

Help STOP the Crisis in Rape Crisis

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 control back 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.

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.

Useful facts

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 80,000 women suffer rape 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

Key findings from *The Crisis in Rape Crisis*

- Rape Crisis centres are spectacularly under-funded, compared to other services providing support to victims of crime, such as Victim Support which received £30m from the Home Office
- Centres surveyed across England and Wales had a combined annual income of just over £3.5m. In 2004-05, the Government spent twice this amount each week on advertising and public relations
- The average annual income of a Rape Crisis centre is just over £80,000 - only marginally more than the cost, to the state of one rape
- Rape Crisis centres are crucial support services for women with historic experiences of sexual violence (such as childhood sexual abuse), as well as supporting women with recent experiences
- There is high demand for Rape Crisis services. The total number of average days on waiting lists was 1,929 days - or 5.3 years
- Health agencies (such as Primary Care Trusts) and local partnerships (e.g. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships) are often unwilling to fund Rape Crisis centres despite significant numbers of referrals from, and the obvious value to, organisations in these sectors/partnerships

Key findings from *Map of Gaps*

- Most women in the UK have no access to a Rape Crisis centre
- A third of all local authorities have no specialist violence against women support services

- Less than one in ten local authorities have specialist services for ethnic minority women that would address forced marriage, female genital mutilation and crimes in the name of honour, amongst other issues

Gender Equality Duty

- This legalisation requires all public bodies to promote equality of opportunity between women and men, and to eliminate harassment and discrimination
- Sexual violence is a gendered crime, perpetrated overwhelmingly by men against women and children. It is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality

Sexual Assault Referral Centres

- Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) are a relatively new phenomenon and the SARC model was developed to ensure high quality criminal justice responses to survivors of (primarily recent) sexual assault
- SARCs provide very different services to those delivered by Rape Crisis centres. The majority of SARCs are statutory-led and generally provide services to those who have been recently assaulted, whereas Rape Crisis centres are independent, provide long-term support and women-only space, and support survivors who have experienced recent and historic abuse and/or have complex needs

Actions you can take

Find out if you have a Rape Crisis centre operating in your local area

From www.rapecrisis.org.uk/alpha.html. Contact the centre and let them know what actions you are going to take. They might have ideas on what actions would be most needed. 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>.

Use the Gender Equality Duty

The Tools for Change toolkit, produced by End Violence Against Women (EVAW) and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), provides information about how women’s organisations can hold public bodies to account using the Gender Equality Duty. There is a lot of evidence as to why sexual violence should be a priority for many public bodies. For local councils and partnerships, there is also clear direction from Government about addressing sexual violence and funding for services in the Sexual Violence and Abuse Action Plan, Public Service Agreements and National Indicators.

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 and ask them:

- How the council is implementing the Sexual Violence and Abuse Action Plan (SVAAP)
- 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 given the prevalence and impact of sexual violence
- What the council will do to address National Indicator 26 (“Specialist support to victims of a serious sexual offence”)

Contact your Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

LSPs (partnerships of local government, businesses and the voluntary and community sector) can play an important role in supporting Rape Crisis centres as they determine local priorities and which services are needed. To find the contact details of your LSP, go to your local council website. Write to the Chair of the LSP and the voluntary and community sector representative and ask them about how the LSP is:

- Working with the Sexual Violence Forum (normally run by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership or CDRP, under the SVAAP guidelines). If no Forum has been established, ask the LSP how they will address this with the CDRP
- Prioritising the needs of women survivors of sexual violence
- Going to address NI 26

Contact your Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP)

A CDRP is a combination of the police, local authority and other agencies who have banded together to develop and implement strategies for tackling crime. CDRP details are available from www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/regions/regions_map.htm. CDRPs are a sub-group of the LSP that looks specifically at local issues of crime, for example domestic violence is usually addressed through this forum. Write to the Chair of your local CDRP and ask them:

- How the Sexual Violence Forum is addressing the sustainability of the Rape Crisis sector and/or supporting local services. If no there is no Sexual Violence Forum, ask the CDRP when they intend to set one up
- What actions the CDRP is taking to prevent sexual violence
- About the CDRP's support of the local Rape Crisis centre. If there is no local Rape Crisis centre, ask them how they would support the setting-up of a centre (e.g. designate funds)
- How they will address NI 26

Contact your local Primary Care Trust (PCT)

Your local health service should be addressing the health needs of local people. Your PCT will work with local authorities and other agencies that provide health and social care locally to make sure your local community needs are being met. PCTs are now at the centre of the NHS and control 80% of the NHS budget. Got to www.nhs.uk/ServiceDirectories/Pages/PrimaryCareTrustListing.aspx for PCT contact details. Write to the Chief Executive of the PCT and ask them:

- What specialist support services the PCT provides to survivors of sexual violence
- How the PCT works with and supports the local Rape Crisis centre. If there is no local Rape Crisis centre, ask them how they would support the setting-up of a local centre (e.g. designate funds)
- How the PCT addresses the needs of survivors of sexual violence in their Gender Equality Scheme

Contact your MP or visit their surgery

Find your MP at www.theyworkforyou.com. Ask your MP to sign up to the following EDM, supporting the New Statesman campaign calling for better funding for Rape Crisis centres. www.edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=353777&SESSION=891. You can also ask your MP to contact the following ministers and raise the issue of sustainable funding to Rape Crisis centres:

- Responsible for the Government's priorities for women's/gender equality - Cabinet Minister for Women (Harriet Harman) and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Barbara Follett)
- Government lead on the voluntary and community sector - Minister for the Third Sector (Phil Hope)
- Local government - Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Hazel Blears) and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Baroness Kay Andrews)
- Health - Secretary of State for Health (Alan Johnson), Minister of State for Public Health (Dawn Primarolo) and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Ivan Lewis)

Sign-up in support

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

- WRC and Rape Crisis (England and Wales) open-letter to the Prime Minister at www.wrc.org.uk
- 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/>
- EAW campaign www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk and petition asking Gordon Brown to take urgent action to end the postcode lottery in violence against women services <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/violenceservices>
- 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

Useful resources

Latest statistics on Rape Crisis centres

WRC and Rape Crisis (England and Wales) (2008) *The Crisis in Rape Crisis. A survey of Rape Crisis (England and Wales) centres*. WRC: London. www.wrc.org.uk

How and why local authorities should address funding to Rape Crisis centres

WRC, Rape Crisis (England and Wales) and NAVCA (2007) *Briefing for local infrastructure organisations on the 'Crisis in Rape Crisis' and sexual violence policy drivers*. WRC: London. www.wrc.org.uk/downloads/Polycystuff/Sexualviolencebriefing.pdf

Shows the geographical postcode lottery of violence against women support services

Coy, M., L. Kelly and J. Foord with V. Balding and R. Davenport (2007) *Map of Gaps: the postcode lottery of violence against women services*. EAW in partnership with the EHRC: London. www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/home.asp

Outlines the differences between Rape Crisis centres and SARCs and why both are needed

Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, Rape Crisis (England and Wales), EAW and Fawcett (2008) *Not either/or but both/and: Why we need Rape Crisis centres and Sexual Assault Referral Centres*. Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit: London. www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=432

Toolkit to hold public bodies to account through using the Gender Equality Duty

EAW and EHRC (2007) *Tools for Change: Public Sector Equality Duties and Violence Against Women*. EAW: London. www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/publications.asp

Sexual Violence and Abuse Action Plan and Implementation Guide

Interdepartmental Ministerial Group on Sexual Offending (2007) *Cross Government Action Plan on Sexual Violence and Abuse*. HM Government: London. www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/sexualoffences/sexual03.htm

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