



Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

for adults, children and young people
in Cheshire and Merseyside



Annual General Report 2025-2026



Introduction

Welcome to our 2025/2026 Annual General Report. We have been offering support to survivors of sexual violence since 1995, and this is our 31st Year. As I reflect on the year I am very much aware that funding for Specialist Rape Crisis Centres is an issue. This next year we will be working harder than ever to secure further funding opportunities to ensure that we continue and are able to meet growing demand.

It is a concern that the PCC's are ending as the commissioning teams at Cheshire PCC and Merseyside PCC have been brilliant supporters of our work and we really appreciate their expertise and support.

Our service has continued to meet its aims and objectives, and I am extremely proud of our Board of Trustees and staff team in delivering an excellent service. Key achievements this year have been reaccreditation with Rape Crisis England & Wales, British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) and Lime Culture ISVA/CHISVA Service. Funding from local firms and small trust funds have also enabled us to refurbish our counselling rooms in Ellesmere Port and Crewe.

Throughout the report are quotes from our service users and I am delighted that they found our service helpful. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge their bravery and integrity in accessing our services.

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 have worked at RASASC for over 10 years, and it is one of the greatest privileges of my life to work with survivors of abuse, and to be a part of their journey of healing. It is so special to witness the bravery and courage that our service users display when reaching out and accessing support from our service, and to know the difference our service can make to their lives is something that makes me very proud to be a part of.

Molly- ISVA



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...

9360

**Counselling
Face to Face
Sessions**

2233

Assessments

7704

**ISVA
Interventions
(hrs)**

Our Feedback...

100%

**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**

99%

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

93%

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

100%

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

**We received
2,017
referrals
from
Cheshire**

**We received
594
referrals from
St Helens and
Knowlsey**

**We received
131
referrals from
outside of our
area**

**Total referrals
2,742**

Across Cheshire, St Helens & Knowsley

ISVA Service

Across Cheshire and Merseyside, the ISVA service has continued to provide a critical role in delivering specialist support to survivors of sexual violence, regardless of when the abuse occurred. The service has maintained a strong focus on supporting individuals throughout the criminal justice process, helping survivors to navigate complex systems, understand their rights, and make informed decisions about their cases.

Our service continues to meet the Lime Culture Quality Standards. This reflects our dedication to delivering safe, high-quality, and trauma-informed support that places the needs, choices, and voices of survivors at the centre of everything we do.

Over the past year, the service has also strengthened its connections within local communities by attending multi-agency forums and networking events.

Through this work, the ISVA service remains a trusted and essential source of support across Cheshire and Merseyside, helping survivors to feel less alone, more empowered, and better able to move forward

Core duties of the ISVA team include:

- Providing trauma-informed, person-centred emotional and practical support
- Sharing clear information to support informed decision-making
- Advocating for survivors and helping them understand their rights
- Supporting individuals through the criminal justice and court process
- Connecting survivors with wider support services for holistic care
- Recognising and responding to the impact of trauma
- Raising awareness of sexual violence within local communities
- Attending multi-agency meetings to strengthen partnerships and referral pathways



I cannot speak more highly of my ISVA, I would not be standing today without her. Throughout the whole process Cheshire Police, and my ISVA and Counsellor at RASASC have helped me in all aspects of my life which has impacted my ability to be supportive friend, daughter, sister, wife and mother. I can advocate for myself and others. I would not have been standing without this incredible team that I have been so blessed to be supported by. The ripple effect will continue for generations to come. Thank you"



ISVA Service has been involved in:

- Taking Action campaign in Merseyside – launched by Merseyside police and the Police and Crime Commissioner, a multi-phase initiative aimed at combating Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
- MOJ digital service for victims of crime – input from the ISVA team on a project to develop a new Ministry of Justice online service for victims of crime.
- ISVA clinics – to enhance partnership working with local police forces.
- Collaborative letters with Rape Crisis and The Survivors Trust – letters to the government calling for better recognition and support for survivors of sexual violence.

Challenges for the ISVA team:

Over the past year, the ISVA service has faced growing demand, leading to an increase of case numbers and longer periods of support required for survivors. Delays within the criminal justice system, particularly extended court waiting times, have added to this challenge, often prolonging uncertainty and distress for those accessing the service. At the same time, the service continues to operate within limited funding and resource constraints. This has placed sustained pressure on staff capacity, while the need for specialist, trauma-informed support across Cheshire and Merseyside remains high. Despite these pressures, the service has continued to deliver meaningful impact, ensuring survivors remain at the centre of all decisions and feel supported throughout their journey.



Specialist Counselling Service

This year we have continued to provide our Specialist Counselling Service across Cheshire, Knowsley and St Helens. We work with people who have experienced any form of sexual violence, whether they have reported to the police or not. The service is offered face to face in our community based premises, or remotely by video call or telephone.

RASASC Counselling Service is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, for which we are audited and assessed on an annual basis. This widely respected service standard evidences the consistently high quality of our therapeutic work. We adhere to the BACP Ethical Framework in the delivery of our service.

Our Therapy Team is committed to continued learning and development within their practice, they ensure 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 the effects of trauma means that we can help clients to process their thoughts and emotions; address specific symptoms and distress; develop coping skills; and facilitate healing.

RASASC counsellors are client centred in their approach – meaning that they work to 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 and symptoms raised by our clients, including Person Centred Therapy; Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy; 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.



“My counsellor has been really helpful, she was professional and very human, and I felt connected with her. I have never experienced that with other counsellors that I have had. It has been an all-round positive experience leaving me feeling positive for the future.”
Male, 44

I have felt well supported by RASASC and have found the service easily accessible and has helped me process my emotions around trauma and sexual abuse. I would highly recommend this service. It has meant so much to have a safe space to be heard over these last few months. Thank you for your patience, your insight and for helping me to process some difficult moments and find my voice again.

Male 28



Thank you very much I am grateful to have had the opportunity to have someone to talk to each week. To work through my memories and thoughts, having the support weekly has been really helpful as I have been able to reflect on our session and come back the following week with more insight etc. I am feeling stronger and more confident since having this support. Thank you.

Female 57



I felt so supported and I feel better in myself. I am able to control the way I feel about people. Thank you so very much for your support at this hard time. I have managed to reduce the amount of alcohol intake which has been a great achievement for me. I would recommend your service to anyone who has been through what I have been through.

Male 45



Case Study- Child S

A child attended our service following an incident of sexual abuse at the age of 7, she was 11 years old at the time of the referral to us. The client was experiencing anxiety, panic attacks, intrusive thoughts and confusion around having no contact with specific family members due to the sexual abuse she had experienced. The client had stopped attending her hobbies due to this and had low attendance within school. Our children and young people's counsellor initially met with client and their mum to build rapport due to the levels of anxiety she was feeling. Our children and young people's counsellor also had one to one time with Mum to check in around client's wellbeing at home.

The form of therapy used within these sessions was TF-CBT to support the client to express and manage their emotions following trauma and provide coping techniques.

The client was experiencing panic attacks, through exploring the triggers to the panic attacks - using the 'thought triangle', the client was able to identify that their trigger was recurring intrusive thoughts and unanswered questions. We explored these thoughts further and the client also began to keep a Thought Journal. Within the sessions and with the use of the journal the client recognised how her intrusive thoughts were linked to being unable to have contact with a significant family member and her concerns about how they were. Through exploring these thoughts, they identified anger she was feeling towards Mum and confusion to why they could not see the family member. The counsellor also supported Mum with this and introduced communication techniques, such as control words, to limit anger and avoid arguments; and letter writing to discuss the feelings they were experiencing. With the help of the counsellor during a joint session, Mum reflected on her own feelings and was able to explain why there could be , she allowed the client to express her thoughts and talk about the anxiety she was experiencing. This was followed up with a technique to use at home whereby they began to text a word to each other to say they needed a check in.

When counselling concluded, the young person intended to continue to use their Thought Journal and had begun to understand the reason why they could not see their family member – this had helped to settle feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. The counsellor linked in with school and a support plan was put in place with a pass for the client to leave classes early if needed and have regular check ins with pastoral support. From accessing TF-CBT the client had developed an understanding of why she was experiencing panic attacks, anxiety and intrusive thoughts. Through the help of the counsellor, communication with Mum and the client had significantly improved and the client expressed she no longer felt anger towards Mum. With a range of coping techniques in place, Mum reported a positive change within the client and was grateful for all the support she had been given. The client began attending her hobbies again and attendance in school improved

“

We found your service very helpful and supportive. You listened to what we had to say and gave us the time we needed

”



Wellbeing Project

Now in its third year, our Wellbeing Project, funded by the The National Lottery Community Fund, continues to provide vital spaces where women affected by sexual violence can come together, connect, and rebuild a sense of safety and belonging within their communities. The project continues to go from strength to strength and remains an important and valued part of our support offer.

Feedback from participants consistently highlights the impact of these spaces. Women tell us that the project provides a safe and supportive environment to connect with others who understand their experiences, try new activities, and build meaningful, lasting relationships.

As we move forward, we remain committed to nurturing these community spaces, responding to the evolving needs of survivors, and ensuring that no survivor feels alone on their journey.

Over the past year, the project has offered a wide range of activities, including:

- Coffee & Chat sessions
- Weekly walks across Cheshire
- Yoga & Stretch sessions
- Gardening
- Pottery sessions
- Boxing sessions
- Online support group
- Arts & crafts
- And much more

This is the first walk I've attended where more people have joined, it was really great to meet with others that are going through the same thing as I have found it a very lonely process to go through, the walk has helped me get out of the house and connect with other people but also take some time for myself as well as helping me with feeling isolated, depressed and worried thank you!



Resilience Program- Cheshire West & Chester



Cheshire West
and 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.



Corporate Partnerships

Our corporate partnerships continue to play a vital role in enabling us to provide specialist, life-changing support to survivors across our region. Over the past year, we have worked alongside a growing network of businesses who share our commitment to creating safer communities and supporting those affected by sexual violence. These partnerships go far beyond financial contributions.

Through fundraising initiatives, awareness campaigns, and staff engagement, our corporate supporters have helped to amplify our message, challenge stigma, and extend the reach of our services.

We are particularly proud of the creativity and dedication shown by our partners, whether through organising fundraising events, nominating us as their charity of the year, or encouraging open conversations within their organisations about consent, boundaries, and support.

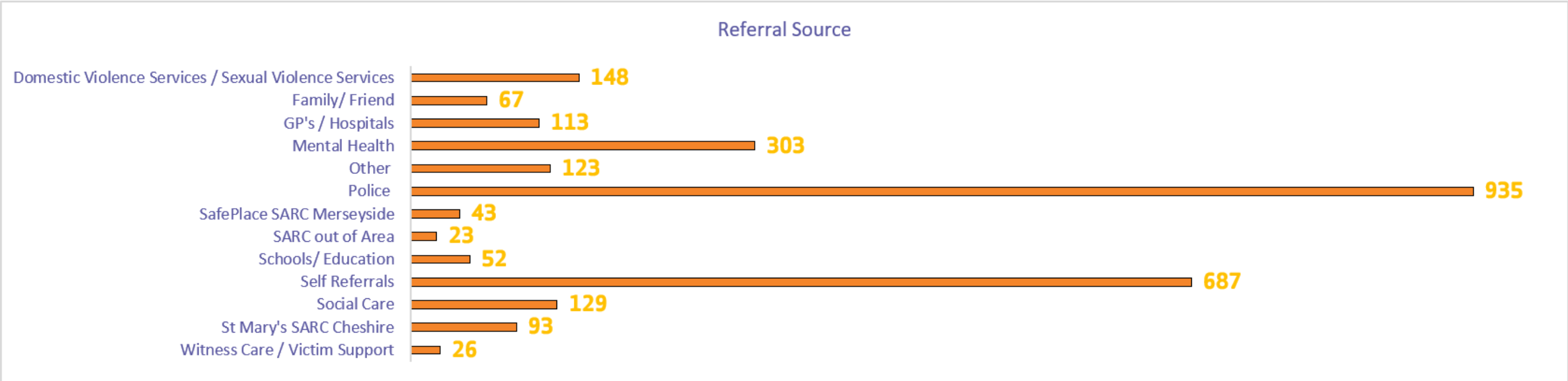
Income generated through corporate partnerships has directly contributed to:

- Increasing access to counselling and support services
- Reducing waiting times for survivors seeking help
- Expanding outreach and awareness across Cheshire & Merseyside
- Strengthening prevention and education work in local communities

As we look ahead, we remain committed to building ethical, values-led partnerships that align with our mission and centre the needs of survivors.

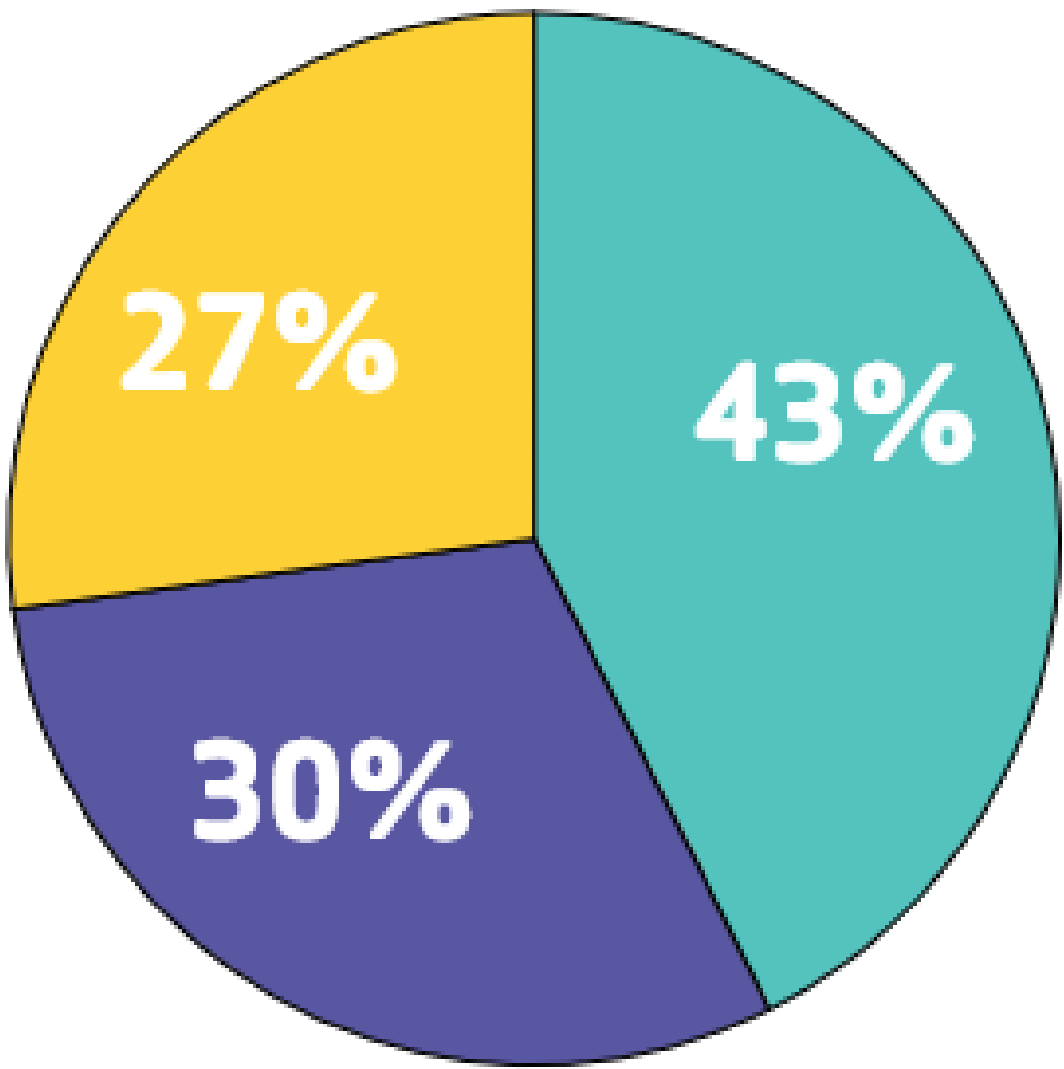


Referral Source



Types of Sexual Violence Reported

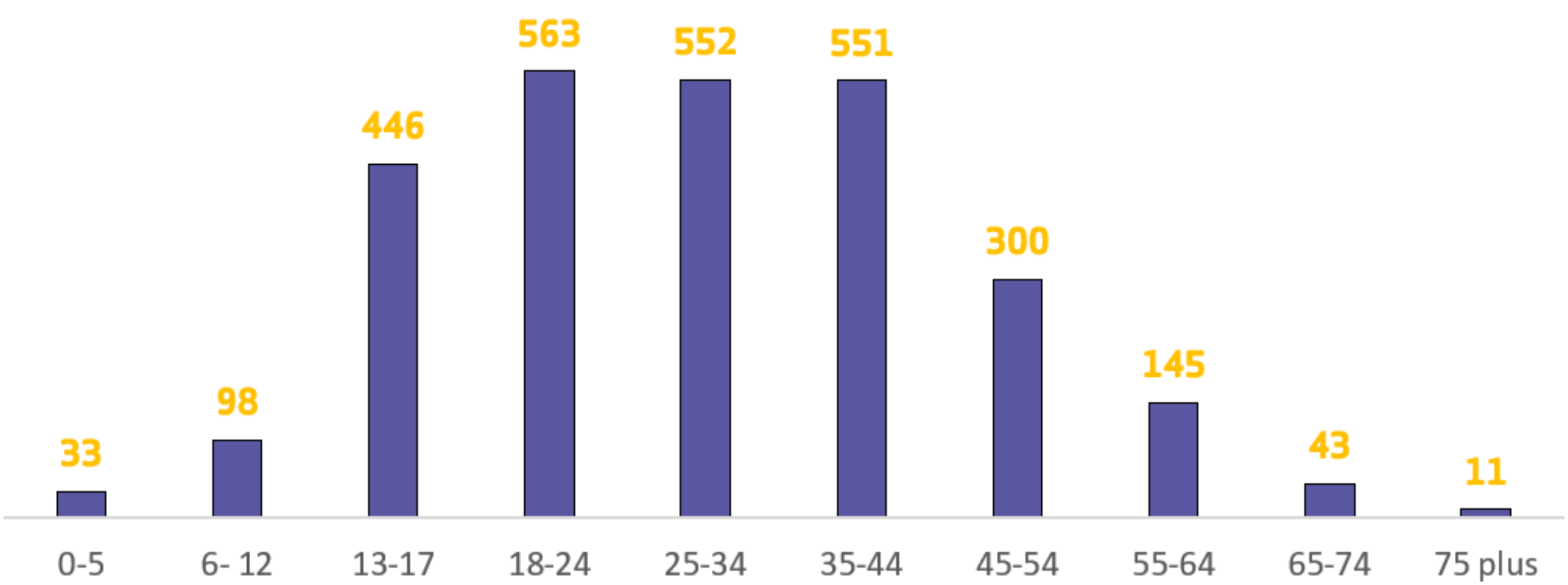
Type of Sexual Violence Reported



■ Rape ■ Sexual Assault ■ Child Sexual Abuse (Historic)

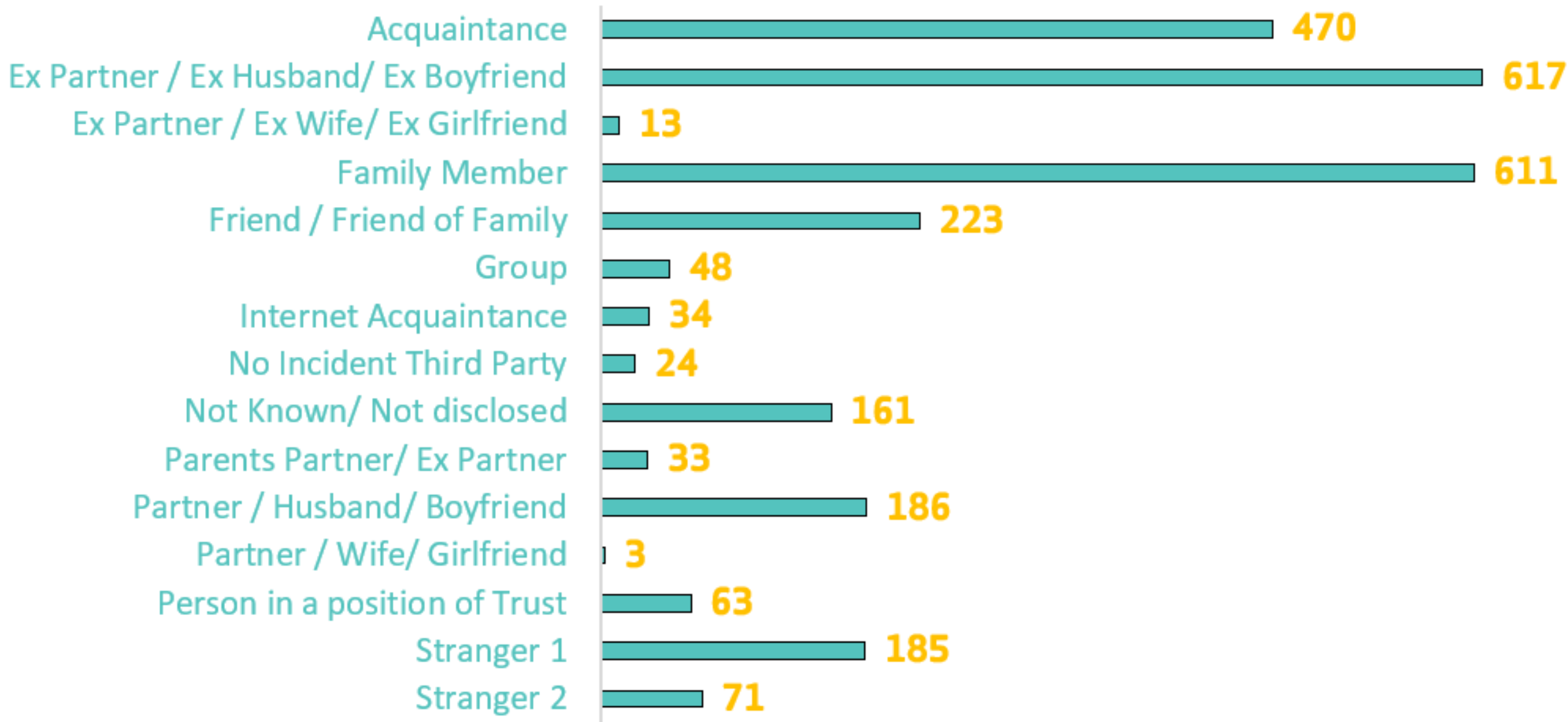
Age Groups

Age Group - The amount of referrals per age group



Perpetrator Details

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



Business Continuity

Our Business Continuity Plan sets out a structured and proactive approach to identifying, assessing, and managing risk across all areas of our service delivery. Its primary purpose is to ensure that we can respond effectively to potential disruptions and continue to provide safe, consistent support to survivors, even in challenging or unforeseen circumstances.

Our Business Continuity Plan, alongside the organisational risk register, takes a comprehensive approach to risk management. Together, they enable us to anticipate potential risks, minimise their impact, and maintain operational resilience. Both the plan and risk register are subject to regular review and oversight by the Board of Trustees and Senior Management Team, ensuring they remain responsive to emerging risks and aligned with the evolving needs of the organisation.

Our Funders



”

I have felt well supported by RASASC and have found the service easily accessible and has helped me process my emotions around trauma/SA. I would highly recommend this service. It has meant so much to have a safe space to be heard over these last few months. Thank you for your patience, your insight and for helping me to process some difficulty moments and find my voice again

”

Thank you

Our valued funders, Board, Senior Management Team, and staff remain firmly focused on the needs of our service users and continue to deliver an excellent standard of support. We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank them all for their ongoing dedication and commitment.

Over the past couple of years, we have also seen a significant increase in staffing levels. We are deeply grateful to our staff, as well as to the Police and Crime Commissioners of Cheshire and Merseyside, who have continued to support and champion our work.

To the survivors who have accessed support with us, your strength and determination continue to inspire our work every day. Thank you for trusting us to be part of your journey.

RASASC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre)

Cheshire and Merseyside

**PO Box 35,
Warrington,
WA11DW**

www.rasasc.co.uk



0330 363 0063



support@rasasc.co.uk

Click below to refer into our service

[Professional Referral Form](#)

[Self Referral Form](#)

Follow us on Social Media



@RapeSupport



@rasasc_cm

Linked  **@RapeSupport**