

Criminal Justice Committee
Wednesday 17 December 2025
35th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Prevention of Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill

Note by the Clerk

Introduction

1. The [Prevention of Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Bill](#) was introduced on 7 May 2025.
2. The Bill seeks to reduce domestic abuse by making changes in four areas:
 - The Bill introduces notification requirements for domestic abuse offenders, requiring them to provide the police with details such as all names used by them, their date of birth, address and passport details, and enabling them to be assessed and managed under multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA).
 - The Bill requires consideration of whether someone convicted of a domestic abuse offence is a suitable candidate to take part in a rehabilitation programme or services with the aim of reducing reoffending.
 - The Bill places a requirement on Police Scotland, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and charities to ask for specific information from victims of domestic abuse. This information would be provided on a voluntary basis and the Scottish Government would need to publish an annual report on the data gathered.
 - Lastly, the Bill requires the Scottish Government and education authorities to promote, facilitate and support domestic abuse education in schools.
3. On [25 June 2025](#), the Committee held an initial evidence session with the Member in Charge of the Bill, Pam Gosal MSP. On [3 December 2025](#), the Committee held an evidence session with Committed to Ending Abuse, Scottish Women's Aid, Scottish Women's Convention and Shakti Women's Aid. On 10 December 2025, the Committee held an evidence session with the Law Society of Scotland, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Police Scotland and Social Work Scotland.

Today's evidence on the Bill

4. At today's meeting, the Committee will hear from—

Siobhan Brown MSP, Minister for Victims and Community Safety, Scottish Government

Jeff Gibbons, Head of the Violence Against Women and Girls Unit, Scottish Government

Graham Robertson, Public Protection Unit, Scottish Government

5. Following their oral evidence on 3 December 2025, Shakti Women's Aid have provided a written submission which is produced at Annex A.

Further reading

6. See Paper 3 for a [SPICe briefing on the Bill](#).
7. [Responses to the Committee's Call for Views on the Bill](#) can be found online.
8. Both the [SPICe analysis of submissions to the Call for Views by individuals](#) and the [SPICe analysis of submissions to the Call for Views by organisations](#) can be read online.

Clerks to the Committee
December 2025

Annexe A

Written submission from Shakti Women's Aid

Name

Tumay Forster

Organisation details

1. Name of organisation

Shakti Women's Aid

2. Information about your organisation

Please add information about your organisation in the box below

Shakti Women's Aid is a voluntary organisation, based in Edinburgh, offering support and information to all black minority ethnic women and their children experiencing and/or fleeing domestic abuse from their partners, husbands, ex-partners and/or other family members. Our role is to support women and children experiencing or fleeing domestic abuse, providing practical and emotional support, enabling women to access statutory services, helping them to resettle and empowering them to be independent. We offer extended outreach services and provide support in the Lothians, Fife, Falkirk and Dundee.

Shakti also takes on an active role to raise the general public and organisational awareness within the public and third sector towards BME specific domestic abuse and to promote a violence free and inclusive society through workshops, presentations, training sessions and national campaigns.

We employ staff from a very diverse ethnic background and help promote inclusion and integration by incorporating different cultures in our workspaces.

Shakti also provides placement opportunities to college and university students so they can gain knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse and the cultural, religious, practical and legislative barriers faced by BME women, their children, and young people in leaving an abusive situation and accessing appropriate specialist support. During the time of their placement, students receive one to one support/mentoring from Shakti's experienced key case workers and help them to become a confident and inclusive professionals.

We are involved in several collaborations focused on gender-based violence within our service areas in Scotland, as well as at the UK-wide level. Our active participation includes the Edinburgh Domestic Abuse Collaborative Partnership and local End Violence Against Women (EVAWG) groups in the Lothians, Fife, Falkirk, and Dundee. Additionally, we engage in any national initiatives that address GBV issues.

1. Notification requirements and monitoring of Domestic Abuse Offenders

1.1. What are your views on this proposal?

We welcome the proposal as it could create new opportunities to deter gender-based violence within BME communities. We particularly appreciate aspects of the proposal such as improved data collection and mandatory reporting, as these measures demonstrate a commitment to recognising and addressing domestic abuse statistics in under-represented communities. Furthermore, implementing preventative programmes in schools will offer valuable learning opportunities for young BME individuals, helping them to understand what constitutes healthy relationships.

1.2. Is the definition of a domestic abuse offender in Part 1 of the Bill the right one?

Please use this textbox to provide your answer

We understand this definition is in line with the existing Scottish Government definitions although this may still fall short in addressing and recognising BME specific domestic abuse such as Honour-Based abuse with involvement of multiple perpetrators.

1.3. Do you think these notification and monitoring requirements would help improve safety for victim-survivors?

We believe that implementing this proposal could deter incidents within BME communities, thereby enhancing safety for victim-survivors. However, we are not entirely clear on how the notification and monitoring requirements would be integrated into the existing risk assessment and monitoring structures like MAPPA and MARAC.

Shakti can confirm that MARAC responses vary significantly across different regions in Scotland. Given our unique position of providing services in multiple areas, we have encountered BME-specific domestic abuse cases where risk is not adequately managed at the MARAC level. Often, the responsibility for risk assessment falls on our organisation as a specialist service. Therefore, we advocate for a better, statute-backed approach to ensure holistic, risk-aware support. This proposal could greatly aid in providing and managing such support.

We also require clarification on which organisations would have access to the proposed monitoring systems. If access is restricted to Police Scotland, clearer definitions are necessary to explain how this would integrate with the existing DSDAS scheme and how the two would differ or complement each other. It would be extremely beneficial for support organisations to have access to the proposed register. Many BME women fear approaching safeguarding bodies such as Police Scotland and are often more willing to engage with specialised organisations like ours. Access to the register at the support level could be invaluable for early prevention and risk assessment.

Moreover, while a notification register would be helpful to have for disclosures, it should not replace the statutory protections available to victim-survivors.

1.4. Are there any risks or unintended consequences that you think need to be considered?

Women who may become victims of situational abuse as a form of self-defense need to be protected. While we understand that the register aims to include only serious offenses prosecuted under solemn procedure, there must also be protective measures in place to prevent the inclusion of women who are involved in counter-abuse allegations made by their abusers. BME women often find the legislative process difficult to navigate. Coupled with language barriers and a lack of legal aid in many situations, they may be left completely dependent on their perpetrators and legal professionals. It is essential to create a safety mechanism to ensure these women receive full support within legal contexts.

1.5. Do you think there is other information that domestic abuse offenders should be required to notify the police of that isn't included in the Bill?

Unspent/spent convictions in other countries should be reported.

1.6. Do you agree with the notification periods included in the Bill or should these be different?

The proposed notification periods seem reasonable and align with the current requirements outlined in the Sexual Offences Act. However, there may be a necessity for immediate court-mandated notification for the most serious offenses and the highest-risk offenders.

1.7. Do you agree with the penalties for failing to comply with the notification requirements?

Yes

2. Risk Notifications

2.1. Do you think the provisions in the Bill will mean that more disclosures will be made under this scheme?

Yes, this is likely to result in more disclosures. However, the extent of these disclosures will depend on the safety and protection measures implemented by the safeguarding systems for the survivors who have taken the decision to disclose.

2.2. Could the Bill do more in terms of enabling the disclosure of someone's history of domestic abuse?

More efforts could be made to connect the register to a perpetrator's history of domestic abuse in other countries, as well as to indicate any spent or unspent convictions they may have.

Additionally, since most domestic abuse offenses are handled through summary proceedings, the register could also be expanded to include individuals who repeatedly commit minor domestic abuse offenses.

3. Rehabilitation and Behaviour Change Programmes

3.1. What are your views on this proposal?

Suitability assessments for rehabilitation programmes can be valuable in reducing reoffending rates. However, we need clearer understanding of how these assessments will work within existing structures and programmes, such as the Caledonian Programme. Additionally, the assessments should include all perpetrators who have been charged under both summary and solemn procedures.

3.2. Can these types of programmes be effective in reducing harm?

Yes, however, the existing programmes need improvement to better address BME-specific domestic abuse. Current programmes do not fully incorporate the culturally and traditionally driven abusive behaviours exhibited by BME perpetrators.

3.3. What kinds of support or follow-up are needed to make them meaningful?

It is essential to monitor perpetrators during and after the programme to ensure its effectiveness. Reports on perpetrator progress can be included in the proposed notification register, which will help track re-offending rates and rehabilitation outcomes.

3.4. Are there currently enough programmes and services in place that if someone is assessed as suitable that they could be provided?

No, what is being offered is inconsistent and lack statute-backed support. A national rollout of programme provision needs to be provided.

4. Data collection and reporting

4.1. Do you support this proposal?

Shakti fully supports this proposal. We welcome the commitment of the Scottish Government to improve data collection and implement mandatory reporting, which will affirm their dedication to diversity and inclusion. This initiative will ensure a statutory framework for the recognition and reporting of domestic abuse statistics in under-represented communities.

As a specialised organisation, we already collect data from our clients and share this information with our funders, including the Scottish Government, through our regular reporting. While we will continue to provide our data, it is important to note that, as a third sector charity organisation, what we offer will not fully capture the actual statistics. Under this proposal, public bodies such as Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service would enhance their data collection efforts and report meaningful statistics. This would be invaluable in acknowledging the true figures and enabling both the public and third sector to allocate funding and provide services in a more targeted manner.

We would also welcome the collection of disaggregated data to highlight specific issues within BME communities, such as honour-based abuse, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation, among others. This approach would allow support services in both the public and third sectors to direct their resources with a greater awareness of intersectional discrimination.

4.2. Is the data the Bill requires to be collected the right information that is needed?

Yes, data collected should include all types of abuse in under-represented communities, specifically highlighting BME-related abuses such as honour-based abuse, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation, among others.

4.3. How could this help improve support for victim-survivors?

Improved data collection will help the Scottish Government better understand the extent of domestic issues that need to be addressed. This approach will facilitate more targeted funding and provide better support to communities, groups, and regions. Ultimately, it will lead to greater efficiency in addressing gender-based violence in Scotland, promoting full diversity and inclusion and improving support for victim-survivors.

5. Domestic Abuse Education in Schools

5.1. What are your views on this proposal?

Shakti fully supports this proposal. For many BME children and young people, schools represent a unique and only opportunity to access information about healthy relationships. We seek further clarification on how this proposal will be integrated into existing structures, such as the Equally Safe at Schools Programme. However, since the proposal aims to establish a statute-backed programme, it could only help ensure consistency across all areas in Scotland, which is currently lacking. We welcome the potential opportunities this proposal may provide.

Shakti conducts workshops in secondary schools as part of our preventative work and would continue to engage in any such initiative. We believe that this type of education should be mandatory and included as part of the enrichment classes in the curriculum throughout Scotland.

5.2. At what age should this education begin?

Age-appropriate content and education should begin in primary schools and progress to secondary level.

6. Support for Victim-Survivors and their Families

6.1. Do you think this Bill goes far enough in addressing the needs of people affected by domestic abuse?

Not entirely; however, it appears to add a statute-backed commitment to managing the risk posed by perpetrators, improving restorative justice, collecting data for under-represented communities, and enhancing early prevention efforts in schools. The Bill does not include any direct provisions for victim survivors, although we acknowledge that all the proposals would have an indirect impact on them.

6.2. What else could be included to strengthen support for victim-survivors, children and families?

Sustainable and long-term funding is urgently needed. Specialist organisations like Shakti are dedicated to advocating for under-represented communities and contributing to any framework that can enhance support services. However, the third sector is facing financial challenges that hinder its ability to maintain services due to funding constraints.

The varying levels of commitment from local authorities to eliminate gender-based violence result in inconsistent support for victims. Many women seeking help from Shakti find themselves needing to relocate to different areas because adequate local service provision is lacking. We welcome any statute-backed proposals from the Scottish Government aimed at establishing a consistent approach to support across all communities. Additionally, public bodies should make a stronger commitment to understanding the demographics and cultural nuances of the communities they serve.

7. Concerns About Privacy, Policing or Human Rights

7.1. Do you have any concerns about the human rights or equality implications of the Bill?

No, public bodies should commit more to understanding the demographics and cultural nuances of the communities they serve. The proposals in the Bill, such as data collection, seem to be positive steps toward this.

7.2. Are there groups of people who might be affected in ways that should be carefully considered (e.g. racialised communities, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people)?

The proposals in the Bill are likely to create opportunities for positive outcomes for marginalised and under-represented groups. However, the proposed systems must be carefully integrated with existing structures, and any data collected or services provided to individuals should not exacerbate the discrimination and disadvantages these individuals may already be facing.

8. Practical Considerations and Resources

8.1. Do you have any views on the practical challenges or resource implications of this Bill?

We will need further clarification on resourcing implications on the public and third sector and also how the proposed systems will be incorporated into the existing systems and structures such as MAPPA, Caledonian Programme, DSDAS scheme and the ESAS Programme.

8.2. Are there specific areas (e.g. rural policing, schools, the third sector) where support would be especially needed?

Statute-backed support programmes would provide better consistency across all areas. However, rural areas are likely to face greater challenges due to resource limitations. Our data indicates that BME women living in rural areas are at a significant disadvantage and are more likely to remain with their abusers due to a lack of locally available support.

It is important to fully understand the resourcing implications for the third sector, as the proposed changes will undoubtedly increase the workload for this sector. Given the existing funding constraints, securing adequate resources could be a significant challenge.

9. Anything Else

9.1. Do you have any other comments or concerns about the proposals in this Bill that haven't already been covered?

Please use this textbox to provide your answer

None