| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information ResponseOur reference: FOI 25-1067Responded to: 01 May 2025 |
| --- | --- |

Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

**I would like to enquire about the methods in which investigations are carried out by Police Scotland for Domestic, Sexual Offences and Rape.**

The information sought is held by Police Scotland, but I am refusing to provide it in terms of section 16(1) of the Act on the basis that the section 25(1) exemption applies:

“Information which the applicant can reasonably obtain other than by requesting it […] is exempt information”.

The information sought is publicly available:

[Domestic Abuse Investigation Standard Operating Procedure](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/fuaflohy/domestic-abuse-investigation-sop.pdf)

The above link defines the expected policing response to, and investigation of domestic abuse. It  supports Police Scotland’s [Domestic Abuse Policy](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/he5ffktq/domestic-abuse-policy.pdf?view=Standard) and the Joint Protocol between Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), ["In Partnership Challenging Domestic Abuse"](https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media/xjtd4i4p/joint-domestic-abuse-protocol.pdf).

Additionally Police Scotland’s [Crime Investigation Standard Operating Procedure](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/uwwcamlx/crime-investigation-sop.pdf) provides a general guide to the investigation of crime.

**I’d firstly like to know if each department within the domestic task force has specific targets of arrests/ charges/ convictions to achieve within a given time period. Likewise with the Public Protection Unit. If so could you please let me know why these targets are set and who makes the decision to create them. Is there a bonus/ progression structure for those who hit these targets?**

Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for Police Scotland and we are committed to working with our partners to reduce the harm it causes and ultimately eradicate it.

Domestic abuse is a despicable and debilitating crime which affects all of our communities and has no respect for ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Police Scotland will not tolerate it. Police Scotland will proactively target perpetrators and support victims to prevent domestic abuse from damaging the lives of victims and their families.

Police Scotland defines domestic abuse 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 (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The abuse may be committed in the home or elsewhere including online.”

Police Scotland adopts a ‘three tiered approach’ to the policing of domestic abuse which helps define the expected response. An overview of these tiers is detailed in Police Scotland’s [Domestic Abuse Investigation Standard Operating Procedure](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/fuaflohy/domestic-abuse-investigation-sop.pdf).

Police Scotland’s performance is measured in relation to reducing the threat, harm, risk and driven by data, with a values based approach. No targets are set in relation to the arrest, charge or conviction of Domestic Abuse Perpetrators. Police Scotland is committed to providing a professional, sensitive and consistent service to all victims of Domestic Abuse. We will conduct a thorough investigation and actively pursue perpetrators so they can be held accountable through the criminal justice system.

**Does Police Scotland inform victims of said crimes of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (CICA) at any point in the investigation? If so, at what stage?**

There is no specific policy in relation to this and circumstances are unique to each victim as to when they ask officers about the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA). Police Scotland’s officers are not advocates for CICA and do not assist victims in submitting claims.  If a victim had any questions regarding compensation or the processes, they would be advised to contact CICA directly.

**What safeguard methods do you have in place to protect against false or malicious accusations? Do you investigate the accusers background and criminal past before carrying out proceedings? Do you also investigate the family background or assess the accusers mental health to check if the accuracy of the claim is valid and not a trauma pattern. And for those with children involved, if there would be a malicious reason to accuse in order to obtain custody?**

The initial priority for police officers attending a domestic abuse incident is the safety and well-being of the victims, their family and any other person present. The circumstances of a domestic abuse incident should not be looked at in isolation and officers must also have regard to the history and nature of the relationship andprevious incidents. Carefulconsideration should be given to all relevant factors and to any threat, harm and risk, which will vary depending on the circumstances.

A consistent and robust approach is essential when dealing with criminal conduct arising from domestic abuse. The Joint Protocol between Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), ["In Partnership Challenging Domestic Abuse"](https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media/xjtd4i4p/joint-domestic-abuse-protocol.pdf) outlines the procedures and practices that will be followed by Police Scotland and COPFS in the investigation, reporting and prosecution of allegations involving an element of domestic abuse.

**If an alleged victim does not want to engage with Police after an allegation. Third part allegation has been made, what is the protocol? And what is the protocol for third party allegations? How are these investigated?**

When investigating incidents of domestic abuse, the police will ensure that all possible lines of enquiry are rigorously pursued, and all available evidence is secured. Whether or not the victim makes a complaint, the police will take appropriate action, including arrest of the suspect where there is reasonable cause to suspect a crime has been committed. Only where there is sufficient evidence available will the police charge the suspect and report the circumstances without delay to the Procurator Fiscal for consideration of prosecution.

A consistent and robust approach is essential when dealing with criminal conduct arising from domestic abuse. The Joint Protocol between Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), ["In Partnership Challenging Domestic Abuse"](https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media/xjtd4i4p/joint-domestic-abuse-protocol.pdf) outlines the procedures and practices that will be followed by Police Scotland and COPFS in the investigation, reporting and prosecution of allegations involving an element of domestic abuse.

**Do Police Scotland ask leading/ directing questions in order to crate a greater criminal profile on the accused, leading to an easier prosecution or is it balanced to give an objective truth?**

The PRICE model is a structured approach to police interviewing used in Scotland, particularly for suspect, victim, and witness interviews. It was developed to enhance investigative interviewing practices. The PRICE model emphasises a structured, ethical approach to interviewing, aiming to gather reliable information while respecting the rights of the interviewee.

**Finally, in respect to Clares Law, do Police Investigators read previous statements from alleged victims to other potential victims in an attempt to create a narrative of the accused to them. What if these previous statements were false and what if the current accuser/ third party accuser is doing this maliciously or has made a wrongful assumption of a persons situation. Taking into account also the social prejudice and cognitive biases for crimes of these natures. What protection is there for the accused in these circumstances?**

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), known as ‘Clare’s Law’ was introduced in England and Wales in March 2014.

The DVDS was not introduced in Scotland.  As such, in terms of Section 17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, this represents a notice that the information requested is not held by Police Scotland.

In order to be of some assistance however, I can confirm that on the 1st October 2015, Police Scotland introduced the Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS) which operates in a similar way to the DVDS.  I have therefore elected to answer your questions on this basis.

DSDAS aims to prevent domestic abuse by empowering people with the Right to Ask about the background of their partner, potential partner or someone who is in a relationship with someone they know, when there is a concern that the individual may be abusive. The scheme enables potential victims to make an informed choice on whether to continue their relationship and provides further help and support to assist the potential victim when making that choice.

DSDAS also provides the Power to Tell where Police Scotland receives information or intelligence that domestic abuse may impact upon the safety of a victim or potential victim.

Every application received by Police Scotland is assessed to confirm that it meets the criteria for disclosure. Using a rigorous process, an examination of the circumstances will be considered relative to the threat presented. Only after all factors have been considered and the threat carefully assessed will a decision be made to disclose information. The content of the disclosure will be determined by the individual circumstances of each application. A disclosure will only be made if it is considered lawful, necessary and proportionate. Wherethis threshold is not met, Police Scotland will not progress the application.

I can confirm that at no time do police officers read the contents of an evidential statement provided by a witness or victim to another victim.

If you require any further assistance, please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by email or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](https://www.foi.scot/appeal), by email or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.