

Briefing Scottish Parliament | 16 Days of Action 2021 | Prevention and Recovery



Rape Crisis Scotland is Scotland's leading organisation working to end sexual violence.

We should all be able to live free from the fear and threat of sexual violence. At Rape Crisis Scotland we work to raise awareness of the prevalence and impact of rape, sexual assault and abuse, advocate for better health, justice and community responses, and work to make sure that no matter what happened or when, survivors can access specialist support.

16 Days of Action is an opportunity to focus our minds and redouble our efforts to tackle male-violence; the issues before us are not without solutions, but these solutions require Political will, investment and for all of us who believe in equality and safety to raise our voices together.

Prevention

We believe that sexual violence is not inevitable, and we cannot accept it as such. The scale of work necessary to challenge and change the attitudes that permit sexual violence is great, but the determination that we – and so many across society – hold to live in a Scotland that is equally safe is greater.

Despite ongoing impacts of Covid 19 across Scotland the Rape Crisis Prevention Programme worked with 10,456 young people in 74 schools over the last 6 months to look at consent, healthy relationships, sexual harassment, and inequalities. We also launched a whole school approach and worked with colleges and universities across Scotland, working in collaboration with partners to prevent and improve responses to gender-based violence in education.

We have worked with 24 colleges and universities to embed the First Responder training programme, developed through the national Equally Safe in Colleges and Universities programme of work. This work ensures that Scotland's local violence against women organisations have a key role in supporting colleges and universities to offer a trauma-informed and survivor-centred response to



students affected by sexual violence and domestic abuse. To date an estimated 850 college and university staff have received the training since the project started in 2018.

Key to our prevention work has been the recent launch of **Equally Safe at School** (ESAS).

ESAS takes a whole school approach, working with secondary school staff and students to prevent gender-based violence and to increase confidence and skills in responding to incidents and disclosures of such violence. It aims to positively influence the school culture by fostering a shared, consistent approach to gender-based violence. ESAS is underpinned by principles of equality, safety, and accessibility, with student voices at the forefront. ESAS has been launched as an interactive website so that schools can undertake it independently at their own pace, with staff training delivered by their local Rape Crisis centre.

We are asking Members of the Scottish Parliament to:

- ⇒ Familiarise yourself with [Equally Safe at School](#), and reach out to schools, local authority education leaders and community planning bodies in your area with information to support them to participate, integrate ESAS into local planning and take a joint strategic approach to local implementation
- ⇒ Advocate for sustainable funding for the [Rape Crisis Prevention Programme](#), ensuring that we have the resources we need to continue to deliver specialist interventions which are critical to enabling a safe space for young people to talk about consent and healthy sexual relationships.
- ⇒ Advocate for sustainable funding for our work with colleges and universities to ensure violence against women organisations continue to be at the heart of colleges' and universities' work to prevent violence, and that survivors get the support they need when they disclose.
- ⇒ Speak out against sexism, sexual violence and inequality in your communities



Centres

Local Rape Crisis Centres are on the front line of supporting survivors in Scotland today, ensuring that no matter what happened or when, survivors have access to high-quality, specialist support and advocacy.

The public conversation that has dominated headlines and airwaves recently so often reminds those affected by rape, sexual violence, or assault to speak out and seek support, but without local Rape Crisis Centres providing this critical service, survivors often tell us that they would have nowhere to turn. Despite progress in public attitudes, community responses are not yet where they need to be for survivors to feel safe and supported to share their experiences. Rape Crisis Centres are leaders in their communities – not just providers of vital support but beacons across Scotland that show survivors they are not alone.

In the past year the way that support has been delivered has changed, and local centres have evolved and adapted to meet the needs of survivors whilst navigating the continued threat of Covid-19.

No survivor should ever have to wait to access support that is described as life-saving but demand for specialist services has increased and though funding from the Scottish Government to address waiting lists has provided a welcome reprieve, we urgently need a sustainable funding model for specialist support.

We are asking Members of the Scottish Parliament to:

- ⇒ Reach out to [your local Rape Crisis Centre](#), and find out how you can support their work
- ⇒ Ensure your office knows the details of your local Rape Crisis Centre, the support they can provide and how to signpost constituents who may need Rape Crisis support
- ⇒ Advocate for sustainable funding for specialist Rape Crisis Centres at a local and national level



Helpline

The Rape Crisis Scotland helpline is open every single night from 6pm – midnight, offering confidential short-term, crisis and initial support by phone, email and text to anyone affected by sexual violence.

We would always encourage anyone who needs to talk – including survivors, friends, family, partners, and professionals – to reach out to us. The pandemic and associated restrictions were intensely triggering for many survivors: We saw an increase in survivors contacting us, with just over 5300 support and information requests in the past year.

“When you doubt every thought you have, and have no self-esteem, it sometimes doesn’t matter what those closest to you or on your side say. It takes an outsiders view point to clarify things and sometimes to make you realise that you are not going mad, you are not stupid, and people are taking you seriously.” – Helpline Caller

Unfortunately, the level of unmet need continues to be a serious concern to us, with 8509 calls to the helpline unable to get through in the past year, an increase of 60% on the year before. We know that some of these callers will try again, but we fear the impact on people who have summoned the immense courage to pick up the phone only to reach voicemail.

We are asking Members of the Scottish Parliament to:

- ⇒ Share [details of the helpline](#) on your social media to ensure that survivors in particular know that they are not alone and that support is available
- ⇒ Continue to advocate for sustainable specialist funding for accessible support

If you have any further questions, or would like to discuss this briefing in more detail, please don't hesitate to get in touch in the first instance with Brenna Jessie, Press and Campaigns Coordinator.

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