



Frequently Asked Questions

Independent Accreditation Programme: Quality Standards for Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) Services

Q1. What is the Independent Accreditation Programme?

LimeCulture's Independent Accreditation Programme provides an independent assessment and verification for service providers seeking to demonstrate that they are meeting the following Quality Standards:

- Quality Standards for Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) Services
- Male Survivors Partnership Quality Standards for Services Supporting Male Victims/Survivors of Sexual Violence

The Programme provides a consistent evaluation of service performance against the published Quality Standards, enabling clients, commissioners, funders and providers to be assured of the service's standards of delivery.

Q2. What happens when a service provider demonstrates they meet the Quality Standards?

Upon meeting the relevant Quality Standards, service providers will be awarded a Quality Mark, as well as certification that can be displayed at the service provider's premises and digital logos for use on marketing materials, e-mail signatures, websites and funding applications.

Q3. Why is LimeCulture the independent accreditor for the Quality Standards for ISVA Services?

Through our extensive training and consultancy work in this area, LimeCulture is frequently approached by commissioners and service providers to identify "best practice" for ISVA services to adopt, provide specific advice on cases, undertake independent reviews of ISVA services, and support the development of ISVA service specifications and procurement exercises. Based on this work, our independence from service providers, and our work to develop Quality Standards for Services Supporting Male Victims/Survivors of Sexual Violence, LimeCulture was repeatedly asked by commissioners and providers to develop Quality Standards for ISVA Services. These were launched in 2018.

During the development and consultation phases, it became clear a robust process was needed to independently verify whether an ISVA service meets the Quality Standards. To this end, LimeCulture launched the Independent Accreditation Programme for ISVA services wishing to adopt and implement these Quality Standards.

Q4. How does LimeCulture ensure they are accrediting service providers consistently and fairly?

LimeCulture is committed to objectivity, fairness and transparency at each stage of the accreditation process:

- Each enrolled service is allocated to one of our Accreditation Managers who is responsible for all elements of the accreditation.
- A process of management audit is applied to every service, involving a review of a sample of evidence to verify the assessment made by the nominated Accreditation Manager.
- Randomly selected group interview sessions will include a member of the LimeCulture Senior Management Team to ensure the accreditation process is being carried out fairly, consistently and transparently.

Q5. Can we appeal to LimeCulture if our service is not awarded the Quality Mark?

LimeCulture has an appeals process in place to review the decisions taken by your Accreditation Manager and, where necessary, to re-review the evidence submitted during the accreditation process. A copy of our appeals process can be requested by emailing accreditation@limeculture.co.uk.

Q6. Is it mandatory that we meet the Quality Standards?

Applying either of the Quality Standards (ISVA or Male) in your service is entirely voluntary, however, service providers are increasingly recognising the benefits of meeting the Quality Standards and displaying the Quality Mark. Additionally, an increasing number of commissioners and funders are incorporating this requirement into service specifications. You should discuss this with your commissioner if you are unclear about whether they expect your service to join the Independent Accreditation Programme.

Q7. We are a member of an umbrella organisation that has its own standards which we adhere to. Is this enough to demonstrate we are achieving these Quality Standards?

While we recognise there are other service standards available to members of umbrella organisations, these do not demonstrate that your service has achieved the Quality Standards for ISVA Services. As these Quality Standards are designed solely for ISVA services, they have not been included in, adopted or replicated by any other standards. Only LimeCulture can offer accreditation against the Quality Standards for ISVA Services.

Q8. How much support will LimeCulture give me/my service to reach the standards?

To maintain the independence of the programme, the level of assistance LimeCulture can offer to individual services to achieve the Quality Standards is limited. We will always try and make suggestions about where you may source relevant advice or guidance, but cannot provide substantive support.

Who can join the ISVA Quality Standards Independent Accreditation Programme?

Q9. Which service providers can join the Independent Accreditation Programme for the Quality Standards for ISVA Services?

All service providers delivering an adult and/or children and young people's ISVA service can apply to join the Independent Accreditation Programme for the Quality Standards for ISVA Services.

Q10. Can my ISVA Service join the Independent Accreditation Programme for both the ISVA Quality Standards and the Male Quality Standards?

Yes, if your service provides an ISVA service to adult male victims/survivors. However, as the Quality Standards are different in scope and focus, you will need to demonstrate that you meet both sets of Quality Standards separately.

Q11. We provide an ISVA service, but we do not support male victims/survivors. Can we join the Independent Accreditation Programme?

Yes, the Quality Standards for ISVA Services do not stipulate which gender of client your service should support.

How long does the Programme take to complete?

Q12. How long does the Independent Accreditation Programme take to complete?

The Independent Accreditation Programme involves a robust, six-stage process and it typically takes up to 12 months to achieve the Quality Mark. However, some service providers do achieve their Quality Mark in a shorter period – specific timescales depend on many factors, and your Accreditation Manager will work closely with you to support you throughout the process.

Q13. If we take longer than 12 months to demonstrate that we are meeting the Quality Standards, will we fail the accreditation?

In the interest of fairness, we discuss expectations around timescales with all services upon joining the programme. Your Accreditation Manager will support you to work within the agreed timescales where possible. In exceptional circumstances, you may request an extension through your Accreditation Manager. Further details can be found in our Terms and Conditions.

Q14. What flexibility does the Independent Accreditation Team have when interpreting the Quality Standards and the decision to award the Quality Mark?

While we provide examples of evidence services may wish to submit, service providers can demonstrate they are meeting the Quality Standards in several different ways. LimeCulture values the individuality of each provider, and welcomes new and innovative approaches to service delivery.

Q15. Is there any flexibility around meeting the standards where circumstances may be out of our control?

The Independent Accreditation Team can award a Quality Mark with conditions. This is used where your Accreditation Manager is satisfied that a service has met all the standards, but evidence is not yet available. An example of where an accreditation with conditions could be issued is where a service has updated its marketing materials and, while they can demonstrate appropriate sign off for the new content, they have not yet received the new materials back from the printer.

Q16. How long can conditions last?

The Independent Accreditation Team will agree a realistic date with you, usually within three months, during which time we will ask you to provide the remaining/outstanding evidence to LimeCulture. Where this is provided, the condition(s) will be removed. Where the evidence is not provided, the Quality Mark will be removed.

How much does the Independent Accreditation Programme cost?

Q17. How much does it cost to join the Programme?

The cost of joining the Independent Accreditation Programme is currently £3,500 + VAT for one service, based at a single site, and includes the accreditation workshop, evidential review, action planning, group interviews and, where successful, a certificate of accreditation and digital/print logos.

LimeCulture will provide bespoke quotations for large or complex multi-site provision.

Q18. We have more than one location where our staff work. Is there a further charge for additional sites?

Where services are delivered from more than one site, there will be an additional charge of between £1,000 and £3,500 + VAT depending on circumstances and location. The higher fee is based on the additional work required of our Independent Accreditation Team to ensure the Quality Standards are applied throughout the service's bases.

Q19. On occasion we use third party offices/consultation rooms to see our clients. Does that mean we have to include these sites in our accreditation?

We understand that it may be more convenient for your clients for you to see them at third party locations (such as GP surgeries, in schools, client home addresses) and we will ask you to tell us about them when you are enrolled on the programme and why they are suitable venues for your services. We will not make additional charges for these sites where they are used irregularly and do not fall within the control of your organisation.

Q20. We want to enrol our adult and children and young people's ISVA services on the programme. What will this cost?

Where providers deliver an adult ISVA service and a children and young people's ISVA service, these will be treated as two services. Where there is a shared service delivery model and single contract in place covering both services, the accreditation cost for the second service will be reduced if the accreditation is undertaken at the same time as the first service. Depending on circumstances, the additional charge will be between £1,000 and £3,500 + VAT. LimeCulture will discuss these costs with you before you enrol.

Q21. We manage our adult ISVA and children and young people's ISVA service as a single service. Why are there additional charges for taking both services through the Independent Accreditation Programme?

The fee for the second service covers the additional work carried out by the Independent Accreditation Team throughout the programme to accredit a second service. LimeCulture will discuss all costs with you before you enrol.

There are additional considerations required for ISVA services to meet the specific needs of children and young people, including but not limited to different policies and working practices, specialist training, and additional multi-agency working and safeguarding responsibilities. These require the team to review separate and different documentary and verbal evidence to assess whether the ISVA service meets the Quality Standards. The Quality Standards for ISVA Services explicitly reflect these differences.

Q22. How will the published charges apply to my service?

For a tailored quote for joining the Independent Accreditation Programme please contact accreditation@limeculture.co.uk. To enable us to quote as accurately as possible, please provide us with a breakdown of service provision within your organisation and an outline of which services you would like to put through the programme. LimeCulture CIC is a social enterprise and does not seek to make a profit. However, we do need to cover the costs of providing the accreditation. This means that, within the accreditation fee, we need to account for the additional work our team must undertake where there is more than one service or site to consider.

Leaving the Programme

Q23. We enrolled on the programme and our workshop is coming up but on reflection think this is not for us. Can we withdraw?

It is at the discretion of each service if they choose to enrol on the programme. We strongly urge you to read the relevant standards document and our Terms and Conditions carefully before submitting your application to join the programme. If you think you may want to withdraw, we suggest you speak to an Accreditation Manager as soon as possible to discuss your circumstances.

Q24. We've attended a workshop but we're no longer sure it's for us.

Speak to your Accreditation Manager as soon as possible to discuss your circumstances. In many cases an Accreditation Manager will be able to reassure you of any concerns that you may have and discuss ways forward, considering your individual circumstances. Please note that once you have attended the workshop and have therefore started the Independent Accreditation programme, no refund can be made under our Terms and Conditions.

Q25. Our commissioner has paid our fees. Can we withdraw?

Where a commissioner has funded a place on the programme, we maintain a dialogue with them about the service's progression towards accreditation. As part of this, we will discuss potential and actual withdrawals from the programme with the commissioner. In accordance with our Terms and Conditions, there can be no refunds where services decide not to continue. Your commissioner may wish to discuss the implications of your withdrawal with you; this is not something LimeCulture is involved in.

FAQ about specific Quality Standards

Q26. Quality Standard 1.1 refers to the ISVA service maintaining independence through the provision of accurate and impartial information to clients. We consider ourselves to provide an impartial service but our ISVAs are employed by a third party (e.g. the police). What does this mean for us?

To meet Quality Standard 1.1, the ISVA service must be able to demonstrate its independence from third parties such as the police and/or other criminal justice agencies. Examples of how independence may be demonstrated include the governance and management arrangements in place; arrangements for collecting, storing, accessing and sharing client information; and promotional literature and materials.

Where escalation processes go beyond the ISVA service to a third party (for example, if accountability and governance arrangements sit with that third party), the service will need to demonstrate how they maintain independence from that third party, or demonstrate how the third party is itself independent from the police and/or criminal justice agencies.

Q27. Quality Standard 1.2 requires us to have specific policies and procedures for the ISVA service. We deliver other services as well as the ISVA service and our policies and procedures cover all of these. Do we have to create a separate set of policies and procedures for the ISVA service?

We do not expect ISVA service providers to rewrite all their policies and procedures for the purposes of meeting this Quality Standard. However, we do need to see the processes, procedures and/or working practices that reflect the unique considerations required for the effective delivery of the ISVA service. This can be demonstrated via, for example, tailored documentation that reflects the different procedures when safeguarding adults, and children and young people, among other things.

Q28. Quality Standard 1.4 refers to the ISVA service being managed by staff who have undertaken specific training to provide effective management of the ISVA service and

supervision of caseloads. I've done ISVA training and Management Training – do I need to attend an ISVA Managers course too?

LimeCulture believes that completing an ISVA Managers course is the best way to ensure that ISVA Service Managers can provide appropriate support to ISVAs whilst overseeing caseloads and managing the service effectively. However, we are aware that some ISVA Service managers are themselves qualified ISVAs and may have undertaken different types of management training. The Accreditation Team will accept this standard is met where the ISVA Manager can demonstrate, including through training, that they have the skills and competence to understand what an ISVA does and does not do, and are competent to supervise and manage ISVAs in relation to:

- Professional boundaries
- Risk assessment and management
- Case management and supervision.

Q29. Quality Standard 2.1 refers to allowing equitable access to all clients regardless of whether their abuse has been reported to police, when the abuse occurred, and the type of abuse they have experienced. We have access criteria that are more restrictive than this. Can we still meet this Quality Standard?

To meet this Quality Standard, the Accreditation Team will want to see evidence that the ISVA service is accessible to all victims/survivors, in accordance with the Home Office guidance and the Crown Prosecution Service definition of sexual assault:

“Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) play an important role in providing specialist tailored support to victims and survivors of sexual violence. An ISVA is an adviser who works with people who have experienced rape and sexual assault, irrespective of whether they have reported to the police.” Home Office (2017), The Role of the Independent Sexual Violence Adviser: Essential Elements

“A rape is when a person uses their penis without consent to penetrate the vagina, mouth, or anus of another person. Legally, a person without a penis cannot commit rape, but a female may be guilty of rape if they assist a male perpetrator in an attack. Sexual assault is where on person intentionally touches another person sexually without their consent. The touching can be done with any part of the body or with an object. Assault by penetration is where a person intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus or another person with any part of their body or an object without that person’s consent. The penetration has to be sexual.” [Crown Prosecution Service](#)

We understand that some ISVA services have additional staff members working in client-facing roles (support staff) to support the work of the qualified ISVA team. To meet this Quality Standard, and reflecting the Home Office guidance, services need to ensure there is not a two-tier system in place for victims/survivors of sexual violence upon entering the ISVA service. The perceived seriousness of the sexual violence experienced by a client does not necessarily correlate with the impact of that experience, nor the risks and needs they present with. Therefore, irrespective of the offence, the risks and needs assessment and the support plan for each client entering a service is an essential foundation of ISVA support, and one which requires specialist training to carry out.

Once a risk and needs assessment has been carried out and a support plan put in place, a decision about who supports the client on a day-to-day basis can then be determined. If a decision is made that

the level of risk and needs can be managed by a member of support staff, then this should be done under the supervision of an ISVA.

If structural changes will be required to your service to meet this Quality Standard, you may wish to discuss this with your commissioner(s).

Q30. We currently only accept clients who are reporting to the police. If we start accepting referrals for non-police cases, will the ISVA role be different in focus?

Referrals for non-police cases may require different input from your service with a focus on risk and needs assessing, creating a support plan and making referrals to appropriate services. When the risk and needs assessment shows that the client no longer needs support from the ISVA service, the case may be closed. This may take place earlier than for clients who are within the criminal justice process due to the type of support required and/or the time taken for cases to process to the criminal justice system.

Q31. Quality Standard 3.1 refers to a risk and needs assessment and states one should be completed at every contact with the client. We complete a risk and needs assessment at the initial appointment which is then used to create a support plan. Do we need to complete a full risk and needs assessment at every appointment?

The risk and needs assessment must be completed at the client's first contact with the ISVA and reviewed on a regular basis. As risk and needs are dynamic, it is important to consider at every contact whether there have been any changes that impact on the client. As they are interdependent, risk and needs assessments should be considered in conjunction with support plans. A full risk and needs assessment should be carried out at defined intervals.