



Ministry  
of Justice

# **Independent Stalking Advocate Guidance**

## **Statutory Guidance**

February 2026



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# Background

## Purpose and legal status

1. The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 (“the Act”) requires guidance to be issued about victim support roles that are specified in regulations. This guidance is issued pursuant to section 16 of the Act and the Victim Support (Specified Roles) Regulations 2025 which specify Independent Stalking Advocates (ISAs). It is intended to:
  - i. set out the role, functions and principles of ISAs; the support they can offer victims through the criminal justice system and beyond; and expectations for the training that is necessary;
  - ii. provide guidance on how ISAs should tailor their service according to victims’ different needs; and
  - iii. provide guidance on effective working between ISAs and relevant professionals.
2. The 2025 Regulations use the terminology ‘Independent Stalking Advocates’. However, throughout the sector, the term ‘Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworkers’ (ISACs) is also used. As such, throughout this document we use the shorthand ‘ISA/Cs’ to collectively refer to these roles.
3. The Act requires persons who have functions of a public nature relating to victims, or any other aspect of the criminal justice system (“relevant professionals”) to have regard to this guidance in the exercise of their functions, where the guidance is relevant to the exercise of that function. This duty does not apply to anything done by a person acting in a judicial capacity (or on behalf of a person acting in a judicial capacity), or to devolved Welsh authorities.<sup>1</sup>
4. As set out above, “relevant professionals” includes any professional exercising functions of a public nature relating to victims, or aspects of the criminal justice system. This includes:
  - iv. adult social care and children’s social care providers in England;
  - v. Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass);
  - vi. the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS);
  - vii. early years, childcare, schools, colleges, and higher education settings in England;
  - viii. HM Courts and Tribunals Service;
  - ix. HM Prison and Probation Services;
  - x. Integrated Care Boards & (whilst still operating) Integrated Care Partnerships in England;<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These are listed in schedule 9a to the Government of Wales Act 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) are being abolished as set out in the government’s 10 Year Health Plan for England available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future>

- xi. lawyers and legal services;
  - xii. local authorities in England;
  - xiii. local housing and homelessness teams, registered providers of social housing in England;
  - xiv. NHS England (whilst still operating), NHS Trusts & NHS Foundation Trusts;
  - xv. Police Forces and Police and Crime Commissioners<sup>3</sup>;
  - xvi. Registered Intermediaries (RIs) in the criminal courts and intermediaries in the civil and family courts;
  - xvii. Youth Offending Services; and
  - xviii. the Witness Service, and the London Victim and Witness Service.
5. This guidance applies to relevant professionals in England. It applies to relevant professionals in Wales insofar as it relates to matters in Wales that are reserved to the UK government – this is primarily policing, and criminal, civil and family justice.
  6. Relevant professionals may also have specific statutory safeguarding duties, and this guidance should therefore be read in conjunction with other relevant guidance and codes of practice, several of which are signposted within this guidance.
  7. This guidance will also be relevant to ISA/Cs and ISA/C services, as well as other services working alongside ISA/Cs including 'by and for services' that support stalking victims, those working on violence against women and girls more broadly, services for men and boys, and other relevant third sector organisations.

## **Terminology**

8. While there is no definition of stalking in legislation, offences of stalking are included in the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and include a non-exhaustive list of examples of 'acts or omissions associated with stalking'. The police and CPS have adopted the following definition of stalking: "a pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive". Stalking can cause fear of violence or engender alarm and distress in the victim. It is a course of conduct crime which can include in-person and online stalking, as well as non-contact offences related to stalking, regardless of whether a report about it has been made to the police.
9. In this guidance the term 'victim' includes those who have experienced stalking but choose to describe themselves as another term, for example, 'survivor'.<sup>4</sup>
10. For the purposes of this guidance, a child is defined as an individual under the age of 18.

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<sup>3</sup> Including Police, Crime and Fire Commissioners, and Mayoral Authorities.

<sup>4</sup> Based on the long-term nature of stalking and ongoing consultation with victims of this crime, many resonate with the terminology of 'victim' as opposed to 'survivor'.

# Introduction

11. This guidance has three chapters.

- i. **Chapter 1: The role, functions and principles of an ISA/C** – this chapter outlines the core role, principle and functions of an ISA/C including the role of ISA/Cs in supporting victims through a criminal justice process and beyond, as well as the training necessary to undertake the role.
- ii. **Chapter 2: Supporting specific needs of victims** – this chapter focuses on how ISA/Cs should tailor their service according to the different needs and experiences of victims they support.
- iii. **Chapter 3: Effective working between ISA/Cs and relevant professionals** – this chapter sets out how ISA/Cs and relevant professionals should best work together to support victims, outlining key principles and best practice for effective collaboration.

12. This guidance is for the following, with a focus on, but not limited to:

- i. **ISA/Cs:** on the core role, principles and functions of an ISA/C; how to understand the different needs of victims; and how to effectively work with relevant professionals to support victims, with key principles and best practice for effective collaboration.
- ii. **ISA/C service managers and providers of ISA/C services:** on best practice service provision, accredited independent specialist training provision and appropriate support for ISA/Cs.
- iii. **Relevant professionals:** on working effectively with ISA/Cs to deliver support for victims.

13. This guidance may also support those who commission victim support services to ensure the needs of victims in a local area are understood and met.<sup>5</sup> Commissioners should consider how they resource and encourage ISA/C services to meet the minimum recommended standards for specialist training and best practice recommendations in this guidance. For example, commissioners should consider the benefit of additional training beyond an ISA/C's core role to gain specialised and advanced skills to support the specific needs of their local communities or their organisation's focus.

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<sup>5</sup> For further information on commissioning victims' services, see guidance: Ministry of Justice (2024), Victims services commissioning guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/victim-services-commissioning-guidance/victim-services-commissioning-guidance>

# Chapter 1: The role, principles and functions of an ISA/C

## Introduction

14. Chapter 1 is primarily relevant to ISA/Cs, ISA/C service managers and relevant professionals working with victims of stalking across a number of agencies. It sets out the role of an ISA/C and the core minimum principles of training necessary to deliver that role. The aim is to ensure the ISA/C role is consistently understood by those delivering ISA/C support and by relevant professionals working alongside ISA/Cs.

## Section 1: Role of an ISA/C

15. For the purposes of the Victim Support (Specified Roles) Regulations 2025, the 'role of an independent stalking advocate is to provide independent support to individuals who are victims of criminal conduct which involves acts associated with stalking'.<sup>6</sup>
16. An ISA/C should deliver specialist, victim-centred and needs-based support to victims of stalking, regardless of whether a victim has chosen to report an offence to the police, whether a criminal case has ended or whether they are victims of multiple offences.
17. ISA/Cs should be stalking victim support specialists. ISA/Cs have a critical role in safety planning and risk management for stalking victims. They should have knowledge of the law and criminal, civil and family justice processes relating to stalking, including reporting processes, special measures and victims' rights.
18. Some ISA/Cs should have additional specialist skills and knowledge for working with victims with specific needs and vulnerabilities, such as Stalking Specialist Psychological Advocates (SSPAs) or children and young people ISA/Cs. They should also have knowledge of the specialist provision available in their local areas for victims who may need referral to specialist services. This guidance also recognises the need and emergence of further specialisms going forward, which should adhere to minimum training as outlined in Section 5.

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<sup>6</sup> Accompanying the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, the Secretary of State created The Victim Support (Specified Roles) Regulations 2025 to specify the victim support roles that require statutory guidance.

For more information, see: The Victim Support (Specified Roles) Regulations (2025) Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ksi/2025/455/made>

19. ISA/ISACs should provide advocacy support to help relevant professionals better understand the crime and the victim's perspective, where appropriate.
20. An ISA/C can work with a victim until such time they no longer need support or until their needs would be better met by an alternative service. This may result in some victims being supported by an ISA/C until the conclusion of a criminal trial, civil justice process, or beyond the court process, depending on the commissioning arrangements and availability of ISA/C services.

### **ISA/Cs, Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs)**

21. This guidance focuses on the distinct role of ISA/Cs in supporting victims of stalking. However, there are other complementary forms of support for stalking victims. Differing interventions may also be appropriate to address the needs of some victims, depending on their unique characteristics, circumstances and experiences.
22. In cases where a victim of stalking has also experienced domestic abuse, sexual violence or sexual abuse, they may benefit from receiving support from an IDVA or ISVA alongside an ISA/C. An ISA/C should work together with such professionals to ensure clarity of roles and ensure the victim is not overwhelmed. In practice, the relevant professionals should determine the 'key contact' to ensure there is centralised communication. While each form of additional support may enhance the victim's experience, the ISA/C role is distinct and can provide unique stalking expertise which IDVAs and ISVAs may not have.
23. Where stalking is present in a domestic abuse context this may require specialist input from a stalking service. Communication may be needed between the IDVA and ISA/C to determine the most prevalent behaviours, the different risks (different risk assessment required) and needs and according to this determine which professional primarily holds the case.
24. Where sexual violence is present in a stalking context the same communication may be needed between the ISVA and the ISA/C to determine the different risks and needs and according to this determine which professional primarily holds the case.
25. For further information on the IDVA and ISVA roles, please consult the relevant statutory guidance.<sup>7 8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Justice (2025), IDVA guidance, available at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-domestic-violence-adviser-statutory-guidance>

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Justice (2025), ISVA guidance, available at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-sexual-violence-adviser-statutory-guidance>

## Section 2: Functions of ISA/Cs

26. ISA/Cs should fulfil the following core functions.

### Information

27. **ISA/Cs should help victims to understand systems and processes** relating to areas such as victims' rights, health and wellbeing, reporting to the police, criminal justice processes, and access to support services. They can also support victims to access and navigate other support such as health, housing or local authority services, including adult and children's social care services, where appropriate.

In practice, this may involve:

- outlining the victim's entitlements as set out in the Victims' Code<sup>9</sup>; and providing information and support for a victim including on how to make a complaint or provide feedback about a criminal justice agency;
- providing information on key processes and timelines, such as engaging with civil, family and criminal processes or health or counselling services;
- supporting the victim to report an offence to the police, providing information on how one can gather evidence to support applications for a Stalking Protection Order (SPO) or other ancillary orders if they choose to engage with the criminal justice system;
- providing accurate and impartial information on the prosecution process and what will happen in the courtroom. For example, supporting pre-trial familiarisation visits or accessing information in relation to special measures which are a series of provisions that help vulnerable and intimidated witnesses give their best evidence in court, such as installing screens in court to shield the victim from the defendant or other party;
- assisting the victim to communicate with employers, for example in relation to time off to attend police meetings/court, negotiating a phased return to work or ongoing sick leave;
- supporting the victim to engage with or access statutory and other services such as sexual health, education providers, housing services, benefits agencies, therapeutic counselling, and mental health services, where appropriate;
- signposting and making referrals to the relevant advocacy services available to the victim both nationally and locally, as appropriate.

28. **ISA/Cs should help other agencies to understand** the definition, dynamics and impacts of stalking. Through an explanation of the pattern of behaviours that constitute stalking, ISA/Cs can support professionals in identifying an escalation of risk. For example, an ISA/C may use the perpetrator's motivations and behaviours to evidence a high-risk case and justify a referral to Multi-Agency Risk

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Justice (2023), Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales (Victims' Code). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime>

Assessment Conference (MARAC) in the case of an ex-intimate partner or between individuals that come under the description of personally connected, or another multi-agency setting as appropriate.<sup>10</sup>

### **Identifying risk, need, safety planning and support**

29. ISA/Cs should undertake **needs assessments** which should be reviewed regularly and on an ongoing basis. Where a victim has experienced other forms of victimisation, the ISA/C should consider if they require additional support from other specialist professionals, for example, including IDVAs in cases where the victim has also been a victim of domestic abuse.

Needs assessments may cover:

- age;
- care experience;
- employment and education;
- disability or learning difficulty;
- finances and resources;
- friends, family (including dependents), and community;
- future plans;
- health and wellbeing;
- immigration and residence;
- other experiences of victimisation (e.g., domestic abuse);
- other sources of support;
- safeguarding considerations;
- safety planning;
- other aspects of a victim's life, as appropriate.

30. ISA/Cs should undertake **risk assessments** to identify ongoing risks to the victim or those in the victim's care. Risk is dynamic and can escalate at any point. An ISA/C should have a thorough understanding of the dynamic nature of risk and conduct thorough and regular risk assessments (at least every 6-8 weeks, or when there has been a new incident or noted change in circumstances).

31. ISA/Cs are trained to understand risk and use assessment tools such as the Screening Assessment for Stalking and Harassment (SASH) to help identify the level of risk an individual is facing and tailor their support accordingly. To inform the risk assessment, an ISA/C will consider the perpetrator's motivation and may consider the stalker typologies. Alongside the variation in stalking behaviours, an ISA/C will also be informed by the frequency and intensity of the behaviours. In cases where stalking was preceded by domestic abuse, ISA/Cs should also complete the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) or Stalking-DASH (S-DASH), alongside the SASH. This risk assessment, along with needs assessments, will help the ISA/C to understand appropriate support options for a victim and any safeguarding concerns. In conjunction with standardised stalking

<sup>10</sup> Section 84(2) of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Available <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/section/84>

risk assessment tools, some organisations may use additional risk assessment tools to more accurately identify and support victims from ethnic minority backgrounds who face distinct cultural barriers.

32. Similarly, an ISA/C may use the Digital Risk Assessment of Stalking and Harassment tool (DRASH) – in addition to standardised stalking risk assessment tool – in cases involving stalking facilitated by technology (extending a wider pattern of physical stalking) or digital only stalking. As cases can often include online or tech-facilitated elements, such as creating social media profiles and tracking devices to monitor and control victims, it is important to consider in person, online, and tech-facilitated stalking together as a course of conduct. While these risk assessment tools are validated for use with adult victims, they are not designed for use with children and young people who are victims of stalking. An increasing number of young people are experiencing behaviours consistent with stalking, with online behaviours being particularly common. ISA/Cs working with children and young people should use a combination of risk assessments completed by Children's Social Care and other emerging validated tools. The risk assessment tools detailed in this section of the guidance are not an exhaustive list and alternatives may be developed in the future.
33. Risk assessments should holistically encompass specialist professional judgement, victim perceptions of risk, along with additional indicators relevant to minoritised groups and potential escalation. However, an ISA/C's professional expertise in stalking means that their recommendations and judgements should be prioritised beyond standardised assessments which may not fully reflect the risks posed to victims (both adults and children).
34. ISA/Cs should engage with the victim in **safety planning**. Safety plans should help a victim to consider what they feel they most need, and to think about and plan what they might do in the case of future incidents of stalking. As with the above assessment and plans, safety planning is a key function of an ISA/C and should be treated as a working document that is reviewed regularly and on an ongoing basis.
35. ISA/Cs should develop **support plans** based on the individual risks and needs of the victim (and the victim's children, if applicable). This should include what support will be provided by the ISA/C, as well as any necessary onward referrals. This should be reviewed regularly and updated on an ongoing basis, as the needs and risks develop or change. The support plan should consider 'planned exit' strategies from ISA/C support once all areas of support are completed, in addition to having appropriate regard to ongoing risk management.
36. ISA/Cs should not provide legal advice (see Section 11 on ISA/C support at court and information that can be provided about the legal process). Where legal advice is required, ISA/Cs should signpost the victim to relevant support options

provided by specialist legal advisers.

37. ISA/Cs can support victims to **access safe accommodation** through housing support letters and onward referrals to housing specialists for all stalking victims. However, in the cases of ex-intimate partner stalking or stalking between individuals that come under the description of personally connected, ISA/Cs may work alongside IDVAs who can help facilitate access to appropriate support across the full range of safe accommodation. This includes specialist refuges, or other forms of relevant safe accommodation delivered under the Part 4 statutory duty in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and/or provided by local authorities. IDVAs may also support a victim of ex-intimate or personally connected stalking to remain in their home by referring them to schemes, including 'Sanctuary Schemes', which can provide additional security measures.

### **The ISA/C role through criminal justice processes**

38. ISA/Cs can provide vital support to victims through criminal justice processes including following a conviction or acquittal, or a police/CPS decision to take no further action. This support can include making the victim aware of their rights under the Victims' Code, including being able to request a review of police or prosecution decisions under the respective Victims' Right to Review Schemes.<sup>11</sup> ISA/Cs may be able to inform stalking victims of entitlements including the right to be contacted in a shorter timeframe after key decisions. Where a victim is eligible for and has opted into the Victim Contact Scheme, they are entitled to receive information about the offender, where appropriate. This information can be delivered to an ISA/C acting on behalf of the victim.

39. ISA/Cs have a specialist knowledge of stalking legislation and will work with the victim and relevant agencies to help ensure that stalking is correctly identified. While ISA/Cs cannot provide legal advice, they can provide legal information and inform victims of the legal options available to them. This can include advocating for the use of SPOs and discussing stalking legislation with statutory agencies to ensure it is used effectively.

40. ISA/Cs can support victims by providing information on how a victim can gather evidence and format it in a way that supports the police. ISA/Cs have an expertise in SPO processes and may use this to support victims and the police, including a stalking 'Single Point of Contact' if available, in applying for one. They may suggest specific prohibitive and positive requirements to be included from a victim-centred and risk management perspective. Further information on SPO applications can be found in the 'Stalking Protection Orders: statutory guidance

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<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Justice (2025) Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales (Victims' Code)

for the police'.<sup>12</sup>

41. ISA/Cs should be aware of Achieving Best Evidence guidance before supporting victims going through the criminal justice process and, in cases where the victim is giving evidence as a witness, be aware of the risk of perceived 'witness coaching'.<sup>13</sup> To this end, an ISA/C must be clear on the boundaries of their role and the need to centre the victim's voice throughout the process.
42. This does not prevent ISA/Cs from understanding information about the victim's experience that is required to make an informed risk assessment, help assess support needs and develop a support plan. It also does not prevent their involvement in MARACs.

In practice, where there is a criminal case ongoing, this may see ISA/Cs:

- discussing how the victim feels about what has happened and the emotional impact it has had on them;
- notifying the victim that they should take a note of what is said and should notify the police if the victim tells them previously undisclosed, in-depth details, or evidence, relating to the case. Such details could include information about other evidence such as forensic results, CCTV, enquiries about other witnesses, and evidence on social media.

### Section 3: Principles of an ISA/C

43. ISA/Cs should demonstrate the following principles.

- i. **Independence.** ISA/Cs are independent from the government and the interests of other organisations and statutory agencies, which is critical to their success. ISA/Cs should operate in a way which centres the victim's needs, rather than any particular organisation's purposes. ISA/Cs should only share information with the consent of the victim (subject to safeguarding responsibilities).<sup>14</sup> Where ISA/Cs work in statutory settings, they should ensure their notes are kept confidential and stored on secure IT so that they are not accessible by other agencies or professionals.

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<sup>12</sup> Home Office (2024) Stalking Protection Orders: Statutory guidance for the police, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/stalking-protection-act-statutory-guidance-for-the-police/stalking-protection-orders-statutory-guidance-for-the-police-accessible-version>

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Justice, NPCC (2022), Achieving Best Evidence guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/achieving-best-evidence-in-criminal-proceedings>

<sup>14</sup> Children's Act 1989. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>; Care Act 2014. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents>

<sup>14</sup> Department for Education (2023) Working Together to Safeguard Children. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

- ii. **Work alongside other statutory agencies.** Where appropriate, they may work alongside relevant professionals or organisations, such as the police, health services, or adult and children's social care to ensure that the victim's voice is heard, and their needs are being considered (including advocating on their behalf, if this is in line with the victim's preferences). See Chapter 3 for information on effective multi-agency working.
- iii. **Be trauma-informed, empowering and responsive.** Understand, recognise and respond to the impact from and responses to trauma, and actively seek to prevent re-traumatisation.<sup>15</sup> For example, an ISA/C can avoid re-traumatisation by checking with a victim if they have already provided information to other agencies and offer the victim the option of the ISA/C gathering information from those agencies directly. Where possible, and taking into consideration any high-risk or safeguarding precautions, ISA/Cs must work from an empowerment basis and ensure the victim's needs are heard, respected and reflected throughout the support process.

In practice, this may involve:

- understanding the impact stalking can have on the victims, their families, wider society, and any professionals working with victims, including ISA/Cs themselves;
- providing a safe and non-judgemental space for victims where they feel believed and heard;
- empowering victims to build self-belief, confidence and the skills to advocate for themselves;
- recognising the dynamics, impacts and pattern of behaviours that constitute stalking and stalker typologies to inform a victim-centred approach;
- build trusting relationships with the victim by communicating and acting consistently and appropriately when providing support;
- understanding the importance of, and adopting, good professional boundaries;
- facilitate sharing of information between key agencies to minimise repeat questioning of the victim which may result in re-traumatisation.

- iv. **Take a whole-person approach.** Consider and respond to the 'whole person', which means understanding a victim's unique characteristics and circumstances in order to provide tailored and holistic support (see Chapter 2). This should mean that victims get the right support to build resilience to recover.
- v. **Work within professional boundaries.** When supporting victims, ISA/Cs should ensure the victim understands the role and remit of an ISA/C including

<sup>15</sup> Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2022), Working definition of trauma-informed practice. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice>

the professional boundaries they must work within. As perpetrators of stalking may target professionals supporting the victim, an ISA/C may wish to use a pseudo name to maintain safe boundaries in their work.

In practice, this may involve:

- ensuring any timeframes and limitations around support are clearly communicated and appropriately managed;
- adhering to any relevant statutory frameworks such as safeguarding, where appropriate, noting that safeguarding responsibilities should require collaboration from relevant professionals involved (see Chapter 3 for further detail on working with relevant professionals);
- adhering to confidentiality policies and procedures, noting the limits of confidentiality in the context of safeguarding concerns which should be made clear to the victim;
- refraining from assuming the responsibilities of others, such as mental health professionals, lawyers, and councillors or therapists;
- where an ISA/C is also a qualified counsellor/therapist (as in, dual trained), they should not provide counselling or therapeutic support to a victim to whom they are providing ISA/C support. This does not include specialist accredited roles such as SSPAs who provide victim-centred and needs-based support and have received appropriate training;
- where an ISA/C is dual trained in another advocacy role (e.g. IDVA), they should be clear on the specialist support required by the victims and which service they need. It is important that they maintain boundaries between the roles and preserve sustainable workloads.

- vi. **Be part of a wider organisation.** ISA/Cs should be managed and employed by a support organisation, regardless of whether they work in other settings, such as a police station.

## Section 4: Settings in which ISA/Cs operate

44. ISA/Cs may operate within a variety of organisations, including organisations which provide stalking support. This may be alongside other forms of support for victims of stalking, such as group work or mental health support.

45. Where ISA/Cs are operating in settings such as police stations, they may not routinely deliver the full range of services which ISA/Cs operating in community settings do. However, they operate with the same principles and utilise the same expertise to support victims of stalking. Where this occurs, they should still act independently from government services/agencies and on behalf of victims, with specific policies and procedures relating to the operational delivery of the ISA/C service.

## Section 5: Training and qualifications for ISA/Cs

46. This section is not intended to be an exhaustive guide or training manual but is designed to provide a starting point for ISA/Cs, commissioners and employers of ISA/Cs on what specialist training is necessary for ISA/Cs to undertake to ensure the required expertise.
47. To effectively deliver the ISA/C role as detailed in Chapter 1, ISA/Cs should receive accredited specialist stalking training delivered independently from government bodies, so they have the right skills and knowledge to support victims. This involves undertaking a Level 3 regulated qualification at a minimum, which is relevant to their work supporting victims of stalking.<sup>16</sup> There will be variation in the name of the qualification and its assessment. Listed below are the content which training should include for these roles to be recognised as an ISA/C.

<b>Core duties of the ISA/C role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• delivery of support and advocacy;</li><li>• case management;</li><li>• communication;</li><li>• record keeping;</li><li>• referral processes;</li><li>• MARAC and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) processes.</li></ul>
<b>Safeguarding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• safeguarding legislation (adults and children);</li><li>• ISA/C services' internal safeguarding protocols.</li></ul>
<b>Safe Working Practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• keeping themselves and others safe (for example, use of pseudo names, lone working, vicarious trauma and burnout);</li><li>• professional boundaries.</li></ul>
<b>Understanding and addressing victims' intersectional needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• assessment and support of victim needs (including accessibility needs) and barriers or challenges to support (see Chapter 2).</li></ul>
<b>Understanding civil, family, and criminal justice processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• knowledge of the law and criminal justice processes relating to stalking;</li><li>• the different court stages, types of hearing and special measures;</li><li>• civil and private family law proceedings including: Stalking Protection Orders,</li></ul>

<sup>16</sup> GOV.UK (n.d.), What qualification levels mean. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>

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	<p>Non-Molestation Orders, Occupation Orders, Restraining Orders, Child Arrangement Orders;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● police investigations;</li> <li>● the potential outcomes of hearings/trials;</li> <li>● the role of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS);</li> <li>● the role of the Probation Service.</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding risk and support needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● understanding and assessing risk, including a proficiency in using tools like SASH and the Stalking Risk Profile (SRP);</li> <li>● developing and implementing safety plans.</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding the impact of stalking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● types and dynamics of stalking behaviours, including stalking facilitated by technology;</li> <li>● impact of stalking behaviours on victims (including child victims);</li> <li>● trauma-informed support;</li> <li>● stalking perpetrator typologies.</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding the variety of options available to victims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● understanding and providing information about relevant legislation and key processes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ civil, family, or criminal justice remedies;</li> <li>○ housing options;</li> <li>○ mental health support.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Working with relevant professionals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● effective multi-agency working and examples of best practice (see Chapter 3 and Case Study 1).</li> </ul>

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48. Additional, specialist training may help ISA/Cs provide more specialist support to victims of stalking facilitated by technology, or victims with particular protected characteristics.
49. Where new professionals are in the process of being trained as an ISA/C, they should be supervised and supported by trained colleagues when engaging with victims and be clear that they are an ISA/C in training. They should access induction from the service they are employed by, receive training in risk assessment and safe working practices, have appropriate caseloads and be supported with their case management.

50. Police and Crime Commissioners can make it a condition of funding that ISA/C roles operate at or work towards the recommended level of training.

### **Continual professional development and support, supervision, and oversight**

51. ISA/Cs should take opportunities to continue to learn and develop within the role following initial training to ensure they continue to have the knowledge and skills needed for victims to receive a quality service. This should include changes to relevant legislation and an opportunity to reflect on personal practice and effectiveness.
52. Many ISA/Cs will gather additional skills to support the delivery of this role beyond 'formal' training, such as on-the-job learning and development, as well as through formal training and qualifications. ISA/Cs and their employers should take joint responsibility for identifying and completing appropriate ongoing development and training opportunities.
53. ISA/Cs should be supervised by a senior practitioner or ISA/C manager who should have also completed the relevant specialist stalking training and should provide oversight of their caseload, development, and wellbeing. Appropriate support and supervision are important for ensuring that ISA/Cs feel safe and supported in delivering this challenging role, and that victims receive a consistent and high-quality service. ISA/Cs should feel confident to raise concerns with their line managers or via the organisation's internal escalation policies.
54. ISA/Cs should also receive reflective practice sessions and regular, separate clinical supervision. This is distinct from management supervision in that it provides support for staff to identify, clarify and address the emotional and psychological impact of their work. It can be individual or group supervision and should be at least every quarter on a mandatory or opt-out basis. Best practice would see this delivered by an external provider with specialist stalking expertise to ensure a separation between the confidential relationship and management structures. Where possible, this supervision should be specifically for ISA/Cs and distinct from the supervision delivered to IDVAs, ISVAs, and other advocacy roles.
55. ISA/Cs and ISA/C service managers should be familiar with their organisation's internal complaints policy and process. ISA/Cs should ensure victims are aware of the process and feel supported to raise a complaint, where necessary.
56. The caseload for each ISA/C should vary and is dependent on a number of factors, including the complexity of the needs of, and risks to, a victim and the number of high risk and/or complex cases held by a particular worker. The ISA/C manager should consider these factors, alongside internal policies, to determine a safe caseload structure.

# Chapter 2: Supporting the differing needs of victims

## Introduction

57. Chapter 2 is most relevant to ISA/Cs and ISA/C service managers. It provides information to help ISA/Cs tailor their service according to the differing needs of the victims they support.

58. A victim's needs may be affected by relevant protected characteristics according to the Equality Act 2010 or contextual factor relating to life circumstances, such as:

- i. having a history of addiction or substance misuse;
- ii. being a victim of other offences, including modern slavery, trafficking, domestic abuse and sexual violence and sexual abuse;
- iii. being in care or previously looked after;
- iv. learning difficulties;
- v. English not being their first language;
- vi. having an offending history or being an offender;
- vii. experiencing homelessness, sleeping rough, or having no fixed address;
- viii. their immigration status;
- ix. living in rural and isolated areas or away from local areas, family and friends;
- x. having physical and mental health conditions;
- xi. their socio-economic status;
- xii. the nature of the domestic abuse they have experienced, including the nature of the relationship with or the status of the perpetrator;
- xiii. their past experiences and interactions with support services or statutory systems, such as the criminal justice system or health and social care system;
- xiv. transitioning from children and young people's services to adult services.

## Section 6: How ISA/Cs may respond to different needs

59. Below are some examples of how ISA/Cs may respond to different needs to effectively support and empower a range of victims.

### Tailoring communication

60. It is important for ISA/Cs to acknowledge and appropriately tailor their communication to help build a trusting relationship with each victim and foster a safe environment for them to engage. ISA/Cs should ensure that their role, remit, and independence are clearly explained to reassure and set expectations with victims (and, where necessary, relevant professionals). They should communicate openly with accessible language, adopting a non-discriminatory,

non-judgemental and trauma-informed approach, and remaining considerate of the victim's experience, particularly with the following groups.

61. **Children and young people** will have different communication needs to adults and may find it difficult to articulate their needs, particularly where the stalking is happening in a family or education setting. ISA/Cs working with children and young people should have an understanding of additional vulnerabilities that they face and use age-appropriate communication to ensure that they are providing information in an accessible way.
62. **Victims who have been stalked by people in positions of power, trust or authority** may struggle to trust institutions and authorities when seeking support. ISA/Cs should be clear to emphasise their independence and that they will present impartial options for the victim's consideration. This applies regardless of the setting in which an ISA/C operates (see section 4) and the victim's data is always kept separate and confidential.
63. **Victims from ethnic minority backgrounds** may feel less able to share their experiences fully or accurately due to past discrimination or racism. ISA/Cs should be sensitive to this when enquiring about the victim's needs by asking considerate and non-judgemental questions.
64. **Victims awaiting an immigration decision** may fear having their information shared with government agencies and that perpetrators may exploit this as part of their abuse.<sup>17</sup> ISA/Cs should clarify that victims do not need to make a report to the police in order to access victim support services and should explain when support services must legally share data with government agencies or organisations.
65. **Deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired victims** or those with a speech impediment or who have a learning disability may need accessibility adjustments. ISA/Cs may adapt a communication plan to include easy-to-read documents, locate translated versions of documents, or engage with translation services, including British Sign Language interpretation, where available.
66. **Victims whose first language is not English** may require independent interpretation and translation support. Victims should be aware of their right to be provided with free interpreting or translation services under the Victims' Code<sup>18</sup>. Translation through the use of family or community members is not appropriate. ISA/Cs should check that the victim does not know the translator in advance of their name being shared with the translator. ISA/Cs should consider the victim's preference for the sex and gender of a translator to prevent further victim

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<sup>17</sup> College of Policing, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, Independent Office for Police Conduct (2020), Safe to Share? Report on Liberty and Southall Black Sisters' super-complaint on policing and immigration status. Available at:

<https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/liberty-and-southall-black-sisters-super-complaint-on-policing-and-immigration-status/>

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Justice (2025) Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales (Victims' Code)

traumatisation.

### **Maintaining a flexible service**

67. Some victims will have different needs or preferences around how they interact with ISA/Cs. When meeting victims or tailoring ISA/C services, ISA/Cs should ensure that any communication is factored into safety planning and will not put the victim, ISA/C or anyone else at further risk of harm.

68. Tailoring the ISA/C service may require flexibility, this could include:

- i. providing support outside of standard working hours;
- ii. meeting in different venues, such as a health centre or community centre, a child victim's school or other educational setting;
- iii. using technology such as video calling, instant messaging, or other adaptive equipment such as text-to-speech systems with those who are unable to attend in-person appointments;
- iv. considering religious practices, such as times of prayer or periods of fasting, and celebrations might impact when victims can engage with support services.

69. ISA/Cs should consider creative and flexible approaches for victims with multiple needs. This could include providing the victim more opportunities to contact services before closing their case or working with other services which may have more regular contact with them such as 'by and for services', health providers, religious places of worship, community centres and shelters to provide holistic, wrap-around and ongoing support.

### **Practical support**

70. Listed below are some examples of additional considerations ISA/Cs may need to consider when delivering practical support to address a victim's needs.

- i. Older victims, or victims with long term health conditions may have a Lasting Power of Attorney arrangement, which provides an individual with the legal authority to make decisions on behalf of another person if they lose mental capacity.<sup>19</sup> ISA/Cs should work closely and collaboratively with the Office of the Public Guardian where appropriate, as well as with adult social care and other relevant professionals on matters such as consent, decision making, communication, and information sharing.
- ii. Some victims may prefer to be supported by a support worker of their own sex and may prefer to access single-sex services where these are available.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> GOV.UK (n.d.), Lasting power of attorney: acting as an attorney. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/use-lasting-power-attorney>

<sup>20</sup> Equality Act 2010, Part 7: Separate and single services. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/notes/division/3/16/20/7>

- iii. Some victims with disabilities may require adapted services, for example: step-free access to buildings, appointments to be scheduled at certain times of the day. ISA/Cs should proactively ask what victims need to engage with services, rather than the onus being on the victim to make this known.
  - iv. Some pregnant victims of stalking may require practical support making or attending medical appointments and accessing trauma-informed pre-natal care.
- 71. Victims whose perpetrator holds a position of authority, such as being a member of the police, emergency services or Armed Forces, may require assistance with relevant processes. For example, victims whose perpetrator serves in the Armed Forces may require support reporting the stalking to the Royal Military Police or signposting to specialist military welfare providers.
- 72. Those who have experienced police-perpetrated stalking may need assistance and support with reporting a case. This is particularly true of victims of stalking who are police officers themselves as they may be less likely to report an offence through public channels.
  - i. Where the victim is seeking a criminal justice outcome, ISA/Cs can assist by discussing the option of formal reporting routes with victims. Alongside criminal investigations, these cases may be investigated as allegations of police misconduct by either the force's Professional Standards Department or the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC).<sup>21</sup>
  - ii. To address concerns about whether the investigating officer may have links to the perpetrator, ISA/Cs may explore the option for the victim, as a member of the public, to report via confidential systems such as Crimestoppers. Serving officers and police staff can use the Police Integrity Line which is also run by Crimestoppers.
  - iii. ISA/Cs may be able to support victims to request an independent review of the outcome if they have made a complaint and are dissatisfied with the handling or outcome of a police misconduct investigation.<sup>22</sup>

## **Working with friends, family and wider support networks**

- 73. While it is not common, where appropriate, and with the consent of the victim, an ISA/C may be required to support the victim's friends, family or wider support network. As advocates operate from an empowerment model, they will be victim-centred and ensure the victim's needs are heard, respected and reflected throughout the support process. An empowerment model aims to increase the capacity of the victim to make their own choices and regain control of their life, so

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<sup>21</sup> A criminal and misconduct investigation would not be conducted separately. Evidence gathering would be the same. For more guidance on investigations into police misconduct, please refer to IOPC guidance on the police complaints system.

<sup>22</sup> Independent Office for Police Conduct (2020), Statutory guidance on the police complaints system available at: <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/publications/statutory-guidance-2020>

the decision to work with wider support networks must be considered carefully and on a case-by-case basis.

74. In certain cases of stalking, there may be secondary victims that require ISA/C support (for example, where the perpetrator typology is identified and their motivation is intimacy-seeking, the primary victim's partner may be a secondary victim). As stalking is typically underpinned by fixation and obsession on one individual, it is important for ISA/Cs to identify the primary and secondary victims to adequately assess risk and safety plan. While this distinction is imperative from a risk management perspective, it does not detract from the traumatic impacts of stalking on all victims. This also applies in cases where a stalker has a fixation on either a parent or child and the other members of the family are nonetheless affected by the stalking and recognised as victims in their own right. Depending on the level of risk and support needs identified, an ISA/C may support both the primary and any additional victims, or refer to a separate ISA/C as required.
75. ISA/Cs supporting adult victims with children may need to consider a 'whole family approach' and whether a referral to a children and young person's ISA/C is appropriate. As stalking can affect the entire family, separate ISA/Cs for adults and children can ensure both voices are heard - especially where family dynamics may otherwise prevent a child or young person from speaking openly. ISA/Cs cannot provide support to family members who are also witnesses in the victim's case and should, instead, signpost or refer them to appropriate support.

In practice, this support may involve:

- helping the family to understand the potential impacts of stalking, targeting secondary victims and transferred stalking (i.e. where a stalker changes their primary target from one individual to another);
- outlining civil, family and criminal court processes;
- signposting or referring to other appropriate support services, such as counselling or therapy;
- assisting communication with the victim's employer or school, for example, to arrange time off for appointments.

76. An ISA/C may also need to work with a child or young person's school (for example, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead) to help them understand the risks and impact of stalking on the child, so that they can make adaptations for the child accordingly.

77. Some victims face community-based risks, especially when experiencing 'honour'-based abuse. In addition, some people may not have disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity to their friends, family, or wider community. ISA/Cs should keep victim information confidential and only disclose information with consent or when relevant to a safeguarding context (see Section 8: Information sharing). In cases of 'honour'-based abuse or hate crime, ISA/Cs will focus on the primary stalker and liaise with the relevant specialist services as appropriate.

## **Other specialist support provision**

78. ISA/Cs should be aware of other local and national specialist services and the support they can provide, whether that be community-based services, 1:1 support services or 'by and for' services. In some cases, victims may be better supported by ISA/Cs co-working alongside other specialist service providers that offer complementary but distinct services to ISA/Cs.

79. For example, victims may be engaged with a mental health service or a 'by and for' organisation, and wish to continue receiving this support alongside the advocacy provided by an ISA/C. 'By and for' services are led, designed, and delivered by and for people with specific backgrounds or protected characteristics. These services and roles enable victims to see themselves reflected in the staffing, management and governance structures.

# Chapter 3: Effective working between ISA/Cs and relevant professionals

## Introduction

80. Chapter 3 is primarily relevant to ISA/Cs, ISA/C service managers and relevant professionals working with victims of stalking. This chapter sets out how ISA/Cs and relevant professionals should best work together to support victims of stalking, outlining key principles and best practice for effective collaboration. The aim is to improve multi-agency working and raise awareness of the ISA/C role among relevant professionals.
81. This chapter should be considered alongside locally identified best practice and existing frameworks for working with ISA/Cs.

## Section 7: Referrals to ISA/C services

82. If a victim consents to a referral for ISA/C support, the referring professional should make a formal referral as soon as possible. A victim can be referred into the ISA/C service at any time, by any professional engaging with them. Some ISA/C services accept self-referrals by victims themselves, which some victims may prefer.
83. Professionals considering referrals for children should contact the ISA/C service to check whether they provide specialised services for child victims and, if so, what age groups they support. If they do not, the referrer should seek or ask to be signposted to a service which suits the child's age and needs. For victims under 16, ISA/Cs may work alongside children's social care services to provide wraparound support and ensure appropriate risk assessment and safeguarding processes are undertaken. Where a referral has been made for a victim under 16, ISA/Cs should consider arranging an initial meeting with the referrer to identify the safe parent or guardian in the case and whether there are any safety concerns. If a professional is concerned about a child's safety, they should notify local authority children's services. For further advice about child safeguarding, professionals should seek advice from their local multi-agency safeguarding child partnership and see *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.<sup>23</sup>
84. Professionals considering referrals for adult victims with care and support needs should contact the ISA/C service to check whether they provide specialised services. ISA/Cs may work alongside adult social care services to provide wraparound support and ensure appropriate risk assessment and safeguarding

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<sup>23</sup>Department for Education (2023) Working Together To Safeguard Children

processes are undertaken.

85. The following steps should be helpful when referring a victim into an ISA/C service (see also Figure 1). Where ISA/Cs work in government or criminal justice settings, there may be alternative processes for making referrals.

<b>Seeking consent and clearly explaining the ISA/C role</b>	Professionals should seek consent from the victim to make a formal referral, unless there is an alternative legal basis for sharing their information such as a safeguarding concern or data sharing agreement between services (see Section 8: Information sharing). For child victims, it may be necessary to seek consent from a safe parent or guardian. When seeking consent, professionals should explain in full the role and benefits of the ISA/C support so that the victim can make an informed decision. Where a victim chooses not to be referred to an ISA/C service, professionals should make clear that the victim can change their mind at any point. They should provide the victim with information on how they can access support services in the future.
<b>Working without consent</b>	As set out in Section 8, there are lawful bases for sharing information without consent, including in cases where there are safeguarding/high risk concerns or where a data sharing agreement has been established between services. Where safe to do so, it is best practice to inform the victim before making the referral and to inform them of the information shared in the referral. It remains the victim's choice whether to engage with ISA/C support.
<b>Including sufficient information within referrals</b>	To make a referral, professionals should follow the local ISA/C service referral protocol. If a referral form is required, the professional should ensure it is fully completed. This should ensure all relevant information is included and the victim can be appropriately safeguarded and supported. This helps to avoid victims having to repeat their story, in line with adopting a trauma-informed approach. The referral should include, but is not limited to:

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- information provided by the victim about their contact preferences and when and if it is safe to contact them. For child victims, it may also be appropriate to include the contact details for a safe parent or guardian;
  - information about disability or accessibility requirements (including the need for an interpreter);
  - the context and nature of the stalking, the reason for the referral, the crime reference number (if applicable) and whether there are any known additional victims;
  - a needs/risk assessment, safety plan, or safeguarding actions (if conducted), alongside any relevant details in relation to risk classification, including the referrer's professional judgement or a record of an escalation in the frequency and/or severity of stalking behaviours;
  - information on any other statutory or non-statutory agencies known to be in contact with the victim and the wider family.

For further clarity about what information is useful, relevant professionals should contact the relevant ISA/C service provider. If safe to do so, the referrer should share the information included in the referral with the victim to ensure accuracy and transparency.

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**Ensuring the victim is kept up to date**

Professionals should make the referral as soon as possible and consistently. They should inform the victim when they have made a referral and explain the next steps.

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**Confirming receipt and action to be taken**

ISA/C services should confirm with the referring professional when they have received and actioned the referral. They should securely share the details of the allocated ISA/C with the referring professional. If the victim consents, the ISA/C should proactively reach out to any services that are working with the victim to make it known that they are the victim's allocated ISA/C.

ISA/Cs should consider multiple attempts and methods to contact the victim, with consideration of their communication preferences. Where the

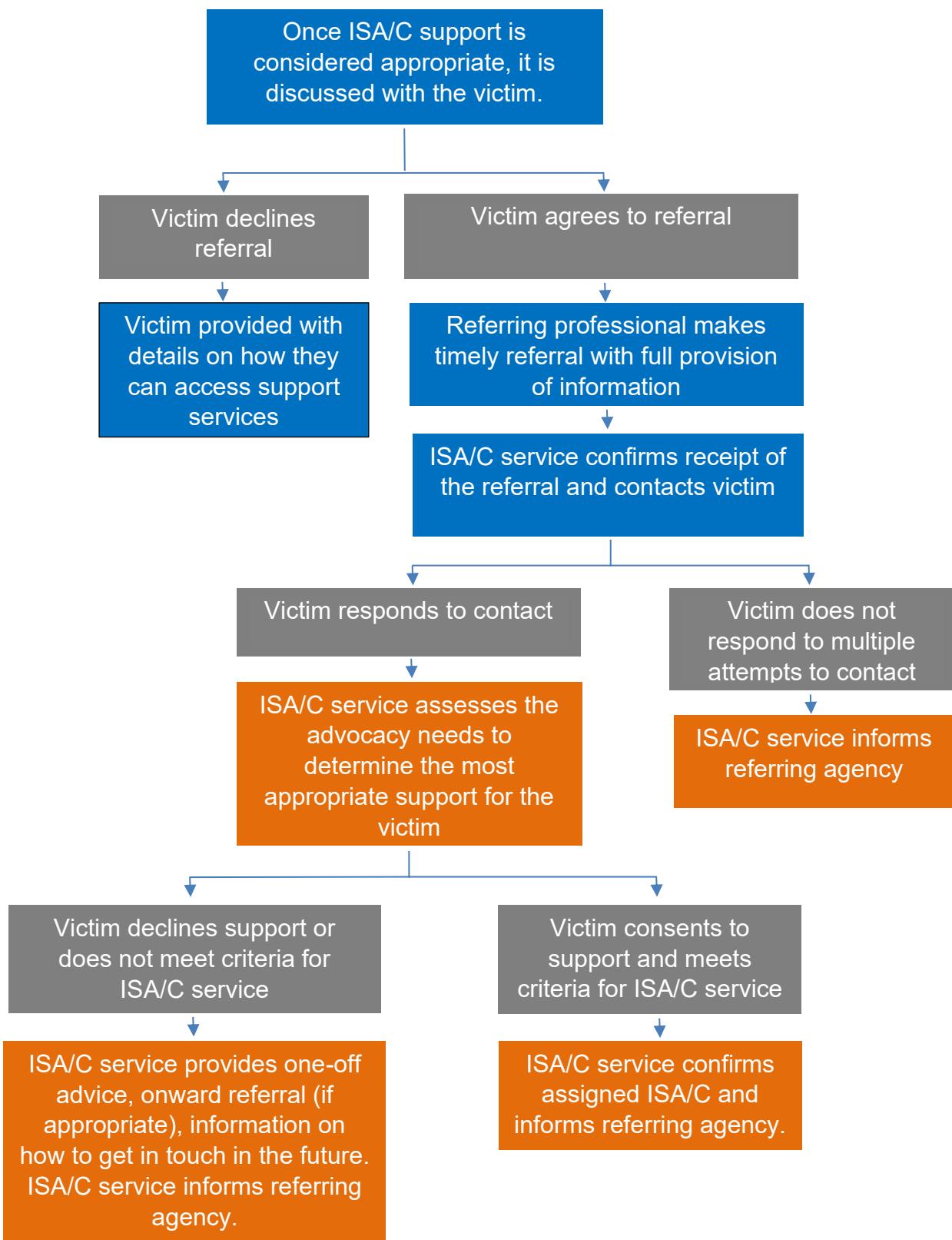
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ISA/C has not been able to contact the victim,  
they should inform the referring professional.

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Figure 1: Process map for referrals into ISA/C services



Key:

Professional

ISA/C

## Section 8: Information sharing

86. Relevant professionals and ISA/Cs should consider the need to securely share appropriate information throughout their support of the victim. Importantly, data protection regulations should never be a barrier to justified information sharing in the context of safeguarding. Instead, they provide a framework for this information to be shared as long as it is necessary, relevant and proportionate to the intended purpose.<sup>24</sup>
87. Relevant professionals should also be aware of how unintentional information sharing can increase the victim's risk of harm. For example, relevant professionals should take all necessary steps to prevent the victim's contact details from being disclosed to the perpetrator.

### Understanding information sharing requirements

88. For detailed guidance regarding information sharing, relevant professionals and ISA/Cs should consult their internal policies. Where they are in doubt about a decision to share information, they should seek advice from relevant colleagues. This could be their manager or supervisor, or their organisation's Data Protection Officer, Caldicott Guardian, professional regulator or relevant policy or legal team.<sup>25</sup>
89. Relevant professionals and ISA/Cs are bound by the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018, the common law duty of confidentiality (in relation to information shared by a victim with a professional with an expectation of confidentiality), the Information Commissioner's Office's Data Sharing Code of Practice, and – where appropriate – guidance published by their professional regulator.<sup>26</sup>
90. Relevant professionals and ISA/Cs should be aware of the additional considerations when processing information about child victims. The Department for Education has produced additional guidance on data sharing for professionals providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers. Relevant professionals and ISA/Cs should also be aware of safeguarding responsibilities set out in legislation, such as the Children Act 2004, the Care Act

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<sup>24</sup> Department for Education (2024), Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice>

<sup>25</sup> A Caldicott Guardian is a senior person responsible for protecting the confidentiality of individuals' health and care information and ensuring it is appropriately used.

<sup>26</sup> Data Protection Act 2018. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents>  
NHS Digital (2013) A Guide to Confidentiality in Health and Social Care: references – Section 2: The common law of confidentiality and consent

Information Commissioner's Office (2021), Data Sharing Code of Practice. Available at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/data-sharing/data-sharing-a-code-of-practice/>

2014 and the '*Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education*' guidance.

### **Lawful bases for sharing information**

91. Relevant professionals and ISA/Cs should select the most appropriate lawful basis for information sharing. Consent is a lawful basis for sharing information under the principles set out in Article 5 of UK GDPR.<sup>27</sup> However, it is not the only lawful basis and, in cases involving safeguarding concerns, it may not be appropriate.
92. Where consent is not given, relevant professionals and ISA/Cs should be transparent with the victim about the limits of confidentiality and the circumstances in which they might securely share personal information with third parties. Where information is shared without consent, it is still best practice to inform the victim (unless doing so will put someone at risk) and explain why this information is being shared and what will happen next.

### **Developing and implementing information-sharing protocols**

93. To facilitate effective information sharing, ISA/C services and relevant professionals should establish protocols which set out what each agency can share and how. Where multi-agency information-sharing agreements are already in place, they should include ISA/C services.

#### **Case Study 1: Effective information-sharing protocols and multi-agency working**

Rima was referred into a multi-agency stalking arrangement as a result of the stalking she experienced by her daughter's teacher. The perpetrator sent unwanted gifts, made repeated contact and showed up at Rima's address.

Through the information-sharing protocol established by the multi-agency arrangement, the police were able to refer this case to an ISA/C in a timely manner. The ISA/C identified the perpetrator as meeting the typology of an 'intimacy-seeking' stalker and assessed the case as high-risk. The ISA/C arranged multi-agency conferences and worked alongside the partners within the multi-agency arrangement including specific representatives from police, healthcare and probation, to manage the specific risks of the case and safety plan accordingly. A referral was also made to the local authority designated officer. The ISA/C within the multi-agency arrangement liaised with the Officer in Charge to apply for an interim SPO to provide temporary protection until the court hearing for the full SPO. The ISA/C advocated for specific prohibitive and positive requirements to be

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<sup>27</sup> Article 5 of GDPR: Principles relating to processing of personal data. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2016/679/article/5>

included in the SPO that were tailored to the risks of Rima's case. At the hearing, the judge granted Rima a full SPO with conditions for 10 years.

## Section 9: Effective communication

### Establishing frequency/method for communication

94. The extent to which ISA/Cs and relevant professionals will communicate are dependent on the needs and circumstances of the victim. On first contact, the ISA/C and relevant professionals should establish how they will communicate going forward, including who they should remain in contact with (for example, for children, this may be a safe parent or guardian), the frequency (for example, after key decision points or on a regular basis), and the preferred method (for example, email or phone).

### Acting as the 'key contact'

95. Victims will often need to engage and communicate with several government agencies, organisations and relevant professionals. To simplify communication and prevent further re-traumatisation, some victims may benefit from someone acting as the 'key contact'.<sup>28</sup> This could be the victim's ISA/C, or the victim may prefer to liaise with the ISA/C and other relevant professionals through another trusted worker. As the key contact, this person may communicate with relevant professionals and advocate for the victim on their behalf, where appropriate. As advocates operate from an empowerment model, the decision to work as a key contact must be considered carefully and on a case-by-case basis.

96. During initial engagement, the ISA/C should establish if the victim would like them to act as a key contact to facilitate wider communication and engagement with other relevant professionals. The ISA/C should make clear that the key contact role can be changed at the victim's request and the ISA/C should consider how they can empower the victim to advocate for themselves, where possible.

Where a victim consents and would like their ISA/C to act as the 'key contact', the below actions should be followed. The ISA/C should:

- where possible, record this preference in writing with signed agreement from the victim. This may be known as a client contact agreement;
- agree with the victim about how to keep them informed about decisions and updates;
- communicate this to relevant professionals who are engaged with the victim and state this on any onward referrals;

<sup>28</sup> It may be common practice, including in the IDVA and ISVA guidance, for a 'Single Point of Contact' to refer to a victim's primary liaison for information. However, since ISA/Cs often work alongside stalking specific 'Single Points of Contact' within police forces, the term 'key contact' will be used to refer to a victim's designated person to avoid confusion.

- ensure that all relevant professionals are aware if they are no longer supporting the victim so that communication preferences can be updated.

Relevant professionals should:

- record and adhere to, where possible, the agreed contact preference;
- establish with the ISA/C the best method for communication;
- communicate this to relevant professionals who engage with the victim and state on onwards referrals/handovers, for example, from the police to the Witness Service; (where any referral should clearly document whether the witness has consented to the ISA/ISAC being the key contact);
- note that this does not necessarily make the ISA/C a lead practitioner responsible for co-ordinating support.

Where it has been agreed that the ISA/C should act as the 'key contact', relevant professionals should respect this communication preference.

However, it may not always be possible to reach the ISA/C within the necessary timeframes to communicate with the victim, for example, where a victim needs to be urgently notified for safeguarding reasons. It may not be appropriate to share updates through them, for example, where there is a discussion of evidence or medical information, or to communicate the rationale for a 'No Further Action' decision.<sup>29</sup> In these circumstances, professionals should try to inform the ISA/C so they can: advise on how best to communicate with the victim (for example, time of day to contact, preferred contact method); meet jointly with the victim and the professional; and/or provide support to the victim afterwards.

97. While the ISA/C key contact may communicate on behalf of the victim, they should not necessarily be responsible for coordinating all support services required by the victim. This role therefore differs from others, such as lead practitioners, who may also be involved if the victim is a child or the victim has children and may coordinate support services for the whole family.
98. Where an ISA/C is aware of risks to the child victim or the victim's child(ren), they should establish if there is another existing 'lead practitioner', such as a social worker, who is responsible for coordinating support around the family. Where there is a lead practitioner, they will often act as a key point of contact with the victim and their family in relation to wider support services.<sup>30</sup>
99. Where an ISA/C is aware that the victim has multiple support needs, such as around mental health issues, homelessness or substance use, they should

<sup>29</sup> There will be certain instances where a victim requests for 'No Further Action' decisions to be communicated via their ISA/C and this should be discussed and agreed as part of the initial conversation between the ISA/C and victim.

<sup>30</sup> For more information, refer to: Department for Education (2025), The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/families-first-partnership-programme>

establish who is the most appropriate practitioner with a relationship to the victim, who can coordinate support around these needs.

### **Providing simultaneous updates**

100. Where a victim has not chosen for their ISA/C to act as a key contact, other professionals should explain to the victim their duty to share safeguarding concerns with the ISA/C. They should establish whether the victim consents to their ISA/C receiving simultaneous updates, where appropriate and practical. These updates ensure that an ISA/C is aware of key decisions which may impact the safety of, and the support required by, the victim. This also removes the emphasis on the victim having to share updates themselves.

## **Section 10: Using the expertise of ISA/Cs**

101. Relevant professionals should regard ISA/Cs as a key partner in the support of victims and have a clear understanding of the ISA/C role, including their independence, as outlined in Chapter 1.
102. Relevant professionals should consider using the expertise of ISA/Cs to enhance the support provided to victims and ensure that their actions are informed by a clear understanding of stalking. This can be at an individual case level, as set out below, but also on a strategic or organisational level (known as 'institutional advocacy'). Further information on institutional advocacy can be found in Section 11.

### **Drawing on an ISA/C's insights**

103. Relevant professionals should recognise and consider where they should actively use the ISA/C's expertise and insight into the wider context and circumstances of the victim.
104. Making use of this expertise will help victims receive better support, including by developing relevant professionals' comprehensive understanding of how best to adequately safeguard, manage risk and provide appropriate trauma-informed support. ISA/Cs should also assist relevant professionals to conduct or develop needs or risk assessments, safeguarding plans or support plans. Relevant professionals should always be mindful of an ISA/C's independence, as set out in Chapter 1.

### **Drawing on ISA/C support**

105. Through the relationship that an ISA/C establishes with a victim, they will often have a unique and in-depth insight into how best to support a victim, whether this be through victim centred and needs-based, support and/or advocacy. This may

be particularly relevant for victims who have experienced multiple disadvantages or have had negative experiences with government agencies in the past.

106. If the victim consents, it is always best practice for relevant professionals to consider including ISA/Cs when they need to directly engage with victims. This may include key meetings, appointments and visits. In circumstances (including those outlined below) where it is not deemed appropriate for the ISA/C to be present for a meeting, appointment or visit – whether online or in person – other professionals should share a clear rationale with the victim and ISA/C, as well as sharing the time and location with the ISA/C so they can provide support before and after, if needed.
107. Below are examples where ISA/C support can help. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list, and relevant professionals should continually consider where the presence of the ISA/C will enhance support and improve a victim's experience. These examples will not be relevant to all victims, depending on a victim's consent, their circumstances and the government agencies they are engaging with.
  - i. **Healthcare professionals:** Some ISA/Cs may support victims who need support when attending medical appointments, for example, an advocate may empower the victim to explain the impact of the trauma as a result of stalking to healthcare professionals.
  - ii. **Housing meetings:** Alternative housing options can be a key factor in safety planning with a victim of stalking. Wherever possible, relevant professionals should inform the ISA/C of meetings with housing providers to support the victim through this process and advocate for them. In an emergency where the perpetrator is an ex-intimate partner or between individuals that come under the description of personally connected, this could include providing domestic abuse safe accommodation, such as a refuge. In an emergency where the perpetrator is not an ex-intimate partner, an ISA/C can relay the risks of the specific case and can quote the risk of homelessness under Section 175 of the Housing Act 1996.
  - iii. **Meetings with family solicitor/barrister:** Where the victim is accessing the family justice system, the ISA/C can help them during the process of them giving evidence by providing victim-centred, needs-based and practical support. ISA/Cs may be able to share their expertise on stalking and its impact with the solicitor/barrister through meetings, and ensure that family lawyers are not expected to provide support beyond their expertise. ISA/Cs can also provide support letters which detail the relevant safety concerns of a case, which can then be added to an evidence log.
  - iv. **Parole hearings:** With the victim's consent, Victim Liaison Officers (VLOs) should make the ISA/C aware of when a parole hearing will take place,

when the parole hearing decision is expected, and once it has been made, so that additional support can be offered at these stages. VLOs should also, with the victim's consent, make the ISA/C aware of when an offender may be released. Where the victim does not already have an ISA/C supporting them, VLOs should discuss with the victim whether they wish to be referred to an ISA/C service (in line with Section 7).

- v. **Schools, colleges, universities and employers:** The ISA/C may offer support to improve professionals' understanding of stalking and the victim's safeguarding needs, including in instances where the perpetrator may study or work in the same setting as the victim. ISA/Cs who are supporting adult victims with children may support the adult victim to contact the school or may contact the school directly to discuss safeguarding needs and refer to children's social care services if necessary. ISA/Cs supporting children should work closely with education safeguarding leads to enhance the young person's access to support and improve their safety and educational experience. For example, ISA/Cs may help to negotiate a revised school timetable to allow them to attend therapy or other services. Similarly, ISA/Cs can liaise with university staff to negotiate accommodations for students who are victims of stalking. ISA/Cs can also speak to employers about their duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and suggest adjusting shift patterns or other safeguarding measures as appropriate.
- vi. **Police:** The ISA/C may offer support to improve police understanding, such as identifying stalking and highlighting the rights of the victim under stalking legislation. The ISA/C can advocate for tailored protections, such as suggesting positive and prohibitive requirements in an SPO. The ISA/C can also put forward a case for specific bail conditions or special measures for police consideration.
- vii. **Witness statements:** Providing a witness statement for a police investigation can be a distressing time for victims. Officers should liaise with the ISA/C to establish a convenient time for the victim to attend. However, where the victim would like their ISA/C to continue supporting them through the criminal justice system, the ISA/C will not be able to be present while the statement is being taken (see Section 2) but the victim may wish them to be present for support before and after, where appropriate. As part of the statement-taking process, there should be a discussion with the victim about special measures - if the ISA/C is attending in person, they should be present for this discussion. If they are not present, officers should inform the ISA/C of the special measures discussion which has taken place.<sup>31</sup> There should be an opportunity for victims to provide a Victim Personal Statement. While a Victim Personal

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<sup>31</sup> More information on special measures can be found in the CPS Guidance: CPS (2021) Special Measures. Available at: [Special Measures | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)

Statement should be written in the victim's own words and describe the impact the crime has had on them, an ISA/C can provide relevant guidance, review the statement and provide feedback to support the process. If the victim has particular access needs, the ISA/C can transcribe the statement for them.

### **ISA/C Support with applications for Stalking Protection Orders**

108. ISA/Cs regularly work alongside the police and support their understanding of stalking and the options available to victims. The ISA/C should ensure the police consider an SPO at the start of every stalking investigation. An ISA/C may be able to support the police by explaining the SPO process, providing information that will support the application and, if there is a stalking 'Single Point of Contact' in the police force, an ISA/C can share their contact details with the officer in charge.
109. When submitting an SPO application, police should ensure that the victim is consulted and the ISA/C can support the process. The ISA/C working with the police can ensure any prohibitive or positive requirements – such as specialist stalking perpetrator intervention programmes – are suitable for the respondent's stalking behaviour and the specific circumstances involved. For example, an ISA/C can explain the adverse effects of generic domestic abuse intervention programmes for stalkers which can pose further risks to victims. Where appropriate, they can advocate for specialist stalking perpetrator intervention programmes that directly address the perpetrator's fixation and obsession. In consultation with the victim, an ISA/C can support an officer in charge in determining both the prohibitive and positive requirements that are included in the SPO and amplify the victim's voice. As the police and ISA/Cs will have completed a thorough risk assessment with victims and tailored the accompanying safety plans accordingly, they may be able to suggest prohibitive and positive requirements that can reflect the victim's safety needs. If the order is granted, the police should put a suitable risk management plan in place and may incorporate suggestions from the assigned advocate. Further information on SPO applications can be found in the 'Stalking Protection Orders: statutory guidance for the police' and the College of Policing Stalking Protection Order checklist.<sup>32,33</sup>

### **ISA/C support at court**

110. Court proceedings can be a particularly challenging part of the justice process for a victim and one where they can benefit from victim centred, needs-based and practical support of their ISA/C. ISA/Cs most commonly support in criminal court

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<sup>32</sup> Home Office (2024) Stalking Protection Orders: Statutory guidance for the police. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/stalking-protection-act-statutory-guidance-for-the-police/stalking-protection-orders-statutory-guidance-for-the-police-accessible-version>

<sup>33</sup> College of Policing, Stalking or harassment authorised professional practice, available at: <https://www.college.police.uk/app/major-investigation-and-public-protection/stalking-or-harassment>

proceedings. However, there may also be circumstances where the victim requires support in the civil or family court.

111. Examples of how an ISA/C might support a victim in the court setting are set out in the table below.

<b>Supporting with Protective Orders</b>	The ISA/C should help the victim decide whether applying for civil or family court protective order might be appropriate to improve their safety. It is advisable that an SPO is considered for all stalking cases. However, if another protective order has already been applied for, such as a Domestic Abuse Protection Order, Non-Molestation Order, or a Prohibited Steps Order, an ISA/C may support a victim through this process. <sup>34</sup> If an alternative protection order which relates to domestic abuse has been applied for instead of an SPO, an ISA/C should consider whether an IDVA may be able to work alongside them and provide specialist domestic abuse support for civil/family matters. Ultimately, an ISA/C will consider the victim's safety as paramount and be informed by risk management on a case-by-case basis when supporting with protective orders.
<b>Supporting with a Restraining Order</b>	An ISA/C can also support the victim and barrister with Protective Orders issued by the criminal court, such as a Restraining Order. In consultation with the victim, an ISA/C can empower them to advocate for specific recommendations and support the drafting of the conditions to be included in the Restraining Order. Once a Restraining Order has been granted, an ISA/C can also review the conditions and suggest amendments from a risk management perspective.
<b>Supporting with pre-trial visits and arriving safely</b>	Pre-trial visits enable the victim to see the courtroom and to ask any questions they might have about the criminal court process. Witness Care Officers should make the relevant service aware that an ISA/C is in place. Depending on the commissioning arrangements and availability of local ISA/C service provision, the relevant service should endeavour to arrange a mutually convenient time so that the ISA/C

<sup>34</sup> Information on how to apply and who can apply for protective orders can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/injunction-domestic-violence>; <https://www.gov.uk/injunction-domestic-violence>

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	<p>can attend the pre-trial visit to support the victim through the process.</p> <p>The ISA/C should liaise with the relevant witness service beforehand (for example, at the pretrial visit, if applicable) to ensure they know which entrance and exits are appropriate to avoid contact between the victim and the perpetrator and any family/friends. The ISA/C should work with the victim (and police, if applicable) to ensure the victim is able to get to and from court safely.</p>
<b>Providing victim centred and needs-based support by sitting beside the victim while giving evidence in court or in the live-link room (subject to judicial approval)</b>	<p>There are 'court rules' which set out the overarching principles for who can be in the courtroom. Where a victim would like support of their ISA/C, they can request this in advance (see Figures 2 and 3) and it will be up to the judge or magistrate to decide.</p> <p>If allowed, an ISA/C may sit next to the victim, but they must not speak on behalf of the victim in the courtroom or interrupt the hearing; they must also refrain from discussing the evidence (with the victim or anyone else). See Section 2 for more information.</p>
<b>Explaining the court process, and aiding interaction, where appropriate, with relevant professionals</b>	<p>ISA/Cs should help support victims' understanding of what is happening during the court process. This can include supporting engagement between a prosecutor and the victim, advocating for the victim's wishes in meetings with a prosecutor or family lawyer, and helping to challenge a lawyer if a decision taken could increase the risk faced by the adult victim and/or any child victims. An ISA/C can also write support letters to court. When relevant professionals need to interact with the victim, it is best practice to ensure the ISA/C is involved, with the victim's consent.</p>
<b>Keeping the victim updated on how the case/trial is progressing</b>	<p>ISA/Cs should work closely with the Witness Care Unit to keep the victim updated on how the case/trial is progressing, including when they will give evidence and outcomes of the case/trial (including sentencing, licensing and liaison with VLO if applicable).</p>
<b>Supporting the victim with the Victim's Right to Review (VRR)</b>	<p>The police and the CPS have their own VRR Schemes. For either Scheme, an ISA/C can support a victim to complete a VRR application or can submit one on their behalf. ISA/Cs can also provide support letters that detail the stalking behaviours, impacts</p>

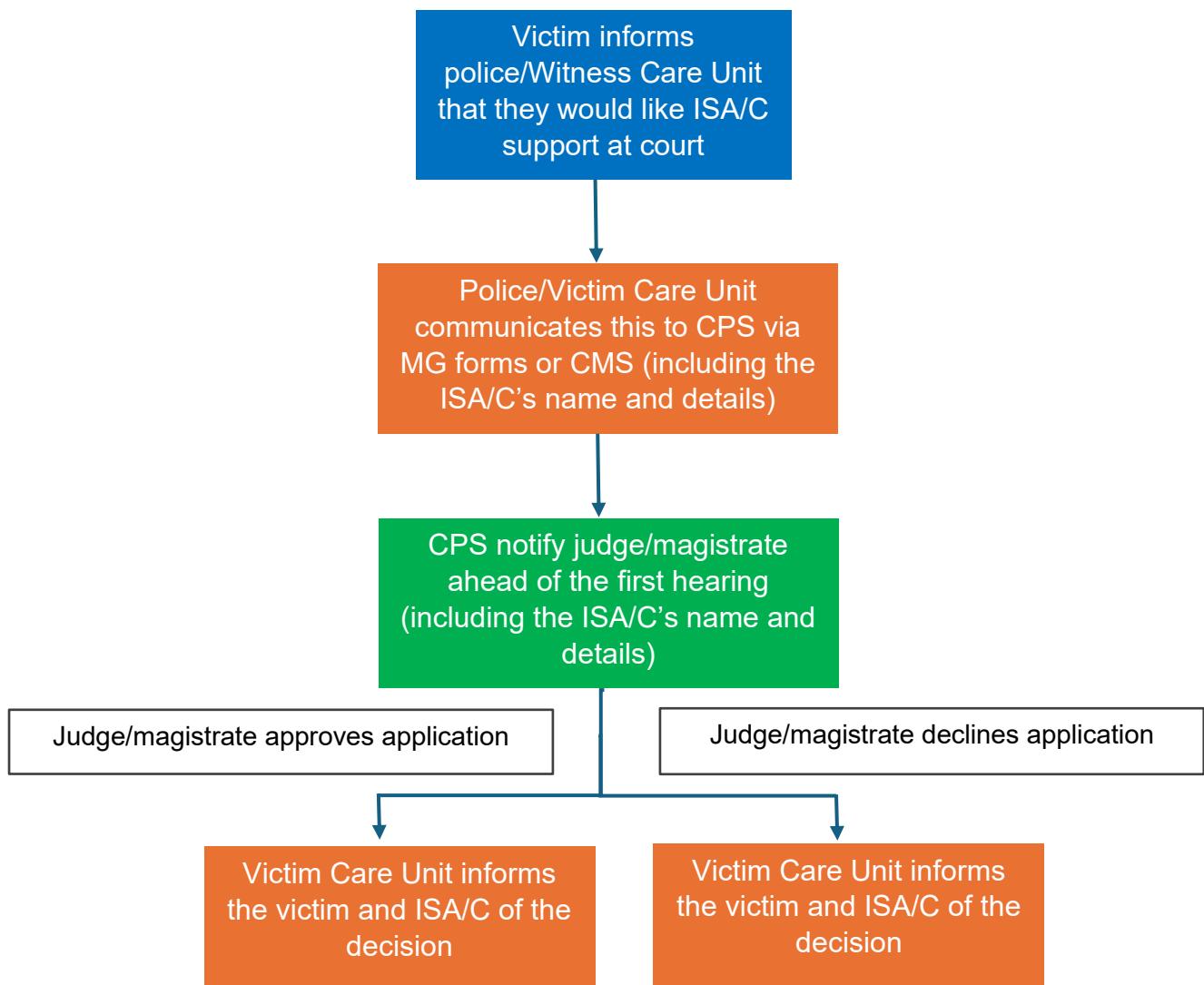
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and advocacy support offered to date. ISA/Cs can attend a CPS meeting if required.

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112. For cases heard in the criminal courts, the Witness Service is present to provide support for all witnesses attending court. Where a victim is called as a witness, due to the relationship the ISA/C will have developed with the victim, they may be best placed to support the victim in court giving evidence, rather than the Witness Service. However, the ISA/C and the Witness Service should ensure they work closely together due to the operational knowledge of the courts the Witness Services will have. The ISA/C and Witness Service should agree with the victim who is best placed to provide this support.

Figure 2: Flow chart for notification of ISA/C support in criminal court



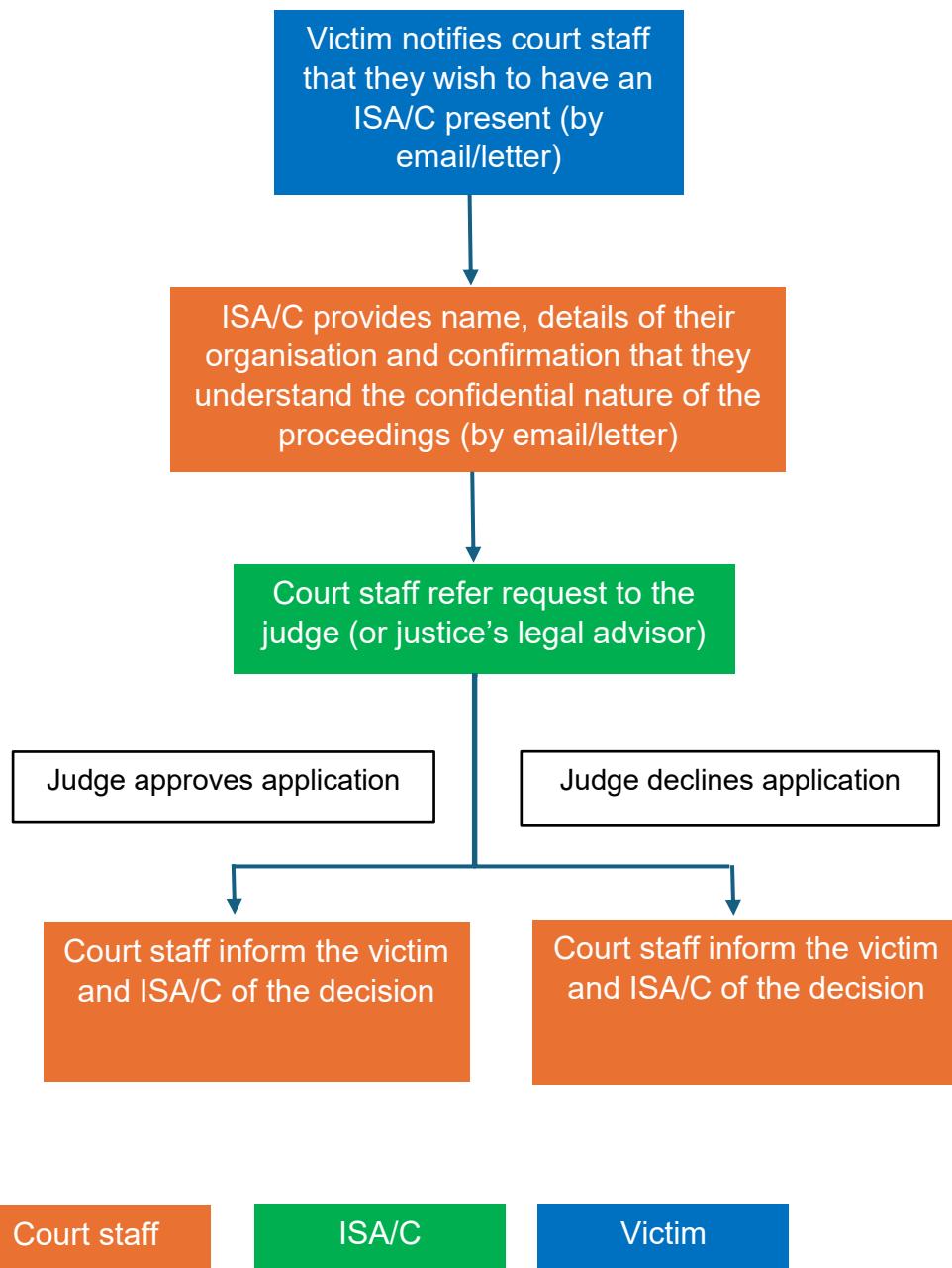
Key:

Police/Witness  
Care Unit

CPS

Victim

*Figure 3: Flow chart for notification of ISA/C support while giving evidence in family court*



### **Involving the ISA/C role in multi-agency settings**

113. To assist with communication and improve outcomes for victims, relevant professionals should routinely include ISA/Cs in all relevant multi-agency meetings where stalking has been identified. ISA/Cs should determine whether they should attend on a case-by-case basis. When in attendance, ISA/Cs should have parity of status with other relevant professionals. Within these meetings, an ISA/C will reflect the victim's voice and advocate for their needs, including outlining the relevant risks and suggesting specific safeguarding measures.

ISA/Cs can also inform professionals about the nature and dynamics of stalking. Such forums include but are not limited to those listed in the following table.

<b>Multi-Agency Risk Assessment conference (MARAC)</b>	<p>The purpose of the MARAC is to manage risk and increase support and safety of victims of high-risk domestic abuse, as well as domestic abuse stalking. This is achieved through risk management plans, comprehensive information sharing, and action planning processes. MARACs are held between representatives of local police, health, child and adult social care, housing practitioners, IDVAs, probation and other specialists from the government and voluntary sectors to share information and create a coordinated action plan. The action plan is aimed at reducing the risk posed to victims, including children, as well as other family members. Children aged 16 or over who are victims of abuse in their intimate relationship or are experiencing stalking must be referred to MARAC if they are assessed to be at high risk. It is not necessary to refer children who are associated with a high-risk case in their family or household because they will be discussed at the same time as the adult victim. An ISA/C should be invited to every MARAC forum where stalking has been identified. In practice, as part of the MARAC, an ISA/C will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• represent the voice and needs of the victim, ensuring that their choices and views are respected and understood;</li><li>• provide information about the victim's risks and needs assessment including action already taken and proposed next steps;</li><li>• where agreed, work as the main point of contact for the victim and other professionals, to help streamline support and prevent re-traumatisation;</li><li>• with the consent of the victim, proactively implement relevant actions from the safety plans developed at MARAC, for example, making an onwards referral to mental health services or other holistic therapeutic services, as appropriate;</li><li>• provide appropriate challenge to agencies where needed to ensure the victim's safety and wellbeing.</li></ul>
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Prior to the MARAC meeting, advance notice should be given to allow the ISA/C to conduct a SASH risk assessment with the victim. Further information on

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	MARACs can be found in the Domestic Abuse Statutory guidance. <sup>35</sup>
<b>Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)</b>	Through MAPPA, the police, HM Prison and Probation Service, and other agencies work together to manage the risks posed by violent, sexual and terrorist offenders living in the community, in order to protect the public. MAPPA are supported by guidance which states that, where stalking is a feature, practitioners should identify any ISA/C involvement. <sup>36</sup> For level 2 or 3 meetings, professionals with relevant information about the victim, including ISA/Cs, must be invited to the meeting.
<b>Stalking Clinics</b>	Where local provision exists, Stalking Clinics are multi-agency panels that discuss stalking cases, and may include representatives from the police, probation, housing, children's and adult social services, forensic psychiatry, vulnerability lawyers, and the CPS. The panel can discuss specific actions, such as discussing the quality of evidence gathering with the Officer in Charge in a victim's case. Unlike MARAC, information can only be shared with the victim's consent. An ISA/C should be present to reflect the victim's voice and advocate for their needs, including outlining the relevant risks and suggesting specific safeguarding measures.
<b>Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC)</b>	MATAC is focused on identifying and tackling serial perpetrators of domestic violence and domestic abuse, as well as in domestic abuse stalking cases. This forum aims to safeguard adults and children at risk of domestic abuse, prevent further domestic abuse related offending, and change offender behaviour. In cases of domestic abuse stalking, an ISA/C should be present to reflect the victim's voice and advocate for their needs, including outlining the relevant risks and suggesting specific safeguarding measures. ISA/Cs can also inform professionals about the nature and dynamics of stalking.
<b>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)</b>	The MASH allows organisations with responsibility for the safety of vulnerable people to work together. Organisations share information and co-ordinate activities, often through co-locating staff from the local authority, health agencies

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<sup>35</sup> Home Office (2022), Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-act-2021/domestic-abuse-statutory-guidance-accessible-version>

<sup>36</sup> Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa-guidance>

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	<p>and the police. Most safeguarding partner agencies support these arrangements so that they can identify risks to vulnerable children early.</p>
<b>Child Protection Conferences</b>	A Child Protection Conference or Child in Need meeting is a meeting between families and professionals held when there is a concern about the safety of a child. This forum seeks to make decisions and plans about a child's future safety, health and development. As it is not appropriate or safe for a victim or ISA/C to meet with the stalking perpetrator/suspect, professionals should ensure separate meetings.
<b>Child Social Service Strategy Meetings</b>	Child social service strategy meetings are a gathering of professionals involved in the care and protection of a vulnerable child or young person. The purpose is to agree next steps for safeguarding the child, which includes deciding whether the case meets the threshold for a child protection investigation.
<b>Team around the Family meetings</b>	Team around the Family meetings bring together groups of professionals and volunteers who work alongside the family to improve outcomes. They are led by a lead practitioner but all members are active participants and their contribution equally valued. The team will be able to demonstrate good communication and co-ordination based on the family's plan and the family's feedback on the support provided should reflect this. As, under no circumstances should the stalking suspect or perpetrator be invited to attend a meeting where the victim is present, there should be a presumption to not proceed with meetings where both parties are expected to be present.
<b>Local Scrutiny and Involvement panels</b>	CPS Local Scrutiny and Involvement panels provide a platform for criminal justice agencies to work with community sector representatives to scrutinise decision-making and actions taken. Through this, agencies identify and share best practice to inform policy and improve victim outcomes. The purpose of these panels is not to discuss active cases. CPS Areas facilitate the panels. ISA/C service providers should identify if they attend a scrutiny panel and, if not, should determine the value-add in their attending, and contact the local CPS Area to enquire about participation.

<b>Substance/ Mental Health Multi-Disciplinary Treatment</b>	A multi-disciplinary approach to drug and alcohol or mental health treatment brings together individuals from different disciplines to determine appropriate patient pathways, interventions or management plans. It may be appropriate for ISA/Cs to attend where the victim has substance or mental health needs or otherwise liaise with the treatment team
<b>Primary Care / General Practice Safeguarding Meetings</b>	Practice safeguarding meetings allow practice staff to share information, identify concerns and agree management plans for complex safeguarding cases. There may also be an opportunity to meet with multidisciplinary partners who can help safeguard the practice's registered patients. It may be appropriate for ISA/Cs to attend or otherwise liaise with the healthcare professionals to ensure the victim's needs are reflected, risks identified and safeguarding measures implemented. If relevant, ISA/Cs can also inform professionals about the nature and dynamics of stalking.

114. Under no circumstances should the stalking suspect or perpetrator be invited to attend a meeting where the victim is present. In cases where meetings have been arranged with both parties, relevant professionals should prioritise the safety of the ISA/C and the victim, the victim's ability to discuss their experiences openly, and the benefits of rescheduling and holding separate meetings, in particular, for child protection meetings. There should be a presumption to not proceed with meetings where both parties are expected to be present.
115. There may be occasions within these settings where it is necessary to withhold information from the victim (for example, personal information relating to the suspect). The professional sharing this information should make it clear where this information should be withheld and ensure considerations around victim safety have been factored into the decision-making process, alongside data protection considerations.

## **Section 11: Institutional advocacy**

116. Institutional advocacy is the term for providing advocacy support and advice at an institutional, rather than individual, level and covers activity ISA/C services may carry out which involves raising systemic issues that impact victims' experiences. This should help government agencies and organisations improve their practices, by learning from shared best practice. It should also increase agencies' understanding and awareness of stalking. ISA/C services have a unique, multiagency perspective as they support victims to navigate different systems. They are, therefore, well equipped to recognise the gaps and barriers which victims may face, and to advocate for improvements to ways of working.

117. Depending on the availability of staff and their relevant expertise, ISA/Cs, ISA/C service managers or other professionals working in the ISA/C service may carry out institutional advocacy.

118. Where ISA/C service availability allows, institutional advocacy may include a variety of activities, such as:

- i. if suitably qualified, providing training to other organisations on recognising and understanding stalking;
- ii. highlighting issues at senior or strategic level to make overall improvements, including with senior stakeholders supporting and driving policy change or where multiple victims are experiencing issues with a particular referral pathway;
- iii. contributing specialist knowledge to the development of strategic plans, and service design and development. For example, ISA/Cs can help shape improvements where particular groups of victims are facing barriers to support because of their language, race, sex, or gender;
- iv. supporting commissioners to understand the needs of local victims and ensuring services are shaped and commissioned to respond to this need;
- v. where appropriate, ISA/C services can support the inclusion and trauma-informed participation of victims in relevant forums.

119. While institutional advocacy can be reactive, in direct response to arising issues, it is particularly effective within set forums or partnerships at a strategic level. In these settings, government agencies and ISA/Cs should work together to draw on expertise and identify opportunities to implement best practice in stalking cases. In cases where stalking has been identified, government agencies should strongly consider inviting ISA/Cs and/or ISA/C service managers to attend local strategic forums, including, but not limited to, the following:

- i. Community Safety Partnerships;
- ii. Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework meetings (where relevant);
- iii. Domestic Abuse Joint Justice Plan meetings;
- iv. Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Boards;
- v. Integrated Care Partnerships;
- vi. joint commissioning groups;
- vii. local Criminal and/or Family Justice Boards;
- viii. local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements for children and adults;
- ix. MARAC Steering groups;
- x. CPS Victims Community Accountability Forum;
- xi. place-based partnerships
- xii. local Scrutiny and Involvement Panels

120. Outside of such forums, government agencies, particularly criminal justice agencies, should also consider utilising strategic leads or key contacts to enable ISA/Cs to raise issues and suggestions.