| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information Response Our reference: FOI 25-1366  Responded to: 27 May 2025 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

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”

Please note that the definition of Domestic abuse in Scotland differs from the definition of Domestic Violence in England and Wales which includes wider familial abuse e.g. from parents or children etc.

## Q. What is the Police Scotland policy/approach on 'victim trawling' defined below when applied to

## non recent investigations into alleged abuse in children's homes, and

## non recent domestic abuse in the context of proactive unsolicited approaches to former partners

As you may be aware, the Act provides a right of access to recorded information only.  Questions seeking the creation of comment or opinion in relation to a particular query, are not therefore valid in terms of [section 8 of the Act](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2002/13/section/8).

However, to be of assistance we can provide the following.

With regards to non-recent investigations into alleged abuse in children's homes pro-active approaches can and will be made, but most will be done on a case-by-case basis. This can depend on whether it’s one suspect within a setting or several suspects within a setting. It also depends on the type and severity of the abuse being investigated. To confirm there is no policy in place and the Senior Investigating Officer will decide how to approach each case.

With regards to non-recent domestic abuse there is a separate Legal System in Scotland and therefore legislation in England and Wales is not relevant to Police Scotland.

There is no specific policy outlining when a victim should be contacted; however, in line with the [Joint Protocol between Police Scotland and COPFS](https://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/joint-domestic-abuse-protocol/html/) specialist teams routinely identify and engage with potential (recent and non-recent) victims of serial perpetrators, to ascertain whether they have been victims of crime and whether they wish to engage with a police investigation. Notwithstanding the use of this approach in the prevention and detection of crime, it provides victims and survivors of domestic abuse and serious crime the opportunity to engage with the criminal justice process and/or access support networks which may not have been previously known or available to them.

The [Joint Protocol between Police Scotland and COPFS](https://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/joint-domestic-abuse-protocol/html/) clearly states “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.”

The approach benefits the investigation of significantly under reported crimes of domestic and serious sexual abuse and removes barriers to reporting for many victims.

Police Scotland aims to adopt a ‘trauma-informed’ approach to potential victims of such crimes, by acknowledging the impact, being victim-centred and signposting to relevant support services, whilst tackling the root cause of abuse - perpetrators.

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](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) 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](mailto:enquiries@foi.scot) 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.