

QUALITY STANDARDS FOR INDEPENDENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE ADVISER (ISVA) SERVICES

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE FOR
COMMISSIONERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

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We are also extremely grateful to the following organisations who have supported the development of these Quality Standards for their valuable contributions:

ISVA SERVICE PROVIDERS

- ◆ Amethyst Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)
- ◆ Doncaster Rape & Sexual Abuse Counselling Service
- ◆ East Kent Rape Crisis Centre (EKRCC)
- ◆ Galop
- ◆ Gloucestershire Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre
- ◆ Herts SARC
- ◆ Horizon SV Services @Cyfannol Women's Aid
- ◆ Horizons - Lancashire
- ◆ IDAS
- ◆ Jersey Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)
- ◆ National Ugly Mugs
- ◆ New Pathways
- ◆ Nottinghamshire Sexual Violence Support Services
- ◆ Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre (Guildford)
- ◆ Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre (Cheshire and Merseyside)
- ◆ Rape Crisis (South London)
- ◆ Rape Crisis (Surrey and Sussex)
- ◆ Refuge
- ◆ RSVP
- ◆ Safeline
- ◆ Safelink Support
- ◆ Savana
- ◆ Spires
- ◆ Spring Lodge Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)
- ◆ St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)
- ◆ Support After Rape and Sexual Violence Leeds
- ◆ Survivors Manchester
- ◆ Survivors UK
- ◆ Survivors' Network
- ◆ SV2
- ◆ The Ferns Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)
- ◆ The Havens – SARCs for London
- ◆ The Hope Programme
- ◆ Treetops Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)
- ◆ Victim Support (Derby)
- ◆ Women@the well
- ◆ Yellow Door

COMMISSIONERS

- ◆ Home Office
- ◆ Islington Borough Council
- ◆ London Borough of Camden
- ◆ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)
- ◆ Ministry of Justice
- ◆ NHS England
- ◆ Public Health England
- ◆ Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner:
 - Avon and Somerset
 - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
 - Devon and Cornwall
 - Durham
 - Gloucestershire
 - Kent
 - Lancashire
 - Leicestershire
 - Lincolnshire
 - North Yorkshire
 - Northumbria
 - Thames Valley
 - West Mercia
 - West Midlands
 - West Yorkshire

FOREWORD

Through our ongoing work in this important area, LimeCulture has witnessed the increased demand for high-quality ISVA services for victims/survivors of sexual violence. There are currently over 110 ISVA services operating across the UK. While they are not always set up, funded or delivered in the same way, their existence is testament to an ongoing recognition that ISVAs provide vital support, and that victims/survivors should be able to access ISVA services in their local area.

However, there is more work needed to ensure greater consistency across ISVA services. It should never be acceptable for victims/survivors to have a postcode lottery for ISVA services. Every victim/survivor should be able to access a high-quality, well managed ISVA service, wherever they are in the country, regardless of their age, gender, race, sexuality or beliefs.

Whilst we know that there are many, many more ISVAs needed to make this ambition a reality, at LimeCulture, we believe that the provision of quality ISVA services will in turn make the case for more ISVAs to reach more victims/survivors. However, we must ensure that there is consistency in the quality of the support that is being provided by ISVA Services. These Quality Standards for ISVA Services will take us a significant step closer to making this a reality.

We are delighted with the level of support that LimeCulture has received for the development and implementation of these Quality Standards for ISVA Services, which have been informed by the views of current ISVA's working on the frontline, ISVA service providers, commissioners and most importantly those who have accessed ISVA services - who were able to share with us their personal experiences of what it is like to receive support from ISVA services.

We are keen to ensure that these Quality Standards are available free of charge to any ISVA Service who wishes to work towards meeting them. We believe they provide a bench-mark for individual services to monitor their provision against, and also act as a driver to improve quality and consistency across ISVA services collectively.

Importantly, sitting alongside these Quality Standards will be an Independent Accreditation and Monitoring Programme, which provides impartial verification of the quality of ISVA services, something which commissioners increasingly demand through specifications.



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BACKGROUND

1. Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) Services play an important role in providing specialist tailored support to all victims and survivors of sexual violence.
2. In September 2017, the Home Office published the essential elements of the ISVA role which sit alongside the National Occupational Standards and provide a comprehensive approach to individual ISVA's practice. However, this guidance does not describe the standards of provision that are required to assure safe and effective ISVA service delivery.
3. Additionally, given the complex nature of support provided by ISVA services, and their important role in supporting both the health & well-being and the criminal justice process, it is clear that the provision of ISVA services must be of the highest quality in order to provide effective, professional and boundaries support to their clients, who are often extremely vulnerable.
4. During our extensive training and consultancy work in this area, LimeCulture are frequently approached by commissioners and providers to identify "best practice" for ISVA services to adopt, to provide specific advice on cases, to provide independent review of ISVA services and to support the development of ISVA service specifications and procurement exercises.
5. Based on our extensive work around ISVA services, our independence from service providers and our work to develop Quality Standards for Services Supporting Male Victims/Survivors of Sexual Violence, LimeCulture has been repeatedly asked by commissioners and providers to develop Quality Standards for ISVA Services.
6. Consequently, with the support of and in consultation with policy leads, ISVA service providers, commissioners and individuals who have accessed support LimeCulture has undertaken the development of these Quality standards for ISVA services.
7. The main benefits of the Quality Standards for ISVA Services are set out below.

BENEFITS OF THE QUALITY STANDARDS



Victims/survivors of sexual violence will have confidence in the quality of the ISVA Service they are accessing



Service Providers will be able to evidence the quality of their ISVA Service provision against the Quality Standards



Commissioners will be able to commission against these Quality Standards, which assure the provision of support and enable effective performance

DEVELOPING THE QUALITY STANDARDS

CONSULTATION WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS AND PROFESSIONALS

The development of the Quality Standards included consultation with a wide range of services delivering ISVA support.

Two consultation workshops were held with more than 60 individual commissioners and service providers to discuss ideas, gather views and collate suggestions about the breadth and detail that should be included in the Quality Standards.

The draft Quality Standards were circulated for a 2-month consultation period to allow commissioners, providers and their partner organisations to provide comment.

More than 50 organisations (including providers and commissioners) provided feedback on the draft Quality Standards ensuring the language, scope and detail contained within the Quality Standards was fit for purpose.

CONSULTATION WITH ISVA SERVICE CLIENTS

An online survey was designed to capture the views of individuals who have accessed ISVA services on the efficacy of the support they were provided and their personal opinion on the ISVA support they received.

More than 60 individuals who had accessed ISVA support responded to the survey and shared their views, experiences and suggestions.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QUALITY STANDARDS

These Quality Standards were formally launched in October 2018 at Knowledge and Network, the National ISVA Conference. The Quality Standards are available to download free of charge at: www.limeculture.co.uk

These Quality Standards have been developed for use by all services providing ISVA support, including all VCSE (Voluntary Community & Social Enterprise) sector, SARCS (Sexual Assault Referral Centres), private provider organisations and services within a statutory setting including NHS, Police or Local Authority.

For commissioners these Quality Standards provide a framework for the development and monitoring of the ISVA services they commission. Some commissioners have already begun to include the requirement for providers to achieve these Quality Standards in their service specifications. LimeCulture is keen to see this approach adopted by all commissioners to begin to improve the consistency of provision across the country and reduce the postcode lottery that can exist for service users accessing similar services delivered by different providers.

It is intended that the Quality Standards will be available to any professional, service provider, client or commissioner who wishes to access them to further the improvement of ISVA support.

ACCREDITING ISVA SERVICES ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARDS

During the development and consultation phases, providers and commissioners reported that ensuring a robust process to independently determine whether ISVA Services are meeting the Quality Standards should be prioritised.

It is clear that there is a desire amongst providers and commissioners to ensure these Quality Standards are consistently applied and monitored. To this end, LimeCulture is launching an Independent Accreditation Programme for ISVA services wishing to adopt and implement these Quality Standards. Services assessed as meeting the Quality Standards will achieve an independent quality 'kitemark'.

The key drivers for these Quality Standards is to improve the overall quality and consistency across ISVA service provision. It is, therefore, crucial that the Quality Standards' accreditation process is applied consistently and independently.

As these Quality Standards for ISVA Services are the first of their kind, they have not been included, adopted or replicated by any other standards available to providers of sexual violence services. No other kitemark or standards are verification for ISVA Services achieving these Quality Standards.

PART TWO

THE QUALITY STANDARDS

These Quality Standards are made up of 4 separate domains, which are:

1. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

2. ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT

3. SERVICE DELIVERY

4. OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

The information contained in this section of the guidance provides a description of each of the four domains and the individual Quality Standard that make up the overall Quality Standards.

This section also includes a rationale for the inclusion of each Quality Standard, as well as the expectation of how the Quality Standard can be achieved.

1. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

These Quality Standards seek to ensure the ISVA Service is able to deliver appropriate and sustainable support to victims/survivors of sexual violence and their families through the effective management of the ISVA service and its staff.

The ISVA Service:

- 1.1** Maintains independence through the provision of accurate and impartial information to clients
- 1.2** Has distinct policies and procedures in place specifically for supporting ISVA service clients
- 1.3** Is underpinned by strategic partnerships to support multi-agency working, seamless pathways to support, and appropriate information sharing
- 1.4** Is managed by staff who have undertaken specific training to provide management of the ISVA service and supervision of caseloads
- 1.5** Ensures all staff with a caseload have undertaken (undertaking with supervision) an accredited ISVA training course and have access to continued professional development
- 1.6** Ensures all ISVAs have access to regular clinical supervision, of no less than 1.5 hours every 4-6 weeks*
*applies to ISVAs working full time

2. ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT

These Quality Standards seek to ensure that the ISVA service recognises the specific needs of ISVA clients.

The ISVA Service:

- 2.1** Provides an equitable service to clients, regardless of involvement with the criminal justice process and nature of abuse
- 2.2** Allows referrals from a range of referral sources including police referrals, self-referrals and professional referrals
- 2.3** Aims to provide initial contact with new clients within 5 working days of referral, or sooner
- 2.4** Puts in place an agreement with all clients that seeks to:
 - outline ISVA service provision,
 - manage service and contact expectations,
 - obtain consent and assure confidentiality,
 - define professional boundaries

3. SERVICE DELIVERY

These Quality Standards Seek to ensure that the ISVA service has processes in place to enable the safe, effective and appropriate delivery of services to its clients.

The ISVA service:

- 3.1** Ensures that individual risk and needs assessments are carried out with each client at every contact
- 3.2** Ensures that client-led support plans are developed for each client, based on their individual risks and/or needs
- 3.3** Delivers flexible support to meet the needs of the client, that is facilitated by effective case management
- 3.4** Has established referral pathways to other local services that may benefit ISVA service clients
- 3.5** Maintains robust management of client records to assure confidentiality, adherence to data protection legislation and where appropriate facilitate the sharing of information
- 3.6** Complies with all national and local safeguarding requirements
- 3.7** Ensures clearly defined exit strategies are put in place to enable the safe, timely and appropriate completion of support

4. OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

These Quality Standards seek to ensure that the ISVA services collects and monitors data sufficient to understand whether they are achieving equitable access and engagement and having a positive impact.

The ISVA Service:

- 4.1** Has a process for encouraging feedback from ISVA service clients, including those who do not continue with support
- 4.2** Collects and monitors a core data set to understand whether the ISVA service is achieving equitable access, engagement and a positive impact
- 4.3** Reviews data and feedback from clients to inform change, improvement and to develop innovative ways of working

QUALITY STANDARD ONE: LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

THE ISVA SERVICE MAINTAINS INDEPENDENCE THROUGH THE PROVISION OF ACCURATE AND IMPARTIAL INFORMATION TO CLIENTS

Rationale

Independence is a key aspect of the ISVA service's role in being able to provide impartial information to their clients. The ISVA service should retain and promote its independence from the police and/or other criminal justice system agencies so that ISVA clients are free to make their own choices about reporting to the police and/or entering into a criminal justice investigation.



Independence from the police is crucial for the ISVA service, which should be explicitly stated and stressed to our clients. This is particularly important for those who choose not to report.

- ISVA Service Provider

My ISVA explained the different options available to me, without pushing or recommending any particular course of action. Because of my experience, it was important for me to have freedom of choice and my ISVA gave this to me.

- Survey Respondent



ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD



The independence of the ISVA service is reflected in the governance and management structures as well as promotional literature and materials



Staff demonstrate an understanding of the need to maintain independence and are able to provide accurate and impartial information to clients



Clients should be assured of the independence of the ISVA service and their role in providing accurate and impartial information

THE ISVA SERVICE HAS DISTINCT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN PLACE SPECIFICALLY FOR SUPPORTING ISVA SERVICE CLIENTS

Rationale

Due to the complex nature of the support provided by ISVA services, it is important that there are clear policies and procedures to underpin the delivery of the service.

For ISVA service providers who also deliver other or additional services (for example, counselling/therapy services, IDVA or Crisis Worker services), it is important that distinct policies and operational procedures are put in place specifically for the ISVA service.



When we established our ISVA service, we used the same forms and policies that we had used for the therapy and group support services. However, we quickly realised that the ISVA service is unique and needs to operate quite differently, with our own referral forms, client agreements, confidentiality agreements.

- ISVA Service Provider



ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD



Leaders ensure the ISVA service has specific policies and operating procedures that are reviewed on a regular basis



Staff are aware of and demonstrate an understanding of the specific policies and procedures



Clients can access the ISVA service's policies and operating procedures and are encouraged to be part of the review process

THE ISVA SERVICE IS UNDERPINNED BY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT MULTI-AGENCY WORKING, SEAMLESS PATHWAYS TO SUPPORT, AND APPROPRIATE INFORMATION SHARING

Rationale

It is important that the ISVA service has developed effective strategic partnerships to ensure and encourage appropriate referrals into the ISVA service and pathways of support outside of the ISVA service.

Agreements should be put in place between the ISVA service and its partner agencies to support information sharing arrangements to enable the client's seamless referral to appropriate support and inform risk and needs assessments.

Feedback from partner agencies should be encouraged to ensure a joined-up approach to working and spread awareness of the support available from the ISVA service.



I really didn't know what an ISVA was, or what support they would give me - but my ISVA explained that she could help me access support from other services. She opened the door to support services that I didn't even know existed.

- Survey Respondent

Having partnership arrangements in place with other local services is key to an ISVA service, they cannot support their clients in isolation. There must be established and robust referral pathways to support victims to gain access to the ISVA service and allow referral by the ISVAs to other services too.

- Commissioner



ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD



Leaders have developed strategic partnerships with all relevant agencies to ensure seamless referral between services and information sharing arrangements are in place



Staff demonstrate awareness of the value of partnership working in order to support ISVA clients and enable appropriate referrals



Clients experience seamless transitions from the ISVA service into other local support services

THE ISVA SERVICE IS MANAGED BY STAFF WHO HAVE UNDERTAKEN SPECIFIC TRAINING TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE ISVA SERVICE AND SUPERVISION OF CASELOADS

Rationale

Due to the complexity of managing an ISVA service, it is essential that those with responsibility for managing the ISVA service have completed ISVA manager training and have appropriate knowledge and skills to supervise and support ISVA's caseloads.

ISVA service managers are responsible for ensuring the ISVAs within their service are:

- ♦ working within the professional boundaries of their role,
- ♦ effectively identifying, monitoring and managing their clients' risk and needs
- ♦ putting in place effective support plans for their clients that enables them to refer to appropriate support services

ISVA service managers should be confident to monitor service-level information and data to manage the capacity and demand for the ISVA service. They should also have a role in the allocation of new cases to ensure that there is an appropriate spread of cases between ISVAs and reduce the risk of burn-out for ISVAs.

ISVAs within the service should be able to escalate problems, difficulties or complaints to their service managers. Therefore, it will be crucial for the ISVA service managers to have a thorough understanding of the support provided by an ISVA, have good relationships with partner agencies to meet the needs of the service and communicate with commissioners where necessary.

“ My last manager didn't really understand my role [as an ISVA]. I didn't get any useful support as she was used to managing counsellors and it's different for them. That definitely made my job harder. ”

- ISVA

“ I worked as an ISVA before I got the job of managing the ISVA team – so I get it. I can help the ISVAs with any problems and most importantly, I can check that the ISVAs are managing their caseloads. I still want to be trained though- to keep learning & stay on top. ”

- ISVA Manager

ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD

- ☑ Leaders managing the ISVA service have completed ISVA manager training to enable them to effectively manage the ISVA service
- ☑ Staff feel supported in the effective management of their caseloads and confident escalating issues through supervision
- ☑ Clients are confident that staff are able to effectively manage caseloads through the support of management

THE ISVA SERVICE ENSURES ALL STAFF WITH A CASELOAD HAVE COMPLETED AN ACCREDITED (OR ARE UNDERTAKING) ISVA TRAINING COURSE AND HAVE ACCESS TO CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Rationale

Due to the complexity of the support provided by ISVAs, it is crucial that all staff providing ISVA support to clients should have completed a full accredited ISVA training course to ensure they can support their clients safely and effectively.

The Home Office ISVA Guidance states “All ISVAs are expected to have undertaken a full, comprehensive, accredited specialist ISVA training course, which provides them with the core competencies and skills required to carry out their role”

Where an individual is carrying out ISVA duties but has not yet fully completed their training this should be made clear, for example in their job title; or, they should only work under the supervision of an ISVA who has fully completed an accredited training programme.

Access to continuous professional development ensures ISVAs are able to effectively support their clients with specific needs. Continued professional development will enhance the support provided by the ISVA services and ensure individual ISVAs remain current and confident in their role




“ We need more well trained ISVAs everywhere. We make sure our ISVAs have completed the ISVA training and the advanced development programme but we know that other ISVAs in our area haven't and it's a risk for all of us. They don't operate in the same way we do, and it makes it difficult when other professionals think we provide the same level of service. ”

- ISVA Service Manager

“ I'm aware my first ISVA had trained a while ago and I think had picked up some bad habits, which came across as unprofessional. ”

- Survey Respondent

ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD

-  Leaders ensure all ISVAs complete accredited ISVA training within a year of being appointed and ensure analysis of staff training needs is conducted annually to include continuous professional development
-  Staff complete accredited ISVA training and continuous professional development obligations and commit to advancing their knowledge of issues relating to ISVA support
-  ISVA clients can be assured of staff competency and qualifications to provide support. Statements of competence are made publicly available e.g. published on websites/literature or certificates displayed

THE ISVA SERVICE ENSURES ALL ISVAS HAVE ACCESS TO REGULAR CLINICAL SUPERVISION, OF NO LESS THAN 1.5 HOURS EVERY 4-6 WEEKS* * APPLIES TO ISVAS WORKING FULL TIME

Rationale

ISVAs require a formal process of professional support and learning which enables them to develop knowledge and competence, enhance client safety and promote self care.

The Home Office recommended "ISVAs are provided with access to separate clinical and management supervision....The Clinical Supervisor should also be impartial and where possible be external to the ISVA's organisation. It is important that Clinical Supervisors are aware of and, understand the role of the ISVA, boundaries for the role and risk and needs management of cases in the criminal justice system. Clinical supervision is distinct to that provided during management supervision, which is primarily intended to support the operational management of the ISVA". ISVAs require a formal process of professional support and learning which enables them to develop knowledge and competence, enhance client safety and promote self care.

The Home Office recommended "ISVAs are provided with access to separate clinical and management supervision....The Clinical Supervisor should also be impartial and where possible be external to the ISVA's organisation. It is important that Clinical Supervisors are aware of and, understand the role of the ISVA, boundaries for the role and risk and needs management of cases in the criminal justice system. Clinical supervision is distinct to that provided during management supervision, which is primarily intended to support the operational management of the ISVA".




“ Ensuring ISVAs have access to external clinical supervision is really important. The ISVA role is a challenging job, they deal with traumatised people daily, with complex needs. We have a duty to try to prevent our ISVAs from burning out or becoming traumatised themselves. ”

- ISVA Service Provider

“ Our manager makes us go to clinical supervision every month. We all moan that its too much but I always come away from talking to my supervisor feeling much better able to cope with the challenges of my job. ”

- ISVA

ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD

-  Leaders demonstrate their commitment to the service and staff well-being by ensuring regular access to clinical supervision for all staff with access to ISVA clients
-  ISVAs describe regular and routine access to effective clinical supervision to complement their management supervision and recognise the benefits to their clients and their own personal well-being
-  Clients experience ISVA who are able to model effective self-care strategies

QUALITY STANDARD TWO: ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT

2.1

THE ISVA SERVICE PROVIDES AN EQUITABLE SERVICE TO CLIENTS, REGARDLESS OF INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCESS AND NATURE OF ABUSE

Rationale

It is an important principle that ISVA services are able to offer equitable access to their clients regardless of whether or not they have reported their abuse to the police. The ISVA role was originally championed because of the support they could provide to those who had not yet reported to the police. Therefore, to exclude clients who have not reported to the police is a departure from this principle. For example, self-referral to an ISVA service can ensure clients' risks and needs are assessed, referral is made to appropriate services and ensure they are supported to make a report should they decide to do so either immediately or at some time in the future.

It is also important that ISVA services are accessible to all victims/survivors of sexual violence, regardless of when the abuse took place, or the type of abuse that the client has experienced. In seeking to manage large caseloads, ISVA services may be tempted to introduce arbitrary access criteria, for example, only providing a service to those who have been abused within the last year, or those who have experienced rape. However, these types of arbitrary access criteria reduce the overall quality of the ISVA service. It is important that the support provided by the ISVA services should be led by the risk and needs assessments. Where caseloads become unmanageable, ISVA service providers should discuss the implications with their commissioners.




“ Support through the criminal justice process is an important part of the support an ISVA provides, but it is not the only aspect. There are 13 other domains of risk and need on the Safety and Support assessment for ISVAs. ”

- ISVA Service Manager

“ The ISVA service saved my life. The waiting time for counselling is long, but the ISVA support was almost immediate. [My ISVA] really listened and believed me, she offered advice, which I needed because my brain wasn't functioning properly, and I needed someone to support me with coping with everyday life stuff like money, my job, my house. She informed me of the rights I have and how to access records that I needed. ”

- Survey Respondent

ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD

-  Leaders ensure an equitable ISVA service, routinely monitor uptake, and publicly promote engagement with clients regardless of their involvement in the criminal justice system
-  Staff can demonstrate they understand the importance of providing support to clients regardless of their involvement with the criminal justice process and are confident providing independent information to support their clients' decision making
-  Clients are able to access the ISVA service regardless of their engagement with the criminal justice process and report effective support from the ISVA service in making decisions regarding their engagement

2.2

THE ISVA SERVICE ALLOWS REFERRALS FROM A RANGE OF SOURCES, INCLUDING POLICE REFERRALS, SELF-REFERRALS AND PROFESSIONAL REFERRALS

Rationale

Providing a range of referral routes into ISVA services promotes equitable access to all potential ISVA clients.

The police will provide a large proportion of the referrals into most ISVA services. However, it is important to ensure that the ISVA service is accessible to victims/survivors who have not reported to the police (either because they have not yet reported their abuse, or because they have chosen not to report to the police)- see Quality Standards 2.1.

Self-referrals to the ISVA service should be encouraged and supported wherever possible to allow clients to access the service when they choose and without the involvement of any other professional or agency. Enabling self-referral will require the ISVA service to promote itself to the widest possible audience, including utilising local networks and social media.

For ISVA services supporting children and young people, it is crucial that the ISVA service recognises its safeguarding responsibilities. Therefore, where ISVA services promote self-referral for victims/survivors under the age of 18, it is important that the ISVA service has considered these responsibilities and explained to clients the limits of their confidentiality.

Many ISVA services report that, amongst professionals including within the police, health and social care services, there is a general lack of awareness about ISVA services and the support they provide. Therefore, the ISVA service should work in partnership with other local services to raise awareness of the support available from the ISVA service and encourage appropriate referrals.

Services should routinely monitor their referrals and sources of those referrals against key local demographics to identify whether further engagement is required to encourage specific groups or parts of the community to access the ISVA service.




“ I never knew this service existed. I would recommend more open advertising of this vital service, not just restricted to the usual places but more info in GP surgeries, even places like the gym etc. ”

- Survey Respondent

“ We’ve found that the majority of our referrals come from the police, but we have done a big push with health and other services to try and get them to be aware of what we do. It seems to be working as we’ve had increased referrals from other professionals. ”

- ISVA service provider

ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD

-  Leaders develop referral pathways with a range of organisations that may have contact with potential ISVA clients (such as police, health, social care, voluntary support organisations) and include enabling services to facilitate self-referral
-  Staff are confident promoting their service to facilitate referrals from a range of organisations and identify opportunities to improve referrals including rates of self-referral
-  ISVA clients report that their access to services was timely and straightforward

2.3

THE ISVA SERVICE AIMS TO PROVIDE INITIAL CONTACT WITH NEW CLIENTS WITHIN 5 WORKING DAYS OF REFERRAL, OR SOONER

Rationale

Following a referral to the ISVA service, initial contact should be made with the client as quickly as possible and within 5 working days of receiving the referral. This is important to ensure that the client is aware that the referral has been accepted and that support will be provided to them by the ISVA service.

Survey respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied with long waits between the referral being made to the ISVA service and the ISVA making initial contact with them. Survey respondents also reported that waiting for the ISVA service to make contact had a negative impact on their view of the ISVA service and their willingness to engage with the ISVA service.

It is important that the ISVA service has a process for managing referrals where the client is not contactable on the initial contact.



I knew that the police had referred my case to the ISVA service, but I heard nothing for weeks. I didn't know what was going on and I wasn't in the right place to chase. So I felt like I was in limbo at exactly the time that I needed the support.

- Survey Respondent

We allocate all the new referrals on a Tuesday and a Thursday at our team meeting. The allocated ISVA then makes contact with the client that same day, so every new client is contacted within 2-3 days or sooner to arrange the first face to face contact. It works really well.

- ISVA



ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD



Leaders develop and monitor referral and contact times to ensure clients are contacted in a timely manner



Staff understand the importance of a timely initial contact



ISVA clients are made aware of the time-scales for contact and provided with the means to get in contact directly if contact is not made within these time-scales

2.4

THE ISVA SERVICE PUTS IN PLACE AN AGREEMENT WITH ALL CLIENTS THAT SEEKS TO:

- **OUTLINE ISVA SERVICE PROVISION**
- **MANAGE SERVICE AND CONTACT EXPECTATIONS**
- **OBTAIN CONSENT AND ASSURE CONFIDENTIALITY**
- **DEFINE PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES**

Rationale

ISVA service providers stressed the importance of describing, at the earliest possibility, the support that will be provided to the client. This is important to ensure the client understands the purpose of the service and helps to manage the clients' expectations.

The agreement put in place between the ISVA service and the client will ensure that there is clarity about confidentiality (and any limits), when the sharing of information will take place and in what circumstances, and importantly, provide a mechanism for the ISVA service to ensure the client has fully understood the arrangements and consents to working with the ISVA service.




“ At the first meeting with my ISVA, he explained what support he could give to me and how our appointments would work. He also gave me a pack to take away that had all of it written down. This was really helpful because I didn't know what an ISVA was until he explained. ”

- Survey Respondent

“ Nobody really knows what an ISVA is, so I take plenty of time to fully explain what support I can provide, how I work and how often we'll see each other. It's important that the client has clear expectations of what an ISVA can do, and also can't do. That's important too. ”

- ISVA

ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD

-  Leaders have developed service agreements which effectively outline the ISVA service provision including when that provision will end, consent and confidentiality, manage client expectations and support the management of professional boundaries
-  Staff are confident explaining the service agreement and fulfilling their commitments under the agreement
-  Clients report feeling confident in their expectations of the service delivery including at the end of support

QUALITY STANDARD THREE: SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1

THE ISVA SERVICE ENSURES THAT INDIVIDUAL RISK AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS ARE CARRIED OUT WITH EACH CLIENTS AT EVERY CONTACT

Rationale

ISVA services should aim to build a culture of safety that supports clients and staff by ensuring that the assessment of risk and needs an integral aspect of service provision.

Recognising the dynamic nature of an individual's risk and needs, ISVAs should assess risk and need continuously and update and adjust support plans accordingly.



We use the Safety and Support Assessment to risk assess all our clients. It draws our focus to each area of need that we should be focusing our support on. We use it at every appointment so that we can pick up any changes in our clients risk level.

- ISVA Service Manager

I absolutely expect [our] ISVA service to be assessing the risk level of clients at each contact. If they don't, then how on earth does the ISVA know what support to put in place? Ongoing & routine risk assessment should be the foundation of the ISVA service.

- Commissioner



ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD



Leaders should implement a clear policy requiring effective risk and needs assessment at each contact, facilitated by effective risk and need assessment tools and information systems



Staff are trained and experienced in delivering risk and needs assessment and able to translate these into effective support plans



Clients report being engaged with the process of risk and need assessment

3.2

THE ISVA SERVICE ENSURES THAT CLIENT-LED SUPPORT PLANS ARE DEVELOPED FOR EACH CLIENT, BASED ON THEIR INDIVIDUAL RISKS AND/OR NEEDS

Rationale

The development of individual support plans should be client led and based on the individual risk and needs of the client. The client should be empowered to take a lead role in developing plans for dealing with difficult situations, offering strengths and solutions where they feel have them and indicating the sort of support that they would prefer.

Support plans should be regularly reviewed and updated in response to any change in the individual's risk and needs.



Too often we were developing a support plan at the start of support that wouldn't be updated or changed. The SAS [Safety and Support Assessment] has changed this for our service. We do it at each contact and we update the support plan straight away, including to show when actions have been completed.

- ISVA Service Manager

The support plan that my ISVA wrote put the responsibility on me to do things that would help in my healing process. It felt very empowering.

- Survey Respondent



ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD



Leaders should implement processes to support the development and routine review of support plans including effective management supervision and information systems to facilitate recording support plans



Staff are trained and experienced in developing and reviewing support plans based on the risk and needs of clients



Clients report being engaged with the process of developing support plans

3.3

THE ISVA SERVICE DELIVERS FLEXIBLE SUPPORT TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE CLIENT, THAT IS FACILITATED BY EFFECTIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

Rationale

As ISVA services often support their clients for long periods of time (for example, if they are awaiting a trial) during which the individual risk and needs of the client often fluctuate, it is important that ISVA services can be flexible in the way that they deliver their support. For example, it may be necessary to increase or decrease the frequency of the ISVA support depending on the risks and needs of the client.

Survey respondents reported being disappointed by the lack of availability or flexibility of their ISVA support, with many respondents saying they were unclear or unhappy as to how the frequency of ISVA support was decided.

It is vital that support provided by the ISVA service is frequent enough to identify, monitor and manage the risk and needs of the client and to enable routine review of those risks and needs. Support may be provided through a range of mediums, including face to face, telephone, text and online support. However, it should be led by the risks and needs of the individual client and based on a discussion with the client to understand their preference and requirements.

In order to support their clients, ISVA services must be able to case manage effectively. This is increasingly important as the risks and needs of each client will often fluctuate at different times, meaning the ability of the ISVA to successfully manage their caseloads is paramount.




“ I didn't want home visits but that's all I was offered. I didn't know how she planned my support and I had random appointments and could not contact her in between... so a lot of waiting for her to contact me. When I moved, the new ISVA was much more structured and clear how I would be supported. ”

- Survey Respondent

“ We use the SAS [Safety and Support] Assessment to drive the frequency of client appointments. If they're a complex case with identified risks and needs, we may have weekly appointments until we've reduced these, but if there are few support needs but we're awaiting a trial, we meet every 6 weeks. There is always the option of the client contacting us if something changes and they feel they need an appointment. ”

- ISVA

ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD

-  Leaders should ensure sufficient workforce capacity to enable ISVAs to provide flexible and frequent support as well as ensuring management supervision has a case management function
-  Staff are able to case manage effectively to offer flexible and frequent support
-  Clients report feeling support was flexible and frequent to meet their identified needs

3.4

THE ISVA SERVICE HAS ESTABLISHED REFERRAL PATHWAYS TO OTHER LOCAL SERVICES THAT MAY BENEFIT ISVA SERVICE CLIENTS

Rationale

A key function of an ISVA service is to enable clients to access services depending on their individual risks and needs.

ISVA services should identify local and national organisations available to provide appropriate support across all areas of risk and needs experienced by clients including:

- ◆ Health and medical
- ◆ Mental health and psychological well-being
- ◆ Coping mechanisms
- ◆ Social & Cultural Support
- ◆ Alcohol and drug use
- ◆ Safeguarding
- ◆ Criminal justice
- ◆ Employment and Education
- ◆ Finance
- ◆ Accommodation and housing
- ◆ Immigration and residence

ISVA services should be able to facilitate their clients' access to these services through formal referral pathways (with consent).

“ *My local ISVA service was brilliant. They knew about local services and how I could access the support I needed. My ISVA was my lifeline. She was brilliant. Professional. Caring. Unflappable.* ”

- Survey Respondent

“ *Sometimes other agencies think if the client has an ISVA that they don't need to support them too, as the ISVA will do it. So I have to explain what my job is a lot and that it's not instead of theirs!* ”

- ISVA

ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD

- ☑ Leaders should work with organisations to ensure that formal referral pathways are in place between their services to facilitate smooth transition
- ☑ Staff should be competent making referrals to organisations to address clients safety and support needs
- ☑ Clients should experience timely referral to services available to support their safety and support needs

3.5

THE ISVA SERVICE MAINTAINS ROBUST MANAGEMENT OF CLIENT RECORDS TO ASSURE CONFIDENTIALITY, ADHERENCE TO DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION AND WHERE APPROPRIATE FACILITATE THE SHARING OF INFORMATION

Rationale

Robust records management is essential in the safe and effective delivery of ISVA services

Clients should be assured of the secure nature of records storage and processing, time-scales for retention and their explicit consent recorded in accordance with data protection legislation for any disclosure or sharing of information.



Effective records management ensure we are able to support clients while fulfilling our obligations around disclosure.

- ISVA Service Provider

Our service is moving over to an electronic record keeping system. It'll be much better as everything will be in one secure place. I'm really paranoid about paper files being left somewhere or going missing. So this is a huge step forward and will be easier to use.

- ISVA



ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD



Leaders should have developed a records management system that supports client confidentiality and complies with relevant data protection legislation and disclosure and safeguarding requirements



Staff should be confident in managing their records including their confidentiality and be able to explain these policies to clients assuring their understanding



Client should be made aware of the service's records management and confidentiality policy during their initial assessment

THE ISVA SERVICE COMPLIES WITH ALL NATIONAL AND LOCAL SAFEGUARDING REQUIREMENTS

Rationale

The ISVA service should be committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk. Safeguarding is the responsibility of all those involved in the delivery of the ISVA service.

The ISVA service should have up to date policies and ensure that training is in place to ensure all staff are competent in their responsibilities around the safeguarding of children and adults at risk. The ISVA service should be aware of local processes to ensure referral of concerns to local Children’s Services or Adult Services.



Safeguarding is at the heart of everything we do.

- ISVA Service Manager

We expect our [ISVA service] provider to ensure all their staff are completely up to speed on local safeguarding arrangements as standard. This is a key requirement of the ISVA service specification.

- Commissioner



ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD



Leaders should develop a safeguarding policy in accordance with local and national safeguarding requirements and ensure staff are routinely trained in their obligations



Staff should have completed appropriate safeguarding training and be aware of their obligations and able to communicate these appropriately to clients



Client are made aware of the service’s obligations around safeguarding

THE ISVA SERVICE ENSURES CLEARLY DEFINED EXIT STRATEGIES ARE PUT IN PLACE TO ENABLE THE SAFE, TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE COMPLETION OF SUPPORT

Rationale

It is an important principle that ISVA service support is not provided indefinitely. The support from an ISVA service will vary from case to case, meaning that some clients will be supported for longer than others. This should be led by the individual risk and needs of each client and the support plans put in place.

While it is not appropriate to implement an arbitrary limit on the support provided by an ISVA (as it is with other support services), it is necessary to ensure that exit strategies are put in place to enable a timely, safe and appropriate end to ISVA service support.

ISVA service providers and survey respondents suggested that it was helpful to discuss the ending of support as early as the initial meeting between the ISVA and the client. Although it will not be possible to put a time-limit on this, it may be useful to explain to the client when they may no longer be in need of support from an ISVA service. For example, when the support plan has been completed and there are no risks and needs that require action from the ISVA service or at such a time that an alternative support service is more appropriate for the client.

Both clinical and management supervision provide opportunities to monitor and review the support provision and when to appropriately end support.




“ I believe some ISVA services automatically end support immediately after the CJS has finished but this can't be right. The ISVA still has a role in making sure that the client's other support needs are being met. ”

- ISVA service provider

“ I think the ISVA could have struck around for longer. I know that they are busy but I needed to know my options after my case was NFA'ed [No Further Action]. ”

- Survey Respondent

ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD

-  Leaders ensure effective caseload management including identifying where support is nearing completion to ensure the safe, timely and appropriate completion of support
-  Staff ensure client agreements include discussions on the ending of support including onward referrals for support
-  Clients support plans include plans for ending support

QUALITY STANDARD FOUR: OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

THE ISVA SERVICE HAS A PROCESS FOR ENCOURAGING FEEDBACK FROM CLIENTS, INCLUDING THOSE WHO DO NOT CONTINUE WITH SUPPORT

Rationale

ISVA services should encourage all clients to provide feedback about the support they have received (or are receiving from the service). A range of options should be available to encourage feedback, including face to face, written and online feedback.

Feedback should be routine during support, however it is important that organisations also encourage feedback from those who choose not to proceed with support, as this can identify potential barriers to engagement and assist the development of new types of services or delivery methods. For example, a follow-up call may not be appropriate, but providing open mechanisms for feedback anonymously via service websites/ comment cards may encourage clients to explain why they chose not to continue with support.



They had a box in the waiting room and sent me a questionnaire to complete afterwards but I never did either and they didn't ask me again. They probably should have and I would have filled it in. My ISVA was brilliant and I never told her.

- Survey Respondent



ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD



Leaders recognise the importance of feedback from clients about the support they have received, have implemented processes to facilitate this



Staff encourage their clients to give feedback about the support they have received and practices are informed and improved as a result



ISVA clients are made aware of the processes for feedback and are able to engage in this process

THE ISVA SERVICE COLLECTS AND MONITORS A CORE DATA SET TO UNDERSTAND WHETHER THE ISVA SERVICE IS ACHIEVING EQUITABLE ACCESS, ENGAGEMENT AND A POSITIVE IMPACT

Rationale

An ISVA service core data set should be designed to enable the service to identify that they are achieving equitable access and engagement from clients across a range of protected characteristics.

The core data set should also include sufficient outcome measures to determine the ISVA service is having a positive impact for their clients.



We require our ISVA service to collect specific information that I then monitor as the commissioner, but I'd really like to know how our ISVA service is performing against other ISVA services. This isn't possible at the moment, but it would be fantastic if we could get all ISVA services to collect the same information. Really powerful.

- Commissioner



ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD



Leaders have implemented processes to collect and monitor a core data set and ensure this is reviewed to ensure the service is achieving equitable access, engagement and a positive impact



Staff are able to collect and monitor the ISVA service data set and recognise the importance of ensuring accurate information is routinely collected



Clients are made aware of the purpose of data collection from the outset and are assured of effective information management

THE ISVA SERVICE REVIEWS DATA AND FEEDBACK FROM CLIENTS TO INFORM CHANGE, IMPROVEMENT AND TO DEVELOP INNOVATIVE WAYS OF WORKING

Rationale

Monitoring and reviewing data and feedback from clients will ensure ISVA services are able to spot any problems and change, improve and develop new ways of working accordingly.

Reviews should occur at both operational and strategic levels and may establish where there is an increase or decrease in demand or where further engagement is required to ensure equitable access.

Where possible, data should be made available to clients or potential clients, for example via Annual Reports or information published on websites, or in other accessible formats.



We know that we can keep improving our service. It would be great if we could make those improvements based on what the data and feedback tell us, rather than just guessing what we should be doing better or differently.

- ISVA service provider

Data can be a useful tool in maintaining and driving an ISVA service's performance. I don't think we're doing this well enough yet.

- Commissioner



ACHIEVING THE QUALITY STANDARD



Leaders have introduced processes to routinely review data and feedback from clients to inform change, improvement and to develop innovative ways of working



Staff are able to contribute to the review of data and feedback



Clients understand how data is used to improve the service or their individual support. They are empowered to contribute data as an essential element of their support

CONTACT



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