getting the right support

A Guide for Survivors





About this guide:

This guide is designed to provide information and guidance to survivors of rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse. This guide will support you if you are thinking about sharing or disclosing your experience of rape, sexual violence or abuse, regardless of when it happened.

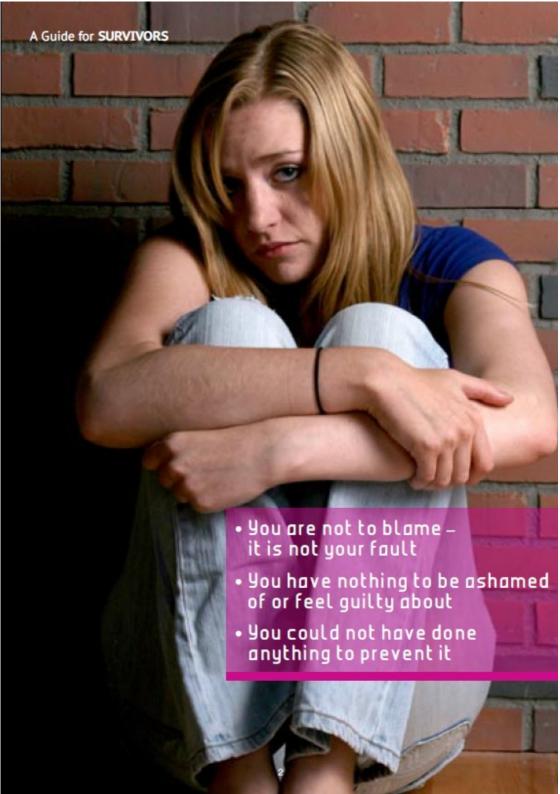
The guide can help you to explore your choices and to get the right support.



- A And if left unsupported, can have serious consequences to the health and well being of the survivor and those around them.
- P People take time to heal and feel safe.
- Every survivor deserves, and is entitled to have access to the right support to help them through difficult times, to then be able to live their lives free from the effects of the damaging crime of rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse.



We would advise you to also read the leaflet entitled 'Getting the Right Support Rape and Sexual Assault – Has it Happened to You?'



Sexual violence happens

It is important to realise that this experience has tragically been shared by many.

Being able to share your experiences, thoughts and feelings is one way to start to get through this difficult time. Keeping the trauma to yourself may affect your life in many ways. With the right help and support you can start the process of healing and moving forward positively.

What do I do?

There is no right or wrong way to respond. Everyone's response will be different. What is important is to feel and know that you have options and choices. What has happened to you is a crime. Everyone has the right to live free from violence and abuse where ever and who ever they are.

We can provide professional support, advice, and if necessary counselling. Being helped to regain your sense of personal power can be a huge step towards dealing with the trauma you may be feeling.

Don't let it affect the rest of your life

Telling someone

The majority of the incidents of rape and sexual assault that occur go undisclosed and unreported. It is difficult to tell someone about what has happened and it may feel safer for you to remain silent. Telling someone really does help.

With the right help and support you can start the process of healing and moving forward positively.



It may be that you have, or are considering sharing your experiences. Sandwell Rape and Sexual Violence Service has trained professionals that include highly skilled Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) who are specially trained to support survivors of rape, sexual assault violence and childhood sexual abuse, whether the assault happened recently or is in the past. An ISVA is independent of all other services.

If the assault happened recently...

Talk to someone. The earlier you seek help the quicker you will receive the support you need to keep you safe. You may need medical help and attention. You will not be pressured into disclosing to any other agencies.

Your safety is our priority. Help can be given to secure vital forensic evidence without making a report to the police, leaving the option to make a report at a later date, without having to lose the evidence.





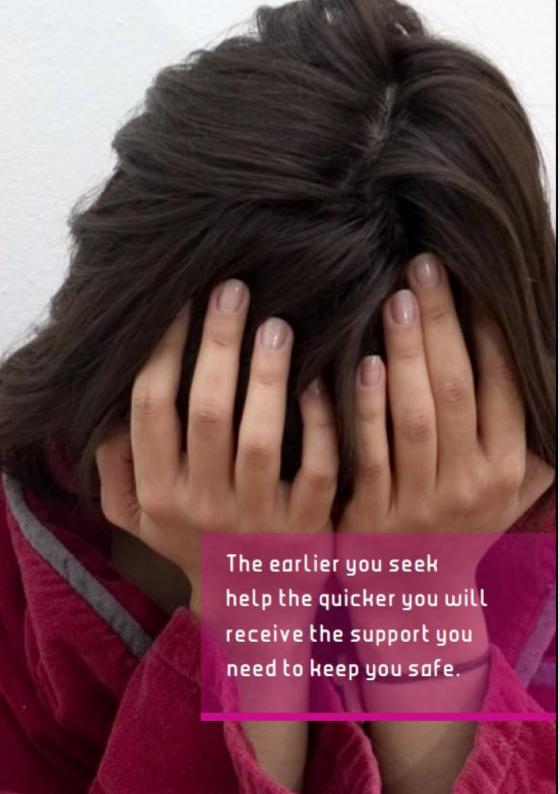
Reporting it to the Police

Reporting the crime may help to regain a sense of personal power and control. The ISVA will not force you into making decisions that you do not want to, however, if you are ready and willing to report to the police, we will support you in making your statement and track follow up actions.

The police have Specially Trained Officers (STO's) who can sensitively deal with the reporting of rape and sexual assault whenever it happened. If the incident happened recently you may be taken to a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) where vital forensic evidence will be gathered and statements taken. This is a very supportive environment and you will continue to be supported by our service after the work at the SARC is finished. The police are committed to keeping you safe and free from violence and abuse.

How do you feel now?

An assault is a traumatic experience that can result in emotional shock and may trigger many reactions. No two people will experience rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse in the same way. Everyone will have different thoughts and feelings and you will have responded and reacted in your own way.



Avoidance

You may avoid confronting what has happened and do and say anything that will avoid dealing with the situation and its impact. You may avoid doing something (denial of what happened), going to places, seeing people, addressing the resulting problems or telling anyone. To do so might make what happened real and that may feel too painful, raw or frightening to have to admit.

You might push away the pain that this incident has caused. Sometimes painful thoughts or feelings may be so intense that your mind just blocks them out altogether and you may not be able to remember parts of the assault.

Hypersensitivity

You may feel jumpy, jittery and shaky, or be easily startled. You may experience difficulty in sleeping or concentrating and as a result you may become impatient, irritable and have extreme mood swings. These feelings may be aggravated by sleep disturbance, lessening the ability to cope with what has happened.

Depression

You may feel down, withdrawn or despairing. You may find that you are crying unexplainably even after a significant amount of time. You may lose interest in the people and activities you used to enjoy. You may feel that plans you had made for the future don't seem to matter and that life isn't worth living or you may have thoughts of wanting to die or harm yourself.

Thoughts of suicide are common but that doesn't mean that you want to die, just that you feel so bad and believe you have run out of options. You just want the pain and hurt to stop.

Your behaviour may swing between very outgoing and very withdrawn. This type of behaviour may have been out of character before the incident. Wanting to sleep a lot and loosing interest in your own appearance are also indicators that you may be depressed.

Relationships

You may find it difficult to feel sexual or maintain sexual intimacy. This may have an impact upon your relationship. You may experience a lack of trust in your relationships with others; even the ones you love most can become tense. You may find it difficult to become intimate with people, as your trust is affected.

Control

During an assault control is taken away at a very fundamental level, control of your own body. Feeling in control may then be taken to extremes as you struggle to retain control over all aspects of your life in order to feel safe.





While alcohol remains the number one drug of choice, there are over 20 other drugs (legal and illegal) being used by abusers to facilitate sexual violence.

There is a reported increase in the use of specific drugs. Many campaigns have focused on keeping you safe when out and about and in particular about keeping your drinks safe and away from others.



What is it?

GHB

What does it do?

This is a synthetic drug that acts as a depressant on the central nervous system. It is commonly made into a clear liquid but can also be a white powder.

Rohypnol

Rohypnol is a controlled substance and usually white in colour, found in tablet form. It is the size of a one pence coin and dissolves quickly in beverages, such as soft drinks.

Hetamine

Ketamine is an anaesthetic. It is found in liquid, powder and tablet form. The liquid can be injected, applied to smoke able materials or consumed in drinks.

How will I know?

You will not know. There is no taste or smell to GHB. You will not remember or be able to recall what has happened.

When dissolved in alcohol, it can leave a bitter taste. It is a sedative and its effects may be noticeable within 20 to 30 minutes.

Its potential for a drug rape is not very high due to the aromatic nature of the compound.

Dizziness, nausea, vomiting, confusion, seizures, respiratory problems, depression, suppression of the gag reflex, intense drowsiness and possible unconsciousness.

Drowsiness, confusion, slurred speech, impaired motor skills, dizziness and disinhibition, impaired judgement, difficulty walking and a reduced level of consciousness.

The drug can affect the senses, judgement and co-ordination for 18 to 24 hours.



What do they do

- * Provide support, advice and guidance on all aspects of rape, sexual violence and assault. ISVA's are professionally trained specialists that will start to work with victims shortly after an attack has been reported - initial contact might take place after a visit to the SARC Sexual Assault Referral Centre.
- * The ISVA will then continue to offer help throughout the legal process that may follow, and beyond. The ISVA also works with victims who have not reported to the police.

* Part of their role is to link with other essential services such as victim and witness organisations, counsellors and health agencies. The advisors will work with those organisations to ensure the safety of the victim is taken into account throughout the process but remain independent from them all, including the police.

Sandwell Rape has a team of professional counsellors available to provide therapeutic counselling.

A Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) is where you may be taken by the police if you report an incident that happened recently, where vital forensic evidence is collected and a statement taken.

You can choose to go to the SARC

without reporting to the police and collect evidence anonymously if you prefer. Once finished at the SARC you will be referred to the nearest support agency to your home address for ongoing support, advice and guidance.

- * Sexual health advice.
- * Same day testing for HIV.
- * Vaccinations

- Contraception / emergency contraception.
- * Diagnosis / treatment of STDs.

Provision of sexual health and advice for those aged up to 24 years old:

Contraception / emergency contraception.

If you choose to make a report to the police, Specially Trained Police Officers (STO'S) will take details and a statement of what has happened.

- * Pregnancy testing / termination referrals.
- * Termination counselling.



Sandwell Rape and Sexual Violence Service is a skilled and experienced provider of support and counselling services to both male and female survivors of rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse.

For the survivor

This service is not just for survivors who wish to report or work within the criminal justice system. We support survivors both inside of and outside of the criminal justice system.

Please Note - all services are independent of any other agency, this includes statutory (Councils, police, courts etc.) and voluntary services.

The following range of services is available:

- Emotional and practical support on a one to one basis
- Access to an Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA)
- Culturally sensitive services, we respect equality and diversity and are sensitive to the needs of the LGBTT and BME communities
- · Access to interpreting service
- Advocacy, ensuring that your views, opinions, wishes and feelings are respected and listened to by all agencies and people involved
- Support through the legal process working within the criminal justice system including police, crown prosecution service, witness care and courts.

- Counselling
- Support to complete the Criminal Injuries Compensation award, if eligible

For the Partner, Relative or Friend

A range of services include:

- One to one support, being there for you, someone to talk to in confidence and to listen to you
- Offering guidance on how to navigate difficult situations and emotions and how to access the best support for the survivor

 Information to help you understand the impact and effects of rape and sexual violence



- Explanations and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of agencies who may be involved in supporting the survivor
- Support for both vulnerable and or intimidated witnesses

Survivors or those supporting them will not be forced or pressured to do or say anything that they do not want to.

All services available are delivered at your pace, when you are ready.

Helping Yourself to Heal

PATIENCE -

be patient with your self. There may be days when you don't feel like doing anything or even getting out of bed.

FRIENDS -

friends can be an important source of support, as a way of keeping a sense of normality in your life, even if you don't feel like going out, just having the company of a trusted friend can be a source of comfort.

WORK -

some may find that going back to work actually helps them to cope and gives them something else to focus on other than the rape. For others they may find that they need time off from work, and again, you need to do what is right for you. You need to be in control of your, choices and decisions.

REMEMBER

It is not your fault.

No one EVER asks to be raped or assaulted or deserves it.

The blame **always** lies with the abuser.

LIFE AFTER RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

We can never take away the experience of rape and or sexual assault because it has happened.

Many brave and inspirational people have shared their experiences, asked for help and rebuilt their lives positively.

I didn't know what to say, I stayed silent for years, I looked for someone to tell. When I did, I felt a weight had been lifted from my shoulders. I was not alone. Sharing my experience with people who understand has been difficult, challenging and hard work. But most of all it has been the most liberating experience of my life.



Myths and facts about rape

There are a numerous myths about rape and its victims.

→ MYTH

RAPE WON'T HAPPEN TO ME OR ANYONE I KNOW 🗸

FACT

Women, children, men, young and old, across all races, religions, economic and geographical divides can all be victims of rape.

Rape is the most under reported crime.

→ MYTH

VICTIMS ASK FOR IT. THEY PROVOKE OR DESERVE AN ATTACK BY THEIR BEHAVIOUR, ATTITUDES OR DRESS

FACT

No one asks to be the victim of sexual violence – you are not responsible for someone's violent behaviour. By blaming yourself you take the responsibility away from the person who decides to commit this very serious and damaging crime.

→ MYTH

THE VICTIM MUST FIGHT BACK FOR IT TO BE CALLED RAPE

FACT

Fighting back is not a criterion for rape – rape is being forced to have sex. Any threat or use of force, which prevents an individual from resisting the attack, is defined as rape.

→ MYTH

A RAPE VICTIM ALWAYS NEEDS TO SAY 'NO' TO SHOW THEY DON'T CONSENT ✓

FACT

The reality is that some victims will 'freeze' during a sexual attack or behave in a submissive manner. This is sometimes due to shock, fear of the attacker, or fear for their lives.

→ MYTH

RAPISTS ARE STRANGERS 🗸

FACT

When most people think about how rapes occur, they imagine desolate dark alleyways late at night and that the attacker is a stranger. The truth is the majority of people who commit rape know their victims and in some cases are relations, friends or work colleagues.

\rightarrow MYTH

MEN CANNOT BE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED 🗹

FACT

Men can and are sexually assaulted.
Rape and sexual assault are traumatic for both men and women and may have long lasting and very damaging after-effects.
Men may find it difficult to talk about their experience for fear of being ridiculed and not believed.

→ MYTH

MALE RAPE IS A GAY CRIME 🗸

FACT

Research shows that the majority of sexual assaults are committed by heterosexual males.

Contact us

Black Country Rape and Sexual Violence Service

We support women and men who have experienced sexual violence. Our services cover Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton, and are based in our specialist abuse centres called Cedar Centres. The services are part of Black Country Women's Aid.

in Sandwell call 0121 553 0090 in Dudley call 01384 455 411 in Wolverhampton call 01902 554 598

Other useful numbers

Helplines If you need to talk in confidence:

- National Rape Crisis helpline 0808 802 9999
- The Samaritans 116 123

Genito-urinary medicine (GUM) and Sexual Health Clinics

For confidential screening and treatment of sexually transmitted infections

- Dartmouth Clinic, Sandwell General Hospital: 0121 507 3094
- Russells Hall Hospital, Dudley: 01384 456111 (ext. 3900)
- Embrace Sexual Health Service, New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton: 01902 695000

Horizon SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre): 0808 1685698

Specialist unit supporting anyone who has been a victim of sexual violence, providing medical examinations and forensic evidence collection.

Brook www.brook.org.uk

Free and confidential sexual health advice and contraception to young people under 25.

British Pregnancy Advisory Service: 03457 30 40 30 Sexual health, contraception and abortion care advice and services

Dial 999 if you are in immediate danger or if an incident has just taken place.

Alternatively, call your local police on 101



Black Country Women's Aid (formerly known as Sandwell Women's Aid) is an independent charity which has supported survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence in the West Midlands for 30 years.

We offer sensitive and holistic support services which help victims of abuse to escape from violence, cope with trauma and rebuild their lives.

We believe that no-one should have to live in fear of violence and abuse. We listen, we support, we care.



The Cedar Centres are our centres in Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall which bring together a range of support services for survivors. They are based on values of protection and healing: a safe space to enable survivors to rebuild their lives. You can find out about services at your local Cedar Centre by calling 0121 553 0090.





















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