

Sarah Hill, CEO of **IDAS (Independent Domestic Abuse Services)**, leads one of the UK's largest specialist domestic abuse charities. Working across Yorkshire, IDAS supports thousands of adults and children affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence every year.

IDAS has a clear vision – to increase the number of safe, stable places available to those fleeing abuse. Currently, the charity is forced to turn away 60% of people who contact them for emergency accommodation due to lack of capacity. At the same time, IDAS and other women's services charities are reliant on landlords who are increasingly redirecting properties towards more lucrative temporary accommodation.

This is why IDAS was determined to own its own properties and they approached SASC with a plan to purchase a first portfolio of 16 houses in Barnsley and Sheffield to cater for single women and families. SASC provided a loan of £1.7m plus a grant of £0.4m from Access' Cost of Living support programme and the project was off and running. During the ramp up phase, IDAS won a new contract in Doncaster and the plan was flexed to move some of the purchases to this new area.

This shift from leasing to owning was more than logistical – according to Sarah it was transformational. She explains how it is part of their medium-term strategy to become a registered social landlord and offers IDAS not only control over property standards but a greater ability to respond flexibly to unmet need.

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By building ownership experience, IDAS can now assert greater influence in commissioning discussions, demonstrating that they bring not only service delivery but housing assets to the table, ensuring they are indispensable partners in future tenders.

While IDAS explored various financing options, including traditional bank loans and leasing, the charity found SASC's shared-risk model and supportive relationship to be unique. Sarah valued the transparent, consultative nature of the process, which allowed open dialogue and mutual problem-solving. This gave IDAS the confidence to move forward with a bold new approach.

The due diligence process was described as challenging but empowering. It prompted useful internal reflection and helped the executive team and board evaluate their readiness for housing ownership. The fact that SASC was able to introduce IDAS to peer organisations who had already been on the journey was particularly helpful in giving the team and trustees confidence to move forward.

Once the project was underway, IDAS worked with property consultants to source homes. While the consultants were helpful in handling negotiations, Sarah highlighted the value of local knowledge, noting that IDAS teams often knew the nuance of local areas better than external partners. In future, she suggested a hybrid model where internal teams shortlist and consultants negotiate – an approach echoed by other SASC partners like The Brick and one we will look to incorporate in future projects.

Despite minor challenges in sourcing properties, Sarah says that SASC remained flexible – allowing geographic adjustments to the

portfolio and continuing to offer practical and responsive support. Sarah described the relationship as a true partnership, where SASC “wants you to succeed.”

Sarah says that the experience with SASC has been a launchpad for broader strategic ambitions. IDAS is preparing to present a five-year housing plan to its board, aiming to grow its property portfolio and recruit a dedicated Housing Development Lead. The ultimate goal: become a Registered Social Landlord and significantly expand housing provision across Yorkshire.

What once seemed out of reach is now central to IDAS' strategic direction. Sarah shared that the SASC partnership has “unlocked doors” internally and created a lasting shift in how the charity views its future.

We are proud to partner with Sarah and IDAS in their mission to offer safety, dignity and independence to those experiencing domestic abuse. Their bold vision for growth and housing ownership is exactly the kind of transformation we hope to support through our funding.

Sarah Hill
CEO, IDAS

