

# SUPPORTING LGBTI SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE



**RAPE  
CRISIS  
SCOTLAND**

## Supporting LGBTI survivors of sexual violence

The Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS) Helpline is for anyone aged 13 and over who has been affected by sexual violence, no matter when or how it happened. This includes survivors as well as family, friends, partners and workers.

The service is free, private and confidential. You can phone or email. You do not need to give your name, gender, sexual orientation or any information about yourself or your history. The decision about what to tell us is yours.

You can be a victim of sexual violence regardless of your gender or the gender of the perpetrator. Anyone, whether or not they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI), can experience sexual violence. Often the reasons and reactions are similar, but some LGBTI people may have to deal with additional issues, such as prejudice, stereotyping and concerns about public revelation of their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

These are all aspects which RCS helpline workers can support you with.

All helpline workers are women. All are fully trained to be sensitive and respectful. We know that LGBTI people who have experienced sexual violence, including those questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation, may have unique worries or fears and face particular barriers.

## About sexual violence

Sexual violence is a term which covers many different types of abuse such as:

- Rape
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Sexual assault (which can include unwanted touching or kissing or being forced to perform or watch sexual acts)
- Stalking
- Sexual harassment
- So called 'honour-based' violence
- Forced marriage
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Commercial sexual exploitation (such as prostitution; pornography; lap dancing; trafficking)

Sometimes people can be unsure whether what they have experienced is sexual violence. Having a chance to talk and to be listened to can sometimes help make sense of what has happened.

Anyone can be raped, sexually assaulted or sexually abused. Under the law, penetration of the mouth, vagina or anus, without consent, by a penis is called 'rape'. The law regards a surgically-constructed penis or vagina as the same as any other penis or vagina. Penetration of the vagina or anus, without consent, by an object or body part which is not a penis, is called 'sexual assault by penetration'. Any other type of sexual physical contact, without consent, is called 'sexual assault'. Anyone of any gender and with any type of genitals can be a victim or perpetrator of sexual assault by penetration and other types of sexual assault. Rape and sexual assault are very serious crimes.

'Consent' also has a legal meaning – 'free agreement'. This means that you cannot consent if the rape or sexual assault happened while you were asleep, unconscious, under the influence of substances, under age (16), or you complied with an assault because you were tricked or misled or threatened or were frightened of being hurt.

Although there are these legal words, you can use any words you like to describe your own experience.

People sometimes blame themselves for the abuse. This is not surprising because perpetrators often try to blame victims. Also myths and prejudice may lead some people in society to blame victims. This is wrong. If you have experienced sexual violence, it is not your fault. It is the responsibility of the person who harmed you; they had a choice. They may have been a complete stranger. But they are more likely to be someone you know such as a partner, a family member, colleague or other acquaintance.

Sometimes people who identify as straight who experience sexual violence may question their sexual orientation. They may think that it happened because they are gay or that it has made them gay. Sexual violence has nothing to do with sexual orientation. Sometimes people can be targeted by abusers because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or intersex status. Sexual violence happens because of who the abuser is, not who you are.

Any sexual activity without consent within an intimate relationship, perpetrated by anyone regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or physical body characteristics, is sexual violence.

Everyone's experience of sexual violence is different.

## **If you have experienced sexual violence**

Sexual violence is common. It can happen to anyone, regardless of gender identity, expression or sexual orientation. You are not alone, and there is support.

Whatever has happened to you, we can help you talk through your feelings and reactions; suggest ways of coping with what has happened; give you information to help you think about options; and let you know where to get more support and information if you want that.

We can do this by phone or by email.

If you are deaf/hard of hearing we can use text or free online interpreters.

If you prefer to speak in a language other than English, we can arrange phone-based interpreters through Language Line.

## **Sexual violence and LGBTI survivors**

If you are LGBTI, there may be some unique stresses, threats or barriers which make it difficult for you to tell anyone what happened, to ask for help, and to be safe from further abuse.

Perpetrators of abuse look for ways to isolate and control victims and to exploit their victims' vulnerabilities. The person who violated you may have used myths and prejudices about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression against you.

RCS workers understand the fears and concerns that LGBTI people may have when asking for help. Because of the discrimination that LGBTI people may face in other areas of life, these fears are understandable. RCS workers will listen to what you say, and discuss these and any other concerns with you.

Some common concerns for LGBTI people who have experienced sexual violence are:

- Fear of being disbelieved or disrespected (and actual disbelief or disrespect)
- Fear of (or actual) hostility or other homo/transphobic response whether this is from friends, family, colleagues or services
- Thinking that talking about the sexual violence means coming out as LGBTI and not wanting to do that; this may include young people who feel they cannot tell their parents about the violence, and those who identify as black, minority ethnic or who belong to a faith group which does not approve of them being LGBTI
- Feeling that not only do they have to 'come out' if they say what's happened but they may have to 'educate', or challenge the beliefs of, the person they are speaking to
- Feeling ashamed about what happened
- Fear of being disloyal or betraying the idea of the 'LGBTI community' if they report an assault by someone else who identifies as LGBTI
- Not wanting to risk losing their connection to the social community of LGBTI people in which everyone may know them and the abuser
- A lack of support from their own community or social networks

- Fear of being 'outed' by the abuser to friends, family or employer
- Concerns for physical safety if the sexual assault was part of a homophobic or transphobic attack
- Feeling powerless or controlled by the abuser in ways that are directly related to sexual orientation or gender identity or expression
- The perpetrator has raped or sexually assaulted them saying that it is to 'fix' or 'cure' the survivor of their LGBTI identity. This can feel like a core part of a survivor's identity has been violated
- Thinking or being told that the sexual violence in some way invalidates their identity or is the result of 'maladaptive' sexuality (for example if they were sexually abused as a child)
- Thinking that they will be blamed for what happened
- People assuming that LGBTI people are 'kinky' or 'promiscuous' or believing other unhelpful stereotypes about the sexual practices of LGBTI people
- The abuse is happening in a first LGBTI sexual relationship and they do not have previous experience or role models of a 'healthy' or 'respectful' LGBTI sexual relationship
- Playing down or 'accepting' what has happened – not realising that it is sexual violence and unacceptable (often because of what the abuser tells them)
- Not realising that men can be raped or that women can commit sexual assault
- Not wanting to go for medical treatment because they do not want to reveal body parts
- If intersex and had medical procedures done to them in childhood without consent, they may be reluctant to have medical examinations or treatment

- Fear, if they report a crime, of homophobic or transphobic media reaction and coverage
- If involved in commercial sexual exploitation, concerned about being judged
- Fear that the attitudes of a jury or the practice of defence solicitors may mean that their gender identity or sexual orientation is used against them to the perpetrator's advantage
- Not knowing which service to turn to or which services support LGBTI people
- Services (although saying they are 'inclusive') assuming that everyone is heterosexual/'straight' or has a certain gender identity

## **What to expect if you contact the RCS helpline**

If you contact us, it does not mean losing control over your life. We will not take over or tell you what to do. We will support you to make your own choices.

It may help you to talk to us because we know about sexual violence and the effect it can have.

We have experience in working with LGBTI people of any age – young and old – and including those who are disabled and who identify as black minority ethnic. We can help people cope with sexual violence which happened recently and/or a long time ago.

We also support people involved in selling or exchanging sex. If you are involved in the sex industry in any way, we will support you with whatever concerns you have.



We can help you to deal with what has happened and to keep as safe as possible.

You can speak to us, by phone and/or by email, and then decide if you want to take anything further.

We will:

- Listen to you, believe you and offer you a safe space to talk
- Respect your sexual orientation, intersex status, gender identity and gender expression
- Respect your privacy and any concerns about giving personal information
- Respect the choices you make for yourself and which work best for your life
- Give you information that can help you make informed choices about what happens next
- Work around what you want and need (if we are not sure, we may ask you what that is)
- Tell you about your rights and what you may need to do to get those
- Support you whether or not you decide to take any action against a perpetrator
- Let you know about other services which support LGBTI people who have experienced sexual violence

## Long-term support

The RCS helpline can support you for a limited amount of time. If you want longer-term support, we will try to find a service to help you – this

could be a phone; web-based; or face-to-face service, depending on what is available, where you live and what you would prefer.

We can tell you about our member rape crisis centres and other services which can support LGBTI people over the longer-term.

There are rape crisis centres across Scotland. They are all different but meet agreed RCS national standards. Some support survivors of all genders. Others support women only. This includes those who self-identify as women, regardless of gender reassignment or intersex status. If a rape crisis centre does not offer a support service to people of a particular gender, they will try to find another service which does. All centres also support family, friends and partners of survivors.

Some rape crisis centres have, or are working towards the LGBT Charter Mark. This tells you that the organisation's staff have been trained in LGBT awareness and that LGBT people are included and supported within their service and/or organisation. Some local centres have specialist services for transgender survivors. We can tell you more about this.

## **Service approach and your entitlement**

It is worth checking to see if any service you are thinking about contacting (for example an NHS clinic) has the LGBT Charter Mark as it may reassure you about the quality or approach of the service. But many services will be helpful even if they do not have the Charter Mark. So, you could check to see if sexual orientation, gender reassignment, transgender identities or intersex status are included in a service's website or literature.

Many LGBTI people are reluctant to ask for services or report to the police because they think they may face discrimination. But public services, including the NHS, local authority, police, courts and justice services, by law, must not discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. If you think you have been discriminated against you have the right to complain. The RCS helpline can help you with this.

## Reporting to the police

Whether the sexual violence happened recently or a long time ago it is up to you whether or not to report it to the police. The RCS Helpline can help if you are thinking about reporting or if you want to talk things through after you have done so.

If you decide that you want to report a crime to the police, we can explain or help you with 'remote reporting' which is available for domestic abuse and hate crime. We can help you with 'Intelligence Sharing' for sexual violence.

The police know that people are sometimes scared to report a crime. Intelligence Sharing means you are able to contact the Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline and report a sexual crime to support staff without passing your contact details to the Police. Staff on the helpline can explain in more detail about how this works and what you can expect before you do this.

Remote reporting is available for victims of domestic abuse. It means you can report the crime online or confidentially through certain organisations (3rd party). More information at: <http://www.scotland.police.uk/keep-safe/advice-for-victims-of-crime/domestic-abuse/reporting-domestic-abuse/>

If you were raped or sexually assaulted because of your sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status, this is known as a 'hate crime' as well as a crime of sexual violence. The police and criminal justice system take hate crime very seriously.

There is more information about hate crime remote reporting and a list of all the places you can report, including some local Rape Crisis Centres, on the Police Scotland website at [www.scotland.police.uk/contact-us/hate-crime-third-party-reporting/](http://www.scotland.police.uk/contact-us/hate-crime-third-party-reporting/)

If you report a crime of sexual violence to the police, the police will assign a named Sexual Offence Liaison Officer (SOLO) to you. You can ask for a male or female SOLO. All SOLOs are specially trained and know about sexual violence and how it affects LGBTI people. Their focus is on victims of sexual violence and they will do all they can to help make you feel as comfortable and supported as possible during any investigation. They understand that LGBTI survivors may face particular issues and aim to respond supportively and sensitively.

The SOLO will not judge you; go into your sexual history unless there is a forensic issue or it is relevant to the case; or disclose any personal information about you to your family. They go along with the wishes of survivors as far as possible.

If you report a crime of sexual violence, the police will start to investigate it. They are victim-focused but they also need to think about risk to anyone else too. If you are reluctant to give evidence then they will work round you. It is not the case that if you report that there is no going back.

If the police are investigating a crime of sexual violence, they will want to speak to the first person you told about the sexual assault. This could be a friend or family member. But they would not disclose your sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status as part of this.

If you need a forensic examination as part of the investigation, this will be done in a comfortable environment by specially-trained medical staff. The SOLO will also make sure that you have whatever you need to feel comfortable.

If there are aspects of the examination that you are not comfortable with, the examiner will discuss with you what they can gather and how, so that the best evidence is recorded with the least intrusion.

If you are not sure whether you want to report the crime but would like the forensic evidence gathered so you can consider this option later there are Sexual Assault Referral Centres/Networks available in some parts of the country. The RCS Helpline can tell you more about these and where they are.

## **Prosecuting crime**

The police work closely with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) which is responsible for prosecuting crime. When the police submit their report to COPFS they will note any vulnerabilities. This could include whether it involves a domestic rape or any issues to do with sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status if they are relevant. This means that you do not have to keep disclosing personal information.

## More information on how the justice system works

There is more information about the Scottish justice system for survivors of rape and sexual assault on video clip at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bG32uX2YFWQ>

And in text at: [www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/workspace/publications/00446204.pdf](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/workspace/publications/00446204.pdf)

## Your health and wellbeing

Everyone is different and everyone reacts differently to sexual violence. A lot can depend on what happened, your personal circumstances and the support you have around you.

Sexual violence can affect short and long-term mental, physical and sexual health and wellbeing. Sometimes people can feel that they are going mad, so being able to talk safely and in confidence with people who understand is important.

Helpline staff can do this with you, and let you know about common reactions and responses to sexual violence; what to look out for; coping with trauma; and medical treatment after a recent rape or sexual assault.

There is more information on our website, including self-help materials to help with common reactions such as anger, panic attacks, self-harm, nightmares, flashbacks and issues such as relationship difficulties.

## Useful contacts

The RCS Helpline can tell you about national and local sources of support and information. There is information about sexual violence, including self-help materials and useful links on the RCS website at [www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk) (under publications).

Some specialist organisations for LGBTI people and services for those who have experienced sexual violence are listed below. The websites have links to more information and services.

If you contact any of the organisations below, they will treat your enquiry in confidence. But remember, if you need to protect your privacy for safety or other reasons, that phone numbers you ring may appear on itemised phone bills (but not the RCS number) and that your computer may store a history of sites you visit.

### Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline

**Tel: 08088 01 03 02** (every day from 6pm to midnight and on Mondays and Thursdays offers an LGBTI specific service from 7pm to midnight)

**Email support: [support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](mailto:support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)**

**Twitter: <https://twitter.com/rapecrisisscot>**

There is some local information for LGBTI survivors in:

**Dundee: [www.wrasac.org.uk](http://www.wrasac.org.uk)**

**Edinburgh: <http://www.ewrasac.org.uk/aurora.html>**

**Glasgow: [www.rapecrisiscentre-glasgow.co.uk/index.php?id=210](http://www.rapecrisiscentre-glasgow.co.uk/index.php?id=210)**

## **Fearless**

Fearless is a national domestic abuse service for survivors of domestic abuse in Scotland.

**https://fearless.scot/**

## **LGBT Health and Wellbeing**

Promotes the health of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Scotland.

**Website: [www.LGBThealth.org.uk](http://www.LGBThealth.org.uk)**

## **LGBT Helpline Scotland**

Information and emotional support to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their families, friends and supporters.

**Tel: 0300 123 2523** (Tuesday and Wednesday 12 to 9pm)

**Website: [www.LGBT-helpline-scotland.org.uk](http://www.LGBT-helpline-scotland.org.uk)**

## **LGBT Youth**

A national youth organisation offering youth groups, one-to-one support, or online support.

**Tel: 0131 555 3940 / 0141 552 7425**

**Text: 07786 202 370**

**Website: [www.LGBTyouth.org.uk](http://www.LGBTyouth.org.uk)**

**Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LGBTys>**

**Twitter: @LGBTYS Twitter**

**Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/LGBTYS>**



## **Men's Advice Line**

Advice and support for men experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

**Helpline: 0808 801 0327**

**Email: [info@mensadvice.org.uk](mailto:info@mensadvice.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.mensadvice.org.uk/mens\\_advice.php.html](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk/mens_advice.php.html)**

## **National LGBT Domestic Abuse Helpline**

UK-wide helpline for LGBT people affected by domestic abuse.

**Helpline: 0800 999 5428**

**Website: [www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse)**

**Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/galpuk/>**

**Twitter: @GalopUK**

## **Scottish Trans Alliance**

Works to improve gender identity and gender reassignment equality, rights and inclusion

**Website: [www.scottishtrans.org](http://www.scottishtrans.org)**

**Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/scottishtrans.org>**

**Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ScottishTrans>**

**Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/ScottishTrans>**

**Tel: 0131 467 6039**

## **Sexual Assault Referral Centres/Networks/Clinics**

### **Aberdeen Sexual Assault Referral Clinic, Health Village**

General number: 0845 3379900 or direct number: 01224 655555

### **Archway**

**Tel: 0141 211 8175** (24 hours)

Service for people who have been sexually assaulted or raped in the last 7 days. Gives sensitive support, physical and forensic examination and counselling for men and women. A female doctor will offer to examine the survivor, take forensic evidence and check for sexually transmitted infections. Everything will be kept completely confidential. Police will only be informed if survivor agrees. Police referrals are for the Strathclyde area but a survivor can refer themselves from anywhere in Scotland.

**Website: [www.sandyford.org/do-you-want-a-service/archway-if-you-have-been-sexually-assaulted-or-raped-in-the-last-7-days.aspx](http://www.sandyford.org/do-you-want-a-service/archway-if-you-have-been-sexually-assaulted-or-raped-in-the-last-7-days.aspx)**

### **Dundee Sexual Assault Referral Network (SARN)**

Contact through Dundee Women's Rape And Sexual Abuse Centre between 9am and 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am to 1pm on Fridays. **Tel: 01382 205556**

### **Survivors UK**

For male survivors of rape and sexual abuse

**Website: [www.survivorsuk.org/](http://www.survivorsuk.org/)**

**Helpline: 0845 122 1201**

**Webchat: times at <http://www.survivorsuk.org/>**

## More information

[www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

Survivors guide to the Scottish justice system:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bG32uX2YFWQ>

Information and help after rape and sexual assault, Scottish Government, 2011:

[www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/workspace/publications/00446204.pdf](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/workspace/publications/00446204.pdf)

Voices unheard report:

[www.LGBTyouth.org.uk/files/documents/02\\_Voices\\_Unheard/Reports/VoicesUnheardWeb2011.pdf](http://www.LGBTyouth.org.uk/files/documents/02_Voices_Unheard/Reports/VoicesUnheardWeb2011.pdf)

*The RCS Helpline aims to be inclusive and welcoming to all regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, gender identity, intersex status or sexual orientation.*

Written and compiled by Shirley Henderson

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