



Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

for adults, children and young people in Cheshire and Merseyside



Annual General Report 2024 - 2025



Introduction

This year is our 30th anniversary of providing support and information to survivors of sexual violence. There is still very much a need for specialist support and the feedback we gather from our service users evidences how important it is that we continue to exist and be an independent provider of support in this field. Our mission statement is that we aim to provide a excellent service and this is something that underpins the decision making of the Board of Trustees, Senior Management and Staff and what we all aim to achieve on a daily basis.

We would not be able to continue our work if its wasn't for the support from commissioners and in particular we are grateful to Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner and Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner for supporting our work financially and taking the lead in also securing funding from all of the Local Authorities in our catchment areas.

We are particularly proud of delivering a seamless Aftercare Service to survivors in Cheshire and in working in partnership with Merseyside RASA to deliver the same in Merseyside in Knowsley and St Helens .

However we recognise that as referrals increase, we need to find more funds for our work so we are also grateful for the support of the public and ex service users who have raised funds for our service – a big thank you to them.

In this report we want to celebrate the work of our staff team and the unswerving bravery and resilience shown by our service users so a big thank you from the Senior Management Team.

Julie Evans

**Julie Evans Operations
Director**

Helen Wardman

**Helen Wardman
Therapy Services Director**



About us

Established since 1995 we are an independent charity that provides specialist trauma support services to adults, children and young people who have experienced sexual violence, including rape; sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse.

We strive to provide a high quality, specialist care service within a safe, non-judgemental environment. Each service user is at the centre of all decisions relating to the criminal justice system, health and social care; and therapeutic interventions.

We are an accredited member of Rape Crisis England and Wales, our Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Service and Child Independent Sexual Violence Service is accredited by Lime Culture, and our therapeutic service is organisationally accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.


Our work covers the counties of Cheshire and parts of Merseyside. We are currently commissioned to provide a seamless aftercare support service to survivors of sexual violence from any of our nine centres, or remotely by telephone or online. This support is offered in close partnership with the two local Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SAFE Place Merseyside and St Mary's Manchester).



In Cheshire, we are funded by a consortium that includes Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, NHS England and the four local authorities (Cheshire East, Cheshire West and City of Chester, Halton, and Warrington).

In Merseyside we work in partnership with Merseyside RASA to provide a seamless aftercare service to all survivors of sexual violence in Knowsley and St Helens (with RASA covering the rest of Merseyside). This is funded by a consortium which includes Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioners Office, NHS England, Knowsley Public Health and St Helens local authority. We additionally receive support from national government funds such as The Rape Support Fund, and the Big Lottery Fund. Through these partnerships we aim to provide support for service users throughout their recovery – from support with the criminal justice system, and on to therapeutic work through a seamless pathway of care.

We have a staff and sessional team of nearly 50 trained and experienced specialist workers.



“ I’m proud to work for an organisation rooted in feminist values that centre survivors’ voices, challenge inequality, and strive for social justice. My work is about more than delivering training, it’s about shifting power, raising awareness, and building communities that understand and believe survivors.

It’s a privilege to be part of a team that is unapologetically committed to creating change and supporting women and girls in ways that are empowering, inclusive, and grounded in compassion.”

Training & Outreach Manager- Kirsty Williams



Mission Statement

The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre aims to be a centre of excellence in the provision and delivery of services to individuals and families who have been affected by sexual violence.

We believe that sexual violence is a cause and consequence of gender inequality and work to feminist principals throughout our service delivery.

Our Aims

- To maintain a free and confidential service, which is therapeutic and educational
 - To provide the choice of women-only spaces in all aspects of our service delivery
 - To respect the rights of women, men and young people who access our service
- To support clients in making decisions through counselling and information
- To raise awareness of issues relating to sexual violence
- To maintain confidentiality, allowing service users to trust the service we offer
- To evaluate the service on a regular basis, and to develop the service in response to the demands of our clients where possible

Our Services

- Information line
- Independent Sexual Violence Advisors
- Specialist counselling
- Children and young people's service
- Group work
- Training and awareness raising
- Wellbeing Project

We've Offered...

9260

**Counselling F2F
Sessions**

2417

Assessments

7403

**ISVA
Interventions
(hrs)**

Our Feedback...

99%

**Felt supported
through the
Criminal Justice
System**

95%

**Felt better able to cope
& build resilience to
move forward with daily
life following the
support received**

97%

**Reported feeling
better informed and
empowered to act**

89%

**Reported an
improvement
in their well-
being**

99%

**Were satisfied
with the service
received and
would recommend
to others.**

**We received
2,209
referrals
from
Cheshire**

**We received
558
referrals from
St Helens and
Knowlsey**

**We received
128
referrals from
out of area**

**Total referrals
2,767**

Across Cheshire, St Helens & Knowsley

ISVA Service

Across Cheshire and Merseyside, our dedicated ISVA team have played an important role in delivering vital support for survivors of sexual violence, no matter when it happened. Our focus is around the criminal justice process.

The ISVA Service consists of an:

- ISVA Manager
- 9 ISVAs
- 2 CHISVAs
- 2 Family ISVAs

All members of the ISVA team are fully trained and accredited, with the service accredited with the Lime Culture Quality Standards to ensure we are delivering high quality support and advocacy to anyone accessing our service.

The team have undertaken work relating to:

- Providing personalised emotional and practical support
- Information around available options to allow informed choices to take place
- Advocacy to help survivors understand their rights
- Supporting survivors in court
- Connecting individuals with other support services
- Raising awareness around sexual violence
- Understanding trauma and the impact this may have on individuals
- Networking opportunities by attending multi-agency events in local areas to discuss and raise awareness around the support we can provide



My ISVA has done everything I have asked for and more. You have been there for me at the end of the phone in all situations, through the hardest time of my life. You have worked so hard, and it really hasn't gone unnoticed. I struggle to put into words what you have done for me not just supportive but really going out of your way to problem solve situations I couldn't deal with mentally. I really hope the work you have done for me, you continue to do for the women that need it. You really are an angel in my eyes. Not all hero's wear capes. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.



ISVA Service working in partnership:

The team have also been involved in opportunities to work in collaboration with other agencies to promote a better understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities. This has enhanced communication, offered shared learning and increased trust between professionals. It also allowed agencies to share best practices and improved outcomes for survivors.

Some of the work undertaken:

- Lived Experience Forums – clients were invited to local forums to share their experiences of the criminal justice process with their local police force.
- ISVA clinics – ISVAs attend monthly clinics based at local police stations.
- New campaign involvement – #Checkwithmefirst pilot – a range of cards to help inform healthcare practitioners around small adjustments to make survivors more comfortable when attending medical appointments.
- Attendance at local scrutiny panels and RASSO team CPD training days.
- Regular meetings with the Crown Prosecution Service following the introduction of the Victim Transformation Programme.

Challenges and how these are met:

This year, one of our main challenges is the ISVA holding list. This is often caused by delays in court, particularly adjournments which are extremely impactful to survivors and the service. We are working with other agencies involved to look at ways to manage this and local solutions. We have made changes to our ISVA framework to support staff with the additional caseloads and managing survivors' expectations around the service we provide. This framework has created a more effective, efficient and positive impact to service delivery, ensuring survivors are at the forefront of decisions and they continue to be fully supported by our ISVAs.



Specialist Counselling Service

This year our dedicated team of Specialist Counsellors have continued to offer Trauma Focused Therapy to people who have experienced any form of sexual violence. Working from community based locations, we strive to provide safe and supportive environments to all clients engaging with our therapy services, including adults, adolescents and children. To provide greater accessibility we also offer a Remote Therapy Service through online video or telephone appointments. We have seen a further increase in referrals this year and have provided over 9260 therapy sessions to our clients.

RASASC Counselling Service is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, which evidences the consistently high quality of our therapeutic work and is a widely respected Service Standard.

Our Therapy Team is committed to professional development which ensures that they are up to date in their knowledge and skills when working with people who have experienced trauma through sexual violence, this includes understanding the far reaching impact on mental health, physical health; behaviour; and relationships. Understanding how trauma affects each individual means that we can help clients to process their thoughts and emotions; address specific symptoms and distress; develop coping skills; and facilitate healing.

Counsellors are client centred in their approach – meaning that it is our ethos to respect people’s choice to work at their own pace, and with the content that they choose to share. Our Therapy Service is integrative and adaptable, using a range of modalities to address the issues raised by our clients, including Person Centred Therapy; Cognitive Behavioural Therapy; Psychoeducation; Solution Focused Therapy; Creative techniques; and EMDR. Counselling is time limited, which gives the benefit of providing a focused approach, with regular reviews in place to ensure that therapeutic goals are achievable.



**“ This has helped me understand a lot of my thought processes. It has helped me join the dots to why I react to situations and life events. I have also identified ways I can move on. My counsellor was brilliant!
Male 44 ”**

I cannot put into words the difference that my counsellor has made to my life. They helped me move away from guilt and a sense of why me? in a way that has simply transformed my life, but also that of my family. It may seem overstated to say that they have changed my life, but they have, and I will be forever grateful for the help, support, kindness, but most of all understanding that they have shown me. Thank you.

Female 58



I feel like a weight has been lifted talking about what I needed to address. I am looking forward to the future with my family. The support I have received has helped me gain a better understanding of myself and I feel proud of what I have achieved.

Male 35



I have found the counselling process extremely helpful. My counsellor is exceptionally skilled and has really helped me process it all. They helped me regain control of my mind and life that will impact me and my family positively forever. Thank you.

Female 31



Children & Young People's Service

Our Children and Young People's Service has continued to offer support in the form of specialised child and family ISVA's and trauma focused therapeutic interventions to children aged 5 and above. Our specialist child counsellors cater the support to each child's individual needs, using a range of techniques, including TF-CBT, person-centred counselling, play therapy and other creative approaches to support each child in their recovery.

NSPCC Talk Pants Campaign

Since September 2024, we have been involved with the NSPCC 'Talk PANTS' campaign in collaboration with St Helens local authority. Talk PANTS helps to support children to recognise what abuse is and how they can speak up if anything doesn't feel right. Talk PANTS is aimed at parents and carers of children aged 3-11, giving adults advice on how to talk to children in an age-appropriate way about sexual abuse, without using any scary words. RASASC have supported the launch and delivery of this campaign across St Helens, sharing information on our service and promoting the aftercare support we provide in the area.

Mum commented: I can't thank you our counsellor enough for the support you have given my daughter. It has had such a massive improvement, not just for her but also for me. Knowing she's happy and has no worries means everything to me, she has loved having you to talk to
Client circled the words: heard, happy, confident and relaxed
Female- Age 6

My counsellor has helped me to understand and accept my feelings and emotions. Helped me to feel more normal again and like myself. Helped me to process my emotions and realise that I can have more control.
Male- Aged 17



A Day in the life of an ISVA...



A typical day for me as an ISVA is to provide specialist support to survivors who have experienced sexual violence. This may include advocacy, practical and emotional support and helping survivors navigate the criminal justice system.

The day may begin with checking emails, messages and responding to any inquiries. I often have scheduled appointments with clients, either in person, online meetings or telephone sessions to discuss support required and to assess any further advocacy needs. As an ISVA, I also need to consider any unplanned, urgent requests and prioritise my workload based on minimising risk and safeguarding concerns.

I am actively involved in advocating for survivors within the criminal justice system, attending external meetings or court proceedings to ensure the needs of clients are met. Today I am completing a support session with a client to discuss any anxieties, challenges around the court process and practical arrangements needed when attending court. My aim is to answer any questions the survivor has, offering them information around choices or their rights and to help ease any of their worries. We discussed the client attending a pre-trial visit to help them become familiar with the court environment, including the court layout and waiting areas. We also looked at various options around special measures in order for them to make an informed decision about how best for them to give evidence during the trial. Court can be an emotionally challenging and overwhelming time for survivors; my role is to ensure that they are supported, offering that reassurance and providing a familiar face during stressful moments.

As an ISVA, I may also be involved in inter-agency collaboration with the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and healthcare providers to ensure survivors receive appropriate care and support.

What is the best part of working in the ISVA role?

The most rewarding part is supporting clients through the criminal justice process, right up to the trial and follow on support. I am privileged to be part of a survivor's journey, witnessing their progress and strength. ISVAs often work with people over extended periods, developing a strong rapport and offering a trusted and empathetic presence. It is incredibly rewarding seeing survivors gain confidence, make informed choices and moving towards healing.

I really enjoy my role as an ISVA, particularly supporting clients through the process, and reassuring them you are here to help, with the goal to bring them the justice they deserve.

Wellbeing Project

Now in its second year, our Wellbeing Project, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, has continued to provide vital spaces where women affected by sexual violence can come together, connect, and begin to rebuild a sense of safety and belonging within their own communities.

The feedback the project continues to receive highlights how the project creates a safe space for women to connect with each other, try new things and build lasting relationships.

As we look ahead to year three, we remain committed to nurturing these vital community spaces, responding to the needs of survivors, and ensuring that no woman feels alone on her journey to healing.

This year, the project has offered:

- Coffee & Chat sessions
- Regular weekly walks across Cheshire
- Yoga & Stretch sessions
- Gardening, Plot to Plate Sessions
- Pottery Sessions
- Boxing Sessions
- Online support group
- Arts & Crafts

plus much more!

“ I have enjoyed meeting new people and trying something new. I have enjoyed being outdoors and the social prescription benefits of nature for my wellbeing. ”



Resilience Program- Cheshire West & Chester



In partnership with Chester West and Chester RASASC has developed a recovery group intervention for our adult clients called the resilience programme. This aims to equip clients with skills and knowledge to identify triggers, and recognise the signs and symptoms which are indicative of changes to their mental health and well-being. This is achieved by using psycho-education, peer discussions and practical resources. The programme also aims to empower clients to feel more able to make positive choices and to identify goals for the future.

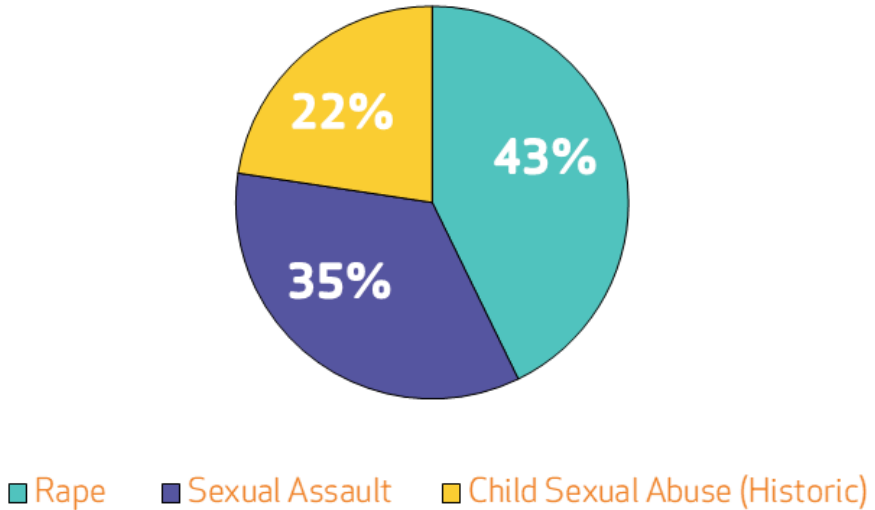
The groups consist of six 3-hour long sessions focused on different topics including 'understanding trauma', 'emotional regulation', 'boundaries and safety planning', 'healthy relationships', 'confidence building' and 'future planning'.

100% of clients reported improvements in confidence safety, coping strategies and goal setting, following completion of the programme.



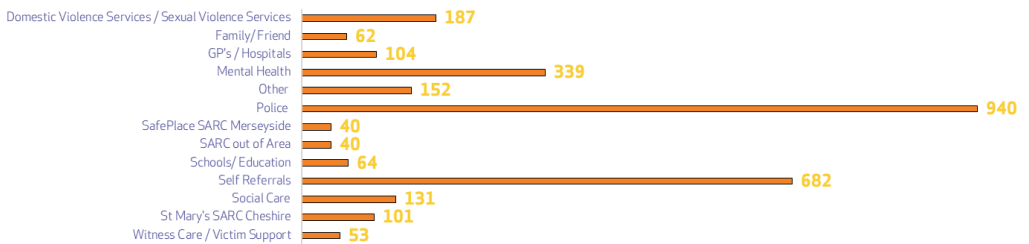
Types of Sexual Violence Reported

Type of Sexual Violence Reported



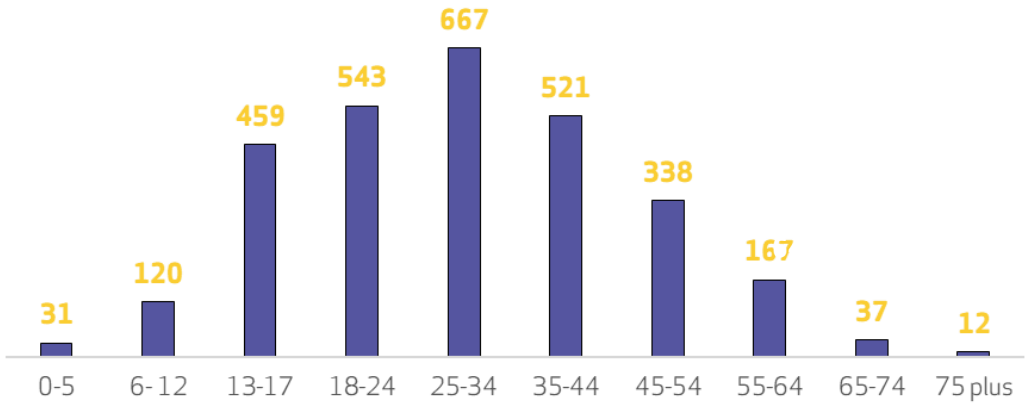
Referral Source

Referral Source



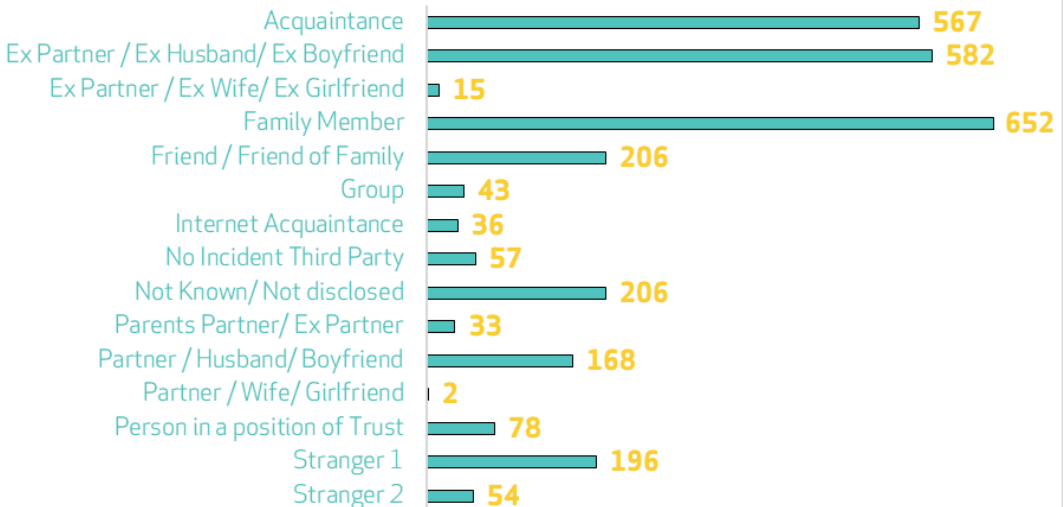
Age Groups

Age Group - The amount of referrals per age group



Perpetrator Details

Perpetrator Details - The type of perpetrator identified & number of referrals



Business Continuity

RASASC Business Continuity Plan aims to implement a systematic approach to risk management across all service operations. The primary objective of the Business Continuity Plan is to show how we would respond to identified risks and continue to manage service operations under adverse circumstances.

The plan and risk register takes a comprehensive approach to identifying; assessing; and managing risks to the organisation and is regularly reviewed by the Trustees and Senior Management Team.

Our Funders



I have developed coping skills and been able to talk openly about my trauma. I have learnt that it wasn't my fault and to be kinder to myself. I was offered a safe, comfortable space to explore my feelings. Thank you!

Female 21

Thank you

Our wonderful Funders, Board, Senior Management Team and Staff continue to have a focus on the needs of our service users and continue to deliver an excellent service and we would like to take this opportunity to thank them all.

The last couple of years has also seen a significant increase in staffing levels and we want to thank the staff and the Police and Crime Commissioners of Cheshire and Merseyside who have continued to support and champion our work.

A special 'thank you' to Graham and his team @absolutely.design who created our amazing mural in our warrington office.

To the survivors who have accessed support with us, your strength and determination continues to inspire us every day. Thank you.

RASASC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre)

Cheshire and Merseyside

PO Box 35,

Warrington,

WA11DW

www.rapecentre.org.uk



0330 363 0063



support@rapecentre.org.uk

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