



Institute For
Addressing
Strangulation

Survivor Involvement at IFAS

Our Approach

Updated May 2025

Introduction

The Institute for Addressing Strangulation (IFAS), funded by the Home Office, was established in October 2022 following the introduction of a new standalone offence of strangulation, which came into effect in England & Wales in June 2022.

IFAS aims to increase awareness of the risks associated with strangulation amongst the public and professionals with the intention of improving the response to victims and survivors when they seek help and support.

We encourage professionals and organisations to collect data on where victim/survivors of strangulation present and disclose their experiences to help us understand the number of people affected and those who may be at more risk of strangulation. We continue to develop research and audit programmes to inform our work and our understanding of strangulation in the UK, and hearing from victim/survivors about the lived experience of strangulation is a key part of this.

Our adopted principles

IFAS works in partnership with SafeLives which is a UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, for everyone and for good. SafeLives has a well-established Authentic Voice programme which aims to include the voices of those with lived experience of domestic abuse as a vital component of their work.

In 2022, SafeLives Authentic Voice Pioneers (a group of survivors) developed a toolkit for implementing lived experiences into organisations.

At IFAS we have adopted the principles outlined in the toolkit and incorporated our own practices and objectives to develop this approach on survivor involvement at IFAS. The box below provides an overview of these core principles.

(1) Do no harm – Acknowledging that harm can occur as a result of what we do or do not do, with that in mind our work is trauma informed and risk is recognised and addressed with all survivors who come into contact with IFAS.

(2) Expert by experience – survivors and professionals bring knowledge which is vital in responding to strangulation, we try to avoid ‘them’ and ‘us’ and survivors are valued and compensated for their expertise.

(3) Speak your truth – survivors are not spokespeople for the organisations they work with, survivors get to choose what/when and with whom they share their experiences and recognise the impact that their voices might have on others.

(4) Equality & diversity – anyone can experience strangulation and our experiences can be affected by our different identities, services should find ways to access voices they are not hearing.

(5) Heart & start – we aim to include survivors from the outset of projects and ask them to create and not rate work. Survivors are informed of the impact of their work and are safely acknowledged.

(6) Care – IFAS and survivors work together to acknowledge the potential impact of sharing lived experience, IFAS gives choices in terms of the support they are able to provide and survivors are responsible for taking care of themselves. IFAS and survivors learn and develop together – nobody knows everything!

What you can expect from IFAS

At IFAS we have incorporated these principles alongside establishing our own ways of working in line with our funding and key objectives. IFAS employ a Survivor Liaison and Research Worker to engage survivors who wish to contribute to the work of IFAS.

The Survivor Liaison Worker is not a support worker but will work individually with the survivors to establish how they can and would like to contribute to our work considering their experiences and skills.

There is a risk to you in being engaged with this work. Participating and supporting our aims and objectives might re trigger some of your previous experiences and therefore symptoms of trauma. We will work with you in a trauma informed way in an attempt to keep you safe and well.

You will know yourself better than anyone else, if at any point in your engagement with IFAS you would prefer not to be contacted or contribute, that is absolutely fine. We do not provide direct support but can, where appropriate, provide details of support services, listed which are listed here on our website.

You may or may not have reported to the police. That is entirely your decision. However, there are certain considerations we need to make in case you wish to report to the police.

Any details about the incident can be information that would be helpful when the police investigate a crime. To safeguard any future investigation, we do not ask you to disclose all the detail of what happened. To help us improve the response of professionals and improve understanding of the impacts of strangulation we are interested in the impact of what happened to you and the response you received from professionals.

This is important so as not to cause you more distress and be unhelpful to your recovery.

About the IFAS survivor group

The IFAS survivor group meets monthly. A poll is sent to all members to agree a time and date that most people can attend.

Some group sessions have a particular focus, this will always be shared beforehand so that you can decide whether or not you want to attend. For example, a recent group focussed on reviewing the information leaflet for victims of strangulation.

Other groups are around inviting new members and getting to know each other, or just an open space to bring issues and topics of your choice.

There is no pressure to attend the group meetings, sometimes we are a small group other times everyone can make it, it varies depending on what is going on in the lives of those in the group.

Examples of survivor involvement & projects

To date, survivors have been involved in our work in the following ways:

- Development of training and resources – for example providing case studies for SafeLives training, recording videos and audio resources to share the impact of strangulation in webinars and developing the information leaflet for victims
- Survivor specific projects – the reclaiming my voice project in 2024 is an example of this.
- Participated on interview panels for the recruitment of roles at IFAS.
- Spoken at our conferences
- Engaged with the journalists/the media
- Written blogs for our website – <https://ifas.org.uk/blog/>

Confidentiality

We are inviting you to share your experiences to inform best practice and improve how victim/survivors of strangulation are responded to by professionals and the services they work for in the UK.

We want to give you as much information as possible so that you can make an informed choice about what you tell us. We will keep the information you share with us confidential to IFAS. This means that only the people who work at IFAS have access to that information. We work with SafeLives to deliver training and conduct research. We will ask your permission to share your experience with our partners or other interested parties. We will explain what your experience is being used for and how it might be helpful to any given audience, you have the right to refuse any request.

Whilst you have a right to privacy there are certain circumstances when we may need to breach confidentiality under the following circumstances:

- If you or someone else is at risk of harm
- There is a risk to the public e.g. terrorism
- If there is a court order (police investigation and prosecution)

If we need to share your information, we will let you know who with, what information we are sharing and why. Very occasionally we may share information without your knowledge if that puts you at risk of further harm.

Embedding this survivor involvement approach into how we develop projects is an ongoing process, that we aim to continue to develop.

At this point, we have two key approaches for engaging survivors in our projects:

- **Survivors are made aware of projects/areas for involvement and contribute to those they are interested in** – information regarding timescales, payment and required input are outlined from the outset.
- **Survivor group sessions for specific projects or issues where survivor experiences are required** – for example in the process of developing best practice resources we require the experience of those who have lived experience of strangulation to understand what works and what could be done better.

Data protection & data management

IFAS are committed to ensuring that your personal information is protected and processed appropriately when using our services. We will only collect the minimum information required and process it to provide you with the best possible service. This policy relates to usage of any personal information we collect from you. We may collect personal information when:

- You agree to participate with IFAS and share your experiences and details with us.
- You apply to attend a training course or conference run by the IFAS or our partner SafeLives.
- You contact or correspond with the IFAS for any other reason.

This policy may be updated periodically to take account of changes to relevant legislation or in response to specific issues raised so we advise you to regularly review the website to ensure that you are aware of any such changes.

When you participate in projects or share your experiences to create resources, we will always discuss consent and complete a consent form to agree how your information will be used, as this may vary from project to project.

Help & support

It is important to understand that IFAS does **not** provide frontline or direct support to victim/survivors. The survivor liaison worker will work with you in a trauma informed and supportive way but contributing to IFAS does not replace advocacy or mental health support that you may need.

If you do need additional support, you may find our get help page useful - <https://ifas.org.uk/get-help/>



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