



Child Focused Courts

Family Court IDVA Service

Client handbook





West Yorkshire Pathfinder IDVA Service

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Who are we?

We are a partnership of domestic abuse charities including Staying Put, Leeds Domestic Violence Service (LDVS), represented by Leeds Women's Aid and Behind Closed Doors, WomenCentre and Pennine Domestic Abuse Partnership.

Our aim is to support families and their children through the family court process by putting them at the centre of the process.

Areas we serve





Key aims



What is an IDVA?



Hi, I'm Lucy a court IDVA. An IDVA is an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate. We support people subjected to domestic abuse. Here's how I'll support you:



When I am allocated your case, I contact you to introduce myself and book in a time for assessment



I will look at your current needs and risk through the use of a DASH risk assessment and put a safety and support plan in place for you and your children where required.



I write a report that summarises your experiences, risk, the impact of the abuse on you and your children, and what your wishes are for the outcome of the court proceedings, including concerns. This is to assist Cafcass or the local authority in writing their Child Impact Report and making recommendations. It is also submitted to the court as evidence so the judge can review it.

What is an IDVA?



I will always send you a draft copy of the report for you to review and approve before I send it to Cafcass/local authority



If you need more support I can refer you to other services



You are then placed on the court support waiting list in case your case goes to a decision hearing. I can then re-open the case and attend court with you to provide emotional support. We can liaise with the court to arrange special measures for you.



Once proceedings are concluded I will close your case and again refer – maybe we can consider if any further support would be helpful?

How we support you



Safety planning

Safety planning can include:-

- Legal Orders
- Safety Apps
- Securing technology and devices



Needs assessment

We will complete a Needs Assessment to understand your needs. The aim of this is to highlight areas for us to be aware of, such as intimidation or disability and access needs.

How we support you



Child Focused Courts



Report for court

We will write a report that summarises:

- Your experiences
- Risk
- The impact of the abuse on you and your children
- Your wishes for the outcome of the court proceedings, including concerns.

This is to assist Cafcass or the local authority in writing their Child Impact Report and making recommendations.

It is also submitted to the court as evidence so the judge can review it.

How we support you



Support planning

Identifying what support the individual needs during the court process– including emotional support and making the individual more comfortable whilst attending court.



Support in Court

Using the Support Planning process and providing emotional and practical support whilst in court.



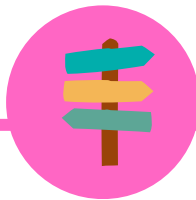
How we support you



Special measures in court

This includes but is not limited to:

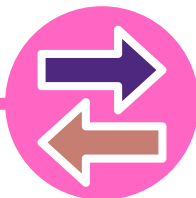
- Providing screens
- Video testimony
- Accessing the court through different entrances
- Accessing empty courts so the individual is not overwhelmed
- IDVA presence throughout the hearing to provide emotional support



Signposting to other support

Signpost to more appropriate services based on needs

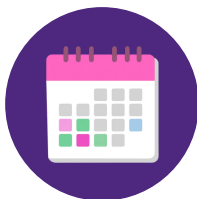
Counter allegations



Where there are counter allegations of domestic abuse within the relationship both parties may be referred to the Pathfinder IDVA Service. If appropriate, we will make contact with both parties to assess (using the Respect Toolkit) who is the primary victim and who is the primary aggressor.

There will be times when a referral to both parties may be deemed inappropriate, for example if one of the parties is assessed as high risk, or where one of the parties is already known to domestic abuse services as an established perpetrator.

Hi! I'm Holly, your volunteer court IDVA



How I support you

One week before your court date I'll contact you to ensure you feel fully confident and ready for that day. I'll introduce myself and our service and let you know the support we offer. I'll check dates, times and location of your court hearing, then we'll work together to establish a safe meeting point and time.



I know this is nerve wracking!

I am aware this is a very nerve-wracking and anxiety inducing time for you. I will send you a text message just after the call to briefly highlight any important details we discussed.



I'll meet you at court

On the morning of the court date I will send another text message to check in on how you are doing and if there has been any update on your case. I will confirm our arrangements and describe my appearance so you know exactly who to look for, this limits any confusion!

Once we have met, I will help you in getting through security, signing in, and making sure we get to a safe space within court. I understand the process can be very overwhelming and therefore I always sit and listen to anything you want to tell me, or if applicable, anything your solicitor may be informing you. This way, if there's anything you didn't pick up on, I can hopefully assist.



I'll be there

When it is time to go into the court room, I will be right there next to you to offer my support in helping you get through this tricky process. I am there to help with whatever you need, whether that be a shoulder to cry on, or a hand to hold. I always make sure I have a packet of the nicest tissues in my pocket!

When the hearing ends, we can find a room or I can call you so we can talk through what has been discussed, I will have made notes on what has been said to help inform you.



Support after the court hearing

My support extends to after the court hearing. I will walk you to your car, or make sure I am leaving you with someone you trust and feel safe with. I will give you another call a week or two after the court date to go over anything you need to, and check if you needed any more support from our service.

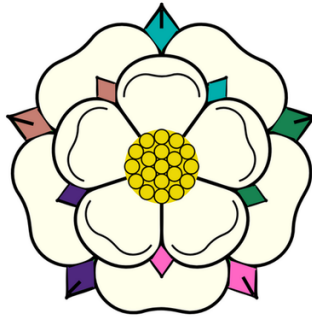
Contact us

If you want to contact us you can email



Email

pathfinderIDVA@wypp.org.uk



West Yorkshire Pathfinder
IDVA Service

**Putting you and your
children's voices at the
heart of what we do.**