



Social Impact Report

2025 – 2026



“Today’s accomplishments were yesterday’s impossibilities.”

Robert H. Schuller

This Social Impact Report spans from July 2025 – June 2026 to coincide with our accounting year.

We would like to start this Report by thanking our funders, without whom, none of this would be possible;

A massive “Thank you” to the **Bank of Scotland Foundation** for funding our “Safe & Sound” Project Manager until February 2027.



And another huge “Thank you” to The National Lottery’s **Awards for All Community Fund** for funding all our travel and accommodation costs for courses for females. This will help us provide empowering courses to women throughout Scotland until August 2026.

And “Many Thanks” also to **The Robertson Trust** who have supported us by part-funding our core costs **for the last 5 years** (ending November 2025).



Finally, “Huge Thanks” also to **The Volant Charitable Trust** who took over the part-funding of our core costs for the remainder of this financial year.

We are so grateful to all of our funders who have supported us throughout this year, allowing us to continue to deliver our Personal Safety courses and wellbeing activities to vulnerable people.

“Thank you” never seems enough.

This funding enabled us to run **140** training sessions this year, empowering a massive **1,867** individuals - our highest number since we started in 1997. This brings the total number of people we have helped to **14,005** (this number may include repeat attendees). Amazing, considering we only had 6 volunteer instructors this year!

We were also lucky enough to be able to rent our Centre out to various community groups (TaeKwonDo, Tai Chi, Yoga, Krav Maga, Recovery College, etc.) which provides us with an additional income source, and in turn helps pay for the repairs and maintenance of our 137yr old building.

Background history

The area our Centre is located in is not without its problems; according to the latest Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), **North Ayrshire as a whole is the 5th most deprived Council area in Scotland. Saltcoats Central is the most deprived area in North Ayrshire; Ardrossan Central** (where we are located) **is the 3rd** and **Stevenston Ardeer is 5th highest**. Together we are known as ‘**The Three Towns**’.

For the last 8 years, Scotland has been the drugs death capital of Europe. Depressingly, drug and alcohol hospital admissions in North Ayrshire are **more than double the Scottish average**.

Alongside high unemployment, and drug/alcohol misuse, **knife crime is high** in our area. **Sex crimes are extremely high** and **domestic abuse is the highest, per capita, in all of Scotland**.

A 2025 report by the National Records of Scotland (NRS) has shown that the estimated healthy life expectancy in Scotland has reached its lowest since records began in 2014, with the average healthy life expectancy for Scotland being 60yrs old for females and 59.6yrs old for males. The highest healthy life expectancy in Scotland is in the Orkney Islands, at 72.1 years, and **the lowest healthy life expectancy is in North Ayrshire, at 52.5 years, well below the national average**.

All of these factors have a negative impact on our local community, not just their physical health, but also their mental health. It's little wonder then that **North Ayrshire has the 8th highest suicide rate in Scotland**.

Obviously, by locating our Barony St John Centre in Ardrossan with its many wellbeing activities, we have placed ourselves in the eye of the storm, and so we are in the perfect place to help those most in need of our services.

Our Charity's mission is to potentially save lives by;

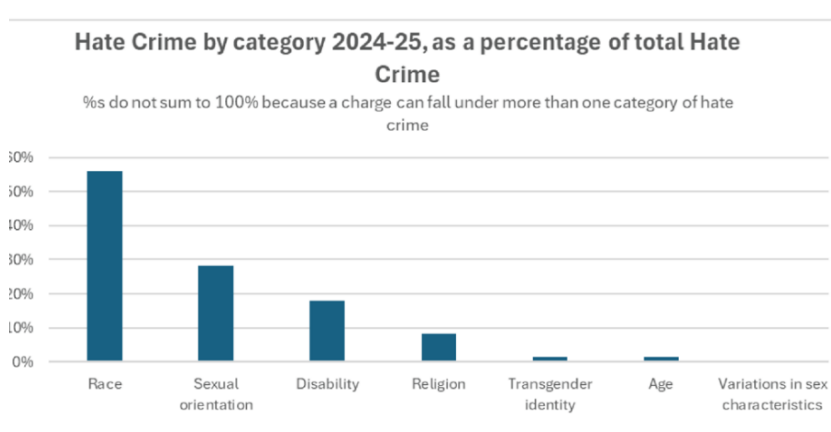
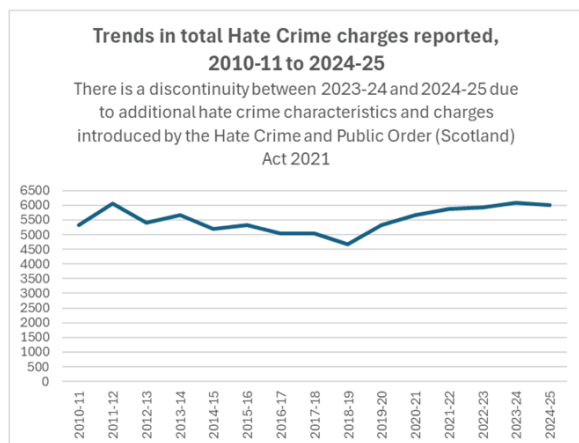
- The provision of practical training and solutions to help people avoid violence and aggression.
- The raising of awareness of the importance of personal safety in Scottish communities.
- The provision of a point of contact for those who are at risk of violence or those seeking advice in Scotland.
- The reduction of the fear of crime throughout Scotland.

Our objective is simply to empower individuals to manage safer lives and we sum up our aims and objectives in one, very powerful statement;

“We champion equality, diversity and human rights as defining values of our charity.

We promote equality of opportunity for all, empowering every individual to achieve their potential, free from prejudice and discrimination.”

Our aim has always been to help reduce Hate Crime and to do this, we offer our Personal Safety courses to frequently targeted groups and individuals. The graph below, taken from the latest **Hate Crime in Scotland 2024-25** report, shows the amount of Hate Crime incidents reported over the last 15 years;



In 2024-25, the total number of charges reported containing at least one element of Hate Crime was **6,019** a **1.2% decrease** on 2023-24. However, figures for the two years are not directly comparable because the 2024-25 figure includes new categories of Hate Crime and new charges relating to Hate Crime introduced by the **Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021**.

- **Racial crime** remains the most commonly reported Hate Crime. 3,357 charges relating to race crime were reported in 2024-25, **a decrease of 2.2% compared to 2023-24**.
- **Sexual orientation aggravated crime** is the second most commonly reported type of Hate Crime. The number of charges reported **decreased by 8.7%** in 2024-25 to 1,699. **This is the lowest number of charges reported since 2020-21**.
- **Disability aggravated crime** **increased by 15%** to 1,069 in 2024-25. **This is the highest annual number of charges reported since the legislation creating this category came into force in 2010** and continues an almost unbroken upward trend in the numbers since then.
- **Religiously aggravated crime** was **5.1% fewer** than in 2023-24 with 505 charges. **This is the lowest annual number of charges reported since 2004-05**.

There were also 86 charges reported in 2024-25 with **an aggravation of transgender identity**, compared to 87 in 2023-24. **This is the second highest annual number of charges recorded since this legislation came into force**.

This Social Impact Report details what we do to combat violence, abuse, bullying and Hate Crime;

Personal Safety for Females

According to the Scottish Government's **Recorded Crime in Scotland 2025-26** report issued in June 2026, **sex crimes in Scotland are at their highest level in 55 years** with **domestic abuse also showing a 23% increase** on last year.

A 2025 study by **56 Degree Insight** showed that almost **4 in 10 women in Scotland don't feel safe walking at night**. And a **YouGov** poll showed that **66% of women felt unsafe walking home at night at least "sometimes"** and **53% said they regularly avoid being out at certain times to reduce the risk of encountering harassment or sexual assault**.



Additionally, research published by **The National Police Chiefs' Council** and the **Domestic Homicide Project** in February 2026 has shown that the number of women who are driven to suicide by domestic abusers is being *"severely under-reported"* in what has been described by experts as a *"national scandal"*.

It is now estimated that **1 in 10 women commit suicide in the UK due to domestic abuse**. This puts the number of suspected suicides among domestic abuse victims as exceeding the number of intimate partner homicides in the UK.

Sadly, **30 women attempt suicide every day due to domestic abuse**. According to **Grassroots Suicide Prevention**, this now means that **50% of all suicide attempts in the UK are linked to domestic abuse**.

**GRASSROOTS
SUICIDE PREVENTION**

Many of these suicides are directly linked to the emotional, psychological, and coercive control these women have experienced, which led to feelings of hopelessness and despair. Experts argue that these official statistics may only track as few as 6.5% of the true number of domestic abuse-related suicides, with **the real number potentially being 15 times higher**.

Dame Nicole Jacobs, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, said: *"It's unacceptable that domestic abuse victims are being failed and bereaved families are having to fight for justice because the police didn't ask the right questions when an unexpected death has occurred."*

Vera Baird KC, a former Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales, said suicides *"certainly should"* be investigated as homicides *"both from the perspective of driving someone to suicide, which is clearly manslaughter, or the domestic abuse has escalated, as it frequently does, to the degree where he has helped her to kill herself"*.

The domestic abuse charity **Women's Aid** said the findings were “a shocking insight into the reality for so many families who are left bereaved of mothers, daughters and sisters as a result of domestic abuse, but are **too often denied justice because their death was not considered to be directly at the hands of their perpetrator.**”

With sexual crime and domestic abuse rates so high, our empowerment-focused Personal Safety training (including practical self defence) is specifically designed for female survivors and is, in our opinion, an effective way to combat violence against women. It provides women with ways of extracting themselves from danger *before* violence occurs, and if violence does occur, ways of defending themselves to aid their escape.

We also provide trauma-informed, empowerment-focused training, including emotional support, to help traumatised female victims of abuse and/or sexual crimes overcome what has happened to them. These women come to us as victims, often with extremely low mental health, however they leave our services as survivors, ready to move on to more richer, fuller lives, free from fear and emotional trauma.

Females are referred to us from GP surgeries, via local officers from Police Scotland, or from their own volition. These women attend two-hour sessions with us each week, sometimes for over a year, to help them recover from the extreme trauma that they have experienced. Here are just a couple of statements which highlight the professional way we treat these women, as well as the life-changing effects our training has had on them (*names have been changed to protect identities*);

Grace – North Ayrshire



“After experiencing a prolonged and distressing situation over 3 months since November last year where I was threatened and intimidated by a neighbour, **I found myself isolated, vulnerable, and overwhelmed.** Most organisations, including my tenant landlord, were unwilling to help. **Apart from the Police, it was only The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety who stepped in to offer real, practical support.**

Their classes provided more than just physical techniques, **they helped me reclaim a real sense of safety.** I let go of anger, retained my dignity, and felt more in control. **I started to rebuild my confidence** and realised that I could cope, even when facing

very real threats, because I now had tools, knowledge, and the support of a community.

That said, my journey didn't end at learning self-defence. Once you find yourself involved with the criminal justice system as a victim, it opens up a much wider set of needs. **I am a trauma survivor from domestic abuse,** I had to privately arrange trauma-informed mental health care to cope with the recent abuse that triggered old wounds, teach myself about my rights as a victim, learn how to write a victim statement, understand Police procedures, and prepare for court - all by myself. This was a daunting and exhausting experience that extended and prolonged my suffering, and it is still continuing as I have another criminal trial to attend in August after already being in court in April when the neighbour pleaded guilty.

While Personal Safety and self-defence training was a vital part of my recovery, what made the biggest difference was knowing someone had my back. Also having access to trusted referrals could be transformative for others like me.

The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety helped me when others did not. With more funding and collaboration, I believe they could help even more people, not only survive, but stand tall and grounded through any aspect of abuse.”



Hazel – North Ayrshire

“One of the things that helped me make some strides in restoring a personal sense of safety was the introduction to The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety, a self defence charity group who ran a class which was organised by my local Women’s Aid. **This helped me so much** that I visited the charity’s headquarters and received some one-to-one instruction with them.

By luck one of the instructors had Special Forces training and **was able to help me significantly by debunking the rhetoric my ex used to supposedly justify his abuse.** I also discovered that the techniques my ex had gone through with me to defend myself, which I had used against him on the occasions his attacks were severe, were actually incorrect techniques not taught in the military. In fact, **the self defence techniques my ex taught me were consistent with someone trying to teach a technique that seems useful but was flawed and designed to give a false sense of safety, which could then be used by the perpetrator to emphasise his strength, thus demonstrating how weak and useless I was.**

This was very illuminating to me, and **I am forever grateful to that instructor for giving me some sense of security back.**”

It is easy to dismiss statistics of violence against women and in particular, domestic abuse, as “just another set of figures”, but the stories these women tell are harrowing examples of the traumatic experiences we hear from them every day. **These women are not statistics!** They are women in need of help, who need their fears addressed and quashed, and who need their confidence and, in many cases, self-esteem returned. We can help them – but we desperately need funders to help us to help them.

As well as individual Personal Safety training, we also provide trauma-informed, empowerment-focussed Personal Safety training for groups of females;



In July 2025 and again in April 2026, we ran empowering Personal Safety courses for **Dundee Women’s Aid**. Comments included;

“I would definitely recommend this course to any female. It was empowering to learn that even though I am not overly strong, I can still defend myself.”

“Brilliant training with important insight into law and legislation around self-defence. What I liked the most was that it was pragmatic and tailored to the gendered nature of harm. Overall, **super empowering and I loved how it pushes the skills to be used under pressure via a padded attacker.**”

“This is the second time I have done the self defence training and I think it is absolutely brilliant. I wish that the Centre was closer so I could attend classes, as I think this would be great to keep up in terms of practising the moves. **All the facilitators were amazing and made me feel comfortable.** I would absolutely recommend this fantastic course to others **and I feel all women should do this at least once in their life to learn the safety skills to keep safe.**”



"This course helped me to feel more confident, aware of potential harm, and reading attacker's body language. I feel empowered by learning these new skills in self defence. The trainers were skilled and knowledgeable. Overall, a 5-star experience."



"I was really surprised how much information I didn't know in terms of self defence and the law and that so many of the moves were simple and effective to implement. The trainers were brilliant and really gave us scenarios to suit our experiences. Both the knowledge and practical aspects were fab! I would really like to have this regularly. Every female should be equipped with this knowledge."

"I had my daughter just over a year ago and since then I have lost my confidence in my abilities to handle difficult situations and to keep both myself and her safe when out and about. This course really made me feel able, strong and equipped to deal with situations that might happen. For me, the main thing I took away is confidence. I also really liked the discussion around the law - there was a lot I had no idea about. And I liked how involved the course was, the padded attacker was an excellent way to practice. Overall, all the trainers were excellent and brought personal experience and humour to the course and I felt that was a really great way to learn a heavy subject. I'd just like to say thank you to you all, I think the work you are doing is so necessary and I thoroughly enjoyed the course and got a lot from it."



In December 2025, we ran a Personal Safety course for females from **Project Saoirse**. Saoirse (ser-sha) is a service run by **South Lanarkshire Women's Aid** for women impacted by substance use and gender-based violence. Their purpose is to help women stay safe, feel confident and empowered.



The Project Lead of Saoirse commented; "As an organisation we were delighted to be able to have The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety attend. **The women and the staff benefited from it so much. They all commented on how much they enjoyed not only the physical interactions and learning about how they could defend themselves but also the laws around defending themselves. I hope that future funders look at applications and fund your organisation so that this training can be opened up to all women. The staff from The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety make this experience enjoyable for all our women, using a trauma-informed response and always adding in the right amount of humour where appropriate.**"

"I found this course to be very informative. I learnt things I did not know as well as the legal side of things. I liked all of it – the information, the hands-on training and the lighter side with the presentation – it was all a great combination."



In March 2026, we ran an empowering Personal Safety course for **Edinburgh Women's Aid** as part of their *Work 4 Women* programme. Comments included;

"I liked everything about this course and I now feel confident. I think the law was explained very well. The practice helped us to have confidence in the techniques. I think the whole thing was really well presented."

"I felt that it was very helpful to see Kimberley there, as I felt encouraged that if another woman with a disability could do it, then I could do it too. I saw Kimberley's confidence and felt really empowered by it. In fact, I felt the whole course was very empowering."

I also noticed everyone start to open up as the day went on, and that even though it was triggering and difficult at times, it was necessary and important for everyone to learn this. I felt that I was able to take a bit of strength back, knowing that I can and know how to defend myself.

I also felt that it was really helpful to know that I can defend myself even in a seated position. ***I found it very helpful to know that Barbara was a domestic abuser survivor. She is a rockstar to me!***

Alan also took time to teach me how to escape from a strangulation from behind and he made me feel very safe throughout the process (he asked for consent and paced it to what I felt I was comfortable with). ***I feel this course was very important particularly as it allowed me to role-play potential self-defence situations with a man.***

I also really enjoyed the humour, even though they were covering serious matters.

And I feel that young girls in high school, and every woman who comes in contact with Edinburgh Women's Aid, should be offered self-defence/personal safety training with this charity (even if it's just a condensed version)."

"I think this course is very important for women's safety. I did not know any of what was taught before, and I really liked the way this course was taught, how the trainers explained things to us and made it easy for us to understand the situation, and to try to navigate our safety."

"I gained far more than I expected. The information on the legal issues was very informative and the techniques were so easy. I have already taught this to my daughter. ***Very effective techniques.***"

Also in March, we ran a trauma-informed, empowerment-focused Personal Safety course for **RASASH** (Rape And Sexual Abuse Service, Highland) in Inverness. Comments included:

"I just wanted to say "Wow!" and thank you to every one of you for reaching out and helping vulnerable people with the skills you have shown. I hope I never have to use them, but if I ever do, I hope I bloody hurt whoever wants to hurt me first. I may have to come down your neck of the woods and do an all-day course. I found it so interesting and so, so inspiring."



We also ran a course for **Ross-shire, Skye & Lochalsh Women's Aid** on the Isle of Skye in March. Comments included;

"As a Women's Support Worker for Ross-Shire, Skye and Lochalsh Women's Aid, it was important to me that the women attending the course felt relaxed, comfortable, and empowered. I feel the trainers achieved this with genuine ease and warmth.

The feedback I received highlighted that, although some women felt nervous at the beginning of the day due to not knowing what to expect, they left

feeling both empowered and more confident. The trainers supported everyone exceptionally well, creating a warm, safe environment in which participants could learn these crucial safety techniques.



Also, the course was delivered confidently and the trainers made sure everyone was able to fully practice techniques comfortably, with patience and with understanding.

This is the second time attending this empowering and important course. I now signpost women to The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety's website and YouTube channel as part of my safety plans, in certain cases. I personally feel more confident in using the new skills that I have learned through this training. Thank you to all the trainers involved."

In April 2026, we ran an empowering Personal Safety course for **Lochaber Women's Aid** in Fort William. The organiser commented;

"We gained more than expected. I didn't expect the course to be so positive. What I liked most about the course is that it was domestic abuse informed and the trainers were very encouraging and supportive. I would definitely recommend this course to others as I found it very empowering. I definitely feel more able/positive about how to deal with an attack/confrontation. Thank you to you and your team."



Also in April, we ran two empowering Personal Safety courses for **Orkney Women's Aid** in Kirkwall. Comments included;

"What fantastic trainers! I loved the legal parts of this course which gave a great foundation for the rest of the session. I feel empowered having the knowledge and skills to defend myself if I need to. I particularly liked the support given by the trainers. I mentioned my 'trigger' and the team were kind, compassionate and helped me so much with this when I got upset. I then had a great 1:1 session with Barbara, at my pace to face my fears and give me tools to use. Thank you all so much for giving me confidence and power to be in control in difficult situations."

"This course has given me the confidence within myself I didn't realise I was fully missing or needing to find. What I liked most about the course, was how engaging and informative the content was. It was more physical than I was expecting but this was empowering and I found the knowledge behind the laws really facilitating and hugely helpful. I have already been recommending this course to anyone and everyone. It should be rolled out to everyone. I would love to see this course come to schools – I am a firm believer in learning to protect ourselves from as early a stage as possible in life."

"I wasn't sure what to expect, so I had no preconceived ideas about what I wanted to gain from the day, but I came out of it having learned so much – both about the law and practical techniques. I really liked the balance of talking / listening and physical. I feel that the legal context is essential and was well balanced with learning the various physical techniques. Also, the time spent at the start of the session hearing from the trainers and getting to know you, and your reasons for doing this, helped build a level of trust which was essential for the physical stuff. You created a safe space for us. I really liked the dynamic between the trainers, it was reassuring but also brought home the realities of what this was all about. I liked that you could say at what point you didn't want to take part, and that you were clear that things were optional. I also liked that it was a small group with a lot of trainers – which meant that you were supported with trying out the techniques and not left to yourselves to figure it out."

"It was really beneficial to review the law and apply this to real life scenarios. I liked how this felt like a safe space to try out the techniques and ask questions. I really liked how the techniques were practiced in a realistic way with appropriate levels of force and I found it very beneficial to be able to experience the attacker as a male as this felt completely different. I can highly recommend this course and it would be really beneficial to repeat this course/have a refresher course to practice the techniques again."



Many thanks to both **NorthLink Ferries** and **Pentland Ferries** for giving our team **FREE** ferry travel to and from Orkney.

Please see our video <https://youtu.be/2Fyydl9o5jg>



In May 2026, we ran an empowering Personal Safety course for **Glasgow Women's Aid**. Comments include;

*"As someone who had little knowledge of self-defence, **the course exceeded any expectations I had**. It was nice to leave feeling more knowledgeable in terms of the law and the right to defend myself, as well as learning beginner friendly ways to defend myself. I really enjoyed how interactive it was. We were able to ask lots of questions to make sure we understood what to do. **And I liked that Alan came in to provide a***

***male example of how an attacker would grab you, to allow us to practice a more real-life version of the defence moves**. Hopefully, next time I'll get more time to kick BOB's ass."*

*"**I enjoyed the course content and the information and techniques that were taught**. **Barbara and Kim** were inspirational. I would like all women to have access to this course with regular refreshers. With endemic levels of violence against women, we need all the tools available to keep us safe."*

*"**I feel more confident in self-defence and even feel able to teach these skills to other women**."*

*"**I was surprised at how much I learned and I feel more confident after this course**. It provided legal guidance, the facilitators were approachable and engaging, and the practical afternoon was amazing. I think this course would be useful to teach adolescent children."*

*"**This was a very engaging, useful course and I enjoyed it greatly**."*

*"I gained a better understanding of the self-defence moves that are out there and what is the best approach if I ever find myself in a situation where self-defence may be required. **I really enjoyed the content and knowledge of the different self-defence moves and what would not count as self-defence**, i.e., if I did not say 'get back' or an attempt to get away was not made, (if that is possible to do so, sometimes it isn't). This course is very informative and pro-active for women safety."*

New figures estimate that **domestic abuse is costing Scotland around £66 billion per year**.

We sincerely hope that, given this huge cost, money can be put aside to **prevent** cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse happening. We believe that our trauma-informed, empowerment-focused Personal Safety training will not only teach women safety awareness techniques, de-escalation skills and self-defence to extract themselves before violence occurs, but will also help survivors recover and heal, both mentally and physically.



Women unite for day of safety, confidence and empowerment



Calum Corral
Calum.Corral@newsquest.co.uk

THE rescheduled International Women's Day event at Vikingar in Largs took place on Sunday, April 26, bringing together women from across the community for a day centred on safety, confidence and empowerment.

Organised by Largs Community Development Trust, the event had originally been planned for March but was cancelled after a funding bid was rejected.

It was later saved thanks to support from Ayrshire businesswoman and entrepreneur Dr Marie Macklin.

Pictures from the event captured a busy and engaging day, with attendees taking part in both discussion and practical sessions led by the Scottish Centre for Personal Safety.

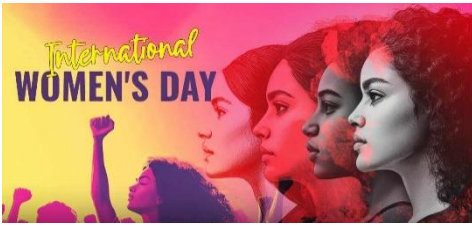
The morning focused on raising awareness of violence against women, alongside guidance on personal safety and the legal framework around self-defence. Guests then enjoyed a buffet lunch and time to network.

In the afternoon, participants took part in a hands-on self-defence workshop, building confidence through practical techniques and shared learning.

The free event, open to women aged 16 and over, was funded by Dr Macklin, whose backing ensured it could go ahead.

Thanks to Charlie Gilmour for the photos.





On Sunday 26th April 2026, we presented an event to mark **International Women's Day** for **Largs Community Development Trust**. 84% of the women attending felt very confident they could defend themselves at the end of the training with 11% saying they felt fairly confident and 5% saying they felt moderately confident.

Comments included;

"A wonderful insight into self-defence and the law. So much information to pass onto other females."

"Brilliantly delivered. Brilliant demonstrations."

"I wish every woman could attend this training."

"Excellent presentation. The trainers were all engaging with a friendly approach."

"We were so lucky to have been offered this opportunity."

Male Victims of Domestic Abuse

In the UK, it has been known for some time that **1 in 6 men experience physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner**. How do we know this? Because these figures came from the **British Medical Association** – they were taken from hospital admissions.

The problem is; this only accounts for those men who are admitted to hospital for treatment to their wounds – it does not include physical injuries that do not require medical treatment, or those men suffering from emotional and psychological abuse, financial abuse or coercive control abuse. So, the actual figure is probably more like **1 in 4 men experience domestic abuse**, maybe even the same amount as women.

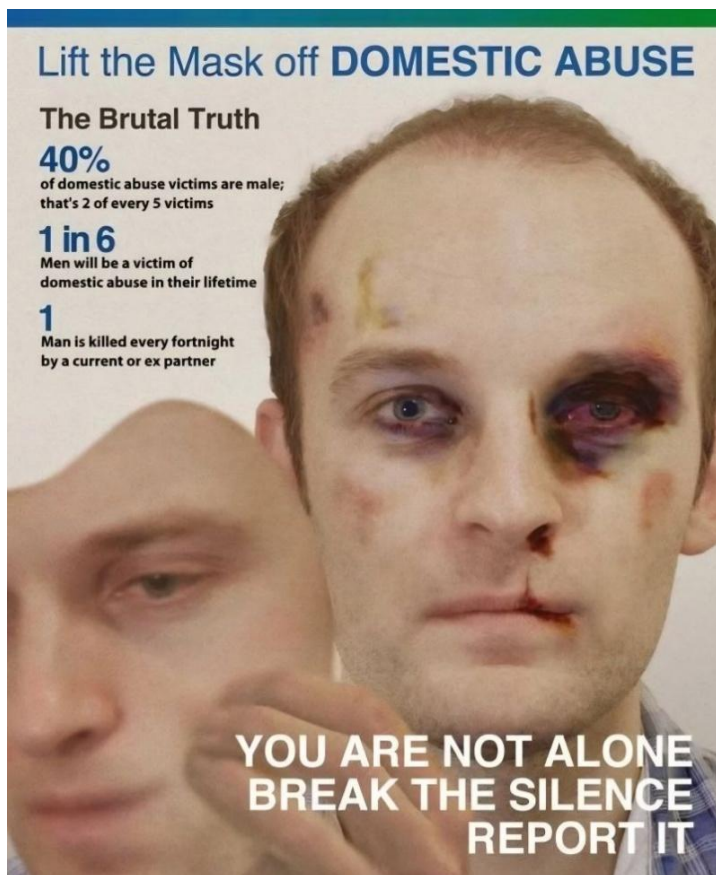
For lots of people this is a taboo subject – not because it is about domestic abuse, but because it is about men. To understand why this is so, you have to understand the position of females in this country;

Until the mid-1970s in the UK, domestic violence was treated as a private matter. **The Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1976** eventually allowed women to obtain court orders to prevent further violence and to remain in the family home, giving legal recognition to domestic abuse as a criminal and civil concern.

The 1990s saw further reforms, including guidance from the **Crown Prosecution Service** in 1993 to ensure domestic violence cases could proceed, even if victims withdrew complaints. **The Family Law Act 1996** improved protective orders under civil law but the most significant legislation was **The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004**, which came into force in stages from 2005, and introduced new offences including "familial homicide", while strengthening police powers to protect victims.

Today, domestic abuse is addressed through a combination of criminal offences such as assault, harassment, and coercive control as well as civil remedies such as occupation and non-molestation orders.

In short, females have had a long, hard struggle to get domestic abuse recognised and made illegal. We all know that the majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated by males – but it now looks like the gap between the number of male and female victims of domestic abuse is not as wide as it once was.



Recent UK studies have shown that approximately 1.5 million men experience domestic abuse annually, and men make up roughly one-third of all domestic abuse victims. They also show that between **10% - 20% of men will experience some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetimes** with **psychological and emotional abuse** being the most frequently reported form of domestic abuse, affecting men at rates nearly equal to women.

U.S. studies have also shown that approximately **1 in 6 men experience physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime**. **1 in 7 men experience physical violence by an intimate partner**, and **1 in 23 experience contact sexual violence**.

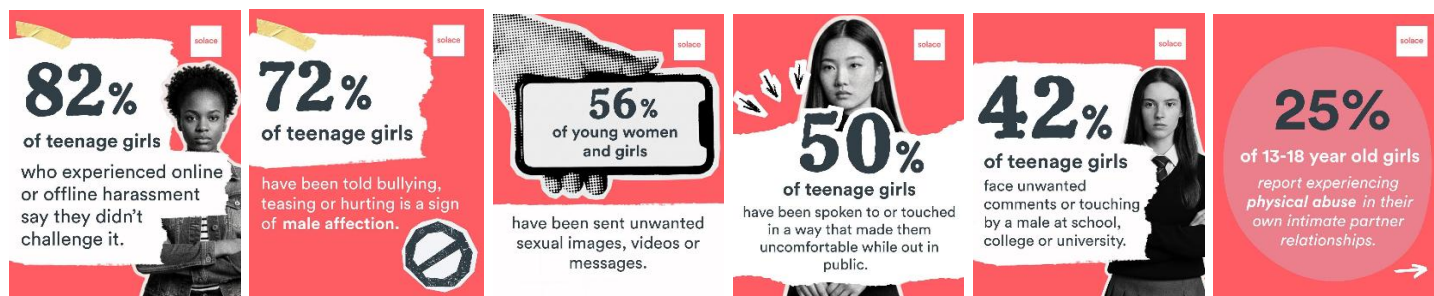
We also know that men are significantly less likely to report abuse to law enforcement or seek local support services due to stigma, believing that they won't be taken seriously, or a lack of recognition that what they are experiencing is abuse.

Unfortunately, the amount of services for male victims of domestic abuse are extremely limited in comparison with those for female victims.

Organisations such as **Next Chapter**, **Mankind Initiative**, and **MFCC (Male and Female Crisis Centre)** offer small numbers of refuge accommodations for male victims of domestic abuse, but none are available in Scotland. Shockingly, male domestic abuse victims in Scotland have to be content with helpline advice from small organisations such as **Abused Men In Scotland**.

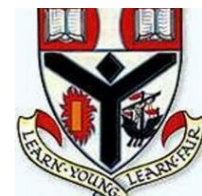
Our charity is now considering the development of Personal Safety courses specifically for male victims of domestic violence. Obviously, the emphasis would not be on physical self defence, but rather on how to escape a violent female partner ideally without using force. Watch this space!

Personal Safety for Children and Young People



Schools

Our Personal Safety workshops took place in **Auchenharvie Academy** in Steventon throughout September and October 2025 and again in February, March and April 2026. In total, we ran **32** workshops, training **613** pupils.





Workshops focused on a variety of topics including bullying, knife awareness (including the legal consequences of carrying a knife or other bladed weapons), domestic abuse, staying safe while socialising, and even the effects of pornography on young people and respecting women.

These workshops were for every year group from S1 to S5 and it is our hope that we will see a reduction in school bullying, as well as a future local reduction in domestic abuse, knife crime and sexual assaults, as these pupils progress into adulthood.

Time will tell if our training has the impact we are hoping for.



In December 2025, we ran two Personal Safety workshops focussing on domestic abuse for **70** 5th & 6th year females and two workshops for **62** 5th & 6th year males at **Ardrossan Academy** as part of **16 Days of Action**. The response has been fantastic with the school inviting us back in 2026.



ST ALOYSIUS' COLLEGE

Also in December, we ran two 'taster' Personal Safety sessions for **St. Aloysius' College** in Glasgow. The organiser commented;

"The sessions were very well received, by staff as well as pupils. We even had staff commenting that they would like to learn these skills too. As a taster it was just right, and has left us wanting to do more."

100% of the pupils involved agreed that learning self defence was an important skill to learn and that they would like to learn more in the future.

In January 2026, we ran empowering Personal Safety workshop for students at **The Glasgow School of Art**. Comments included;



"The instructors were very helpful and engaging to listen to."

"I learned a lot at the session. There was so much I didn't know, and the trainers were so encouraging and honest."

"The session was informative and captivating. The trainers were confident, welcoming, and even open about relevant past experiences."



GEORGE WATSON'S COLLEGE

In June 2026, we ran five empowering Personal Safety workshops for **113** S6 pupils at **George Watson's College** in Edinburgh. This is our third year of running our workshops for the College and we have already been invited back for 2027.

Young People not attending schools

Over the last two years, we have worked with various alternative education programmes and groups whose aim is to empower young people who struggle with traditional schooling.

School isn't for everyone. Some young people just aren't academically suited. Some don't perform well in classroom environments. Many have learning deficits such as dyslexia, dyscalculia or dysgraphia or conditions such as ADHD or Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Some are bullied or have other domestic issues which make formal schooling a problem for them.

Rather than leave school with no qualifications, various providers in North Ayrshire offer young people a chance to gain alternative accreditations, practical skills and hands-on experiences that will help them gain employment in the future. Our charity has been working alongside these providers;



In November 2025, we ran empowering workshops for young people in Irvine attending **Positive Pathways**, which helps young people not attending formal education.

Our charity was then asked to give a 'taster' Personal Safety talk and self defence demonstration session in March 2026 to celebrate Positive Pathways' 10th Anniversary.

The organisers commented;

*"These workshops and sessions were incredibly well received by everyone who attended. **Both partner services and members of the public found them highly engaging and valuable, and there was a real sense of appreciation for the practical skills and knowledge shared.***

The sessions were a real eye-opener for participants, offering clear, accessible guidance on how to stay safe within the community. It was particularly impactful for those considering roles in community care, as it helped build their awareness of legal considerations and best practices when faced with potentially unsafe situations.

*The taster session also did a fantastic job of highlighting the outstanding work of The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety. **It gave participants a strong understanding of the support available and how they can engage further. We truly value these sessions—they are an excellent resource not only for individuals, but also for partner organisations looking to better support their staff.***

Everyone left speaking about the session and it was a real highlight of the event.

Thank you again for delivering such informative and empowering sessions. We look forward to continuing to work together."



In March 2026, we trained a group of youths in North Ayrshire Council's **Safer Choices, Stronger Futures** programme. These youths had been highlighted as likely to offend by school campus cops and we have been asked to run similar training for this programme next year.

An organiser commented; "These courses taught our more challenging young people how to stay safe and avoid violent situations. **The training was invaluable.**".

We have been involved in the development and presentation of the **Community Brokerage Network's "EmpowerEd"** programme since August 2024 and continue to run workshops in our Barony St John Centre for local youths who have opted out of school. We ran empowering workshops in our Centre in February, March and June 2026.



The group leader commented;

"Every child we brought along loved the sessions and were always buzzing afterwards. Having looked back through all our sessions, our young people enjoyed these days and said they had the best time and always asked when they could return.

One young person has since gone on to do some further training outwith the sessions with encouragement from Alan and his peers. He now attends these sessions within his own time during the week after school, and this is huge for him as he has not previously been involved in any out-of-school activities.

All young people gave the sessions they had with Alan 10/10, and we noticed that these sessions provided smiles and lots of conversations about why self-defence and fitness were important parts of life and growing up. All came away feeling much more confident in their ability to ever be in a position where they were required to use self-defence. They admitted they would never have been able to do this before attending the sessions. They also said that they felt better after doing some exercise.

Alan always treats the young people with respect and they, in turn, show this to him, which is great to see from a group of young people who struggle in school."

Youth Groups



In February 2026, we ran an empowering Personal Safety course for **Pavillion Youth Café**, a charity youth organisation based in Easterhouse, Glasgow. Comments included;

Charlotte; "Doing the self defence course made me feel more confident in my abilities."

Korey; "It was really fun and engaging and really useful in case we get into an altercation. I liked it very much. The one slap to the ear and how to get out of being strangled were useful for self defence. My favourite part though was the one ear slap."

Caleb; "My favourite part of the training was slapping both ears. I found the training quite fun and cool and I kept engaged for the full thing."

Dorian; "I loved the self defence because I've never knew the techniques until you taught them to me. My favourite was the one where you get out of being choked. The training was so cool and interesting."



Millie; “It was really fun and engaging and I liked it because I really enjoy physical stuff. **I feel like the instructors taught me well and I enjoyed listening to them because they made me feel like I could level out what someone had done to me** e.g. someone punches me or kicks me, so I can kick them back. **My favourite part was acting drunk/high with fake fighting involved** (the warning/danger signs) **and learning how to burst someone’s eardrum if necessary**. I also like that I had gotten taught this course because I have not done any martial arts or physical fighting in over a year. **I felt as if I now be more safe after learning these things**. I would like to say thank you to **Alan** and **David** for taking their time to come out of work and teaching me these things.”



- KRAV MAGA -

Our own weekly **ScotCPS Krav Maga** self defence class ran in our Barony St John Centre in Ardrossan through until May 2026 and was attended by under 18yr olds from The Three Towns. Each class had 6 – 10 youths taking part.

Personal Safety for Ethnic Minority groups

In November 2025, we ran a Personal Safety course for **CEMVO Scotland** in Glasgow. CEMVO Scotland is a national intermediary organisation and strategic partner of the Scottish Government Equality Unit. Their aim is to build the capacity and sustainability of the ethnic minority (EM) voluntary sector and its communities. Comments included;

“This course was fantastic.”



Also in November, we ran an empowering Personal Safety course for females at **Edinburgh Central Mosque** which the organiser described as **“a wonderful session”**.

In January 2026, we ran an empowering Personal Safety workshop for **Govan Community Project’s Women’s Group**. The Project supports refugees and people seeking asylum across Glasgow. Comments included;

“An excellent course with excellent trainers.”





In March 2026, we ran an empowering Personal Safety course for **Shakti Women's Aid**, a Women's Aid group which provides help to black minority ethnic (BME) women, children and young people who are experiencing, or who have experienced, domestic abuse. Comments included;

"Lovely trainers. They are all good communicators and supportive. I felt confident to ask questions and I knew I would get good answers. The whole day boosted my confidence."

"Everything was amazing and the trainers were very helpful. I really enjoyed learning about what improvised weapons were."

"The trainers were very supportive and energetic. We now know if someone attacks us, we can defend ourselves."

Recent research shows that people with disabilities are more likely to experience domestic violence, sexual assault, and abuse, than people without them. This is why, over the years, we have developed empowering Personal Safety courses for people with dwarfism; people who are sensory impaired (blind, deaf, deafblind); and most recently, people with learning disabilities and/or autism.

Personal Safety for People Learning Disabilities including Autism



Lockhart Campus
UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

Throughout 2025 and 2026, we have had numerous talks, discussions and course demonstrations with **Down's Syndrome Scotland, Trindlemoss** in Irvine (who aim to transform community attitudes to better support and promote opportunities for people with learning disabilities), and **Lockhart Campus** in Stevenston (who provide an exceptional learning environment for learners aged 5–18yrs old who require additional support across their educational journey).



Our intention was to adapt and provide an empowering Personal Safety course to individuals with more complex learning disabilities however, despite holding over 30 meetings and 'pilot' training sessions both online and in-person, running actual courses has proved to be elusive and, as you may imagine, extremely challenging. We will continue to endeavour to help individuals with this category of disability and our fingers are crossed that group courses of one form or another, will take place in the near future.



A huge *"Thank you"* must go to the **Elizabeth Drummond Charitable Fund** who provided us with the funds to run these discussion groups and pilot courses with service users and staff of **Down's Syndrome Scotland, Trindlemoss** and **Lockhart Campus**, as well as our empowering Personal Safety courses for people with mild-moderate learning disabilities this year, including the following;

Neighbourhood Networks - an organisation that supports vulnerable adults with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health issues, to live an active, healthy life, safely, within their own homes and to be fully involved within their local communities. Their aim is for their members to learn essential life skills, becoming more independent whilst spending more time with friends and becoming less reliant on paid support.

In June 2026, we ran empowering Personal Safety courses for their service users with learning disabilities.

The organiser commented; “Members and staff from the North Ayrshire Networks recently participated in Personal Safety sessions from The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety in Ardrossan. **They learned how to avoid confrontation and tips on staying safe when they might feel vulnerable, as well as practical self defence moves and the laws about this.**

They saw many people come out their comfort zones and building their confidence during the day, and everyone said they would love to go back again! Thank you very much to **Alan** and **Barbara** at The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety for their time and activities!”



We also ran empowering Personal Safety courses for **Key Housing**, an Ayrshire-based company that helps people in supported living who have mild-moderate learning difficulties. Our courses were designed to make them feel less vulnerable and more empowered, allowing them to live more fuller, safer lives. The course organiser commented; “**The feedback from the guys has been very positive and they have been telling other staff about what they learned at the course.** They really liked **Alan**. **Thank you for everything.**”



Personal Safety for People who are Sensory Impaired



In September 2025, we ran an empowering Personal Safety session for **West Lothian Vision Impaired Group**. The group commented;

"The feedback has been fantastic; The members felt the workshop was well presented and very informative. Being able to role play was really good for our confidence and we all feel that if the worst was to happen, we would at least have an idea how to defend ourselves.

Your understanding of visual impairment and how that might affect someone who is being attacked was also very good.

*The workshop has given us a good insight of potential problem solving in dangerous situations which **has given our members more confidence about going about their daily lives with less fear.***

It was really helpful that there was a visually impaired volunteer who attended the workshop too.

A really worth-while workshop to have attended and many thanks to you and your team for taking the time to provide this for us."

In October 2024, we ran a 'taster' session for vision impaired youths at **Visibility Scotland** in Glasgow. Following on from this, we ran an 8-week block of empowering Personal Safety courses to VI adults from 29th October – 17th December 2025.

Participants of this first course came over to our Barony St John Centre in April 2026 for more training. Comments included;



*"I enjoyed the course immensely. **I was really nervous coming along because I didn't get the house much and this has got me back out again.** I'm meeting some really nice people and the Instructors were marvelous...and it was actually great fun."*

*"It's a good class to go to and **I'd recommend you come and see what it is like because you never know when you are going to be attacked.**"*

*"I think the stuff we are taught is really very useful. **I feel more confident walking around. I really don't feel scared of being attacked, not that I did a lot before, but I just don't think it is a problem anymore.** I think everyone who is vision impaired should come to this training. It is fun but it's also quite important and I think everyone should know how to defend themselves, just in case. Hopefully, none of us will ever have to use it but it's just good to know."*

Please see our video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upqi4wauuEc>



In January 2026, we also ran an empowering Personal Safety course for **Visibility Scotland**'s Dumfries branch. Comments include;

"The course was empowering. As we lose our sight most of us become fixated on the things we can no longer do, Visibility Scotland and events like this one held by The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety help us to focus on what we can still do. There are several excellent charities doing great work in Scotland but events understandably tend to be held in the Central belt making them inaccessible to us in Dumfries and Galloway. Local presence is vital and makes each of us feel we have a personal friend who will help us with any questions or problems we may have."

"The self-defence classes was great, learnt some great techniques and realised my strength. I also met other visually impaired people, which was great."

"I enjoyed this course very much. I found it very helpful. There's a lot of things that I was quite quick at learning. Everything that he showed us was useful, very useful. I feel more confident after doing it (the class). I was even telling my brother, 'I could be knocking you out now!' It was great to meet new people. I haven't really met many other people with my condition and it helps you feel understood."

"The class was absolutely fantastic, I loved it! There are places I would avoid walking as it can be scary if they are unfamiliar, especially at night when my vision is worse, but I feel safer in my own skin now."



In March 2026, we ran an empowering Personal Safety course for the **Scottish Sensory Centre** based in Edinburgh University. Comments include;

"The best things about this training course were participating, the Instructors (who were very engaging and informative), the practical demonstrations, and understanding how the course content is adapted for VI participants."

"I wish it had been longer to learn even more!"



Personal Safety for the LGBTQ+ community

Latest statistics from **Stonewall**, an organisation advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, found that:

- More than **1 in 10 LGBT people (11%)** have faced domestic abuse from a partner in the last year.
- **64% of LGBTQ+ people** had experienced anti-LGBT+ violence or abuse. Of these, **92% had experienced verbal abuse**, **29% had experienced physical violence** and **17% had experienced sexual violence**.
- Only **1 in 8 LGBT+ people surveyed** had reported the most recent incident that they had experienced to the Police. **Less than half of those who did report their experience to the Police were satisfied with the response**.
- **18% of LGBT+ people** have been the target of negative comments or conduct from work colleagues because they're LGBT+.
- **18% of LGBT+ people who were looking for work** said they were discriminated against because of their identity while trying to get a job.

In February 2026, we ran empowering Personal Safety courses for **Queen Margaret University LGBT+ Society**.



The organiser commented; ***"We've had great feedback following your course, as usual."***

Last year, the **UK Supreme Court** made a ruling that the terms "woman", "man" and "sex" in the Equality Act 2010 are based on biological sex at birth, not legal gender identification. This caused quite a bit of a stir in the transgender community particularly as, amongst other things, it seemed to say that transgender people would no longer be allowed to use the toilets and changing rooms of the gender they identified with.

There was a call for further guidance on this subject and, in May 2026, this came to fruition. The new guidance confirms that single-sex toilets and changing rooms must exclude transgender men and women.



The announcement led to '**For Women Scotland**', the female campaign group that brought the original case to the Supreme Court, describing the new guidance as *"a significant milestone in ensuring women's rights are upheld and protected across the UK"*.

Our founder, **Alan Bell MBE**, commented;

"Our charity's focus is keeping people safe, so regarding changing and shower rooms where people are getting naked or in state of undress, it makes perfect sense for them to be single-sex areas. You cannot, for example, have a biological male, even although they identify themselves as a female, in the same shower or changing area as biological females. It is a simple matter of common sense and personal safety."

However, when it comes to toilets, is there really a safety issue?

This year's trans-women and trans-men, the same as yesteryear's transexuals and transvestites, enter a female or male toilet and go straight to the cubicle, do their business, and leave. This has been occurring without incident for decades, perhaps even centuries.

Some people say the answer is unisex toilets but quite frankly, the result would be exactly the same – biological males and females would still be using the same facility. The reality is, the only difference would be the sign on the door.

Now the other argument some people propose is that there have been cases where men identifying as women have entered a female toilet and then sexually assaulted a female. First of all, this is extremely rare. And secondly, there are far more cases of biological males entering female toilets and sexually assaulting females than there are transwomen doing this. In short, not allowing transwomen into female toilets won't stop sexual assaults happening there.

So, **is it fair to now suddenly say that transwomen must go to a men's toilet or transmen must use a female toilet? Is this safe? Forcing transpeople to use the toilets of their biological sex will no doubt result in them facing abuse, harassment and possibly violence and assaults. That's just not acceptable! You cannot give transpeople rights one minute and then strip them of it the next, leaving them more vulnerable and unsafe now than they have been in generations."**

Our charity sincerely hopes that this situation will be addressed further and rectified in the very near future.

Personal Safety in the Workplace

General staff



Nursing staff

Workplace Violence in Healthcare



Mental health is now the leading cause of workplace absence in the UK.

Charity workers

According to a 2024 Unite survey, **69% of charity workers said they suffered from anxiety due to their work**, while **68% reported continual tiredness** and **66% sleeplessness**.

Teaching staff

In September 2025, **The Commission on School Reform**, set up by the think-tank *Enlighten*, found that **“the sanctions-averse Scottish Government approach to school discipline was ‘fundamentally misguided’”**.

It went on to say that well-behaved pupils’ right to an education was being eroded, teachers were leaving the profession due to stress, and Scotland was declining in international comparisons of education standards.

The report also suggested **growing numbers of Scottish parents had lost their respect for education and were more likely to side with their children against the authority of the school**. The report urged government to issue new guidance making it clear that ‘*serious sanctions*’ such as suspensions and exclusions were tools that all Head Teachers should have at their disposal.

The report highlighted that **many teachers felt physically sick every morning before they enter the classroom and were worried that they may be punched in the face that day**. Other teachers reported **fleeing school buildings to weep in their cars** for a time before trying to compose themselves for the next lesson.

In an Aberdeen secondary school, two boys marched into a classroom and squared up to their female teacher. She ordered them to leave and, when they did, she closed the door. Then they kicked the classroom door down.

In the same school, **fireworks were set off inside the building and aimed at teachers**. Across Aberdeen, **violent incidents in schools have soared by 70% in the past three years**.

In Dundee, **a male music teacher was physically thrown out of his classroom and onto the floor by a pupil**. On other occasions, **children spat in his face, trashed his classroom, climbed on desks and hurled themselves at him**. They even keyed his car. **He resigned after a year**.

One female teacher told Radio Scotland; *“The advice we’re given, is if a pupil is making a beeline for you, try to protect your face by holding your hands up.”*

Another caller works in an Additional Support Needs unit in a Scottish school, and said; *“Those are 16-year-old boys – almost men – who are physically assaulting us. I myself have been absent from school on a couple of occasions after being physically assaulted. Before I go in each day, I actually feel physically ill because I think, ‘God, is it going to be me today? Am I the one that’s going to be punched in the side of the head or hit in the face?’”*

Another caller, a probationary primary school teacher, admitted that **she was now used to evacuating her class of 5-6yr olds because chairs were being thrown across the classroom**. And because the sanction for the out-of-control pupil throwing them was pastoral – such as being taken out to play in the playground – other pupils were acting up too, in the expectation of being given the same treatment.

A third caller, whose wife works in a secondary school, reported that **a two-line note of apology was sufficient for a pupil who had battered a staff member on the head with a heavy text book, to be readmitted to the same class the next day**.

Another teacher, dreading returning to work after the 2025 summer break, told STV News that she had *“recurring nightmares”* about her classroom traumas, and added; **“Teachers are being hit, pushed, headbutted, scratched, bitten, and kicked on a daily basis**. I’m covered in bruises most term-time. And I have to say, I’m looking at other careers.”

Tom Bennett, a long-standing UK Government adviser and one of two newly-appointed Attendance & Behaviour Ambassadors for schools, said; *“I’ve seen over 1,500 schools in the world and I would say **the Scottish behaviour system is among the worst**. And I say that with no pride. I say it with nothing but shame, as somebody who is Scottish and lives in Scotland.”*

This report and teachers comments confirm the alarming rise in violent behaviour. In the 2023-24 academic year, **assaults on teachers in Scotland rose to 16,000 – one every 4 minutes of class time**. That is almost treble the number recorded 3 years earlier.

An NASUWT survey in early 2025 revealed **44% of Scottish teachers had experienced physical abuse or violence in the previous 12 months – and 90% had been verbally abused**. And Scottish Liberal Democrat figures in 2025 showed 40,382 violent incidents had been reported in Scottish schools during 2023-24 – a new record.

In July 2025, we ran an empowering Personal Safety course for an **Adult Carer Support group** in Girvan, South Ayrshire. Although low numbers, the group was extremely enthusiastic about our training and hoped to invite us back for more.



In September 2025, we ran an empowering Personal Safety session for females at international law firm **CMS** in Edinburgh. Comments included;

"We had brilliant feedback from the attendees at the last session, where you provided a 'taster' of the basics of the law regarding self-defence/reasonable use of force, voice control/defensive stances and a few self-defence scenarios."

In October 2025, we ran two workshops for the **Women's Empowerment Business Resource Group** at **Thermo Fisher Scientific** in Inchinnan. This was the third year we have run this training for them with the organiser confirming that the feedback merited us returning next year.



In November 2025, we ran an empowering course for the staff of NHS Fife's **Bank Street Medical Group**. The Practice Manager was keen for us to return in the near future and has since recommended us to other medical groups in NHS Fife.

In November 2025, we ran a Personal Safety in the Workplace course for **East Dunbartonshire Leisure & Culture** staff and have been asked back next year for on-going training of their staff.





In March 2026, following recommendations from other medical practices in the area, we ran an empowering Personal Safety course for NHS Fife's **Cowdenbeath Medical Practice**.

Also in March, we ran an empowering Personal Safety in the Workplace course for **Lantra Scotland**. Comments included;

*"The training was very good. **We all feel much safer at work now**. Personally, I didn't think I would be able to defend myself - and now I know I can. **The team now feels more confident that they could defend themselves if attacked and we are looking forward to a padded attacker in the near future**. I feel 100% safer now. Thank you."*



*"**I feel this course was definitely helpful** and it made me think of how I can be more aware as well as things I can do in different situations. It also made me really want to take the full course. **I feel much more confident that I could defend myself if attacked** but would want to have it ingrained in me so that there would be no doubt. It was an amazing start to what I hope will be future courses."*

Wellbeing activities

Pressures within society including poverty and inequalities, increase the risk of suicide. Social exclusion, isolation and poor access to local services may increase this. **North Ayrshire Council area has the 8th highest suicide rate in the whole of Scotland**.

This prompted us to consider how we, as a charity based in North Ayrshire, could help improve the mental and physical wellbeing of our service users and our local community as a whole.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Charter;

*"**Wellbeing is not happiness that lasts only for a moment, but happiness that lasts.**"*



Wellbeing is often viewed as a broader concept than happiness, encompassing not only the fleeting pleasures of hedonic happiness, but also the deeper, more lasting forms of happiness such as eudaimonic happiness, which involves the fulfillment that comes from helping others and living a purposeful life.

According to the Japan WHO translation;

*"**Good health does not mean that you are not sick or weak, but that you are in a state of being satisfied physically, mentally, and socially.**"*

We know our charity's Personal Safety / self defence courses empower people and this goes towards helping people feel safer to socialise again, but we had to ask how we could improve our community's wellbeing - to help people feel satisfied **physically, mentally** and **socially**. We came up with these answers;

Physically – we can offer Tai Chi and Yoga access; free Gym access; and free Self Defence classes.

Mentally – we can offer free Therapeutic Art classes; Ice Tank therapy; Sauna (hot therapy); and Meditation.

Socially – Barony Bingo, Fun Quiz, Dominoes, and making new friends in our Barony Wellbeing Café.

Barony Wellbeing Café

Our new café serves up smiles and support with your favourite cuppa, making it the ideal place to improve your mental wellbeing...it's a place where you can feel anchored.

We focus not only on serving fresh, wholesome food at affordable prices, but also on improving the wellbeing of our community.

Over the past year, our café has been decorated with different themes and staff costumed-up to put a smile on customers' faces. The themes, which change at least monthly, celebrate various holidays (Christmas, Rabbin Burns Week, Easter, Halloween, St. Patrick's Week); National or international Weeks (National Tea Week, National Cocktail Week, Greek Week, National Mental Health Awareness Week); and even national events (Back to School Week, Scotland in the World Cup Month).



Customers love it!



We also started our very successful **Barony Bingo** on Tuesdays, our **Fun Quiz** on Wednesdays, and our **Domino Mornings** on Thursdays, all free of charge. Comments included;

"Coming to your café is the highlight of my week."

"Anything that gets people out and socialising in a safe environment should always be applauded. Well done."



"I came all the way from Kilmarnock because I heard this was a wellbeing café. I never had the courage to come into a café by myself before but the atmosphere here has been so friendly and welcoming that I intend to be back every week. **Loneliness is a terrible thing**, so thank you. Loved the Bingo and the chat."



"Alan and his team helped me so much when I came out of my domestic abuse relationship. They gave me confidence to get my life back on track. It's amazing the amount of wellbeing activities this charity are now offering. I love all groups in the community that support mental health and help combat loneliness."



"What a great initiative for the community. Well done to everyone involved. **Amazing work.**"



"Anyone who is helping anyone with any sort of wellbeing help, is amazing in my eyes. Well done to all involved."



"This has been an excellent resource for many people in the community. My friends and I have recently found, within the Barony St John Centre, **a gem of a place.** The Barony Café attached to the Centre is a friendly, welcoming addition.

It is a space to relax and enjoy delicious recipes, newly fresh. Avril and her staff are a great advertisement. **Always friendly, informing customers of all wellbeing events available (and there are many) that complement the Personal Safety training** including Sauna, with gym-access in progress.

Avril spends a lot of time and effort into offering a selection of different breads to make your sandwich or wrap. I love Avril's homemade coleslaw. It would be great to be able to purchase a jar of it. It is delicious and better than any supermarket one.

The cafe prices are reasonable too. Lovely quality food, delivered with a friendly smile, and I know Avril spends a lot of her time making exciting, out of the ordinary, tastes.

There is a great view out of the café window, on any day of the week. The sea has many moods and it's nice to enjoy a walk along the promenade,

then pop into the Barony Café for a nice hot chocolate.

Avril is always happy to suggest different drinks to go with any meal. Never just ordinary tea, although you can have that too, if that's your wish. There's a lovely range of herbal teas available too.

I for one have certainly made The Barony Café, with the warm welcome from Avril and her staff guaranteed, my go-to place. This business is certainly an asset to The Three Towns and beyond."



"Passing the Barony Church one day, I spotted a sign saying "Barony Café, We Are Open". I went in, and **that was the best move I have made in a long time.**

Things have not been too good for me in the past five years. Unfortunately, during lockdown, **my wife Cathie was diagnosed with vascular dementia.** Eighteen months ago, **my health broke down and I was in hospital for a month, so Cathie had to go into a Care Home.**

I am able to visit her every day. But my family live so far away, so I am on my own. I tried going to various local hotels and cafes but soon realised that **nobody wants to talk to you anymore.**

Not true – go into The Barony Café.

The **welcoming atmosphere** from the staff only comes when morale is high, and that is down to proper management.

What a difference to see people joining in with the quizzes, bingo, etc. provided by the charity and staff. If the charity ever went into politics, they would win by a landslide victory.

This café has made a huge difference to my life. Thank you."



Cold Water Therapy

When installing our **cold-water therapy (Ice Tank)** was first mooted, we questioned as to whether the front of our building was a good place for it, particularly as users would be in their swimming costumes and passers-by on the pavement only a few feet away. One of our service users, a survivor of sexual assault, stated; **"I can't think of anything more empowering!"**, so we built it! It's situated to the left of the front door of our Wellbeing Café. Since being installed, we have had a number of positive comments including;

"I just wanted to say a big thank you for opening up the Ice Tank. I was a bit nervous coming along as I've only tried the ice a couple of times before, but from the moment I walked in I felt really welcomed and at ease.

*The staff's introduction was brilliant — they made everything feel **safe, supportive and reassuring**, which helped me relax and really enjoy the experience. Having them there gave me the confidence to go for it, and **I felt amazing afterwards!***

It's something I can see myself continuing with to support my own health and wellbeing, and I've already encouraged my sister to give it a try — she's planning to come along in the next week or two.

*What you're offering here is so much more than just the physical side. I can see how valuable it could be for people in the community, especially anyone facing mental health challenges. **It gives people a safe, positive space to try something new and feel the benefits straight away.***

I really hope this grows and gets the recognition it deserves, because it has the potential to make such a difference. I'll definitely be back soon!"



Sauna Hot Therapy

We also opened our **hot therapy (Sauna)** in September 2025 with some amazing results;

*"How great the sauna is at The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety. **I have arthritis and I feel like a million dollars when I come out of the sauna. It actually gives me a lift – mentally and physically.** The staff are all so friendly and helpful too. **It is a real joy!**"*

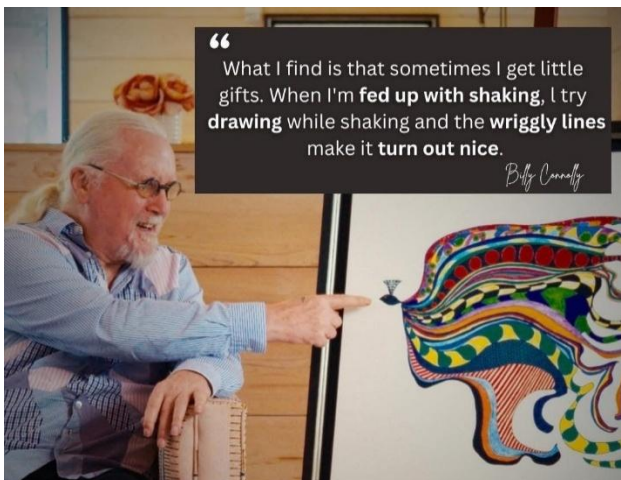


*"**This is a great community initiative** with so much already happening there. **Lovely, affordable café with friendly, helpful staff...and a great sauna! Anything that reduces isolation, provides affordable activities, AND has great toasties is to be encouraged and supported.**"*

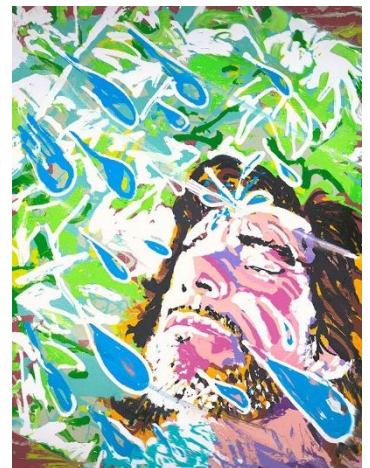
WONDERFUL

Therapeutic Art classes

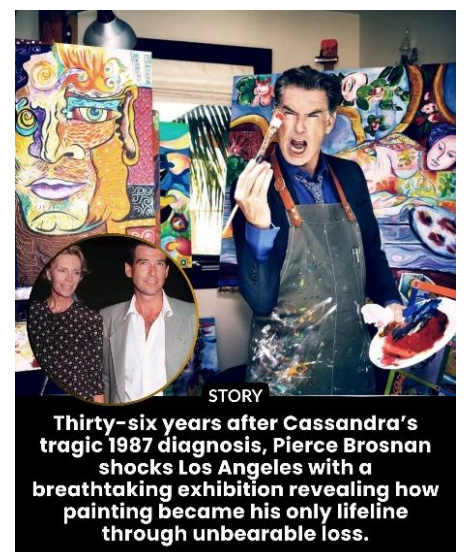
Therapeutic art has long been used to help heal and improve people's mental wellbeing. Billy Connolly, Sylvester Stallone, Jim Carrey and Pierce Brosnan are amongst many celebrities who use art to help convey their emotions and feelings.



Actor and comic, **Jim Carrey** describes the therapeutic effects of his artworks;
"Art is a way of modelling the inner world. Of making the invisible visible."



Sylvester Stallone describes how art helps his mental wellbeing;
"Art is the ability to communicate through an intermediary and convey one's feelings through an isolated object. It's inspiration and incubation. It's putting my subjective feelings into an objective form and then on to you for a subjective interpretation."



Our **"The Art of Feeling Safe" therapeutic art classes** were presented by artist and volunteer **Barbara Pokryszka** in 8-week blocks, first from 18th September - 13th November 2025 to coincide with the **North Ayrshire Mental Health Arts Festival** and the **Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival**, and then from 29th January - 19th March 2026.

Participants were encouraged to explore and express their emotions when producing their art works, whether joyful, hidden, or difficult, participants were encouraged to project their feelings onto the canvas, offering a creative outlet while supporting their mental wellbeing.

Please check out our video which highlights the amazing benefits people who attended our first 8-week block felt.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMx5DdHGu4g&t=6s>

**NORTH AYRSHIRE
MENTAL HEALTH
ARTS FESTIVAL**

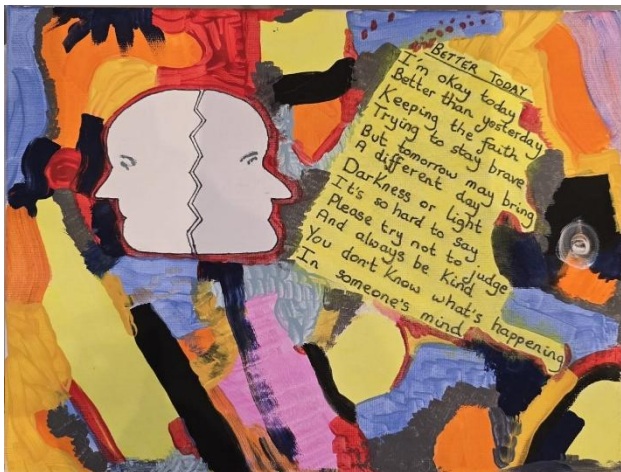
**SCOTTISH
MENTAL HEALTH
ARTS FESTIVAL**

Comments from participants included;

"Most days I don't leave my bed, never mind my house. But I've made an effort to come to these classes and they've helped me a lot. Learning that I can draw and paint has given me a purpose in life that I never had before. It makes me feel good. I can put my thoughts and feelings onto paper and I've started to go outdoors more to see and draw nature. I can't thank Barbara and The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety enough for guiding me through this depressive period in my life."

"I joined this art class to open up and chat about my mental health worries within a group. And I wanted to gain more confidence. **These art classes have very much helped me.** They have given me an insight into expressive art; given me confidence in my ability; and **helped me mentally within myself.**"

"I lost my husband over a year ago and have been feeling isolated. I thought these classes would help me but I have also been surprised at what I can do artistically. I've felt supported and cared for by Alan and Barbara. **The conversations while we were painting were very therapeutic and I feel I have gained confidence.**"



"I had noticing myself getting really low and thought the art aspect of this class would give me something to look forward to, as well as a chance to be with people who are in a similar situation. Now I feel it is the right time for me to at least try and express my feelings through art. **Barbara has helped me in ways I could never have imagined.**"

"As I attended the classes, everybody started to open up about their lives, wellbeing and how the classes were helping every week, which has been great. **They've helped me express where I've been in life and where I'm going in life now.** Thank you."

"Art is a creative way that people can express themselves in ways that perhaps talking therapy can't facilitate. Being able to show visually what you feel and think is such a powerful therapeutic tool. This video of the group of participants shows beautifully, the process of identifying pain and hurt and loss, and being able to express it through art, and how impactful it has been going on the journey in Barbara's group."

Sharon Belshaw MSc MBACP

Charity no: SC044042

Company no: CS001160



www.ScotCPS.org.uk

reflects your personal experience, but also the feelings and challenges within the wider community. It is important to continue to build understanding and awareness of mental health issues that affect so many of us."



Depute Provost Sweeney added; "Volunteering means giving your time to help others, A volunteer benefits both the community and the volunteer. This helps others help build skills, improve confidence and creates a positive impact on society. It is an absolute honour and a privilege for me to be with you today to present the "**Health & Wellness Training & Coaching Excellence**" award that was recognised at the **Global Health & Wellness Awards 2026**. This award recognises innovators through leaders and the experts driving health and wellbeing. Congratulations to everyone at The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety and it is with great pleasure that I present this award to **Barbara Pokryszka**."



On receiving the award on behalf of our charity, Barbara commented;

"I would like to say **thank to our artists for trusting me and letting me into your lives**. Thank you."



A huge "Thank you" to the Scottish Government's **Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund**, for part-funding our Wellbeing Café Manager and Wellbeing/Health Promotions Officer, and for funding bingo and quiz prizes in our café, ice for our Ice Tank and yoga mats.



And "Thank you" also to **Cunninghame Housing Association's Making Our Communities Better Places Fund** for part-funding our therapeutic art classes for 2026 and 2027.



Wellbeing courses

We also ran our empowering Personal Safety courses, designed to promote mental wellbeing, for various groups and organisations including;



Having already run a wellbeing Personal Safety workshop in March 2025 for the **Over 50s Discovery Award Friendship Club** in Irvine where we added humorous anecdotes and stories to promote laughter within the group, we were asked to run another workshop for them in July 2025. The organiser once again confirmed that the workshops had been a huge success with their members and hopes we can return again next year.



An 8-week **Depression Group** ran in our Training Room from 30th April until 24th June 2026 facilitated by the Senior Occupational Therapist & Practice Education Coordinator North Ayrshire for **North Ayrshire Primary Care Service**.

Three outcome measures were used to measure the success of this group; PHQ-9 (depression symptoms), CORE-10 (psychological distress), and Behavioural Activation for Depression Scale (BADS) with subscales Activation (AC) and Avoidance (AV).

All participants demonstrated marked improvements across all outcome measures, including substantial reductions in psychological distress, avoidance behaviours and depressive symptoms, alongside increased activation.

All participants rated our venue as 5/5 (very good) and quoted its size and location as being ideal for the group. They were also appreciative of the café where family members could wait, which made them feel more secure in attending the group.

Participants commented;

"I am feeling more positive. At the start of the group, I didn't think I was depressed. I have accepted things better now and do not think I need counselling anymore. I was in a dark tunnel and now I am coming out of the tunnel and see the light moving forward". (Participant is now in a craft group and is volunteering).

"My confidence has improved" (Participant's involvement in group discussion and in informal conversation with other participants increased)

"I am thinking more about relationships and setting boundaries to improve my own wellbeing."

"I've realised there's things I can't control and have to focus on the things I can."

The group facilitator commented;

"Thanks again for the use of the great space, **it really stood out to the participants as preferable to a medicalised venue**. We will be in touch again re future groups!"





A 5-week course **Capacitor for Change** course also ran in our Training Room from 7th May until 4th June 2026 by **North Ayrshire Wellbeing & Recovery College**. Comments included;

"I would really appreciate the opportunity to do more of this in this learning space, and gain more knowledge and skills."

"Loved these sessions and was sad they ended as we could do so much more. Learning from YouTube is not the same."

"It was so much fun. The communication, laughter, friendships made. There was absolutely no pressure on anyone, it was just so laid back and very informative."

"All of the aspects of the course were new to me, so I learnt a great deal. The highlight would be meeting Lorna - such an enthusiastic, sparkling, generous person."

"I loved it all and learnt so much from the course and others – a really good, fun group."

The course tutor added;

"I feel that this was a fabulous course to run and would like to do a second one. The student feedback we received was fantastic with everyone commenting on how sad it was that the course had come to an end. We never got any bad feedback. One group member benefited so much from the course that she is now able to lift her arm high. She was delighted about this and shared at the Recovery College 'Celebration of Learning' event in Saltcoats how much of a success this is for her from the course."

Awards and Achievements

We are absolutely thrilled that our Personal Safety and wellbeing work, and its empowering, life-changing results have been recognised by so many local and national awarding bodies this year, as well as some of our volunteers being recognised for their own individual efforts;



In October 2025, we reached the final of **The Mental Health Awards 2025** in the category of **“Most Innovative Mental Health Intervention”** for the life-changing effects of our empowering Personal Safety courses. Unfortunately, we did not win but the judges commented; **“This was a really innovative and novel intervention which has the ability to be adapted across multiple regions.”**

In December 2025, our founder **Alan Bell MBE** reached the Manchester final of the **Stars of Learning Disabilities & Autism Awards** in the category of **“Trailblazer Trainer”**.



Also in December, our **Barony Wellbeing Café** made it to the final in the **“Best Café – North Ayrshire 2025”** category of the **UK Small Business Awards** in London.



In February 2026, **Barbara Pokryszka** won our **“Volunteer of the Year”** trophy for the second time, having previously won this award in 2022. Her outstanding commitment to our charity, making herself available for the vast majority of our training courses, and launching her hugely successful and impactful **therapeutic art classes** in our Centre have helped Barbara achieve her second win.

Huge congratulations, Barbara, from all the team.



In March 2026, we reached the London final of **The Great British Wellbeing Awards 2026** in the category of **“Wellbeing Service Provider of the Year”**. Sadly, we did not win this time around but the judges' commented;

“This charity demonstrated measurable improvements in wellbeing and repeat engagement shows sustained influence.”



Also in March, we were delighted that the recognised the health and wellness benefits of both our Personal Safety training and our therapeutic art coaching. The award also took into consideration the health and wellness effects our ice tank and sauna therapies have on our local community as well as our many wellbeing classes and the activities in our Barony Wellbeing Café and our Centre's various wellbeing activities. We were particularly proud to have the coaching skills involved with our therapeutic art classes recognised, all of which resulted in us winning their "**Health and Wellness Training & Coaching Excellence**" award.

Global Health & Wellness Awards 2026



In April 2026, two of our volunteers won their respective categories in the **North Ayrshire Community Champion Awards 2026**;

Alan Bell won the '**Champion Mentor of the Year**' award for his

work in not only devising and teaching the many Personal Safety courses this charity has to offer, but also mentoring volunteers and service users to become instructors.

Barbara Pokryszka won the '**Arts Champion of the Year**' award for the amazing achievements of her therapeutic art classes.

Congratulations to both.

Herald IrvineTimes Largs&Millport



Congratulations also to our volunteers **Barbara Pokryszka** and **Craig Bainbridge** for reaching

the June final of The Ayrshire Community Trust's **Volunteer Awards 2026** in the categories of '**Supporting the Community Volunteer**' and '**Sports Volunteer**' respectively.



The Ayrshire Community Trust's **Adult Volunteer Recognition Award** commends volunteers for their volunteer work in our local area.



On 13th June 2026, **David Bell** and **Kimberley Marlin** were both presented with a **Gold Award** after they each volunteered over 100hrs for us...amazingly, Kimberley achieved this in under a year.



Our charity was also nominated for the '**Grassroots Community**' award category at The UK Parliament's **Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls Awards 2026**. Unfortunately, we did not make it to the shortlist of finalists, however they commented; "***Our judges were impressed by the quality of your nomination and your achievements.***"

To summarise, we have had our best year ever with regard to the number of vulnerable people we have helped and trained. We must say another huge "**Thank you**" to our funders, as without their help and support, we simply could not function.

As well as increasing confidence, decreasing anxiety levels, reducing stress and helping people live more richer, fuller lives, our empowering services have a **huge** social impact, not only for our service users but also for their friends, families and local communities;

Saving Lives

Experience has also shown us that course participants often pass on the skills they have learned on our Personal Safety courses to their friends, family and colleagues, thereby giving life-saving self defence skills to the wider community.

Additionally, our trauma-informed, empowerment-focussed Personal Safety training promotes personal awareness, making participants more vigilant and less prone to attack. Our training also teaches de-escalation techniques enabling participants to withdraw or escape a potentially violent situation, and self defence skills to enable participants to take practical steps to safely escape an attacker. All of these actions can potentially save lives.

Over the years, our individual trauma-informed training has also helped many women who have been so deeply traumatised and depressed, that they planned to take their own lives.

And this year, we continued to save lives when we prevented a young man attending our new Therapeutic Art class from taking his life.

Changing suicidal thoughts and preventing people from taking their own lives, on numerous occasions, has and always will be our greatest achievement as a charity.

Promoting Inclusion

Our target groups include female survivors of violence/abuse, children & youths, ethnic minority people, LGBTI people, people with learning disabilities, sensory impaired people, and people with dwarfism. Many of these people experience problems with self-confidence, anxiety and self-esteem but given the right training and support many of the obstacles they face can be overcome.

By providing adequate supervision and creating practical self defence scenarios in a safe and secure environment to a diverse number of groups, we know our charity and our Scotland-wide courses are truly fully inclusive – and we are extremely proud to have had this recognised by the many national diversity awards we have been awarded over the years.

Communities are safer, stronger and more able to work together to tackle inequalities

We have a direct impact on making communities safer by helping people from across all sections of the community able to understand and mitigate against situations that might endanger their personal safety.

Following our training, people's overall fear of crime are often reduced as they become confident in their ability to deal with violent and aggressive situations. We also provide individuals with the strength and confidence to live their lives again, free from the fear of being attacked, and we empower them to engage within their community, regardless of their personal circumstances or background.

Experience has also shown us that course participants get enthused with self-confidence following our training and on numerous occasions teach the skills they have learned to friends, family and colleagues, thereby reducing the fear of crime to a wider community.

People have better and more sustainable services and environments

By enhancing people's awareness of safety threatening situations, this in turn leads to an improvement on how they perceive their local environment and there is anecdotal evidence that safe and secure environments are generally more sustainable.

Encouraging Health Gain

The nature of our activities, our Personal Safety courses, training sessions, workshops and classes (including evening Krav Maga classes at our Barony St John Centre), involve physical activity at a level to suit each individual. By structuring our activities in this way, we not only aim to improve the personal safety, awareness, and self-confidence of participants, but also empower them to increase their levels of physical activity and so improve their overall health and well-being.

Additionally, our trauma-informed, empowerment-focussed training for individuals suffering from trauma combines emotional support with our Personal Safety training and has proven mental health gains.

With regards to school pupils, the Scottish Government is promoting one hour per day of physical exercise for young people. In schools and often at home, young people do not get this amount of exercise but by attending our Personal Safety / self defence courses, after-school classes or an evening class, this can be overcome leading to a healthier community that promotes safer lives.

Supporting Individual Development

By providing opportunities for individuals from across society to learn skills that will allow them to identify and avoid situations likely to endanger their personal safety, we are able to support people from within identified vulnerable groups and help them secure the best chances that life has to offer them.

By transferring skills that result in a greater degree of self-confidence and personal empowerment, participants can improve employability options and life chances in general.

Additionally, we provide volunteering opportunities which allow people to learn new skills, and by engaging in these skills on a regular basis, volunteers become more confident, socially adept individuals with a higher degree of employability skills.

And there's more.....

Associated with the direct community and individual social benefits as described above, are the indirect impacts on the economic well-being of communities and individuals as a result of savings on health services, a greater opportunity to engage in economic activity, savings in workplace absence and reduced costs for providing public services. These impacts are carried through into the establishment providing more sustainable environments within our communities.

It is our goal to continue helping those most at risk, breaking down barriers, improving wellbeing, and encouraging people to live more fulfilling lives.

We look forward to informing you of our social impact achievements in the forthcoming year of 2026/27, in the meantime, stay safe.

Alan Bell MBE, BCAe

Volunteer Executive Manager



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead