

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
INDEPENDENT DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES
COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Purpose

To set out the approach of Independent Domestic Abuse Services (IDAS) in relation to recording, responding to and reviewing complaints.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all IDAS managers, staff, volunteers and the Board of Trustees.

3. Policy Statement

- IDAS is committed to providing the highest standard of services and to learning from mistakes when standards fall short.
- We recognise that people we support and agencies have the right to raise concerns or complaints about our services and we will take these seriously.
- IDAS views all feedback, including feedback received via complaints, as a useful mechanism for learning and for improving.
- We will deal with complaints quickly, consistently and fairly. We will seek a resolution wherever possible and will provide clear feedback to complainants.
- All complaints are managed in accordance with our confidentiality procedures.
- IDAS staff, volunteers and trustees are required to understand and comply with this policy in the handling of complaints.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Board of Trustees

The IDAS Board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that our services are delivered to a high standard and in accordance with the law. Complaints can indicate that there are deficiencies in the delivery of a service or services and therefore the Board will:

- Monitor, review and update this policy at least every three years.
- Monitor complaints on a quarterly basis.
- Ensure that serious incidents / complaints are reported to the Charity Commission in accordance with guidance.



4.2 Chief Executive

The CEO is responsible for the operational implementation of IDAS Complaints Procedure. The CEO may delegate duties and responsibilities to Senior Managers and Managers to ensure full implementation of the policy within their respective areas. The CEO will ensure that:

- Systems are established and maintained to report complaints.
- The Board are alerted in the case of serious, reportable complaints and incidents.

4.3 Head of Services

The Head of Services is responsible for ensuring that IDAS services are of a high standard and delivered in accordance with our policies and our contracts. Complaints can be an indication that this is not happening. They will therefore:

- Review all complaints and ensure that any lessons learned are embedded in future practice.
- Ensure that effective training is identified and completed by all staff and volunteers.
- Provide reports to commissioners and to the Board.

4.4 Managers

Managers are responsible for ensuring that complaints and concerns are resolved / dealt with at the earliest opportunity. They will:

- Ensure that their line reports and volunteers are provided with training on handling complaints and dealing with disputes and concerns.
- Report complaints to the Head of Services.
- Investigate complaints and concerns in accordance with these procedures.

4.5 Staff and volunteers

All staff, including relief, casual and temporary employees and volunteers should:

- Ensure they are familiar with this policy.
- Take complaints seriously and report them to their line manager.
- Handle concerns and attempt to resolve these at the earliest possible stage.
- Attend and participate in any training courses.



5. Procedural Guidance

5.1 Definitions and scope

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a person, whether justified or not. An individual may complain about:

- An experience of services (such as the quality or range of services we provide, our external relationships and partnerships, staff conduct, IDAS's ethos and our decision-making processes).
- A fundraising activity undertaken by, or on behalf of IDAS.

We accept complaints and comments from people we support or have recently supported, or from someone acting on their behalf. We also accept complaints and comments from other stakeholders such as partner agencies. However, where a complaint relates to a third party, we will require the consent of that person to investigate the complaint and to provide feedback.

In exceptional circumstances, we may need to investigate a comment as a complaint without the person's consent, especially where this exposes, or appears to expose, a significant risk or staff misconduct.

This policy covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services by IDAS, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Appeals following a refusal to provide a service	IDAS's appeals process is outlined in our Fair Access, Fair Exit Policy. Anyone refused a service will be provided with a letter outlining alternate sources of advice and support. This letter will include information about submitting an appeal.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under IDAS's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under IDAS's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint.

	However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff. We have appointed two Whistleblowing Officers who can provide guidance on raising issues through the Whistleblowing Policy; the Head of Services and the Head of People.

5.2 Raising a concern

Sometimes people using our services have informal concerns about the support they are receiving. If a person raises a concern:

- This should be taken seriously. It is important to try to resolve the concern as soon as possible.
- The person raising the concern should be provided with information about the complaints' procedure if the concern raised cannot be resolved.
- All concerns should be logged and reported to a line manager. Serious concerns should be brought to the attention of the Regional Manager.

5.3 Timescales

If you wish to raise a complaint you must do so within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 12 months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

5.4 How to complain

There are several ways to complain. These are:

- Complete a written or online complaints form and return via email or post.
- Approach a member of staff / service manager and explain your complaint. They will take a record of this and ensure it is dealt with in accordance with this policy.
- Contact us using our public telephone number and ask to speak to a service manager or Head of Services.
- Via email: complaints@idas.org.uk

- If the complaint is about the CEO, you may email our Board at boardsecretary@idas.org.uk
- If the complaint is about the Chair, an individual Trustee, or the Board as a whole you may email the Board Secretary at boardsecretary@idas.org.uk so that an appropriately independent investigation can be arranged.
- Write to us at IDAS, 39, Blossom Street, York.
- You may ask others to help you with your complaint – e.g. a support worker, relative, advocate, Citizens Advice Bureau.

5.5 Dealing with complaints

There are three stages to IDAS complaints procedure.

STAGE ONE – upon receipt of a complaint

- All information about complaints will be passed to the Head of Services.
- Complaints will be logged on IDAS complaints' register and the complainant will receive an acknowledgement.
- The Head of Services will identify the most suitable person to investigate the complaint within three working days of receiving the complaint. This will normally be the manager of the service / staff member named by the complainant.
- Where a complaint is made about a manager, a more senior manager will investigate this. If the complaint is about the Head of Services, the CEO will investigate. If it relates to the CEO, the Board will. A complaint about the Chair or an individual Trustee will usually be investigated by another Trustee not involved in the issue. We may also appoint an independent investigator where this would be most appropriate.

STAGE TWO – the investigation

- The manager dealing with the complaint will gather all relevant information within fourteen working days of receiving the initial complaint. This might include clarifying information with the complainant.
- Where it will take longer than this to gather information (e.g. if a key member of staff is on leave) the manager will feed this back to the complainant and provide an appropriate timescale for investigating the complaint.
- Ordinarily, complaints will be fully investigated, and a written response provided to the complainant within twenty-one working days.
- The complainant will receive written confirmation of the outcome of the investigation, including any recommendations / remedies made, such as reviewing policies, staff development or training.
- Where a complaint is upheld an apology should be offered.

- The complaints log will be updated.
- If an individual is dissatisfied with the outcome from STAGE TWO they can appeal within fourteen working days of the date of the outcome and progress to STAGE THREE.

STAGE THREE – appeal

- The complainant should let us know that they wish to appeal and the grounds for this.
- The Head of Services will identify who will hear the appeal. This will be a member of the senior management team.
- If the complaint is about the Head of Services, the CEO will hear the appeal and, if the complaint is about the CEO, the Board will hear this.
- The appeal will be considered, and the complainant notified of our decision within 14 working days.
- The complainant will be informed about the appeal decision in writing.
- The decision reached at this stage is final. However, there are other options open to the complainant which are listed below. These should be stated in our final letter to the complainant.

OTHER OPTIONS

Complainants who are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint can do one or all of the following:

- Seek advice from a solicitor or Citizen's Advice Bureau.
- Approach our commissioners.
- Contact the Charity Commission.
- Contact one of our accrediting bodies: Women's Aid or Safe Lives or Lime Culture.

6. Data protection

In accordance with IDAS's UK GDPR Policy we hold case records for a limited amount of time. Therefore, we are normally only able to respond to complaints that relate to services / events within the last 12 months but will consider each complaint on a case-by-case basis.

7. Learning from complaints and concerns

- We provide feedback to staff members, trustees and stakeholders regarding complaints, compliments and comments received.



- Where a complaint exposes a lack of knowledge or staff misconduct, this will always be addressed.
- Comments and complaints are used to inform the way in which we provide and develop our services.

8. Complaint closures

A complaint will be considered closed for the following reasons.

- The complainant is satisfied by the outcome.
- The complainant does not respond to investigating manager within twenty-eight days of receiving a response.
- IDAS has discharged the duty to investigate and communicate the outcome/outcomes to the complainant. The complainant may however continue to be dissatisfied.

9. Monitoring complaints

- IDAS maintains a complaints' register as a record of all complaints.
- The Head of Services has overall responsibility for monitoring complaints and reporting these to the senior management team and to the Board. They are reviewed on a quarterly basis.

10. Related procedures and policies

- Code of Conduct
- Confidentiality
- Consulting and Involving Stakeholders
- Data Protection
- Disciplinary Action
- Equality and Diversity
- Equalities Strategy and Scheme
- Fair Access / Fair Exit
- Health and Safety policies and procedures
- Induction and Training
- Licence Agreement
- Partnership Working
- Privacy
- Referral, Assessment and Support Planning
- Risk Assessment
- Safeguarding Policies

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Last Review Date	June 2024
Approved By	Board
Issue Date	April 2004
Author	Sarah Hill
Next Review Date (must be less than 3 years from previous version date)	June 2027
What are the key changes to this procedure? (in brief)	Clarification of issues not within the scope of the policy.

IDAS Complaints Form

Please complete this form as fully as possible. IDAS will take your complaint seriously and the information you provide will be treated sensitively and investigated thoroughly. Where necessary we will contact external agencies to verify the information you provide. If we need to do this we will gain your consent first.

Your name and contact details:	Today's date
	Date when incident / problem occurred

Please outline details of your complaint (continue on a separate sheet if needed).

Please give details of any similar incident.

Have you mentioned your complaint or reported it to anyone else before?

What action would you like IDAS to take?



Please return this form to:

Head of Services (confidential and private)

39 Blossom Street,

York YO24 1QA

Or email:

complaints@idas.org.uk

For office use:

Received:

By Whom:

Date:

