

What is domestic violence?

For a long time domestic violence has been a crime that has been hidden away. In Nottingham there is a determination by the partners involved in the specialist courts to bring domestic violence into the open and tackle its root causes.

Although there is no specific offence of domestic violence, an offence will be classified as being so if it is within the following criteria:

“Any incident or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been in a relationship together, or between family members, regardless of gender of sexuality.”

Offences classified as domestic violence will be listed in the specialist courts and will be heard by specially trained magistrates – with the exception of trials and defendants who are held in custody.

Domestic Violence - Did you know?

- On average, Nottinghamshire Police deals with 1,263 incidences of domestic violence per month.
- It accounts for 16 per cent of all violent crime
- It has more repeat victims than any other crime
- It claims the lives of two women each week and 30 men per year
- It will affect one in three women and one in six men in their lifetime.

Early Successes

The specialist domestic violence courts have already started to make a difference. In the courts first three full months (June to August 2006):

- the proportion of offenders being brought to justice, including those convicted after trial and defendants entering guilty pleas, has increased to 56.9 per cent, compared to 52.6 per cent during the same months of 2005;
- following an assessment by the national Specialist Domestic Violence Programme Panel additional training support will be available for staff working in the specialist domestic violence courts; and
- plans are underway to increase the number of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors supporting victims in Nottingham.



Nottingham
Crime & Drugs Partnership



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Nottingham's Specialist Domestic Violence Courts

Supporting victims & witnesses

Help & Support

If you are a victim of domestic violence, you can call:

- Nottinghamshire Women's Aid Advice Centre's 24 hour helpline on **0808 800 0340**;
- Nottinghamshire Police – **999** in emergencies or **0115 967 0999** for non emergency calls;
- For further information about domestic violence locally and nationally, including further help, visit the Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Forum website at www.ndvf.org.uk



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About Nottingham's Specialist Domestic Violence Courts

Specialist domestic violence courts have been operating at Nottingham Magistrates' Court since May 2006. The courts, held on Wednesday mornings each week, promote a co-ordinated approach to tackling domestic violence. Criminal justice agencies work together with voluntary specialist support services and strategic partnerships to provide better services for victims and more effective treatment of offenders.

Agencies work together to identify, track and risk assess domestic violence cases and share information so that more offenders are brought to justice, victims are protected, and further violence is prevented.

Victims are supported throughout their case by an accredited Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA), who offers victims one point of contact during and after their case.

Who are the agencies involved?

The specialist domestic violence courts initiative is coordinated by a steering group comprising, Nottinghamshire Criminal Justice Board, Crown Prosecution Service, Police, Probation, Courts, Nottingham Crime and Drugs Partnership and a range of voluntary organisations such as Nottinghamshire Women's Aid Advice Centre and the Domestic Violence Forum.

Aims of the Courts

Nottingham's specialist domestic violence court aims to:

- **ENHANCE SUPPORT SERVICES FOR VICTIMS** – Independent high-quality support advisors work with targeted victims and witnesses to ensure they are informed of the progress of the case. Independent advisors liaise with the court to ensure it is provided with up to date information about victim safety to ensure informed decisions are made;
- **INCREASE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE** – Criminal justice partners adopt a combined approach to tackling domestic violence giving victims more confidence in the law and bringing more offenders to justice;
- **REDUCE DELAYS** – By listing similar cases in the same court or the same day means fewer court appearances and better case management for victims and perpetrators;
- **PROMOTE INFORMED AND CONSISTENT JUDICIAL DECISION-MAKING** – Trained magistrates and judges become more familiar with domestic violence issues; and
- **PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF EVERYONE** – there is no presumption against the defendant. The court retains its duty of applying the law and ensuring a fair trial;

“Making a difference”

Jane Lewis, Chair of Nottingham's Specialist Domestic Violence Courts Steering Group, said: “By ensuring criminal justice agencies, partner and voluntary organisations work together to support victims and witnesses of domestic violence we can help ensure justice is done for the communities we serve. Nottingham's specialist domestic violence courts are making a real difference to lives of victims of this cowardly and despicable crime.”

Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP)

In April 2006, Nottinghamshire Probation Service launched a new programme for those convicted of domestic violence. The Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme aims to reduce the risk of violent crime and abusive behaviour towards women by their partners be helping offenders change their attitudes.

A number of people convicted in the new courts have been sent on the Programme, which consists of weekly group sessions of two-and-a-half hours over a nine-month period. During Programme sessions, male heterosexual offenders learn how to take personal responsibility for their offence and understand how their crimes have affected their partners and children. They also learn non-abusive ways of relating to their partner.

The emphasis is not just on the offender – throughout the programme the victim is helped and supported by a women's safety worker. The offenders' progress and any risk of re-offending can be closely monitored as offenders sign a contract and accept that information will be shared with the Police, Social Services and other agencies.

Offenders who do not comply with their order are returned to the court and could face a prison sentence.

