

**The proposed Civil Protection Orders and Access to Justice Bill.  
Response by Perth Women's Aid**

The progress of the Scottish Parliament in tackling the issue of domestic abuse in Scotland has been extremely heartening and rewarding for all of us who have been dealing with this issue for more than two decades or more. Having protective orders available as one of the measures is essential in supporting women and any children within the household to rebuild their lives after living with domestic abuse. It is therefore essential that these orders are accessible to the very ones who need them and no barriers exist to prevent protection from continuing abuse.

After have read the document I have the following responses to make.

Q1: Removing the "course of conduct" requirement can only be advantageous to women seeking protection. Women are abused many times before they seek any assistance. Having taken the steps necessary to access protective measures, perhaps after years of abuse, to then be told your statement is not enough, eyewitness accounts and the evidence of at least two professionals are need to establish a "course of conduct" would be devastating. A woman should not have to be put in a position where to gain the protection necessary further evidence would need to be supplied which will result in her being further abused.

Where the perpetrator has been convicted under criminal law then one conviction should be all that is required to grant women the protection the need.

Q2. The main benefits would be the increased protection offered to women and any children within the household. This would also make this form of protection available to more women.

Q3. The advantages of removing means testing would be that all women had equal access to protective orders. More women and children in the household would be protected. It may be that this would increase the levels of legal aid applied for and could possibly lead again to restrictions on the level of aid awarded thereby reverting again to some form of means testing.

Q4. The main benefits would be making protective orders accessible to all women irrespective of their financial status. Sending a clear message to all abusers that their conduct will not be tolerated and their behaviours not go unchecked.

Q5. Breaching an interdict with powers of arrest must be considered as a criminal offence. This would ensure that these orders are taken seriously and not viewed by the perpetrator as "not worth the paper they a written on" giving them licence to continue to intimidate their ex-partners. To further support victims of domestic abuse it is imperative that these powers are recognised as a strong deterrent.

Q6. The main benefit would be the continued safety of women and any children within her household.

May I take this opportunity to wish you every success in your endeavours to ensure that protection from abuse is available to all who need these measures and that those who breach such orders be dealt with appropriately.