



DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE
ADVOCACY SUPPORT SERVICE



Criminal Justice Advocacy Service
for Children and Young People



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www.assistni.org



[@assistni](https://www.instagram.com/assistni)



What Is ASSIST NI?



ASSIST Children and Young People's Service provides independent advocacy for children and young adults up to age 24, experiencing domestic or sexual abuse who are engaging with the Criminal Justice System. We offer guidance, support, information, and tailored advocacy based on your needs.

You may be referred after reporting to police, via The Rowan SARC, or through MARAC pathways. We collaborate closely with partner agencies to ensure you receive coordinated, effective support.

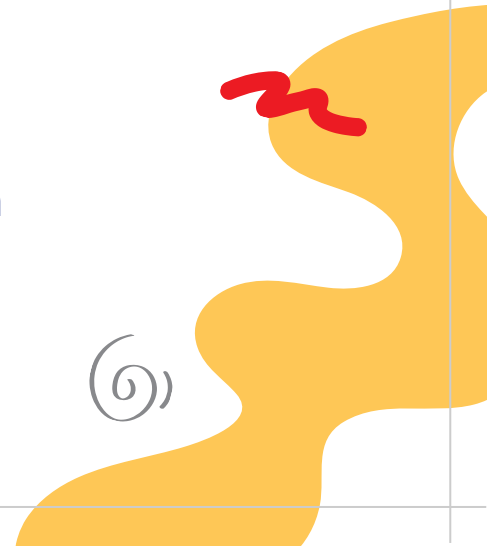


What Is ADVOCACY?

Victims of domestic and sexual abuse have a fundamental right to be safeguarded from harm, to live in safety and stability and exercise their right to engage in the criminal justice process in Northern Ireland.

ASSIST NI work in partnership with statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector to ensure victims and survivors are protected from further harm, their core welfare needs are met, and the rights of the victim are advocated for and promoted throughout the complexities of the criminal justice process.

ASSIST represents our service model,
the pillars guiding our practice and
partnership approach.



Victim Journey Pathway

Report to PSNI

Victim will report to the PSNI.
They attend domestic and
sexual abuse crime.



ASSIST NI Referral

ASSIST NI will attempt to make contact via telephone
within 48 hours of receiving a referral. Services will be
explained and a face to face meeting offered.



Ongoing Support

The advocate will assess the victims long and short term needs
– help access support for mental, physical and sexual health,
substance misuse, housing support and much more. The
advocate will help to explain how your case may proceed in
the Justice System and liaise with other criminal justice
agencies as needed.



Case Closure

Your case will be closed when you either don't need
advocacy support any more or your criminal justice
process has come to an end. Your advocate will make sure
you have the most appropriate support going forward.



YOUR Journey Pathway

This is a space for you to record what your own personal journey through the criminal justice process looks like.

Report to PSNI



ASSIST NI
Referral



Ongoing
Support



Case Closure



What's an ABE ?

ABE stands for Achieving Best Evidence and you may hear it be called an interview, ABE or ABE interview. It is a specialised interview technique used within criminal investigations. It focuses on gathering accurate and reliable accounts from the victim, whilst trying to minimise distress but ensuring the interview process is legally sound.

Where can an ABE take place?

An ABE needs to be held in a neutral environment like the police station or the Rowan. The location can be agreed between you and the police.

Who will conduct the ABE?

Two specially trained police officers will conduct the interview. There is also a possibility of a specially trained social worker conducting the interview as well.

Who can be in the room with me?

Unless it has been agreed with the police officer organising your ABE, others are not allowed in the room with you. People who can attend the interview may include a Registered Intermediary (RI) or an interpreter.

However, you can bring someone to support you before and after the ABE. This could be your advocate, a friend or family member.

What should I expect during the interview?

The interview will often follow the structure of 4 stages:

1. The interviewer should start with a relaxed conversation to help you feel more comfortable.
2. They will explain the process to you and how the equipment is used to record the interview.
3. They will then ask you about what happened using open-ended questions to help you give as much information as possible.
4. They may ask for clarification on specific details to make sure they have gathered all the information correctly.

REMEMBER you can ask for breaks to make sure that you are feeling comfortable.



Staying Safe

There are lots of things you and the people who support you can do to keep you safe. Fill in the boxes below to help you think about how to stay safe.

How do I stay safe at home?

How do I stay safe out and about?

How do I stay safe online?

What do I need when I'm struggling?



Appropriate Adults

An Appropriate Adult (AA) in the UK is a responsible person aged 18 or over who safeguards the rights, welfare, and communication of a child (under 18) or a vulnerable adult involved in the criminal justice process.

Who Needs an Appropriate Adult?

An AA must be provided if the individual is:

- Under 18 years old
- A vulnerable adult (e.g., someone with mental health conditions, learning disabilities, or cognitive impairments)

Who Can Act as an Appropriate Adult?

The police will generally prioritize AAs in the following order:

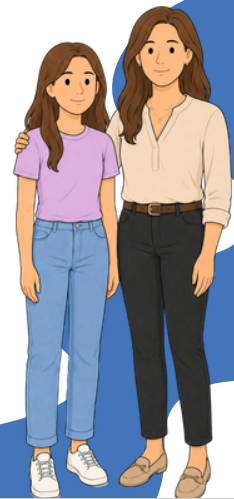
- A parent, guardian, or carer
- A family member or responsible friend over 18
- A social worker or Youth Offending Team (YOT) worker
- A trained, independent volunteer (managed by local charities or schemes)

Note: A parent or guardian cannot act as the AA if they are the victim, a witness, or otherwise involved in the investigation

What is the Role of the Appropriate Adult?

An AA is not a legal representative, but they are there to:

- Ensure fair treatment: Observe police conduct and ensure the vulnerable person is treated justly.
- Ensure understanding: Help the person understand what is happening, why they are being questioned, and what their rights are.
- Facilitate communication: Help the suspect communicate clearly with the police and their solicitor.
- Oversee procedures: Be present during critical police processes, such as formal interviews, strip or intimate searches, fingerprinting, and taking DNA samples.





Wellbeing Plan

Understanding yourself and your mental health can make a big difference in keeping you safe too. Fill in the boxes below to help you think about it.

My baseline: when I feel well I am

.....

.....

.....

This is what I need to do for myself every day to feel as well as possible

.....

.....

.....

Triggers are things that happen to us that are likely to set off a chain reaction of uncomfortable or unhelpful behaviours, thoughts or feelings. This is what triggers me

.....

.....

.....

What can I do to avoid or limit my exposure to things that trigger me

.....

.....

.....

What can I do when I'm triggered to prevent things from getting worse

.....

.....

.....

Who do I rely on to support me

.....

.....

.....

What is MARAC?

MARAC stands for Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference. It is a meeting where different professionals come together to help keep people safe when there are serious concerns about domestic abuse.

Why is a MARAC held?

A MARAC is held when professionals think someone is at a high risk of domestic abuse and there are concerns for their safety. The aim is to share information between services to keep you safe by making sure everyone is working together. It is highly confidential and only information that is relevant is shared to a restricted group of people.

Who will be at the MARAC meeting?

The people at the meeting will depend on your situation but they may include:

- Police
- Domestic Abuse Support Workers
- Social Workers
- Housing Services
- Health Professionals
- Other professionals who support you

Do I have to go to the meeting?

No, you do not attend a MARAC meeting. The professionals meet together on your behalf to discuss how they can keep you safe.

What happens after the MARAC

A professional working with you such as a social worker or domestic abuse worker will usually explain what support is available, any changes that may make you feel safer and what will happen next.

The Acronyms

We know that people who work within the Criminal Justice System use a lot of confusing acronyms that you might not understand. This page will show you the meaning of some of the common ones. If there's one you've heard that isn't here, don't be afraid to ask your advocate!

ACRONYM

MEANING

IO	Investigating Officer looks after your case
CPO	Crime Prevention Officer can help you to feel safe at home.
ABE	Achieving best evidence is a video interview to describe the incident
RI	Registered Intermediary is someone who is allowed into the ABE room to make sure you understand what is happening.
PIA	Pre-interview assessment may be done before you do an ABE to make sure you are fit to do so.
PPS	Public Prosecution Service make the decision about whether a case will go to court.
VWCU	Victim Witness Care Unit will liaise with you about court proceedings
YWS	Young Witness Service is run by the NSPCC to support U18s giving evidence in court
REC	Remote evidence centre is a place to attend court remotely rather than going in person.
NMO	Non-molestation order is a legal document that prevents an individual from having any contact with you. You can explore this option with your solicitor.
SOLA	Sexual Offence Legal Advisors provide free legal advice for victims of sexual offences

WhoToContact

When you need support from someone outside your friends and family, these are some people who may be able to help.

childline

ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>
0800 1111

THE MIX

<https://www.themix.org.uk/>
Text – 85258

BARNARDOS

<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/>

Lifeline

0808 808 8000

NSPCC

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>
0808 800 5000
help@NSPCC.org.uk

**common
YOUTH.**

<https://commonyouth.com/>
028 9032 8866
hello@commonyouth.com



<https://onlinesafetyhub.safeguardingni.org/>
028 9536 1810
SBNI.info@hscni.net