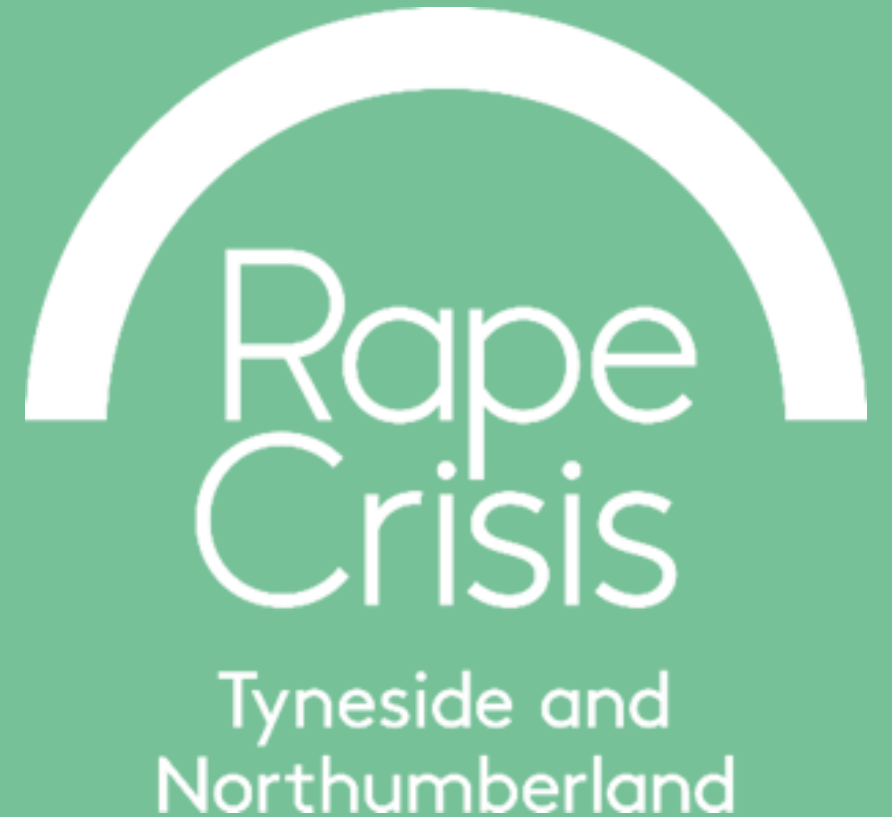


The Role of the ISVA

Jamie Allinson

Deputy CEO

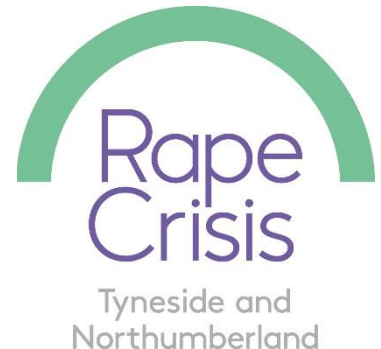
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Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland

- Services for women and girls
- Independent of the criminal justice system.
- Free and confidential

- Counselling
- Practical & Emotional Support
- ISVA support
- Helpline
- Group Work



Language

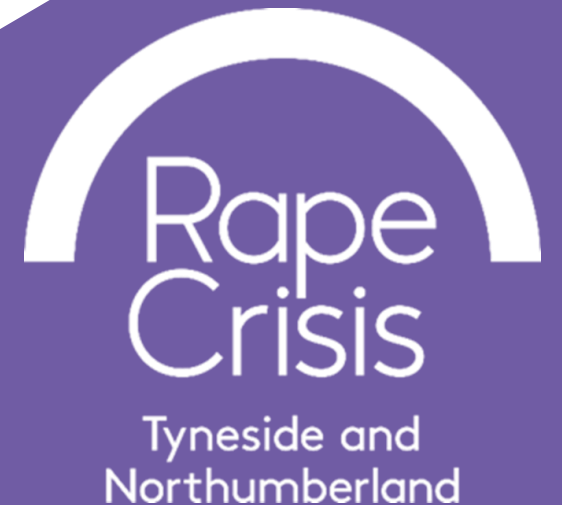
ISVA - Independent Sexual Violence Advisor

Victim?

Witness?

Survivor?

Complainant?



Becoming an ISVA

- Multiple accredited courses offered by numerous providers including Purple Leaf (Rape Crisis), Lime Culture, ICENA
- Modules generally include the following:
 - Conducting needs and risk assessments
 - The criminal justice process
 - Safeguarding
 - Responding to trauma and risk
- Background of ISVAs – varied workforce

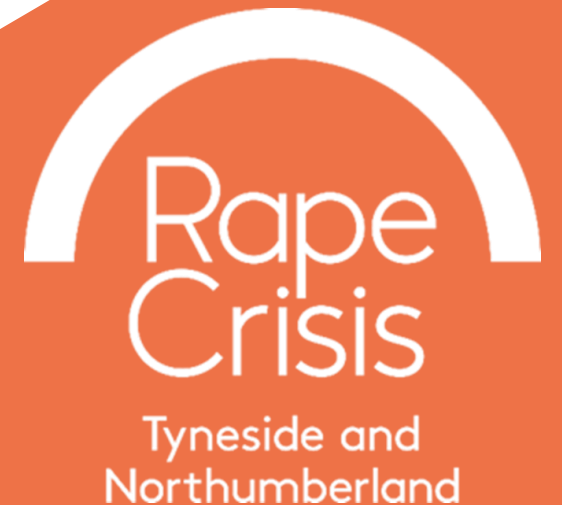
Key Developments

Special Measures including S28

Updated 2025 ISVA Guidance

Operation Bluestone / Operation Soteria

CPS Guidance



2017: ISVA Role Created – *Essential Elements of the ISVA role*

Lacked statutory recognition of ISVAs as professionals.

Evolution into holistic support addressing needs and risk.

May 2025 guidance released from MOJ Independent Sexual Violence Advisor

guidance legally mandated by the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024

"..to provide independent support to individuals who are victims of criminal conduct of a sexual nature, where the support provided relates to that conduct"

Victim Support (Specified Roles) Regulations 2025

Identifies both Intermediaries and ISVAs as Relevant Professionals within the criminal justice process.

Role of The ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor)

Core Elements of the ISVA Role

Core Principles

- Case Management
- Communication
- Delivery of Support
- Record Keeping
- Referral Processes

Safeguarding

- Adherence of safeguarding legislation (adults & children)
- Adherence to internal policies and procedures

Safe Working Practices

- Keeping themselves and others safe
- Maintenance of professional boundaries

Core Elements of the ISVA Role (cont)

Understanding of and addressing intersectional needs

- Person-centred approach

Understanding civil, family and criminal justice processes

- Knowledge of key legislation and guidance including ABE guidance, VRR, VCOP,
- Knowledge of remedies in civil and ability to signpost to agencies to support
- Knowledge of stages of court process, PTPH, S28 etc

Core Elements of the ISVA Role (cont)

Understanding Risk and Support Needs

- Assessing risk

Understanding impact of sexual abuse

- Trauma informed support
- Types and dynamics of sexual abuse

MOJ Independent Sexual Violence Adviser
Statutory Guidance (2025)

- Provide practical and emotional support to survivors of sexual violence
- Work in a holistic way – right support for the right person taking into account their needs, risks and personal experiences.
- Provide a safe and non-judgmental space for victims/survivors
- Conduct needs and risk assessments to ensure safety of clients and their dependants
- Ensure they are not privy to evidence in the criminal justice process
- Be trauma-informed and responsive
- Work within professional boundaries
- Access clinical supervision
- Referrals and signposting to other agencies – housing, CICA, CAB
- Management of expectations
- Work collaboratively with CJS agencies

What does an ISVA do?

- Discuss evidence in the case
- Provide crisis support
- Ask probing questions about the incident/s of sexual violence
- Work in silo – information sharing / multi agency approach is key
- 'Hold' all of the client – recognition that an ISVA service might not be the right service to address all support needs
- "Rescue"
- Treat everyone the same

What does an ISVA not do?

- Act as a SPOC in the criminal justice process
- Provide advocacy support around special measures and VCOP
- Complete risk and need assessments
- Support clients to attend ABEs, PTV's and to support them to give their best evidence.
- Work in partnership with Police
- Support with managing expectations of CJS

What this means in practice

ISVA Role

2017 vs 2025 Guidance

Key Changes: 2017 → 2025 ISVA Guidance

- 2025 guidance is **statutory**; 2017 was non-statutory
- Clearer **definition and role** of ISVAs (independent, survivor-centred)
- **Minimum training and qualifications** now expected
- Stronger emphasis on **tailored, trauma-informed support**
- Clearer guidance on **information sharing & multi-agency working**
- Explicit **supervision & workforce support** requirements
- Increased focus on **systemic advocacy**

Key Points: What this means in Practice

- **More Professionalisation:** With statutory guidance and qualification expectations, the ISVA role becomes more formalised, likely improving trust and consistency in service delivery.
- **Better Survivor Protection & Tailoring:** The stronger focus on risk, capacity, and tailored support ensures survivors with varied and complex needs are better supported.
- **Improved Multi-Agency Working:** Clearer frameworks for inter-professional work should lead to more consistent experiences for survivors across police, courts, health, and social care.
- **Stronger Workforce Support:** By embedding supervision and clinical support expectations, the guidance acknowledges the emotional burden on ISVAs and promotes their sustainability.
- **Systemic Influence:** Recognising the ISVA role in institutional advocacy means ISVAs can potentially drive systemic changes- not just support survivors individually.

- Professional curiosity may be lacking – confidence about how to identify need for an intermediary may be beneficial.
- Some confusion over the roles – best practice to take the time to understand each role to ensure appropriate support.
- "Ships in the night?"
- Missed opportunities for ISVA's and intermediaries to information share to ensure victim/survivors communication needs are shared as well as any risk information.

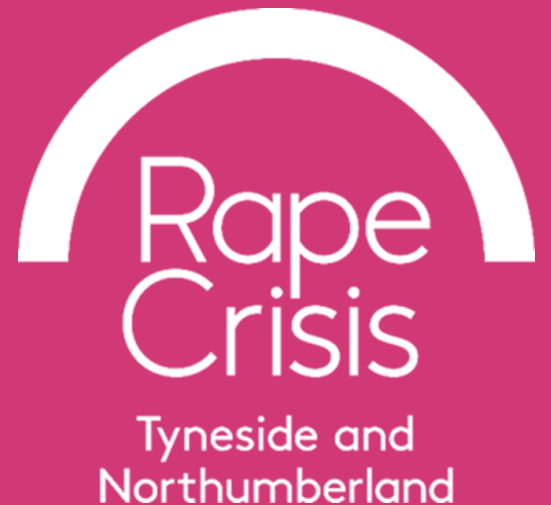
In Practice

Working Together

Aspect	ISVA Role	Intermediary Role	How they Complement
Communication	Explains processes, prepares survivor	Facilitates communication in Court (Court Agent)	ISVA prepares witness, intermediary ensures understanding
Emotional Support	Ongoing emotional support	Minimal – emphasis on communication	ISVA provides broader support context
Advocacy	Multi-agency working, SPOC, liaise with OIC, CPS etc. Signposting and referring.	Supports Court communication	ISVA ensures voice heard throughout, intermediary ensures understanding at Court
Safeguarding	Review of risk throughout support process	Focuses on communication barriers	Together a more supportive and accessible process

Case Study

- ISVA service received referral to ISVA service for support with criminal justice process.
- Referral received quite late on in the Criminal Justice Process (trial date set).
- Client shared with ISVA they were also involved in Civil Proceedings and had an intermediary – asking sensitive questions to obtain relevant information.
- ISVA raised professional concerns with CPS around communication challenges and trial was vacated to allow an intermediary to be sought.



Joint Working

- Early collaboration: ISVAs can flag communication needs
- Coordinated planning: Pre-trial sessions with both ISVA and intermediary improve survivor confidence
- Avoid duplication: Clear boundaries of responsibility ensure efficiency and reduce survivor stress
- Enhances trauma-informed practice: Combined approach addresses both emotional and communication needs

Questions?

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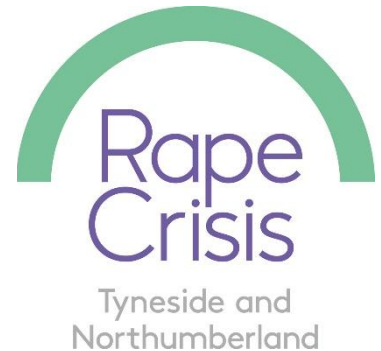
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6:00 pm - 8:30 pm



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