



The Blue Sky Centre Male Client Aftercare Information Pack

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This aftercare pack is intended to help you or someone you may know that has been sexually assaulted, recently or at any time in the past. It sets out:

- Common emotional response to rape or sexual assault
- What helps?
- What to do if you change your mind and decide that you want to report the rape or sexual assault to the Police?
- Police Investigation- What happens next?
- Where to go for additional support

Common Emotional Responses following a rape or sexual assault

Rape and other forms of sexual assault happens to men and boys far more often than is thought. This public myth that sexual violence is only ever directed at females is in part fuelled by the fact that levels of reporting of sexual abuse by men may be even lower than by women and girls. At the Blue Sky Centre we recognise that men and boys who have experienced sexual abuse may have to contend with some popular myths and stereotypes. We try to address these below but the most important thing to say is that your experience is unique to you, and accordingly how you re-act will also be unique to you. There are no right or wrong ways to respond.

- **Myth. You are to blame, wholly or partially. This is not true. The offender is to blame. No matter what the interaction was before an assault everything that happened should have been with your consent. If you didn't want something to happen then it shouldn't have happened. It is as simple as that. So it didn't matter if there had been any consensual activity, or flirting, or anything else leading up to the assault. The line should be where you want it to be and not where the abuser wanted it to be. Similarly you should be able to have a drink, walk home alone, or**

even take some drugs if you want to without your safety being compromised. If you walk home alone at night, a little tipsy and get mugged, it isn't your fault, it is the attackers. Of course children cannot legally consent. And groomers groom. They get very good at manipulating people through flattery, gifts, attention, whatever, to get what they want. Anyone can be hoodwinked. Often the abuser isn't motivated by sexual desire but the need to control or humiliate. As a child you may not realise that what someone is doing to you is wrong and it may be twisted to seem like affection or even love. Our bodies react automatically to stimulus, to heat or ice cold water for example, and as a child, reacting to physical touches that aren't in themselves painful or unpleasant it is natural sometimes to experience a pleasant sensation. It is always the offender's fault.

- **Myth. Real men should be able to protect themselves. This is nonsense. Sexual abuse can and does happen to the strongest and fittest people, mentally or physically. There is a part of the brain called the amygdala that often kicks in when a threatening situation arises. This can override your usual ability to scan your environment, risk assess, or make a plan. In effect it shuts down these functions and most people in that situation, male or female, experience the sensation of freezing. So people who would have assumed that they would resist find that they were powerless to do so. Other abusers, male or female, can exploit power imbalances to get their way. So, for example, we have seen lots of cases where sports coaches, managers or film producers, use their position to pressure people into sexual activity or into keeping quiet about it afterwards.**
- **Myth. A physical reaction to abuse means you enjoyed it. No. As stated above, the body is a machine which is in many ways separate from the mind and emotions. Many bodily reactions are involuntary, like the reflex action of the leg when the knee is tapped. Men and boys who are sexually abused may (but not always) have such an involuntary reaction. This might include getting an erection or even ejaculating. This is not evidence that you enjoyed being abused or would want it to happen again. Similarly women who are raped might experience a moistening of their vagina. This is their body protecting itself and not a sign of arousal or consent. It is, however, understandable that such bodily reactions could cause confusion and embarrassment.**
- **Myth. Men should be able to get over such an incident. Why should men be able to recover any quicker than women? It only seems fair to yourself to recognise that what has happened to you was horrible and it may take time to feel ok again. Take each day as it comes and accept that some days you may feel better than others, and that some days you may feel that you are going backwards. Have faith though that you are probably making progress, even if it is slow. Nobody should treat you with anything other than compassion and support, or minimise how you feel. You may find that your confidence is knocked, and that you feel uneasy in**

certain situations or in certain areas. That is entirely normal. We can all be easily transported back to particular moments in our lives by smells and sounds. That again is very normal. It is normal to feel a mixture of anger and anxiety, helplessness and frustration. There are people who can help with this and links are included at the end of this information sheet.

- **Myth. Sexual abuse of men or boys by women or girls is not as serious or impactful as abuse perpetrated by men on women. There are popular misconceptions that men and boys should be grateful for any sexual activity, or that sexual activity with older females is somehow a teenage rite of passage. Another myth is that males can't really be abused except by other males. As the male sexual organ needs to be aroused to penetrate the female body it is thought that men must therefore be willing participants. None of this is true. Men and boys may experience exactly the same reactions to abuse as females. Abuse is abuse. Men can also be coerced or forced into engaging in penetrative sex against their will by women and a physical arousal does not necessarily equate to a consensual act.**

What Helps?

Here are some ways to help you in the process of coming to terms with what has happened: Of course, you know yourself better than anyone else, but consider:

- Trying not to bottle up and ignore your feelings.
- Talking to family and friends who you trust. Tell them about what has happened, how you feel and how they can help you. They can give you emotional support.
- Take care of yourself. Give yourself time to absorb the shock of the experience. Try and get adequate sleep and rest, eat regularly, and exercise.
- Try not to use alcohol or drugs to 'switch off' your mind. Whilst these may make you feel better at the time, if you use them too long they can have bad effects.
- Talk to your GP if you have any physical injuries or other problems you may be experiencing.

Where to go for additional support

With your consent the Crisis Worker may have referred you to local agencies that support victims of rape and sexual assault. We may have considered that you would benefit from immediate intervention to help you cope but if we didn't please tell us if you think this would help.

The support organisations that we work with support men and boys and can help in a variety of ways. They can provide counselling as and when this is appropriate. Sometimes it

is better left until after a court case to avoid the defence alleging that evidence has in some way been contaminated by the counselling sessions. They can provide what is called an ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor) who is there to be your support and advocate with any aspect of your life that has been affected by the attack, particularly through any court process. They can find out information for you, ask questions about progress of an investigation or court proceedings, and go to court with you. The service the ISVA can provide includes:

- Initial assessment of the support that you need
- Drawing up of a care plan and involvement of any other partner agencies required
- Confidential and impartial advice that is not linked to the police
- Regular and ongoing telephone contact
- Face to face meetings and support
- Help with advice on housing issues
- Detailed understanding of the court process and the criminal justice system
- Attendance with you at any police interviews or court proceedings
- Liaison between you, the police, the CPS and barristers acting on your behalf
- Emotional support and guidance
- Support in reporting your assault to the police if you first came as a self referral
- Assistance with Criminal Injuries Compensation

Non-police cases – Storage of evidence

**Forensic evidence can be recovered for up to seven days after an attack. If you do not wish to report to the police or you need more time to think about that, any forensic samples taken from you here by the clinician can be stored by us. In line with National SARC Policy, Self-Referral forensic samples will be retained for seven years before destruction. To avoid causing unnecessary distress to you we will assume that you are happy with these samples being retained for that period unless you get in touch with us at any time to request their earlier destruction.*

If, in the future, we need to review the retention timescales then we will only apply the new policy to samples taken after that date.

Non-police cases – Anonymous submission of forensic samples

**In the overwhelming majority of cases of sexual assault the identity of the offender is known to the victim. Taking forensic samples is still a very important investigative step as it makes it difficult for the offender, when arrested and interviewed, to deny that any sexual contact occurred. Because of this most suspects, when interviewed, if they are aware of the existence of forensic evidence, tend to admit that their DNA will be found but claim that what happened was consensual. It is then up to the investigators to show that this isn't true. It is actually fairly uncommon for this reason for the police to submit forensic evidence for*

analysis in cases where the identity of the offender is known, until the suspect has been interviewed.

If you do not know your attacker, or if you aren't sure whether you were sexually assaulted (perhaps because your drink was spiked, for example) we can, with your consent, ask the police if they would consider submitting samples anonymously with a view to identifying the attacker or confirming that an assault occurred. The police have been very co-operative with this but they have limited forensic budgets and so will carefully consider all the factors that apply to each case before agreeing to submit the samples. Of course, the absence of the offender's DNA does not mean that nothing happened. It could be that the offender, if male, did not ejaculate, or ejaculated elsewhere, or used a condom.

If samples are submitted and a DNA profile is found that is capable of identifying the suspect then that DNA profile will be matched against the National DNA Database. If the suspect has ever had their DNA taken by the police then a match will be made. If not then the DNA profile obtained from the attack will be added to the database awaiting a match if that offender is ever arrested in future.

When an identification is made from the database the police will be informed and will research what else they know about that individual. Any such developments will be made known to you, usually through an ISVA if you have one, but your anonymity is guaranteed until such time as you decide you wish to talk to the police.

Only in exceptional circumstances, ie when we have good reason to fear that someone else is at risk of imminent and serious harm, would we consider breaching your confidentiality.

Follow-up treatment to prevent infection, ongoing support and counselling

We will call you the next working day after your visit to see how you are feeling and to ensure that all necessary ongoing care is provided. That is, partly, because we understand how difficult it is to take in everything that you are told during your time here when you may have been overwhelmed by everything that had happened to you. The forensic swabs taken here are not tested for any possible STIs that may be present. Their purpose is to link the offender to you scientifically. You will need to attend your local sexual health clinic for STI testing, but we can help you to arrange that.

If you have consented to your forensic swabs being submitted for analysis please be aware that it may take a number of weeks, or sometimes months for any results to come back. We will let you know as soon as we have the results. If you change contact details please update us with these so we can still contact you.

If you did not consent to a referral to the sexual health clinic then the details are on the last page for all of the local clinics. Please remember you will need to wait 14 days from the day

of the incident to have your STI tests done at the clinic. Please ring to book an appointment and mention that you attended the Blue Sky Centre, rather than attend as a walk in patient.

If you were given HIV preventative medication the pack lasts 5 days so you will need to attend your local sexual health clinic within 5 days to be assessed as to whether you need to take the full 28 day course. Additionally if you were given an Hepatitis B vaccination you will need follow up at the sexual health clinic for a second dose of the vaccination 7 days after attendance at our clinic. In either case we will work with you to ensure that your health is protected.

If you have consented to ISVA referral we will contact the ISVA service the next working day. They aim to contact you within 48 hours of receiving our referral.

What to do if you change your mind and decide that you want to report the rape or sexual assault to the Police?

Many people decide not to report an attack at the time but do so months or even years later. We recognise the major barriers that you may have to overcome before you feel able to disclose what happened, particularly if the offender is someone close to you.

There is no time limit on reporting to the police and you can decide to do so at any point. If you decide to report the matter you can contact your local police directly on **101** or contact us on **01926 507805** and we can assist you with the reporting process. Additionally if you are being supported by an ISVA they can also assist you to make a complaint.

If, for whatever reason you really don't want to talk to the police there are still things you can do to protect yourself and others. Any information the police receive, even anonymously helps to build up a picture of sexual violence and help in combating it. Anonymous intelligence can be passed to the police via us at The Blue Sky Centre. We don't share anything that might identify you. Sharing intelligence is your choice and there is no pressure to do so. It may be that providing the name of the attacker to the police shows them that there is a serial offender at large or it may be that if someone else reports a crime later involving the same offender then the police can potentially link that attack to yours. It would still be entirely up to you whether or not to identify yourself or co-operate with an investigation. We can discuss this with you in more detail.

If you are being supported by an ISVA or other caring professional they might be able to pass on to the police any details that you are prepared to share but we totally respect the importance of the confidential bond you may have with them and that you may not want to disclose anything at all.

The Police Investigation

The on-going investigation of your case will be allocated to an experienced, trained officer who is likely to be in plain clothes. The Police aim to support you as well as investigating the case and dealing with the offender.

We will liaise with and refer you to other caring professionals where appropriate and if that's what you want. Full details of these local organisations and what they can offer are detailed below

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The decision to prosecute

In the vast majority of rape investigations the offender is identified, arrested and interviewed. Contrary to myth, most rapes do not involve a physical struggle, are not committed by total strangers, and take place in private. Because of this, and the fact that every case is unique, in some circumstances there may not be enough evidence to charge the suspect. This does not mean that the police don't believe you, only that it cannot be proved beyond all reasonable doubt.

The suspect's account will be robustly challenged and checked and the police will look for evidence that undermines their account, such as similar behaviour towards previous or subsequent partners. It is often the situation that evidence of a victim's inability to consent to sex, due to age, alcohol consumption or drink spiking, can help make a strong case.

This decision whether or not to charge is usually made by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and will be communicated to you as sensitively as possible. The police have to conduct what they refer to as the 'threshold test' which means on the rare occasions when there is clearly no evidence or very little, they can decide not to pass the file to the CPS. You have the right to ask questions about the investigation and decision and if you don't feel that enough has been done or the decision is wrong you can ask, either verbally or in writing, that a more senior officer reviews the case. If you are still unhappy about the way the case has been handled you have the right to complain formally.

Arrest, charge and bail

When the police arrest someone there is a limit to how long they can be kept in custody at a police station before they are charged, released or released on bail pending further enquiries. The limit is usually 24 hours but where justified and on authority of a senior officer and then a court this can be extended to a maximum of 96 hours.

When enquiries cannot be concluded in a matter of hours, a decision will usually be taken to release the suspect on bail. By that time the suspect will have provided their account in interview. It is fairly rare for rape suspects to refuse to answer questions. Most are represented by a solicitor, and when forensic evidence exists their advice is generally to accept that the suspect's DNA will be found and to suggest that what happened was

consensual. The police may then need to make further enquiries about what the suspect has said. The fact that the suspect is bailed is in no way a sign that the police believe their account and not yours.

When someone is bailed that is usually for a maximum period of 28 days. The police can impose conditions on that bail, which if the person breaks them, can render them liable to further arrest and to being remanded in custody (see below). These conditions are designed to protect you and other witnesses in the case. Examples of conditions might include that they make no attempt to contact you directly or indirectly, or that they stay away from the area in which you live or work.

If the police feel that the threshold test is passed and that there is sufficient evidence to charge the offender, they pass the case papers to the CPS, seeking their authority to charge. The CPS will carefully assess the evidence and decide if there is a realistic chance of conviction and also that a prosecution is in the public interest. No case will be discontinued without consultation with the police in order that every opportunity to strengthen the case is taken, and the CPS should communicate their reasons for discontinuance to you.

When someone is charged the CPS can ask the court to remand them in custody if they are concerned that they will fail to appear at court, commit further offences or intimidate witnesses (including you). If the court agrees the offender will be sent to prison until the day of the trial. The offender's solicitor or barrister has the right to oppose such an application and argue their case to a judge. All of these complex, legal issues should be explained to you by the police, CPS or prosecution barrister.

Trial

If the case proceeds to court the offender may plead guilty in which case all that remains is the sentence. If a 'not guilty' plea is entered there will be a trial in which you are likely to be called to give evidence. There are restrictions on the media reporting your name or anything that might identify you but otherwise they can fairly report what is said in evidence. Although you may have recorded your account on video or in a written statement, it is likely that you will be asked to give evidence in person in the court so that questions can be asked of you by the defence. Defence barristers have to seek the permission of the judge before any questions can be put to you about your sexual history, and this will only be granted where it is absolutely necessary for a fair trial.

You will be supported through the court process by specialist staff, the officer in the case and, where involved, your ISVA. The judge can be asked to allow certain 'special measures' to be taken to help you cope with the stressful nature of proceedings. This might include giving evidence from behind a screen so that you do not have to see the defendant, or even giving your evidence from another room in the building via a video link.

If you decide that you do not want to proceed with the case and do not want to go to court you should inform the police officer in charge of your case immediately. The CPS would

then consider whether it is in the public interest for the case to go ahead against your wishes. In many cases a sympathetic view will be taken because, after all, you are the victim. In some other cases the offender may be seen to be such a risk to the public that there is good reason to try and prosecute them despite your reluctance. Of course, your unwillingness to give evidence would make prosecuting the case difficult but sometimes there is enough evidence other than yours. It is possible, therefore, although quite rare, that you would be summoned to give evidence by the court and if that happened you would have to go.

Some victims feel distressed at the questioning from the defence barrister, partly because it seems to them that this intelligent independent person, well versed in the law and in sexual crimes, doesn't believe them. It is important to remember that this may not be the case at all. The prosecution barrister is not your barrister but represents 'The Crown', i.e. he or she is acting for the state. The defence barrister acts purely for the defendant and has the specific role of securing a not guilty verdict in a trial, which often involves robustly challenging any evidence given for the prosecution whether by the victim, the police or experts. They are trying to create even the smallest doubt in the minds of the jury.

All that can be asked of you, as a witness, is that you give your evidence to the best of your recollection, and it is the job of the prosecution barrister to help you to do this. The role of the judge is to ensure that the trial is fair. The jury hear the evidence and decide between them whether the prosecution case has been proved beyond reasonable doubt. Often there are a number of different charges and it is not unusual for a jury to find the accused guilty of some of them and not guilty of others. The expectation is that all 12 jurors will agree on guilt. Sometimes the judge will allow a 'majority verdict' when at least 10 of the 12 agree. If 3 or more jurors are unwilling to convict then the defendant will be acquitted. So in many cases where the defendant is found not guilty it may well be the case that more than half of the jury thought that they were, in fact, guilty. Again, many victims assume that a not guilty verdict means that they weren't believed by any of the jury members and that may not have been the case at all.

After the case has concluded

You may be eligible for compensation for your ordeal and the police officer investigating your case, someone from Victim Support, or your ISVA can all help you with completing the necessary forms. After a case has concluded the police will return any property to you if you want it. There may be some degree of local interest in the story and often it is in the wider public interest to publicise a successful prosecution and sentence as a means of deterring similar behaviour. Again there are clear rules about not identifying you. Your ISVA, Victim Support or your police officer can discuss these matters with you. Sometimes other victims come forward as a result of such publicity.

Useful links

Male Survivor Partnership

www.malesurvivor.co.uk

Helpline 0808 800 5005

Opening hours, Monday 9-5, Tuesday 8-8, Wednesday 9-5, Thursday 8-8, Friday 9-5, Saturday 10-2

Samaritans

0116123

Email jo@samaritans.org.uk

24/7 Crisis Text Support, text SHOUT to 85258

CALM: Male Suicide Prevention www.thecalmzone.net 0800 58 58 58

Coventry and Warwickshire Rape Support Organisations:

CRASAC – Coventry

Tel: 024 7627 7777

www.crasac.org.uk

RoSA – Warwickshire

Tel: 01788 551 151

www.rosasupport.org

Safeline – Warwickshire

Tel: 0808 800 5008 or 01926 402 498

www.safeline.org.uk

Emotional support (not 24/7 or crisis) support@safeline.org.uk

Local GU Clinics

Stratford-on-Avon

Hathaway Centre, Stratford Hospital , Arden Street, Stratford CV37 6NX

Tel 0300 123 6644 (press 3)

Rugby

The Pine Clinic, Rainsbrook Wing, Hospital of St Cross, Barby Road, CV22 5PX

Tel 0300 123 6644 (press 2)

Nuneaton

Shepperton House, George Eliot Hospital, College Street, CV10 7DJ

Tel 0300 123 6644 (press 1)

Coventry

Integrated Sexual Health, 3rd Floor, City of Coventry Health Centre, 2 Stoney Stanton Road,
CV1 4FS

Tel 0300 020 0027