



LDVVS

LEEDS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE

2023

**Everyone has the right to live
their lives free from fear and harm.**

Introduction

Leeds Domestic Violence Service (LDVS) is a partnership of 3 specialist agencies – Leeds Women’s Aid, Behind Closed Doors and Women’s Health Matters - the LDVS partnership has been working together since 2011 to deliver Leeds City Council’s commissioned services to provide emergency accommodation and practical support to people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse (DV&A).

LDVS comprises of the commissioned refuge provision; 24/7 Helpline, IDVA support, Community DV&A support, Support Group and Drop In services, children’s workers, specialist IDVAs and the Sanctuary Support Team.

49
people
requested
support EVERY
day

In 2023 we
received over
1,500
enquiries
about refuge
availability

LDVS is a consortium of three organisations across Leeds who are commissioned to deliver services to victims-survivors of domestic abuse



2023 at a glance

4,500

PEOPLE RECEIVED
SUPPORT FOLLOWING
REFERRALS TO OUR
SERVICES

AVERAGE
90

REFERRALS FOR
SUPPORT EACH WEEK

Nearly
10%

PEOPLE RECEIVING
INTENSIVE SUPPORT
IN ALL GENDER
SERVICES WERE MEN

AVERAGE
155

HELPLINE CONTACTS
RECEIVED EACH
WEEK



OVER

12,700

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT BY EITHER
PHONE, EMAIL OR ONLINE CHAT

92%

OF PEOPLE FEEL
SAFER AFTER
SUPPORT FROM
LDVS

"I actually have a life now. My daughter has always told me that I had more to my life and that I deserved better. Having LDVS say the same thing and validate what my daughter has been saying helped me to believe that I could have a better life."

Who we support

1

Any person who is experiencing or has experienced domestic violence and abuse

2

Regardless of race, ethnic or religious group, sexuality, gender, sex, class, disability or lifestyle

3

Victims-survivors of physical and sexual assault and honour-based violence, as well as emotional, psychological and financial abuse, stalking, controlling and coercive behaviour and forced marriage

Equity and Diversity



Domestic violence and abuse is overwhelmingly experienced by women, however, we know anyone can experience abusive behaviour from a partner, ex-partner, relative or other known person. LDVS supports people of all genders, including women, men, and non-binary people.

We recognise that people experience violence and abuse in different ways and other barriers exist that may prevent people accessing support. We know that people experience oppression due to their race, religion, gender, sex, sexuality, age, class and ability.

All our work is person-centred and tailored to suit the people we support. We can provide specialist support to meet specific needs, including having staff that speak a number of different community languages, and using interpreters, for those who's first language isn't English or who need language support, including BSL. Our support workers help victims-survivors of trafficking and/or modern slavery and people who have experienced honour-based abuse and forced marriage.

We strive to ensure that everyone has equality of access to support from our services.

50%

people receiving intensive support have a disability

34

languages spoken including British Sign Language

1 in 20

identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ communities

70 years

of age range between the youngest and oldest people who received support

The support we offer



We offer a variety of person-centred support across our teams from one-off support with a Helpline call to longer term intensive support and refuge accommodation.

The support is tailored to the needs of the individual or family and can include practical support covering safety planning, support through the criminal justice system, information around injunctions, housing, family courts, physical and mental health and finances.

- **24 hour Helpline & online chat**
- **Discreet drop in service**
- **Emergency accommodation**
- **Community outreach**
- **Legal support & advocacy**
- **Support groups**

36%

of people have been supported around their mental health

70%

of people have been supported around housing related issues

46%

of people have been supported to navigate the criminal justice process

43%

of people have been supported to manage their finances

Typically, the people we supported had experienced abuse for 6 1/4 years

57%

of abusers for male victims-survivors are female

95%

of abusers for female victims-survivors are male

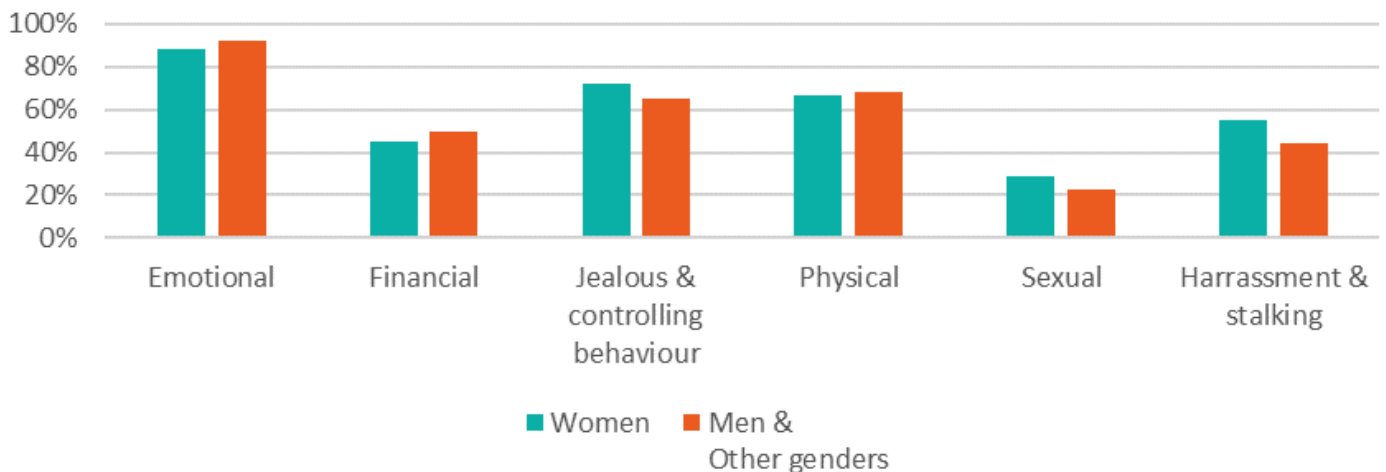
442

people have been told they would be **murdered** by their abuser

44%

experience abuse multiple times in their life

Types of abuse experienced (by gender)



LDVS has made a massive difference, the care and compassion I have been shown has been amazing, the time that my worker spent with me and has been more than I could have hoped or wished for. They listened to me and believed me and that meant so much to me.

Refuge Accommodation



Support for people at refuge

We offer emergency refuge accommodation for women in our main refuge and to people of all genders in our dispersed properties including children, who are homeless as a result of DV&A.

Each person is allocated a DV&A Support Worker who will provide emotional and practical support and will work in partnership with other services such as counselling, mental health support and housing. We also have Children and Family Workers to provide additional support to children and young people who stay in refuge.

41 FAMILIES
SUPPORTED WITHIN
REFUGE DURING
2023

EACH REFUGE PLACE
WAS REQUESTED OVER
37 TIMES
IN 2023

You've set my standards really high. You do everything you can and it is definitely enough. It made me more confident in my decision to leave my abusers when I did. You have been the best service I've ever dealt with, and I am so grateful for everything you've done for me



1/4

Women have reached out and reconnected with family and friends with LDVS support

90%

Women have been supported to remain separated from their abuser

Support for Children & Young People at refuge



Often children and young people are the hidden victims-survivors of DV&A. They not only witness DV&A but can also experience it as well and this has a huge impact on them. The Domestic Abuse Act made children victims-survivors of DV&A in their own right.

We have specialist Children, Young People (CYP) and Family workers who provide additional support to the children and young people who stay in our refuges.

During their time in refuge, the team will offer one-to-one support, group play and well-being sessions. The expansion of the team has meant that we have been able to offer more activities to individual children and to family groups which has a positive emotional and wellbeing impact on the families. These include a weekly Nurture Group, After-School Club and running the Women's Aid 'You and Me, Mum' programme.

The team have regular engagement with the children to see what they want from our service and this helps us decide what activities and trips to run. These have included arts & crafts sessions, educational trips, celebration events & parties, cooking and baking sessions, emotional, mental & physical development sessions.

Additional activities are held in the school holidays including trips to the farm, seaside, Stockeld Park, picnics in the park as well as other cultural and seasonal celebrations.

112
children
have been
supported
by specialist
children
workers

59%
have
directly
experienced
abuse
themselves

3/4
were
supported
regarding
their
education
needs

Access and Assessment team

The Access and Assessment team operate our 24-hour helpline, hold regular drop ins throughout Leeds and process incoming referrals from both victims-survivors and professionals seeking help.



The Helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for people to call us for emotional support, and information on all LWA and other services. It is open to victims-survivors, concerned friends or relatives as well as professionals from other organisations.

The Helpline team can search for refuge availability in Leeds and the wider area as well as taking a self-referral from callers if they would like ongoing support. They can also arrange for an interpreter if required.

In July 2023, following a lot of hard work and dedication by the team, our Helpline received accreditation from the Helplines Partnership.



Email support

We can also provide support by email. A trained worker can talk with women in need via email. Similar to the Helpline, help, advice or ongoing practical or emotional support can be provided.

Drop In Service

We run regular discreet drop-in services in Leeds city centre for women. Our drop-in worker will offer confidential, emotional and practical support and can give information about rights and discuss various options. No appointment is necessary and it can be completely anonymous.

OVER 8,000 TOTAL CONTACTS RECEIVED BY THE HELPLINE

83% OF CONTACTS TO THE HELPLINE WERE VIA TELEPHONE

20% OF HELPLINE CALLS WERE SEARCHES FOR REFUGE ACCOMMODATION

10% OF VICTIMS-SURVIVORS WHO CALLED THE HELPLINE NEEDED AN INTERPRETER

Multi-agency meetings

The Access & Assessment Team made nearly **4200** calls to victim-survivors being discussed at DRAM to get their voices represented during the meetings.

LDVS have attended nearly **400** MARAC, DRAM and Clare's Law meetings in 2023 and have represented victim-survivors over **6,500** times during these meetings.

NEARLY 100 LDVS STAFF HOURS EACH WEEK ARE DEDICATED TO DRAM

DRAM

Daily Risk Assessment Management Meeting

DRAM provides early opportunity for LDVS and other agencies to safeguard people from domestic abuse. This is where high risk DV&A incidents reported to the police are discussed.

West Yorkshire Police, LDVS, and Childrens Social Work Service meet daily to discuss high risk police incidents. LDVS contact all victims-survivors to get their voices shared in the meeting to help agencies keep people safe.

MARAC

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

MARAC is a meeting to discuss how to help victims-survivors at the highest risk of serious harm from DV&A.

Through these collaborative meetings, professionals from various agencies across Leeds come together to assess and manage the risks faced by high-risk survivors.

Through coordinated efforts and information sharing, MARAC aims to enhance victim safety and hold perpetrators accountable.

IDVA

Independent Domestic Violence Advocate



Our dedicated team of IDVAs play a crucial role in our mission to support and empower survivors of domestic abuse. In times of immediate crisis, our IDVAs offer safety advice and work closely with high-risk survivors to work on practical and legal strategies that reduce the risks they face. All our IDVAs hold, or are actively working towards the nationally accredited IDVA qualification.

The IDVA Team represents LDVS at various multi-agency meetings including Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), DRAM and Clare's Law Adjudication Panel meetings.

59%

were supported to navigate the criminal justice process

1/2

needed support to report incidents to the police

99%

of people felt safer as a result of IDVA support

88%

had a reduction in incidents that needed police intervention



I'd have been lost without LDVS, I wouldn't have understood the system or the processes. It was very alien to me. My Worker explained everything every step of the way. Thank you so much. I was fortunate to get a very positive outcome and I can now close that chapter of my life and move on.

Specialist IDVAs

The IDVA Team also has two specialist IDVAs: Young Person's (YP) IDVA, who supports people aged 16-24, and Complex Needs (CN) IDVA who supports women with multiple complex needs. People supported by the specialist IDVAs face additional barriers when accessing support and are not always able to engage with the traditional ways of delivering services.

The specialist IDVAs allow opportunity to be flexible in supporting victims-survivors, adapting the approach and communication styles to fit their unique needs.

Complex Needs

81%

have a disability with nearly **3/4** of these have multiple disabilities

Average

42 days

spent trying to engage with women before support is even started

59%

of women supported had mental health vulnerabilities

Young Person's

3/4

of young people supported need support keeping safe on their phone and online

Over

50%

of young people supported are between 16 and 18

1/3

of abusers were over 25 years of age

Community Domestic Violence Team

The Community Team are made up of female and male practitioners who support all people regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

They recently received the Lime Accreditation Quality Mark in recognition for their work assessed against quality standards for services supporting male victims/survivors of sexual violence.

Our Community DV Practitioners work with medium and high-risk cases and our support is tailored to your specific needs. We will provide support on housing, benefits and budgeting, safety planning, health and social care and community engagement. We can accompany you to solicitor's appointments and support you in attending family and criminal court proceedings. We can liaise with agencies and advocate on your behalf to ensure that you receive specialist support in areas such as drug and alcohol dependency, mental health and children's education and wellbeing.

46%

needed support to navigate the Family Court system

Nearly **20%** were supported to gain access to their own income

47%

were supported around housing related issues

65%

Feel optimistic about the future

92%

Feel more confident asking for help when they need it

76%

say they feel safer after support



My worker gave me back my life. When I came to the service, I did not have a clue about anything. My worker helped me have a voice and supported me with everything: reporting to the police, child contact proceedings, Restraining Order, moving, absolutely everything. She also helped me more than she will ever know.

George

George is an elderly man and didn't want anyone to know that his adult son was abusing him. He loves his son and didn't want to get him in trouble.

George was being emotionally manipulated by his son and the abuse was becoming more aggressive and physical causing George to become even more isolated from family and friends. He worried about what they would say.

George wanted to escape the abuse but felt stuck as his son lived in his home. He tried to encourage him to move out but the abuse became even worse and he didn't know what to do.

George reached out for help and was supported by the Community Domestic Violence Team. His support worker advocated for George with other services and with a lot of encouragement from his CDVT worker he was able to start reporting his sons abuse to the police.

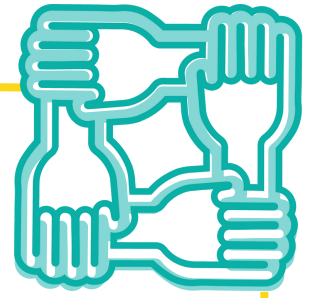
After a particularly bad incident his son was removed from his home by the police and his support worker was able to get the locks changed to prevent his son returning.

George is now selling his house and looking forward to living in a small bungalow that will better suit his limited mobility.



My son is no longer living at my house, so things have changed massively. I will now be able to sell my house and get a little bungalow which will be much better for me. I never thought I would be able to get my son out of my house, I thought this was just something I had to put up with.

Support Groups



Experienced facilitators offer weekly groups in various locations throughout Leeds.

The group is a safe space to explore issues, it's a place where there is no judgement, a place where women can share their experiences with other women, or just sit and listen.

The support group looks at a different topic every week, looking at things like why women stay in abusive relationships, what makes it hard to leave and grief and loss following separation. There is also a lot of work around self-esteem and confidence building, because we understand that domestic abuse can take so much from women. Women work together to explore issues, experiences and feelings that have affected them with the support of peers.

I just wanted to say that yesterday's session was a bit of a lightbulb moment for me. I am still really struggling to accept what has happened to me but yesterday was the first time I realised it was not my fault. I feel like my healing journey actually started yesterday. So thank you.

137

group sessions
were supported
in 2023

1012

attendees at
group support

54%

women
completed the
programme

Jing

Jing was being abused by her partner. He told her he would kill her and controlled where she went, who she saw and what she could wear.

Jing gained the courage to leave the relationship but was really worried about possibility of him stalking her and subjecting her to further harassment.

Jing contacted LDVS via the online Webchat and within 2 days was able to join the Support Group.

Jing spent time focusing on the different kinds of abuse and the impact of trauma, the importance of self-care and mindfulness within group. Jing was able to learn and understand that the strong emotional and physical reactions following distressing events such as domestic abuse was normal. Jing felt she was able to recognise that her experiences with her ex-partner had been frightening and distressing and was supported to learn self-care strategies in order to support her recovery and reduce her trauma.

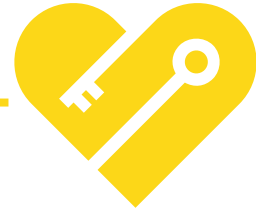
During the course Jing's support worker watched as her self-confidence built, and she started to believe in the amazing woman that she is.



I came here feeling scared, nervous, stressed, and doubting myself as a naive victim of domestic violence, but also with a small chance that I could grab to seek help. Throughout this group within four months, my journey has transformed from 'I am not alone' to 'it's not my fault' to 'there are solutions' to 'I am valuable' to 'I can achieve what I want because I am a strong and independent woman.'

It has been like a power bank for me, where I could come here every week to recharge myself for the coming week and at the same time, help build my own charging system. Now, I can identify what my boundaries are and what constitutes disrespectful behaviour towards me. I feel much more confident saying no to those unacceptable behaviours from my own point of view.

Staying Safe Programme



The Staying Safe Programme is designed so that women can support one another to understand DV&A, how it happens and how to become safe. It can be very useful for women who are worried about getting into another abusive relationship in the future as the programme looks at the first signs that a new partner may be abusive.

Available to
EVERY WOMAN
in refuge accommodation



Thank you very much for enrolling me onto the programme. These ten weeks have really nourished me with invaluable knowledge and have given me the strength to overcome the experiences of the past six years of an abusive relationship. As this is the beginning of a new phase for myself and my young child, I can't thank you enough for providing me with an insight of the importance of self-care, giving me a safe space to be myself, to express my emotions and feelings, to be able to understand holistically and in specifics the various concepts we explored in the course. Please continue helping women like me.

Fatima

Fatima came to the UK 6 years ago to live with her husband. She routinely suffered from emotional, physical, verbal and financial abuse from her controlling husband.

Fatima was scared, he threatened to harm her, her child and her family. His parents were also abusive and Fatima felt isolated, like she had nowhere to turn.

"I wasn't allowed to leave the house without him"

Fatima became so distressed she eventually called the helpline to seek refuge and was granted a space in LDVS refuge.

Fatima needed support to restart her life. She was helped to apply for benefits, obtaining a Non-Molestation order, setting up a new school for her child, finding a GP, and even getting a new phone number and email address.

Fatima was also supported to join the Staying Safe programme. Over the 10 weeks, she grew in confidence and self-esteem and made friends with the other women on the programme who were all extremely supportive and encouraged her to leave the refuge and get out and about on her own for the first time in years. Fatima was terrified but she was so proud of herself for doing it.

Fatima feels more safe and secure, she is bidding to be re-housed, she no longer feels so isolated and her mental health and her general wellbeing has improved. She feels comfortable and settled and is able to make her own decisions in life. Her child is now settled in school, and has gained many rewards for school curriculum activities, opening up doors for new opportunities.

Sanctuary Support Team



Sanctuary Support Team (SST) offer practical and emotional support around DV&A to victims-survivors of all genders who have had a sanctuary security installation via Leeds City Council. The team is led by a Team Leader at Leeds Women's Aid has specialist workers based in ASHA, Behind Closed Doors, Karma Nirvana, PAFRAS, Shantona, Touchstone, Women's Health Matters and AGE UK.

The SST team was highly commended this year for Diversity Project of the Year at Leeds Compassionate City Awards 2023

1 in 7

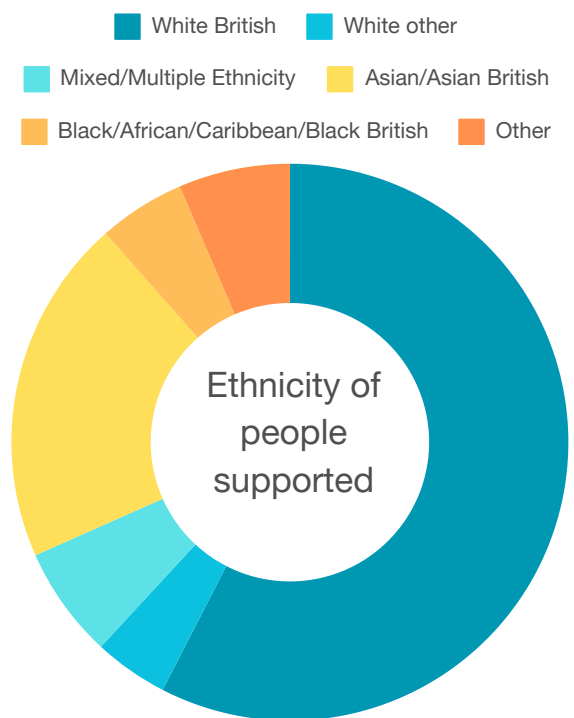
need an interpreter to access support

Over 25%

are over 40 years of age when starting support

11 women and girls

have experienced Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage



I just wanted to say that I can't thank you enough for constantly boosting my confidence and your kind encouraging words. Thanks for uplifting me and giving me support. As you know, life has been challenging for me and I could not see a way to move forward and could not have managed without your support.

Alex

Alex identifies as non-binary and uses she/they pronouns.

Alex did not feel able to acknowledge what was happening to them and did not know that their abuser had a history of abusive behaviour.

After several incidents that resulted in police intervention they felt they were now ready to accept support from the LGBTQIA+ specialist in the Sanctuary Support Team.

Alex received one to one support from their worker who helped them when they became triggered and supported them to engage in victim-survivor groups.

"My worker has been a major part in my recovery over this past year or so, they have always been there to support me through everything and been a shoulder to cry on many times! I really wouldn't be in the place I am now without their support. I will always be grateful. Thank you"

Alex was also supported to stay safe from their abuser through extensive safety planning and inter-agency working by their SST worker, allowing them to stay safe and continue their recovery.

Alex had sanctuary measures on their home, but also wanted to look at alternative housing which their worker supported them with. They are now moving house, giving them the security to continue their journey in a safe and stable environment away from the risk of abuse.

Alex now knows what healthy relationships look like and they are excited by what the future holds.

Impact of our work



I think until I used this service I didn't know what DV was. It was a wakeup call around past and present relationship. My worker was amazing throughout my process.

92%

of people feel safer after LDVS support

1/3

feel better able to manage their mental health

87%

of people are at decreased risk of DV&A

1 in 3

have reached out to lost family and friends

71%

of people feel more confident in themselves

2/3

feel more optimistic about their future



I can't express to you what a difference having my workers support has made. She was absolutely magnificent she knows her job inside and out. I have never met another professional who is that knowledgeable. What can I say, she got my situation from the first time I spoke to her. I would definitely not have been able to deal with everything that I have without her.



I actually have a life now. My daughter has always told me that I had more to my life and that I deserved better. Having LDVS say the same thing and validate what my daughter has been saying helped me to believe that I could have a better life.

45%

of people supported have improved coping abilities in their day to day lives

1 in 10

have been supported to remain in work or education

98%

would recommend LDVS to friends or family if they needed help

57% of parents feel they have a better relationship with their children and **85%** feel more confident in their parenting skills



LDVS has made a massive difference in my life. My LDVS worker is a miracle worker, she is an absolute god send. She gave me back my life. When I came to the service I did not have a clue about anything, I was clueless to orders, family court proceedings it all. She helped me have a voice again she supported me with everything reporting to the police, child contact proceedings, Restraining order, Breach of Restraining orders, moving, absolutely everything. She also helped me with more than she will ever know.

Anna

Anna has been referred to our services many times over the years and has experienced DV&A from several partners. She has experienced physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse, stalking and harassment, as well as extensive coercive and controlling behaviour. Anna also endured traumatic events throughout her childhood which have left long-lasting effects on her mental health. Anna also uses drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism.

Anna received intensive support from our specialist Complex Need IDVA following a referral for support with the DV&A she was experiencing from her ex-partner. Anna was often in a state of crisis and needed immediate safety planning and emotional support. The IDVA also worked closely with other agencies who were also working with Anna and attended regular professionals' meetings.

Throughout support, the IDVA kept in regular contact with Anna, speaking with her several times a week. She also encouraged Anna to report further incidents of abuse to the police which resulted in further criminal charges being brought against the abuser.

The IDVA kept Anna up to date with the progress of the criminal case and explained what would happen at the trial. Anna was extremely worried about giving evidence in court and how she would react in such a stressful situation. The IDVA talked through various ways of coping with the this.

Anna attended the trial with the support of her IDVA and was able to give evidence. This was the first time that Anna had supported a prosecution all the way to trial, despite countless reports to the police in the past. The suspect was found guilty of the charges against him and Anna was granted a Restraining Order as part of sentencing which provided additional, ongoing protection for her.

"I feel so much better in myself, I don't have a lot of friends and family, so it feels amazing just knowing that someone actually cares if I am ok or not"

Since the trial, Anna has not had any contact with her ex-partner and she has increased her engagement with services and made positive changes in her life as a result. She has worked hard to reduce her reliance on drugs and alcohol.

"I don't know what I would've done without you, your patience with me and everything you have done for me, thank you – you're a gem"

Leading the way

As the biggest provider in Leeds of DV&A support, we are proud to offer support and guidance to other organisations throughout the city.

Practitioner Quality Support

We recently received funding for a Practitioner Quality Support (PQS) Co-ordinator to provide support to DV&A practitioners across a number of supported housing services.

The role ensures best practice is used across the services to ensure that victims-survivors of DV&A receive the right support. The PQS co-ordinator leads a DV&A Practitioners' Forum looking at developing ways of sharing and improving practice across Leeds.

Raising awareness of DV&A

Promoting DV&A support through partnership engagement is crucial in ensuring that victims-survivors of DV&A have access to the support they need.

We continue to engage with community and other organisations in order to promote our service through joint outreach efforts, delivering presentations and training sessions, improving referral networks, attending training courses and thereby ultimately increasing awareness and access to our critical service.



Your voices Our ears



At LDVS we are continually looking at how we can improve our services and ask for feedback from people who have been supported by us.

DV&A Voices Project

The DV&A Voices Project is an exciting project where victims-survivors voices can influence service commissioning for the future. It is open to all victims-survivors of DV&A including women, children, men and LGBTQIA+ communities. The aim of the project is to ensure their voices are heard at the highest level of decision making within Leeds City Council. Victims-survivors can decide their level of involvement, for example through focus groups or questionnaires and all feedback is given anonymously. Consultation work with participants and potential participants has been around 'What I wish I knew' and 'What makes a good service' and an awareness campaign about the project has reached over 50 organisations and 250 schools.

They can share their story through case studies, give specific feedback on topics of interest and/or attend a Survivor Group. As group work is not appropriate for children, one-to-one support is offered through the LWA Elevate project.



LDVS has helped me to keep going, has been my voice when I needed it and built me up to then find my own voice.

Keep in touch



<https://twitter.com/LDVS7>



<https://www.facebook.com/LeedsDomesticViolenceService>

**IF YOU HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE
CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT AND WOULD
LIKE TO SEEK HELP PLEASE CONTACT OUR
HELPLINE:**

24 Hour Helpline:

0113 246 0401

Email

hello@ldvs.uk

Everyone has the right to live
their lives free from fear and harm.