

# Reducing™ the Risk

of Domestic Abuse

# Court IDVA Service Annual Report 2024 - 2025

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# About the Court IDVA Service

The Court Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service, commissioned by the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner, with funding from Henry Smith charity, employs IDVAs who work in courts in Oxford and offer therapeutic recovery work with clients going through courts in Oxford.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, the service received 266 referrals – a significant proportion from Police and Witness Care Officers – and provided tailored advocacy through criminal, family, and protection order cases. Client feedback continues to evidence high levels of satisfaction and impact, with 94% reporting increased confidence and understanding of the court process, and all respondents rating the service 5 out of 5 for helpfulness.

The data, feedback and outcomes outlined in this report highlight the vital role of Court IDVAs in increasing safety, improving victim experience, and strengthening the effectiveness of the justice system for those affected by domestic abuse.

## Purpose of the Service

IDVA services provide independent domestic abuse advocacy to victims of Domestic Abuse. They proactively support victims to improve their safety and facilitate recovery from Domestic Abuse. These services are important because the impact of Domestic Abuse is complex, and as well as the immediate risk of harm, exiting an abusive relationship has an impact on housing, finances, employment, child access arrangements, family relationships, and mental and emotional well-being. And for many victims their ability to advocate for themselves is severely undermined by fear, trauma, and the long-term erosion of their confidence by the perpetrator.

The Court IDVA service specifically supports and advocates for victims through:

- Anyone attending a court due to domestic violence.
- Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPO).
- Applying for Civil Protection Orders (usually non-molestation orders or occupation orders) - Through criminal proceedings.
- Family Court (first hearings) and Child Arrangement Orders.

## The aim of the service is to have impact across three areas:

### Empowerment

- Make support accessible to victims by improving understanding of options, and providing free support through the legal process.
- Effectively support and empower victims through what can be a retraumatizing process.

### Safety

- Increase the likelihood of Protection Orders and Child Arrangement Orders being effective in keeping victims safe (including children) by empowering victims to make decisions, make their case, and feel safer in attending court.
- Increase the likelihood of prosecution for Criminal Offences by empowering victims in representing themselves and feeling safer in attending court.

### Recovery

- Increase the confidence of victims to take the next steps to recovery from domestic abuse by improving their experience of the court System.

This work has an impact on safety and risk.

| Immediate Safety   | Leaving Relationships Safely | Long-Term Recovery                   |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Domestic Violence Protection Orders  | Child Arrangement Orders     | Support through criminal proceedings |
| Non-Molestation Orders   | Occupational Orders          | Therapeutic Recovery Support         |
| Delivered by trained IDVAs who can refer to MARAC, safety plan and support | Prohibited Steps Orders      | Sign Posting and Referral on         |

# Referrals to Court IDVA Service

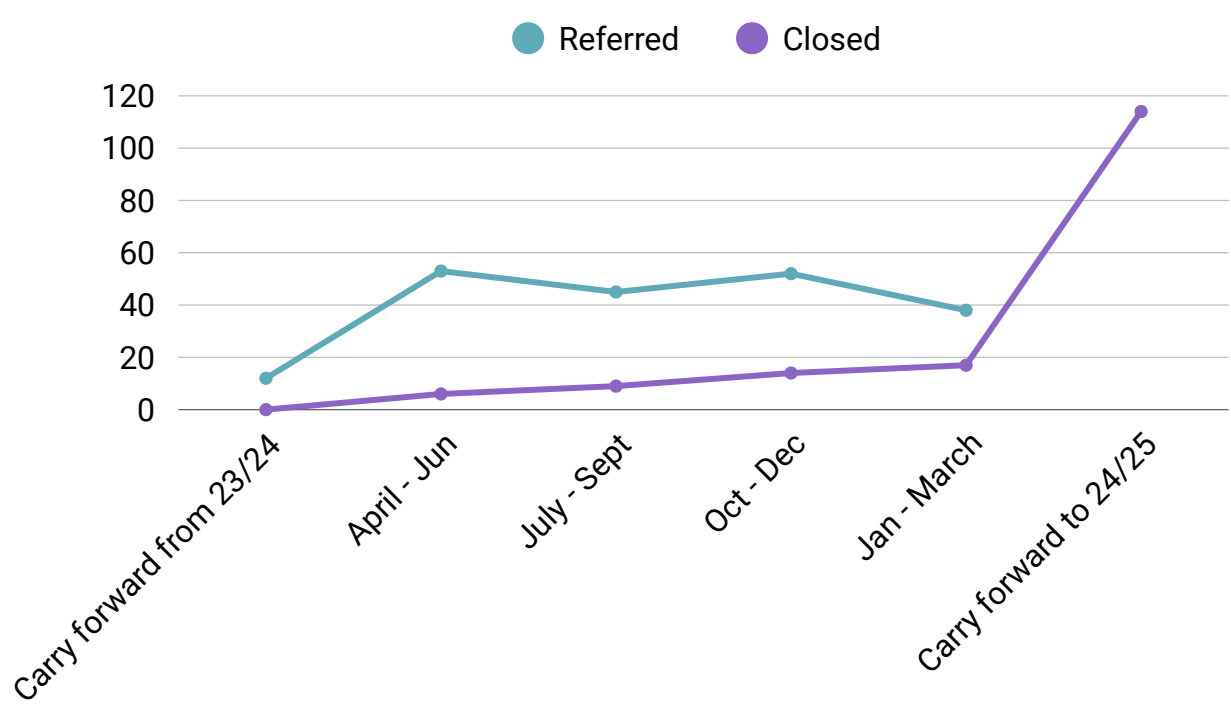
This year **266** referrals were made to the service, with **64** of these being for **DVPOs**.

The data below relates to court referrals and excludes DVPOs.

A total of **202 referrals** were made in the year. Only three referrals were not appropriate, with one being for someone out of area.

**114** cases were still open at the end of the year.

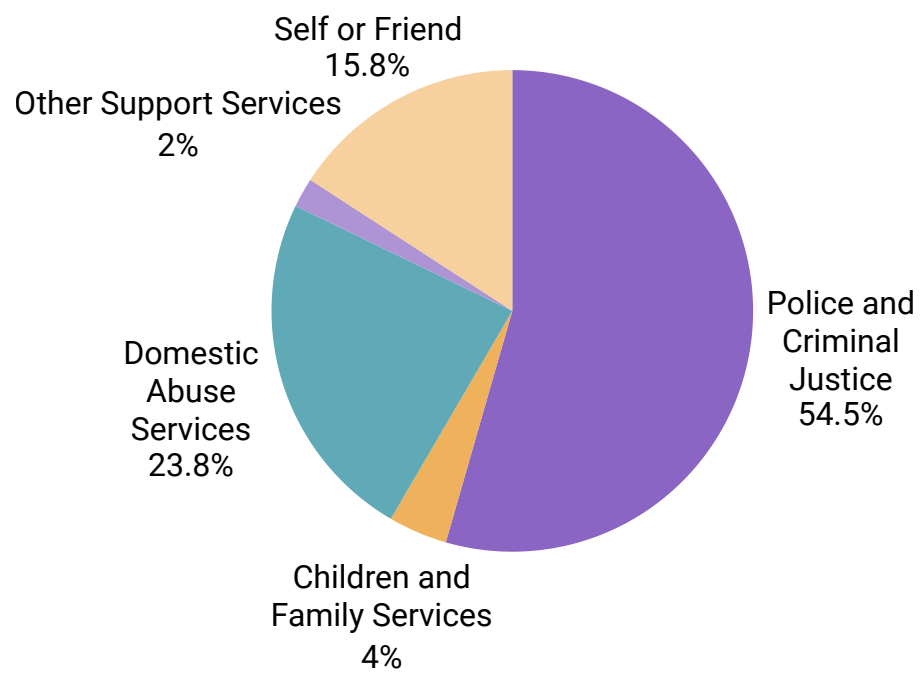
## Referred and Closed



## Source of referrals (non-DVPO)

- This year 16% of referrals were made by the client (self), or a friend (2).
- 84% were made by professionals.
- Of referrals made by professionals, almost two-thirds came from Police – 39% from Witness Protection Officers, 25% by other members of the Police Service. 2 Witness Protection Officers made 58 referrals between them, which is 35% of professional referrals.
- 28% of referrals were made by Domestic Abuse Services, including 13% by the High Risk IDVA service which is part of the MARAC/MATAC system hosted by the Police.

## Referrals



| Domestic Abuse Services         | No. of Referrals | % of professional referrals |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| A2 Dominion*                    | 12               | 7%                          |
| High Risk IDVA                  | 21               | 13%                         |
| Court IDVA (picked up in court) | 11               | 7%                          |
| Housing                         | 3                | 2%                          |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>47</b>        | <b>28%</b>                  |

\*Provider of social and affordable housing.

| Children's Services      | No. of Referrals | % of professional referrals |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Children's Social Worker | 5                | 3%                          |
| Home School Link Worker  | 1                | 0.6%                        |
| Family Court Advisor     | 1                | 0.6%                        |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>7</b>         | <b>4.2%</b>                 |

| Police and Criminal Justice     | No. of Referrals | % of professional referrals |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Police                          | 41               | 25%                         |
| Witness Care Officer            | 65               | 39%                         |
| MATAC Lead                      | 1                | 0.6                         |
| Military Police                 | 1                | 0.6                         |
| Citizens Advice Witness Service | 1                | 0.6                         |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>109</b>       | <b>65%</b>                  |

| Other Support Services        | No. of Referrals | % of professional referrals |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mental Health Worker (Crisis) | 2                | 1%                          |
| Care Services                 | 1                | 0.6%                        |
| Vale Community Impact         | 1                | 0.6%                        |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>4</b>         | <b>2.4%</b>                 |

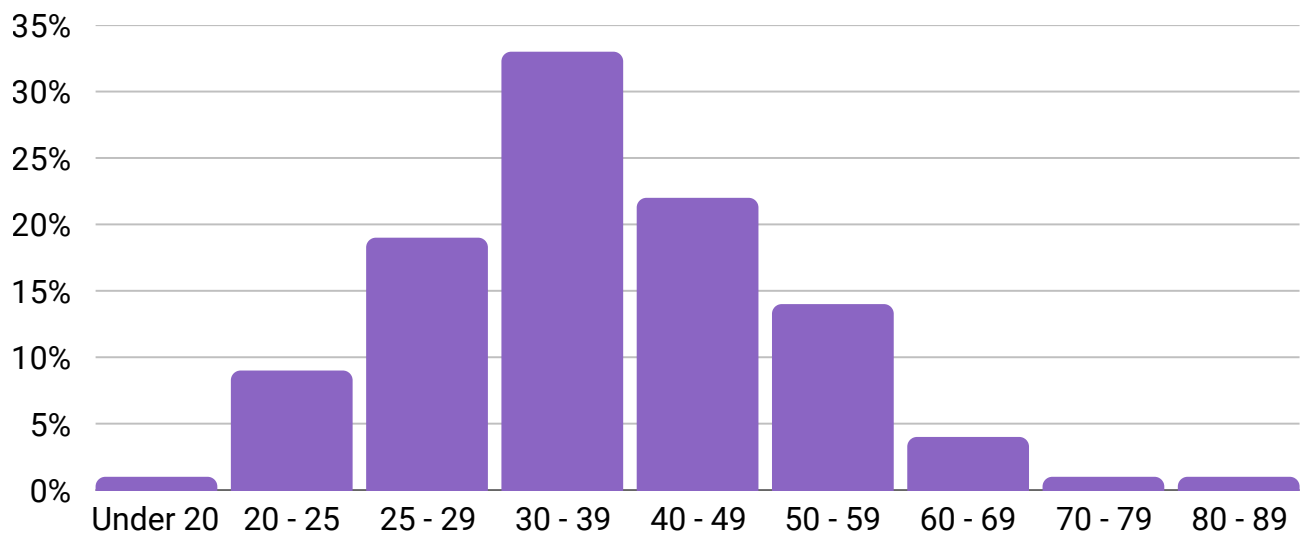
# About Clients

The following data relates to both DVPO and non-DVPO clients. Some of the data is collected differently, and is not directly comparable. Where this is the case it is highlighted which service the data relates to.

## Age of referrals

The average age of referrals was 38 across both DVPO and non-DVPO clients.

Age of Referrals

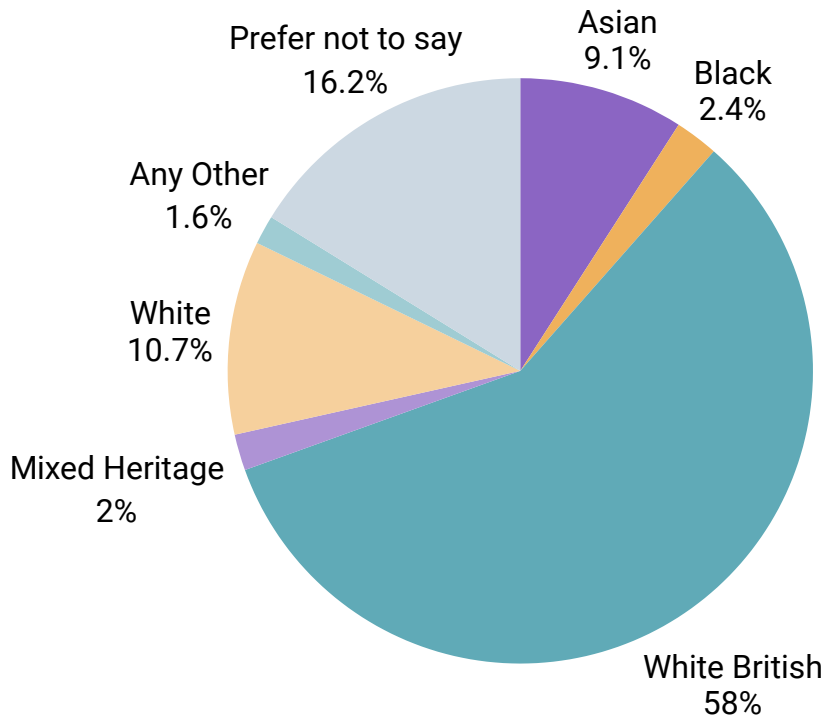


The highest proportion of referrals were in their 30s (33%) followed by 20s (28%) and 40s (22%). There was one client under 20, and 23 were under 25 (9% of referrals).

This age distribution is broadly in line with the High Risk IDVA service.

## Ethnicity of referrals

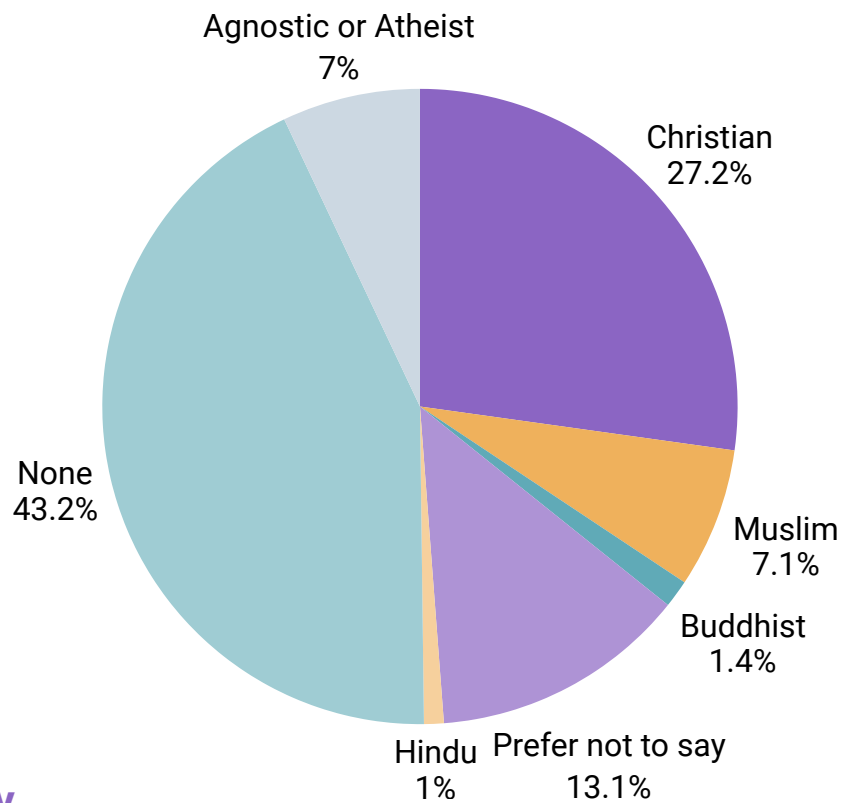
The majority of referrals (58%) were White British. This is similar to the High Risk IDVA service for the last year (55%). However, 16.2% of referrals (41 people) declined to disclose their ethnicity. This figure is high. 33 of those not disclosing ethnicity were referred by Witness Care Officers (Police) and 3 by other Police.



## Religion

Data on religion was collected for 35% of referrals to the Court IDVA service. This data is not collected for DVPOs.

Of those where religion was collected, 43% stated that had no religion and 7% said they were agnostic or atheist. 27% were Christian – the largest proportion of an identified religion. 7% were Muslim.



## Sex, gender and sexuality

The majority of clients were women (97%). 9 men were referred, and one non-binary person. Recording and disclosure rates for gender identity matched that at birth, and sexuality were lower than for gender.

|                            | Gender (97% recorded/disclosed) | Cisgender (64% recorded/disclosed) | Sexuality (69% recorded/disclosed) |               |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
|                            |                                 |                                    | Heterosexual                       | Bisexual      |
| Woman including transwoman | 95% (242 people)                | 96% (155 people)                   | 92% (161 people)                   | 4% (7 people) |
| Man including trans man    | 5% (12 people)                  | 4% (7 people)                      | 4% (7 people)                      | 0             |
| Non-binary                 | 0.4% (1 person)                 | n/a                                | 0.6% (1 person)                    | 0             |

## Health Conditions, Disability and Neurodivergence

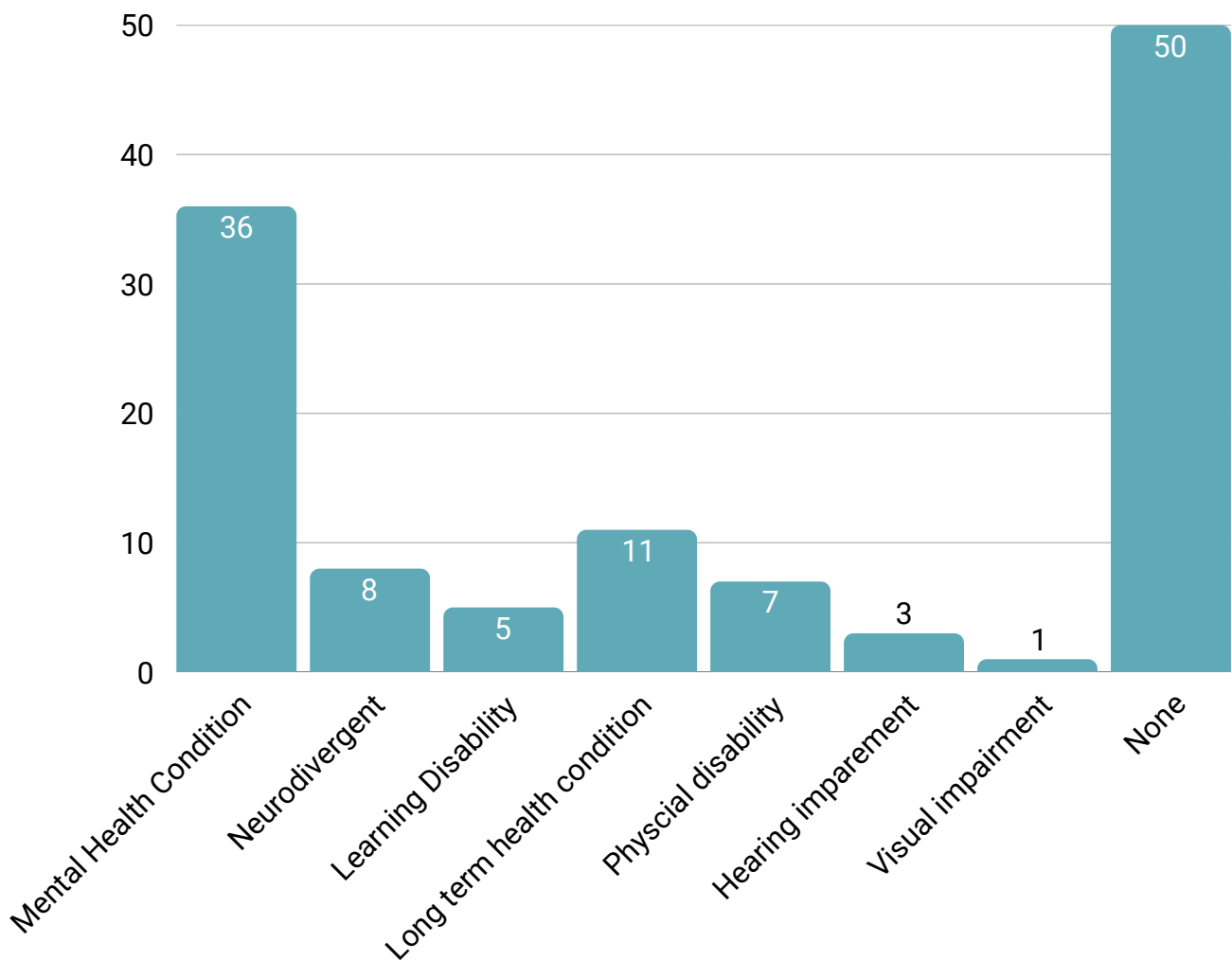
Data on health and disability is recorded differently for the Court IDVA service and DVPO clients.

### Non-DVPO clients

Data on health, disability and neurodivergence was recorded for 109 people (55% referrals).

- 50% reported no condition.
- Just over a third (36%) had a mental health condition.
- 18% of referrals had more than one condition.

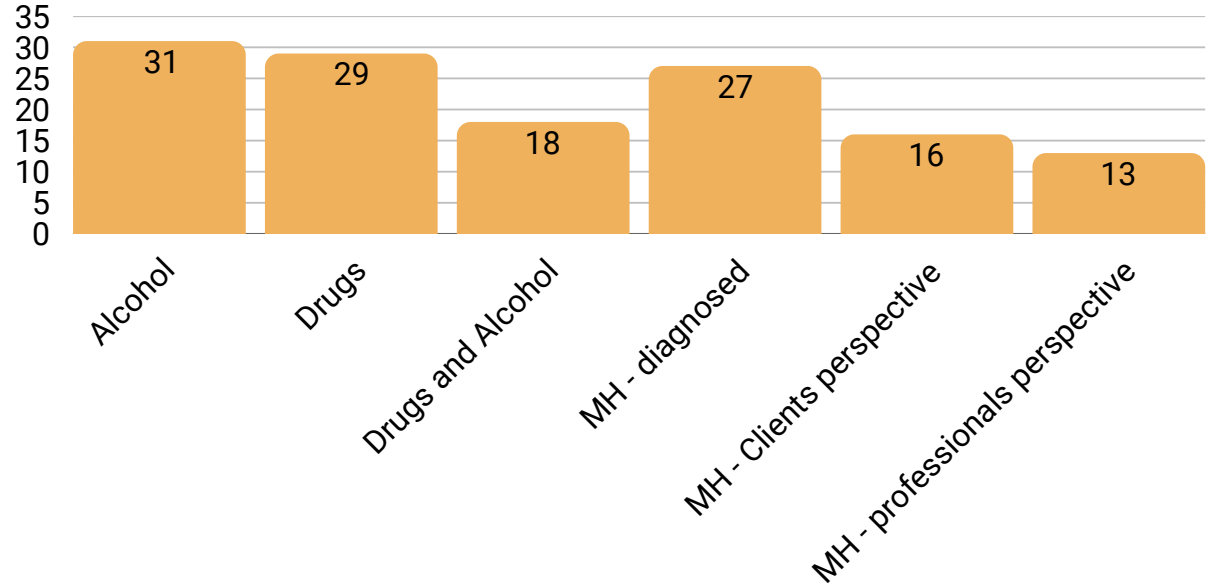
% disability, neurodivergence, physical or mental health condition



## DVPO clients – mental health, drug and alcohol misuse

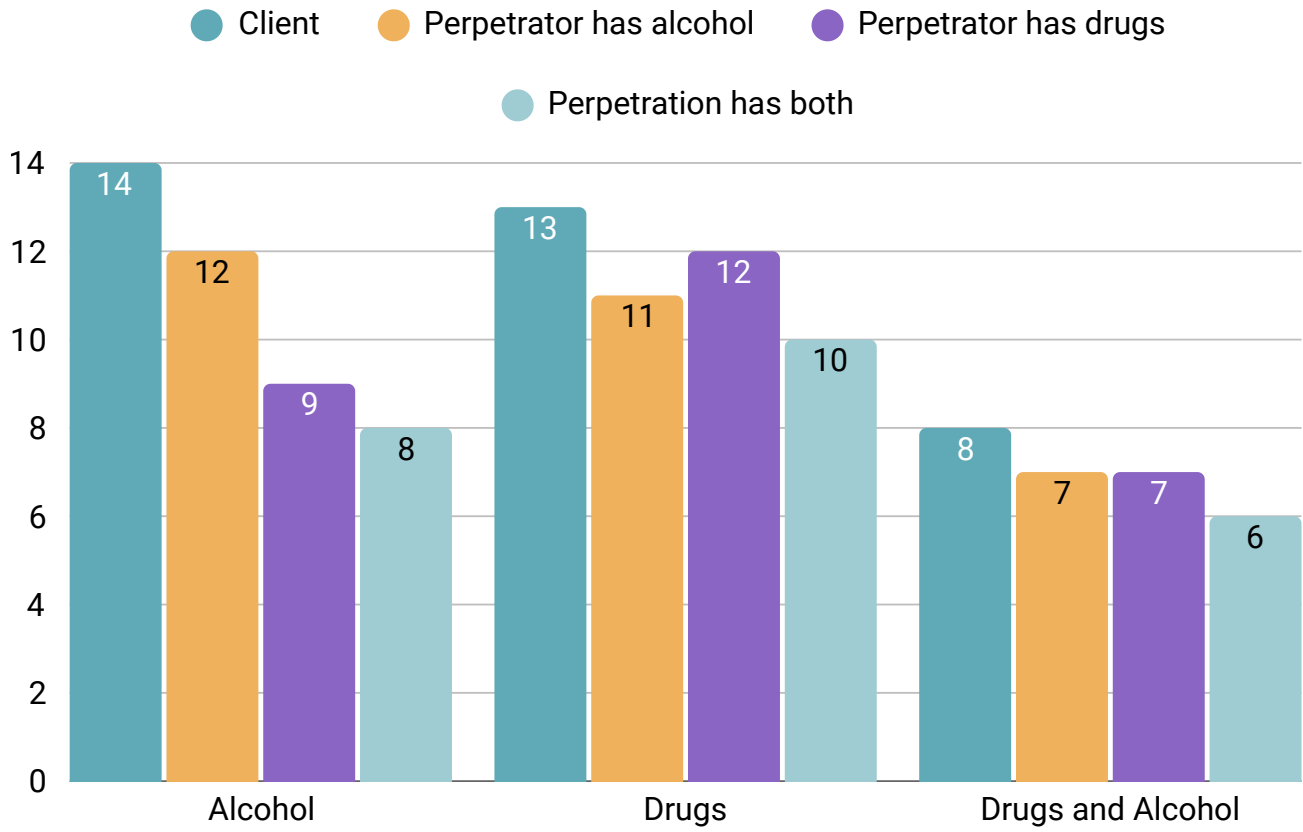
Data on mental health and drug and alcohol use is recorded for DVPO clients.

### Complex needs - DVPO clients



There is a high correlation between clients misusing drugs and alcohol and the perpetrator misusing.

### Drug and alcohol misuse



## Relationship status

Data on relationship status is recorded differently for DVPO clients. The following analysis relates to non DVPO referrals only.

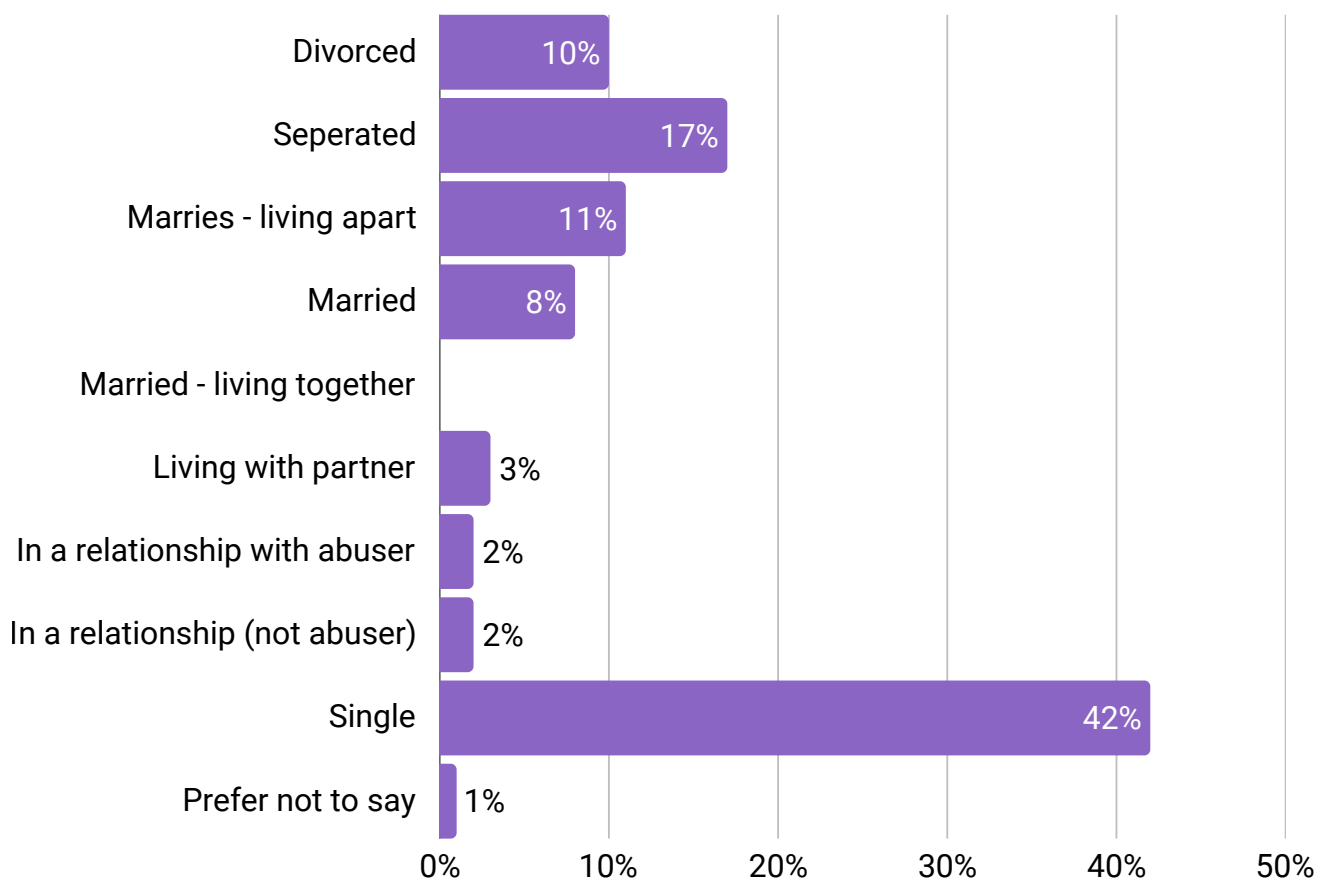
Data on relationship status was recorded for 145 referrals (73%).

70% of referrals were single, separated or living apart from their abuser.

2% stated they were in a relationship with their abuser.

It is not clear from the data whether the spouse/partner was the alleged perpetrator for those married or living with a partner.

### Relationship status where known



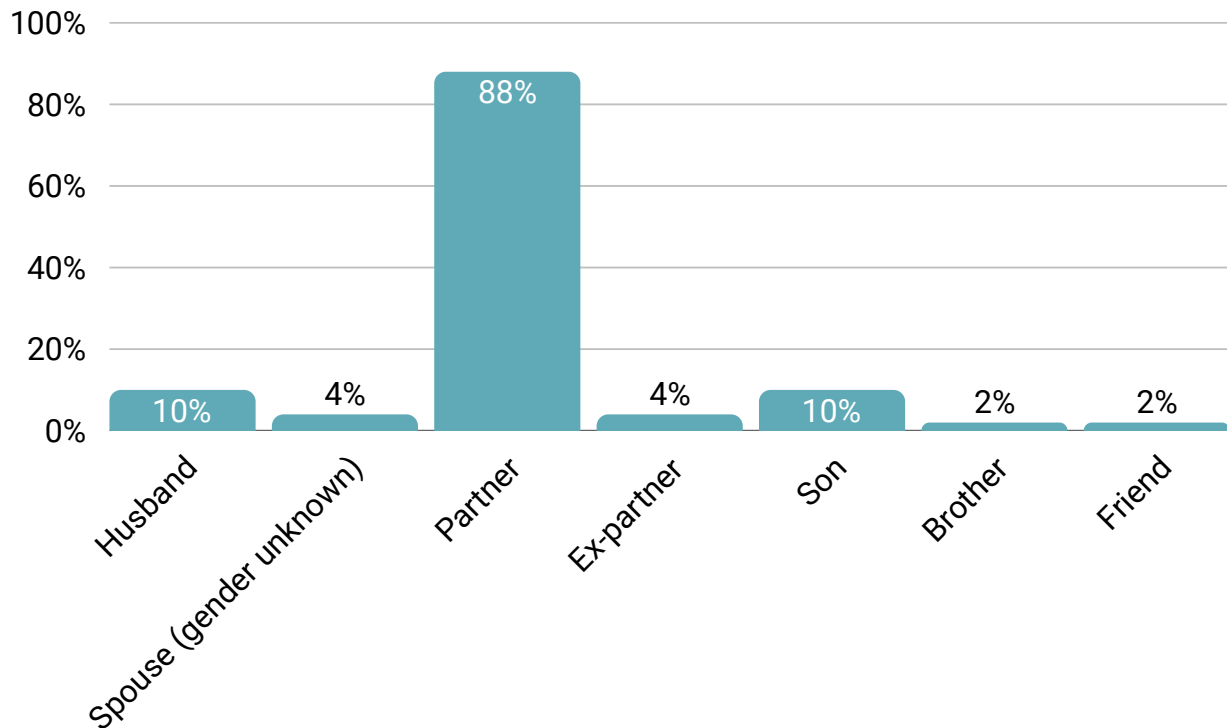
## DVPO perpetrator relationships

Data on relationship between the perpetrator and victim was recorded for 87% of referrals. The significant majority (88%) the perpetrator was a partner.

In 10% of cases (5) the perpetrator was a son. One of these, the victim, was a man.

For male victims (3 recorded) 1 perpetrator was the son, and 2 were partners (female).

## Perpetrator relationship to victim



### Children and pregnancy

This data relates to both DVPO and non-DVPO clients.

13 people referred to the service were pregnant, with one reporting that they were possibly pregnant. This is 6% of referrals.

Of those who were pregnant, 9 already had children.

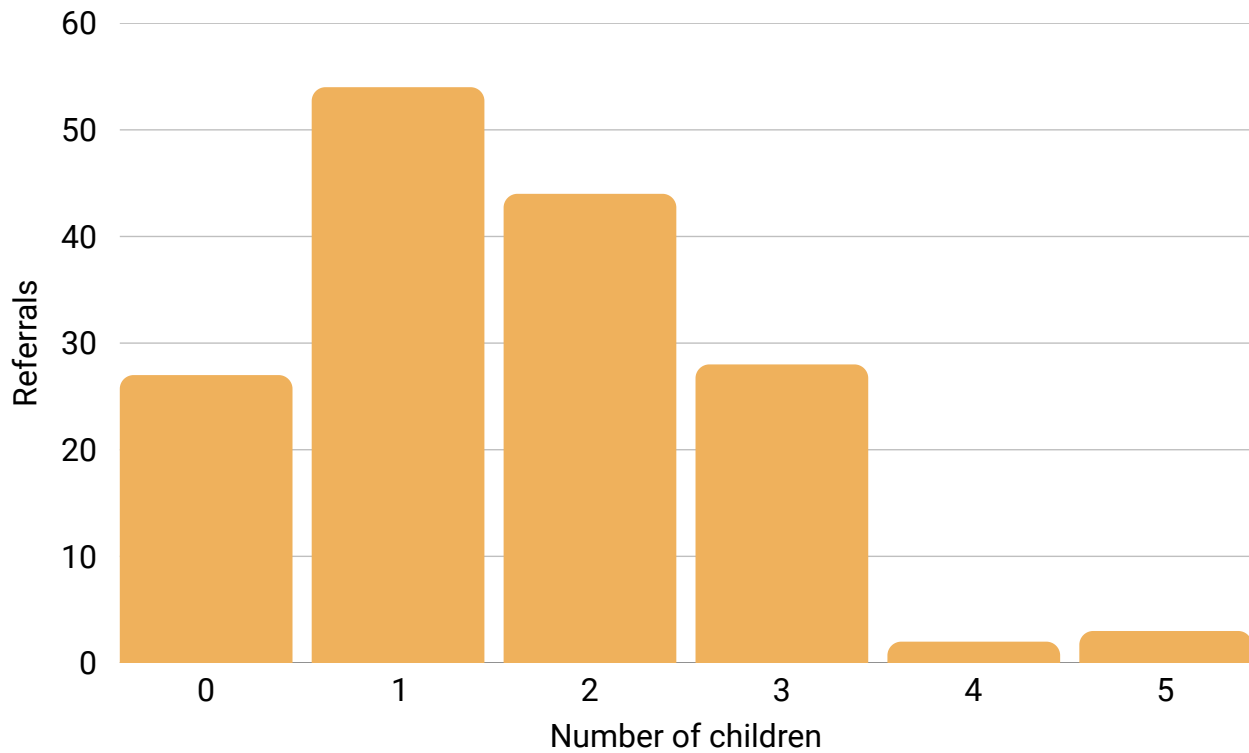
Data on children was recorded for 194 referrals (88%).

148 referrals (67%) had children, with 275 children in total.

For non-DVPO referrals (accounting for 131 parents), 18 were still married, or living with their partner, however it is not clear if the spouse/partner is the alleged perpetrator. This accounts for 42 children.

The ages of children were only recorded in 5 cases so this data is not included as it is not a sufficient sample size.

## Number of children where recorded



Note: The chart above does not include DVPO clients.

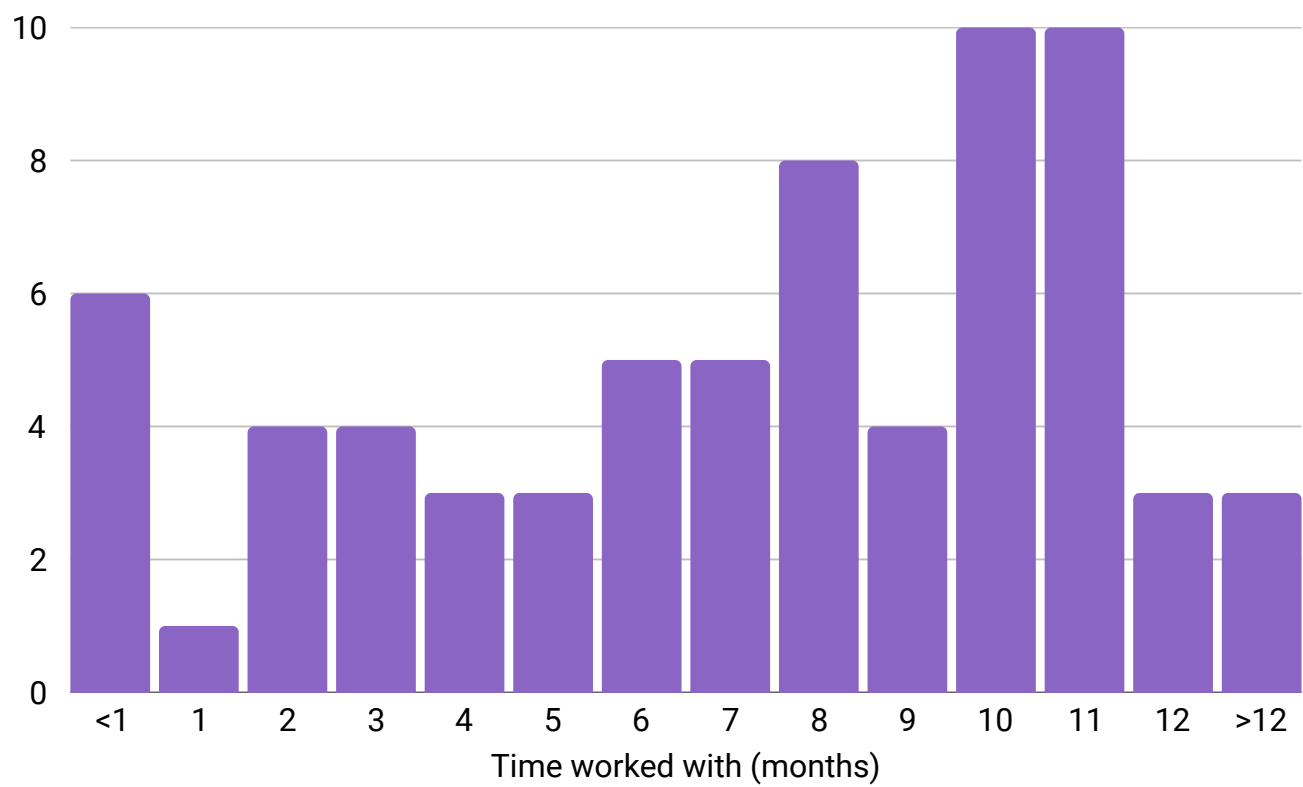
**“Nikki made my experience in court so much easier and made me feel at ease. I was really worried about attending court but going with Nikki and having her there for support made it so much more easier if I didn't have Nikki I definitely wouldn't have been able to do it. She also kept me informed about the whole process every step of the way and how and what options I had as it was my first time and I had a lot of questions.”**

# Support provided

## Length of engagement (non-DVPO)

The average length of support from the Court IDVA service (non-DVPO) was 31 weeks. The longest period was 70 weeks (Family Court case), and the shortest 1 day (Criminal Case).

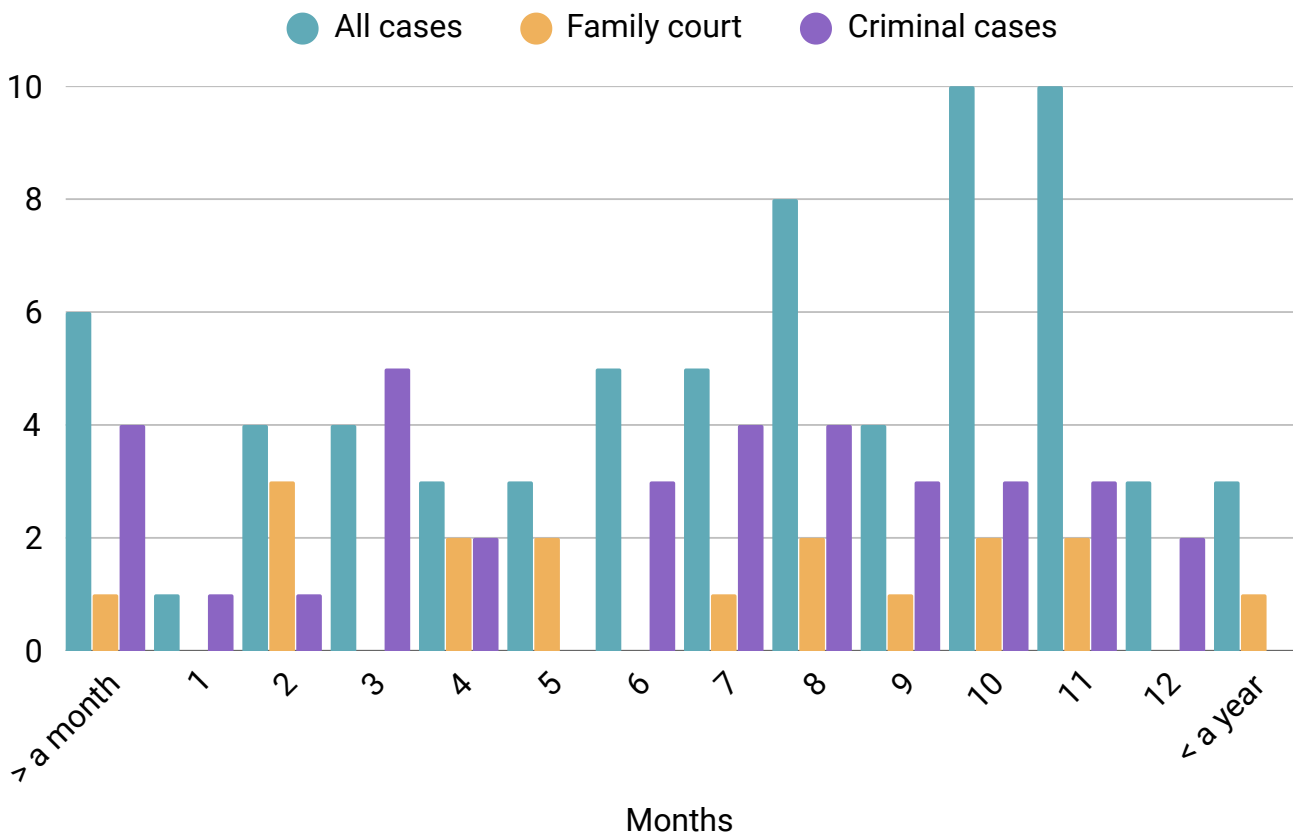
Time worked with client



There was not a significant variance in the length of cases for Family Court and Criminal Cases (Magistrates or Crown Court)

|                        | All       | Family Court | Criminal Cases     |
|------------------------|-----------|--------------|--------------------|
| Time engaged - average | 7 months  | 7 months     | 6 months           |
| Most                   | 17 months | 17 months    | 12 months          |
| Least                  | 1 day     | 11 days      | 1 day (sentencing) |

## Lengths of engagement by case type



## Type of case and support offered

The first half of this section relates to non-DVPO clients.

### Criminal Cases

93 cases were for Criminal Cases.

In 4 cases the victim dropped charges, declined to give evidence, or denied domestic abuse had occurred.

In others, the Court IDVA supported from by pre-trial through to sentencing, including support to attend court, advising and supporting applications for Non Molestation Order (7 cases).

### Family Court

15 cases were identified as Family Hearings and Child Arrangement Hearings.

Non molestation orders were applied for for 5 clients going through Family Court.

1 was not pursued and one was not granted due to not being warranted.

1 client was supported to access Legal Aid.

## Civil Protection Orders

Support is offered to prepare statements, and make applications.

38 clients were supported with applying for Protection Orders, predominantly Non-Molestation Orders (32). In three cases support was to extend an existing NMO.

- 3 clients were supported with Occupation Orders.
- 6 clients had Restraining Orders against the alleged perpetrator.
- 1 client had a DVPO in place.

## Legal Aid

4 clients were identified as potentially eligible for Legal Aid. 2 were provided with forms, one applied and accepted, and one not accepted.

## Domestic Violence Protection Orders

There were 64 referrals of clients where Police had applied for a Domestic Violence Protection Order. As the action is taken by the Police, the victim does not need to support the action. However, where a victim does support the action, and engages in the service, the application is more likely to be granted.

|   | All referrals | Client fully engaged |
|---|---------------|----------------------|
| Application supported by victim               | 55%           | 68%                  |
| Application granted                           | 72%           | 90%                  |
| Application granted where supported by victim | 70%           | 100%                 |

## Other Protection Orders applied for (DVPO clients)

Clients who are referred to the service because of a DVPO are also supported to apply for other Protection Orders, most frequently non-molestation orders.

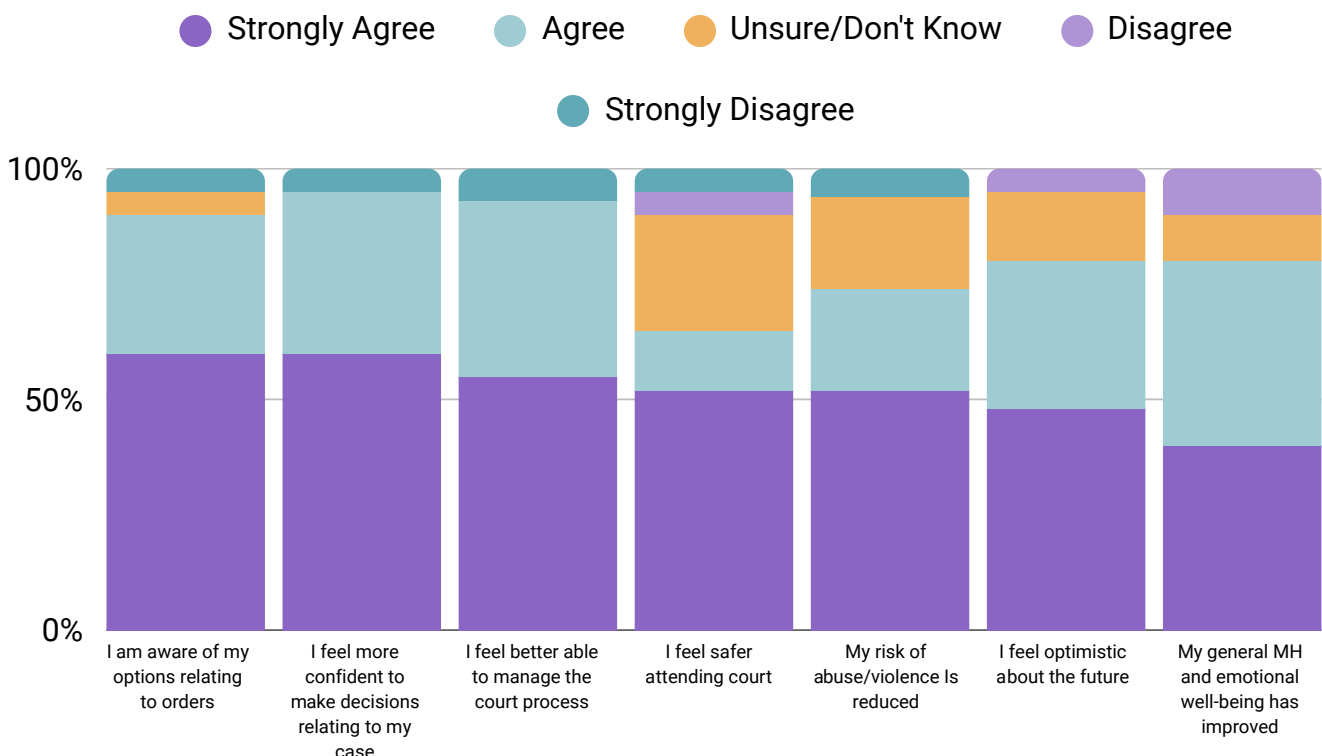
- 14% referrals (9) applied for an NMO, and 8 were granted. 3 of these had children.
- In two cases where an NMO was applied for, the perpetrator was a son.
- Additionally, one client was supported to apply for a Child Arrangement Order.

# Effectiveness of the service

Feedback is sought from clients on their experience of the service across outcome domains:

| Outcome domain                        | Related statements   |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Empowerment through the court process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am aware of my options relating to orders</li> <li>I feel more confident to make decisions relating to my case</li> <li>I feel better able to manage the court process</li> </ul> |
| Safety                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I feel safer attending court</li> <li>My risk of abuse / violence is reduced</li> </ul>   |
| Recovery                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I feel optimistic about my future</li> <li>My general mental health and emotional wellbeing has improved</li> </ul>   |

## Feedback on Court IDVA Service

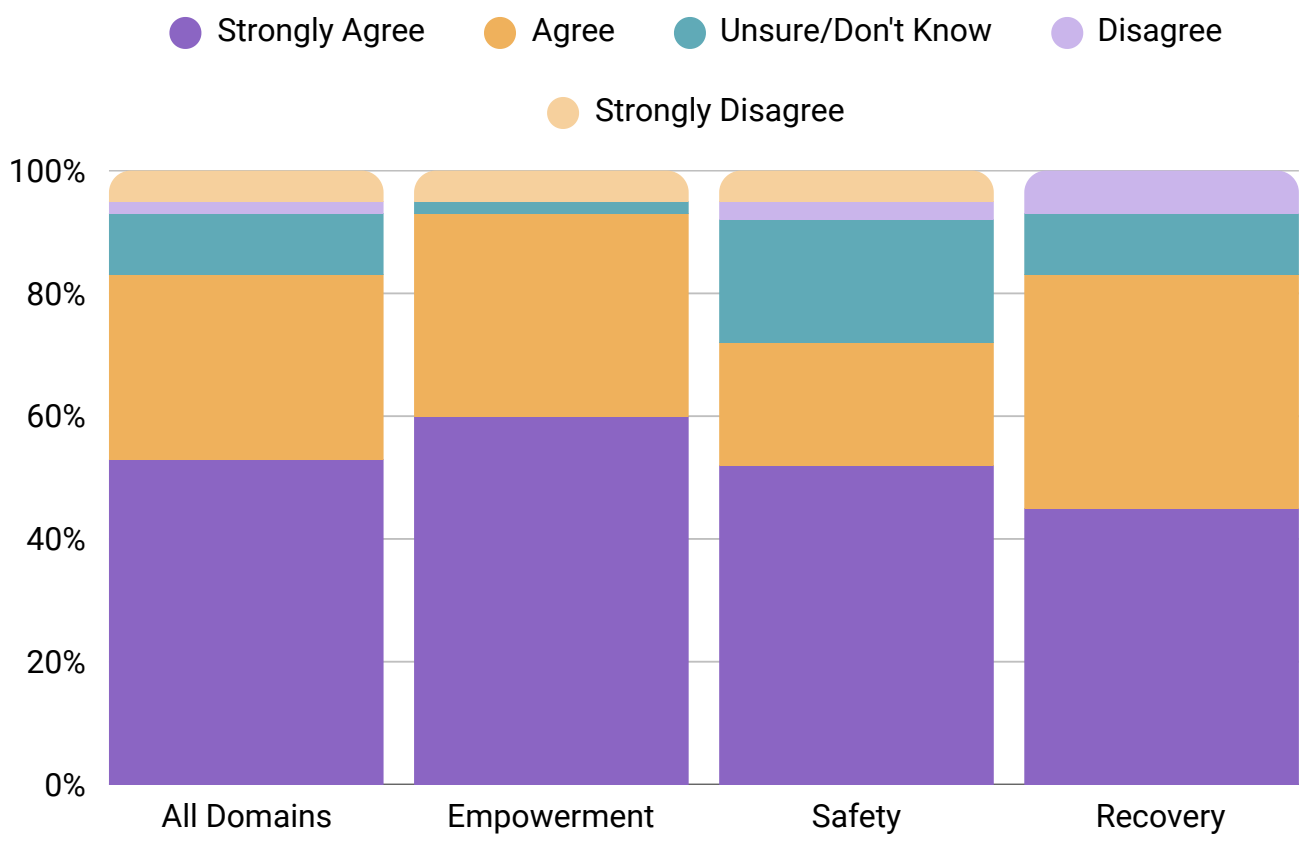


Considering the three outcome domains – empowerment, safety and recovery empowerment, clients agree most strongly with statements relating to their empowerment with 94% strongly agreeing or agreeing, compared to 73% for safety and 43% for recovery.

|                                | All Domains | Empowerment | Safety | Recovery |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------|----------|
| Strongly Agree                 | 45%         | 61%         | 52%    | 22%      |
| Agree                          | 25%         | 32%         | 21%    | 21%      |
| Unsure/Don't Know              | 8%          | 2%          | 19%    | 4%       |
| Disagree                       | 2%          | 0%          | 2%     | 3%       |
| Strongly Disagree              | 3%          | 5%          | 5%     | 0%       |
| % responding to all statements |             | 94%         | 100%   | 81%      |

This is to be expected as this is the primary aim of the service – to advocate for and empower victims through the process.

### Rating across outcome domains



Ability to support a client to feel safe is impacted by many factors beyond the control of the Court IDVAs (court process, Police role, perpetrator, outcome of the process).

Impact on recovery is also expected to be finite as the service is very focused on managing the court process, and longer-term planning and recovery work will not occur in the majority of cases as this is beyond scope.

### Support to attend court

**66%** agreed or strongly agreed they felt safer to attend court,

**57%** of respondents to the survey attended court.

A third said they would not have attended court without the support of an IDVA.

### Helpfulness of the service

All respondents rated the service 5 out of 5 for helpfulness.

Clients are asked how the Court IDVA's helped them.

66% of responses related to empowerment – including ensuring people knew their options, were kept updated, and supported to attend court.

***“My court IDVA made me feel so much safer and reassured, I didn't attend court in the end but did a tour before hand and eased my nerves so much. It was also so helpful being able to be updated straight away about the results as sitting there waiting is horrible for your mental health. She made sure to update me straight away”***

**13%** of clients said that the IDVA made them feel less alone.

***“You helped me feel confident by reassuring me with what's happening with court and my case.”***

***"I can't put into words how grateful I am for your support. It made a massive difference knowing I had someone in my corner. I know I was very upset and very scared but I still did it and gave the evidence and that is partly down to you - thank you. I'm not sure if I'd actually have managed to give the evidence without knowing you were advocating for me. I had no idea people like yourself existed. Not feeling alone was huge for me."***

The other common themes related to the approach of the Court IDVAs – reassuring (26%), understanding (22%), kindness (9%), encouragement (4%).

### **Realistic outcomes**

Not all clients will be supportive of DVPOs, Protection Orders, or criminal proceedings. For many victims, they will attempt to leave, or seek support multiple times before leaving an abusive relationship. The Court IDVA approach means that clients do not feel judged should they not be supportive of the criminal process. 11 DVPO clients returned to their abusive partner.

The RtR approach is focused on building trust and maintaining the relationship with the victim. We want to demonstrate to victims that there is help ready when they are.

This quote from a client reflects the importance of this approach:

***"I was phoned by my Court IDVA and kept in contact. She let me think about my relationship but didn't push me to get a Non mol . I decided not to have one as we are back together but I know i can call Nikkie if I need to"***

## Conclusion

The Court IDVA Service continues to demonstrate its value as a vital link between victims and the justice system – improving safety, confidence, and outcomes for those navigating the court process. The high engagement levels, strong positive feedback from clients, and the measurable difference in protection order success rates highlight the importance of this dedicated and specialist support.

Building on this success, we are delighted that funding has now been secured to extend the service into two further areas, enabling more victims across Thames Valley to access expert, trauma-informed advocacy at the most critical moments.

This expansion represents both recognition of the service's impact and a commitment to ensuring that all victims, wherever they live, can be supported to feel safe, heard, and empowered through the court process.

# Glossary

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>DA</b>          | Domestic Abuse                          |
| <b>DIY NMO</b>     | NMO without a solicitor                 |
| <b>DVPO</b>        | Domestic Violence Protective Order      |
| <b>IDVA</b>        | Independent Domestic Violence Advisor   |
| <b>MARAC</b>       | Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference |
| <b>MATAC</b>       | Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination   |
| <b>MH</b>          | Mental Health                           |
| <b>NMO/Non-Mol</b> | Non-Molestation Order                   |
| <b>PO</b>          | Protection Order                        |
| <b>RtR</b>         | Reducing the Risk                       |

# Reducing the Risk

of Domestic Abuse



[www.reducingtherisk.org.uk](http://www.reducingtherisk.org.uk)  
[contact@reducingtherisk.org.uk](mailto:contact@reducingtherisk.org.uk)