

## **Survivor Voice Ambassadors: Embedding Lived Experience in Domestic Abuse Policy, Training and Public Communication**

### Summary

The Survivor Voice Ambassadors (SVA) programme amplifies the lived experiences of domestic abuse survivors to inform commissioning, strengthen training, improve public communication and enhance service design across Kent and Medway. The programme invites survivors to share their experiences safely, with trauma informed protocols embedded throughout all stages of involvement. Ten ambassadors representing a range of backgrounds, identities and experiences have contributed to a range of local and national outputs.

Their voices shape the Domestic Abuse Partnership website, media campaigns, professional training, and strategic policy discussions. They have provided insights that informed the commissioning of cybercrime support and specialist mental health input. Ambassadors have co produced content for public awareness campaigns, contributed testimonies to radio and press coverage, and recorded material for online training.

The programme demonstrates meaningful involvement of survivors in shaping communication, service improvement and public understanding. It advances inclusive and ethical research practice by positioning survivors as partners rather than subjects. This entry shows how local research and engagement can drive organisational change, strengthen public messages, improve practitioner confidence and directly enhance support pathways for victims. The programme meets LARIA criteria through high quality engagement and demonstrable impact on decisions, service development and communication strategies.

### Methodology

The programme's engagement model is grounded in trauma informed practice, safeguarding considerations and participant led decision making. Survivors are invited to take part in conversations about their experiences through structured but flexible interviews. Participants choose the level of detail they share and the mode of engagement, including in person, online or telephone sessions. Conversations are recorded, transcribed and stored securely, with personal identifiers removed.

Stories are analysed by Kent Analytics and the Kent & Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership to identify patterns, themes and insights relevant to service design, professional practice and communication campaigns. Survivor insights are then embedded into strategic outputs, including website design, training materials, commissioning decisions and public messaging.

Additional qualitative evidence is generated through feedback loops where ambassadors respond to drafts of websites, media scripts and campaign materials. Their commentary is used to refine the tone, accessibility, clarity and emotional resonance of communications.

Impact evidence is drawn from documentary outputs (e.g., campaign content, website analytics, ambassador feedback), training attendance figures (over 750 registrations and 400 attendances in the first five webinars), and partner reports on how survivor testimony has influenced specific service decisions. The methodology foregrounds survivor empowerment and ensures their contributions directly shape multi agency practice.

### Wow factor

Survivor testimony directly influenced new service commissioning, including a cybercrime support service, while also shaping public campaigns and national policy discussions. This model shows how lived experience can transform communication, training and system design across an entire partnership landscape.

### Synopsis

The Survivor Voice Ambassadors programme places lived experience at the centre of domestic abuse policy, communication and service improvement across Kent and Medway. The programme was established to ensure that survivors' voices are used ethically, safely and constructively to influence system development. It provides a structured, trauma informed mechanism for survivors to share experiences in ways that suit their needs and preferences, recognising that narratives of abuse carry emotional, psychological and safeguarding considerations.

Ambassadors are involved in shaping the Kent & Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership website, producing content that reflects survivor priorities, improves clarity for the public and strengthens accessibility. Survivors specifically commented on elements such as layout, multiple choice features, supportive tone and use of survivor quotations. Their feedback has directly influenced the site's structure and communication style.

The programme also plays a central role in public campaigns such as #KnowSeeSpeakOut and themed awareness events including Valentine's Day "Love Bombing" communications. Survivor stories have featured in BBC Kent and BBC South East media coverage, ensuring that public messaging remains grounded in authentic experience. Ambassadors contribute to social media calendars, press materials and recorded voiceovers used in professional training.

Their insights have shaped multi agency learning. For example, ambassador testimony has been used to develop the End Domestic Abuse Partnership Learning Webinar series, which has attracted more than 750 registrations and 400 attendances. Survivor involvement also strengthened the Kent Domestic Abuse Champions programme, including through a survivor led presentation at its first Communities of Practice session.

Importantly, ambassador input has influenced operational and strategic decisions. Survivors contributed to white paper discussions, provided evidence shaping Operation Argus "Slam on the Brakes", informed a renewed focus on housing issues and contributed to new commissioning of services such as cybercrime support and mental health specialist roles. Their insight has also been used in surveys informing redesign of therapeutic and ISVA services.

The programme demonstrates strong partnership working across KCC, Kent Police, health services, DA providers, communications teams, media organisations and national stakeholders. Survivors' contributions are documented and anonymised, enabling their voices to shape decisions without compromising safety.

Against the LARIA criteria, the programme demonstrates:

- User involvement: survivors influence outputs at every stage.
- Impact: commissioning, training, communications and partnership policy have all been shaped by this work.
- Innovation: survivor voices are integrated into multimedia campaigns, training webinars, website design and social media materials.

- Communication excellence: the programme elevates stories that resonate with both professionals and the public.
- Partnership working: the programme is embedded across the Domestic Abuse Partnership.

The SVA programme demonstrates how survivor led insight can transform local systems, strengthen messaging and drive ethical, evidence informed improvements across complex public service environments.

What should LARIA members learn from your award entry?

LARIA members can learn how survivor centred methodologies can enhance both research quality and public communication. The programme shows that involving people with lived experience strengthens not only evidence gathering but also the relevance, authenticity and clarity of outputs. Survivor involvement ensures that professional messages resonate with the public and reflect real world experiences rather than organisational assumptions.

The model also illustrates how ethical engagement can be operationalised through trauma informed practice, participant control and safeguarding protocols. It demonstrates that research with survivors does not have to be extractive; instead, it can be empowering and collaborative.

Another valuable lesson is the role of survivor narratives in improving cross agency practice. Their contributions have shaped training, digital content, commissioning and media campaigns. This shows how qualitative insight can drive impact across multiple tiers of a complex system.

Finally, the programme demonstrates how partnerships can integrate lived experience into continuous improvement rather than treating it as a standalone project. Survivor voices are now embedded in ongoing public campaigns, professional learning and policy discussions. This level of integration represents a model of best practice for local authorities and public bodies aiming to strengthen engagement, improve communication and ensure services reflect the communities they support.

Is there a published report or background information on your study publicly available?

[Practitioners - Kent & Medway Domestic Abuse Partnership](#)