

Refuge Handbook

A guide for residents



IDAS

Independent Domestic Abuse Services

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Independent Domestic Abuse Services

What is IDAS?

IDAS is a registered charity working in York and North Yorkshire. We work with people who are experiencing or escaping domestic violence and run a number of refuges and outreach services. We are run by a Board of Trustees which is made up of volunteers with experience of managing services.

The refuges we run in York and Harrogate are for women and children who are escaping domestic abuse.

We also use women volunteers who give up their time to help us provide our services in the York refuge.

The Refuge

IDAS manages the refuge you are staying in and we employ a manager and support workers to ensure that things run smoothly and that you and your children receive the support that you need.

This means that we are all responsible for the day-to-day running of things as well as providing support for you. The refuge is actually owned by Yorkshire Housing Association and we rent the building from them.

We are responsible for maintaining the refuge to a high standard, as expected by our landlords.

**We are all
responsible for the
day-to-day running
of things.**



A safe place

A refuge is...

An emergency confidential address where you can live temporarily with your children if you are escaping domestic abuse.

A safe place where there are staff available to support you in deciding what you want to do next.

In our refuge, you have the use of a furnished bedroom with a separate bath/shower room, plus the shared use of communal facilities including:

- Residents' Lounge
- Laundry Room
- Kitchen
- Pay phone
- Playroom
- Car park
- Secure garden
- Secure children's play area.

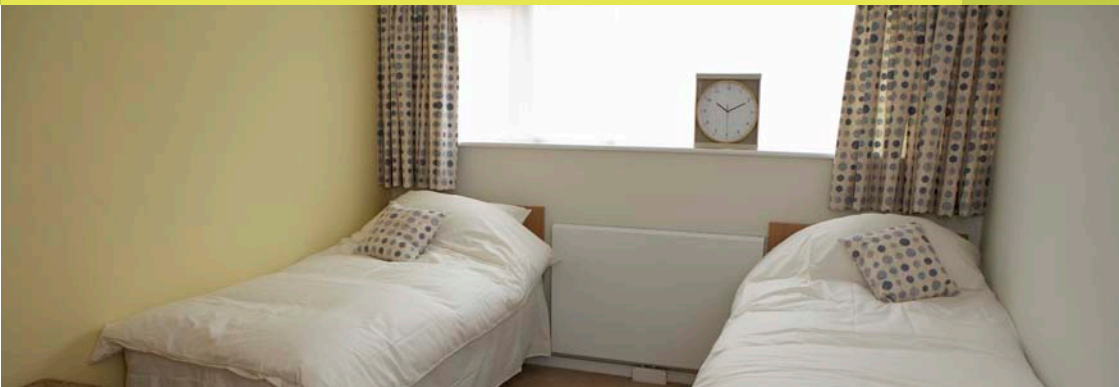
When You First Arrive

On your first day in the refuge workers will help you to fill in forms (boring but necessary) like an admission form and a Housing Benefit form. We will also ask you to read through and sign your licence agreement and the house rules.

Housing Benefit, if you are eligible, will pay for your accommodation costs. If you are working, you may have to pay towards your rent. Staff will work out how much you will have to pay.

All sorts of other things will be explained to you, for example, the House Rules, Licence Agreement and fire procedures.

Don't worry if you can't remember it all, just ask any of the workers



You have your own bedroom

and they will answer any of your questions. This handbook also repeats a lot of the information you will be given so you can use this to help you too.

Settling In

As part of you settling in to the refuge, a worker will:

Show you around the refuge, including your own room and the areas you will share with other women and children.

Introduce you to the other people who are staying in and working in the refuge.


Make sure you have things to eat and drink for the first 24hrs of your stay in the refuge, if necessary. After that, we can help you get any shopping

you need and assist you in getting your personal belongings from your home if this is what you choose to do.

Explain the house rules to you.

You will also be told who your support worker will be. This worker will be the one who is mainly responsible for working with you on your support plan and any problems you might have. However, you can always talk to any member of staff at the refuge. In the refuge we have:

- 2 Children's Support Workers
- 3 Women's Support Workers
- A refuge Manager
- A finance Manager
- An Admin Worker
- Volunteers.



“You can see your files at any time, just ask a worker.”

Your files

From the time you arrive, we set up a file that contains details about things like your benefits, housing matters, your children, health issues and your support plan. This is kept in a locked cupboard and the information in it is confidential.

This means that only staff in the refuge will have access to information about you except under exceptional circumstances. You can see your file at any time, just ask a worker.

What Is A Support Plan?

While you are staying with us, the support you receive is based on what you tell us and most importantly on what sort of support you want. The support you receive from your support worker will be based on your ‘support plan’. There are different stages to your support plan:

Initial Assessment

During your first week in the refuge your support worker will arrange a time with you to talk about any

practical and emotional issues that you need support with. From this information you will both draw up an action plan which will be discussed each week during your key-working session.

Support Needs/Action Plan

This part of your plan is a set of agreed actions based on what you've told your support worker in the initial assessment. It covers things such as health matters, relationships and any immediate needs you have. At least once a week your support worker will meet with you to discuss how things are going with your support plan and set new targets/actions with you.

Review

You can ask for a review of your support plan whenever you want to. Generally, we will carry out a review at regular intervals or when your circumstances change significantly.

Support sessions

Your support worker will offer you a support session at least once a week. This is your opportunity to talk about how you are feeling, issues in the refuge or any of the issues relating to your support plan.

- **Initial assessment**
- **Action plan**
- **Review**

You decide what sort of support you need



“We will help your child to settle in.”

At the refuge there are two Child Support Workers who will help your children to settle in and support them like your support worker.

Play Sessions

During the play sessions we offer lots of different child centred activities which will help your child settle into refuge life. There will be opportunities for your child to complete art and craft activities and choose other activities such as games and books.

Once a month we hold a children's meeting for the children over 6 years. These meetings are a great way to build confidence and gives the children an opportunity to talk about things which are important to them in a group. In previous meetings we have discussed activities they would like to do, play session rules, house rules and anything else they feel is important to them while they are living here.

Play sessions are always supervised by two members of staff



“We will support your child in a friendly and caring manner.”

We will listen to your child

One-To-One Sessions

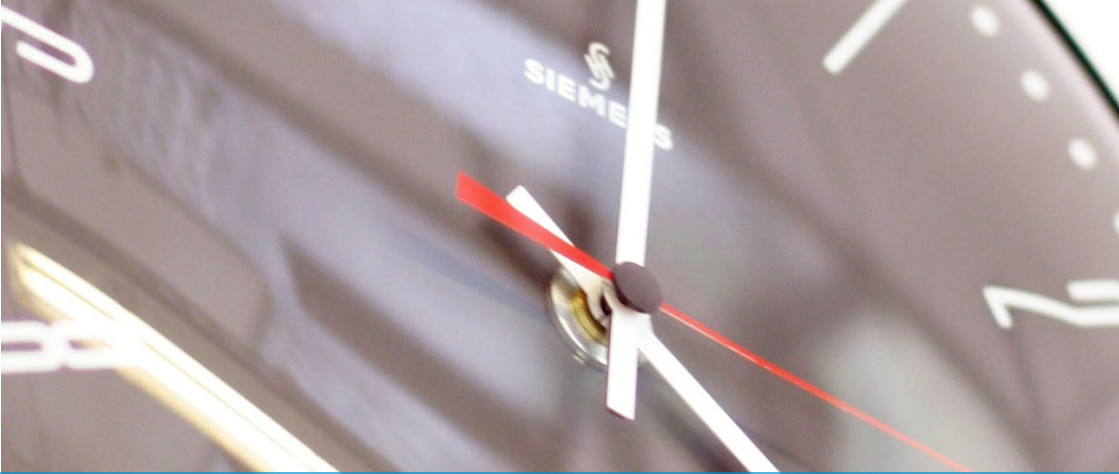
Living in a refuge is a difficult time for all and we aim to support and help your children through this. Each of the children over 6 years will be allocated a support worker who will regularly arrange one-to-one sessions with your child.

During these sessions the support worker will give your child the opportunity to talk through various thoughts and feelings and work through ways of dealing with these appropriately. We incorporate games, group work and other fun activities into these sessions.

The support worker's main priority is to listen to your child, offering support in a friendly and caring manner.

Trips and Outings

During the School Holidays we will provide activities to help occupy the children. These may include trips to the library or a play in the local park. We also like to plan big trips and outings to places further afield like Flamingo Land or the Seaside. On these larger trips we do expect Mums to come along and supervise their own children.



8am to 7pm Monday to Friday

Office Hours

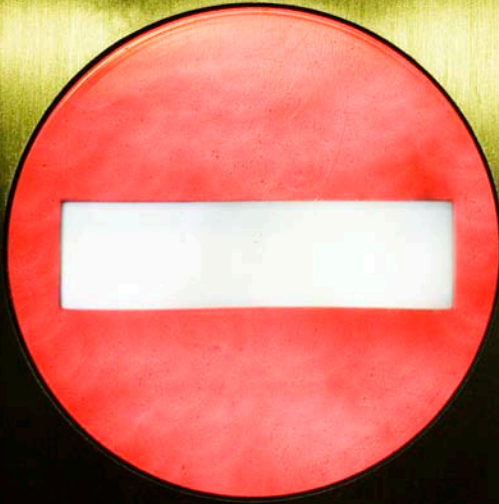
There are usually workers based in the offices between 8am and 7pm Monday to Friday.

If you are away from the refuge and you need to contact us phone the public number on 01904 646630. We also have an out of hours service.

Licence Agreement

The licence agreement is a legal document that outlines your rights and responsibilities while you are living with us. A worker will go through this with you when you first arrive.

Our public number is 01904 646630



“Safe for all women,
children and
workers.”

You will receive a list of ‘House Rules’ when you move into the refuge. These are part of the licence agreement and explain the things that are not allowed while you’re living in the refuge. They are there to make sure that the refuge is a safe place for all women, children and workers.

If you don’t agree with or understand any of the rules you can bring this up

with a worker or raise it in a house meeting. A worker will explain what the rule means and why we have it.

Cleaning Rota

During your stay within the refuge you will be expected to take part in a cleaning rota of all communal areas. There is a weekly cleaning rota displayed in the communal corridor, which allocates jobs.

If you don’t agree with or understand
a rule, ask a worker

What Happens If I Break A Rule?

If you break a rule there are several things that might happen. A worker will always explain how the house rules have been broken and give you the opportunity to explain why this has happened. She might then give you a written warning. If you receive four warnings you will be given seven days to leave the refuge.

In the following cases you may be given immediate notice to leave:

- Violence to other residents or staff members.
- Inviting visitors to the refuge or its boundaries.
- Presenting a risk to residents or staff.
- Bullying and intimidating other residents/staff.

We will always try to find you suitable accommodation if we ask you to leave the refuge.

Appeal

You have the right to appeal against either a warning or a notice to leave the refuge. This is explained in your licence agreement and House Rules.

Service Agreement

This document outlines the things we can support you with while you are living in the refuge. Again, a worker will go through this with you when you arrive.

If you receive four warnings you will be given seven days to leave the refuge.

You can appeal against a warning or notice to leave



You have rights while you stay with us

Confidentiality

This means that we will not share information about you or your children with anyone not working for IDAS without your permission. The only time that this would not be followed would be if we had major concerns about your safety or if we believed your children were at risk.

Privacy

We want to give you as much privacy as possible and will only enter your room with your permission. The only time this would not apply is if we were concerned for your safety, if we believed that you might be breaking the House Rules or if urgent repairs were needed in the room.

Information

You have the right to receive information about your Licence Agreement, policies and files kept on you. You can do this by asking any staff member.

Consultation

You have the right to be consulted about any changes to your licence agreement, House Rules or any policy that might affect your stay with us.

Complaints

We believe that you have the right to complain if you feel that you or your children are not receiving proper support during your stay.



Do I Pay Rent While I'm Staying Here?

While you are with us you will be charged rent. This is to pay for your accommodation, security costs, maintenance and repairs to the property. If you are on benefits then you can claim Housing Benefit to meet the cost of the rent. If you are working you may still be able to claim a portion of the rent through Housing Benefit. A worker will advise you about this.

Standing Charge

Some costs are not met through the rent such as the water rates, electricity and so on. For these, we charge a small amount. This should be paid weekly in advance.

Support Charges

The cost of the support we give you is paid from a pot of money called 'Supporting People'. For more information about this, ask a worker.

Your rent pays for your accommodation, security and maintenance of the refuge



Report breakages & repairs promptly

Maintenance

We are responsible for the maintenance of the property, including the internal and external decorations. If you have comments about the maintenance of the refuge you should raise this with your support worker or in a house-meeting.

Repairs

We are also responsible for repairs and ensuring they are carried out quickly. We carry out regular health

and safety checks to ensure that any repairs that are needed are noticed quickly, this includes weekly room checks. However, you have a responsibility to report breakages and repairs as soon as they occur.

At the main entrance there is a card holder this has a card with your name on it and your children if you have any. These are turned around to indicate whether you are in or out. They are important as they mean we can see who is in the building if there is a fire.

If you have comments about the maintenance of the refuge, speak to your support worker



Panic Alarms

Panic Alarms are connected on the walls through the refuge building. To activate a panic alarm you press the two green buttons underneath the box, this will make a high pitched sound that is also sounded in the office. This will alert staff to the area in which the box has been sounded.

To sound the alarm, press the two green buttons underneath the box

Leave the refuge quickly & calmly

Fire alarm boxes are attached to the walls throughout the building.

In case of a fire these boxes need pressing in the centre which will activate the alarm to alert residents and staff. In the case of hearing the alarm you need to exit the building through the front door if it is safe to do so, if not use any exit that you can safely get through. There are exit signs that will light up to help identify your way.

If you can make your way to the front door in Caeser Court we will do a head count and it is important that

you use the in and out cards so that we can attain how many people are in the building.

The fire alarms are directly connected to the fire brigade and they will attend immediately. Once the incident has been dealt with the fire brigade will allow us back into the building when deemed safe to do so.

We have weekly fire alarm checks and regular fire drills. You will not be notified of a drill and we are aware that these may not always be convenient, but neither are real fires.

Fire alarms are directly connected to
the fire brigade



A safe place for everyone

IDAS is committed to making the refuge a safe place for everybody and this includes safety issues in the refuge. Around the house you will notice Health & Safety signs we are legally obliged under the Health & Safety Act 1974 to carry out Health & Safety checks and to reinforce any new changes. Some of the signs you see are for everyone's safety and we expect you to adhere to them. The refuge is a non- smoking building so there are shelters outside for your use.

COSHH

We also display COSHH signs to provide you with information for the cleaning products we provide. This also indicates the safe usage of products. This information can be found in the kitchens and laundry area.

There are also yellow floor signs to be put up whilst cleaning the floors to indicate that it is wet and possibly dangerous.

COSHH stands for Control of Substances
Hazardous to Health




Door Entry System

When you are admitted into the refuge you will be allocated a fob as well as keys to your room and kitchen cupboard. The fob admits you entry into the building by the panel on the door. You are asked to sign for this fob which has a unique number on it. If this is then lost we can have it cancelled to prevent anyone else gaining access to the refuge. If your fob is lost there will be £10 charge for a replacement.

Risk Assessments

On your referral we calculate a risk assessment, this is carried out so that we can calculate any potential risks and to clarify that we can meet your support needs. During your time at the refuge we may carry out further risk assessments. This may be because your circumstances change, going to court, resettlement visits, trips out and a whole variety of other things. Risk assessments are also carried out to calculate the risk to other residents and staff.

You have a fob to enter the refuge and keys to your room and kitchen cupboard



“We will work with you to offer you and your children extra support wherever possible.”

As well as providing support and accommodation that helps protect you from domestic abuse, there are other ways that IDAS aims to safeguard you and your children. The ways in which we do this are outlined in a number of policies. You can see a copy of these at any time – just ask a staff member.

Your children

We have a duty to report our concerns to social services if we feel that children living in the refuge are at risk from harm. There are a number of things that we consider potentially harmful and these include:

- physical – hitting, punching, smacking and so on;
- emotional – shouting, swearing, threatening;
- neglect – not feeding your children regularly or failing to show affection and sexual abuse.

This risk could come from you, your ex-partner or other people living in the refuge.

If we have concerns that we are thinking of passing on we will always try to discuss them with you first.

We will also work with you to offer you and your children extra support wherever possible in the first instance before involving other organisations.

You and other adults

If we feel that you or other adults in the refuge are at risk - either of harming yourself or someone else we will raise these concerns with you. Depending on what you say we might pass this information to another agency. We will always try to find you the best support possible.

If you have a concern about someone else living in the refuge or are worried about a child's safety you can also talk to any member of staff or ring York Social Services on 01904 555111.

Staff

Everyone who works for IDAS has a duty to be professional and has to abide by policies and procedures that protect both you and them. This means that they cannot favour one person over another or form a friendship with anyone they are supporting. It also means that they will always treat you with respect and keep your information confidential.

If you have any worries about how a member of staff is treating you, you can speak to the refuge Manager about this or follow the complaints procedure.

If you have any worries about how a member of staff is treating you, speak to the refuge Manager



Fair and respectful to everyone

Discrimination is hurtful, offensive and illegal. IDAS is committed to ensuring that everyone gets fair and respectful treatment. We will not discriminate against anybody because of his or her ethnic origin, colour, gender, sexual orientation, disability, health status or for any other reason.

- All staff and management members are trained so that they are aware of issues and don't discriminate.
- Any kind of harassment and/or discrimination in the refuge will be taken seriously and dealt with.

What Does This Mean?

- Anybody living or working in the refuge is treated fairly and respectfully.
- Workers and the Board of Trustees represent the women we provide services to.

Discrimination is hurtful, offensive and illegal



Your views are important

We always want to know how you've found your stay with us. Your views and comments help us to understand:

- What we're doing well and should keep doing.
- What we could do better.
- What we need to change.

How Do I Complain Or Make A Comment?

When you want to make a comment or informal complaint about the services you are receiving you can do so by speaking to your support worker or any member of staff. She will listen to your complaint and work with you to resolve this. This might involve informing other members of staff or the Manager.

Where your complaint is more serious or where you are unable to approach a worker, you should complete a complaint form. These are available in your bedroom.



Exit Questionnaires and Interviews

When you've left the refuge you will be sent an exit questionnaire.

It asks for your comments on the services you've received, what you found helpful and how we can make improvements.

Please fill this in as honestly as possible as it helps us to make any

changes needed. It will not affect you if you need to use our services again.

As well as the questionnaire, wherever possible the Refuge Team Leader will arrange to complete an exit interview with you.

Again, this gives you the chance to tell us how you've found your stay and is designed so that we can make any improvements that are necessary.

Your comments will not affect you if you need to use our services again

Participation In Our Services

We want you to participate in the services we provide. This includes you taking an active role in your support plan as well as in the day-to-day running of the refuge.

Activities

While you are staying with us you can become involved in activities we organise. These include trips out, health and beauty sessions and various other things. We will also ask you what sort of activities you would like us to run.

House Meetings

House meetings are your opportunity to discuss day-to-day issues with other residents either with or without staff, and to suggest any changes to services you receive. House meetings are held every Tuesday morning at 10.30 in the communal living room.

At house meetings staff may also bring up issues for discussion and to

gain your feedback. There might be particular things about the service or day-to-day running of the refuge.

Changes to Services

If we make changes to any of the services we provide we will consult you. This will be done during key-working and during house-meetings.

Changes to Policies

Again where we make changes to policies, we will consult you. We will always discuss what changes we plan, ask for your input and provide you with copies of the new policy.

“While you are staying with us you can become involved in activities we organise.”

We will always discuss changes we plan and ask for your input

How many belongings do you have to move?

Do you require a removal firm?

(We can take one load in our vans.)

Moving out of the refuge can be a very busy time and although your support worker will help organise things with you, it is your responsibility to make sure you have your essential items that you will require for daily living and made arrangements to move in to your home.

Although you maybe entitled to apply for a Community Care Grant which your support worker will give to you, you must fill it in yourself.

The Community Care Grant will take about 6 weeks to be paid in to your bank account, so you need to get essential items before you leave.

- **Kettle**
- **Microwave**
- **Bed - blow up or mattress**
- **Iron**
- **Bedding**
- **Cups, cutlery, plates**
- **Tin opener**



You will need to change your address on all of your mail. We will forward mail on to you for the first couple of weeks, after that we will have to return it to sender.

The main type of correspondence is from:

- Bank
- School
- Doctors
- Benefits
- Solicitors

Moving day

On the day you move out you will need to get your belongings to the front door for removal. The staff can turn the lift on for you to make this easier.

Please leave your room in the condition that you found it.

Please leave your keys and... Good luck!



Your support worker can visit you for a few months after you've left the refuge to help you settle in to your new home and community.

She can help with practical and emotional issues and will do her

best to help you with any worries or problems you might have.

She will make you aware of all the local amenities and put you in touch with other agencies if necessary.

Your support worker will help you settle in your new home and community

Useful numbers and services

Benefits Agency	01904 682100
Citizen's Advice Bureau	0870 1264850
Connexions	0800 323272
Doctor's (Dalton Terrace)	01904 658542
Drugs Resource Scheme	01904 647474
Future Prospects	01904 634748
York City Council	01904 613161
Jobcentre (Stonebow)	01904 882000
NHS Direct	0845 4647
NHS Walk-In Centre	01904 630351
Refuge Office	01904 646630
Outreach	01904 646036
Samaritans	01904 655888
Sane Line	0845 767 8000
Fleet ways Taxis	01904 645333
Youth Enquiry Service	01904 623850
New Claims	0800 0556688
Tax credits	0845 3003900