
Domestic Abuse Service Specification

Introduction

1. This document provides a specification for the delivery of outcome focussed, high quality and person-centred Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) and Cope and Recover services for adults, children & young people who have been subjected to domestic abuse across the West Midlands.
2. The aim of this DA (Domestic Abuse) service specification is to provide information to potential service providers about the nature and scope of services required to effectively respond to victims of DA.
3. The prospective DA service must be able to offer support and guidance to victims and survivors of all ages who have been impacted by DA. This can be in the form of IDVA support or cope and recover activity which includes early intervention, advocacy/outreach, counselling and therapeutic services, peer support, helpline, support at drop-in centres and housing support and advice.
4. Providers are able bid for either lot 1 or 2. They are also able to bid for a combination of both lots.

Definitions

5. Domestic Violence and Abuse;

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides the statutory definition of Domestic Abuse as; “Abusive behaviour’ is defined in the act as any of the following: physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse, psychological, emotional or other abuse.” For the definition to apply, both parties must be aged 16 or over and ‘personally connected’.

‘Personally connected’ is defined in the act as parties who: are married to each other, are civil partners of each other, have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated), have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated), are or have been in an intimate personal relationship with each other, have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child, are relatives”

Which is inclusive of:

Controlling and coercive behaviour

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. This definition of DVA is also inclusive of 'Honour' Based Violence (HBV), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that survivors are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Scope and service length

6. The provider must provide the services within the West Midlands region, and the service is expected to demonstrate the widest possible geographic and socio economic take up of its service.
7. It is imperative that local agencies have the knowledge and skills to identify people affected by DA including children and young people and can respond and refer appropriately.

Interventions and support

- Creating safety plans for victims and child safety planning and undertaking risk assessments.
- Offer advice and support to victims of domestic abuse.
- Be familiar with and have knowledge of criminal justice system and relevant procedures.
- Accompanying service users to court or arranging pre-trial visits working in collaboration with the witness care unit and witness care service where necessary.
- Liaise with social workers on child protection issues.
- Apply a "Public Health Approach."
- Ensure all service users are treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity, respect the diversity of the community and work to ensure all survivors have access to the services they need.
- Interventions to reduce risk related to housing, including measures to improve safety in existing home and/or support to find alternative accommodation if necessary: Sanctuary referral, referral to refuge or other temporary accommodation, support to access civil orders, support to make a homelessness application etc. support with accessing temporary recourse to public funds as necessary.
- Brief interventions to reduce risk related to or exacerbated by, alcohol or drug use where substance dependence is identified e.g. brief advice, referral and direct access to drugs and alcohol services in the region.
- Interventions to ensure service users with mental health needs are referred to appropriate services/counselling and that information relating to risk of suicide is shared appropriately.
- Working with other agencies (within and without MARAC) to engage / manage risks relating to service users that are difficult to engage or are service refusers.
- Working with other agencies (within and without MARAC) to engage / manage risks relating to service users that are repeat victims.
- Ensure the reporting of emerging issues / problems for the service user group to relevant meetings.

- Consideration of and ongoing review of the risks to dependent children, or other children who may be at risk. Timely referral to Social Care / MASH as appropriate. Supporting the service user to liaise with schools / other agencies that need to be aware of possible risks to the child/ren;

Interdependencies with other services

8. The providers will ensure the service is central to multi agency work, therefore will develop and maintain links with other agencies, individually and as a service, developing protocols, referral pathways and signposting with statutory and voluntary agencies with;
 - Children’s Social Care
 - Mental Health services
 - Substance Misuse services
 - Safeguarding (MASH)
 - Schools & Education
 - Parenting programmes
 - Perpetrator programme
 - Offender management
 - Early Help
 - Supporting Families (previously Troubled Families)
 - Community and Third sector organizations
 - MARAC
 - Police
 - Housing
 - Health
 - Adult Services
 - Specialist Refuge service
 - Probation service

Requirements for specific LOT’s;

LOT 1 IDVA

1. This specification has been written in line with the recently published [Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Statutory Guidance 2025](#).
2. IDVAs are pro-active in implementing the plans, which address immediate safety, including practical steps to protect themselves and their children, as well as longer-term solutions. These plans will include actions set from the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) as well as sanctions and remedies available through the criminal and civil courts, housing options and services available through other organisations. IDVAs support and work over the short- to medium-term to put victims on the path to long-term safety. They receive specialist accredited training and hold a nationally recognised qualification.
3. IDVA’s are expected to support those considered at high risk of domestic abuse.

4. The Service will provide a range of programmes, interventions and activities that are delivered by appropriately qualified practitioners and professionals. The qualifications held by practitioners and professionals must be nationally recognised and acceptable to the appropriate professional governing bodies.

LOT 2 Cope and Recover

5. Cope and recover services include advocacy, liaison and helpline services, these types of services include the provision of information, practical advice, safety planning, support, information and liaison between survivors and organisations to negotiate access to and the use of community resources (such as police, health, social care, criminal justice, housing and legal services).
6. They can also include accredited therapeutic programmes and group support – for example the Freedom Programme, Specialist domestic abuse helplines, Community Outreach and floating support services.

Overall Service Delivery Standards

7. Providers must commit to working in accordance with the [West Midlands Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault and Abuse Standards](#) and the [West Midlands Competencies, Training and Development Framework for Tackling Exploitation and Abuse](#) - A good practice guidance framework for individuals, organisations and senior leaders to support their response to tackling exploitation and abuse. As a specialist provider this specification requires compliance for tier 3 in the framework (Specialist).
8. It is imperative that local agencies have the knowledge and skills to identify people affected by domestic and sexual assault and abuse, including children and young people, and can respond and refer appropriately.