

INTRODUCTION TO BCWA SEXUAL ABUSE SERVICES

Sexual abuse is defined as:

‘Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. Most victims and perpetrators know each other’

BCWA SEXUAL ABUSE SERVICES

BCWA sexual abuse service is a specialist service supporting victims and survivors of sexual abuse. The service covers the Black Country areas Sandwell, Walsall, Dudley & Wolverhampton. The service offers support to women and men who have experienced sexual violence. The support offered is both inside and outside of the criminal justice system. The service provides a trauma informed approach tailored to the needs of the client.

The service is made up of ISVAs (Independent sexual violence advisors), CHISVAs (Children Independent sexual violence advisors, CSA (Childhood sexual abuse ISVA), Community Development ISVA, all offering a unique package of support using a trauma informed approach.

PROJECTS AND SERVICES

INDEPENDENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE ADVISOR (ISVA)

Our specialist trained Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) provide a frontline high quality service to victims that have experienced rape and sexual violence. The support is tailored to the individual needs of the client, using a trauma informed approach. The team use a range of different interventions to proactively engage clients in supporting them in their journey to recovery. The support is provided both inside and outside of the Criminal Justice System.

THE CHILDREN’S INDEPENDENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE ADVISOR (CHISVA)

Our specialist trained Children’s Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (CHISVA) provides a frontline high quality service to children and young people between the ages of 5-18 years. The support is tailored to the individual needs of the child/young person, using a trauma informed approach. The team uses a range of different interventions to proactively engage children/young people in supporting them in their journey to recovery. We also offer parental support, supporting them to understand the trauma their child/young person has experienced and the impact of that.

CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE INDEPENDENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE ADVISOR (CSA ISVA)

Our specialist training Childhood Sexual Abuse Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (CSA ISVA) provide a frontline high quality service to adult survivors of sexual abuse. The support is tailored to the individual needs of the client, having completed a comprehensive risk assessment and support plan. The CSA ISVA takes a trauma informed approach, providing emotional support both within and outside of the criminal justice system.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INDEPENDENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE ADVISOR

The Community Development ISVA is a trained specialist who proactively engages with local communities across the Black Country to raise and increase awareness of referral pathways into service for ISVA or therapeutic support and advocacy.

THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

Therapeutic Services underpins all of the services within BCWA. Providing a person-centred approach and specialist trauma therapy, all counsellors work within the BACP Framework for ethical practice in line with the CPS Guidance.

THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICE

The sexual violence service aims to proactively support victims of rape and sexual violence, to enable them to live a healthy, fear free and safe life as a basic human right. Our objectives are to:

- Offer support to victims of sexual violence and abuse which enables them to cope with and recover from the effects of this crime
- Strengthen pathways between police and support services so all victims presenting are offered independent support
- Continue to improve criminal justice outcomes/victim experiences within the criminal justice system, by offering victims support from report to court
- Strengthen the victim's voice
- Offer a consistent sub-regional service across the four boroughs of the Black Country

SERVICE STANDARDS

BCWA is a member of the Women's Aid Federation and our support services achieved the Women's Aid National Quality Standard in February 2020. The quality mark sets a high bar for victims' services, and the seven standards we work to are:



1. **SAFETY, SECURITY AND DIGNITY:** Women and children's rights to life, liberty and dignity are upheld.
2. **RIGHTS AND ACCESS:** Equal access to their rights and entitlements is ensured for all and barriers to equality are addressed.
3. **PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH:** Women and children's rights to the highest attainable standards of physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health are upheld, promoting long term recovery and wellbeing.
4. **STABILITY, RESILIENCE AND AUTONOMY:** Survivors are supported to achieve long-term stability, independence and freedom from abuse.
5. **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE:** The rights of children and young people to safety, education and family life are upheld.
6. **LEADERSHIP AND PREVENTION:** Survivors' voices lead the development of strategic responses to violence against women and girls.
7. **GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY:** The organisation demonstrates women's leadership of services for women and children and is accountable to survivors and communities

We also work to the following standards:

- National Occupational Standards for domestic abuse and sexual violence services
- VAWG shared sector standards
- West Midlands Sexual Abuse Standards

PRINCIPLES OF SUPPORT

“It has been so helpful and useful to have someone to talk to...no one else knows what I have been through, so having someone who knows how I am feeling and checking to see if I am okay has been amazing. [ISVA] has completed research for me that otherwise I wouldn't have known where to begin. [ISVA] has helped me not feel so lost in all of the stress of what happened to me”

“It is so important for rape victims to be believed...your support definitely makes me feel that way”

“From the beginning of the process and all the way through to court, I have felt supported. I feel it would have been so much harder without the advice I have been given.”

Quotes from ISVA clients

Our support **involves victims and survivors at each stage**. Our approach:

- is underpinned by motivational interviewing
- is trauma informed
- is gender responsive
- focuses on the principles of short term safety and long term recovery

All work of the domestic abuse service is informed by several core values:

- **SAFETY:** ensuring that service users feel physically and emotionally safe as they come into the environment and that they remain safe;
- **TIMELINESS:** we act quickly in response to needs and risk;
- **RELEVANCE:** our support is needs-led and outcome-focused; interventions are targeted and relevant to each client, recognizing that different people may work in different ways. Where there are needs we cannot meet we refer to partner agencies.
- **TRUSTWORTHINESS:** service users know that providers and practitioners will ensure that expectations are clear and consistent and that appropriate boundaries
- **CHOICE:** we prioritise the preferences of service users in routine practices and crisis situations;
- **COLLABORATION:** we consult and involve clients on actions we take, so that a collaborative relationship is encouraged between those in service and providers. We ensure clients understand our interventions, the actions we take, and the actions of other professionals;
- **INTEGRATION:** our support is integrated to reduce overlap and offer a smooth support journey where clients and their children have multiple needs. We collaborate internally with other BCWA support services, and externally with police, social services etc.
- **EMPOWERMENT:** services are developed and delivered to maximize client empowerment, recognizing strengths and building skills that will enable recovery.

SUPPORT MODEL

BCWA offers a range of flexible contact/support options so that we can engage clients in ways that work for them, including:

- Client one to one support interventions provided face to face, by phone or video call depending on client preference and risk;
- Support groups offered online or in person;
- Whatsapp/text referral line in addition to telephone and email referral options, and a live webchat service, so survivors who find it hard to find privacy to make a phone call can contact us discretely;
- Flexible support times for clients to work around childcare commitments, with evening support/counselling appointments where needed;
- Peer mentoring as an onward referral pathway to provide continued support post ISVA intervention.
- Completing support in a timely manner and in best practice with the agreement of the client.

WOMEN-ONLY SPACES

BCWA's interpersonal abuse support services accept referrals for both women and men. This is defined by our commissioned service specifications as well as identified need.

However, in accordance with the Women's Aid national quality standards, services should be gender-sensitive and gender-specific. The experiences and needs of male victims differ from those of female victims and should be met separately from services for women and children.

We therefore provide, value and protect women-only spaces for women in our community services.

Male victims should be supported in designated male-only spaces within BCWA's community offices, or at partner agency sites.

Support is provided according to BCWA's Visitor and Gendered Spaces Policy and Procedures. Please refer to these for more information.

WORKING WITH 3RD PARTY AGENCIES

The Sexual Violence service aims to provide a person-centred approach to support. This is particularly important when thinking about marginalised and vulnerable clients. These clients may include, but are not constrained to, adults with disabilities, elderly people, those who have significant mental health needs, adults who lack capacity as well as other vulnerabilities.

Victims should be able to engage with our support in a safe manner. They may require to have additional help to fully engage with our service. This additional help may come from their family, other adults or relevant professionals. It is imperative that the victims' voice is heard in these instances. Engagement with third party individuals and/or professionals should be involved only by the client's consent. However, in exceptional circumstances this may not be possible and liaison with third party agencies will be essential to assess the needs of the client.

The level and nature of involvement of third party agencies will vary on a case by case basis. It is the responsibility of your ISVA/CHISVA to establish what kind of support is appropriate for you and to reflect on whether they can identify any further risks and support needs.

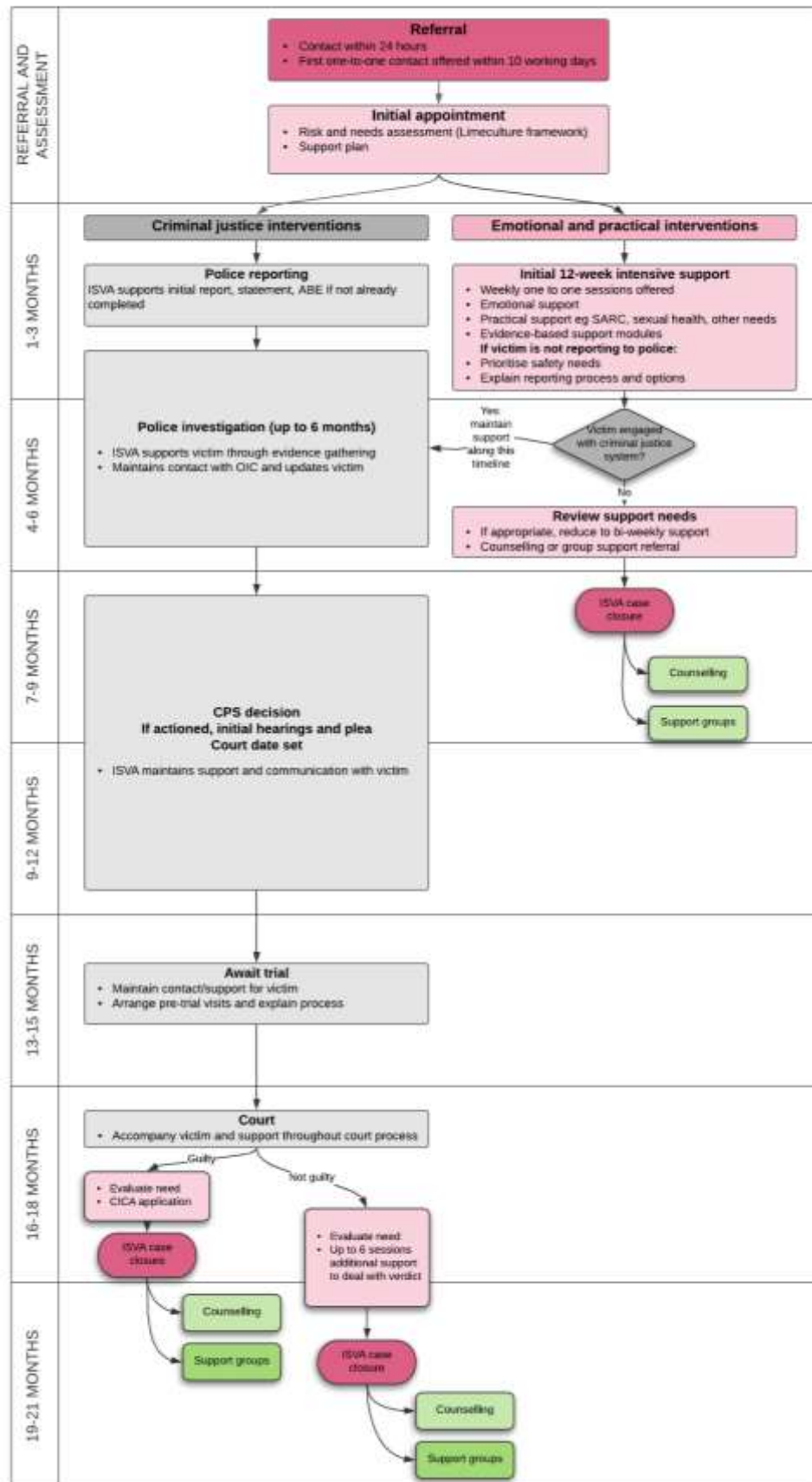
In regards to children, there may be instances where direct communication with the child may not be appropriate in the first instance. As we have a holistic approach of support, it is imperative that we establish an understanding of the context around the client. Working in isolation with vulnerable young children would not be best practice unless all risks can be managed appropriately.

Where a child or young person may not wish for their parent/carer to be engaged or aware of their involvement with the service, it is the role of the CHISVA to reiterate the boundaries of confidentiality with the client and work with the child or young person – and other professionals in the child or young person's support network where the client consents – to agree a way forward that is safe.

Engaging with 3rd party agencies shouldn't be a barrier in accessing support. There is a balance between the clients having a private space to engage with their ISVA/CHISVA and to utilise 3rd party agencies to ensure that they can engage.

SUPPORT JOURNEY

BCWA ISVA Service Support Journey Adult recent victim (within 12 months)



REFERRAL

CONTACTING BCWA

One of the biggest challenges for victims of abuse is reaching out to the appropriate services and confidentiality. We provide multiple options to access the service:

TELEPHONES:

- 24-hour helpline: 0121 552 6448: between 9am-5pm weekdays. This number is directed to Landchard House, and at all other times it is directed to BCWA accommodation services for response by out of hours staff.
- Main phone contact line: 0121 553 0090: directed to Landchard House with response available weekdays 9am-5pm.
- Regional numbers for external use in Walsall 01922 649 569 and Dudley 01384 455 411: these numbers are directed to Landchard House for SPOC response

EMAIL: ISVAREFERRALS@BLACKCOUNTRYWOMENSAID.CO.UK

- This email is for all referrals and is managed by the SPOC
- All referrals sent to this email address should be password protected.

The sexual abuse service has a range of referral sources and designated pathways into the service:

POLICE

- Police refer directly into the single point of contact.
- These referrals are opened based on risk (risk assessed by a manager)
- Once risk assessed they are triaged
- Cases that are deemed to be high risk are allocated straight out.

SARC

- Sarc referral all cases into our SPOC for ISVA support, adult and paediatric counselling.
- These referrals are triaged and allocated out based on risk

OTHER AGENCIES

- All other agencies should complete a BCWA referral form and should ensure the referral has been appropriately secured before sending to the SPOC mailbox
ISVAreferrals@blackcountrywomensaid.co.uk

SELF REFERRALS (PHONE/DROP IN)

- A full referral form should be completed.
- All referrals into service have senior/management oversight, who will complete lateral check using private online database to identify if client is previously known to BCWA. Once these checks are complete the case will be risk assessed.
- All referrals will be offered an Initial Assessment, either face to face or via the phone.

REFERRAL FORM

The referral form is the main document which collates all relevant information for clients and should be completed for EVERY client prior to acceptance into the service.

- Self-referrals – The form should be completed over the phone, or during a drop in appointment or telephone
- Agency referrals – Agencies should complete a BCWA referral form and send this as password protected document via email.
- A safe contact number should be provided when either referred in or self-referred. Any special guidance in respect of safe times to call should also be noted by the agency referring in or the member of staff taking the referral.

SPOC PROCESS (SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT)

Our SPOC team are the first response to all referrals and enquires for the Sexual Violence service. Their role is to respond to referrals within 24 hours within our service times.

HIGH-RISK REFERRALS

Referrals that are deemed to be high risk through assessing these are a priority and should be inputted and allocated to an ISVA straight away. High risk referrals are not triaged as this will be the responsibility of the ISVA.

Risking

- Any referrals that are deemed inappropriate due to risk around complexities, the manager will discuss this directly with the referring agency to discuss suitability.

REFERRALS

All new referrals should be contacted by SPOC to complete a comprehensive triage assessment. This helps us to understand the client's needs and whom is best to work with the client.

- If the initial contact is unsuccessful, further attempts must be made over a period of 10 working days. The following attempts should be made to engage the client;
 - Contact the referring agency to discuss facilitating contact, via joint visit or agreed telephone appointment.
 - Send out letters (if safe to do so)
 - Safety is paramount at every stage of trying to engage, this should not be overlooked. We should not be doing anything that could potentially escalate risk in any way.

If after 10 days contact has been unsuccessful, the referrer should be notified of closure.

If contact was successful, the case will either be:

- allocated to a ISVA
- Closed if the client refuses or no longer wants support at that moment.

INITIAL CONTACT

The initial contact with service users should aim to build excellent rapport and should be structured as follows:

- Identify the service and introduce yourself clearly.
- Explain the reason for the call and check whether now is a good/safe time to talk.
- Cover confidentiality and safeguarding and basic information sharing principles.
- Open-ended questions to ascertain how the service user is feeling.
- Identify whether incidents have been reported to the police.
- Identify the risks, whether they are immediate and whether urgent safety planning is required. Also completion of risk assessment to ascertain emotional and wellbeing needs.
- Ask the service user what they would like to gain from contact with the service, for example whether they are seeking advice and guidance or ongoing support.

ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

If clients choose not to engage in casework, we will provide advice and guidance. This should include:

- An awareness of safety planning (including mental health and trauma, crisis numbers, current risk from perpetrators)
- Discussion of police reporting process and how this works
- Importance of reporting to 101/999
- Signposting to SARC in cases of recent assault: forensic evidence can be stored at the SARC for 6-7 years in case clients choose to report later on
- Signposting to sexual health clinic for testing and treatment
- Signpost to mental health and emotional wellbeing services
- Advice not to mediate with the abuser
- Discuss whether to block numbers/email addresses/social media) profiles: discuss the impact this may have and whether this is the right decision for them (eg blocking phone numbers may escalate risk/result in perpetrator trying in-person contact)
- Discussion of personal safety, online safety, eg advice to use Hollie Guard app
- Discuss civil remedies eg non-molestation orders
- If relevant, a brief outline of domestic abuse dynamics and awareness depending on victim need, for example that domestic abuse is not just physical
- What support the service can offer, advice to call back if any further concerns
- Signposting to any other agencies (housing, DA services, CAB, online safety apps/information)

This information should be provided to all callers in order that they are fully aware of their options, whether they take up the service there and then, or take the information away and come back to the service at a later date.

SAS: SAFETY AND SUPPORT PLAN

We want to help clients create a life in which they are safe, independent and empowered to make the choices that are right for them – and for their children. The support offered by an ISVA/CHISVA should be tailored to the individual client and based on a support plan. Effective support planning will include an awareness of the client's overall needs and the degree of risk that they may face or present to themselves and/or others. It will be the responsibility of the ISVA/CHISVA to monitor your progress through the plan and inform you when your support will come to an end. The plan is reviewed every 6 weeks and in that time you will assess your needs and set any further actions. Once these actions are complete an exit strategy will be made with you to complete your support safely.

SUPPORT PRINCIPLES: REBUILDING A LIFE FREE FROM ABUSE TAKES TIME

The abuse and other difficulties service users may have experienced can have a big impact on their life and affect how they feel about themselves and how ready they feel to accept help. It takes time to make the changes to be safe and rebuild confidence.

The journey to independence can take time. While you are building rapport and support planning with your clients, you will develop a view of where clients are on this journey and how your role can help them to move forward. It is important to work with them at their pace and respect their choices and the place they are in at that time.

The ISVA service uses a trauma informed intervention pack to ensure structured, informed and consistent delivery of support sessions across the team. These interventions address and are relevant to how each individual client is feeling and which particular presenting issues are impacting them.

RECORD-KEEPING

CASENOTE GUIDANCE

It is essential to complete accurate, good quality casenotes on all contacts and interventions with clients and professionals. There are several key reasons for this:

- **Continuity and quality** of support;
- **Safeguarding** purposes, to ensure we have recorded and reported concerns;
- **Accountability:** case notes may be called upon by external agencies in the case of a safeguarding review or homicide, and consulted internally during case reviews, audits, and investigations of complaints or operational issues;
- **Access:** clients have the right to view their records via a subject access request;

PERFORMANCE

INTERNAL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

We have several internal performance management systems, enabling us to focus on the outcomes of our service delivery, service user needs, and staff competence. These systems include:

STAFF SUPERVISION

BCWA Employee Handbook outlines BCWA approach to support for staff including supervision, support and appraisals. This is to ensure that staff are conducting and delivering the service to a high standard whilst ensuring that their wellbeing is being addressed. Further support is offered to ISVA/CHISVA workers as we are aware that they are delivering trauma informed work, but as employers we need to manage the impact of trauma on staff.

CASE MANAGEMENT SESSIONS

Managers/seniors will discuss any reoccurring trends in your case management style, offer clear and constructive feedback with possible suggestions and recommendations.

CASE REVIEW

Case reviews with managers/seniors offer a second opinion on where a case is, what next practical steps could be offered and what outstanding actions have been identified. They assist staff to identify uncompleted actions, additional actions and bring cases to an appropriate conclusion, ensuring cases are only submitted for closure when all needs have been met to the best of their ability.

INTERNAL AUDITS

Managers and seniors regularly review cases to identify any issues and trends in case management and provide feedback to staff. Audits ensure that cases are well documented, clear and concise, with appropriate and timely risk assessments and safeguarding actions. Managers complete audits during case closure, to ensure all actions have been completed, or contact attempts exhausted. Audits also offer managers the opportunity to review our private and secure database and identify any updates or fixes needed.

TEAM MEETINGS

Regular team meetings ensure clear communication about news and updates, performance, and aims, of individual services and BCWA as a whole. Team meetings take place every 4 weeks to:

- Review work
- Disseminate information from quadrants/senior management meetings
- Review referral throughput and quality response
- Plan upcoming work
- Share good practice
- Share news eg new projects or funding

Chaired by: SV service managers. Attended by all operational personnel in the team. Minutes should be circulated to: all who are present, CEO

SV QUADRANT MEETINGS

Take place on a quarterly basis, aiming to:

- Review progress against strategy
- Review strategic drivers and any action plans
- Review operational functions
- Review quality systems
- Review data and performance information
- Develop any action plans needed

Chaired by: CEO. Attended by CEO, Executive Officer, Sexual Violence Service Managers, Therapeutic Services Manager, Development & Communications Manager, Performance Officer.

REPORTING

Our development and performance team works alongside service managers and heads to capture and analyse data to produce reports. These are used to assess performance, identify trends and inform service improvements. Client feedback and engagement help to enrich these reports and offer valuable suggestions and changes for the service.