

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
INDEPENDENT DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES
COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Sept 2010

Purpose

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

Definitions

Comment

A comment is an expression of someone's thoughts or ideas. Comments can be negative or positive, and can be expressed as requests, observations, criticisms or feelings.

Complaint

A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction or unhappiness in relation to:

- 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)
- The decisions taken by staff (such as those related to referrals and the provision of accommodation and support services)

Related procedures and policies

- Consulting and Involving Service Users
- Equal Opportunities & Anti-Discriminatory Practice
- Fair Access / Fair Exit
- Individual Support Planning
- Partnership Working
- Referral & Assessment
- Risk Assessment

Part One – Policy Statement

Aims and Principles

1. IDAS are committed to reviewing and improving their services to meet the needs of all those affected by domestic abuse.
2. IDAS aim to be an accountable and open organisation and we view comments and complaints as a useful feedback tool.
3. IDAS are committed to providing the highest standard of services and to learning from mistakes when standards fall short of this.
4. IDAS aims to deal with complaints as quickly as possible and will provide clear feedback to people who wish to complain.

5. IDAS will maintain the confidentiality of people who wish to complain as far as is practicable when dealing with the complaint.
6. IDAS is committed to positive multi-agency working.
7. We can only accept complaints that relate to the services we have provided.

Part Two – Procedural Guidance

How to complain / comment

1. We accept complaints and comments from clients, residents, relatives, neighbours and also members of the public or local community. We also welcome comments and/or complaints from other stakeholders such as partner agencies, officers and members of local authorities, funders and Members of Parliament.
2. 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.
3. If the complaint / comment relates to anti-social behaviour, harassment or adult or child safeguarding we will follow the procedures set out in the relevant policy.
4. There are several ways in which individuals and organisations wishing to make a complaint can do so. These are:
 - a. Approach a worker / Service Manager,
 - b. Contact us using our public telephone number (01904 646630) and ask to speak to a Service Manager,
 - c. Via email (info@idas.org.uk),
 - d. Write to us at PO Box 487, York YO26 OAS or
 - e. Complete the attached form and return it to us at the above address.
5. If preferred, an individual may ask others to help such as a support worker, relative, advocate, Citizens Advice Bureau.

How we deal with complaints

Verbal complaints

1. If a verbal complaint is made to a member of staff, the staff member should take the complaint seriously and make a record of the discussion. If the complaint relates to a colleague, the staff member should explain that the complaint will need to be heard by a Service Manager.
2. If the complaint can be dealt with straight away, i.e. if it is a less serious complaint, the staff member should deal with this as quickly as possible.
3. If it becomes obvious that the complaint is serious and will need the attention and input of the Service Manager / other colleagues, this should be explained to the person making the complaint.
4. Verbal complaints should be dealt with as quickly as possible and an outcome should normally be explained to the person making the complaint within 5 days of the

complaint being received. This should be provided verbally and, where appropriate, in writing.

5. The person who is making the complaint should be offered a complaints form and a copy of this policy even where the verbal complaint appears to have been dealt with.
6. All verbal complaints should be clearly logged using the log form and brought to the attention of the Service Manager.
7. After initial discussion, if the complaint is formalised in writing, the procedure below should be adhered to.
8. The Service Manager will ensure that all complaints are reported to the Director.

Written complaints

1. Where we receive a complaint via email or in writing, a Service Manager will acknowledge the complaint via email or in writing within 7 working days. (Appendix one)
2. The complaint will be investigated by the Service Manager. This may involve speaking with relevant staff members, taking a statement from the complainant and / or asking external agencies for information. This will be carried out within 14 days of the complaint being received.
3. If the complaint relates to a Service Manager or is sufficiently serious, the Director / trustees may investigate this.
4. The complainant will receive written and, where appropriate, verbal feedback on how the complaint has been dealt with within 7 days of completion of the investigation. The feedback should contain details of how the complainant can contact the Director / Board of Trustees if he / she is dissatisfied with the outcome.
5. All complaints will be logged and reported to the Board of Trustees.

If a complainant is dissatisfied

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with how the complaint has been dealt with, he/she should write to IDAS outlining why he / she is not satisfied. If the initial complaint has been dealt with by a Service Manager, the Director will carry out a review of the initial complaint and how it was dealt with. If the Director dealt with the initial complaint, the Board will undertake the review.
2. If the complainant needs assistance in this, he / she should seek advice from an independent agency such as Citizens Advice Bureau or other advocacy service.
3. The Chair will appoint a trustee to carry out an investigation into how the complaint has been dealt with. This may involve speaking with relevant staff members, taking a statement from the complainant and / or asking external agencies for additional information.
4. The review will be completed within 14 days and feedback will be provided to the complainant within a further 7 days.
5. This letter will contain details of how the complainant can proceed if they are still not happy with how their complaint has been dealt with. For example, if someone has a complaint about an IDAS refuge they may wish to contact the housing association that owns the building or, if they wish to complain about the outreach service, they may want to contact Supporting People.

House-meetings & focus group

As well as the other formal mechanisms for making comments and / or complaints, we use house meetings and focus groups in order to gain feedback about our services. Suggestions and feedback from clients and residents is regularly used to inform and shape our services.

User feedback / exit questionnaires

We send exit questionnaires to all users of our clients and ex-residents where it is safe to do so. Information from these is collated and fed-back to members of staff where this is appropriate to do so.

Stakeholder feedback

We formally gather information from our stakeholders once a year. This information is used to inform and shape our services.

Comments & compliments

1. We provide feedback to staff members, trustees and stakeholders regarding compliments and comments received. Where appropriate, these are used to inform the way in which we provide services.
2. In exceptional circumstances, we may need to investigate a comment as a complaint without the person's consent, especially where the comment exposes, or appears to expose, a significant risk or staff misconduct.

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.

We will let you know what we will be doing about your complaint within 21 days of receiving it.

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:

**Service Manager or Director (confidential
and private)**

PO BOX 487

YORK, YO26 OAS

For office use:

Received:

By Whom:

Date: