



Department of
Justice
An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Máinnystrie O tha Laa
www.justice-ni.gov.uk

Department of Justice
Records & Information Team
Information Services Division
Block 5
Knockview Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3SL

Email: foi@justice-ni.gov.uk

26 April 2024

REFERENCE: FOI\24\40

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your request for information dated 21 March 2024. I am pleased to enclose the following information, which is contained in the attached report.

You have asked the Department of Justice:

- (1) How many men are referred to the ASSIST program in the last 12 recorded months?
- (2) How many women are referred to the ASSIST program in the last 12 recorded months?
- (3) In the multi-level triage system how many men are referred elsewhere/rejected at each stage?
- (4) In the multi-level triage system how many women are referred elsewhere/rejected at each stage?

You have asked for recorded figures for the previous 12 months. Data has been provided in line with ASSIST NI's reporting years, as explained below which I hope you will find useful. If you wish for a specific breakdown for the last 12 months, please advise us and a breakdown will be provided specifically for this period.

As the service commenced operation on 1 September 2021, ASSIST NI's reporting years are as follows:

Year 1: 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022;

Year 2: 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023;

Year 3: 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024.

The attached report provides the data requested along with the explanatory notes. As you will see, the vast majority of referrals come from the PSNI. When a domestic abuse or domestic abuse motivated or sexual crime is reported to the police, a referral is made through the police's automated system to ASSIST NI, unless the victim specifically declines support services.

The report provides a table of total referral numbers made to the service (differentiated between adults and children) for the first two years of service on page 1. This is the data held by the service in relation to incoming referrals. It includes numbers of:

- PSNI raw referrals;
- PSNI referrals received minus duplicate/multiples;
- Referrals triaged into the service including from PSNI, the Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre, self-referrals and those supported through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process;
- Service offered and accepted; and
- Contact not established and/or service declined.

The remainder of the report focuses on the data requested, i.e. from the referrals how many males and females (differentiated between adults and children) had been triaged into the service from commencement until 31 March 2024. It sets out:

- Triaged number of referrals triaged into ASSIST;
- Referral outcome
- Where service is not achieved

Although this does not specifically answer questions numbers 3 and 4, this is because the terminology does not reflect the service's processes. To be helpful, you may find the following information useful regarding the service's processes provided under 'line of business'.

ASSIST NI undertake an assessment of suitability against qualifying criteria as required by the Department. This is to ensure advocacy services are prioritised according to need

and vulnerability. Thereafter, ASSIST NI undertake a triage process concerning the victims proximity to harm, threat, risk, severity of abuse, complexity of need, vulnerability and the presentation of factors associated to disengagement from the broader justice process as known at the point of reporting to the referring authority. These principles are undertaken regardless of gender identification.

ASSIST NI is an inclusive and victim focused advocacy service which supports engagement by all groups, facilitating improved accessibility to justice for all. At no stage are victims rejected owing to gender therefore this is not reported/recorded in these terms. At no stage are services withdrawn or discontinued owing to gender therefore this is not reported/recorded in these terms. Reasons service is not achieved are provided and differentiation male and female have been included accordingly.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives you two rights of access when you write to us asking for information. You have the right to know whether we hold the information that you are looking for, and you have the right to have the information given to you. These rights may only be overridden if the information you are looking for is covered by an exemption in the Act. **There have been no exemptions applied to your request.**

If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information you may request an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you request an internal review please do so in writing stating the reasons to the address above.

If following an internal review you were to remain dissatisfied you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner and ask the Commissioner to investigate whether the DOJ has complied with the terms of the FOIA. You can write to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

The Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out.

Further details on the role of the Information Commissioner and the handling of appeals can be found at: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Manager