

# A Day in the Life of an IDVA

**solace**

## My role:

I'm Helen and I work as an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) for one of the advocacy and support services at Solace. I provide specialised advocacy and support to a caseload of 30 High Risk service users, with a focus on safety planning and intervention to reduce risks.



## A typical day

I begin my day by checking my emails and checking my phone for any new texts or voicemails from Service Users. I respond to anything urgent before checking in with the wider team to see what is happening within the SASS service this week, and I prepare a to do list for the day. My to do list is usually a mix of urgent client calls, admin tasks, and correspondence with other professionals.

I contact all my clients at least once per week to continue support and help ensure their safety. My calls with clients cover a range of topics: safety planning, housing options, criminal and civil justice, responding to immediate crises, emotional support and exploring the dynamics of abuse. IDVAs often manage crisis situations with clients in distress, which sometimes means rapidly changing priorities for the day dependent on urgent support needed. For example, if a client is at risk

of homelessness, I would liaise with our Senior Housing IDVA to put an immediate housing safety plan in place. We often respond to new disclosures that a child may be at risk of witnessing domestic violence, so I frequently follow up with timely safeguarding referrals to Children's Social Care.

Throughout the day I will be allocated new cases. As IDVAs provide support to the highest risk clients, we have a four-hour window to attempt first contact with new cases. In my first contact, I will complete a full risk assessment and safety plan with my client. I use these first calls to explore with my client the support they are hoping to access and explain the support our service can provide. Our work is non-judgmental and trauma informed, so I always inform clients at the start of support that working with us is their choice. I will usually follow up my initial risk assessments by completing a referral into MARAC and explain to the client what the MARAC process means for them.

The rest of my day is usually occupied by liaising with other professionals about different cases. This can include requesting safeguarding measures from police such as panic alarms, advocating for housing moves, and supporting clients to attend meetings with Children's Social Care. High Risk survivors of abuse often encounter several professional services at once, such as police, social workers, and housing officers. Repeatedly discussing traumatic events can be very overwhelming, so part of my role is to act as a point of contact between the client and the professionals involved in their case. IDVAs advocate for their clients and can act as their voice with other professionals, we can educate other services on the impact of trauma and abuse, and we can communicate the client's wishes at forums such as MARAC.

Throughout the day, I regularly update my casenotes to ensure all contact with clients and professionals is fully recorded. If I have any time leftover, I try to end my day with admin tasks which helps me to unwind before logging off. I check through my case spreadsheet to see if any support plans, safety plans, or risk assessments need to be updated soon, before checking out with my team.

## What I love about what I do

I love having a job which enables me to bring my feminist values to my everyday work. I am passionate about ending domestic violence and abuse in all forms, and frontline IDVA work gives me the opportunity to contribute towards this overall social struggle.

I also love that the IDVA role is challenging and each day is different, we have to think

on our feet and be creative with safety planning to suit individual survivors' needs and wishes.

Finally, while IDVA work can be distressing and challenging at times, knowing that I have helped people through their time of need is hugely rewarding. Supporting someone to understand that the abuse they experienced was never their fault is an amazing feeling.

## One thing I wish I'd known when I started out

I wish I had learnt sooner that educating other services about domestic abuse is not going to happen overnight, and will be very draining at times, but small opportunities to educate and advocate can make a real impact. I also wish I had known how well supported I would feel by my colleagues before starting this role – I would have felt a lot less daunted knowing the courageous women I would have working alongside me!



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