



DVACT-PAI
Assessments & Interventions

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DVACT-PAI Assessments and Interventions

DVACT-PAI is an independent organisation providing expert assessments relating to **domestic abuse** and **sexual abuse** as well as assessments of **psychological** and **cognitive functioning** for children's services and the family courts. We also provide **domestic abuse intervention programmes** for parents.

Assessments

DVACT-PAI specialises in complex cases with assessments designed to offer a level of 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. Our primary concern is to ensure the safety of, and assess the potential for harm to, the children from violence and abuse within the family.

DVACT-PAI expert assessors all possess the competencies and expertise outlined in the [2012 guidelines for the commissioning of expert domestic violence risk assessments](#) and have many years' experience in the family courts as specialists and expert witnesses. CVs are available upon request.

We are always keenly aware of the need to move matters forward swiftly, particularly regarding the children's timescales, we 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) and we will meet court dates wherever possible.

The following information gives brief details of what each of our expert assessments includes; as specialists in complex cases our assessors have expertise in a number of areas and can answer further questions on issues such as: substance misuse, HBV, female perpetrators, cultural imperatives, non-English speakers, criminality, same sex relationships and multiple parent cases.

Family Safety Assessments

Our Family Safety Assessments are comprehensive and are 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. 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.

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

- 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.

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:

- mother’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;
- mother’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 access support and understanding of domestic abuse;
- recommendations for risk management strategies and treatment options.

Joint risk and vulnerability assessment of both parents – An assessment of both parents (please note that all clients 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;
- ability to protect the children under specific circumstances (for people being considered as alternative carers).

Family assessment – 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:

- 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;
- likelihood of further exposure of the subject child/ren to sexual abuse;
- prognosis for change and a risk management plan.

Assessment of protective capacity – This provides an assessment of the non-offending 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 clients 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.

Psychological Assessments

Assessments of psychological functioning – Should a referrer have concerns about the extent to which mental health difficulties affect a parent’s functioning, we can provide formal screening for psychopathology, using well-respected self-report inventories alongside a clinical interview.

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.

Please note that a psychological does not replace the need for a risk/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.

Cognitive assessments – This assessment will focus on the capacity of a parent to use and retain information. It will involve a short clinical history taking and the administration of a standardised, validated measure of IQ (the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scales IV – WAIS IV). The findings of a cognitive assessment can help to ensure that communication and support are provided to the parent in a way that they can understand and use.

Please be aware that it is not possible to use the WAIS IV with parents who do not have a good command of the English language, even with an interpreter present. In general we do not have access to versions of this test in other languages. However, we can explore with the parent whether there have been any indicators of cognitive difficulties in their developmental, educational and employment history, and their literacy and everyday coping skills. This screening exercise can be supplemented with a language-free test, such as the Test of Nonverbal Intelligence Fourth Edition (TONI-4) or the Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales (II).

Please note that sometimes 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 as the assessor would not have already read the papers and interviewed the clients as part of the family safety assessment. In such cases we advise estimating up to 25 hours’ work for the psychological assessment.

Assessments of psychological or cognitive functioning can be provided either as stand-alone assessments or alongside a family safety or sex offender assessment.

Assessment Costs and Timescales

Please note that because of the comprehensive nature of our family safety assessments the hourly rate and the number of hours taken does not come within the Legal Aid Agency expert rates. Where the Court directs that the fees be split between the parties, the fees that extend beyond the rates set by the Legal Aid Agency, both hourly rates and the number of hours, need to be met by the Local Authority. Upon receiving assurance from the local authority that they will meet any shortfall, we will then commence the assessment and split our invoices accordingly upon completion.

Referrers should also be aware that we cannot provide additional assessments of sex offending, cognitive and/or psychological functioning within the Legal Aid Agency’s guideline hours allowance for a single assessment. Such assessments, therefore, need to be commissioned separately.

Family safety assessments - DVACT-PAI charges expert family safety assessments at an hourly rate of **£88 (+ VAT)**.

Sex offender assessments – these specialist assessments are charged at an hourly rate of **£93.60 (+ VAT)**.

A typical breakdown of hours for family safety and sex offender assessments is given below. Where an assessment of sex offending is included within a family safety assessment an additional 5-8 hours will be required.

Number of hours		Task
1 parent	2 parents	
8	10	Interviewing time with client/s
4	7	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)
15	20	Writing and filing the report
32	45	Total

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.

When not commissioned alongside a family safety assessment the maximum number of hours required is 25 hours for one parent and 35 hours for both parents.

Cognitive assessment - a typical breakdown of hours is shown below with an hourly rate of **£93.60(+VAT)**.

Number of hours		Task
1 parent	2 parents	
2	3	Interviewing time with client/s including administration of WAIS IV
1	1	Scoring and analysis
1	1	Setting up the assessment (setting up interviews, obtaining all necessary documentation and filing the report)
1	2	Reading
2	3	Report compilation
7	10	Total

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 £2816	6 weeks
	2 parents £3960	8 weeks
Sex offending assessment	1 parent £2995.20	8 weeks
	2 parents £4212	10 weeks
Psychological assessment alongside a family safety or sex offender assessment	1 parent £3564.80	8 weeks
	2 parents £4896	10 weeks
Psychological assessment (not provided as part of a family safety assessment)	1 parent £2340	6 weeks
	2 parents £3276	8 weeks
Cognitive assessment	1 parent £936	Please enquire
	2 parents £1872	

Please note that the costs given above do not include interpreter costs which must be funded additionally or provided by the local authority.

Attendance at Court hearings or Professionals meetings 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.

If parents cancel or fail to attend their appointments with less than 48 hours' notice, a missed appointment fee of 2 hours will be charged.

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 a cancellation fee of 2 hours will be charged plus travel time and expenses.

Treatment Programmes

DVACT-PAI provides bespoke 1:1 treatment programmes for both perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse. Our programmes are designed specifically to meet the needs of parents who are in care proceedings or who have children in Child Protection measures.

All programmes 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 our online platform 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.
- Further recommendations for risk management, including a view on child contact where appropriate.

Vulnerability Programme for Mothers

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.

This 10-session 1:1 programme is designed to meet this need and 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. The work is demanding and matched to the needs of the mother and the Child Protection plan.

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.

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.

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)**
Vulnerability programme for Mothers	£3130 (+VAT)	15 weeks
Suitability assessment for perpetrator	£440 (+VAT)	3 weeks
18 session partner abuse intervention programme	£3430 (+VAT)	22 weeks
Motivational programme	£2338 (+VAT)	14 weeks
Specialist perpetrator work	Available upon request	Dependent upon the type of work and number of sessions required

* A reduced fee is available where an initial DVACT-PAI family safety assessment has already been (or is being) completed.

**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.