



# 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 independent assessment and verification for service providers seeking to demonstrate that they are meeting one of the following sets of Quality Standards:

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

The Programme provides a consistent evaluation of service performance against the Quality Standards, enabling clients, commissioners, funders and service providers to be assured of a 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 asked by commissioners and providers to develop Quality Standards for ISVA Services. These were launched in 2018 and updated in 2022.

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 and, as such:

- Each enrolled service is allocated to a named Accreditation Manager 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 named Accreditation Manager.
- Randomly selected group interview sessions will include a member of LimeCulture's 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](mailto:accreditation@limeculture.co.uk).

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

Applying the Quality Standards within 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 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 by or replicated in 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. Does it matter which gender my ISVA service supports?**

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. It typically takes up to 12 months to achieve the Quality Mark, although 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.

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

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

### **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 marketing materials and had appropriate sign off but has not yet received the new materials back from the printer.

### **Q16. How long can conditions last?**

The Independent Accreditation Team will agree a reasonable timeframe 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 may be removed.

### **Q17. How long is the Quality Mark valid for?**

The Quality Mark is valid for three years starting from the date of the Accreditation Workshop. Should services successfully achieve reaccreditation by the end of the three-year period, the Quality Mark will be renewed for a further two years.

## **How much does the Independent Accreditation Programme cost?**

### **Q18. How much does it cost to join the Programme?**

The cost to join the Independent Accreditation Programme is £3,500 + VAT. This is the fee for one service and includes the Accreditation Workshop, evidential review, action planning, group interviews and, where successful, a certificate of accreditation and digital/print logos. Additional services from the same service provider will incur an additional fee - see Q19 and 20 below.

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

### **Q19. 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.

**Q20. We manage our adult ISVA and children and young people's ISVA service as a single service. Why is there an additional charge 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 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 documentary and verbal evidence to assess whether the ISVA service meets the Quality Standards. The Quality Standards for ISVA Services explicitly outline these differences.

**Q21. How will the published charges apply to my service?**

For a tailored quote for joining the programme, please contact [accreditation@limeculture.co.uk](mailto: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 the services you would like to enrol. LimeCulture is a social enterprise and is established as a Community Interest Company, meaning it is not a profit-making organisation. We are committed to providing value for money and transparency in all costs associated with our work.

## **Leaving the Programme**

**Q22. We enrolled on the programme and our Accreditation Workshop is coming up but we're no longer sure it's for us. Can we get a refund?**

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.

**Q23. We've attended the Accreditation Workshop but we're no longer sure it's for us. Can we get a refund?**

Speak to your Accreditation Manager as soon as possible to discuss your circumstances. It may be the case that your Accreditation Manager is 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 Accreditation Workshop and therefore started the Independent Accreditation Programme, no refund can be made under our Terms and Conditions.

**Q24. Our commissioner has paid our fees. Can we withdraw?**

In accordance with our Terms and Conditions, there can be no refunds where services decide not to continue on the Independent Accreditation Programme. If your commissioner has funded your place, we advise you discuss any intended changes to your participation in the programme directly with them.

## Reaccreditation

### Q25. When should we start the process of applying for reaccreditation?

The Independent Accreditation Team will make contact six months prior to the expiry of your existing Quality Mark to invite you to apply for reaccreditation.

### Q26. What is the fee for applying for reaccreditation?

The reaccreditation fee is £1,500 + VAT for a single service. Should you wish to reaccredit another service at the same time, there is an additional cost of £500 +VAT.

### Q27. What is involved in the reaccreditation process?

Services who choose to apply for reaccreditation are required to complete the following three-stage process in the six months leading up to the expiry of their Quality Mark:

1. Signing a written declaration confirming the service continues to comply with all the Quality Standards. LimeCulture strongly encourages services to carry out a thorough internal review to ensure the service still meets all the Quality Standards prior to signing the declaration.
2. Participating in a virtual group interview session where the Accreditation Manager examines each of the domains, standards and indicators in two 1.5-hour focus groups with the Leadership and Staff teams.
3. On completion of the group interviews, the named Accreditation Manager will request a dip sample of documentary evidence relating to eight Quality Standards across the four domains. The standards included in the dip sample are selected at random but may also include particular standards/indicators the Accreditation Manager feels require further review. The service will be given a four-week deadline to submit the required evidence.

Once the Accreditation Manager has completed a review of the documentary evidence and is satisfied the service has demonstrated continued compliance against all the Quality Standards, the Quality Mark will be extended for a further two years. If a service is unable to evidence continued compliance, the Quality Mark will not be renewed.

### Q28. Can conditions be attached to a reaccreditation?

Yes, in the same way that conditions can be attached to an accreditation, the same applies to a reaccreditation.

### Q29. How long is the Quality Mark valid following successful reaccreditation?

Following successful reaccreditation, the Quality Mark is valid for a further two years.

### Q30. What happens after the reaccredited Quality Mark expires?

The reaccreditation programme is a two-year rolling process – LimeCulture will invite services to apply for further reaccreditation six months prior to the existing Quality Mark expiring.



### **Q31. What happens if we do not apply for reaccreditation?**

Should a service provider choose not to reaccredit a service or be unable to demonstrate continued compliance against *all* the Quality Standards, the Quality Mark will cease on the existing expiry date and should be removed from all publicity material and external communications.

### **Q32. If we decide not to reaccredit but change our mind later, can we apply once the Quality Mark has expired?**

Services that wish to continue to hold the accreditation but whose Quality Mark has expired are encouraged to contact their Accreditation Manager at the earliest opportunity to discuss options. If a significant period of time has passed since the Quality Mark expired, the service may be required to complete the full accreditation process again to achieve the Quality Mark.

## **FAQ about specific Quality Standards**

### **Q33. Quality Standard 1.1 refers to the ISVA service maintaining independence through the provision of accurate and impartial information to clients. We believe we provide an impartial service but our ISVAs are employed by a third party. 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 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.

If you have any concerns about your service being able to meet this Quality Standard, please discuss this with your Accreditation Manager at the first available opportunity.

### **Q34. 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

### **Q35. 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?**

Completing specific training for ISVA Managers 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.

**Q36. 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 need to see evidence that the ISVA service is accessible to all victims/survivors. This is in line with the Home Office guidance on the ISVA role, 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](#)

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. The Quality Standard requires services to ensure there is not a two-tier system for victims/survivors entering the service with all referrals given the opportunity to be assessed by a qualified ISVA.

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 your access criteria do not enable your service to meet this Quality Standard, you may wish to discuss this with your commissioner(s).

**Q37. We currently only accept clients who are reporting to the police. If we start accepting referrals for non-police cases also, will we meet Quality Standard 2.1?**

To meet Quality Standard 2.1, services must evidence there is no referral criteria dictating which clients will receive support from an ISVA and which won't. All victims/survivors who are referred into the ISVA service, regardless of involvement with the criminal justice process and the nature of abuse, should have the opportunity to be risk and needs assessed by a qualified ISVA.



**Q38. 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 risks and needs are dynamic, it is important to consider at every contact whether there have been any changes that impact on the client. Risk and needs assessments should continue to inform support plans. A full risk and needs assessment should be carried out at defined intervals.

**February 2023**