

Domestic Abuse Community Services

City of York and North Yorkshire
March 2019 - March 2023



An overview

Domestic Abuse Community Services

In 2019, the Joint Commissioning Group awarded the new “one service” domestic abuse contract to IDAS. This new and innovative way of working reflected the understanding that risk is dynamic, and that successful support is built on good relationships between professionals and people using services.

The Early Intervention, IDVA and Making Safe contracts were combined to deliver this ground-breaking service, which removed the need for people to repeat their story to different professionals, therefore reducing the risk of traumatisation. There were, of course, challenges along the way, but 4 years on, we are very proud to have fully designed and embedded this approach through effective working with Commissioners, partners and the people who use our services and to be considered an influential and pioneering organisation that delivers inclusive and accessible services for people of all risk levels subjected to domestic abuse.

Throughout the course of the contract, we have also improved our recording and data analysis and can now capture outcomes achieved by clients supported both by the Hub and Community Teams, as well as fully understanding who is using our services, and more importantly, who is not. With this insight, we have worked hard to raise awareness and reach seldom heard and marginalised groups and communities.

Improved data collection and analysis also allowed us to understand emerging need and adapt to that need. This proved invaluable during the global pandemic in 2020, which had an immediate and extraordinary impact on the numbers of people requiring support and the way in which services were delivered. This Impact Report highlights the growth and changes in service delivery over the course of the contract, and some of the nuances, impacts and legacy associated with the pandemic. We are immensely proud of our dedicated team who throughout this time worked ceaselessly to deliver vital services to those who needed them.

Evie Duarte, Regional Manager



Key features

Domestic Abuse Community Services



IDAS developed a Hub model providing centralised support for community teams and all referrals.



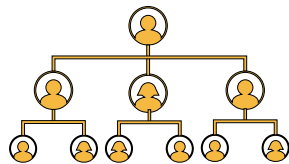
Community teams provide place based support across the county.



We work across risk levels ensuring clients receive consistent support informed by risk assessments and safety planning.



Collaboration with agency partners and specialisms within the community teams.



Our support builds on clients exiting strengths, empowering people and building their resilience.



We run a helpline operating 365 days a year in addition to Live Chat on our website, email and video calls to offer support to clients.



Facilitated support groups and peer support .



1:1 support, advice and advocacy provided by experienced, trained practitioners

Our Impact

Domestic Abuse Community Services
March 2019 - March 2023

31,539

Referrals received

15,092

Individuals completed our
online domestic violence
awareness training

12,704

Individuals supported by
our Hub Team

**97% of
Individuals
reported
feeling Safer**

137

Moving on from
Domestic Abuse groups
were delivered

5,770

Individuals supported by
our Community Team

**64% reported an
improvement in
their mental
health**

The Hub Model



The success of the new model relied on having a consistent, trauma informed approach to assessing need and risk, and so the North Yorkshire Referral and Assessment Hub was developed in 2019 and has continued to grow, so that it is now the single point of contact for anyone contacting IDAS.

The Hub model ensures that anyone who calls or is referred to IDAS receives a timely and consistent response, including immediate safety advice, emotional support, target hardening and referrals to other specialist agencies.

Throughout the course of the contract, the Hub model has become fully embedded and today around 60% of all referrals to IDAS have their needs met by the Hub and do not require longer-term support from a community team.

In 2023 the team includes IDVAs with specialisms in areas such as Family Court and working with Gypsy, Roma, and Travelling Communities.



Working across risk

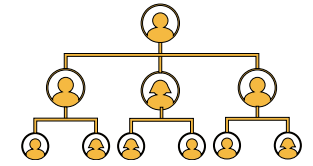


Moving away from a fragmented service that is determined by risk has proven to be beneficial to people subjected to domestic abuse. Clients have told us that they do not like being passed between services, having to retell their story. They prefer to build a trusted relationship with someone who understands and knows what has happened to them. Our model supports this, and means that, as risk changes throughout the time they are supported, their worker is able to provide flexible and practical support.



“I felt comfortable talking to my worker from the start and that trust just continued to grow. She has been a tower of strength to me through the worst time in my life. She has listened, given advice and support, and sent me resources that I didn't know were available and genuinely cared. She is knowledgeable and committed and will never know how much I have relied on her calls and support. She is a credit to the IDAS team.”

Strengths based approach



Every individual we support is unique and has their own experience of abuse. This means that each person's support needs differ, and people need to feel heard and involved with their support planning.

We recognise that strengths and needs should also be considered alongside risk, and that people's strengths can be built upon to help the recovery from abuse and violence. Over the last 4 years we have developed a trauma informed, end-to-end service which helps to address the social and health needs associated with domestic abuse.

We know that having good social networks is a supportive factor that can help in the recovery following abuse, so our approach provides opportunities for people to build those networks through groups and peer support networks as well as volunteering opportunities.

Community teams



The community teams provide short and long-term holistic support to clients with ongoing needs. Around 40% of people referred to the domestic abuse service go on to have longer-term support in the community. Many of these people have more complex and intersecting needs, such as a physical or mental health disability or a drug or alcohol need. IDAS has satellite offices throughout the County with a team of dedicated domestic abuse practitioners who work alongside our Sexual Violence Advisors and Children's Workers and provide emotional and practical support on a 1:1 basis as well as delivering Moving on from Domestic Abuse Groups.



The new Hub model has allowed the community teams to spend time engaging with the communities in which they work, raising awareness and finding ways to engage with seldom heard or marginalised communities. For example, in rural Craven, there is a practitioner who is dedicated to engaging with older, isolated people, and in rural Ryedale there is a practitioner who is dedicated to coordinating a community response to domestic abuse in the area.

In 2021 this involved delivering an online workshop which was attended by over 70 local businesses and organisations in Ryedale. We are also embedded in community "One Stop" shops and have a presence on the Citizens Advice Bureau's rural bus in Ryedale, Hambleton and Richmondshire.

In addition, teams have been working to improve links with organisations representing other groups, such as LGBTQ+, Black and Minoritised and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and frequently attend drop ins, groups and events to further strengthen these relationships.

Specialisms and collaborations



IDAS has developed and maintained invaluable partnerships over many years. Our partnership arrangements are dynamic and constantly evolving as we strive to best meet the needs of local communities. We invest time and effort into working with agencies both locally and nationally in order to influence and create transformative change.

We recognise that some groups are under- represented in our services, so have nurtured relationships with agencies that work with marginalised people. One of these relationships is with The Halo Project, a specialist organisation that supports women and girls from Black and Minoritised Communities and those who are subject to, or at risk of, illegal cultural harms.

We also work closely with Citizens Advice Bureau to reach rural communities and have established a good relationship with the Traveller's Trust, the Refugee Council and POMOC, who support Polish migrants. Over the course of the contract, we have also encouraged staff with particular skills and interests to develop specialisms that encourage referrals and engagement from groups not routinely accessing our services.



Professionals feedback



“IDAS are amazing, they’ve supported a lot of my families over the years and the work you do is amazing. Thank you.” - Social Worker

I would like to thank you for your assistance on this Carla, it was important and is very much appreciated -
Witness Care Officer

“I had a meeting yesterday with one of the mums I work in Craven. She couldn’t praise highly enough the support she has had from IDAS, and Adele in particular. Adele’s support and insight into the patterns of behaviour she has experienced has really helped her to deal much better with a very difficult situation.”

"Mags the work you do at IDAS is invaluable, thank you so much for all you do" –
Police Officer

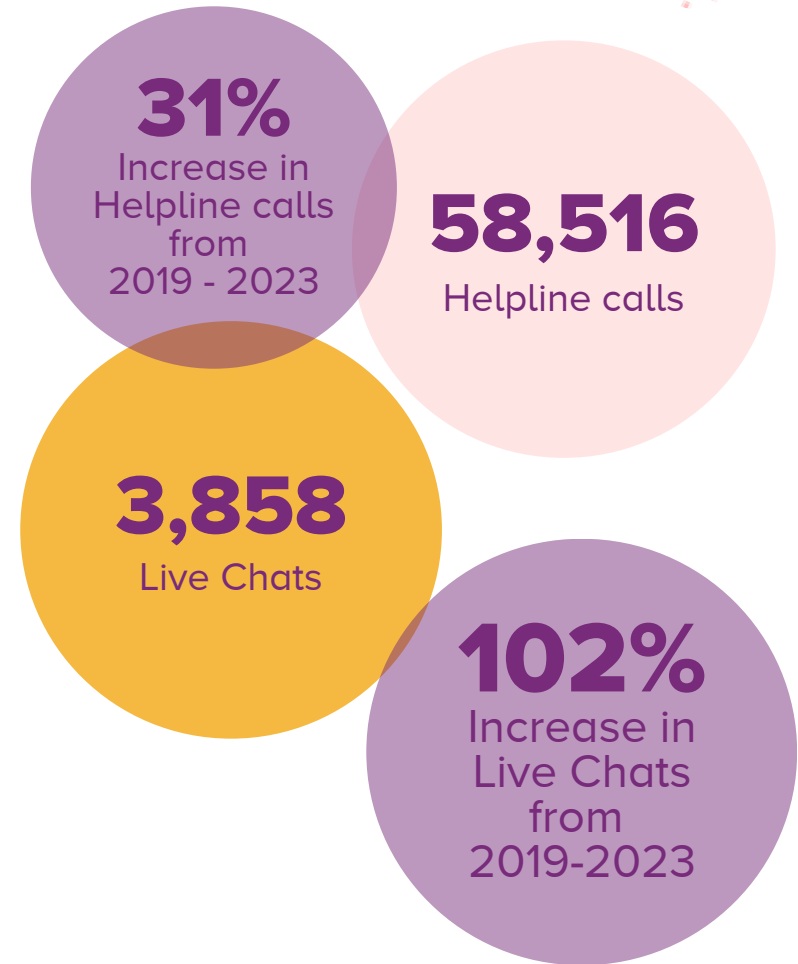
Helpline and Live Chat



The helpline offers a lifeline for many people subjected to abuse, as well as for anyone who is worried about a friend or someone they know or work with.

Year on year the number of calls made to the helpline has increased, with some anomalies during Covid 19 lockdowns when people were unable to make calls without their abuser knowing.

During this time, contacts to IDAS via Live Chat and email increased significantly, allowing us to continue providing emotional and practical support where needed.



1:1 Support

The way in which we support people in the community has evolved and changed over the past 4 years. In 2019 there was almost no virtual support provided, but this changed with the onset of the pandemic. We started asking people how they wanted to be supported and found that many people preferred telephone, video, and email contact. We acted on this feedback immediately and have continued to ask, listen, and respond to what people tell us.

Our data shows that people who have a disability are more likely to need support in a community setting and those who face multiple, intersecting challenges often require longer-term support.

One to one support in the community includes ongoing emotional and safety work, helping people to understand and recover from the impacts of domestic abuse, advocating on their behalf and supporting them to access specialist agencies.


Practitioners work collaboratively with their clients, helping them to explore their options and agreeing a plan of support together.



“The sessions have helped me feel less hopeless”

“I feel like you just gave me my life back a reason to live and I'm meeting up next week to sign paperwork for education art therapy and slimming world thank you so, so much I feel like you just took the padlock off and opened 40 doors for me thanks”





“It is an amazing safe space to process what has happened and prepare for the future. Meeting other women made me feel less alone and reassured”

“I just wanted to say thank you for the group calls each month. I cannot exactly put my finger on what it is that I find helpful, but definitely it feels like there is a safe space held by people who care, and know about the struggles, won't criticise or belittle. The supportive feedback normalises compassionate reflection which has been missing from my inner dialogue and for that I'm very grateful.”

Groups and peer support



The people we work with tell us that peer support is one of the things they value most in their recovery from domestic abuse. Having the opportunity to listen to, interact and share experiences with people who have been through similar things is validating and reassuring. Being able to help others at the same time is also hugely empowering.

Moving on from Domestic Abuse (MODA) groups and with the help of volunteers, many of whom have used our services, have also developed a range of peer support groups and activities, including walking, gardening and creative writing groups as part of our “Next Steps” programme. Each month a Next Steps newsletter, which includes tips, resources and opportunities to meet is sent to hundreds of people who have used our services in the past and want to stay connected.

Client feedback



"Thank you so much, I now lift my head up when walking and feel able to look around me, I can't thank you enough for all of your support and advice."

"What you are doing on the front line is literally saving lives and most importantly saving children's futures. just a huge, huge thank you for working with me, and well putting up with me."

"I am as free now as I will ever be. The support you gave me got me through so much and taught me the skills I need to identify and act on red flags in the future I am so grateful to you and IDAS for everything."

"My Worker has provided consistent and accessible support to my family. Niche family services such as parenting advice, parent to parent support, physical support such as helping us with a broken fridge etc, to expert legal advice (or at least insight, guidance, signposting, moral support, referral to specialists etc), behavioural knowledge regarding my own experience and behaviours of others, and long term urgent support, regularly when ever needed."

"I appreciate you listening to me and not judging my decisions. Letting me be able to talk open and honestly"

"Thank you so much for being a listening ear when I needed one to not to feel I was alone in circumstances I have put up with for far too long.. Now there is finally a brighter future for me"

Case Study: Annabel

Annabel had been subjected to domestic abuse for many years. She had been supported on and off by IDAS throughout this time, but frequently said that she no longer needed or wanted our help. Each time she came back into service, she was supported without judgement, which she later said was the reason she knew she could come back to us. Her husband abused her both physically and sexually as well as monitoring and controlling all her movements. Her husband had isolated her from all of her family and friends, which led her to experience mental ill health; he then used this to control her further.

Before the pandemic, Annabel met with her IDAS worker during appointments with her Mental Health Practitioner, however once this option was removed due to lockdowns, Annabel's mental health deteriorated, and her worker was unable to contact her as she had done previously.

The IDAS worker contacted Annabel's GP and they were able to agree a plan which meant that the IDAS worker would attend regular medical appointments alongside the GP.

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

During one of these appointments, Annabel disclosed that her husband had used non-fatal strangulation, and she had decided to leave the relationship.

Shortly after this, there was another incident and Annabel took her worker's advice and called 999.

Her husband was arrested and removed from the property, giving Annabel and her worker the space to plan. The Covid restrictions created barriers to Annabel accessing refuge, as no one was moving in or out of temporary accommodation, and the search for refuge was difficult. The IDAS worker liaised with all agencies, including Housing and the perpetrator's name was taken off the tenancy. A Non-Molestation Order was also put in place.

The IDAS worker supported Annabel to claim benefits and helped her to access foodbanks and agencies that could supply essential items. Eventually the Non-Molestation Order was granted, and Annabel and her worker started doing the recovery work. This took pace via Zoom or phone 2 or 3 times a week during the pandemic. Annabel no longer needs the support from IDAS but said that she is confident that if she needed to, she would be able to access this again without judgement.

Case Study: Amara

We received a helpline call from a young woman called Amara who was encouraged to speak to us by her Mental Health Support Worker. Amara's husband had confiscated her phone, so she had previously been unable to make a call to us. Amara told our helpline worker that she had met her husband whilst he was on holiday in Gambia, and he had brought her to the UK and married her.

Amara initially thought that finally she would be free from the abuse she had been subject to from her family in Africa, which included rape and female genital mutilation that had resulted in numerous painful health conditions. Amara explained, however, that since coming to the UK, her husband had continued the abuse, frequently raping her, and subjecting her to non-fatal strangulation. She felt lonely and isolated, which had got worse since becoming pregnant as a result of being raped.

Her husband used the threat of deportation to control her, and Amara could see no way out of her situation other than suicide if his threats came to fruition.

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

Amara was referred to the local community team and introduced to her Domestic Abuse Practitioner who met with Amara in a safe location to agree a safety and support plan. The plan included providing her with a phone that she could keep hidden to speak with the Police, IDAS or her Mental Health Support Worker when needed.

The Support Worker also made a referral to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and arranged for police markers to be added to her address, so that police would respond immediately if a call was received from the address.

Amara's mental health needs included her having psychotic episodes due to the trauma she had experienced, so her IDAS Support Worker liaised with the Community Mental Health Team as a priority to understand how IDAS could best support her with this.

Continued...

Case Study: Amara

Continued.

The IDAS worker also ensured that Amara was receiving the care she needed during her pregnancy. Whilst Amara was receiving support for her mental and physical health, she came to trust her worker more and began to disclose the extent of the abuse her husband was subjecting her to.

She wanted to leave him but was afraid to do so, as she had no recourse to public funds and feared deportation. Her IDAS Support Worker liaised closely with agencies such as Social Care Services, Hope for Justice, Southall Black Sisters, and Karma Nirvana. She established that Amara had limited Leave to Remain, so could access healthcare, but was not entitled to Universal Credit, which presented a potential problem in terms of accessing safe accommodation.

The IDAS worker was not deterred, however, and found a women's refuge space with an agency who specialise in supporting women from black and minoritised groups in the North East of England.

***Names have been changed to protect client anonymity**

She then set about applying for funding from Social Care Services in the first instance. Initially the application was declined, with Social Care Services stating that Amara would benefit more by remaining locally where she already had support in place. Amara very much wanted the refuge space and the risk remained high if she stayed locally so the IDAS worker respectfully challenged the decision, advocating on behalf of Amara and the decision to go to refuge was finally agreed.

With agreement from the refuge, the IDAS worker kept in touch with Amara by phone for the first few months in refuge to ensure some continuity in support. Amara gradually gained in confidence and began talking about friends she had made. She told her IDAS worker that she was excited to meet with other women from Gambia and had even met someone who was now living and working independently in Newcastle, which is what she hoped to do. She said she liked her new support worker and was optimistic for the future but missed her IDAS support worker, but both felt that Amara was settled and happy and could now manage without calls from IDAS.

Inside track

I've worked for IDAS for 3 and a half years, supporting clients who are, or have been, subject to domestic abuse. I'm so passionate about my role & supporting clients to recover from the impacts of abuse and feel so humbled and proud when I see them thrive. A client I had the privilege of supporting recently spoke at a SafeLives workshop event.

The event was attended by senior leaders and commissioners, which was quite daunting for her, but she spoke with confidence about her journey from leaving her abuser, about the support she received from IDAS & her experiences of the criminal justice process. She shared the things that really helped her and her views on the things she feels could change to help others after her. After this presentation she was approached by North Yorkshire Police to speak with their new student officers to give them a survivor's view on how best they can support victims of abuse from that first contact. We have also discussed an opportunity to join the Survivors Advisory Board at IDAS which she's very enthusiastic about. The client speaks of how validating it is to have her voice heard and to be able to share her experiences both positive and negative and I feel honoured to be able to facilitate this.

Mel, Domestic Abuse Practitioner

I began volunteering for IDAS in January 2021 as I wanted to give back after receiving support as a service user, and because I am passionate about the work that we do. I supported IDAS' Communications and Engagement Lead and quickly found that I could put my background and experience in sales and marketing to good use. I didn't initially volunteer with a view to gaining employment with IDAS, but a fundraising role came up that felt like a good fit, and the flexibility our organisation offers meant that I was able to fit the work around being a single parent to my two boys. I first contacted IDAS almost three years ago and have been very happy with the support I've received, first as a client, then a volunteer, and now as a paid member of staff.

IDAS Volunteer

Inside track

I work in one of the local teams which covers a large rural area. Pre-pandemic, I spent most of my time out in the community supporting clients. This included attending professionals' meetings and meeting with clients face to face, usually in their own home if it was safe to do so. This is often the most comfortable and emotionally safe space for a client, allowing the person to express their emotions in a familiar environment. This enables me to build a trusted relationship.

Alongside the safety planning and sessional work, seeing a client in their home environment gave me additional insight into their current situation. I would be able to see first hand some of the practical needs. I might notice, for example, that there was a lack of basic items such as white goods or furniture and would gently initiate a discussion about this, as people often appear ashamed of their circumstances. This might lead to applications for essential items or referral to the foodbank or local assistance funds. I always checked the welfare of any animals that people had and would discuss options for them if they were struggling. Sometimes this might be looking at pet fostering schemes.

When Covid struck we had to adapt our way of working and I needed to be much more flexible about the way I delivered support.

We all worked throughout the pandemic, but it was no longer possible to go to people's homes and I would often take my dog, Maisie, out for a socially distanced walk with a client in order to meet them without anyone questioning what was happening.

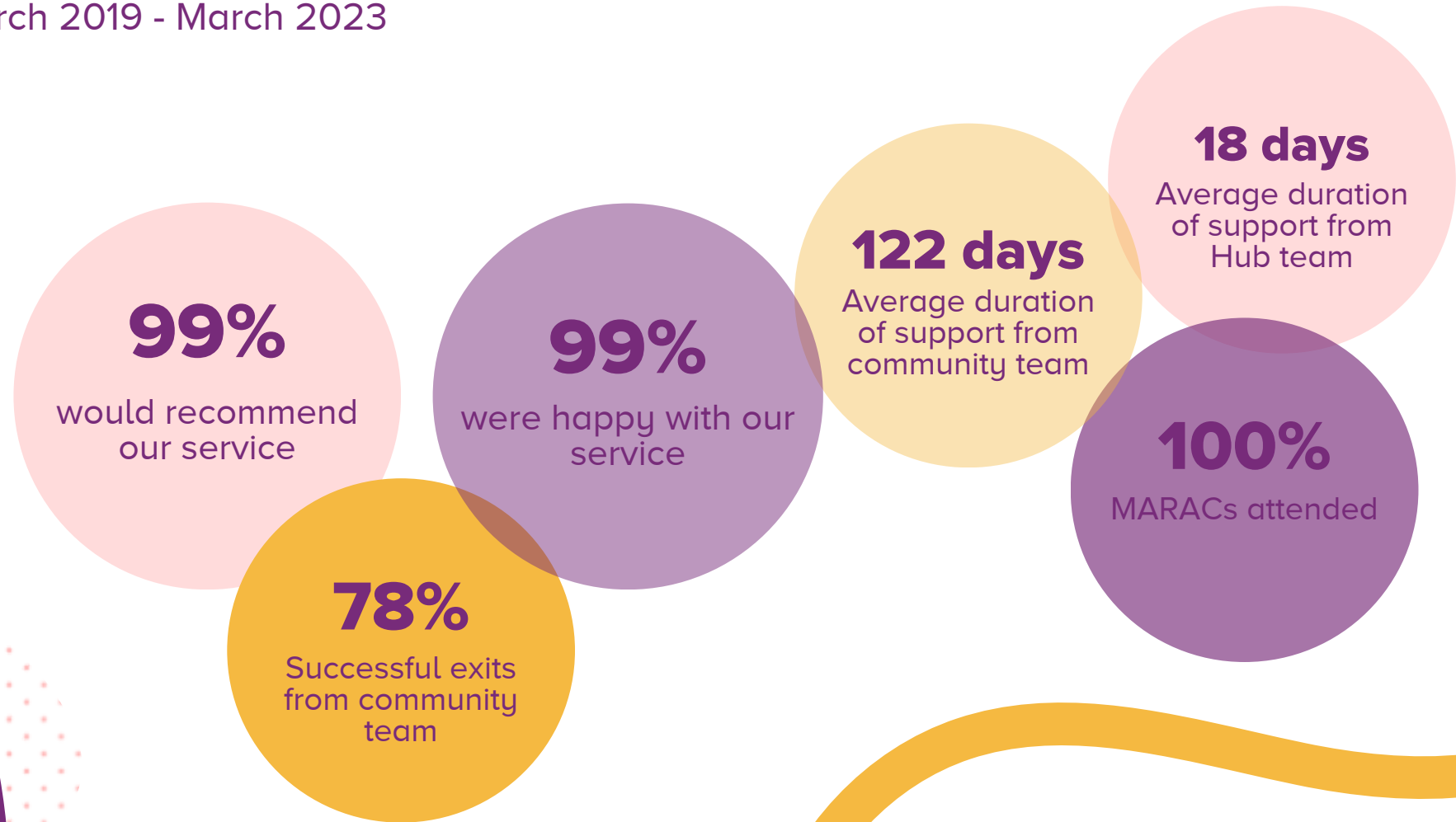
Telephone became the most common way of supporting clients, which wasn't easy for everyone but for some it seemed a more natural way to talk about sensitive and difficult matters. I began to use video and WhatsApp to facilitate both one to one and group sessions. So that people felt less isolated, we also arranged weekly virtual coffee sessions.

We, as practitioners, could also feel isolated at this time but lots of things were put in place to support staff, such as regular webinars, self-care manuals and frequent online team meetings. I am happy that things have returned to normal but have continued to use a mix of ways of working with people and I am always looking at new ways to support our rural clients. I love that I am now back working in the community and able to build relationships with agencies as well, but some meetings, such as MARAC, have continued to be virtual and are much more effective that way. We are also able to provide many more groups by having a mixture of in person and virtual options.

Rebecca, Lead Domestic Abuse Practitioner

Key performance data

March 2019 - March 2023



Special projects

Family Court

In March 2020, the Domestic Abuse and Family Court report was launched. Funded by the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, the review was commissioned as part of a wider regional programme of work 'Domestic Abuse: A Whole Systems Approach' and allowed us the opportunity to work closely with victims, survivors and partners involved in family court processes to understand and review victim's and survivor's experiences.

Our work around Family Courts continues to be recognised nationally. We were invited to the Women's Aid national conference in summer 2022 to deliver a workshop on engaging with the family courts. Following this, we partnered with Rights of Women and the Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors (FLOWS) forum to deliver regional inputs to FLOWS forum members on engaging with the Family Court. We have also been able to deliver our own national multi agency training on the Family Courts, with three courses scheduled in 2023 that are oversubscribed.

We continue to lobby for improvements in the Family Court system. Our Family Court IDVA in North Yorkshire sits within the Hub and provides advice to survivors and colleagues around Family Court processes, as well as having a fortnightly presence at the Family Court in York.

Our North Yorkshire Court IDVA is also working closely with South Yorkshire colleagues to gather insight and amplify the voice of all survivors. Since being in post, the IDVA has provided training for Magistrates from North and West Yorkshire. and we also continue to chair a subgroup of the Local Family Justice Board in North Yorkshire.

The coming year will see a pilot project with York Magistrates Court, which involves providing on-call support when domestic abuse cases are being held. The pilot ends in October 2023 and an impact report will be published in the autumn.



Special projects

Military Communities

Our data shows that, despite the fact that we have the largest garrison in England in North Yorkshire, referrals for military families are disproportionately low. We understand that there are additional barriers faced by military families and that a unique approach is required to work effectively with this community.

We have provided training and awareness raising to military families and personnel since delivering the contract with little impact on the numbers of people accessing services, so in 2022 created a specialist Domestic Abuse Military Lead who has built trust and important relationships with both army personnel and families living within the garrison. She has trained hundreds of army personnel and holds regular drop-ins to raise awareness of our services.

The ambition for 2023 is to be fully integrated within this community and work closely with the national commissioned service to provide regular Moving on from Domestic Abuse groups.



Staff development



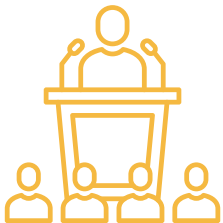
Training and induction

We are committed to ongoing learning and professional development. Our staff are given extensive training, including internal and external training.



Monthly seminar

Our teams benefit from monthly seminars covering a range of issues spanning both professional and personal development.



Annual staff conference

Our annual conference is open to all staff and volunteers, held online during the pandemic we look forward to returning to in person events in November 2023.



Policy and communications

We have been influential in informing national policies by attending meetings and consultations. Our expertise is now called upon to inform policy and legislation nationally and we regularly contribute to government consultations and attend sector meetings to keep abreast of national developments and amplify the voices of survivors. Our practice informs government consultations and statutory guidance on legislation and bills, the Victims & Prisoners Bill, Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance, and Coercive and Controlling Behaviour Statutory Guidance, to name a few. We also joined our colleagues in signing letters to government on issues including Migrants' Rights, the Public Order Bill, the Nationality and Borders Bill, the Online Safety Bill.

Our communications span several social channels and we have completely redeveloped our website in the last two years. Our website is accessible in a number of languages and boasts a wealth of information and resources, including survivor stories, latest news, blogs and events.

We have a significant social media following and continue to develop campaigns around awareness days, paired with webinars and free training taster sessions.

6700
Followers on Twitter

1000+
Attendees at webinars and taster sessions

9000+
Newsletter subscribers

These sessions offer opportunities to address subjects including domestic abuse and disabled people, male victims, and supporting LGBTQ+ survivors to name a few. Our webinars are regularly oversubscribed with many reaching over 100 people. We have also partnered with regional and national organisations to raise awareness of concerns impacting victims such as the cost of living and animal abuse. In addition we have run sessions on the Domestic Abuse Act and it's implementation.

We are featured regularly in the press and media giving radio interviews and responding to topical concerns. In addition to local and regional news, we also gave several interviews for national media.

We have a regular e-newsletter that is sent to over 9000 subscribers and has an average open rate of 25%.

6600
Hours of
volunteer
support

182
Trained to be
volunteers

95
Active volunteers
across the service
during the contract
period



Volunteers, Champions & Ambassadors

Over the contract period we have developed our volunteering service, continuing to recruit, train and support volunteers and champions throughout the pandemic and beyond.

Volunteers work closely with community teams, using their skills and expertise to provide a range of support and activities for clients, and have given thousands of hours of their time to enrich the service we provide.

Champions provide a vital network, reaching the communities in which they live and work to raise awareness and challenge harmful societal views in different settings.

Ambassadors use their voice and influence to change perceptions and are frequently seen in the media or speaking at high profile events.

A group of Survivor Ambassadors make up IDAS' Survivor Advisory Board. These survivors, many of whom have used domestic abuse services help to embed the voice of survivors into all our work.



Challenges and next steps



Emerging from the devastating impacts of lockdown, victims and survivors have been hit with the cost of living crisis, locking them into abusive situations and removing their means of escape.

We continue to be resourceful in securing funds to assist families and advocate on their behalf. We will continue to upskill our teams to offer assistance in respect of financial hardship and work closely with partners to achieve the best outcomes for the people we support.



Rurality and inequalities create barriers to accessing support.

To address this we will develop a whole community approach, piloting this in rural areas and rolling it out across the county. We will increase our network of Champions and recruit volunteer community connectors to galvanise support.



A multi-agency response is required to keep people safe from abuse in the community, However, all services are under strain with limited resources, particularly mental health services. This results in people requiring our support for longer.

We are working creatively with agency partners to support victims to stay safely in the community and move on from domestic abuse. We will develop more robust frameworks to bring agencies together to ensure victim safety.



Making safe arrangements for children in the Family Courts following domestic abuse continues to present significant safeguarding concerns for victims.

IDAS have secured additional funding from Access to Justice to improve the support available both online and in person. We continue to campaign for reform and draw attention to positive practice.

Stay in touch

If you would like to volunteer, donate, fundraise or campaign with us please visit: idas.org.uk

You can email us: info@idas.org.uk

Follow us @idasfor100



[Sign up for our newsletter →](#)

IDAS (Independent Domestic Abuse Services) is a registered charity in England and Wales Charity Number 1102337
Company Number: 4984337

