

Leading Lights

Standards for community-based domestic abuse services

The Leading Lights standards are designed to provide detailed guidance towards meeting the Leading Lights quality assurance accreditation for domestic abuse service provision.

The standards are split into four main sections: service provision, multi-agency working, human resources and governance. Together, these sections represent practice that is effective, sustainable and - above all - safe.

This document presents each section separately, summarising its 'spirit' alongside the standards that a service needs to meet to reach accreditation. The types of evidence that would be required to demonstrate the standards are outlined in the Leading Lights Dossier and the Self Assessment Toolkit.

The scope of the standards

Following consultation with our existing Leading Lights services and the wider sector, we are pleased to make the Leading Lights standards available to organisations providing a wider community-based domestic abuse service. This may include crisis intervention work, outreach and floating support alongside IDVA work.

This update reflects the feedback of the majority of existing Leading Lights-accredited services who have asked us to widen the Leading Lights remit to acknowledge that IDVA services are rarely commissioned in isolation and sit within a spectrum of services, all of which are striving to provide the highest quality, most effective service to victims of domestic abuse: whether that victim is in crisis, requires early intervention or longer term recovery work.

SafeLives will be working with several services over the coming year, and with other sector partners, to refine these service standards. If necessary, we will review the standards in light of this work later next year. However, if your service provides a risk-led response (even where the caseload is not made up of high risk clients) and works as part of a co-ordinated community response and you wish to apply these standards to your full service provision, we would be happy to support you to achieve accreditation.

We very much hope that Leading Lights will provide your service with robust standards that will allow you to provide the best service to your clients, demonstrate its value to commissioners and support your staff as effectively as possible.

Service provision

Effective domestic abuse services have a clear remit and offer a risk-led response to each client that proactively addresses risk and safety, supports a client's practical needs, empowers them and provides effective referral pathways where appropriate. This is typically delivered in partnership with other agencies.

The service provision standards

1. The service provides clients with a specialist pro-active, risk led response that reflects clients' individual risks and needs.
2. The service provides effective and comprehensive safety and support planning work.
3. The service has a robust case management and supervision process in place, ensuring effective recording practice and appropriate staff support from intake to closure.

4. The service ensures that all aspects of casework and case file recording meet their legal and best practice duties to the client.
5. The service encourages and supports clients to act for themselves and engage with services that can help them.
6. The service is clear about to whom it offers a service and what that service provides
7. The service works proactively to ensure that a non-discriminatory service is equally accessible to all eligible clients.
8. The service has clear and accessible referral pathways into and out of the service.
9. The service regularly reviews its practice to ensure continuous improvement.

Multi-agency working

Effective domestic abuse services form part of a multi-agency response to victims of domestic abuse and contribute to strategic partnerships and multi-agency forums, including the MARAC. Poor practice is challenged at an individual and an institutional level.

The multi-agency working standards

1. The service proactively engages with multi-agency responses to domestic abuse, all the while ensuring client safety remains central.
2. The service proactively engages with multi-agency responses to child safeguarding and fulfils its legal duty in relation to this.
3. The service engages with its local MARAC, in line with its remit. This includes prior contact, attendance and engagement at the meeting and continued client support.
4. The service works with other agencies to promote, support and improve their response to adult and child victims of domestic abuse accessing those agencies.

Human resources

Effective domestic abuse services have a strong policy framework which reflects the specific challenges of working with domestic abuse clients. They employ qualified, competent, well-supported staff and recruit them in a safe and considered way.¹

The human resources standards

1. The service ensures that staff and volunteers are recruited, inducted, trained and supported appropriately for work with those who are experiencing domestic abuse.
2. The service effectively manages the risks that staff face through their work.
3. The service is appropriately prepared to address the situation of employees as victims and as perpetrators.

Governance

Effective domestic abuse services have clarity of accountability between their executive and non-executive roles (trustees/board). They have robust performance management, risk and financial management systems with a clear strategy, operating plan and budget.

The governance standards

1. The service is based within a sustainable organisation with a clear strategy for maintaining its activities.
2. The service is placed within a robust framework with clear lines of accountability between all staff and between the executive management and the board.²
3. The board identifies and manages key legal, financial and operational risks.
4. The board monitors appropriate data to measure the performance and outcomes of the service, and ensures that corrective action is taken when required.
5. The board takes responsibility for ensuring that the service meets its contractual requirements.
6. The board receives regular information to ensure that a non-discriminatory service is being offered to all eligible clients.
7. The board and management take account of stakeholders' views in reviewing and developing the service.

¹ This section does not provide a comprehensive outline of a service's full HR requirements. We assume that you already meet your legal requirements to support your staff adequately.

² While we use the term 'board', we recognise that there are different governance structures which might apply.