



Supporting survivors: The value

A service review of Rape and Sexual Abuse
Support Centre (Cheshire & Merseyside)



“I have found the confidence and strength to move on both socially and in my career. I recently got a new job and career plan with the encouragement of my worker.

“The support of RASASC and my counsellor has been invaluable to my recovery. The sessions and approach were tailored specifically to my needs. I was provided with techniques to take home with me and work on self-esteem issues. I cannot express enough how greatly the support provided to me has improved my quality of life.”
Raped by her partner, aged 25

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The authors Crosby-McKenna, Cousins and Scott for Amplify Communications thankfully acknowledge the fantastic work carried out by RASASC and the survivors of rape and sexual abuse who bravely shared their experiences.

Publishing Information

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First published July 2013.

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1. Foreword

In recent months, sexual abuse has been at the centre of unprecedented, and in many ways very welcome, media attention. One of the most important truths highlighted by the Savile scandal in particular has been the length of time it takes many victims to come forward, in part because of a historical lack of support and justifiable fear that they would not be taken seriously or believed by the justice system.

Thankfully now, attitudes are changing. As a society, we are becoming better at supporting survivors and we recognise the value of counselling and of providing help and guidance through the judicial system. Specialist support services, like the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC) in the North West of England, enable survivors of both recent and historical abuse to come to terms with what has happened to them and to seek retribution through the courts if they want to.

Abuse is not something that can be easily forgotten or dealt with internally. Often the psychological effects can have a traumatic impact on a survivor's relationships, physical health, mental wellbeing and employment and education opportunities. Support structures and planned, coordinated specialist counselling are vital in overcoming the deep-seated problems that abuse causes. The social consequences of abuse are profound and overarching, and services like RASASC are only recently beginning to get the recognition they deserve for the work they do.

Abuse can affect anyone, from any walk of life. RASASC is a support service available to all survivors aged 13 and over regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, and immigration status. It does not discriminate and its doors are open to all who are referred to the service. Thanks to RASASC, clients who report sexual violence to the police feel supported to seek justice.

Services like RASASC do not exist in a vacuum. Support requires funding and, all too often, this kind of support is seen as an easy target when it comes to spending cuts. This is wrong and short sighted. These services support people, change lives and save money in the long term. Each adult rape in the UK is estimated to cost £96,000 in after care and legal costs. Accessing effective support reduces the emotional cost for the survivor. Timely support reduces the economic burden. RASASC services deliver a model of best care at an average cost of just over £1000 per survivor.

RASASC's service model is excellent at dealing with the consequences of abuse, but more robust and secure funding would allow the service to move into areas of preventative care, to stop these crimes and abuses from even occurring, saving potential victims long term trauma. The effect of recent cuts has been to replace three-year funding contracts with one-year funding contracts, leaving RASASC in an unstable situation and unable to make any plans for the future.

It is plainly a mistake to neglect to adequately fund a service model that has shown to be effective in both cost and delivery. This report clearly sets out the strength and value of the RASASC service and makes a compelling case for continued and increased funding of the service. I call on those statutory agencies responsible for the care of survivors in the North West to secure RASASC's future, so that it can continue to help survivors live their lives, seek justice and move on from the abuse they have suffered.

John Dwyer, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire

2. Recommendations

Commissioners and Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (Cheshire and Merseyside) [RASASC], should consider this report along with the wider guidance on the duties of health, police and local authorities in respect of supporting survivors of sexual violence.

Health Commissioners

This report reinforces key recommendations for commissioners outlined in *The report of the Taskforce on the health aspects of violence against women and children (March 2010)*ⁱ. The planning and commissioning of good quality services to support survivors of sexual violence must be a priority.

- I. Commit to ensure funding for RASASC over the medium and long-term.
- II. Assess local needs of, and local services (including RASASC) for, victims of recent and historic sexual violence and ensure that appropriate commissioning arrangements are in place.
- III. Increase access to effective support and reduce failure to attend rate by ensuring commissioning plans give survivors timely access to a choice of services and service providers, including RASASC.
- IV. Ensure locally agreed pathways include RASASC. Commissioners, with their partners in Local Strategic Partnerships, should ensure that this pathway is appropriately funded.
- V. Put greater value on services provided to male and transgender survivors as well as women and children.

Local authorities

- I. Commit to funding RASASC over the medium and long-term. This security will allow RASASC to develop its service and provide support to current and future survivors of sexual violence.
- II. Conduct a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of survivors of recent and historic sexual violence. This too, will highlight the value of RASASC in meeting the needs of survivors within the local community.

Police and Crime Commissioners:

- I. Ensure all officers understand the importance of making a timely referral of survivors of recent and historic sexual violence to RASASC to gain rapid access to an Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) and counselling.
- II. Improve systems to track the progress and outcomes of crime reports of both recent and historic sexual violence. This will paint a clear picture on a local level of where progress in reducing attrition has occurred, and where more needs to be done.
- III. Continue to ensure that trained police officers are assigned to cases of rape and sexual abuse.

RASASC

- I. Work with local police and crime commissioners to ensure that progress of sexual violence reports by RASASC supported clients are better tracked. This will prove the effectiveness and value of ISVAs.
- II. Maintain a record of ethnic background for all clients. This will identify level of progress made in reaching and supporting survivors from black and minority ethnic groups.
- III. Maintain a record of disability and long term medical conditions reported by clients. This will identify level of expertise gained in supporting vulnerable clients with disabilities.
- IV. Take action to ensure the Local Authority, Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS Commissioning board and Healthwatch commit to quality planning in services for survivors of sexual violence.

3. Introduction

Amplify Communications Limited was appointed by Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (Cheshire and Merseyside) [RASASC] to analyse the services it offers to survivors of rape and sexual abuse.

The response is **Supporting survivors: The value**. This report summarises the hard and soft findings of the review and the importance of the service in the current environment - an environment that is financially challenging but where demand is increasing. The profile of sexual violence has increased on the political, health and criminal justice agenda, but better funding is required to enable RASASC to support and counsel more survivors through the legal system and beyond, and to launch vital prevention schemes.

RASASC acknowledges all forms of sexual violence including rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse, sexual harassment, rape in marriage, forced marriage and so-called honour-based violence, female genital mutilation, trafficking and sexual exploitation, and ritual abuseⁱⁱ. The organisation's mission is to support survivors of these sexually violent crimes, and advocate on their behalf. RASASC employ a staff team of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors; Specialist Counsellors; Senior Management; and Specialist Administrators. Time lapsed since the event, gender, ethnicity and migrant status of the survivor is irrelevant.

“Since my sessions with my counsellor started I have improved in many ways. For example I’m now a lot more confident and excited about my future. I was having sessions throughout the exam period and my success in my exams is partly thanks to the amazing support I received from my counsellor! Thank you for everything you have done for me!”
Survivor of recent rape (by her mum’s partner), aged 17

There is a real need for RASASC to secure longer-term funding from its partners, the police, NHS and local authorities. Longer term funding will provide the stability RASASC needs to implement future plans for growth, to increase service reach, participate in prevention work and continue to effectively counsel the growing list of referrals.

3a. Evaluation of RASASC within a challenging environment

Each year in England and Wales:

- 404,000 women survive a recent sexual offence (spectrum includes rape, sexual assault, indecent exposure and unwanted sexual touching)ⁱⁱⁱ
- 72,000 men survive a recent sexual offenceⁱⁱⁱ
- Around 90 per cent of survivors of the most serious sexual crimes knew the perpetrator
- Children under 16 account for 34 per cent of rapes reported to the police^{iv}
- Sexual abuse in childhood (in children under age of 16) affects 16 per cent of children^v
- 24 in 100 recorded crimes of rape of a female result in a detection or a sanctionⁱⁱⁱ
- 30 in 100 recorded crimes of rape of a male result in a detection or a sanctionⁱⁱⁱ
- 30 in 100 recorded crimes of sexual assault of a female result in a detection or a sanctionⁱⁱⁱ
- 30 in 100 recorded crimes of sexual assault of a male result in a detection or a sanctionⁱⁱⁱ
- Each adult rape is estimated to cost over £96,000^{vi}

RASASC is an affiliated (but fully autonomous) member of charity Rape Crisis (England and Wales) and Survivors Trust (England and Wales). It continues to work in close partnership with Sexual Assault Referral Centres, health and social care services, the police and local authorities.

Changes in government policy and commissioning within health, criminal justice and local authorities have increased the need for RASASC to operate with short-term and partially-funded contracts. In stark contrast to funding reductions, a ten per cent growth in the number of referrals of survivors to RASASC has occurred during each of the last three years and will continue to increase as education and awareness of sexual violence, and the support available, increase and stigma regarding survivors is effectively removed.



RASASC counsellors

4. The RASASC service

4a. RASASC service model

RASASC offers:

- A service model of best practice counselling, support and advocacy to women, men, transgender and young people who have experienced recent and historic sexual violence (provided at no cost to the survivor)
- A client-centred model of empowerment that respects the rights of the client
- Access to an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA)
- Evolving service provisions that responds to changes in need
- This results in positive short, medium and long-term benefits for the survivor and, as a consequence, long-term cost savings for the health service, police, local authority, social services and wider society.

RASASC's service value is the provision of community-based support, tailored towards the needs of individuals who have experienced sexual violence. Survivors can make a self-referral for RASASC support or be referred by others. Examples of referrers include health workers within SARCs and hospitals, GPs, police officers, social workers and addiction / substance misuse workers.

Figure one: the different referral pathways and services operated by RASASC

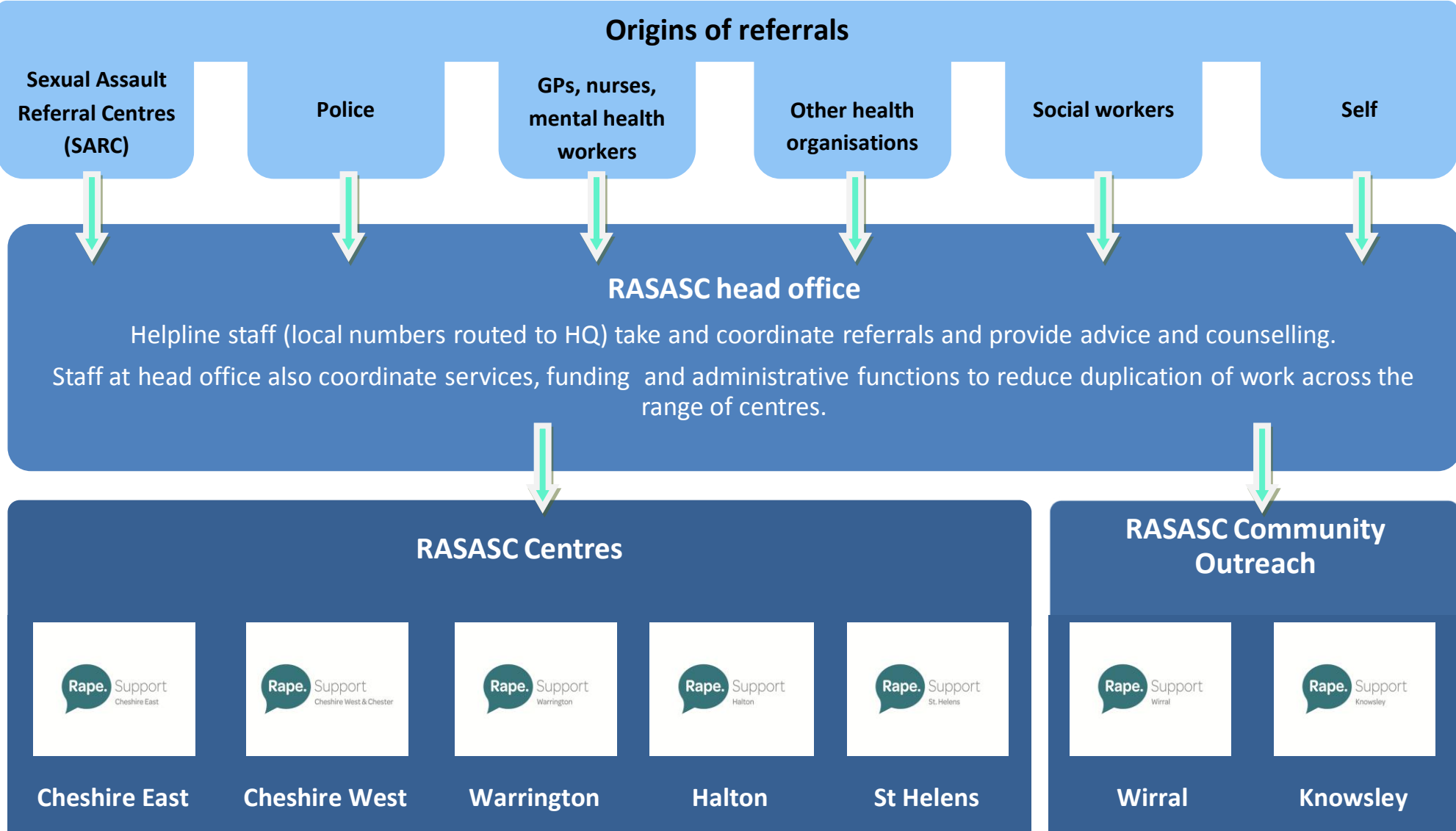
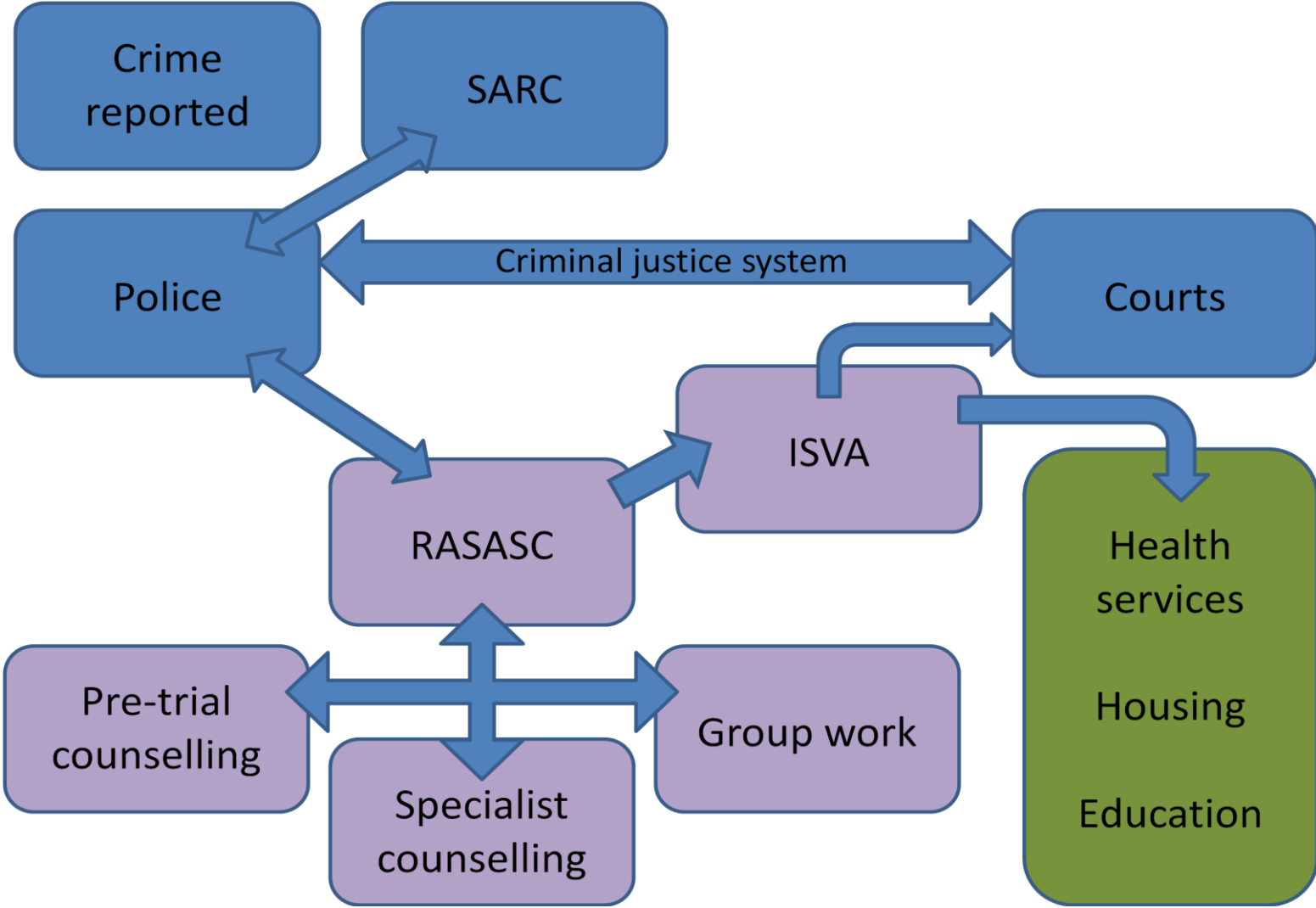


Figure two: A possible journey of a survivor of recent sexual violence



4c. The survivors supported and empowered by RASASC

Figure three: clients by gender

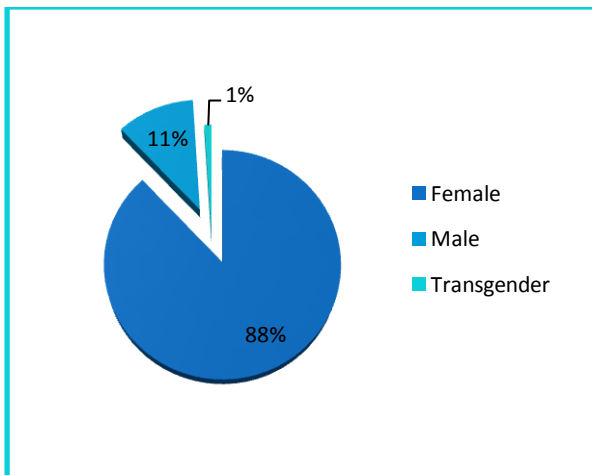


Figure four: sexual violence by type

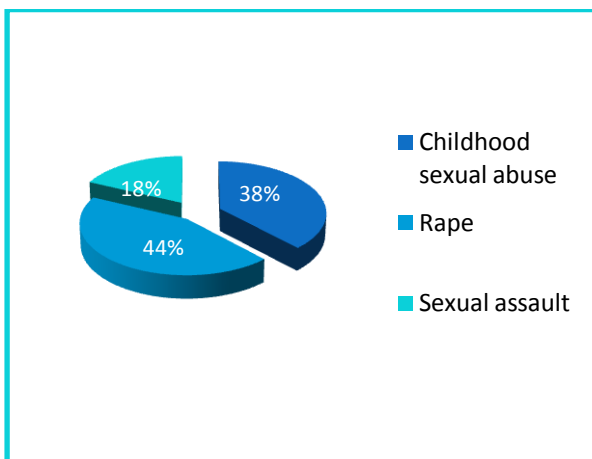
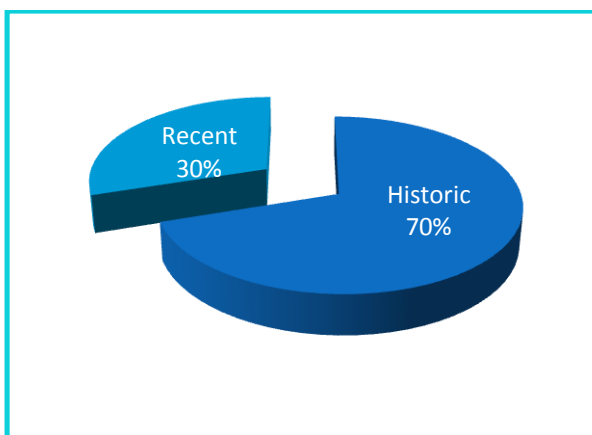


Figure five: ratio of violence experienced by clients - historic to recent



RASASC's youngest service user in 2012 was aged 13 and the eldest was 80. RASASC support survivors aged 13 and over, of any gender, sexual orientation, race, immigration or social class.

A high proportion of RASASC's clients were hard to reach due to either poor mental health and/or the fact that the sexual violence took place a significant period of time ago (and therefore is less likely to achieve a positive justice outcome).

Figure five shows that 30 per cent of all referrals received by RASASC are survivors of recent sexual violence. Of these survivors, 83 per cent went on to report the crime to the police - much higher than the national average reporting rate of 20 per cent. RASASC attributes this high reporting rate to the work of ISVAs and a strong partnership with police and the local SARC.

"I feel since I met [ISVA] my journey has been supported from day 1. [My ISVA] has been a huge help in my recovering progress.

I felt listened to, believed, supported, understood and very much guided. I never felt I could get to where I am now mentally or emotionally. But with [my ISVA's] help I am further on than I ever thought I could be.

That's helped so much in my recovery, to heal and move on in my life to a much better place. I'm more at peace now."

Survivor of childhood sexual abuse (by a family member), aged 34

RASASC acknowledges that its services are under-used by members of black and ethnic minority communities. RASASC believes that a multi-agency partnership backed by adequate funding would increase service accessibility. As a result more survivors from black and minority ethnic groups could be supported, reducing the burden on their families and local communities.

4d. Client satisfaction

Satisfaction scores for 2010-11 showed that, overall, 98 per cent of clients responded positively. In total, 88 per cent of clients ranked the service they received from RASASC as excellent and 10 per cent ranked the service as good.

“My life has changed so much in the last few months for the better. I would not have recovered if I had not attended this service. I already work but am more confident in work.

“This service has changed my life, I was just living with not much meaning. The work I have done with [my counsellor] has helped me to move forward in my life and make good changes. [My counsellor] is a great counsellor. I wouldn't have got this far without her. I just hope this work can carry on. There are plenty more people needing help - like I did.”

***Survivor of childhood emotional, physical and sexual abuse (by her father and others)
aged 40***



RASASC consultation room



RASASC counselling room

“My worker [ISVA] has been great and helped me through a very difficult time in my life. I thank her so much for the support I have felt. She has been the best and made me realise that there is more to life. She understood me whenever I have had a feeling inside. I trust her 100% with all that I have said!”

Survivor of recent sexual assault, aged 18

“I feel the service provided could not be better or more friendly. I personally would not change them. I feel much better/confident in myself [after counselling]. I feel that these sessions helped me concentrate and move on in my studies, as I have had someone to vent to.

“I feel that these sessions are the best thing to have happened to me, since I told my dad [about the abuse] in August 2011. They have improved my confidence, my trust in people and made me accept and move on from what has happened to me. I recommend these sessions to anyone who has been through similar circumstances. I will miss them but I am happy to move on!”

Survivor of childhood sexual abuse (by her grandfather), aged 18

5. Impact of the work of RASASC

The Home Office estimate that the financial cost incurred by each adult rape is £96,000. This figure includes emotional and physical health treatment costs, criminal justice costs and lost economic contribution^{vi}. The longer a survivor is in crisis and unable to access effective help and support, the greater the potential for increased cost. Client groups least likely to engage with statutory services include survivors of historic sexual violence and people with poor mental health and/or substance misuse problems. And one in three imprisoned female offenders is a survivor of sexual abuse^{vii}.

“But a good service saves money in the longer term, by preventing many years of ill-health and instability in those who have been victims.”^{viii}”

“The simple fact is that when victims receive the support they need when they need it, they are much more likely to take positive steps to recovery. This should be our goal.”^{ix}”

5a. Health and welfare impacts

Sexual violence has direct health consequences and is a risk factor for a wide range of long-term health problems including:

- poor mental health (including co-morbidities)
- substance misuse
- trauma (including maternal and foetal death)
- unwanted pregnancy and abortion
- sexually transmitted infections and risky sexual behaviour

Source: Taskforce on the health aspects of violence against women and children (March 2010)¹

Figure six: the importance of specialist sexual violence counsellors

Across the client group, RASASC specialist support leads to a reduction of:

- Short to long term mental health problems. Survivors are taught coping techniques and strategies, and effectively supported to deal with the underlying trauma caused by sexual violence.
- Addiction issues and substance misuse. The survivor’s mental health and self-esteem improves following counselling, and then they are supported by RASASC and referred to access an appropriate substance misuse service.
- Future trauma. The survivor is empowered to develop good self-esteem and healthy relationships.
- Sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies and abortions. The survivor’s underlying trauma is treated and the survivor is supported to access statutory sexual health clinics and screening.

RASASC support all survivors including those who typically avoid statutory services

Empirical evidence suggests that survivors of historic sexual violence, those who misuse substances or those with poor mental health are least likely to access support and counselling through the statutory sector. RASASC is the non-statutory option in Cheshire and Merseyside. It successfully engages many ‘hard to reach’ survivors. For example:

- 70 per cent were survivors of historic, childhood sexual violence
- 85 per cent were noted as showing poor mental health
- 1 per cent were transgender
- 14 per cent reported addiction issues (the majority of who were male survivors of sexual violence in childhood).

“It is vital that women can seek help in safe places they know are not linked to the police, immigration or social services. Many of these specialised services have been supporting women in overcoming the violence they have experienced for over three decades. They are essential life-lines that can take the form of listening, information and advice, advocacy, counselling, shelter, protection, self-help and support to become activists themselves. Crucially, unlike many of the statutory services, voluntary sector organisations support women who have experienced violence in the past, as well as those currently experiencing violence.”

To increase the successful take-up of counselling and support among survivors who are hard to reach, it is essential to fund RASASC services. RASASC are identified by clients as non-statutory and thus non-threatening. Many clients also perceive RASASC as without a hidden agenda (for example not seeking a conviction or reduction in health spending). Client groups also identify that RASASC has long-term expertise in supporting survivors of sexual violence. They assume that RASASC counsellors and ISVAs have a better understanding of the topic, and won't be over whelmed or judgemental by what the survivor reveals. This helps survivors to feel safer.

“Fear that they would not be believed, or would be blamed, was one of the reasons that the women I spoke to often felt more comfortable reporting to specialist women’s services, such as rape crisis centres.”^{xii}

“You cannot understand how good it feels to be listened to after being ignored for over 30 years.”
Survivor of childhood abuse (by a family member) aged in her 40s

RASASC has the flexibility and skills to empower survivors to make their own counselling effective

Sexual violence is extremely disempowering and re-empowerment of survivors is a key goal of therapy. RASASC counsellors (working to the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy ethical framework) use an integrative client focused model to encourage re-empowerment. RASASC enables survivors to work in true partnership with their counsellors, to take ownership of their own counselling and recovery. This is achieved by offering a service flexibility that statutory providers cannot match. Survivors make a range of well-informed decisions about the type of counselling and support they want to receive, and can opt for the type of service they believe are most relevant to their personal need.

Offering survivors no real choice in the type of counselling, therapy and provider they access disempowers them further. Enabling the survivor to make informed choices is crucial to increasing take up of health and support services.

Removing the trauma of sexual violence results in better self-management of mental health

RASASC counsellors have the experience and expertise to identify signs of hidden crisis, poor mental health and the many ways that post-traumatic stress can show in the survivor's behaviour (for example anger, withdrawal, low self-esteem, self-loathing, depression, self-harming and risky sexual behaviour). The survivor is taught a wide range of self-help strategies to deal with these symptoms in a safer way, as well as counselling to deal with the underlying trauma. This puts the survivor in control of managing their recovery and mental health. As a result of re-empowerment, improved self-esteem, increased trust in the counsellor, and sometimes physical support, RASASC staff enables many survivors to re-engage with their health professionals. This includes seeking further help for poor mental health.

“The support of RASASC and my counsellor has been invaluable to my recovery. The sessions and approach were tailored specifically to my needs. I was provided with techniques to take home with me and work on self-esteem issues. I cannot express enough how greatly the support provided to me has improved my quality of life”

Survivor of sexual violence (by her then partner), aged 25

RASASC gives survivors access to seamless services across a wide range of statutory services

RASASC works very closely with statutory agencies to provide clients with one contact point for a joined up, seamless service that encompasses as necessary: counselling, health, social services, housing, police, justice and education. Counsellors and ISVAs advocate on behalf of the survivor with a matrix of service providers. This is to help survivors deal with practical considerations that arise from sexual violence (for example, access to urgent medical care, sexual health screening and re-housing or safer-housing). These are issues that, although extremely important, can be overlooked by other statutory agencies who are appointed to perform specific duties. It also reduces the risk of vulnerable survivors having to engage with an extremely complex matrix of providers on their own and potentially falling into gaps in provisions.

The on-going support of RASASC workers enables many survivors to finally access statutory services (for example sexual health screening) that they typically avoid. This has benefits for the individual and can benefit their families and future partners too. For example, sexual health screening can be extremely invasive to a survivor. Yet it is important to their own health that they are treated for any sexual infections as soon as possible, and similarly important to the health of any future children and sexual partners.

Access to safer housing is extremely important. Enabling a vulnerable survivor to live independently from the abuser reduces the risk of further sexual violence.

Reduction in failure to attend rates incurred by statutory services

The relationship between counsellor and survivor is fundamental in facilitating change. Confronting and accepting the sexual violence that occurred is a huge emotional task for the survivor. RASASC counsellors support the survivor to address feelings and memories that they might have hidden away as a coping method. Particularly vulnerable clients include those who only disclosed childhood sexual abuse after an event triggered re-traumatisation. Breaking that trust, or referring a survivor to a service or counsellor whom they don't trust, is a waste of commissioning resources. It increases attrition rates and failure-to-attend rates. It also decreases the potential effectiveness of the support and counselling.

“The service has given me time to reflect on the past when I can't at home. I would have been on my own and probably still self-harming. I was already in uni when I started counselling but may have dropped out if it wasn't for the support of the ISVA originally and then the counsellor. I think that my recovery process (although it is not over) would not have been as successful if I hadn't of had the support from this service.”

Survivor of rape (by her male acquaintance), aged 20

5b. Justice impacts

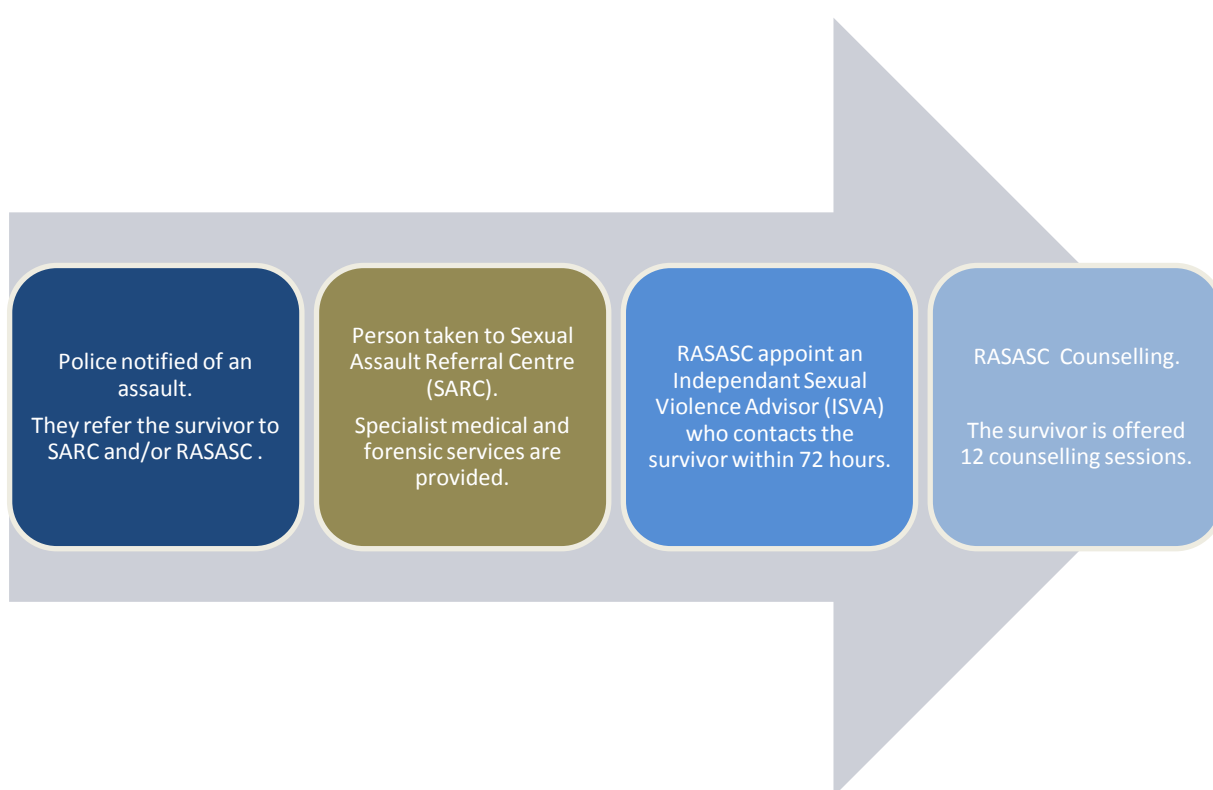
RASASC partnerships with the police result in:

- Increased reporting of rapes and sexual abuse
- Reduced attrition from survivor non-compliance
- Increased support for the majority of survivors whose cases end in attrition or a not guilty verdict
- Reduced reoffending among survivors of sexual violence.

“Everyone who has been involved with my issues and [court] case has been wonderful. I feel I have the strength to do everything I can to move on and deal with things. I am blown away by how lovely everyone is, kind and supportive. This service has massively helped me come to terms with my trauma, I am eternally grateful to all that have helped me.”

Survivor of rape (by a stranger), aged 33

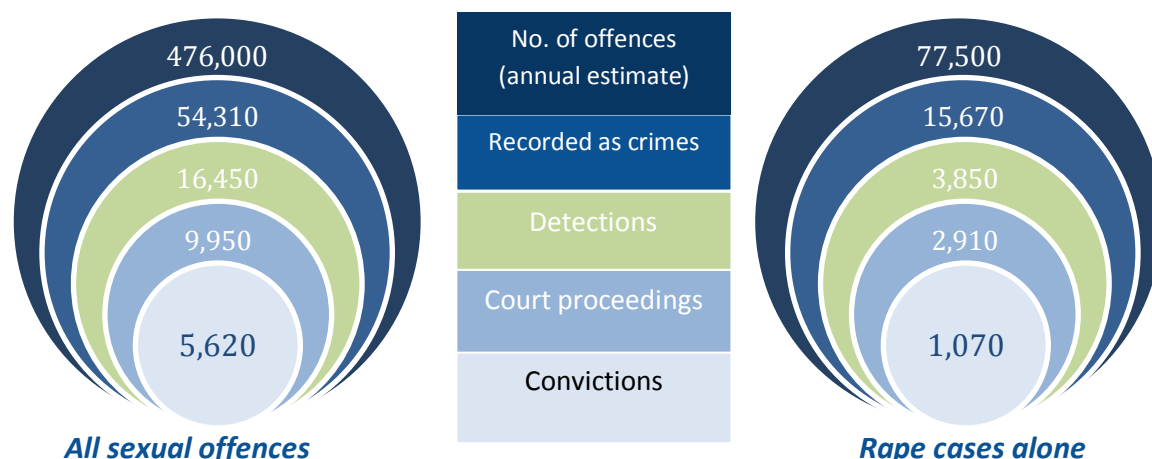
Figure seven: Immediate sexual assault referral process from a local police force



The national picture of justice for survivors and sexual violence

Evidence suggests that the overwhelming majority of sexual violence offences (recent and historic) go unreported. Of the cases reported to the police and recorded as a crime, a successful conviction is secured in only a minority. Recent data on sexual offences in England and Wales revealed that less than one fifth of recorded sexual offences and rapes result in court proceedingsⁱⁱⁱ. This data also revealed that in 2011, of the cases that proceeded to court, the conviction rate was 60 per cent for all sexual offences, dropping to 45 per cent in cases of rape against a man and 40 per cent in cases of rape against a woman. Furthermore the whole process takes on average 497 days from first report to the end of the court case.

Figure eight: progress of prosecutions for sexual offences in England and Wales



These figures are based upon the three year average, and taken from An overview of sexual offending in England and Wales. Statistical bulletin. Ministry of Justice, Home Office and the Office for National Statistics. 10 January 2013. Diagram is not to scale.

Partnership between RASASC and the police increase justice – the local picture

Partnership working between RASASC and the local police force is benefitting survivors of recent and historic sexual violence. Cheshire and Merseyside police are instrumental in the referral process, with 45 per cent of all RASASC’s client referrals originating from the police and local SARC.

Referring a survivor to RASASC gives them access to an ISVA and counselling. During the last three years (2010 to 2012) the six ISVAs employed by RASASC have supported over 1500 survivors.

“We recommend that Independent Sexual Violence Advisors be seen as an intrinsic part of the way rape complainants are dealt with, as the service that enables the rest to operate effectively and a crucial part of the way in which the State fulfils its obligations to victims of violence.”^{viii}”

Increased reporting of sexual offences and reduced rates of attrition

Nationally, attrition and under reporting of sexual violence is a huge barrier to justice. On a local level the extent of the issue is unfortunately, unquantifiable because local police forces don’t currently collate data relating to attrition, reporting and prosecution rates for sexual violence. However RASASC’s own data shows that support from RASASC leads to an increase in reporting of sexual violence and reduced attrition from non-compliance. Of the clients supported by RASASC, 70 per cent overall (and 83 per cent of those recently offended against) reported the sexual violence to the police. Attrition from withdrawal of complaint did not occur in any of these cases, bucking the national trend of a third of rape cases ending in these circumstances^{xi}.

Increased conviction rates of perpetrators of sexual violence

Of sexual offences proceeded against in Cheshire and Merseyside in the last three years, approximately 62 per cent resulted in a conviction. Of rape offences proceeded against, approximately 39 per cent resulted in a conviction (see figures nine and ten). This represents a very modest increase in conviction rates against the national average, but more work is needed to improve justice outcomes. The evidence supports the view that ‘victim’ support through an ISVA and the effective working partnership between RASASC, local police forces and SARC are the mechanisms for further improvement.

“...it was clear that support from women’s services help women to have the confidence to report, and to remain within the criminal justice system. The services they provide must be supported; they are crucial in supporting women through the criminal justice system and beyond.” xii

Figure nine: defendants proceeded against and found guilty at all courts for sexual offences, 2009-2011^{(1) (2)}

Proceeded against in:	2009	2010	2011
Cheshire	142	121	132
Merseyside	191	238	239
2 force total	333	359	371
Found guilty in:			
Cheshire	83	78	85
Merseyside	104	123	145
2 force total	187	201	230
Proportion of those taken to court, found guilty (both forces) %	56	56	62

Figure ten: defendants proceeded against and found guilty at all courts for rape, 2009-2011⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

Proceeded against in:	2009	2010	2011
Cheshire	25	29	41
Merseyside	48	60	57
2 force total	73	89	98
Found guilty in:			
Cheshire	15	12	15
Merseyside	18	26	23
2 force total	33	38	38
Proportion of those taken to court, found guilty (both forces) %	45	43	39

(1) The figures given in the table on court proceedings relate to persons for who these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

(2) Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

Source: Justice Statistics Analytical Services - Ministry of Justice.

RASASC supports all survivors, including those who are least likely to see their abuser convicted

Few survivors of historic sexual violence report the crime to the police, and a small proportion of the historic crimes of sexual violence reported result in a criminal conviction. The reasons for low prosecution rates and low reporting rates are many, including lack of probable evidence, fear of not being believed and the survivor avoiding statutory services.

RASASC ISVAs have the skills and build the vital trust needed to empower a survivor to access and engage with the justice system. This is evidenced by the high reporting and zero attrition from withdrawal rates. RASASC ISVAs and counsellors also have the vital skills, expertise and trust required to explain the justice processes and to support survivors to understand and come to terms with potential attrition and decisions not to proceed with a criminal prosecution. Without this help, these decisions can be overwhelming and damaging to the survivor’s health and wellbeing, further disengaging the survivor from the criminal justice system and the local police force.

“...the majority of women still choose not to report the [sexual] violence to the police. Thus statutory provision only deals with a tiny fraction of the problem”x.

6. The business case

RASASC is different

The way that RASASC records its calls is different, and perfectly illustrates the integrated, compassionate service offered. Other similar services count each call individually; RASASC is only concerned about recording the number of people referred to the service. So rather than 300 calls, last year RASASC directly helped 300 people, from the point of first contact all the way to closure. That is 300 lives directly improved, and extrapolated to victims' partners, children, family and friends shows RASASC has had a huge, socially beneficial, impact on the local area.

The figures behind the RASASC service

Only when we delve behind into the figures behind these 300 calls does this impact become even more apparent.

- One face-to-face counselling session costs RASASC £50 to provide. Each session last for one hour.
- The information line, open 9:00-4:30pm five days a week, costs £50,000 a year to run. This includes the training of advisors, making them available to receive calls, following up these calls with appointments to counsellors, and distributing advice and information material. Each year this line handles over 1,000 calls which at a conservative estimate also equates to a £50 cost per call.
- RASASC runs six stand-alone centres, providing counselling and ISVA support. Individual ISVA support costs between £500-£1000, depending on the individual and amount of support they require. All these costs are met by RASASC, meaning each of these centres requires running costs of between £70,000 and £100,000 each year to provide the current, oversubscribed, service.

What the figures tell us

As demonstrated, the costs of providing the right care and the right support to each individual can be high. Cumulatively, these individuals add up. This is because the service is user intensive, responsive and bespoke depending on the needs of the individual.

But at the same time, this data demonstrates how efficient RASASC services are, with the overwhelming majority of funds directed to the front line. There is no marketing budget, no communications budget, and very little in the way of admin costs. Funds provided to support people are spent directly on services helping them.

Of the total organisational income for 2011 (£568,399), £474,279 was spent directly on advice counselling and support. That is 83% of all money spent. The remaining money was spent equally prudently. £6,557 was spent on admin to support this (such as IT and repairs). The organisation's trustees claimed no benefits, remuneration or expenses.

This also shows that even the smallest reduction of grants or funding will immediately impact on these services. RASASC's costs are largely fixed and structural, therefore offering little room for manoeuvre. There is nothing to trim, and any reduction in funding will instantly lead to a reduction in the capacity and quality of the services provided for the small percentage of survivors who are able to access them.

When considering future funding, we have to bear in mind that this service is still inexpensive compared to the personal and societal costs of abuse, and far, far cheaper than inevitably dealing with the consequences further down the line. Ultimately for this report, the consequences of inaction or delayed interventions are immeasurable.

Figure eleven: the direct service cost of two RASASC clients

Client one: Rachel

Rachel was recently raped by someone she knew. The offence was quickly reported to the police who alerted RASASC, and organised for Rachel to be taken to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre.

RASASC appointed an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) to help Rachel. The ISVA supported Rachel in her 'Achieving Best Evidence' interviews with the police, and continued to liaise and advocate on her behalf throughout the criminal justice proceedings. The ISVA was also there, supporting Rachel throughout the court proceedings, it didn't matter that the process took more than a year before the offender was found guilty.

The ISVA also gave Rachel the confidence to start a bespoke RASASC counselling programme. In total Rachel accessed 12 counselling sessions. Three of these sessions were 'pre-trial counselling sessions'. The aim was to re-empower Rachel to move on from the trauma.

The support from RASASC was free and invaluable to Rachel. The direct service cost was £1600. This consisted of 1 x ISVA, 3 x pre-trial counselling sessions and 9 x counselling sessions.

Client two: Jean

RASASC first's contact with Jean was six months ago when he rang the helpline. He needed to talk about the historic sexual abuse that he'd experienced during his childhood. The offender was a member of his close knit family. Unfortunately Jean didn't feel able to engage in the services offered by RASASC. Confused he acknowledged that he needed help, but was wary of 'opening the flood gates'.

Thankfully, one month after making his original phone call, Jean rang again. During the call, the advisor helped Jean to identify the impact that the abused continue to have on him. Importantly, the advisor gave Jean options to regain control and reassured him that no one at RASASC would pressurise him to report the crime to the police.

Jean agreed to attend a meeting at RASASC's nearby Rape Support centre. Jean was currently taking medication to control his long-term diagnosis of depression. He had no contact with his abuser, and hoped that dealing with the trauma caused by the abuse would have a positive effect on his mental health.

A programme of twelve one to one counselling sessions was agreed with Jean.

The support from RASASC was free and invaluable to Jean. The direct service cost was £700. This consisted of 2 x helpline calls and 12 x one to one counselling sessions.

7. Plans for the future

Future development of the service would ideally include employment of:

- Specialist young people's ISVAs
- Community outreach workers to work on prevention programmes (see next point)
- Male project outreach worker to increase service take up among male survivors
- Specialist mental health worker to help the high number of clients with poor mental health
- Specialist equalities and inclusion outreach worker to ensure that the service is accessible to people from black and minority ethnic groups.

Work in partnership with statutory agencies on sexual violence prevention work

RASASC is the perfect partner to local police forces in prevention programmes. The organisation is community-based and skilled at working with vulnerable groups, children, young people and adults. They also have links to survivors willing to speak out to challenge the perception of what constitutes sexual violence, what an abuser is and what a survivor is.

Within prevention initiatives, RASASC counsellors could provide specialist insight into what influences risk of vulnerability to sexual violence and precursors to abuse or grooming. They can work closely with individuals judged to be a high risk of sexual violence to empower the individual and discourage risky sexual behaviour. The organisation would also like to help police forces develop a preventative and educative programme for young people and children. This programme would support adults, young people and children to identify behaviours that are an act of, or could lead to, sexual violence.

"[The police] need to work with other agencies to reduce the level of sexual violence overall in their communities. We recommend a local arrangement that recognises that a criminal case will represent but one part of the support needed for a victim of rape^{viii}."

Work to increase accurate portrayals of sexual violence in the media

RASASC hopes to better influence the local media to ensure that a more accurate picture of sexual violence is portrayed. This includes ensuring that the myths surrounding attrition and unhelpful aspersions on justice outcomes are dispelled.

"Some of the victims I spoke to mentioned the focus the media place on stranger rapes and felt that this can sometimes mean that victims of historical abuse have less confidence in the criminal justice system because successful prosecutions of historic cases rarely make the headlines. The police also felt that media reporting of low conviction rates, without highlighting the support that is available for victims, or that conviction rates for cases that go to court are at the highest they have been for ten years, dissuade victims from reporting or continuing with a case as it seems from the outset that they are unlikely to get a conviction.^{xii}"

On-going funding instability is restricting growth

Funding instability is severely restricting RASASC's blueprint for the future. Currently, only aftercare is being funded and preventative work largely ignored. This approach is short-sighted as better investment now in prevention work could potentially save the local and national economy a great deal of unnecessary expense in the future. It also allows many more people to experience sexual violence. Better investment in the website now, for example, could help even more survivors to access support, reducing long-term costs to society.

8. Closing statement

I commissioned this report to evidence the value of the service RASASC provide to survivors of rape and sexual violence. It clearly demonstrates how crucial this service is and how cost effective our model is - delivering the right support at the right time.

I would like to extend my thanks, first and foremost, to Amplify Communications for producing such a thorough analysis of our service. I am also enormously grateful to John Dwyer, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire for his endorsement of this piece of work. I would like to personally thank the staff and volunteers at RASASC, whose ongoing dedication and hard work sustains our service. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank those survivors who have courageously spoken out and allowed us to use their experiences to show the true value of what we do.

Clearly, some progress has been made in reporting and investigating rape and sexual violence, and in access to health and support services for survivors. Thankfully, more survivors are being referred to our services, but much more is needed if we are to offer all survivors the required level of support. We need sustained improvement in processes relating to the Crown Prosecution Service and policing. We need health agencies to fully recognise the far-reaching mental and physical impacts of sexual violence and prioritise access to specialist counselling and support as part of the survivor's care and treatment plan. We need politicians to remain focused on their commitment to policy in this area.

“Obviously, even in times of austerity, rape must be investigated and prosecuted, and victims cared for. There cannot be impunity for perpetrators of such a serious violent crime. If this is to be done with due regard for economy then we need priorities. What we have learnt from the review suggests to us that care for victims and protection of those who are vulnerable to rape should be a higher priority than it is now.”^{ix}

At RASASC, we need to maintain and grow our service to meet increasing demand. We can't do this alone. We need you to support us so we can support survivors.

Julie Evans, Operations Manager, RASASC

Helen Wardman, Counselling Services Manager, RASASC

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