

# 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 approx. once a year at the Chalmers Street abortion clinic, Edinburgh. Vigils have also taken place at the Forth Valley Royal Hospital, Larbert.

### *Who organises the vigils?*

In our Archdiocese the above mentioned vigils are organised by 40 Days for Life, an organisation dedicated to praying for an end to abortion.

### *What happens during a vigil?*

Prayers are said, mostly the Rosary, but can include other devotions such as the Angelus or Divine Mercy.

### ***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 and clergy are encouraged to take part.

### ***How is help provided to pregnant women during vigils?***

Vigils can introduce women to pregnancy support services, such as the new [Stanton Healthcare](#) organisation. Stanton provides alternatives to abortion and supports women with practical help for as long as needed. 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 free and 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 say they had 'no choice' and feel forced into abortion by economic circumstances. Some women say they wish a vigil had been there for them and mothers' testimonies are available at <https://behereforme.org/#stories>

### ***Are there any concerns?***

Many years of Freedom of Information responses from Police Scotland and NHS Lothian have confirmed that there are almost no records of any incidents. This is reliable and credible evidence. In 2018 a large scale study by the UK Home Office concluded that vigils were passive in nature. In Edinburgh, vigils have run for over a decade 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.

Over/...

## ***What's happening at the Scottish Parliament about prayer vigils?***

A private members Bill has been proposed which would ban prayer at or near sites where abortions take place, thus preventing offers of support for women. The Bill proposes up to 2 years in prison for public prayer. If the Government is allowed to decide when and where people can pray this is a serious threat to religious freedom. <https://archedinburgh.org/event-free2pray/>

---



THE  
ARCHDIOCESE of ST ANDREWS  
& EDINBURGH

Charity No SC008540



### **PRO LIFE OFFICE**

**Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh**

**100 Strathearn Road**

**Edinburgh, EH9 1BB**

Telephone **0131 623 8917**

Email: [\*\*prolife@staned.org.uk\*\*](mailto:prolife@staned.org.uk)