



MISSINGLINK
cutting edge
women's mental health services



NEXTLINK
changing the face of
domestic abuse support services



SAFELINK PLUS+
supporting survivors



GUIDE TO OUR SERVICES



MISSING LINK 01

NEXT LINK 05
NEXT LINK PLUS BRISTOL
NEXT LINK PLUS SOUTH GLOS
NEXT LINK NORTH SOMERSET

SAFE LINK PLUS 13

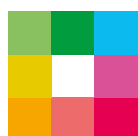
TRAINING 17

Across all our services, we work from a trauma-informed, intersectional and rights-based approach. This means we

- recognise the impact of abuse, trauma, inequality and discrimination
- place safety, choice and dignity at the centre of support
- work alongside survivors and children rather than making decisions for them
- hold perpetrators responsible for violence and abuse.

Our services are shaped by lived experience and aim to build confidence, connection, recovery and long-term safety.

GUIDE TO OUR SERVICES



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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, women's crisis houses, as a preventative or alternative to psychiatric admission. We are funded to provide Women's Health Inequalities training across the BaNES (Bath and North East Somerset), Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) Mental Health Workforce.

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

WOMEN EXPERIENCE
DISPROPORTIONALLY HIGH RATES
OF MENTAL ILLNESS WITH

**1 IN 4
WOMEN**

IN ENGLAND HAVING A COMMON
MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM SUCH AS
DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY

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.



1 IN 3
16-24 YEAR OLDS
ARE LIVING WITH
POOR MENTAL HEALTH



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 crafts 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. 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 just wanted to say a huge thank you for everything you've done for me. Thank you for your patience, your kindness and for genuinely caring."



1 IN 20
WOMEN

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



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"



"Lovely house. So glad it's female only! Great management! Large rooms, lots of creative activities and lovely garden. I'm glad this crisis house is open. Another option for when I'm in crisis. Thank you to all the staff that have supported me."

Oriana House resident

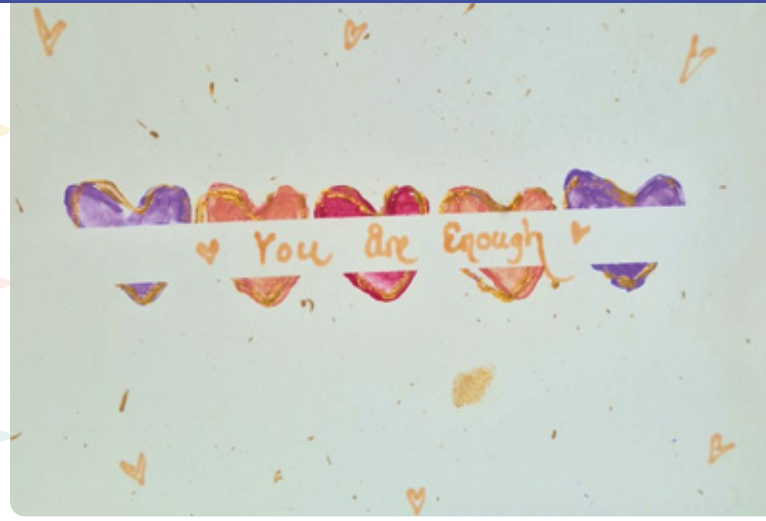
Women's Crisis Houses

Our women's crisis houses offer a safe, welcoming and supportive alternative to hospital admission for women experiencing a mental health crisis. Based on a trauma-informed, rights-based and recovery-focused approach, they provide short-term support in a homely, non-medical setting, helping women through immediate crisis while building resilience, strengthening support networks and supporting longer-term wellbeing.

In Bristol, Link House provides specialist women-only crisis accommodation for women across Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset, working as part of the AWP mental health care pathway. In 2026, we opened Oriana House in Swindon, the first women's crisis house for the BSW area, delivered in partnership with Alabare, Nilaari, Second Step and AWP to extend this vital model of support to more women in the region.

We're proud that Link House was 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. It has been very successful in preventing hospital admissions and, for those who are admitted into hospital, reducing their length of stay.

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT
WOMEN WAIT
ON AVERAGE
4 YEARS
LONGER THAN MEN
FOR A CORRECT MEDICAL
DIAGNOSIS



Bristol Community Mental Health Partnership

Missing Link is one of the organisations which make up Bristol Mental Health Partnership, striving to ensure everyone in Bristol receives treatment and support with their mental health to 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 Support workers based in hubs in North, Central and South Bristol.

"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"

BSW 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 Recovery Navigators to work within the AWP community mental health teams, and runs a women's crisis house that is part of the AWP care pathway.

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

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.

**50%
OF WOMEN**

SAY THEY HAVE BEEN
**DISMISSED, IGNORED
OR NOT BELIEVED**
BY A MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL
BECAUSE OF THEIR SEX

GUIDE TO OUR SERVICES



NEXTLINK

changing the face of
domestic abuse support services

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 Horizons.

In 2023 we were re-commissioned by South Gloucestershire Council for the new safe accommodation and community domestic abuse services. Since we first started delivering the service in the region in 2017, we have increased our safe house provision by 5 bed spaces, expanded our IDVA team, developed dedicated children's support and new specialist services for 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 South Glos office base is at Kingswood Estate.

EACH YEAR IN AVON AND SOMERSET,
THERE ARE OVER

23,000

RECORDED DOMESTIC ABUSE CRIMES,
AROUND **15%** OF ALL RECORDED CRIME



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

Referrals - Single point of contact in Bristol and South Gloucestershire

There is a single point of contact for survivors to use, 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. Safe house referrals can also be made through the referral form on our website.

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

They complete a DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and 'honour'-based violence) risk assessment alongside the survivor, and if appropriate, refer to MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) and offer immediate help with any safety needs, as well as advice and information from our accredited service.

*"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!"*



NEXTLINK PLUS+
changing the face of
domestic abuse support services
Bristol



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



NEXTLINK North Somerset
changing the face of
domestic abuse support services



Safe Houses

We have multiple safe houses across Bristol and South Gloucestershire including dedicated houses for single women, women with children, global majority women and children, a 24-hour complex-needs house for those needing more intensive support around substance misuse or mental health issues, a 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.

North Somerset safe houses

In North Somerset, Next Link is now one of three services supporting victim-survivors of domestic abuse. We provide safe accommodation for adults and children fleeing high-risk domestic abuse, alongside practical and emotional support.

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

Working alongside us to provide the IDVA support service is Cranstoun, and Family Action which provides therapeutic support.

In the region, we also manage the Sanctuary Scheme, helping survivors remain safely in their own homes where appropriate, and provide emergency 'crash pad' accommodation for stays of up to seven days. This ensures victim-survivors can access safe housing immediately while longer-term or move-on accommodation is arranged.

North Somerset Council also fund us to deliver domestic abuse training programmes to council and council commissioned services.

A MINIMUM OF
£516 MILLION
 IS NEEDED PER YEAR
 TO FUND SPECIALIST
 DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES FOR
 WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN
 ACROSS ENGLAND
 (WOMEN'S AID, 2024)

"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."



55% OF LGBT+ PEOPLE

IN THE UK HAVE BEEN
SUBJECTED TO DOMESTIC ABUSE
BY A FAMILY MEMBER,
PARTNER, OR EX-PARTNER



Community and Outreach IDVA Services (Independent Domestic Violence Adviser)

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.

The support can include talking things through, forming a safety plan, making the home safe, help to go to court, legal protection, making grant applications, accessing benefits, budgeting, registering with a doctor, schools or nurseries, and planning for the future.

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

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.

We have a range of specialist IDVA 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.



We offer:

• Global majority communities IDVA

We recognise the importance of diversity and to ensure our services are inclusive we have a dedicated Black and minoritised woman's safe house. We also have dedicated IDVAs in community and short-term intensive services.

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

• South Asian IDVA

Domestic abuse is a major cause of homelessness for South Asian women. Our dedicated South Asian IDVAs provide culturally sensitive support and crisis intervention to South Asian survivors experiencing 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.

• Forced Marriage and 'Honour' Based Violence IDVA

We 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.

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

• LGBTQ+ IDVA

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

DISABLED WOMEN ARE
TWICE
AS LIKELY
 TO EXPERIENCE
 DOMESTIC ABUSE
 COMPARED TO
 NON-DISABLED WOMEN.



• Disability IDVA

Our Disability IDVA supports survivors with disabilities and care and support needs.

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.

We also offer one-to-one and group work support to survivors with a learning disability of domestic abuse.

• Older Survivor IDVA

We see high levels of older people 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.

• Multiple Disadvantage IDVA

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 perpetrators can use their vulnerabilities such as addiction and mental ill health to have even greater power and control. We have dedicated multiple disadvantage IDSVA's (Independent Domestic & Sexual Violence Advocates) to support these survivors.

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

• Children and Young People's IDVA

Our dedicated children and young people's service prioritises the needs of child victims of domestic abuse.

We provide a range of support including one-to-one support from children's workers, children's group work, play therapy, play sessions, after school clubs and help with enrolling in schools and nurseries.

"My kids are so much happier now"

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

• Drive IDVA

The Drive programme offers support to high-risk perpetrators to help reduce the risk they present to victims and change their behaviour. 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.

• Rural IDVA

In South Gloucestershire we have an IDVA service in rural communities. We know that survivors in rural settings often suffer greatly and are less able to seek help.

This much needed service reaches 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.

RURAL DOMESTIC ABUSE LASTS

25%

LONGER ON AVERAGE
 THAN IN URBAN AREAS

APPROXIMATELY

**1 IN 5
MEN**

**WILL EXPERIENCE
DOMESTIC ABUSE
IN THEIR LIFETIME**



Support for male victims

Men can be victims of domestic abuse too, though we understand how difficult it can be to reach out for support. Men and women have the same rights to protection from domestic abuse, and we want men to know that help is available.

Male victims can access support across Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset, although the way support is delivered varies by area. In Bristol, IDVA support for men is provided through Victim Support. In South Gloucestershire, male victims are supported by Next Link. In North Somerset, Next Link provides safe accommodation for male victim-survivors, alongside wider local domestic abuse support.

Dedicated safe house accommodation for male victims of domestic abuse is available in Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

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

Co-located services

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

Family Hub IDVAs

We are working in partnership with Bristol City Council and have domestic abuse workers based in the north, south, inner city and east Family Hubs. The workers consult with children's social 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.

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.

Respite Rooms

Most women who face homelessness have also been victims of domestic and sexual abuse, and are at high risk of exploitation. We have a dedicated IDVA and group work facilitator who provide support to the women living in St Mungo's Respite Rooms project. They provide short-term accommodation for homeless women to access support and move into longer-term safe accommodation.

Northern and Southern Arcs – support in local communities

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 needs 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



1 IN 3 WOMEN

IN THE UK HAVE
EXPERIENCED ONLINE ABUSE
(ON SOCIAL MEDIA OR
OTHER ONLINE PLATFORMS)
AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES

Short-Term Intensive Support

Our 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 abusive 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 for them.

Sanctuary Scheme

Wherever possible victims and their children should be supported 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.

We also provide this service in North Somerset with support from North Somerset Council.

Peer Support Programme

This service provides a space for survivors to meet, 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.

"Is a very safe and friendly environment, there is no judgment and I have felt very comfortable opening up to the group."

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 hold "Have Your Say" meetings where we consult with survivors 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.

LEAF – Lived Experience Active Feedback group

The LEAF group is a lived experience group, bringing together a small group of current and former clients from diverse backgrounds, cultures and experiences to help shape and improve our services. Based on the belief that people affected by a service are best placed to help design it, we work with the members to review priorities, values, toolkits, promotional materials and induction processes, identify gaps and barriers, gather feedback from people currently using our services, and support wider system change.

The name LEAF reflects growth, change and individuality, while recognising the vital role lived experience plays in creating accessible, relevant, trauma-informed and effective support.



WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCE
DOMESTIC ABUSE ARE
TWICE
AS LIKELY
TO EXPERIENCE
DEPRESSION



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'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."

Groupwork services

In Bristol we offer a variety of groupwork programmes. The groups focus on both emotional and practical support including: self-esteem, confidence, safety, red flags of coercive and controlling behaviour, impact of domestic abuse on children, building friendship networks, independence and ambition.

The groups include:

- Freedom Programme
- Recovery Toolkit
- Hope 2 Recovery
- Peer Support

For children and young people:

- You and me, Mum
- Baby Massage
- Under 4's Stay and Play
- 5-7 Drawing and Talking
- 7-11 Aces Recovery Toolkit
- 12 – 16 Aces Recovery Toolkit
- 16 – 19 Freedom Programme

In South Gloucestershire we run the Freedom Programme and Peer Support, and in North Somerset, Peer Support sessions are held in safe houses.

Health Intervention team - Domestic Abuse workers in hospital A&E and maternity departments, GP's and sexual health clinics

The IRIS Service – Identification and Referral to Improve Safety

We have two IRIS workers supporting GP practices across Bristol to access our service and support, as well as a dedicated IRIS worker in South Gloucestershire.

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 train and support primary care clinicians to recognise domestic abuse and refer their female patients to our service.

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

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

IRIS ADViSE (Assessing for Domestic Violence and Abuse in Sexual Health Environments)

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 the IRIS ADViSE intervention. We have two Advocate Educators supporting sexual health clinicians across Bristol and South Gloucestershire to identify domestic abuse, how to refer for support and then supporting survivors who present at the clinics.

JUST OVER
30%
 OF **WOMEN**
 HAVE EXPERIENCED
 DOMESTIC ABUSE
 SINCE THE AGE OF 16



IRIS +

IRIS+ is a research project lead by University of Bristol and IRISi, and Next Link is one of the three services used in the research. IRIS+ is researching the use of the IRIS model with supporting both children and young people and male survivors of domestic abuse.

We currently have one IRIS+ Advocate Educator working with male survivors and two IRIS+ Advocate Educators working with children and young people. IRIS+ has 23 test GP practices across Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

IRIS+ Advocate Educators have also been delivering training to the clinicians and reception and admin staff across the test sites.

Hospital, A&E and Maternity IDSVA (Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Adviser) Service

Often victims who present at A&E disclose high levels of abuse and are still living with the violent perpetrator.

We have IDSVAs in Bristol Royal Infirmary (BRI) and Southmead Emergency Departments who offer victims support with their immediate safety and link them in with longer-term services.

They also deliver training to health clinicians to develop their understanding of domestic abuse, recognise the signs and symptoms and how to access the service.

It is well evidenced that domestic abuse can often start or escalate during pregnancy and post-partum. Since 2023 we've been funded to provide specialist Maternity IDSVAs at St Michael's Hospital and Southmead Maternity Department. Alongside supporting victims that are referred into the service, the Maternity IDSVAs also provide advice, guidance, training and support to midwives and clinicians.

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.

Quality Assurance

We are accredited 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.

Raising Awareness

Throughout the year we participate 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 Candlelit 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



SAFELINK PLUS+
supporting survivors

Safe Link Plus

Our 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."



Our Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) provide independent advice and practical and emotional support, including help to navigate the criminal justice system. Where needed, they liaise with sexual health services, the police and other agencies, and signpost survivors to further support.

We offer:

- Adult Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs)
- Dedicated ISVAs for survivors of historic abuse
- Dedicated Young Person's ISVAs
- Dedicated Male ISVA
- Children's and Young Person's ISVAs
- Dedicated global majority communities 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

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.

1 IN 2

ADULT SURVIVORS OF RAPE
HAVE EXPERIENCED IT
MORE THAN ONCE

ON AVERAGE, ALMOST
200
RAPES WERE RECORDED
BY THE POLICE
EVERY SINGLE DAY
IN THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 2025

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

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

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



Waiting Well

We offer a support service for victims who are waiting for their case to get to court, or for postponed hearings. It provides wellbeing resources and support in the lead-up to the trial.

"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)

AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER 2025,
THERE WERE
14,180
SEXUAL OFFENCES
WAITING FOR A COURT DATE
**A 77% INCREASE
SINCE 2022**



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

2 IN 5

**RAPES AGAINST WOMEN
ARE CARRIED OUT BY
THEIR PARTNER OR
EX-PARTNER**

More information about some of our ISVA specialisms:

• Learning Disabilities ISVA

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 mean 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.

We support victims to tell their story in the best way for them, have help with benefits and housing, help with reporting to the police if they wish, learn about healthy and safe relationships, and support 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 can support survivors access relevant mental health or specialist interventions such as substance misuse support.

• Global majority communities ISVA

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 global majority communities IDVAs

• LGBTQ+ ISVA

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.

• Children's and Young People's (CYP) ISVAs

Safe Link now has a dedicated team of 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.

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

6 IN 7

**RAPES AGAINST WOMEN
ARE CARRIED OUT BY
SOMEONE THEY KNOW**

Support 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 reclaim their lives. 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 get support from us, report to the police if they choose to, and access other specialist services.

Our support is 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

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 up to 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 - CYPVA 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 underpin everything we do.

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.

GUIDE TO OUR SERVICES

Training

We offer a range of training packages focusing on different areas of our service. If you'd like to find out more or enquire about training for your workplace, please get in touch at enquiries@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

Next Link

- **Domestic Abuse Awareness training**

Our Domestic Abuse Awareness training is delivered to a range of organisations and groups, including primary healthcare providers, police, adult and child social services, VCSE partners and council employees.

Domestic Abuse Prevention Workshops for schools – an age-appropriate programme for primary and secondary schools to understand healthy relationships and reach out to children and families who may need support to prevent domestic abuse.

DASH and DA assessment training – for organisations who want to upskill staff to complete holistic and trauma informed domestic abuse risk assessments.

'Honour' Based Abuse and Forced Marriage training – for professionals and community groups who want to learn how to spot the signs of this form of abuse, understand the law and support available.

ALMOST
60%
OF GIRLS
HAVE EXPERIENCED
ONLINE HARASSMENT
42%
OF STALKING
VICTIMS
SAY IT INVOLVED
ONLINE METHODS
OF ABUSE



Missing Link

- **Health Inequalities Programme**

Missing Link facilitates Women's Health Inequalities training across BSW (BaNES, Swindon & Wiltshire), funded by the ICB, for front line mental health staff in the NHS, local government, Statutory Agencies and VCSE (Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise) practitioners.

The training follows the life course of a woman and has been co-produced with women with lived experience and other VCSE equality organisations. The aim is to develop a deeper understanding of the life complexities women may experience, the barriers they report in accessing mental health services, and why a greater knowledge of women's lives is needed throughout the health system.

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.

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



Photo © Tina Gue

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 [@missinglinknextlinksafelink](https://www.instagram.com/missinglinknextlinksafelink)

 www.linkedin.com/company/missinglink-nextlink-safelink

"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).

Register No. 24218R

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