

Help STOP the Crisis in Rape Crisis

Extent of sexual violence

- 45% of women in the UK have experienced some form of domestic violence, sexual violence or stalking
- It is conservatively estimated that 300,000 women suffer rape and serious sexual assault every year
- 31% of children who are sexually abused reach adulthood without telling anyone
- Statistics on survivors who report the sexual violence to the police are just the tip of the iceberg – only 10% of women who access Rape Crisis centres report to the police

Impact of sexual violence

- Sexual violence can have profound effects on individuals, impacting on physical and mental health, inter-personal relationships, ability to work or study etc.
- The cost to the state of sexual violence was £8.5 billion in 2003-04, with much of this cost being lost outputs, due to long term health issues
- Research from New Philanthropy Capital shows that the total cost sexual violence in England and Wales is £25.7 billion per year, with the total cost of violence against women at £40.1 billion, more than the government spends each year on defence

Rape Crisis centres provide essential, long-term support to thousands of women and girls across the UK. They are a crucial support service for women who have suffered historic abuse, such as childhood sexual assault, and the majority of women and girls who access centres do not report to the police. Because the impact of sexual violence is often enduring and far reaching, Rape Crisis centres provide long-term counselling, support and advocacy. They are independent, women-centred and work to empower women and girls to take back control over their lives.

Yet Rape Crisis centres are facing a funding crisis - nine centres have closed in the last five years and many are struggling to find funding to continue providing services to survivors of sexual violence. Rape Crisis centres need long-term, sustainable, ring-fenced funding to survive.

If you think support for women and girls to rebuild their lives after sexual violence must be a right, not a privilege determined by a postcode lottery, then there are simple actions you can take to make a difference.

Sign-up in support

There are several campaigns by women's organisations calling for better funding for Rape Crisis centres. It only takes a minute to add your support and help to strengthen our voice:

- New Statesman campaign calling for proper funding for Rape Crisis centres www.newstatesman.com/subjects/sexual-violence-and-rape-crisis and petition to the Prime Minister <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/RapeCrisis/> (ends 11 March 2009)
- Fawcett's *Demand Justice for Rape Victims* campaign which is calling for better funded support services for survivors and for an improved response to the rape conviction rate (which is just 5.7%) www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=599
- WRC's **why women?** campaign which calls for women's voluntary and community organisations to be acknowledged and supported by Government www.whywomen.org.uk
- Truth About Rape campaign, challenging the myths about sexual violence www.truthaboutrape.co.uk

Actions you can take

Find out if you have a Rape Crisis centre operating in your local area: Look on www.rapecrisis.org.uk then contact the centre and ask them what actions would be most needed or offer to support them by becoming a volunteer on their helpline or a Trustee. If there is no Rape Crisis centre working in your area, this should be highlighted in your contact with local representatives, policy decision makers and influencers and other organisations.

Talk to other organisations about sexual violence and the 'crisis in Rape Crisis': What could voluntary and community organisations in your local area do, individually and collectively, to challenge sexual violence and the lack of funding to Rape Crisis centres? Let your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) know that this is an important issue for the women's sector and that you want them to raise the 'crisis in Rape Crisis' in their contact with decision makers, such as Local Strategic Partnerships. See the NAVCA website for details of your local CVS <http://webdb.navca.org.uk/home.aspx> and the WRC briefing on how CVS's can raise sexual violence as an issue locally http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2008/s/sexualviolencebriefing.pdf.

Contact your local council: To find the contact details for your local council, go to www.direct.gov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/LocalCouncils/AToZOfLocalCouncils/index.htm?indexChar=H. Write to the Chief Executive of your local council and ask them:

- How the council is implementing the Sexual Violence and Abuse Action Plan (SVAAP), including setting up a sexual violence forum
- How the council supports specialist services, including Rape Crisis, for survivors of sexual violence
- Whether the needs of sexual violence survivors are included in the council's Gender Equality Scheme, and if not, why not, given the prevalence and impact of sexual violence against women
- What the council will do to address National Indicator 26 ("Specialist support to victims of a serious sexual offence")

Contact your Local Strategic Partnership, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and local Primary Care Trust: Ask them:

- How they are supporting Rape Crisis centres and how they would support setting up a new centre if there is not one locally
- What action they are taking to prevent sexual violence and prioritising the needs of women survivors of sexual violence
- Whether the needs of sexual violence survivors are included in their Gender Equality Scheme, and if not, why not, given the prevalence and impact of sexual violence against women

Contact your MP or visit their surgery: Find your MP at www.theyworkforyou.com and ask them to address the local issue in terms of Rape Crisis services and also to raise the issue with the Ministers for Women (Harriet Harman and Maria Eagle) and the Minister for the Third Sector (Kevin Brennan).

For further information on taking action, contact WRC on 020 7324 3030 or info@wrc.org.uk or visit the Rape Crisis (England and Wales) website www.rapecrisis.org.uk