

What is it?

The Caledonian System is Scotland's nationally accredited programme for men convicted of domestic abuse offences. Introduced in 2011, it adopts a whole-family approach, combining a structured behaviour change programme for men with dedicated support services for women, children and young people affected by domestic abuse

While the programme is not available in every area of Scotland, it is delivered across Ayrshire by trained Justice Social Work practitioners, ensuring eligible individuals can access the programme locally.

Why it matters

Domestic abuse can have a devastating impact on victims, children, families and communities. The Caledonian System recognises that improving the safety of women and children requires work with those responsible for the abuse, alongside support for those who have experienced harm. The programme seeks to:

- Increase the safety of women and children.
- Reduce domestic abuse and repeat offending.
- Help men take responsibility for their behaviour.
- Promote healthier, safer relationships and family outcomes.
- Contribute to Scotland's ambition of preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.

Key Facts

- Men may be referred through a Community Payback Order or post-release supervision.
- Men's programme typically lasts around 24 months and includes individual work, group work and maintenance sessions.
- Women and children are offered separate voluntary support.

How it Works

The men's programme supports participants to:

- Understand abusive and controlling behaviour.
- Recognise the impact of their actions on partners, children and others.
- Challenge harmful attitudes and beliefs.
- Develop healthier ways of managing thoughts, feelings and relationships.
- Take responsibility for choices and behaviour.

Women's workers provide:

- Emotional support.
- Safety planning.
- Advocacy and practical assistance.
- Information and guidance throughout the man's involvement in the programme.

Through the Children's Service, support is available to help ensure Children's:

- Safety and wellbeing.
- Voices are heard.
- Rights and needs are respected.

The Caledonian System

Your Role

Everyone has a role in preventing domestic abuse. Recognising the signs, supporting those affected and promoting respectful relationships can help create safer communities.

Community justice should support the Caledonian system:

Be Aware of what participation means.

Collaborate with Justice Social Work and relevant services to share information appropriately and support coordinated risk management.

Promote Safety by ensuring that the safety and wellbeing of women, children and victims remains central to any intervention or decisions.

Support Positive Outcomes by assisting individuals to access services like housing, employability, mental health, substance use, financial inclusion, family support. These factors can contribute to achieving sustainable behaviour change and reducing further harm.

Key Messages

- Domestic abuse is about more than physical violence. It often involves patterns of coercive control that can have lasting impacts on women, children and families.
- Lasting improvements in safety require both support for victims and meaningful intervention with those responsible.
- Behaviour change is possible, but it requires accountability, sustained engagement and specialist support.
- Partnership working is essential to supporting positive outcomes and managing risk effectively.
- Independent evaluation found that women reported feeling safer and men completing the programme presented lower levels of risk to partners and children.

Further Resources

[Community Justice Scotland: The Caledonian System](#)

[Scottish Government: Caledonian System Evaluation](#)

[Community Justice Scotland: The Caledonian System External Evaluations](#)

[Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women and Girls](#)



CommunityJustice
Ayrshire Partnership