
Sexual Assault and Abuse (SAA) Service Specification

Introduction

1. This document provides a specification for the delivery of outcome focussed, high quality and person-centred Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) and Cope and Recover services for adults, children & young people who have been subjected to sexual assault and abuse across the West Midlands.
2. The aim of this Sexual Assault and Abuse (SAA) service specification is to provide information to potential service providers about the nature and scope of services required to effectively respond to victims of SAA.
3. The prospective SAA service must be able to offer support and guidance to victims and survivors of all ages who have been impacted by SAA. This can be in the form of ISVA 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. Sexual assault and abuse are forms of interpersonal abuse that can affect anybody, at any age, from any background, at any time. The West Midlands Definition of Sexual Assault and Abuse states, 'Sexual violence' and/or 'sexual abuse' can both be defined as any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature that takes place without consent or without understanding. It encompasses a broad range of activities, physical, visual and verbal, that are: of a sexual nature; take place without consent or without understanding; are experienced, at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault and that take away the ability to control intimate contact. Whilst sexual violence has been recognised as a cause and a consequence of gender inequality disproportionately affecting women and girls, we recognise there are heterosexual male victims, and victims within the LGBT+ community.¹

Scope of the Service

1. 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.
2. It is imperative that the provider has the knowledge and skills to identify people affected by SAA including children and young people and can respond and refer appropriately.

¹ [Layout 1 \(westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/layout-1)

3. It is anticipated that victims and survivors accessing the service will remain with the service until their needs are met or to a point where their needs are best met by another service within the wider system.
4. There is no maximum support period that a victim can be supported for, but the service should be mindful of:
 - ✓ The risk of creating a dependency
 - ✓ The risk of duplication
 - ✓ The need for reviews
 - ✓ Wider demands on the Service System
5. The service should also ensure it is well embedded in local partnerships to ensure that it is able to promote and signpost to other services within the wider system to allow a victim's needs to be best met.

Requirements for specific lots

Lot 1 ISVA

6. This specification has been written in line with the recently published [isva-guidance.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
7. The ISVA will work closely with the Police and partner agencies, whilst ensuring independent boundaries are maintained. Through this partnership they can engage on a range of options to support preparators being prosecuted and the victim and future victims being safeguarded. These could include Prosecutions where a victim is removed from the situation and there is third party supporting evidence; Sexual Harm Prevention Order, Sexual Risk Order and any other relevant civil interventions or out of court resolutions.
8. Support before, during and after court but where this does take place there should also be a clear understanding that ISVAs are not legal advisers and can only provide impartial information regarding the criminal justice process.
9. Reference and a clear understanding of the [isva-guidance.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) and Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) in Criminal Proceedings should be demonstrated. Types of activity may include providing accurate and impartial information regarding reporting to the police and understanding the police investigation process.
10. Supporting through interviews but not any investigative interviews and pre-trial meetings with Prosecution.
11. Providing accurate and impartial information on the prosecution process and what will happen in the court. This may also include advising on risk to the investigation or court case where it does not breach client confidentiality.
12. Accompanying to the court, providing emotional support and updating on how the court case is progressing. Support in court or in the live link room while evidence is being given, providing this is at the individuals request, the court approves and does not duplicate the role of the Witness

Lot 2 cope and recover

13. 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).
14. They can also include accredited therapeutic programmes and group support – for example, Specialist sexual Assault and Abuse helplines, Community Outreach and floating support services.
15. The service provider will deliver the following support to victims and survivors:
 - ✓ Advice and information via the telephone, virtual and face to face
 - ✓ Emotional support via the telephone, virtual and face to face
 - ✓ Undertake a comprehensive assessment of need and risk
 - ✓ Give advice on risks, safety and options
 - ✓ Advocacy in relation to the needs of the individual as a victim of crime
 - ✓ Allocation of a key worker
 - ✓ One to one and group interventions
 - ✓ Safety planning
 - ✓ Support/advocacy relating to the criminal justice process
 - ✓ Ongoing support including the ability to access therapeutic interventions
 - ✓ Advocacy and ongoing onward referrals to other relevant statutory and non-statutory services as appropriate including but not limited to; health, accommodation, education/employment, wellbeing, criminal justice. Etc.

Interventions and Support

16. All those accessing the service must have a tailored support plan, with the types of support varying depending on the identified needs, risks and circumstances. However, the support provided must include, but not limited to the following;
 - ✓ **Impartial information provision**, which empowers the victim to make informed choices and may include victims' rights and entitlements, reporting to the police, criminal justice processes, other support services, health (physical and mental) and wellbeing such as sexual health, emergency contraception, risks relating to sexual health and pregnancy and criminal injuries compensation.
 - ✓ **Practical support**, which may include developing coping strategies, making referrals and signposting, accompanying on appointments or meetings, advocacy, supporting with engagement with statutory services or with the criminal justice processes such as reporting to the Police, facilitating support for family members or other support networks.
 - ✓ **Emotional support**, which may include helping the individual understand the potential impact on their health and wellbeing, dispelling stereotypes to challenge feelings of shame and blame, support family members or other support networks where appropriate by helping them to understand the potential impact and signpost to available support services, respond to concerns or queries regarding what has happened, which may include the investigation, impact on health, work, education and relationships etc.

- ✓ **Safeguarding identification and management** of appropriate referrals. This may also include safeguarding against further risk from the alleged perpetrator or potential perpetrator.

Service specific requirements

- ✓ The objectives of the service/s are to:
- ✓ Provide clear information and guidance to victims.
- ✓ Support victims of all ages including children and young people.
- ✓ Support friends and family to enable them to support victims as appropriate/or as per the project specific requirements.
- ✓ Provide a prompt, effective and skilled response.
- ✓ Undertake a full holistic assessment of need and risk.
- ✓ Support victims through one-to-one interventions and group work.
- ✓ Support victims through the criminal justice system where there is a criminal justice process ongoing, including attendance at court.
- ✓ Provide interventions that help victims to cope and recover.

Overall Service Delivery Standards

17. 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).
18. 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.