

## The GDASS mission

To improve access to justice for the most vulnerable by practically supporting those who are not eligible for legal aid, or who cannot afford legal representation.

Our focus is on LIPs in a domestic abuse context.

### What we DON'T do:

- **Divorce cases** – unless they are uncontested or no net worth
- **Enforcement Orders** – unless there is sufficient independent, corroborative evidence provided
- **Assist** where a solicitor or counsel has already been instructed.

**NOTE:** This is currently a limited resource and so all enquires are dealt with on an individual basis.

Call the GDASS helpdesk on

**0845 602 9035**

or email [support@gdass.org.uk](mailto:support@gdass.org.uk)

GDASS offers a range of bespoke packages of support to help people live safely and move on from abuse, including:

- Floating support

- Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)

- Young Persons Violence Advocate (YPVA)

- Court IDVAs, and

- Group work programmes

Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service is a county-wide service designed to reduce the level of domestic abuse and improve the safety of victims and their families. We operate in all districts offering a variety of support programmes for women and men over 16 years old experiencing domestic abuse.

If you would like to have any part of this leaflet explained further or translated, or put into a different format, such as larger print, please contact us to discuss your needs.

Help for

people facing family law

proceedings

on their own



Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service

Supporting victims of

domestic violence and abuse

**Cuts to legal aid in 2013 significantly increased the need for help with family law proceedings.**

It also dramatically increased the number of **victims in person** (LIPs) – many of whom are but to face the perpetrators of their abuse, alone, in court. **We can help.**

**Problems over child residence and contact frequently perpetuates domestic abuse.**

This continued abuse can be **highly manipulative and frightening.**

Perpetrators of abuse often **use the court system** to continue to exert control or abuse over their former victims – which also has a damaging impact on the children.

The court process itself can be **intimidating** and confusing, with legal terminology that people don't understand.

When child contact issues are at stake, the pressure on the abused, unsupported LIP to **protect their children** and present and manage their case as effectively as possible can seem **overwhelming.**

**Since November 2015 GDASS has worked hard to provide FREE practical help for LIPs who are victims of domestic abuse.**

**Our Family & Civil Law Independent Domestic Advocate (IDVA)** can provide hands-on assistance if you don't qualify for legal aid and cannot afford legal representation.

**Early intervention**

We believe that LIPs require **practical assistance** from day one to prepare cases for court.

**We deliver:**

- Specialist assistance including court attendance for LIPs.
- Help to access solicitors or Direct Access Barristers using the unbundling cases agreement or pro bono [free] services if you have limited financial means.

**We have:**

- **Trained** McKenzie Friends (who can accompany you to court).
- **Developed** existing partnerships with The Bar in the Community Project, Law Works, South West Mediation, Citizens Advice partners and local solicitors.
- **Built** on the good reputation we have gained with the judiciary.

**We also:**

- **Address** emotional trauma to prepare you for the practicalities of litigation;
- **Empower** you with the confidence to represent yourself by giving you the support, advice and tools you need to present your case;
- **Act** as a McKenzie Friend;
- **Provide** access to mediation and/or facilitate negotiation with the aim of reaching agreement and avoiding litigation; and
- **Manage** difficult communication between parties.