

Attending your Assessment



What is a family safety vulnerability assessment?

A vulnerability assessment aims to clearly set out your vulnerability to domestic abuse, the impact of the abuse on your children and if you are able to assess the risks to yourself and your children. It will also make recommendations for how any risks can be managed in the future.

Why have I been referred?

Referrals to DVACT-PAI are made by children's social workers or family court solicitors when they are worried about domestic violence. You may be involved in court proceedings, or your child may have a social worker and a child protection plan. DVACT-PAI usually becomes involved when there are serious concerns about domestic abuse affecting the child's safety.

Who will my assessor be?

Our assessors have professional backgrounds in areas such as social work, probation, or mental health. They are highly qualified and have many years of experience working with parents in situations where domestic abuse is a concern.

You can view our list of experts and the standards they must meet on our website: dvact.org/expertsregister

When will my interview appointment be?

The assessor will first try to contact you by phone or email to arrange your interview appointments. We could also speak to your solicitor or social worker to suggest a date and time. It is important that you tell us whether you can attend. If you do not respond or do not attend the appointment, it will be recorded as missed. If you cannot attend at the suggested time, please tell the assessor as soon as possible so that a new appointment can be arranged.

How will the appointments take place?

Most interviews happen using Zoom or another video app. The assessor will ask you to choose a room with a good signal and where you won't be interrupted or overheard. It is important that your appointments are private and that you are alone so the assessor will ask you to confirm that you are in a room on your own and they may ask you to show them the room on your device.

We need 4-6 hours of interview time with you, this will usually mean 2 or 3 appointments of 2 hours each.



What will happen at the appointments?

In the assessment interviews, the assessor will ask questions about incidents of domestic abuse, your background, your past and present relationships, and your opinion about the local authority's concerns.

Are interviews confidential?

You will be asked to sign a confidentiality policy and this will explain what we can and cannot keep confidential.

Any information you share with the assessor may be included in the assessment report. This report will be sent to the referring social worker or lead solicitor who will then send a copy to all the parties.



What if I need extra help?

If you need an interpreter, childcare or extra breaks due to any difficulties you may have, you should speak to your solicitor or social worker so that this can be arranged with the assessor in advance of your appointments. You can also discuss this with the assessor when they contact you to arrange appointments.

What if I miss my appointments?

Missing your appointment or cancelling at late notice can result in the report being filed late or without your input. You should always get in contact with the assessor as soon as possible to let them know. **We only allow 2 missed appointments.** The assessment will still go ahead if you do not attend but it will be based on the information in the documents and interviews with the other parent if they attend.

What will happen once interviews are completed?

When all the interviews are done the assessor will write the report which will include information from any interviews with you, any other parents involved in your case and from the case papers provided by the local authority or solicitors. This report will be sent to the lead solicitor or social worker who will then share it with you or send it to your solicitor to share with you.

If it is recommended that you attend one of our programmes and it is agreed by the local authority that you should be referred, you will then be contacted by a member of our programmes team.

What if I have questions after the report is completed?

Our assessors are not available to answer questions directly once the report has been filed. We cannot guarantee that the assessment will support the outcome you are hoping for. If you do not agree with the assessor's views in the report, formal questions can be put to the assessor in writing or the assessor can be asked to attend court. You will need to discuss this with your solicitor or social worker.

If you have any questions or concerns contact Barbara Newman or visit our website: