



Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) Service

City of York and North Yorkshire

April 2019 - March 2023



An overview

IDAS Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Service

The harmful impacts of sexual violence can last a lifetime and providing the right support is crucial for survivors. At IDAS, we pride ourselves on delivering a trauma informed service to victims and survivors of both recent and non-recent sexual abuse and violence. We also recognise that abuse not only affects victims, but also other family members, relationships and communities, so take a whole person, whole family, whole community approach.

All support is tailored to meet survivor's needs and includes providing impartial and accurate information so they can make informed decisions to begin the process of recovery. ISVAs support people through criminal justice processes and beyond, as well as those who choose not to, or who are unable to report; it is well documented that when supported by an ISVA, survivors are more likely to stay engaged with the process, resulting in higher conviction rates, and we are not only extremely proud of the brave survivors we work with, but also of our ISVAs who demonstrate tenacity and determination whilst advocating for survivors throughout these processes.

Unfortunately, the criminal justice system continues to be exceptionally challenging for victims and survivors with many waiting years for cases to come to court and successful conviction rates at an all-time low. Even when justice has been granted, survivors frequently require ongoing help to overcome isolation, anxiety and feelings of guilt or shame. We remain committed to supporting them to overcome the devastating impacts of sexual violence through our ISVA and volunteer-led services to re-build confidence and self-esteem and recognise themselves for the brave people they are.

At IDAS we also remain committed to challenging the systems and structures that are harmful to survivors so lobby for change and work hand in hand with our expert Survivor's Advisory Board, Volunteers and Champions to do so. We also continue to co-design and adapt services in consultation with Commissioners and clients, so that they are accessible and inclusive to any victim or survivor of sexual abuse.

Evie Duarte, Regional Manager



Key features

Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Service



Trauma informed, tailored support



Support for recent and non-recent abuse that has not been reported



Lime Culture accredited, the quality standard for ISVA services achieved in 2020



Support before, during and after criminal and civil proceedings, for several years if required.



Dedicated Sexual Violence Website developed in 2020

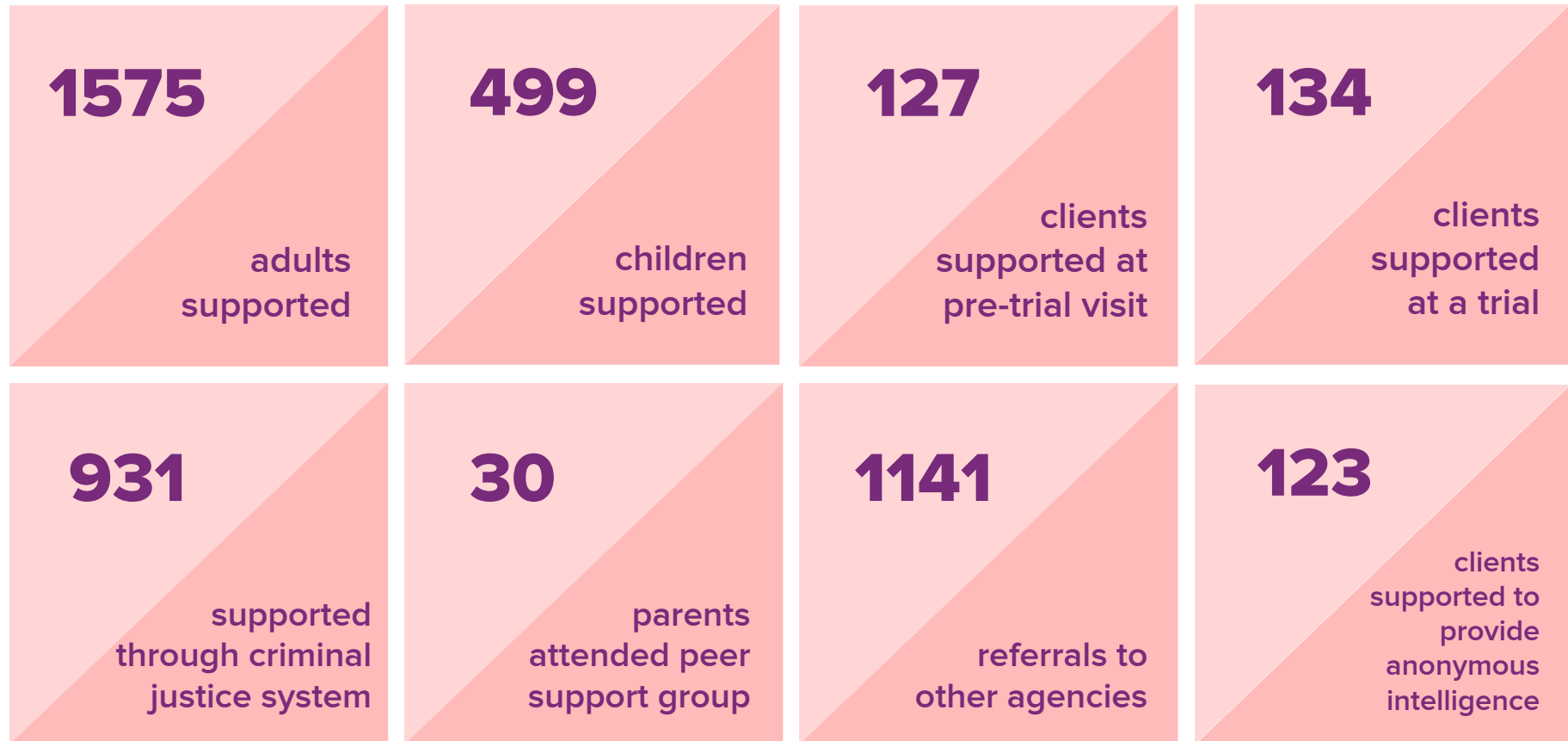


Support for children who have been abused and their parent/Carer

Our Impact

Independent Sexual Violence Service

April 2019 - March 2023



Trauma Informed



Our approach recognises the widespread impact of trauma and stress, and ISVAs actively seeks to reduce the potential for re-traumatisation.

Crucially, ISVAs help clients to evaluate, reconnect and build upon their existing inner and external resources. This means helping them to explore the elements of their life from which they already draw strength and teaching them new techniques to enhance their coping ability and promote opportunities for recovery.

They create a safe environment, building trust and allow everyone to work and explore at their own pace.



Trauma Informed



Our trauma informed model for client support is underpinned by SENSE principles:

Stabilisation

Stabilisation is the foundation on which support is built. ISVAs focus on a series of stabilisation and resource building techniques. They understand that traumatic experiences can be linked to risky behaviours used as coping mechanisms and demonstrate compassion to ensure that the client's basic needs are met from first contact, including having safe accommodation and a reduced risk of further harm.

Education

ISVAs help clients understand their responses to trauma, listening to and validating their feelings. We also educate and inform partner agencies.

Normalisation

ISVAs help clients understand that their responses to abuse they have been subject to are completely normal and that they are not alone with these.

Socialisation

Our practice is strengths-based and helps people recognise and realise their personal assets, including their supportive networks. We also help people reconnect with people where relationships are fractured.

Engagement

By taking a holistic approach and using motivational interviewing skills during assessment, practitioners identify where clients may benefit from a referral to a specialist support agency and positively encourage them to engage.

Support through court



Our specialist teams have been instrumental in supporting several high-profile cases in North Yorkshire which have led to successful prosecution, including a number which have involved several family members and abuse spanning many years.

ISVAs provide support before, during and after court, acting as a single point of contact so that victims and survivors are kept well informed throughout the process. As part of their role ISVAs can help survivors prepare their impact statement, arrange for special measures during the trial and attend court with the person they are supporting.

Support through court



784 clients have been supported by an ISVA with writing a Witness Impact Statement.

This is the client's space to voice their thoughts, feelings and impacts of the violence or abuse they have been subject to, including the psychological, physical, emotional, and financial impacts on themselves and other family members. These statements can be used to support sentencing where there is a guilty verdict.

159

people supported with pre-court visits

231

people supported with the Victim's Right to review

189

people supported with special measures

“

"IDAS are the only thing that has kept me going through the last couple of years of hell. My appointments with Sam were the only thing I used to look forward to and she was like my rock beside me every day of court. I feel honoured to have met Sam and have been supported by IDAS and continue to be supported. Thank you so much IDAS"

Case Study: Lily

Lily was referred to the ISVA service by West Yorkshire Victim Support in March 2019. She had been sexually abused by her father and older brother while she was growing up in Leeds. At 15 years old, Lily became pregnant with a baby (not known who the father was either father or brother). She gave birth to the baby in a garden and abandoned her baby.

Lily went on to become involved with abusive men and went from one abusive relationship to the next. Lily managed to find the strength to leave her last ex-partner and fled to Scarborough early 2019. She then reported her childhood sexual abuse to West Yorkshire Police and the case began.

Lily had very poor mental health and low self-esteem, but she also had a determination to take control of her life. The ISVA worked with her to build her confidence and self-esteem and also referred her to a mental health charity and for counselling, both of which she engaged well with.

Throughout support, Lily faced many challenges. Initially the case was given “No Further Action” from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The ISVA supported Lily to appeal through the Victim’s Right to Review, but this was also unsuccessful.

The ISVA continued to work with Lily to encourage her to stay positive and some months later she was contacted by the CPS and told that her case was to be re-opened as another witness had come forward. The ISVA supported Lily with each case of the criminal justice process and the perpetrator was taken to court and found guilty of the offences. He received a 30- year jail sentence. At the end of support Lily said:

“

I couldn't have continued with this process without the support of my ISVA.

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

Rape review

In June 2020 the Government's End-to-End Rape Review was published. The review, overseen by the Criminal Justice Board, looked at how rape is investigated and prosecuted in England and Wales.

The report highlighted several areas where victims of rape are being failed and a number of recommendations were made, including focusing on perpetrator behaviour rather than undue focus on the victim's credibility and holding each part of the criminal justice system to account. It also found that victim attrition rates from criminal justice processes are lower when they are supported by an ISVA.

A new approach, "Operation Soteria," was adopted by all Police forces and we are beginning to see Police referrals increase as a result of this.

One of the courageous women, Naomi, who IDAS has supported was interviewed by ITV following the review's publication. She told how let down by the criminal justice system she had felt and how her case had initially been dropped by the CPS, however with the support of her IDAS ISVA she appealed this decision, and the perpetrator of her abuse was finally convicted and sentenced for 30 years.

Naomi is now an activist and ambassador for IDAS, speaking at events and lobbying for justice for victims of rape and sexual assault.

She also facilitates a peer support group for survivors of sexual abuse and violence at Scarborough library.



Case Study: Debbie

Debbie was systematically groomed by her PE teacher for 3 years before he sexually assaulted her at the age of 15. Debbie reported the abuse as an adult about the time she had a daughter coming up to her 15th birthday.

Her daughter reaching the same age as she when she had been assaulted triggered Debbie's re-traumatisation, and she began to struggle in many aspects of her life.

She had previously used her work and keeping busy as a means to cope, but suddenly struggled with work and with relationships, including with those she loved most. Debbie told the ISVA that she had enjoyed the attention from her teacher so, although her head told her that she had been a victim, she felt guilty about her body betraying her and feeling pleasure from the experience.

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

The ISVA worked with Debbie to understand and forgive her 15-year-old self and to understand that she was not to blame and that her responses were normal.

Debbie began to write a journal from the perspective of that child which really helped her to recognise that she had done nothing wrong. There were many barriers to overcome for Debbie. The grooming and assaults had taken place prior to the 2003 Sexual Offences Act when having sex with someone under the age of 16 was not considered to be a crime.

Together with her enjoying the attention, this confirmed Debbie's assumption that she was to blame. The grooming and assaults had also taken place in another county, so the ISVA liaised with 2 Police forces to coordinate the communication prior to the trial.

Case Study: Debbie continued.

The ISVA kept Debbie updated throughout the process, as well as continually encouraging her to implement the coping strategies they had discussed. She also arranged for a pre-trial visit with a local ISVA working in the county where the trial took place, still maintaining contact every day throughout the trial. The outcome of the trial was not what Debbie had hoped for, and she continued to receive support afterwards to help her deal with this. The ISVA is currently supporting Debbie with a Victim's Right to Review. Despite this, Debbie has become an active champion and advocate of the work IDAS does and we are incredibly proud of her strength and determination.

The following are Debbie's words:

"For the majority of the 3.5 years Sam was my IDAS support. What I valued most was the inclusive, safe, non-judgemental space she consistently provided. Whatever state I arrived in, I left in a far better place.

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

"Sam listened and she would sit with me in silence as my emotion came out. she offered differing perspectives ,asked supportive questions and as the relationship developed, she was able to hold a mirror up to me and highlight beliefs or persistent patterns that were holding me back.

We would discuss possible things I could do that may help combat these. When I questioned why I was sticking with it when everything felt so hard, she gently reminded me of what I said I wanted and what was important to me and checked to see whether that had changed. This skilful ability to ground me back to the purpose of 'finding my voice' was so empowering.

She calmly talked me through the process , system or procedure, not to excuse the behaviour or response of other services, but to help me understand why they did what they did. This really helped . She also suggested things that enabled me to understand the importance of self- care and self- compassion that have now become part of my regular routine. Sam regularly reminded me of just how far I had come."

Support for recent and non-recent abuse that has not been reported



Although ISVAs are generally recognised as a key support for victims and survivors going through the criminal justice process, IDAS is proud that our ISVA service is not limited to this provision. We offer personalised support to any victim or survivor of sexual violence and abuse, including those who feel that a trial would not provide them with justice or those who simply don't know what they want to do.

Around 42% of ISVA survivors do not want a criminal justice response and will therefore be given accurate and impartial information around their options, including the opportunity to provide anonymous intelligence. This is a process whereby we support the survivor to give an account of what has happened to them, including very brief details of the who? what? when? and where? This information is then completely anonymised, with no reference to the person giving it, and shared with the Police.

The intelligence goes on the perpetrator's file, so if anyone else reports a similar offence against the same person the Police will contact the ISVA, or whoever took the account and ask if they can speak to the survivor. Since 2019 we have supported 123 people to provide anonymous intelligence.

The support for survivors who do not wish to report to the Police focusses on wellbeing and recovery. ISVAs help them to make sense of what has happened and support them to understand their responses to the abuse or violence. ISVAs work closely with partner agencies ,liaising, making referrals and signposting to numerous agencies and community groups, as well as encouraging people to attend peer support and "Next Steps" groups provided by IDAS.

Group support



As a result of listening and responding to what people tell us, we have developed a number of both in-person and online support groups for sexual violence survivors. One group, “Moving on from Sexual Violence” was developed following the success of the IDAS Moving on from Domestic Abuse group and is for anyone who has been subjected to sexual violence or abuse. This peer-led group gives survivors an opportunity to share feelings and ways of coping, offer reciprocal support and begin the healing process. Although details of experiences are not discussed, knowing that they are not alone and that others have experienced similar often helps to validate survivor's feelings and helps to lessen the guilt and shame that can be associated with being a survivor of abuse.

“

Thank you for yesterday's session, I have been in tears all night, good tears. To suddenly realise it wasn't my fault, not just to know that, but to actually believe it. Your very skilful!

49

individuals who have been directly subjected to sexual violence or abuse attended a group.

231

parents of children who have been subject to sexual violence or abuse attended a group.

“

I found the content really relevant & incredibly helpful

189

individuals attended a group recently piloted to support young people in a rural community.

Group support



One of the most rewarding and successful developments to the ISVA service, has been the co-creation of groups that support parents of children who have been sexually abused. These were developed following consultation with parents during lockdown and were initially delivered via Zoom.

Parents told us that they would prefer to meet in person, which we facilitated as soon as we safely could. This safe space has proven to offer an opportunity for parents to explore their own feelings of guilt, the impacts of vicarious trauma, and share ways to support their children. The groups were initially facilitated by an ISVA, with parents requesting topics to discuss, but parents have naturally formed a peer support network that no longer requires ISVA input. Our ambition is for the number of these groups to multiply over the coming year.

"Please send my regards to the other women, I cannot tell you the boost it was to be with others and know that I am not crazy. I hope we all get to meet up soon."

"The group has improved my confidence in supporting my child"

"It was good to have the reassurance and support. It's still hard to shift the guilt, but like you say, that will take time."

Case Study: Jonathon

Jonathan first came to IDAS in 2016. He was married to a woman but was struggling in his relationship due to the impacts of sexual abuse he had been subjected to by an older man when he was young. At that time Jonathan said that he did not want to report the abuse; he felt a huge amount of shame and guilt and was afraid he would not be believed. The ISVA explained the option of providing anonymous intelligence, which meant that if other victims came forward, he could give a statement if he felt confident to do so and Jonathan agreed.

Jonathan and the ISVA worked on self-esteem and confidence building, as well as developing coping strategies, which included journaling and creating a safe space at home to practise meditation and mindfulness. They explored the impacts of trauma, which helped Jonathan to understand his emotions and responses to the abuse. The ISVA also referred Jonathan for Counselling and he felt that he no longer needed support from the ISVA service.

Several years later Jonathan contacted the ISVA after seeing a report in the newspaper about the perpetrator, who had been arrested for sexually assaulting someone else.

The following day the same ISVA met with Jonathan and contacted the SARC to request his previous statement. She also contacted the Officer in Charge of the current case in Cumbria. A decision was made that the perpetrator's court case would be delayed whilst the crime against Jonathan was investigated. The ISVA supported Jonathan to give a visually recorded interview and then helped them prepare for the court case.

The trial took place over 5 days and the ISVA supported Jonathon before, during and after the trial, including calling them each evening of the trial to debrief and updates on what was happening in the days they were not in court. The case concluded with the perpetrator receiving a 7-year custodial sentence. Jonathan's feelings of relief at being believed were almost overwhelming; they felt completely exhausted by the process but were finally able to begin the long process of recovery.- Jonathan joined a gym, started having driving lessons and started to build social connections, including joining a group and making friends with other survivors of sexual abuse supported by IDAS.

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

Inside track

I have been the ISVA Lead now for a little over three years, I started with IDAS around 15 years ago and for much of this time have worked with people who have experienced sexual violence. I have seen the service grow and develop, which has happened by listening to the real experts, the clients who use our service. They inspire all of us to do better.

Being able to talk to clients about the impact of what has happened to them can be literally life changing. Talking about where the blame truly lies, that it is not about what they wore, or what they said, but it is about the perpetrator, can truly reset a client's sense of self, belief and worth.

Clients are often relieved to hear that they have options; many do not want to report to the Police but feel a pressure from friends, family and society to report. They can be silenced by these expectations, too scared to tell anyone as they do not wish to go through the criminal justice process.

Being able to discuss the option of anonymous intelligence assuring them that there is no expectation or pressure for them to report relieves them from much of the guilt and shame and we can help them to make an informed decision.

When a person does report to the Police, they are often shocked by the sheer length of time it takes for a case to be investigated, to be charged and to go to court. Many times, the only consistent support the client receives is from the ISVA. We support them right through the process. Many clients are distressed by the lack of involvement they have with the case once they have told the Police.

ISVAs liaise with the police to ensure the client is being kept updated, we talk to them about coping strategies and encourage them to engage with other specialist support agencies. We spend a lot of time helping clients to re-establish their support network, be that family and friends or other community groups to help the client heal and recover. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to work with literally 100s of people who have experienced sexual violence and the chance to continue the work with the new ISVAs who bring new energy and enthusiasm to the role.

Sam, IDAS Lead ISVA

Impacts of the Pandemic

Between March 2020 and April 2021 there was a reduction in newly recorded sexual offence crimes, most likely because of Covid restrictions and a reduction in night-time economy activity. However, the pandemic adversely affected the mental health of many victims and survivors already experiencing trauma. Isolation, lack of access to support services and other Covid related pressures meant that we saw an increase in the mental health needs of the people we support at a time when access to specialist mental health services was limited as services were under undue pressure.

In addition, the already unprecedented delays in perpetrators being brought to justice were compounded by the pandemic, as courts in the county were closed for extensive periods and only a limited number of cases were being heard in other areas.

In 2020, “Nightingale Courts” were considered to be a solution to the growing backlog of cases, but unfortunately many closed shortly after opening.

This meant that victims and survivors were, and are, frequently waiting several years before their case is heard. This has led to an inevitable and understandable increase in disengagement of victims and survivors from an already stressful process.

During the pandemic, ISVAs quickly adapted to providing support in different ways, such as online and phone, but for some, this presented a barrier, so ISVAs continued to see those people in person, using appropriate PPE and having safe socially distanced meetings outside where possible.

Additional resources were created for the website, including the “IDAS Voices” podcasts from inspirational IDAS survivors, and many survivors were sent a “Coping Box”, which acted as an emotional first aid kit. Keeping people connected and reducing isolation was key and ISVAs facilitated online groups for victims and survivors during this time and continue today. Survivors have told us that they find this type of peer support invaluable in their recovery.



Church work

IDAS has been working closely with the Church of England to improve the response and support available for victims and survivors of church-related abuse. Following a review, the Diocese of York appointed an independent auditor to examine historical cases, alongside a panel of specialists to dip sample reviewed cases.

Our North Yorkshire Regional Manager was part of the panel and was subsequently invited to Bishopthorpe Palace to discuss the audit findings and support the Lead ISVA was invited to attend the Survivor Voice Working Group to ensure that survivors' voices are heard. A recommendation from the audit was that Church Officers have a better understanding of domestic abuse and IDAS has provided bespoke training to the church during their Safeguarding Weeks. development of a Diocesan Action Plan.

The Archbishops' Family and Households Commission identified IDAS as an organisation demonstrating best practice. They spoke with 4 survivors who had received support through IDAS and the findings were published in 2023 in their "Love Matters" report.

Client feedback



"I couldn't have done this without you. I don't even know how to say thank you, your truly a lifesaver. From helping me to move, to being with me through the trial and the high court, and then everything after when I didn't know how I could go on living. Thank you"

"I really, really loved today's session, I will definitely go to any future ones that are on. I can't wait to show you everything in the journal too, it will be amazing"
(feedback from client who attended the young people's group)

"Thanks for the support and advice. clarifying what the police process would look like and informing me of the anonymous reporting have been really beneficial as now that I have completed the anonymous, I feel so much more at peace"

"I am beginning to get my confidence back. I am having more good days where I am laughing and smiling. I use all the strategies we talked about in the previous sessions if there are bad days and I find that the sad feelings don't last as long. I still acknowledge them because they are important. I feel a lot calmer and my family have noticed this too."

"I am so appreciative that you didn't disengage with me in my periods of burying my head in the sand. Your support has been enabling for me to see past the periods of panic. You have stayed in touch when mental health services have closed the door on me."

'Your passion and energy brings hope . We are very thankful to you to bring a smile on to our kids faces. Thank you for your kindness and contribution to making tangible differences in people's lives'

Inside track

I am proud of the impact we have on violence against women and girls. The education, and changes we help the client with is awe inspiring.

I feel that this is done really powerfully through the Moving on from Sexual Assault (MOSA) group. In the groups we are able to come together, creating a safe space that offers a sense of community. We normalise discussions about the impact of the abuse and support survivors to develop coping strategies. We also educate on how to move forward, all within a space where there is warmth and laughter.

Being a victim of sexual violence is often stigmatised and many people do not get the opportunity to speak to others who have had similar experiences. This leaves people feeling shame, guilt, isolated, confused and lonely.

Being a part of the group offers clients the opportunity to be with others who have experienced similar things, and witnessing one client who had always felt the rape was her fault as she had been “flirting” challenging a peer on the group who was self-blaming was one of the most impactful things I have ever seen, she looked at me and smiled, and said “OK, I get it, it wasn’t me, I didn’t make him rape me”. The whole group connected on a vastly different level, and I was honoured to be included in the group experience.

Chloe, IDAS ISVA

Education and training

Since 2019 thousands of people have accessed our free online training courses that help raise awareness about domestic abuse and sexual violence. In addition to these, our team of ISVAs have provided bespoke training and awareness sessions for numerous groups and agencies, including training for 120 Military Police Officers in 2019, regular training inputs to North Yorkshire Police and training for GPs and Social Worker students.

Our prevention work is vital to challenging harmful societal norms and stereotypes and so we work closely with schools and colleges around the county.

We were fortunate to speak with over one hundred 15 and 16 year-olds at The Vale of York Academy in 2022 and received the following feedback:

“

The ISVA team did an amazing job in delivering such hard-hitting and important content in an engaging manner. The Year 11 students listened intently and participated well in thought provoking discussions. We, as a School, really appreciated your time and effort and look forward to working with you again in the future.



Training and awareness raising

In addition to the people who access free training on the IDAS website, ISVAs have trained hundreds of professionals in the community on the impacts of sexual abuse and violence, including understanding trauma and how to respond to victims and survivors in a trauma informed way.

We have also worked with our partner agency, Foundation, to deliver a Safeguarding Masterclass to professionals in York and North Yorkshire. Our impact has been recognised even further afield, with the Caymanian Government requesting that we talk to 47 Government Officials, including the Governor of Cayman in 2022.

Some bespoke training the ISVAs have delivered include:

- Staff and prisoners at Askham Women's Prison
- Social Care Teams
- Sexual Offences Liaison Officers
- Schools and Academies
- Church Officers in the York Diocese
- GPs
- Cervical Smear Inclusion Team
- 80 Social Work Students
- Refugee Action
- Victim Board

Training feedback

“Many thanks for this Sam. I don't think it is in any way an easy subject, but essential we are as well informed as we can be.

Am sure we will see more of each other, we need to keep working closely together.”
York Diocese

“The ISVA team did an amazing job in delivering such hard-hitting and important content in an engaging manner. The Year 11 students listened intently and participated well in thought provoking discussions. We, as a School, really appreciated your time and effort and look forward to working with you again in the future.”

Vale of York Academy

With thanks Sam - fab presentation and all those who attended have come back to me to ask me to thank you for such a clear, concise and succinct overview. really useful! thanks again

"Massive thank you for your input at the victim board today. Your presentation on the work of your team and highlighting the delay and experience of victims and survivors was absolutely first class and was very well received by the audience.

Thank you"
Victim Board

“I just wanted to say thank you so much for talking with the SOLO delegates yesterday – they really enjoyed the input and thought you were brilliant - I told them that you absolutely were!

Thank you again for your time, I realise that it's a fair distance for you to trek up here but we really do appreciate it.”

“Thank you so much Hannah, the work you do is inspirational and I know the students got a huge amount from it. Thank you for coming and speaking to us today.”

Askham Bryan College

Partnership working

We recognise that the impacts of sexual abuse and violence can affect many aspects of a person's life and that some people need support from a range of specialist agencies to meet their needs.

Partnership working is therefore crucial to ISVAs, and they regularly refer to, and work in partnership with a range of agencies including Social Care, Health and Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol and Counselling services. ISVAs also help people navigate complex systems, acting as an advocate and single point of contact. We attend a number of strategic and operational partnership meetings to provide a lens which is survivor led.

Strategic and operational partnership meetings attended by ISVAs include:

Exploitation Risk Assessment Conference (ERAC) which takes a multi-disciplinary approach to supporting women and girls at risk of modern- day slavery, sexual exploitation, prostitution, and survival sex.

NY Police Scrutiny Panel where Police cases are reviewed from the point of reporting to conclusion, highlighting good practice and lessons learnt.

CPS Scrutiny Panel where CPS cases are reviewed, highlighting good practice and lessons learnt.

SARC Operational Meetings which are held on a quarterly basis and are attended by several organisations, both locally and beyond, who support victims and survivors of sexual violence to share best practice and discuss emerging issues.

Rape Tactical Delivery Group – To support with the implementation of Operation Soteria.

Survivors Voice Working Group – informs the structure of the Diocese engagement and response to victims and survivors of abuse. The group meets quarterly.

The Sexual Violence & Abuse Strategic Steering Group to improve the overall experiences of all victims and survivors of all forms of sexual violence and abuse accessing the range of support and services available to them.

Sexual Violence Support Group York University - to discuss needs and support services for students who have experienced sexual violence.

Lime Culture Annual Conference where our Lead ISVA gave a presentation on working with seldom heard communities.

Voice

IDAS continue to amplify the voices of survivors and have grown our influence so that the concerns of the people we support are heard at the highest level. A group of survivors of sexual violence, supported by an IDAS Independent Sexual Violence Advisor, met with the Ministry of Justice Rape Review Team to relay their experiences to influence the implementation of the actions from this review. We have also embedded our Survivors Advisory Board with members supporting consultation on key issues that affect victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse.

In 2021, we were approached by Chanel 4, the makers of a teenage drama set in a Yorkshire mill town, to advise on a sexual assault storyline. The storyline tackled the important issue of consent and IDAS was able to ensure that the topic was approached accurately, dispelling myths around sexual assault and consent.




Campaigns

We regularly use key events to raise awareness about domestic abuse and sexual violence and have developed webinars, films and podcasts alongside survivors, partners and Commissioners to shine a light on issues related to violence against women and girls.

During 16 Days of Action in 2022, one of our ISVAs worked with Commissioners to produce one of the films created to showcase the support available in North Yorkshire that tackles violence against women and girls.

ISVAs have also supported people they work with to give their voice and contribute to consultations that influence policy decisions such as those that took place on the Victims Bill.



Sexual Violence Awareness Week 6th - 12th February

To mark sexual violence awareness week, 6th - 12th February, we will be sharing myths and facts about sexual violence, as well as information, advice and blogs from our dedicated sexual violence support website.

[Visit the website](#)

IDAS Lead Independent Sexual Violence Advisor, Sam Beckett, invites you to a free webinar to discuss the role of the ISVA and improve sexual violence awareness.

[Free webinar](#)

Read Sam's blog exposing some of the myths around sexual violence.

[Read Sam's Blog](#)



Mirror

Brave Naomi Clayton finally got justice through a victim scheme Image: Darren Casoyl

NEWS POLITICS FOOTBALL CELEBS TV ROYALS MONEY

'Evil stepdad raped us for years but CPS dropped case - then we fought back'

EXCLUSIVE: Naomi Clayton and her sisters were abused sexually and physically by evil stepdad Graham Howard - but the CPS dropped case after 12 months before the courageous women fought back against the system

Amplifying survivor voices

However, there is nothing more impactful than hearing the voice of the survivor in person and some of the brave survivors who have spoken in the media include:

Shane who spoke to Greatest Hits Radio and featured in the Scarborough news talking about the Barber Campaign that encouraged boys and men to talk about abuse they had been subject to.

Susan who gave a Radio 4 interview on Woman's Hour about the impact of the Criminal Justice System on victims and survivors and also contributed to our work with the Church to improve their response to allegations of sexual and domestic abuse and violence.

Naomi who spoke with ITV News following the 2021 Rape Review
Hannah who made a podcast for the IDAS website about managing PTSD and the impacts of trauma.

Jennifer who has written a book titled "Brave Souls" and is passionate and campaigns to improve the criminal justice journey for victims and survivors of sexual violence and assault.



Challenges and next steps



Dispelling myths around sexual violence

Myths and misconceptions around what a victim should look like can affect the outcome for the victim or survivor, and in some cases create a barrier to reporting. A culture of victim blaming sadly still exists, which is particularly prevalent where the victim has used alcohol or has a mental health difficulty and can be seen as an “unreliable” witness. Our ambition is to challenge myths and influence a cultural change by continuing to advocate for the people we work with, ensure their voices are heard and educate people about the impacts of trauma.



Peer led groups

To increase the development and delivery of peer-led support groups, particularly for the parents of children and young people who have been subjected to sexual abuse.



Criminal justice system

Court delays have a serious and detrimental impact on victim well-being and the likelihood that the victim will be able to continue to engage. Coupled with entrenched victim blaming attitudes and a lack of understanding of the impact of trauma resulting in victims often feeling that they themselves are on trial. We will continue to work with our partners in the Police and wider criminal justice system to advocate for victims and increase the knowledge and understanding of victim blaming and impact of trauma to help ensure victims seeking a criminal justice response are well supported.



Mental health support

Limited availability of appropriate mental health provision for victims of all ages. We will continue to work with our partners to identify and address gaps in service provision and campaign, alongside sector colleagues for counselling notes to remain confidential so that victims can confidentially seek support to help them cope and recover.

Stay in touch

If you would like to volunteer, donate, fundraise or campaign with us please visit: idas.org.uk

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