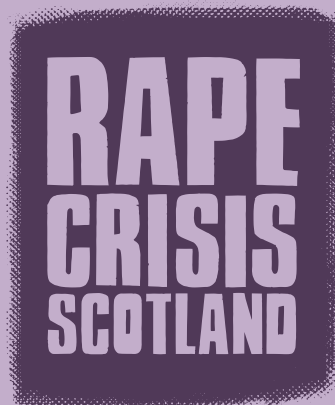




BRIEFING

*16 DAYS OF
ACTIVISM 2023*

*SURVIVORS CAN'T
WAIT: RAPE CRISIS
FUNDING AND
WAITING LISTS*



Briefing Scottish Parliament | 16 Days of Activism

Survivors Can't Wait

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.

We have 17 member centres across Scotland. This means that no matter where a survivor lives in Scotland, there is a Rape Crisis Centre offering highly specialist support for survivors of sexual violence in their area.

Demand for Rape Crisis support is growing. In 2022/23, Rape Crisis Centres supported almost 10,000 survivors.¹ In 2021/22, 8198 survivors received support. But resources simply are not keeping up with demand. Most centres are now being forced to operate waiting lists. At the end of September 2023, 825 survivors were on a waiting list for support. Funding simply is not sufficient to meet service demand. The situation facing survivors will soon get significantly worse unless the Scottish Government acts.

The Survivors Can't Wait campaign

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an opportunity to focus our minds and redouble our efforts to ensure that we work together to end violence against women and girls in Scotland and that where sexual violence does happen, that survivors have access to high quality support at the point of need. But the 16 Days period cannot just be an opportunity for rhetoric. We need to see political will and investment to support these vital services so that no survivor in Scotland is left without support.

Throughout 16 Days, Rape Crisis Scotland is running the Survivors Can't Wait campaign. This campaign aims to raise awareness of the issue of waiting lists at Rape Crisis Centres and to urge the Scottish Government to take action. Rape Crisis Scotland is calling for the Scottish Government to

- Extend emergency waiting list funding beyond March 2024 to save 28 specialist support worker roles

¹ 9,942

- Commit to long term sustainable funding for Rape Crisis Centres in Scotland

Background

Rape Crisis support

Rape Crisis support is highly specialised emotional and sometimes practical support to survivors of sexual violence. This support is available whether or not a survivor chooses to report what happened to them to the police. Across Scotland, member centres offer a range of support options including short-term crisis support, one to one emotional support, counselling, group support and art or creativity-based interventions. This is delivered in a variety of ways including drop-ins, scheduled appointments and on an outreach basis as well as remote options.

Waiting lists

Many Rape Crisis Centres across Scotland have been forced to operate waiting lists. This is not a position any Rape Crisis Centre wants to be in. For a survivor, being on a waiting list simply means experiencing a lack of a service. It takes significant courage to reach out for support for something as sensitive as Rape Crisis support. Where this support isn't available at the point of need, the emotional toll can be devastating. Some centres have reported not being able to reach survivors who have been on waiting lists for some time when availability for support does come up, not because the survivor is no longer in need of support but because a survivor no longer feels able to talk about what has happened to them, has experienced a deterioration in mental health or has turned to damaging coping methods including substance abuse.

Waiting lists times vary from months to over a year for support at some centres.

Emergency funding

In 2021, the Scottish Government granted emergency funding to tackle waiting lists. This funding was delivered to most Rape Crisis Centres. This funding is due to expire at the end of March 2024. If it is not extended, 28 specialist support workers across Scotland will lose their jobs. This means 28 fewer highly trained staff will be able to support survivors. Thousands of support appointments will vanish, and survivors will be forced to wait even longer for help. It's crucial that this funding is extended to save these posts and reduce the time survivors of rape and sexual violence in Scotland must wait for support.

Long term sustainable funding

Any extension to the aforementioned emergency funding would be very much welcome. But Rape Crisis services are essential services that provide vital support.

Long term funding (by which we mean a minimum of five years) would offer survivors and staff certainty that services will be able to continue. Currently, highly trained support workers are left on precarious contracts (many of which are set to expire very shortly). Specialist support workers need and deserve financial security and certainty over the future of their employment. Without this, Rape Crisis Centres will continue to experience a high staff turnover which in turn leads to uneven service provision for survivors.

Long term funding is essential for the future of Rape Crisis support for survivors of sexual violence in Scotland.

We are asking Members of the Scottish Parliament to

- Ask the Scottish Government to extend the emergency waiting list funding and commit to long term sustainable funding for Rape Crisis services in Scotland
- Support the Survivors Can't Wait campaign in Parliament and on social media