



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. The overwhelming majority of these reports have been 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). The full list of registered experts, biographies and CVs can be provided upon request to the main office at [info.pai@dvact.org](mailto:info.pai@dvact.org)

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

Without doubt the essential purpose of any expert assessment is that it must be useful to the professionals and to the court. It should provide 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. All assessments are available for one or both parents and third parties. 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 a picture of 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 of 6 - 12 weeks (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

Our 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.

**Third party carer (Special Guardianship) assessment** – Examines whether any potential carer has an adequate understanding of domestic abuse and their ability to protect the children in their care. Including:

- the impact of domestic abuse on the child/children;
- the ongoing risks and the ability to protect the children under specific circumstances (for people being considered as alternative carers).

**Assessment of family members** – Considers other domestic abusers in the home, for example older adolescents or other adults. This assessment will include interviews with all parties, with the assessment report providing the following:

- static and dynamic risk and vulnerability indicators;
- identification of risks and the principal source of danger;
- recommendation of risk management strategies and treatment options.

## 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).

## Assessment Costs and Timescales

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>

**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
Sex offending assessment	1 parent £3276	8 weeks
	2 parents £4212	10 weeks
Sex offending 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 contact details of parents.

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 appointments** - If parents cancel or fail to attend their 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 as follows:

Travel time, per hour £40

Travel expenses, per mile £0.45

Where clients do not attend in person interviews travel expenses will still be charged.

## Interventions

DVACT-PAI provides bespoke 1:1 domestic abuse and sexual abuse behaviour change intervention programmes for parents when referred by a social worker. We also provide an education programme to alleviate the impact of trauma called Trauma Sense.

All of our programmes are designed to meet the needs of parents who are in Child Protection measures. We accept referrals from social services anywhere in the UK at any stage of the case, including early interventions and those in care proceedings. As specialists in complex cases we can work with those not usually able to attend groupwork programmes, including those who need a translator, those with learning needs, same sex relationships and female perpetrators.

Suitability for treatment can be assessed either through a full Family Safety Risk or Vulnerability Assessment, or a brief Suitability Assessment can be undertaken. We also accept assessments completed by other experts depending on the programme type and the conclusions of the assessment.

All DVACT-PAI interventions include:

- Weekly 1:1 sessions delivered by video calling via Zoom or another online platform.
- A dedicated and experienced programme facilitator allocated to the client with at least 10 years of experience in delivering domestic abuse interventions.
- A risk assessor allocated to the case to oversee the work.
- Access to independent learning to continue work in between sessions.
- Access to technology (a tablet) where required.
- A full final report completed by an expert risk assessor that can be used in proceedings and filed with all parties.

Programme final reports are completed by an expert assessor independent from the programme facilitator and suitable for use in court proceedings. The final report includes:

- What sessions were attended/missed.
- Topics covered in the sessions.
- Details of the client's engagement with the programme material.
- A consideration of any new developments in the case.
- A view on whether the client's risk or vulnerability has been reduced.
- Domestic abuse and sex abuse programmes will include further recommendations for risk management, including a view on child contact where appropriate.

## Vulnerability Programmes

The needs of mothers in care proceedings or Child Protection measures are often complex, with enduring problems around adult attachments, accountability and prioritising their children's safety. In these cases, more intensive, challenging and focused work is needed in order to support lasting change.



**Vulnerable Mothers Programme (for separated mothers)** - This 11-session 1:1 programme is particularly suitable for women who: have an enduring emotional attachment to their abuser; have a history of separating and reconciling with their abuser; consistently minimise the abuse/retract statements, or have failed to prioritise their own or their children's safety when making decisions. As intensive work that seeks to empower and break attachments this can raise the risk of further abuse; therefore, this programme is only suitable for those who have separated from an abusive partner.

The programme is delivered on a one-to-one basis by an expert worker, using video link. There is an additional session towards the end of the programme where the expert assessor will meet with the client in order to complete the final assessment report. Sessions can be completed using an interpreter should this be required, and topics covered in the sessions will include subjects within the broad areas as follows:

- Domestic abuse knowledge - covering subjects such as power and control, sexual abuse and coercive control.
- Attachment - exploring reasons why the mother remained in the relationship, understanding the emotional attachment to the abuser and pressures to reconcile.
- Children - with a focus on understanding the effects of abuse on the child and reparative parenting.
- Safety planning - focusing on prioritising children's safety, crisis management and early warning signals.
- Personal insight - discussing the impact of the abuse, exploring childhood experiences and reasons for vulnerability.
- Moving forward - building self-esteem, how to work collaboratively with professionals and what to do when starting a new relationship.
- Additional needs - this will cover specific needs not included in the above areas such as alcohol abuse, grieving and loss, the use of violent resistance and immigration concerns.

**Capacity to protect programme** – This 12 week 1:1 intervention aims to increase the protective capacity of mothers where there is a risk towards the children from sex offenders in the home.

The programme is delivered by expert practitioners with years of experience of working with parents and families affected by child sexual abuse (CSA). The key aim of the programme is to enable parents to recognise and respond to the risk of CSA and to substantially increase their confidence in speaking to and supporting their children. It is suitable for various scenarios, including:

- sexual abuse by an adult or another child in the family environment.
- abuse by a trusted adult outside the family environment.
- sexual abuse by a group of adults.
- online sexual abuse.
- sexual abuse by another child or children outside the family environment.

This programme includes a tailored treatment plan with material specifically targeted to the child protection concerns, with modules including:

- Myth busting about sex offenders.
- Emotional impact on the parent.



- Denial.
- Emotional attachment to the abuser.
- Children's reactions to abuse.
- Impact of CSA on children.
- Talking to children about CSA.
- Safety planning with children.
- Helping children with boundaries.
- Understanding risk.
- Adult vs child perspectives.
- CSA and links to domestic abuse.

## Perpetrator Programmes

**Partner abuse intervention programme** - This is an 18 session programme of work on a 1:1 basis. This programme is for perpetrators who have some level of acceptance of their abusive behaviour. A bespoke programme of focused work is delivered addressing specific areas of concern and will cover all the topics usually delivered within a perpetrator programme including:

- Strategies for reducing abuse.
- Analysing feelings and behaviour.
- Motivation to change.
- Power and control.
- Reparative parenting.
- Emotional abuse.
- Developing empathy.
- Sexual respect, intimacy and respectful relationships.
- Positive self talk.
- Attitudes towards women.

This programme includes an interim report (where required), a full final report and free confidential support for current and ex-partners of those attending the programme.

Please note that where a full domestic abuse risk assessment has not already been completed a suitability assessment will be required before a place on this programme can be confirmed.

**Motivational programme for perpetrators** - This 1:1 programme is suitable for perpetrators who are willing to complete work but are unsuitable for a full domestic abuse perpetrator programme due to denial and minimisation. As a bespoke programme delivered on a 1:1 basis, there is a particular focus on specific areas of concern and further sessions are included to meet the requirements of the child protection plan.

Please note that this is a motivational programme that aims to progress perpetrators to the point at which they are then suitable to attend a full domestic abuse programme, and is not therefore a replacement for a full DAPP.

**Specialist perpetrator work** - Delivered by highly experienced facilitators, bespoke programmes of work are provided to perpetrators where focus is required on a specific area

of need. This could include domestic abuse work with an emphasis on parenting and child protection, safety planning, early intervention or sexual offending.

## TraumaSense

TraumaSense is an innovative, trauma-responsive, psychoeducational programme designed to empower individuals by providing an accessible understanding of trauma.

General trauma services tend to be focused on psychotherapeutic interventions and while these approaches are valuable, they often fall short of addressing the physiological nature of trauma. Many individuals who have experienced chronic trauma feel disconnected from their bodies, unaware of how trauma manifests as physical sensations, stress responses, and trauma-responsive behaviours. TraumaSense fills this gap by offering a structured programme that demystifies trauma in a non-therapeutic setting. TraumaSense is not therapy but rather a structured educational experience grounded in the principles of bio-psycho-social education. It offers participants a pathway towards self-empowerment and personal growth without requiring them to disclose their past traumas or engage in conventional therapeutic disclosure.

This 12 session programme is available for both perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse who have traumatic experiences that impact their ability to parent effectively. It is particularly suitable for those mandated to attend as part of a court process and individuals who may not be ready for therapy or feel apprehensive about disclosing their experiences. Session topics include the following:

- Understanding trauma and the stress response system.
- Cultivating safety and stability.
- The long term impact of chronic stress.
- The impact of trauma on the brain.
- Wellbeing.
- Protective factors and resilience.
- Power, control and personal agency.
- Reflection and personal action plan for next steps.

## Programme Costs and Timescales

Costs for the programme are detailed below:

Programme	Cost (where an initial assessment has not been completed)	Timescale (from receipt of documents to final report)
Suitability assessment	£440 (+VAT)	3 weeks
Vulnerable Mothers Programme	£2950 (+VAT)	15 weeks
Capacity to Protect Programme	£2950 (+VAT)	15 weeks
Partner abuse intervention programme	£3500 (+VAT)	22 weeks
Motivational programme	£2900 (+VAT)	14 weeks
Specialist perpetrator work	Available upon request	Dependent upon the type of work and number of sessions required
Trauma Sense	£2950 (+VAT)	16 weeks

A reduced fee is available where an initial DVACT-PAI family safety assessment has already been (or is being) completed. Please contact the office for further details.

Timescales include 2 weeks to start the programme from receipt of all paperwork and 2 weeks at the conclusion of the programme to complete and file the final report. However, this is subject to change depending upon capacity; please contact the office for current timescales.

In some cases it may be possible to shorten timescales in order to meet Court/meeting/conference dates this is at the discretion of the clinical manager is decided on a case-by-case basis.

Additional fees may apply as follows:

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

**Missed sessions** - If parents cancel or fail to attend 2 sessions with less than 48 hours' notice the programme will be suspended and the views of the relevant parties will be sought. If the programme re-commences any further missed sessions will be lost or will need to be funded additionally.