

FACTSHEET #1

PRO LIFE VIGILS



What are pro-life vigils?

Pro Life vigils are peaceful prayerful events held where abortions take place. Most participants are Catholics. About 70% are female and many are experienced mothers.

Where do vigils take place?

In our Archdiocese vigils take place opposite the 'Choices' clinic at the Chalmers Sexual Health Centre, Lauriston, Edinburgh, and outside the Forth Valley Royal Hospital, Larbert.

What happens during a vigil?

Prayers are said, mostly the Rosary but including other devotions such as the Angelus or Divine Mercy. In Edinburgh, one woman offers an information leaflet to passers-by.

What happens if anyone wants to talk to the vigil?

One vigil participant is designated to talk to the public and will answer questions and chat as required. Other vigil participants continue to pray, which is the main purpose of the vigil.

What is the legal situation?

Vigils are 'static events' and do not require any permission from Police Scotland or local Councils. Vigil organisers do inform the Police about planned events. All vigil participants sign a 'statement of peace' guaranteeing to obey the law and to follow Police instructions.

Does the Archdiocese support pro-life vigils?

Yes. Events can be publicised in your parish and parishioners & clergy are encouraged to take part, particularly as part of our Lenten preparations.

How is help provided to pregnant women during vigils?

Vigils can introduce women to the Sisters of the Gospel of Life. The Sisters help women keep their babies and support them with practical help for as long as needed, there is no cut off point. For post abortion support vigils are in contact with the Abortion Recovery Care Helpline or Rachel's Vineyard. Some vigil participants are trained befrienders with these organisations. All services are based in Scotland.

Does it work?

Many women think again when offered positive support in their pregnancy. In Scotland, women in the most deprived areas have abortion rates twice as high as those in the most affluent places. Many feel they had 'no choice' but abortion but say that meeting a pro-lifer on the way to their abortion was 'a sign.' 40 Days for Life reports over 15,000 positive decisions and the UK Good Counsel Network estimates over 3,000 lives saved.

Are there any concerns?

Official Freedom of Information responses from Police Scotland and NHS Lothian have confirmed that there are no records of any incidents, arrests or formal/informal complaints. In 2018 a large scale study by the UK Home Office concluded that vigils were passive in nature. In Edinburgh, vigils have run every week for 11 years without incident.

Are the vigils actually protests?

No. Vigils go to the point of need to pray and successfully offer help to those in danger there. A protest would be counterproductive to offering help and could discourage vulnerable women from approaching. Participants abide by a statement of peace and the Home Office has concluded that vigils are passive in nature.

Why not pray somewhere else?

Catholics have a long tradition of praying and offering help at the point of need. Current examples are the Faslane nuclear base or the Dungavel immigration centre. Pro-life vigils have to be at abortion centres in order to offer direct help to mothers and their unborn children who might otherwise suffer abortion.



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