

Terms of Service - Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA)

1. About the ISVA Service

- An Independent Sexual Violence Advisor, known as an “ISVA” provides free practical and emotional support, information and guidance to individuals who have experienced any form of sexual violence.
- An ISVA can explain your options, help you make informed decisions, and support you throughout the criminal justice process.
- While you are on our waiting list for ISVA support, we are still here to support you. If you receive any updates in your case, or have any questions, please **call our office** so that we can update our records and one of the team can talk you through your options.

2. What your ISVA can do:

- **Explain the criminal justice system** to you so that the process feels more manageable and you can make informed decisions about things like reporting to the police, attending court and giving evidence.
- **Support your well-being** throughout the process by providing you with knowledge, information, resources, and coping skills.
- **Talk to professionals** on your behalf, such as the police, social workers, your GP etc.
- **Advocate for you** and support you in areas of your life that have been impacted by sexual trauma. This might include your housing, employment, education, mental health, finances or relationships. We will work with, or refer you to, other organisations where needed.
- **Help you feel empowered** and more in control.
- Be **non-judgmental**, **listen** to your concerns and provide **emotional support**.
- Act on any concerns regarding your safety or the safety of those around you – this is referred to as “**safeguarding**”.
- Act in a way that is **client-focused** – this means always doing what is best for you.

3. What your ISVA can't do:

- STARS Dorset can support people who live in Dorset or who have a Criminal Trial taking place at Bournemouth Crown Court. If you move out of Dorset, your ISVA will be able to signpost you to the relevant agency.
- We cannot talk about the specific details of a reported crime, but we can direct you to a safe space where you can talk about it.
- We are not counsellors or therapists, but we can direct you to those services if appropriate.
- We are not legal advisors.
- We are not an emergency or crisis service - please see below contact details for crisis services.

4. What will happen next?

- Once you have been allocated to an ISVA, they will contact you to introduce themselves and arrange their first meeting with you.
- At this first meeting, your ISVA will answer any questions you have and go through some initial paperwork to ensure we have all the correct information about you and your case. Your ISVA will listen to what you need and make a plan with you about how your support going forward.

5. What we need from you:

- To work with our ISVAs, you **must** be registered with a GP Surgery and share those details with your ISVA. This enables us to best support you.
- We need you to engage with us when we contact you. This means responding to messages and attending agreed meetings. We understand that it can be overwhelming, and there may be a lot going on in your life. If it is not the right time for you to work with an ISVA, we will close your support, but this can be re-opened any time once you are ready. (See below for more details about the number of times we will contact you before ending our support).
- We will confirm each of our meetings with you in advance. You must reply to us to confirm you will attend, otherwise the meeting will not go ahead.
- We ask that you are open and honest with us; we need to understand the bigger picture in order to support you the best we can.

6. How long will your ISVA support you?

We will only end your ISVA support if:

- We have attempted to contact you three times from the point of referral and have not been able to reach you.
- We have not been able to book in an initial paperwork meeting within one month of you being allocated to an ISVA.
- You are no longer engaging with our service.
 - If your ISVA has attempted to contact you **three times** and you have not responded, they will send you a last message with a deadline for you to respond. If you don't respond, we will close you to our ISVA service. However, you can refer to us again in the future when you are ready.
- Your support has naturally come to an end. We will support you whilst the Criminal Justice process is ongoing. Once the process has been completed, we will ensure additional support has been put in place for you and we will signpost you to other appropriate organisations and resources.

Please also note that STARS Dorset does not tolerate volatile or abusive behaviour towards our staff. If you behave this way towards any of our staff, your support will be ended immediately.

7. The ISVA-Client relationship

The ISVA-Client relationship is a professional one and it is important that professional boundaries are maintained; both during your time in our service and afterwards.

If you happen to see your ISVA out and about, outside of scheduled meetings, the ISVA will not approach you unless you do so first. This is to maintain the confidentiality of our service.

Our ISVAs will not be contactable outside of their working hours. There may also be times when your ISVA is unavailable during their usual working hours due to annual leave or sickness. We will do our best to ensure that you are made aware of these times. If you are ever unable to get hold of your ISVA, you can call our office telephone number and request to speak with a member of the ISVA Team, who will be able to assist you.

It is not appropriate for you to message your ISVA, or any of the ISVA Team, via social media. You should **only** communicate with them via their work details which they will share with you. If you do message a member of staff via social media we will have to assess whether it is appropriate for your support to continue.

8. Contact information

Our office telephone number is: **01202 308840**. To speak with a member of the ISVA Team directly, call **01202 308841**.

Our ISVA email address is: **ISVA@starsdorset.org**

Our office is open as follows:

- Monday: 9am – 5pm
- Tuesday: 9am – 7pm
- Wednesday: 9am – 7pm
- Thursday: 9am – 7pm
- Friday: 9am – 4pm

If you need urgent support outside of our office hours or in crisis situations you should contact one of the following free, 24/7 services:

- **999** for emergency services
- **111** (select option 2) or **0800 652 0190** for local mental health support
- **116 123** for Samaritans
- **0808 500 2222** for Rape Crisis' specialist rape and sexual abuse helpline