



MISSINGLINK
cutting edge
women's mental health services



NEXTLINK
changing the face of
domestic abuse support services



SAFELINK PLUS+
supporting survivors



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GUIDE TO OUR SERVICES



MISSINGLINK
cutting edge
women's mental health services



An Introduction to Missing Link

Since 1983 Missing Link has successfully supported women with mental ill health and additional needs to recover, secure and sustain housing and live full and rewarding lives. We are the largest provider of women-only services in Bristol bringing innovation, expertise, established partnerships and extensive experience of engaging women in our wide-ranging support services.

We provide a range of housing and support to women who have either acute or long-term mental health needs. We also support women who are homeless, sleeping rough or whose housing is at risk because of their mental ill health. We provide a direct access service, the women's crisis house, as a preventative or alternative to psychiatric admission. We are funded to provide Women's Health Inequalities training across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Mental Health Workforce.

We specialise in working with women who face multiple disadvantage including substance misuse and offending. Our support has a rights-based trauma informed approach and a holistic recovery focus looking at health, trauma, social care, housing and mental health.

All our support is person-centred and tailored to each woman's needs, and builds on their individual strengths to improve their well-being, secure their housing and sustain their long-term recovery.

*"You have helped me to survive
and I'm sure that you have and
will continue to help many others
through times of crisis"*

**OVER 1 IN 3
WOMEN**

AGED 16 TO 24 EXPERIENCE
MODERATE TO SEVERE DEPRESSION



1 IN 5 WOMEN

EXPERIENCE A COMMON
MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM
SUCH AS DEPRESSION OR
ANXIETY



Bristol Women's Homelessness Pathway

We provide a range of temporary accommodation and support for women who are facing homelessness in Bristol. Women will have a dedicated support worker and access to staff on site with an on call out of hours service. Staff provide regular practical and emotional one to one support, drop-ins, group activities including gardening, cooking and baking, and arts and craft sessions.

We understand there are many reasons that a woman may become homeless, and we work with compassion and without judgement, valuing each woman's skills and strengths.

The aim is to support women to access and engage with other specialist services and recover from homelessness, moving on to independent and long-term accommodation.

Help When You Need It Service

This service offers short-term practical and emotional support for women living in Bristol. We recognise that women with mental health issues have times when they are well, and times when they need support and this is what we provide. Support workers will offer short-term support including help with life skills and wellbeing, claiming benefits and money advice, building social networks and connecting to communities, managing tenancies, help into volunteering or training, education and employment. We facilitate peer support groups and training on developing coping strategies. The aim of this project is to support vulnerable women to avoid accommodation breakdown, and remain safely and securely housed.

"I am overwhelmed with the help I have been given"

"Becoming a volunteer at Missing Link during my university studies was the best decision I could have made. After graduating, I was able to move into a paid position and the organisation has been so nurturing and encouraging of my role(s) within. I have met amazing people in both clients and colleagues, and I really love working in such an empowering place"





Professional feedback about Link House:
"This absolutely would have been a re-admission for someone who had been out of services for several years, I don't believe we could have achieved this without Link House so I just wanted to let you both know!"

Triage Assessment

When women are referred, a triage worker assesses their immediate support needs and offers emotional support. The range of support we can offer includes one-off advice and referrals to other services, a short-term intervention, group work or ongoing support from a support worker. Women can re-enter the service when they need to.

"I never had any thoughts of having a future until I met all the brilliant Link House staff"

Women's Crisis House

Called Link House, this service is for women who are experiencing a mental health crisis and are struggling to cope in the community. We take referrals from Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset and work to a social care model of recovery. It provides safe, high quality, short-term support that has an emphasis on the immediate crisis while also focusing on building resilience, support networks and maintaining good mental health upon returning home.

It is one of 28 organisations chosen worldwide by the World Health Organisation as a model of best practice in promoting a person-centred, recovery and rights-based approach in mental health.

The service is an integrated part of the AWP mental health care pathway and has proved to be a valuable resource within mental health services. It has been very successful in preventing hospital admissions and, for those who are admitted into hospital, reducing their length of stay.

Bristol Community Mental Health Partnership

Missing Link is one of the organisations which together make up Bristol Mental Health Partnership, which strives to ensure everyone in Bristol receives the treatment and support with their mental health and lead fulfilling lives.

We are one of four voluntary community sector organisations:

Second Step (www.second-step.co.uk),

Off the Record (www.otrbristol.org.uk), and

Nilaari (www.nilaari.co.uk)

who work with Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP) and employ staff within the Bristol Assessment and Recovery Services.

Staff roles include Recovery Navigators, Mental Health Crisis workers, Facilitated Discharge workers, and Peer workers based in hubs in North, Central and South Bristol.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership

Alongside Second Step, Alabare and Nilaari we have formed this partnership across BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW). Missing Link employs 6 recovery navigators to work within the AWP community mental health teams, and a women's crisis house that is part of the AWP care pathway.

**1 IN 20
WOMEN**

**HAVE PREMENSTRUAL DYSPHORIC
DISORDER WHICH MAKES
DAY TO DAY LIFE A STRUGGLE**



"Just thank you all so much for everything, you changed my life forever, I feel very blessed you welcomed and helped me through such a tough time in my life"

Community Rehabilitation Service

This service supports people living with complex mental health problems to achieve their goals and gain the skills and confidence to live as independently as possible. Missing Link works in a partnership led by Second Step and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP) and our staff provide a range of interventions to help women manage their mental health problems and live as independently as possible.

The service accepts referrals for people who are registered with a Bristol GP, have severe and enduring mental health problems and have previously received substantial intervention from secondary mental health services without resulting in a level of recovery that they would have wanted. Most of the people we work with have had repeated hospital admissions or have difficulties with self-care, independent living or confidence.

"Thank you to everyone who helped me and taught me some brilliant skills to take forward with me to the future"

Health Inequalities Programme

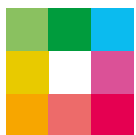
Missing Link facilitates Women's Health Inequalities Training across BNSSG to front line mental health staff in Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust AWP and the voluntary sector, in partnership with Womankind and the Integrated Care Board (ICB). The training follows the life course of a woman, and has been co-produced with women with lived experience and other VCSE equality organisations. It also offers an ongoing reflective practice space after the training so staff can continue to embed their practice to improve the response to women with mental health needs including on self-injury, personality difficulties, domestic abuse, autism and menopause.

Volunteering Programme

We have a diverse group of volunteers, from women with lived experience, those who want to give back to the community, to people who go on to gain employment in the organisation. We hugely value their time, energy, enthusiasm and wide-ranging skills that build extra capacity in our services. Without volunteers, some of our most important and effective services would not be able to operate.

If you want to find out more about volunteering call 0117 925 1811 or email volunteer.coordinator@missinglinkhousing.co.uk

GUIDE TO OUR SERVICES



NEXT LINK PLUS
changing the face of
domestic abuse support services
Bristol

An Introduction to Next Link Domestic Abuse Services

In 2022 we were delighted to launch Bristol's new domestic abuse safe accommodation and community support services. Having provided domestic abuse services in the city for the last 25 years we have an excellent reputation for high quality, trauma informed and innovative services and now offer a range of diverse, tailored and specialist support to adult and child survivors. We are the lead provider collaborating with Nilaari, Victim Support, Off The Record, St Mungo's, 1625 Independent People and Bristol Drugs Project.

Referrals to all Bristol Services

There is a single point of contact and referrals can be received by telephone, text, drop-in or email between 8.30am-5.30pm Monday-Friday and 9.30am-1.00pm on Saturday.

Victims and survivors can also contact us via our Live Chat service, open 10am-4pm weekdays.

Our team of female triage workers will ask survivors about their situation and what support they or their children need.

They complete a DASH risk assessment alongside the survivor, and if appropriate, refer to MARAC and offer immediate help with any safety needs.

*"Everything has changed for me.
I finally have hope for a better future.
I could never thank you enough for
the support that I had!"*



Bristol Safe Houses

We now have 10 safe houses in the city that can house up to 52 families. This includes a dedicated house for black and minoritised women and children, a house for single women, 24 hours complex needs house, male safe house and a block of self-contained units.

Each adult and child survivor who comes into the houses has their own dedicated support worker, who gives emotional and practical support to help them recover and move on to independent accommodation free from violence and abuse.

Complex Needs Safe House

This is a unique 24-hour high-support safe house for women who would perhaps not be able to come into generic safe houses due to needing more intensive support. This house accommodates eight women at high risk of domestic abuse with additional support needs such as substance misuse or mental health issues.

Bristol Drugs Project are co-located within this project to help women with any substance misuse needs while they are in a safe environment

Safe House for Men

We have a dedicated house for male victims of domestic abuse who need a safe place to stay. Our partner, Victim Support, employs a male worker who is co-located within our safe house team and offers emotional and practical support with safety, benefits, legal and criminal options, and future housing options.



1 IN 3
PREGNANT
WOMEN
EXPERIENCE
DOMESTIC ABUSE

Community and Outreach Service

Our team of domestic abuse community workers support survivors living in the community who are experiencing domestic abuse. We provide practical and emotional support to help families remain in their own home safely or move and settle into a new property.

We also help with any court proceedings, making grant applications, registering with a doctor, schools or nurseries and planning the future. When survivors become safer, more confident and connected in their community support gradually reduces.

We also provide virtual drop-in surgeries alongside specialist domestic abuse solicitors and community hubs across Bristol.

"I would have continued living in an abusive relationship, I would keep blaming myself for getting into abusive relationships, I would continue to feel sorry for the abuser and help him more than I would help myself. You have turned that all around for me, it's not my fault."

Northern and Southern Arcs

Victims and survivors often find it difficult to leave their neighbourhoods to seek help. These services reach into communities and have offices in the south of the city in Hartcliffe and one in the north in Southmead.

We also provide drop-in surgeries at a range of local community venues. These include: Hartcliffe, Southmead Children's Centre and Barton Hill Settlement.

Each hub responds to local need and offers high-quality front-line support to survivors and their children to increase their safety, prevent repeat victimisation and reduce levels of physical and psychological injury.

To contact the Northern Arc call 0117 9822495

To contact the Southern Arc call 0117 3533853



ON AVERAGE
VICTIMS EXPERIENCE

50

**INCIDENTS
OF ABUSE
BEFORE GETTING HELP**



Short Term Intensive Support

Our Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and crisis workers offer support to women and children who are at high risk of harm from domestic abuse.

Survivors can often become homeless when they are in a domestic abuse crisis because they are made to feel there are no other options but to leave the violent home. This service responds the same day and will assist women to access emergency legal remedies and extra security in their home to keep the family safe.

When it is not safe for survivors to stay, the worker will find safe housing accommodation within the city or outside of Bristol.

We sub-contract to Victim Support, who provide co-located IDVAs in The Lighthouse, to work with women at high risk of harm and male survivors.

Sanctuary Scheme

Wherever possible victims and their children should be supported to be able to remain safely in their home with the abusive partner removed. That's why we have a Sanctuary Scheme co-ordinator, who works closely with the IDVAs, Bristol City Council housing colleagues, Avon Fire and Rescue and Avon and Somerset Police to provide enhanced safety measures in the home.

*"You stood right by my side
every step of the way."*

Counselling Service

Funded by the Quartet's Grove Fund, our counselling service supports women who have accessed our safe accommodation or community services. Our counsellors provide a safe place for survivors to work through the impact domestic abuse has had on them, helping them to develop tools to improve their quality of life.

Specialist Services

We have a range of specialist services in recognition that many survivors face extra barriers and discrimination in getting the support they need to be safe and free from domestic abuse.

Dedicated Support for Women of Colour

We recognise the importance of diversity and to ensure our services are inclusive we have a dedicated black and minoritised woman's safe house and Forced Marriage and 'Honour' Based Violence IDVAs in both safe house and community services. We also have dedicated IDVAs in community and short-term intensive services, as well as dedicated South Asian IDVAs.

Nilaari, a black and minoritised led charity, provides specialist, culturally relevant therapeutic support to survivors in both our safe house and community services.

South Asian Domestic Abuse Support

Domestic abuse is a major cause of homelessness for South Asian women. Our dedicated South Asian workers provide support and crisis intervention to South Asian survivors who are experiencing domestic abuse.

The workers assist families in crisis, and they offer culturally sensitive support and help to access legal and practical remedies to enable women and children to remain in their family home and lower repeat incidents of domestic abuse.

This service has proven to be extremely successful at both supporting women and raising the issue of domestic abuse within South Asian communities.



**2 WOMEN
A WEEK
ARE KILLED**
IN ENGLAND BY A
PARTNER OR EX-PARTNER

Forced Marriage and 'Honour' Based Violence Service

The results of a pilot funded by the Home Office Forced Marriage Unit enabled us to generate funding to provide a service for victims who have either been forced into marriage or those at risk of forced marriage or honour-based violence. The service offers confidential advice and support to look at all the options available including accessing legal remedies and help to plan their future.

Forced Marriage 'Honour' Based Violence Training Programme

We deliver training to a range of organisations and groups, including primary healthcare providers, police, adult and child social services, VCSE partners and council employees.

We run a series of workshops as part of the 16 days of action to eliminate violence against women and girls.

Our web-based chat/advice facility enables people to access real time advice anonymously and our social media pages also link to our website and live chat.

Dedicated LGBTQ+ Support

We have a specialist service providing IDVA support to survivors from the LGBTQ+ community, whilst also raising awareness of domestic abuse and improving referral pathways into our safe house and community services.

"The trip was wonderful and I would recommend for other people to come"

Survivors with Disabilities

Survivors with disabilities and care and support needs
Dedicated support for survivors who are deaf
Learning Disability Specialist
Accessible safe house spaces

We know that women who are deaf or have a disability are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse. We have collaborated with SignHealth, a national deaf health charity, to provide dedicated support to deaf survivors and make our services more accessible. Building on our expertise of providing support to victims of rape who have a Learning Disability (LD), we also offer one to one and group work support to LD survivors of domestic abuse.

Older Survivors

We have seen a sharp increase in older women reaching out for support, particularly those who have care and support needs. We know that some perpetrators can also mask as carers, and our dedicated IDVA works closely with adult social care to support survivors whilst also raising awareness about the needs of older survivors of domestic abuse.



IT IS ESTIMATED THAT
LESS THAN
24%
 OF DOMESTIC ABUSE CRIME
IS REPORTED
TO THE POLICE



Multiple Disadvantage

Women who have multiple needs such as substance misuse issues, mental ill health, are trapped in street sex working or have histories of offending are often experiencing domestic and sexual violence and abuse. Many are marginalised and isolated, and in relationships where the perpetrator uses their vulnerabilities such as addiction and mental ill health to have even greater power and control. We have dedicated multiple disadvantage IDSVAs (Independent Domestic & Sexual Violence Advocates) in our short-term intensive team and community teams, as well as a complex needs safe house.

We have collaborated with Bristol Drugs Project so that all survivors who have substance misuse needs can get the support they need to be safe from abuse. We also work in partnership with St Mungo's, providing 10 beds to women who have experienced violence and abuse and have multiple and complex needs.

Dedicated Children and Young People's Support

We have expanded our dedicated children and young people's services to prioritise the needs of child victims of domestic abuse. We provide a range of support including one to one support from children's workers, CYP IDVAs, children's group work, play therapy, play sessions, after school clubs and help with enrolling in schools and nurseries. We also help children integrate into their new communities when they leave the safe house.

We provide play therapy to children under 11, whilst Off The Record provide CBT based interventions for 11 to 25 year olds. 1625 Independent People also provide a dedicated young persons' domestic abuse worker, to support young victims at risk of domestic abuse and homelessness.

"It was good - I exited" child - age 9

Domestic Violence Groupwork Services

Freedom Programme

Recovery Toolkit

You and me, Mum

CRUSH

The main outcome of this project is to empower women, increase their confidence and support them to recognise signs of controlling and coercive behaviour when beginning new relationships after surviving domestic abuse.

"It's made me understand myself as a person, how I have been treated and opened my eyes up to many years of abuse I didn't see it as...I think overall it's an amazing course."

Peer Support Groups

Peer support groups offer a space for survivors to talk about the impact of their experiences and learn from each other, whilst taking part or leading an activity of the group's choice. This has included arts and crafts, making 'happy memories' boxes, climbing and forest school activities.





THE POLICE RECORDED
1,500,369
DOMESTIC ABUSE RELATED INCIDENTS
IN THE LAST YEAR

Co-located Services

We have a range of IDVA support services in different organisations and settings across the city. These services are key in providing alternative referral pathways, and wrap-around support to victims and survivors wherever they present in the city.

The IRIS Service

Bristol Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS)

We have two IRIS workers in Bristol who support all of the city's GP practices to access the service.

For many victims of domestic abuse, visiting the doctor is the only safe place they can go without their abusive partner present. Our specialist domestic violence advocate-educators (IRIS) train and support primary care clinicians to recognise domestic abuse and refer their female patients to our service.

The IRIS workers offer emotional and practical support to all women referred and, if appropriate, help to access a range of specialist services.

IRIS ADViSE

Built upon the success of the IRIS model based in GP surgeries, we were one of two domestic abuse services involved in the original research to support this intervention. After winning a new tender to roll out the pilot, we have two advocate-educators supporting sexual health clinicians across Bristol and South Glos whilst also supporting survivors who present at the clinics.

Families in Focus IDVAs

We are working in partnership with Bristol City Council and have three domestic abuse workers based in the north, south and inner city and east Families in Focus (FIF) Teams. Based in the Family Support hubs, the workers consult with FIF key workers and Children's Centre staff to help recognise domestic violence and abuse, improving professional responses and support for victims and survivors. The workers also offer direct support and advocacy to survivors.

"My kids are so much happier now"

Bristol Royal Infirmary (BRI) A&E IDSVAs Service

Often victims who present at A&E disclose high levels of abuse and are still living with the violent perpetrator. For those that present at the Emergency Department, our IDSVAs can offer them support with their safety and link them in with longer-term services. They also train health clinicians to recognise the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse to enable them to refer to the service.

St Michael's Maternity Hospital

Pregnant women are at particular risk from being victims of domestic abuse from a partner or ex-partner, and in 2023 we were awarded funding to provide a specialist Maternity IDSVAs based in Bristol Maternity Hospital, St Michaels. Alongside supporting victims that are referred into her service, she also provides advice, training and support to midwives and other hospital staff.

Housing IDVA service

Domestic abuse is a leading cause of homelessness, and our Housing IDVA supports survivors when they come to the attention of Bristol City Council Housing services. Providing support to high risk victims, she also gives advice and training to housing staff so they are able to spot the signs of domestic abuse and prevent families from becoming homeless.

EVERY **30** SECONDS

THE POLICE RECEIVE
A CALL FOR HELP
RELATING TO
DOMESTIC ABUSE



Research and Innovation – Women’s Safety Workers

As part of our commitment to innovation and evidence-based best practice we work closely with Gene Feder, Professor of Primary Health Care at the University of Bristol on various research projects.

We were collaborators on the REPROVIDE Perpetrator Programme to help men who are concerned about their behaviour in relationships with women. We supported the partners of the men on the programme.

Drive IDVA

We offer IDVA support to the victims and survivors of perpetrators who access this service, and make sure that the victim's voice is central to any planned intervention. The Drive programme offers support to high risk perpetrators to help reduce the risk they present to victims and change their behaviour. After being part of a successful pilot in South Glos, Drive has been rolled out to Bristol and North Somerset.

Quality Assurance

We were re-accredited once again by both Advice Quality Standards and Women's Aid National Quality Standards for our advice and guidance work. Both confirm we deliver well-managed domestic abuse advice and support services, provide ongoing help, ensuring staff have relevant, up-to-date knowledge to offer high quality specialist advice and support

Experts by experience – Co-production, Participation and Feedback

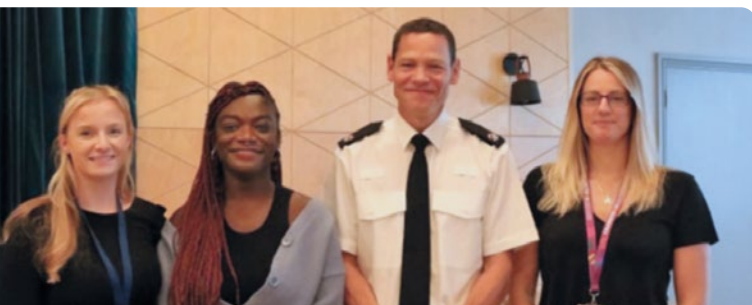
We firmly believe that domestic abuse services should be informed and guided by survivors. Throughout the year we have held “Have Your Say Meetings” where we have consulted with women, men and children that use our services on new initiatives and their experience of our services. They have also been involved in recruitment of staff, development of new services, fundraising, and talking to the media and key stakeholders about their experience of domestic and sexual abuse.

"I love being a small part of a team that does such amazing work to help so many people."

Raising Awareness of Domestic and Sexual Abuse

Throughout the year we have participated in events including Sexual Abuse Awareness Week, Pride, Freshers Fairs at Universities and Colleges, Recovery Festival, Hate Crime Awareness Week, World Mental Health Day, Volunteers Week, HBV Awareness Day, Elimination of Violence Against Women Candle Lit Vigil, Refugee Week, Domestic Violence Awareness Month and International Women’s Day.

Our commitment is to continue to raise these issues at a local and national level and at the same time reassure survivors that they are not to blame. Too often domestic abuse and rape are seen as the victim’s fault and we need to challenge this perception and put the responsibility for the crime where it rightly belongs – with the perpetrator.



GUIDE TO OUR SERVICES



NEXT LINK PLUS+
changing the face of
domestic abuse support services
South Glos



Next Link Plus South Glos

In 2023 we were delighted to be re-commissioned by South Gloucestershire council for the new safe accommodation and community domestic abuse services after a competitive tendering process. Since we first started to deliver services in South Glos in 2017, we have increased our safe house provision by 5 bed spaces, expanded our team of IDVAs, developed dedicated children's support and new specialist services to survivors from different communities.

As the lead provider, we have collaborated with a range of partners including 1625 Independent People, Womankind, Nilaari, Sign Health and Victim Support to offer an even greater package of support and recovery options.

Our office base is at Kingswood Estate.

Single Point of Access

All the services are accessed by one telephone number 0800 4700 280, text or email. We also have a Live Chat Service for victims and survivors to get advice and information. All victims and survivors can speak to a female worker who will ask them about their situation, and offer a relevant service that meets their need. They can get immediate help with any safety needs as well as advice and information from this accredited service.

Safe Houses for Women and Families

We have safe houses for single women, women with children and women with complex needs. The housing is direct access and women and children can move in immediately.

Each adult and child survivor who comes into the houses has their own dedicated support worker, who gives emotional and practical support to help them recover and move on to independent accommodation free from violence and abuse.

Safe House for Men

We have a dedicated house for male victims of domestic abuse. They will have a male support worker, provided by Victim Support, who will offer them emotional and practical help including with their safety, benefits, legal and housing options.

Community and Outreach IDVA Services

Community IDVA workers offer practical and emotional support to help female and male victims and survivors who are at risk of domestic abuse to keep safe in their own home. The support we can offer includes someone to talk things over with, forming a safety plan, making the home safe, help to go to court and get legal protection and help with accessing benefits and budgeting. The support is reduced as survivors feel safer.

Specialist Services

Thanks to the OPCC and South Glos Council who bid to the MOJ IDVA fund on our behalf, we have been able to secure funding for the next 3 years for a dedicated IDVA who works with survivors who have complex needs and one who works with survivors who have mental ill health. We also provide a Complex Needs Safe House, and dedicated support to survivors living in the rural community.

"Thank you for your constant support and words of encouragement and reassurance. It's helped and comforted me so much and given me so much strength over the last few months."



South Gloucestershire Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS)

For many victims and survivors of domestic abuse going to see the doctor is the only safe place they can go without their violent partner present. Our specialist domestic violence advocate-educators train and support primary care clinicians and staff to recognise domestic abuse and refer their female patients to our service.

The IRIS workers offer emotional and practical support and, if appropriate, help to access a range of specialist services.

IRIS ADVISE

Built upon the success of the IRIS model based in GP surgeries, we were one of two domestic abuse services involved in the original research to support this intervention. After winning a new tender to roll out the pilot, we have two workers supporting sexual health clinicians across Bristol and South Glos whilst also providing advocacy support to survivors who present at the clinics.

Southmead Hospital A&E and Maternity IDSVA Service

Often victims and survivors who present at A&E disclose high levels of abuse and are still living with their violent partner. This service supports female and male victims who present at the Emergency Department at Southmead Hospital. They also train health clinicians to recognise the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse to enable them to refer to the service. Support is offered for up to 4 weeks.

It is well evidenced that domestic abuse can often start or escalate when women are pregnant, in 2023 we were given 3 years funding by NHS England to provide an IDSVA to work in the Maternity Department.

"I don't know if I would of been this strong without you and your support"

Group work

Our group work facilitator provides pattern changing courses which are open to all survivors aged 16 years or older living in South Glos. It includes Freedom Programme and Recovery Toolkit. The groups focus on both emotional and practical support including: self-esteem, confidence, safety, red flags of coercive and controlling behaviour, impact of DA on children, building friendship networks, independence and ambition.

Peer Support Programme

This service is funded by the MoJ and provides a space for survivors to meet together, share experiences and support each other. The groups have a facilitator and each week has a theme and activity chosen by the group. Activities have included arts and crafts, making 'happy memories' boxes, climbing and forest school activities.

Counselling Service

Funded by the Quartet's Grove Fund, our counselling service supports women who have accessed our safe accommodation or community services. Our counsellors provide a safe place for survivors to work through the impact domestic abuse has had on them, helping them to develop tools to improve their quality of life.

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT
2.4
MILLION
ADULTS EXPERIENCED
DOMESTIC ABUSE IN THE
LAST YEAR



"Please give my IDVA 5 stars for supporting me in court, she made me feel so safe. "

"Reaching Out" Rural IDVA service

With funding from the Ministry of Justice we were able to extend the IDVA service in rural communities in South Glos and North Somerset.

We know that survivors in rural settings often suffer greatly and are less able to seek help.

National Rural Crime Network Research showed:

- Abuse lasts on average 25% longer in the most rural areas
- Support services are scarce – less available, less visible and less effective
- The more rural the setting the higher the risk of harm
- Retreating rural resources make help and escape harder
- Rurality and isolation are deliberately used as weapons by abusers

This much needed service will reach out to rural victims to offer help and at the same time train and support champions in the community to raise awareness of domestic abuse and refer into our services.

Drive Programme

Our IDVAs support victims of the perpetrators who are taking part in the Drive programme in South Gloucestershire, Bristol and North Somerset. This programme challenges perpetrators and hopes to change their behaviour. Our workers support the victims to ensure they stay safe while the perpetrator is on the programme, making sure that the survivor's voice, safety and wellbeing is central in the intervention.

'Honour Based' Violence and Forced Marriage Service

This is a service for victims experiencing or at risk of honour-based violence or forced marriage. The service offers confidential advice and support to look at all the options available including accessing legal remedies to keep them safe and help them to plan their future. We have a secure live chat facility where we can talk to victims in real time safely.

"I can now stay in the UK. I was so scared of what would happen to me but you have changed everything"

Children and Young People

As children are victims of domestic abuse too, we provide dedicated support to children and young people in the safe houses and community. This includes children's support workers, play therapy, group work, a CYP IDVA and specialist support delivered by 1625 Independent People. We have a range of play and educational activities available after school and during the holidays.

South Glos MASH IDVA

We have a dedicated MASH IDVA, who attends the multi-agency safeguarding hub and is co-located with the social work team. Her role is to bring specialist knowledge of domestic abuse to the decision made with social workers.

Quality Assurance

Our Advice Quality Standard and Women's Aid accreditations confirms we deliver well-managed domestic abuse advice and support services. It evidences that staff have relevant up-to-date knowledge to provide high quality services to survivors, professionals and others seeking help.

GUIDE TO OUR SERVICES



NEXTLINK North Somerset
changing the face of
domestic abuse support services



North Somerset Services

In 2020 we were delighted to win the commission to provide the domestic abuse services in North Somerset. We started this service on April 1st when we were in lockdown because of Covid-19. Following government guidelines, we launched the service and it is now fully up and running and we continue to expand the types of services we can offer.

Our office base is in the centre of Weston at The Stables.

The domestic abuse services include:

Single Point of Access

All the services are accessed by one telephone number 0800 4700280, text or email. We also have a Live Chat Service for advice and information. All victims and survivors will speak to a female worker who will ask them about their situation, and offer a relevant service that meets their need. They can get immediate help with any safety needs as well as advice and information from this accredited service.

EVERY DAY ALMOST

30 WOMEN
ATTEMPT
SUICIDE

AS A RESULT OF EXPERIENCING
DOMESTIC ABUSE AND

EVERY WEEK
3 WOMEN
TAKE THEIR
OWN LIVES

Safe House Services

**For Women with Children, Single Women,
Men and Women with Complex Needs**

All our safe houses are direct access and survivors can stay for up to six months. During that time, they are offered practical and emotional support including staying safe, support with parenting, life skills and finding new housing whilst living in a psychologically informed and safe environment.

All children have dedicated support from the children's worker and can access play sessions with the play worker.

24-hour High Support Safe House

In 2024 we were awarded funding to set up North Somerset's first 24 hours supported safe house. This has meant we have been able to support women who need more intensive support with additional needs such as substance misuse and mental ill health, so that they can safely leave a perpetrator the right level of support to meet their needs.

*"I was supported without judgment
and I finally understood that the
abuse was not my fault"*

IDVA Workers

The IDVA workers help victims who are at high risk of harm from a perpetrator of domestic abuse. They support them to be safer, refer them to the MARAC and work in a multi-agency way to ensure their lives are protected and they are empowered to make informed choices that increase their confidence, safety and recovery.

We have a dedicated Male IDVA who works with male victims and survivors of domestic abuse in the community and safe house, and an IDVA who specialises in working with victims who have multiple and complex needs.

AN ESTIMATED
160,000
 CHILDREN ARE VICTIMS OF
 DOMESTIC ABUSE
 EACH YEAR



"With Next Link's help, I found the strength to engage with other services and take steps I never thought I could."

Floating Support Services

Community workers offer practical and emotional support to help victims who are assessed as medium to standard risk to keep safe in their home. The support we can offer includes having someone to talk things through, forming a safety plan, help with legal issues, support around benefits and income maximisation as well as housing.

Sanctuary Scheme

Wherever possible victims and their children should be supported to be able to remain safely in their home with the abusive partner removed. That's why we have a Sanctuary Scheme co-ordinator, who works closely with the IDVAs, North Somerset Council housing colleagues, Avon Fire and Rescue, and Avon and Somerset Police to provide enhance safety measures in the home



Children's Support Services

We have dedicated children's workers and a Children and Young People (CYP) IDVA who works with high risk children and those living in the safe houses or in the community.

"My children and I can now look forward to a safe and positive future. Thank you so very much"

"Reaching Out" Support for Victims in Rural Areas

We have funding from the Ministry of Justice to extend our support to victims of domestic abuse in rural areas across North Somerset for 3 years. This service is called 'Reaching Out' and offers support to survivors living in the rural community, identifying rural hubs and delivering training to staff so they will become a domestic abuse aware location with a referral protocol in place.

We know that victims in rural settings suffer more and are less likely to seek help.

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NRCN Research showed

- Support services are scarce - less available, less visible and less effective
- The more rural the setting the higher the risk of harm
- Retreating rural resources make help and escape harder
- Rurality and isolation are deliberately used as weapons by abusers

This much needed service will reach out to rural victims to offer help and at the same time train and support champions in the community to raise awareness of domestic abuse and refer into our services.



MARAC Administrator

We are responsible for the administration of the MARAC service in North Somerset. This is a multi-agency group that meets every 2 weeks to review high-risk domestic abuse cases and ensure the lives of the victims are protected and they are empowered to make positive choices, and increase confidence, safety and recovery. A senior IDVA continues to triage for MARAC cases weekly and then we proceed with the MARAC meeting. We note all cases and update all agencies of the actions from MARAC.

North Somerset MASH

Two IDVAs attend the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and are co-located with the social work team. Their role is to bring specialist knowledge of domestic abuse to the decisions made with social workers.

Group Programmes and Peer Support

We provide the Freedom Programme, Breaking the Chains and peer support groups across Weston, Nailsea, Clevedon and Portishead. The groups focus on both emotional and practical support including: self-esteem, confidence, safety, Domestic Abuse flags of coercive and controlling behaviour, impact of Domestic Abuse on children, building friendship networks, independence and ambition.

"Next Link made me feel safe from the very beginning"

Drop Ins

These fortnightly sessions, led by our facilitator, enables survivors to meet together to share their experiences and support each other.



Weston General Hospital IDVA Service

Often victims who present at A&E disclose high levels of abuse and are still living with their violent partner. This new service supports female and male victims who present at the Emergency Department at Weston General Hospital. They also train health clinicians to recognise the signs and symptoms of domestic abuse to enable them to refer to the service.

Co-located Housing IDVA

Domestic abuse is a leading cause of homelessness and thanks to increased funding we now have a specialist Housing IDVA who works closely with North Somerset Council Housing Teams, Housing Associations and is co-located with Citizens Advice Centre. She provides support to victims and survivors whilst also offering training and information to professionals.

Quality Assurance

Our Advice Quality Standard and Women's Aid accreditation confirms we deliver well-managed domestic abuse advice and support services. It evidences that staff have relevant up-to-date knowledge to provide high quality services to survivors, professionals and others seeking help.

62%
OF CHILDREN
LIVING IN DOMESTIC ABUSE
HOUSEHOLDS ARE
DIRECTLY HARMED
BY THE PERPETRATOR OF THE ABUSE,
IN ADDITION TO THE HARM
CAUSED BY WITNESSING
THE ABUSE OF OTHERS

GUIDE TO OUR SERVICES



SAFELINK PLUS+
supporting survivors



An Introduction to Safe Link Plus

An award-winning service, Safe Link Plus was recommissioned in 2025 by the Police and Crime Commissioner. Working across the Avon and Somerset Police Area, we provide emotional and practical support to all survivors of rape and sexual assault. If the victim or survivor wishes, we will support them to report the incident and go through the criminal justice system.

Safe Link is the lead provider, sub contracting to One25 who provide specialist support to women who street sex work in Bristol.

"Without you helping me through this stage of my life I'm not sure I would be as okay as I am now. You have effectively saved my life."



INNOVATION

In 2023 Safe Link won the national Limelight award for INNOVATION awarded by LimeCulture, the national ISVA accreditation body.

"This year's award for ISVA Service Innovation goes to a team that is celebrated locally for their innovation, commitment, passion, and dedication. This fantastic service is leading the way in adapting and creating flexible and innovative strategies and services which seek to remove the additional barriers for victims and survivors from diverse communities to ensure they are able to access the specialist sexual violence support they deserve".

The service follows the Revised Victims Code of Practice. Survivors are supported through a range of communication methods including face to face, text, phone, emails, FaceTime, Zoom and WhatsApp.

**1 IN 4
WOMEN AND
1 IN 18 MEN**
HAVE BEEN RAPED OR
SEXUALLY ASSAULTED
AS ADULTS



"You gave me confidence to keep going and safe in my decision making."

We offer:

- Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs)
- Dedicated ISVAs for survivors of historic abuse
- Dedicated Young Persons ISVAs
- Dedicated Male ISVA
- Children's and Young Persons ISVAs
- Dedicated Black and Minoritised ISVAs for children and adults
- Specialist Learning Disabilities ISVA for children and adults
- Specialist Mental Health and Complex Needs ISVAs
- Specialist LGBTQ+ ISVA
- Dedicated ISVAs who work alongside Avon and Somerset Police's Bluestone Investigation Team
- A Rural ISVA for survivors living in more isolated and rural communities
- One25 support for street sex workers
- Peer support groups

6 IN 7
RAPES ARE PERPETRATED BY
SOMEONE KNOWN
TO THE VICTIM



All offer confidential advice, practical and emotional support including a safe place to talk, referrals to specialist counselling, support attending sexual health services and help with medical attention. They can also help with supporting the family and practical problems such as help with housing, benefits and employment.

If survivors want to report to the police they can give support with making a statement, or report it anonymously on their behalf, assist with claims for compensation and give support before, during and after the court process.

The victim or survivor does not have to report to the police to access the service and the abuse could have happened recently or in the past.

Staff deliver support by:

- One to one support in person or by telephone
- Peer support groups
- Training and practical skills sessions
- Use of email, text, Zoom and WhatsApp



Triage

Our Triage workers carry out an initial assessment alongside each survivor to understand what they want to happen next. We can offer initial support with any safety needs and support the victim or survivor to make their own informed choice. This could be working with an allocated ISVA if it's identified that they have higher support needs or are moving through a police process, or a short-term intervention and signposting or onward referral supported by the Triage worker.

"You made such a difference in how my day turned out compared to if you weren't there. You do wonderful work and I'm glad to have you by my side throughout this." (male client)

Safety and Support Assessment (SAS)

As a LimeCulture accredited service, we use the Safety and Support Assessment (SAS) and toolkit developed by LimeCulture. The SAS assessment provides structure and consistency in the development of the support plan, and support offered by the ISVA is tailored to the identified needs of each individual victim or survivor.

Examples of the areas that are addressed within the assessment and support plan are:

- Safety; harm from others
- Health and medical
- Reporting to the police
- Mental health and psychological wellbeing
- Coping mechanisms, social and cultural support
- Safeguarding
- Employment and education
- Finance
- Accommodation and housing

Specialist Learning Disabilities ISVA Service

We know people with Learning Disabilities are at higher risk of being victims of rape or sexual abuse, yet the barriers they can face when trying to seek help means they often remain hidden and unsupported. Communication difficulties can impact on whether they are understood or believed and they can sometimes be seen as unreliable witnesses so their case will rarely progress to court.

Our Learning Disabilities ISVAs offer specialist support to enable victims to:

- Tell their story in the way best for them
- Have help with benefits
- Have help with housing
- Have help with reporting to the police if they wish
- Learn about healthy/safe relationships and when to say yes
- Have help to start putting their life back together

Mental Health and Complex Needs ISVAs

These roles are particularly relevant as many survivors who have been traumatised by the abuse have been unable to access the emotional and mental health support they need. These workers are able to support survivors access relevant mental health or specialist interventions such as substance misuse support.



**1 IN 6
CHILDREN**
HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED

Specialist Support to Black, Asian and Minoritised Survivors

Many survivors who are black or from a minority ethnic community may face extra barriers when trying to get help and support. They can often be afraid to seek help due to experiencing racism, language barriers or isolation from their community. This dedicated service, delivered by ISVAs who are from a minority ethnic community, provide specialist advocacy support whilst also raising awareness of sexual violence within diverse communities. They work closely with Next Link's dedicated black and minoritised IDVAs.

"You have been such a valuable source of honesty, kindness and patience and encouragement"

Dedicated LGBTQ+ Support

For survivors from the LGBTQ+ community, fear of homophobia or having their sexuality used against them by the perpetrator can stop them from seeking support after rape or sexual assault. The dedicated ISVA, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, provides specialist support whilst also improving referral pathways and awareness of rape and sexual abuse in the LGBTQ+ community. They work closely with Next Link's dedicated LGBTQ+ IDVAs.

Dedicated Children's and Young people's ISVAs

Safe Link now has a dedicated team of 6 children and young people's specialist ISVAs. One post works closely with Avon and Somerset Police's Operation Bluestone, and there is a specialist CYP ISVA who supports victims who are black or from a minoritised community. The Learning Disability ISVA also works with children.

Services for Men and Boys

Men and boys can also be victims of sexual violence and abuse and deserve to be able to have specialist help and support to meet their needs. In 2019 we introduced a male ISVA and are working in collaboration with Second Step and other specialist providers to offer a joined-up service.

Our Safe Link workers can support victims and survivors to cope with what happened and help them recover fully and get their life back. It is a free and confidential service. We can come to meet the survivors or they can meet in another location of their choice.

No matter how long ago it happened, anyone can still:

- Have our help
- Have counselling
- Get advice
- Report it
- Access other specialist services

Our support is totally confidential and victims can just talk to us once or, if they prefer, we can give them ongoing support.





"These sessions have changed my life – I look forward to them every week"

Peer Support

This service is funded by the MoJ.

Our peer support programme takes place virtually or in person. Each group has up to 8 survivors meeting in a closed setting to talk about their feelings and learn from each other. The programme consists of 10 sessions, each with a theme including: flashbacks and nightmares; trust; sleep; safe relationships; managing thoughts and feelings; healthy body/healthy mind; anger and triggers; support from family and friends; coping mechanisms; future hopes and goals.

Some members of previous groups are now trained to be peer facilitators and they co-facilitate the groups.

LimeCulture Accreditations

We continue to be accredited by LimeCulture, providing evidence each year to meet the national standards. We have:

- One for our general service - ISVA Quality Standards
- One for our male service - Male Survivor Partnership Quality Standards
- One for our children and young people service - CYPSVA Quality Standards

We see these awards as a recognition of the quality of service we offer and of our survivor led values and ethos that underline everything we do.

5 IN 6
WOMEN WHO ARE RAPED
DON'T REPORT IT

Consent and Healthy Relationships

In 2024 we successfully gained funding from the Quartet and OPCC's prevention fund to deliver this workshop programme to young people in secondary school education across Avon and Somerset. Two ISVAs deliver consent and healthy relationship sessions and work closely with Bluestone and Operation Ruby officers and 1625IP preventing technology facilitated abuse programme.

"The teams have got so much from the session and feel they have much better knowledge and confidence in how to approach conversations"

Promoting and Raising Awareness of Rape and Sexual Abuse

We continue our ongoing training of Detective Investigation Teams and the new Bluestone RASSO investigation team across Avon and Somerset. We also delivered training to and networked with: SARSAS, Womankind, Bristol Hate Crime Service, Bristol LD DSVN Network, The Greenhouse, Southmead Project, Off The Record's Freedom Service, Kinergy, The Bridge and One25.

We take part in a number of events including Pride, International Women's Day at City Hall, Stop Adult Abuse Week, Loneliness Awareness Week, World Refugee Day, World Suicide Prevention Day and Mental Health Awareness Week, and delivered workshops to schools about healthy relationships and consent

"These sessions have been invaluable and really help to build those strong networks across agencies as well"

Part 2nd Floor, Embassy House,
Queens Avenue, Clifton, Bristol BS8 1SB



Missing Link - www.missinglinkhousing.co.uk

t: 0117 925 1811

e: enquiries@missinglinkhousing.co.uk

www.facebook.com/MissingLinkHousing

instagram @missinglinknextlinksafelink



Next Link Plus Bristol - www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk

t: 0800 4700 280

e: enquiries@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

www.facebook.com/nextlinkhousing

Instagram @missinglinknextlinksafelink



Next Link Plus South Glos

www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk/southglos

t: 0800 4700 280

e: enquiries.southglos@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

www.facebook.com/nextlinkhousing

Instagram @missinglinknextlinksafelink



Next Link North Somerset

www.nextlinkhousing.co.uk/northsomerset

t: 0800 4700 280

e: enquiries.NorthSomerset@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

www.facebook.com/nextlinkhousing

Instagram @missinglinknextlinksafelink



Safe Link Plus - www.safelinksupport.co.uk

t: 0333 323 1543

e: safe.link@safelinksupport.co.uk

www.facebook.com/SafeLinkSupport

instagram @missinglinknextlinksafelink

"I would recommend Link House without any hesitation, and am very grateful for the welcoming and kind treatment I received here, thank you from the bottom of my heart"

"The support from Next Link has been life-changing."

"I can honestly say I would not have made it through the ups and downs if I hadn't had you to turn to, or call or just know that you're there"



Missing Link strives to create a culture that encourages and values everyone's differences and promotes mutual respect and shared understanding.

Missing Link is a Housing Association with charitable status, registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act (2014).

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