

Information After Rape and Sexual Assault

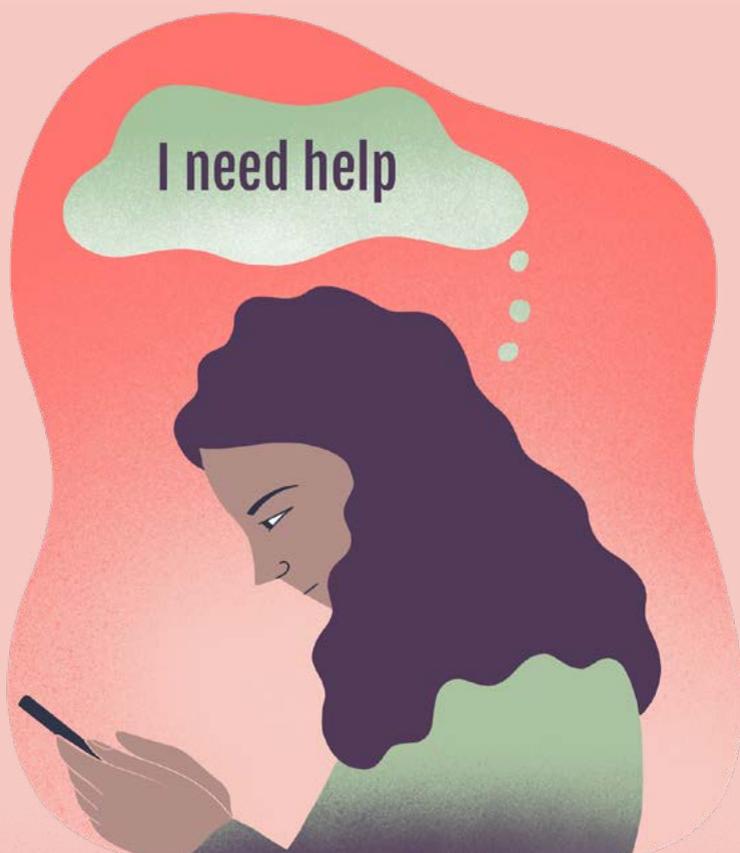
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Introduction

If you are aged 16 or over, live in Scotland and have experienced rape or sexual assault, the information in this booklet will help you.

The information is aimed at those who have experienced assault recently but if it was weeks, months or even years ago, this booklet will still be helpful.



What is sexual violence?

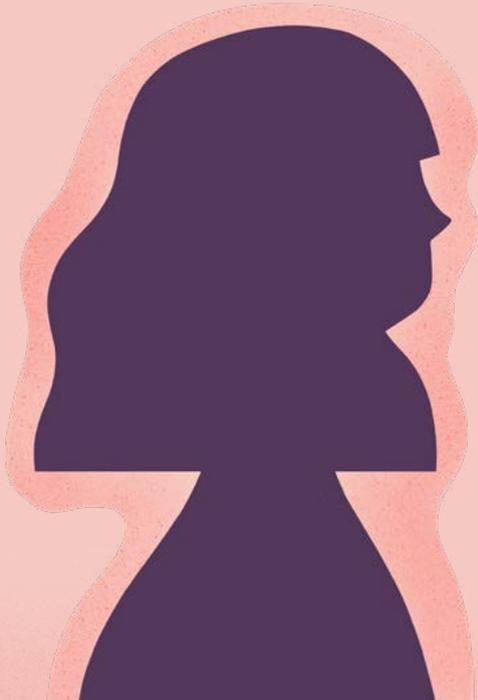
Rape and sexual assault are serious crimes which happen when you are forced to take part in sexual acts you do not consent to.

Sexual assault is a broad term which applies to any form of sexual violence, ranging from unwanted touching or kissing to being forced to perform sexual acts.

Rape and sexual assault can happen to anyone at any age. It can happen once or many times throughout your life.

It might be carried out by the same person – a partner, parent, sibling or other family member, or a colleague – or by different people at different times.

It could be by someone you trust, someone in a position of authority, a stranger or multiple people.



What is sexual violence?

However you choose to explain what happened to you, whatever words you use, rape and sexual assault are wrong.

You might worry that you will not be believed or that people won't understand. But no matter what happened or when – whether you were sober, drinking or taking drugs, and whatever you were wearing – it was not your fault.

The information in this booklet aims to let you know what you can do next. You can read it at your own pace and then decide how to move forward.

**You are not alone,
when you are ready to talk,
we're here.**

Your safety

If you're worried about your immediate safety, call the police on 999 or go into any police station. If you want to report what happened, keep any clothes you were wearing at the time of the assault unwashed in a bag, if you can.

If possible, try not to wash or have anything to eat until you have spoken to the police or a medical professional.

You can access a Forensic Medical Examination (FME) usually up to 7 days after the assault(s) regardless of whether you want to report to the police. For more on reporting to the police, see page **18**; for FMEs, see page **15**.

It might be helpful to be with someone you trust right now. It is natural to feel in shock, frightened, numb or unsure what to do.

It might be easier to talk to someone you don't know; our helpline is open from 5pm until midnight every night:

Call: **08088 01 03 02**

Text: **07537 410 027** (texts charged at standard rate)

Email: **support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk**

► More on support: page **12**

Your health

Though there are not always physical injuries after sexual violence, you might be sore, in shock, or be cut or bleeding. You can visit Accident and Emergency (A&E) and see a doctor, or phone NHS 24 on 111. You might have questions that you want to ask about your sexual health, about testing or emergency contraception. It's your choice whether you tell anyone what has happened.

► More on sexual health: page **8**

If you report a recent rape or assault to the police, you may be taken to the Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS) closest to you. Here, you can get a Forensic Medical Examination (FME) if appropriate, emergency contraception and sexual health screening, and discuss ongoing support options.

How you are feeling

Rape and sexual violence are traumatic. It can help to understand how this might affect you.

► More on trauma: page **10**



Sexual health

If you do not attend a SARCS for a FME, you might want to consider contacting your local sexual health service. You may also want to speak to your GP.

It is worth getting a sexual health check-up following a rape or sexual assault. It can be difficult to think about this but it is important.

You might worry about what to expect and what it involves. How you move forward with a sexual health check-up is up to you. You have options and there is support available.

**You have options
and there is
support available**

Sexual health

You can access emergency contraception and testing without having to tell anyone what happened or reporting it to the police.

Whatever you decide to do, it's up to you what you choose to tell anyone. You do not need to report what happened to the police to get a sexual health check-up or FME. It can be helpful for a doctor or nurse to know what has happened but what you share is your choice.

No matter when the rape or sexual assault took place, it is worth getting a check-up. Many sexually transmitted infections (STIs) do not have symptoms, so you might not be aware of them.



Sexual health

Things to think about

- STI testing
- Risk of pregnancy and emergency contraception
- Accessing support.

What to expect

- You can take the emergency contraception (or 'morning after') pill up to 72 hours after the assault. The pill is provided by your local pharmacy free of charge
- You might be asked to take tests and possibly undergo treatment for different STIs. Some of the tests can be done yourself
- A doctor or nurse is likely to ask some questions. Take your time. They are trained and are only asking so they can provide the right support, tests or treatment.



Sexual health

Remember

- These health services are free in Scotland
- You can go to a sexual health clinic even if you are not registered with a GP
- It's up to you what infections, and how many, you are tested for
- You can take someone with you if you want
- All STIs are treatable.

Where to go

You can go to a local sexual health clinic or GP. You can book an online sexual health appointment anywhere in Scotland.

Click here to book an appointment online

A pharmacy local to you can provide the emergency contraception pill for free.



Trauma

Rape and sexual assault are traumatic, and this can lead to a 'trauma response'.

This is when your body responds instinctively in a way that can feel like you are not present or in control of your behaviour. Many people 'freeze' and are unable to move or speak. This is a natural response to trauma and there is no right or wrong way to respond.

A traumatic event can have a significant impact and take time to recover from. It can affect you in lots of different ways emotionally, physically and practically.

Some people experience ongoing symptoms that last for months or years, and can develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



Trauma

After sexual violence it's very common to feel or experience:

- Anger
- Flashbacks
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Numbness
- Panic attacks
- Sleep problems or nightmares
- Shame and self blame
- Loneliness or isolation.

But there are many other feelings, emotions and effects you might be experiencing just now. Trauma has a different impact on different people.

However you feel is valid, and you are not alone.

Useful information

- **Rape Crisis Scotland Trauma booklet**
- **'I Just Froze' Rape Crisis Scotland campaign and video**
- **'Trauma and the brain: Understanding Abuse Survivors Responses'**

We know it can be hard to reach out but you deserve support and, no matter what happened or when, we are here.

Support

If you have been raped or sexually assaulted, no matter the circumstances, it was not your fault. Some people find it helpful to talk about what happened or how it is affecting them. You might not feel ready to do this right away, or until sometime after. It's never too late to get support.

Seeking support can be difficult and it's normal to be nervous. You might worry that what happened was not 'bad enough' to need support but everyone deserves support when they are going through a difficult time.



Rape Crisis support workers are highly trained and will respond with compassion and care. They know how hard it can be to reach out and that you might have fears and concerns, or might not have told anyone else about what has happened. You can choose what you tell a support worker and don't have to talk about anything you don't want to. You can take things at a pace that is right for you.

With time and the right support, you can move forward from what happened. Healing is often not a straightforward process; it has ups and downs, disappointments and setbacks. This is natural, and part of processing what happened. There is support available and you do not have to cope on your own.

Support

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline

The Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline provides short-term and crisis support over the phone and email to anyone affected by sexual violence, between 5pm and midnight every night. It is free, confidential and staffed by trained support workers who are all women.

08088 01 03 02

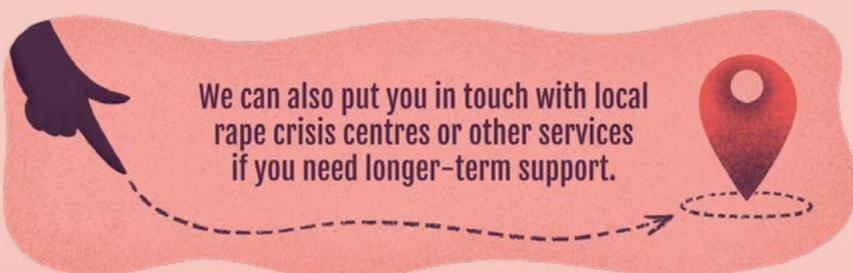
support@rapecrisisScotland.org.uk

07537 410 027 (texts charged at standard rate).

The helpline can also refer you to a support worker and/or an advocacy worker at your local Rape Crisis Centre. Depending on where you are based in Scotland, you might have to wait before you are able to start your support. The waiting time varies but the Rape Crisis Centre will explain what support is available while you are on the waiting list.

You can also use the Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline, detailed above, during this time.

Click here to find your nearest centre.



Support

Scottish Women's Aid

Women's Aid in Scotland provide support and safe accommodation for women and their children who have experienced abuse by their partners.

Click to find your local Women's Aid service.

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline is open to anyone affected by domestic abuse or forced marriage and is open 24 hours a day, on:

08000 027 1234 or **www.sdafmh.org.uk/en**



Forensic Medical Examination

Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS)

If you have recently been raped or sexually assaulted and do not want to tell the police, or are unsure about telling them, you can self-refer to a SARCS. This service is for people aged 16 and over.

You will have your immediate health and wellbeing needs met and, if the assault has happened within the last 7 days, it might be appropriate for you to have a Forensic Medical Examination (FME).

During an FME, a specially trained healthcare professional will collect certain forensic evidence and keep it for 26 months, in case you want to tell the police at a later date. If you choose not to tell the police, the evidence will be destroyed after 26 months.

NHS staff at the SARCS will also organise any necessary follow-up healthcare or support, including checking for and treating sexually transmitted infections, and providing emergency contraception.

For more information about healthcare and forensic medical examination, **please click here to see the separate leaflet online.**

Support & information

Useful helplines and websites

Samaritans

116 123 (24 hours)

www.samaritans.org

Breathing Space

0800 83 85 87

(Monday-Thursday 6pm-2am; Friday 6pm-Monday 6am)

www.breathingspace.scot

Victim Support Scotland

0800 160 1985

www.victimsupport.scot

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Domestic Abuse Scotland

www.lgbtdomesticabuse.org.uk

LGBT Health and Wellbeing

www.lgbthealth.org.uk

Amina – The Muslim Women’s Resource Centre

www.mwrc.org.uk



Support & information

Useful helplines and websites

Shakti Women's Aid

(for black minority ethnic (BME) women, children and young people who are experiencing, or who have experienced, domestic abuse)

www.shaktiedinburgh.co.uk

Childline

0800 1111 (24 hours)

www.childline.org.uk

Shelter Scotland

support for housing issues

0808 800 4444

(Monday-Friday 9am-5pm)

www.scotland.shelter.org.uk

If you are a student

If you are a student, many universities and colleges have counselling services. You can also apply for 'mitigating circumstances' for additional support. Speak to someone in a pastoral care role where you study to find out more about this.

Reporting to the police

Rape and sexual assault is a crime. You can choose whether or not you want to report this to the police. You can get support and information from the Rape Crisis Advocacy Project to help you make this decision. You have not done anything wrong, and have the right to report what happened.

How to report:

- Report in any police station
- Phone the police (**999**)
- Contact a Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS)
- Access support through Rape Crisis to make a report.

You might worry about not being believed, or about having to go to court and give evidence; or you might be afraid of what will happen if you tell anyone. You don't have to go through this alone.

If you report to the police, you will be assigned a Sexual Offences Liaison Officer (SOLO) who is trained to take statements and investigate crimes of this nature.

It might help to talk about your options before making a decision.

Reporting to the police

The National Advocacy Project

The National Advocacy Project provides support to anyone engaging or considering engaging with the justice system after a sexual offence. Advocacy workers are based in Rape Crisis Centres throughout Scotland, and can provide support, information and assistance around reporting to the police, and the justice process.

Advocacy workers can accompany you to meetings, as well as be supporters in court. To access this service, contact your local Rape Crisis Centre or contact the Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline to have a referral made for you.

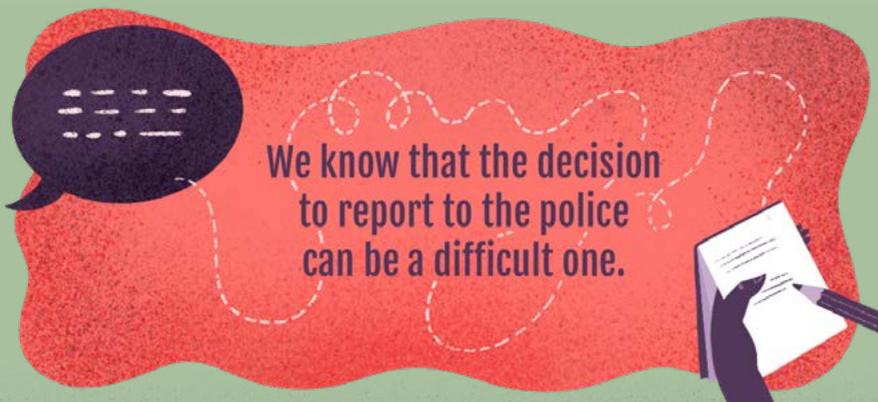


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Reporting to the police... continued

What to expect

- You will be asked to give a statement about what happened
- It might be possible to give a statement in your own home or somewhere other than a police station. You can speak to a police officer or a Rape Crisis advocacy worker about this
- In some areas of Scotland, you might be able to provide your initial statement to police in the **SARCS** using a video recording device. If this is available, it will be offered to you by the police
- The police will ask you questions. It is their job to record as much information as possible, so they might ask you further questions depending on what you say
- Giving a statement can take some time – around a few hours and sometimes longer
- If you want, you can take a friend, family member or a Rape Crisis Scotland advocacy worker with you.



Reporting to the police... continued

Remember

- You can ask to take a break at any point
- It is normal not to be able to remember everything exactly, and in order
- You can phone **101** and request an update, or contact your SOLO directly
- You can get support from a Rape Crisis advocacy worker.

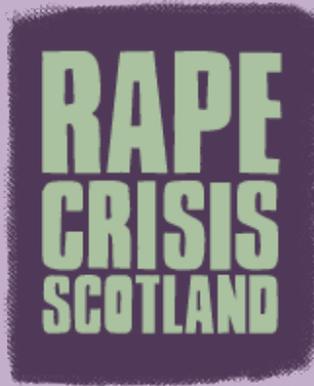
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If you are worried about approaching the police because of your immigration status, drug use, or because you are involved in the selling or exchanging of sex, you can speak to a support organisation confidentially.

Useful information

For more information on the criminal justice system, and what happens after reporting:

- **Rape Crisis Scotland Survivors Guide to the Scottish Justice System video**
- **Police and legal advice leaflet**
- **Drug assisted sexual violence leaflet**
- **Rape Crisis Scotland's support resources**



08088 01 03 02

www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

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