



DVACT-PAI  
Assessments & Interventions

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# DVACT-PAI Assessments and Interventions

DVACT-PAI is an independent agency specialising in providing expert opinion in the family courts on all aspects of family conflict, including, **domestic abuse, sexually harmful behaviour and psychological functioning**. We provide **intervention programmes** for parents where there are concerns relating to domestic abuse or sex offending, including a **trauma programme** for perpetrators or victims who have had traumatic experiences that impact on their ability to parent effectively.

## Registered Experts

An estimated 2,500 expert reports have been completed by our assessors and oral evidence provided in over 400 cases. All of our assessments are completed by domestic abuse experts with extensive experience and knowledge of the field. DVACT-PAI hold the register for expert assessors who meet the necessary standards to provide Expert Domestic Abuse Risk Assessments. You can find our Standards and the Register of Experts on our website at [dvact.org/expertsregister](http://dvact.org/expertsregister). Biographies and CVs can also be provided upon request.

As specialists in complex cases with multiple concerns, our assessors have expertise in a number of areas and can address issues including: substance misuse, HBV, female perpetrators, mental health, sexual risk, cultural imperatives, non-English speakers, criminality, same sex relationships and multiple parent cases. This makes DVACT-PAI ideally placed to provide single jointly instructed experts to save the courts time and additional expense.

## Assessments

The essential purpose of DVACT-PAI assessments are that they be useful to the professionals and the court, providing expertise that is not available within the usual realm of child protection professionals. DVACT-PAI Family Safety Assessments offer clarity and insight into the dynamics of abuse and ongoing risks within the family, including an expert opinion on specific issues of concern. The primary concern of DVACT-PAI's assessments is to establish and quantify the risks to the children of exposure to domestic abuse and conflict. The most important element of this is establishing, as far as is possible, the nature, severity, frequency and pattern of abuse and violence that has been happening in the family so that professionals can understand what the children are likely to experience if nothing changes. Our goal is to ensure that the safety of the children remains at the heart of assessment and intervention.

We are keenly aware of the need to move matters forward swiftly, particularly regarding the children's timescales, and have a professional reputation for providing expert reports within greatly reduced timescales (depending upon the type of assessment and current caseload) meeting court dates wherever possible.

The following information gives brief details of each of our expert assessments.

## Family Safety Assessments

Family Safety Assessments are comprehensive and based upon an analysis of empirically derived risk indicators taken from multiple sources of information about the subject's background, giving detailed consideration to both static and dynamic risk factors. Psychometric testing including behaviour inventories and CAPI (Child Abuse Potential Inventory) are also utilised within these assessments. Each assessment will give an analysis of the risks posed to the children with a realistic risk management plan for each member of the family, including viability of treatment interventions and prognosis for change where necessary.

**Domestic abuse risk assessment of perpetrators** – Assesses the risk towards the victim and children from the domestic abuse perpetrator. This includes interviews with both the perpetrator and victim, wherever possible. The report will include:

- developmental indicators, including exposure to family conflict in childhood;
- static and dynamic risk indicators, including the imminence of any risks;
- history of domestic abuse and the possible impact on the child;
- likelihood of further exposure of the child to domestic abuse;
- parent's understanding of the impact of the domestic abuse on children;
- prognosis for treatment and a risk management plan including an assessment of the risks surrounding contact with the child/ren.

**Domestic abuse vulnerability assessment of victims/survivors** – Alongside identifying vulnerability to future abuse, the impact of the abuse on the victim's parenting will also be assessed, including:

- victim's background, including exposure to abuse as a child and any abuse in previous relationships;
- history of domestic abuse and the possible impact on the child, and likelihood of further exposure of the child to domestic abuse;
- victim's understanding of the impact of the domestic abuse on children;
- static and dynamic vulnerability indicators, including ability to assess risk and prioritise safety, ability to sustain any separation and understanding of domestic abuse;
- recommendations for risk management strategies and treatment options.

**Joint domestic abuse risk and vulnerability assessment of both parents** – An assessment of both parents (please note that parents are seen separately), including all the elements of risk and vulnerability assessments outlined above, but also:

- a clear picture of the dynamics of the relationship, including the principal sources of risk and danger;
- the likelihood of separation/reconciliation;
- the particular safeguarding issues raised by the parental relationship;
- a risk management plan for each member of the family.

## Partner Abuse Interventions

Family safety assessments can also take place alongside a DV-ACTION treatment programme. DV-ACTION has many years of experience in delivering high quality effective interventions to parents including perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse. While the traditional route has involved an assessment taking place first followed by an intervention this new wraparound assessment and intervention provides an opportunity for parents to receive an intervention more quickly and enables parents to demonstrate that they can make positive changes to behaviours of concern.

Completing a targeted treatment intervention that aims to achieve genuine progress for parents in protecting their children, shortens timescales, provides evidence as to the parents ability to safeguard the child and avoid further proceedings. The accompanying assessment report will push the case forward providing an expert opinion on the risk posed to the child, and fills a gap in evidence as to whether parents are able to safeguard their child.

These interventions involve an initial assessment interview with an expert risk assessor who will advise on the right treatment programme for the parent within an initial suitability assessment report. This will be followed by a 6 or 12 week intervention and a final interview to complete the full risk and/or vulnerability assessment report, including the progress made within the intervention.

**Behaviour change PAI** – this includes a risk or vulnerability assessment alongside a full intensive behaviour change programme. The 12 session vulnerable mothers programme focuses on the attachment to the abusive partner, with reflective work on how the attachment was formed and how the mothers vulnerability to further abuse can be reduced. The full 24 session Domestic Abuse Prevention Programme (DAPP) will be delivered to the offending parent with twice weekly sessions with the aim of starting the process of reducing the risk of further violence and abuse. The capacity to protect programme which focuses on building the mothers capacity to protect a child from sex offending is also available.

**Needs PAI** - A Needs PAI includes a Family Safety assessment alongside a 12 session programme that meets the immediate child protection concerns around safety and increasing accountability. Victim work will concentrate on domestic abuse education, safety planning and recognising risk. A perpetrator intervention will involve motivational work to increase levels of acceptance with the aim of moving them to a position where they will be suitable for a full behavioural change programme.

**TraumaSense PAI** - Where high levels of trauma mean that a focused trauma intervention is required the 24 session TraumaSense programme is delivered as a psychoeducational programme designed to support victims or perpetrators who are struggling with the long-term emotional, psychological, and somatic impacts of trauma. The programme is rooted in the latest evidence-based research and trauma theory providing a unique and empowering pathway to post-traumatic growth.

Programmes are also available to take place following (rather than alongside an intervention however please note that this will increase timescales and costs). Further information on each programme is available from the office or can be found on the DV-ACTION website at [dvactprogrammes.org](http://dvactprogrammes.org)

## Sex Offender Assessments

DVACT-PAI can offer perpetrator and/or victim assessments where sexual offending is a key risk to children. Unlike many similar assessments, a DVACT-PAI report will provide a detailed risk management plan and will identify key risk indicators specific to each child who may be exposed to abuse.

**Assessment of the risk of sexual harm** – These are undertaken by our specialists in sexual offending and will identify risk management plans where offenders or risky adults have close contact with a family; this can be a parent, partner or other members of the family, including adolescents.

As a minimum the report will contain the following:

- formal assessment based on the most effective psychometric and actuarial tools pertaining to risk of recidivism;
- the risk of sexual offending, grooming and exploitation;
- history of abuse and the possible impact on the child/ren;
- social functioning and self-management;
- external factors – support/supervision networks;
- assessment of sexual interests;
- compliance with orders/agreements;
- motivation to stop sexually harmful behaviours;
- internal drivers, insight and empathy;
- prognosis for change and a risk management plan.

**Assessment of protective capacity** – This provides an assessment of the non-abusing parent and includes:

- application of the Capacity & Ability to Supervise and Protect- Risk Framework (CASP-R);
- parent's background and any adverse childhood experiences which relate to their capacity to protect;
- an analysis of the power dynamics in their relationship with the offender;
- ability to recognise abuse, including grooming;
- understanding of abuse and the impact on children;
- support network;
- ability to take action and work openly with professionals to manage the risk.

**Joint assessment of both parents** (please note that all parents are seen separately) – This assessment includes all the elements of the risk and protective capacity assessments outlined above, but also:

- a clear picture of the dynamics of the relationship;
- the likelihood of separation/reconciliation;
- the particular safeguarding issues raised by the parental relationship;
- a risk management plan for each member of the family.

## Assessment of Psychological Functioning

A psychological assessment does not replace the need for a risk/family safety assessment – the presence of mental health difficulties is not necessarily a risk indicator, and many people who pose high risk do not have an identifiable mental health difficulty. It is important to recognise that many behaviours that appear anomalous (such as returning repeatedly to an abusive partner) are common where domestic abuse is a factor and do not necessarily indicate abnormal pathology.

Psychological assessments are offered in conjunction with family safety assessments in cases where there are concerns about the extent to which mental health or personality difficulties affect a parent's functioning. We can provide formal screening for psychopathology, using well-respected self-report inventories alongside clinical interviews.

While it is beyond the area of expertise of a psychologist to make diagnoses, the report can comment on any observed indications of mental health problems or personality difficulties and make recommendations for treatment to address these. The assessment is always presented as a part of the family safety assessment and includes;

- history of psychiatric or psychological problems;
- developmental history;
- social and emotional functioning;
- personality patterns;
- clinical syndromes;
- recommendations for treatment (as part of the FSA recommendations).

## Funding for DVACT-PAI Assessments

Please note that because of our assessors high level of expertise, specifically in the field of domestic abuse or sexual abuse and the comprehensive nature of our assessments, the hourly rate and the number of hours taken does not come within the Legal Aid Agency expert rates. Domestic Abuse/Family Safety/Forensic Risk Assessors are not recognised as a separate expert entity by the LAA. It should also be noted that our assessors are not independent social workers, and only employ assessors whose qualifications and expertise in domestic abuse, far exceeds those in other general professions. The register of experts with details of the required standards for expert assessors is available on our website at [dvact.org/expertsregister](http://dvact.org/expertsregister). You can request any of the assessors on our register however, we cannot always guarantee their availability.

The Guidance for the Remuneration of Experts in the Family Court reminds us that the LAA allows for an increased rate in cases where domestic abuse or sexual offending risk assessment expertise is required. Where a lower rate is given by the LAA in previous cases the local authority has agreed to meet the shortfall and/or the legally aided parties challenge the lower rate. Should you require prior authority this will need to be provided before the assessment starts, alternatively, if the Local Authority agree to meet the shortfall then we can commence the assessment and split our invoices accordingly upon completion.

**Family safety assessments** – DVACT-PAI charges expert family safety assessments at an hourly rate of **£90 (+ VAT)**.

A typical breakdown of hours for family safety assessments is given below.

Number of hours		Task
1 parent	2 parents	
6	10	Interviewing time with client/s
4	5	Reading and consultation
1	2	Setting up the assessment (setting up interviews, obtaining all necessary documentation)
1	2	Providing and analysing inventories and psychometric tests
3	4	Quality assurance (supervision, proofing and editing)
20	22	Writing and filing the report
<b>35</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Total</b>

**Partner Abuse Interventions** – the LAA does not fund treatment and so these interventions are usually funded in full by the local authority and invoiced as a package including both assessment and treatment. However, if part funding is preferred separate costs for the assessment and programme can be given so that the assessment portion can be split by the parties.

**Sex offender assessments** – these specialist assessments are charged at an hourly rate of **£93.60 (+ VAT)**. Where an assessment of sex offending is included within a family safety assessment an additional 5-8 hours will be required per parent.

**Psychological assessments** – charged at an hourly rate of **£93.60 (+VAT)**. Where an assessment of psychological functioning is commissioned alongside a family safety assessment an additional 8-10 hours will be required for each parent to allow for the administration of tests, scoring, analysis and report writing.

In cases where it is not possible to allocate a family safety assessment and a psychological assessment to the same assessor. In such cases the hours requirement for the psychological assessment would increase. In such cases we advise estimating up to 25 hours' work for the psychological assessment.

**Maximum expected cost and timescales of all assessments are shown below:**

Assessment	Estimated maximum cost exclusive of VAT	Timescale to complete
Family safety assessment	1 parent £3150	8 weeks
	2 parents £4050	10 weeks
	3 parents £4950	12 weeks
Partner Abuse Intervention (Assessment alongside an intervention)	Behaviour Change PAI	
	Victim £4700	16 weeks
	Perpetrator £5600	22 weeks
	Both Parents £7800	24 weeks
	Needs PAI	
	Victim £4600	16 weeks
	Perpetrator £4700	16 weeks
	Both parents £6500	18 weeks
	TraumaSense PAI	
Sex offending assessment	1 parent £4900	22 weeks
	Both parents £6200	24 weeks
Sex offending assessment alongside a family safety assessment	1 parent £3276	8 weeks
	2 parents £4212	10 weeks
Psychological assessment alongside a family safety assessment	1 parent £3618	10 weeks
	2 parents £4986	12 weeks
Psychological assessment alongside a family safety assessment	1 parent £4086	10 weeks
	2 parents £5922	12 weeks

Timescales are subject to change and start at the point at which we receive all the required documents and direct contact details of the parents. Missed appointments may impact our ability to meet filing dates.

All work is charged upon completion, should a parent fail to attend the full programme or not engage only the time taken will be invoiced for.

If parents cancel or fail to attend 2 programme sessions with less than 48 hours' notice the relevant parties will be notified. 1 further missed session will result in the programme being stopped and the assessor proceeding straight to completing the full assessment report.

**Additional fees may apply as follows:**

**Interpreter fees** – the costs given above do not include interpreter costs which must be provided by the local authority or parents' solicitors.

**Court hearings or Professionals meetings** – fees for attendance will be charged additionally at the relevant hourly rate with travel time and expenses charged at the legal aid rate. If a court attendance is cancelled or re-scheduled at less than 24 hours' notice it will incur a cancellation fee.

**Missed assessment appointments** - If parents cancel or fail to attend their assessment appointments with less than 48 hours' notice the appointments will be charged for up to a maximum of 2 missed appointments after which the assessment will be completed with the information available or cancelled depending upon the advice of the lead solicitor/social worker.

**In person appointments** - Interviews take place via video calling, in person appointments will incur additional travel costs for expenses and time.