

Brief 5: Support for children, young people and families affected by Domestic Abuse

Brief for third sector commissioned service

For the period of 01 April 2027 to 31 March 2030

Introduction and Background

Domestic abuse can have a significant impact on the physical and emotional wellbeing of children, young people and families. Families experiencing domestic abuse may experience significant disruption to their daily lives, and at times be required to leave their family home, school or local community and support networks to ensure their safety. It is understood that the impact of domestic abuse can be long lasting once the experience stops, often resulting in longer term mental health, emotional and social issues for children and their caregivers. In Scotland, domestic abuse is legally defined as:

“Any form of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse which might amount to criminal conduct, and which takes place within the context of a relationship. The relationship will be between partners or ex partners”

In 2023/24, Police Scotland recorded 63,867 incidents of domestic abuse with incidents most commonly occurring at weekends. Responding to domestic abuse accounts for approximately 20% of all police business. It is important to note that these statistics only reflect those reported incidents. It is estimated that around a fifth of young people within the UK are affected by domestic abuse (Cleaver, 2025).

Within Fife, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2026 - 2029 identifies the ongoing correlation between domestic abuse and statutory social work involvement. Domestic abuse continues to be one of the most prevalent concerns leading to child protection registration, accounting for 51% of registrations in 2023/24. Fife has a higher level of recorded domestic abuse incidents per 10,000 population in comparison to the Scottish average. This data highlights the importance of having accessible and responsive support available to women and children with a clear focus on safety, wellbeing and partnership working. Women with learning disabilities, women of colour and LGBT are identified as being particularly vulnerable.

This brief will set out two distinct types of support to ensure a varied provision of services to meet the needs of children and adults impacted by domestic abuse. Throughout this brief the two types of support will be referenced as Lot 1 and 2.

The following key national and local policies inform this brief:

Equally Safe Strategy

This strategy sets out a vision to address violence against women and girls. The priorities of the Equally Safe refresh are:

- Achieving greater gender equality.
- Intervening early and effectively to prevent violence, maximising the safety of women, children and young people.
- Tackling perpetrators.

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018:

The Act recognised Domestic Abuse as a crime for the first time within Scottish Law. The Act recognises abusive behaviour as including psychological and emotional abuse as well as acts of physical violence. The Act also recognises the harm that can be caused to children when growing up in an environment where domestic abuse takes place.

Safe and Together Model

The name “Safe & Together” reflects the evidence-informed belief that children in homes impacted by a perpetrator’s behaviour do best when they can remain safe and together with their protective parent. The Model proposes that better family engagement, assessments, and decisions occur when:

1. We operationalize the foundational idea that a father’s choices and behaviours significantly affect children, partners, and family functioning; and
2. We give protective mothers full credit for maintaining parenting under intense stress and pressure—recognizing the profound difficulty of caregiving under conditions of coercive control and the importance of acknowledging and validating these efforts in safe and ethical practice.

Fife Violence Against Women Partnership Action Plan

Fife Violence Against Women Partnership (FVAWP) co-ordinates activity towards ending violence against women across statutory and third sector agencies. The partnership is committed to the four priorities outlined in ‘Equally Safe: Scotland’s strategy

for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls'. A recent needs assessment was undertaken by the partnership. Key themes which emerged include levels of need outweighing capacity creating long waiting lists for specialised support whilst the seriousness of domestic abuse and complexity of needs is increasing. Those with lived experience highlighted the importance of relationship-based practice as imperative for promoting recovery from domestic abuse and place an emphasis on the approach and knowledge of the 'first responder' being key. The importance of empathy, honesty and care was also emphasised by the lived experience group involved in the preparation of this brief. The needs assessment also identified that enhancing children and adults understanding of healthy relationships is important both for the prevention and recovery from domestic abuse, providing support to navigate the court process supports more women pursue cases against the perpetrator and Equally Safe and Supported training has been welcomed in Fife to support women with a learning disability.

Fife Justice Services Strategy

Fife Justice Services Strategy reflects the 4 priorities outlined in the National Strategy for Community Justice with the addition of a fifth priority to increase opportunity for service user involvement in the design, delivery and development of services. Within the national strategy, there are 4 national aims: optimise the use of diversion and intervention at the earliest opportunity, ensure that robust and high-quality interventions and public protection arrangements are consistently available across Scotland, ensure that services are accessible and available to address the needs of individuals accused or convicted of an offence and strengthen the leadership, engagement and partnership working of local and national community justice partners.

Within Fife, Justice Social Work Services deliver the Caledonian Programme which aims to address domestic abuse perpetrated by men and improve the lives of women and children. For those men subject to the Caledonian Programme via a court order or parole license, the service also offers support to the women and child for the duration of the man's engagement with the programme. Whilst this brief is not aimed at supporting perpetrators of domestic abuse, it is important that applicants are aware of and work in partnership with services to ensure robust risk management and safety planning and to avoid duplication. Furthermore, those with lived experience have explained that ongoing support following the ending of the programme needs to be available and it is anticipated the commissioned service within this brief will support this.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Fife's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) draws on data, literature, lived experience and strategic reflections to identify current outcomes, inequalities and systematic challenges. The assessment is organised around the SHANARRI indicators and aims to give every child and young person the best start in life. Three key themes have emerged strongly through the evidence:

- Strengthening mental health and emotional wellbeing support for children, young people and families.
- Building family resilience through early help and holistic whole family centred services.
- Improving early speech, language and communication to close gaps and support lifelong learning.

This report highlights the importance of support focused on parental mental health and recovery from domestic abuse to reduce harm and improve wellbeing.

Lot 1 – Therapeutic recovery support for women, children and young people where domestic abuse is the primary presenting need.

Aims of the Service

Support at this stage should provide targeted, evidence-based support for children, young people and their families who are experiencing domestic abuse and require specialist support to promote safety and recovery. Domestic abuse should be the primary presenting need. This may include women who remain with the perpetrator of the abuse where safety planning is assessed as safe and appropriate.

Aims of the service are:

- To support parents, children and young people to recognise abusive behaviours by providing opportunities for individual and peer support.
- To provide practical support to parents experiencing domestic abuse.
- To provide emotional support to parents experiencing domestic abuse.
- To provide opportunities for children and young people to talk and make sense of their experiences and emotions in a safe and supportive environment.
- To provide opportunities for children and young people to develop peer relationships utilising accredited groupwork and community-based opportunities.
- To provide opportunities for parents, children and young people to build relationships and attachment.
- To support access to community resources as a 'step down' approach from the service.
- To share specialist knowledge with professionals to promote the safety and recovery of children, young people and women affected by domestic abuse.

The underlying principle is to provide local, accessible and timely intervention to enable children and families to process and recover from their experience of domestic abuse, supporting family relationships, resilience and improving emotional wellbeing.

Who the service will support

Support is anticipated to be available to children, young people and families prebirth to 16 years who are experiencing domestic abuse. Support will be focused on helping children and adults to recover from their experience of domestic abuse. Referrals will come from named persons, social work, health, education, housing, police, third sector partners and self-referral.

The demand for support in relation to recovery from domestic abuse is increasing. To ensure timely and responsive support, this brief is specifically focussed on those women, children and young people where domestic abuse is the key presenting need. For those families where domestic abuse is present but not the immediate presenting need or where families do not feel ready to engage in specialist support, support is available via Brief 1: Whole Family Support. Crucially, applicants are encouraged to consider how they will manage demand for services and a child's journey through the service to maximise the opportunities and availability for children, young people and families across Fife. Applicants are encouraged to outline their triage processes and management of waiting lists.

The service(s) will be available to children, young people and families from prebirth - 16 years and applicants are encouraged to consider how they may meet the differing needs of this age range, whether as one agency or in partnership with another. The service will require to be flexible and available at key times of need including some provision for evenings, weekends and school holidays.

Model of Support

This service is focused on early intervention and scaffolding support for children, young people and families across Fife where there are indicators of need and vulnerability due to the impact of domestic abuse. The service model should be strongly aligned to both the National Framework Principles for Holistic Whole Family Support and GIRFEC National Practice Model and consider the messages shared by those with lived experience.

Critical features of this service model are:

- Knowledge, expertise and understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on children, young people and families and being able to advocate the impact of this on behalf of children, young people and families when needed.
- Collaborative assessment frameworks to establish children and young people's wellbeing needs and risks with the family's voice and pace at the centre.
- Evidence-based approaches and interventions with a key focus on empathy, communication including having honest and difficult conversations, encouragement, age-appropriate means of engagement and "doing what you say you will do".
- Ability to offer flexible support to children, young people and families at times when they need it including provision for evenings, weekends and school

holidays and in local, visible (where safe to do so), accessible and non-stigmatising places.

- To provide opportunities for peer support to promote recovery from domestic abuse for those children, young people and families who do not meet the criteria for CEDAR/EYDAR or wider accredited groupwork programmes.
- Utilisation of a 'step down' approach to support children, young people and families into community resources when specialist, intensive support is no longer required.
- Recruitment and support of volunteers to increase capacity and opportunity for those exiting the service where appropriate.
- Meaningful collaboration and partnership with a range of services to support a families whole experience in a way which facilitates engagement and positive outcomes and reduces the responsibility placed on families to re-tell their story.

Values and approaches underpinning the proposed service:

- Person-centred
- Family centred
- Respectful
- Promoting equality
- Strengths based
- Inclusive
- Participative
- Empowering and rights focused

All applicants should clearly outline how the proposed service will meet these critical features across Fife taking into account the different challenges within each of the seven localities.

Outcomes for children, young people and families

The key aim of this service is to ensure that children, young people and families are supported to understand and begin their recovery from the impact of domestic abuse.

The outcomes for this service brief are:

- Improved feelings of safety and robust safety plan in place.
- Improved understanding of their experience and healthy/unhealthy relationships.

- Improvement in children and young people's confidence, resilience and wellbeing.
- Improvement in child, young person and parent's health and wellbeing.
- Improvement in relationships between children, young person and non-abusive parent.
- Improvement in families circumstances i.e. housing, finances.

This service will be required to support children and families across Fife with support provided within 6 weeks of referral. The service is expected to report on their model of assessment and review, using a strengths-based approach to reduce the risk of service dependency, supporting families to exit the service when they are ready. This will ensure continued capacity to meet the ongoing demand for domestic abuse services.

Partnership Working and Collaboration

Partnership working is key for supporting families and promoting positive outcomes. Families often do not experience one challenge in isolation; therefore, effective partnership working is essential to support appropriate connection with community-based resources to enable whole family support.

The voice of lived experience has been central to the design of this brief, and families have identified that they require services to be visible, accessible and co-ordinated with communication between all parties being key. Through their application services should detail how the service will work effectively with others either in a formal collaboration or informal partnership. Demand for domestic abuse recovery support has increased significantly over time and therefore partnership working is essential to ensure capacity is available for children, young people and families when it is needed.

Through their application, the service should demonstrate the capacity to deliver support across Fife to ensure a consistent approach. Demand for domestic abuse recovery support is highest in Central Fife (Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes, Cowdenbeath), but the service is required to deliver support across all localities and in rural areas as required.

To support consistent delivery and development, services will be expected to engage in regular networking meetings led by the local authority, to share information around local need and delivery, and contribute towards strategic development and planning.

Scale and Budget

The budget for Lot 1 is £515,000. Drawing upon service levels established within the current commissioning cycle (2024 -2027) and from the data and information available, services will be expected to support a minimum of 350 families per year.

Lot 2: MARAC

Aims of the service

Model 2 should provide advocacy and support to children, young people, women and men who:

- Are diverted for support in place of being discussed at MARAC for a period of up to 6 weeks.
- Are discussed at MARAC and advocacy and support are identified as required for a period up to 12 weeks.

It is recognised that a family's level of need might change, and the service will be required to adapt its approach to meet the individual's needs.

The aims of this model are:

- To be a key partner in the MARAC process and partnership.
- To represent the victim's voice at MARAC.
- To undertake safety planning with those referred via MARAC.
- Reduce the risk to children, young people, women and men experiencing domestic abuse.
- To provide practical and emotional support to children, young people, women and men referred via MARAC.
- To support access to community resources for children, young people, women and men.

For children and young people where the parent is no longer residing with/in relationship with the perpetrator, children and young people should be referred to CEDAR and EYDAR where evidence suggests that this supported groupwork is approach is more appropriate to meet their needs.

Who the service will support?

At the heart of MARAC is the working assumption that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of the life of a victim of domestic abuse, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. Ensuring that the victim is supported throughout, and their needs represented at the MARAC is crucial to managing risk, improving and maintaining safety, and reducing repeat victimisation

The service will be required to support children and young people aged pre-birth to 16 years, women and men across Fife who have been referred to MARAC and where the referral progresses to MARAC and/or diverted for support.

Applicants are encouraged to consider how they may meet the differing needs of the age range and genders. In addition, applicants are encouraged to consider the child, young person or individual's journey through the service and how to maximise opportunities and service capacity.

Model of Support

The provision specifically aims to improve the safety and wellbeing of those children, young people and adults who are referred and assessed as meeting the MARAC criteria and/or diverted for support.

Critical features of this service model are:

- To be a key partner of the MARAC process in Fife.
- Knowledge, expertise and understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on children, young people and individuals.
- Assessment framework to establish children, young person's and/or individuals wellbeing needs and risks.
- Provision of advocacy services to children, young people, women and men with a focus on representation at MARAC, ensuring the victim's voice is heard.
- Direct work with children, young people, women and men who experience domestic abuse at times when they need it including provision for evenings, weekends and school holidays. Examples may include attachment focussed interventions, intensive whole family work, parent-child recovery work.
- To provide opportunities for peer support and building of peer relationships via referrals to CEDAR/EYDAR, accredited programmes, community groups or other mechanisms where the individual(s) supported do not meet the criteria.
- Multi-Agency collaboration and information sharing to develop robust, tailored safety plans and to ensure a whole person/family's needs are met. This includes working alongside perpetrator focussed services where appropriate to support whole system risk reduction.
- Support to access appropriate community activities with the view of promoting inclusion, belonging, wellbeing and development.
- Recruitment and support of volunteers to increase capacity.

Values and approaches underpinning the proposed service:

- Person-centred
- Family centred
- Respectful

- Promoting equality
- Strengths based
- Inclusive
- Participative
- Empowering and rights focused

All applications should clearly outline how the proposed service will meet these critical features across Fife taking into account the different challenges within each of the seven localities.

Outcomes for children, young people, families and individuals

The key aim of the service is to be an integral partner of the MARAC Process and to provide advocacy and support to children, young people, women and men experiencing domestic abuse.

Key outcomes include but are not limited to:

- Improvement in child, young person, woman or man's safety.
- Improvement in wellbeing.
- Improvement in individual/family circumstances i.e housing, finances.
- Improvement in children and young people's confidence and resilience where appropriate.
- Improvement in family relationships where appropriate.
- Improved access to community resources and step down from specialist services.

Partnership Working and Collaboration

Partnership working is key to the success of supporting individuals and families and promoting positive outcomes. Applicants should detail how the service will work effectively with others either in a formal collaboration or in partnership. As detailed by those with lived experience, individuals and families have cross cutting needs, therefore, whilst the brief focuses on children, young people, men and women experiencing domestic abuse, applicants should evidence how they will draw on a range of wider support and expertise of partner agencies where required to enable whole family support.

Through their application, the service should demonstrate the capacity to deliver support across Fife to ensure a consistent approach. Demand for MARAC support is highest in

Central Fife (Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes, Cowdenbeath), but the service is required to deliver support across all localities and in rural areas.

To support consistent delivery and development, services will be expected to engage in regular networking meetings led by the local authority, to share information around local need and delivery, and contribute towards strategic development and planning.

Scale and Budget

The total budget for this lot 2 is £300,000. In line with national guidance in respect of MARAC caseloads, the service(s) would be expected to support a minimum of 600 individuals/families per year.

The following sections apply to both Lots 1 and 2:

Continuity of Care

The service provider will be expected to provide consistency of staffing both in levels and personnel for children, young people and families, particularly through periods of absence, sickness and holidays. The service will share their organisation's comprehensive recruitment, induction and workforce development programme for staff members of this service. This should evidence capacity building with the staff team to use effective evidenced based interventions for the specified groups.

Risk Management

For each service user, identify all situations which involve elements of risk to themselves or others, and evidence the planned response which attempts to reduce and control the risk/s.

To manage risks effectively the service must have policies and procedures on the following:

- Operational policy reflecting equalities legislation
- Staff absence and management policy
- Recruitment policies and procedures
- Procedure for lone working and working in service users' homes
- Use of volunteers
- Risk assessment and management
- Dealing with accidents and incidents
- Responding to distress related behaviours

- Protection of vulnerable groups including both an Adult and Child Protection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Training and staff development.
- Job description and details of duties
- References and enhanced disclosure check for staff
- Procedures for the supervision, appraisal and disciplinary of staff
- Whistleblowing policy

Recording & Monitoring

The service must have a record management system in place compliant with GDPR guidelines with a workforce who are knowledgeable and competent to record accurately in respect to direct contact and reports for all groups.

Information regarding the overall service provided may be requested by Fife Council at any time for example, how many hours have been worked, the type of contact that took place, the work involved, changes to service plans/interventions, complaints, successful/unsuccessful outcomes and the reasons for these.

Records kept should ensure that information on the outcomes for the service can be collected for evaluation and analytical purposes.

A Monitoring Meeting will be held every quarter and a report submitted to the meeting by the service.

The grant will be monitored via Fife Councils Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, a Link Officer will be appointed to work closely with the service. The Link Worker will be supported by the Social Work Service Development Officer.

Complaints

For each quarterly Monitoring Meeting the service provider must provide information containing the following:

- The number of complaints the service provider has had during the previous quarter, by type of complaint.
- The number of complaints in respect of service provision funded by Fife Council.
- The outcome of the service providers investigation.
- The number of complaints which were upheld and details on complainants who were satisfied/unsatisfied with the outcome.

- General changes to the service providers policies and procedures as a result of complaints and progress with implementing any changes.
- The service provider will be required to co-operate in any investigation of a complaint as requested by Fife Council and to remedy any concerns that Fife Council has regarding the provision of the service.