

# RAPE CRISIS SCOTLAND



Scottish Parliament

Manifesto 2026-2031

# Sexual violence is endemic, but it is **not** inevitable.

If we **tackle** the discrimination and structural inequality which create barriers to safety, we can dismantle the root causes of violence against women and girls.

If we **invest** in prevention, we can educate young people about consent and healthy relationships, and empower them to challenge misogyny and sexual violence.

If we **challenge** harmful societal norms, we help people understand what rape and sexual violence actually look like.

We want to live in a Scotland, and a world, free from sexual violence where services like Rape Crisis are not as necessary as they are now.

Until that happens, we need properly-funded frontline services so that survivors can access the support they need when they need it.

**Rape Crisis Scotland** is calling on the next Scottish Parliament to:

- Give every survivor has access to life-saving support
- Invest in sexual violence prevention
- Ensure no survivor navigates the justice process alone
- Reduce trauma in the justice process

1

# Ensure every survivor has access to life-saving support

**We need sustainable funding for specialist services, so every survivor has access to support when they need it.**

Seeking support after sexual violence can be an incredibly difficult thing to do. Many people wait months or years before reaching out and may have told no-one else, or have not been believed.

Across Scotland, most Rape Crisis services support anyone over the age of 13 affected by sexual violence, through crisis support, advocacy, therapeutic support and specialist, trauma-informed practice.

We hear repeatedly that timely access to our services saves lives, but too often survivors must endure waiting lists. We believe that no survivor should ever have to wait to access support, but Rape Crisis services need sustainable funding to make support at the point of need a reality.

Two years ago, we launched the Survivors Can't Wait campaign because there was unprecedented demand on local Rape Crisis services. That temporary funding boost has ended, but the demand for services only continues to rise. Local services are increasingly asked to do more with less, while centres risk losing specialist skills and experience because they are forced to place their workers on insecure contracts.

Rape Crisis services need sustainable, multi-year funding that is proportionate to demand and allows services to help survivors as they come to us – not months later.

# 2

## Invest in sexual violence prevention

**Every young person in Scotland should have access to expert-led sexual violence education.**

Sexual violence is not inevitable. We can prevent it.

Rape Crisis Scotland's whole schools approach and prevention interventions are evidenced to challenge and change the attitudes that permit sexual violence, equipping and empowering young people with the knowledge they need to navigate consent and healthy relationships.

In 2024-25, our national Sexual Violence Prevention Programme delivered 2866 workshops on consent and healthy relationships to 41,956 young people in 181 schools.

Prevention is crucial, but it's chronically under-resourced. We want to see our Equally Safe at Schools programme to be rolled out in every school in Scotland and more prevention workers to deliver our national prevention programme across the country.

Every young person across Scotland should have access to this.

# 3

## Ensure no survivor goes navigates the justice process **alone**

**Every survivor should have access to independent advocacy support to help them navigate the criminal justice system.**

The criminal justice system can be a complex process, and no one should be left to navigate it alone. Advocacy workers can provide support and information at every stage of the criminal justice system, from before a statement is made through to the resolution of a court case. They can help to get updates on the progress of a case, provide information about special measures, and attend court with survivors. In 2021, the Lady Dorrian Review recommended that every survivor should have access to independent advocacy support throughout the justice process.

Rape Crisis Scotland coordinates the National Advocacy Service (NAS), which is Scotland-wide programme which allows local Rape Crisis services to employ advocacy workers in their local areas. In 2024-25, 3055 survivors were supported by the NAS, providing a combined total of 32,289 support hours.

However, caseloads and waiting lists for the National Advocacy Service remain high and continue to affect survivors' ability to access specialist support quickly. In 2024-2025, 13 out of 19 Rape Crisis advocacy services in Scotland operated a waiting list, with 1,127 survivors spending time on a waiting list for criminal justice advocacy support (up from the 866 survivors who spent time on a waiting list in 2022-23).

# 4

## Reduce trauma in justice process

**Introduce a properly funded specialist sexual offences court to tackle case backlog.**

Choosing to report rape or sexual assault is a very difficult decision.

The conviction rate for rape and attempted rape in Scotland remains the lowest of any crime type. For those who do pursue justice, there can be an excruciating wait time for a case to reach court. Survivors frequently tell us that the process of seeking justice – and in particular their experience in court – can be as traumatic as the attack(s) itself.

In September 2025, the Scottish Parliament passed the Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform (Scotland) Act, including the establishing of a new specialist sexual offences court. It's crucial that this court, which recognises the unique challenges faced by survivors of sexual violence, is established and properly funded at a level which enables a reduction in the current backlog of cases.

**“It was a relief to be able to speak... this was very helpful to me, help of this kind is very thin on the ground.”**

**“It helped me to not feel as alone, to be able to talk about what happened .”**

**“I felt understood, respected and reassured.”**

**RAPE  
CRISIS  
SCOTLAND**

