

# SafeLives charity will train 14,000 police officers to identify controlling behaviour



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**POILEAS ALBA**

National charity SafeLives has been appointed to train 14,000 Police Scotland officers in identifying controlling behaviours to support the introduction of the new Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act.

Controlling and coercive behaviours are a significant factor of domestic abuse.

The new Act, due for implementation in early 2019, criminalises these controlling behaviours for the first time in Scotland.

Assistant Chief Constable Gillian MacDonald, Crime and Protection, Police Scotland, said, "While physical assaults are the most visible part of domestic abuse, survivors have told us that it can be more difficult to cope with the punishing psychological abuse. This new Act recognises, for the first time, the harm psychological abuse causes to victims and their children and the complex way in which perpetrators

seek to manipulate not only their victims but also the police response.

“Ensuring our officers and staff are equipped with a good understanding of controlling behaviours, is key to delivering this ground-breaking legislation.

“This training and the provisions within the new legislation will enable our officers to investigate and report not only the incident but also the wider circumstances of the abusive relationship.

“We look forward to working with SafeLives and other partner agencies who will support them, to deliver this training collectively.

“Domestic abuse affects every part of our society with no regard for age, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation. We would encourage those affected to report it to the police or seek support from our partners.”

Suzanne Jacobs, CEO of SafeLives, said, “We are really delighted by today’s news. We now have the chance to change culture in relation to domestic abuse across the whole of Police Scotland. That’s a once in a lifetime opportunity to make life better for victims, survivors and their children all across the country.

“SafeLives research found that over 130,000 people in Scotland live with domestic abuse every year, with 68 per cent of victims who access specialist support disclosing controlling behaviour, and 56 per cent physical abuse.

“The police play a vital role in the response to domestic abuse – protecting victims and children and holding perpetrators to account. This training will allow us to work with partners ASSIST, the Caledonian System, Sacro and Scottish Borders Safer Communities team to develop common understanding and awareness across Police Scotland around the

dynamics of abuse, coercive control and the tactics used by perpetrators. We're committed to making sure Police Scotland feels and is ready for implementation of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill in 2019.

"We look forward to delivering this work in collaboration with many expert partners from across the domestic abuse sector in Scotland – reflecting the diverse experiences of survivors and families. We know that together we can improve the response and ensure more people receive the right support, at the right time to keep them safe from fear and harm."

Justice Secretary, Michael Matheson, said, "We are committed to ensuring our law enforcement agencies have the powers and resources necessary to tackle crime and keep communities safe. That is why we have provided £825,000 funding to Police Scotland to develop and deliver high quality bespoke training which will help them to identify some of the more insidious and damaging behaviours that perpetrators use to control their partner or ex-partner which are covered within the new offence.

"Attitudes towards domestic abuse are changing – it's no longer seen as a private matter, or no business of criminal law. We're doing everything we can to tackle the scourge that is domestic abuse at every opportunity and this new funding will greatly assist in tackling it."