



Annual General Report 2020



**Rape and
Sexual Abuse
Support Centre**

for adults, children and young people
in Cheshire and Merseyside

Highlights

Julie Evans Operations Director

2020 has been unlike any year we have ever experienced. Just three months into the year and the UK was thrown into its first lockdown.

Like most organisations, COVID-19 created challenges and we had to adapt fast. Staff began to work remotely and our service provisions became more accessible using virtual systems to support survivors at home.

I'm proud to say we succeeded and the challenges of 2020 have allowed us to grow.



Key Events This Year

- Launch of the children and young people's therapy service
- Achieving Lime Culture ISVA Accreditation
- Re-awarded the sexual violence aftercare provision contract for the county of Cheshire
- Development of online and telephone support services



Who We Are

We are an independent charity that provides specialist support services to adults, children and young people who have experienced sexual violence, including rape; sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse. We strive to provide high quality, specialist care within a safe, non-judgemental environment.

Each client is at the centre of all decisions relating to the criminal justice system, health and social care; and therapeutic interventions. We are an accredited member of Rape Crisis England and Wales, our Independent Sexual Violence Advisor service is accredited by Lime Culture, and our therapeutic service is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Our work covers the counties of Cheshire and Merseyside and we are currently commissioned to provide a seamless aftercare support service to survivors of sexual violence from any of our nine centres, or remotely by telephone or online. This support is offered in close partnership with the two local Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SAFE Place Merseyside and St Mary's Manchester). Our work in Merseyside is delivered in partnership with RASA Merseyside.

In Cheshire we are funded by a consortium that includes Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, NHS England and the four local authorities (Cheshire East, Cheshire West and City of Chester, Halton, and Warrington).

“I can't express how much these sessions have helped me. It has been a life changing experience, thank you.”

Female, 42

In Merseyside we are funded to provide an aftercare service to all survivors of sexual violence in Knowsley and St Helens by a consortium which includes Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioners Office, NHS England, Knowsley Public Health and St Helens local authority.

We additionally receive support from national government funds such as Rape Support, the Ministry of Justice, trust funds, and the Big Lottery Fund.

Through these partnerships we aim to provide support for service users throughout their recovery – from medical interventions, support with the criminal justice system, and on to therapeutic work through a seamless pathway of care.

We have a staff and sessional team of over 30 trained and experienced specialist workers.





Mission Statement

The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC Cheshire and Merseyside) aims to be a centre of excellence in the provision and delivery of services to individuals and families who have been affected by sexual violence.

We believe that sexual violence is a cause and consequence of gender inequality and work to feminist principals throughout our service delivery.

Our Aims

- To maintain a free and confidential service, which is therapeutic and educational
- To provide the choice of women-only spaces in all aspects of our service delivery
- To respect the rights of women, men and young people who access our service
- To support clients in making decisions through counselling and information
- To raise awareness of issues relating to sexual violence
- To maintain confidentiality, allowing service users to trust the service we offer
- To evaluate the service on a regular basis, and to develop the service in response to the demands of our clients where possible

Our Services

- Information line
- Independent Sexual Violence Advisors
- Specialist counselling
- Children and young people's service
- Drop in support
- Group work
- Training and awareness raising
- Volunteering



2020 Statistics

The number of referrals from each area

1164

Referrals from Cheshire

399

Referrals from Merseyside

12

Out of area

1575

Total referrals received

93%

Felt supported through the Criminal Justice System

We've offered...

Counselling sessions

4085

Assessments

1234

ISVA hours

3737

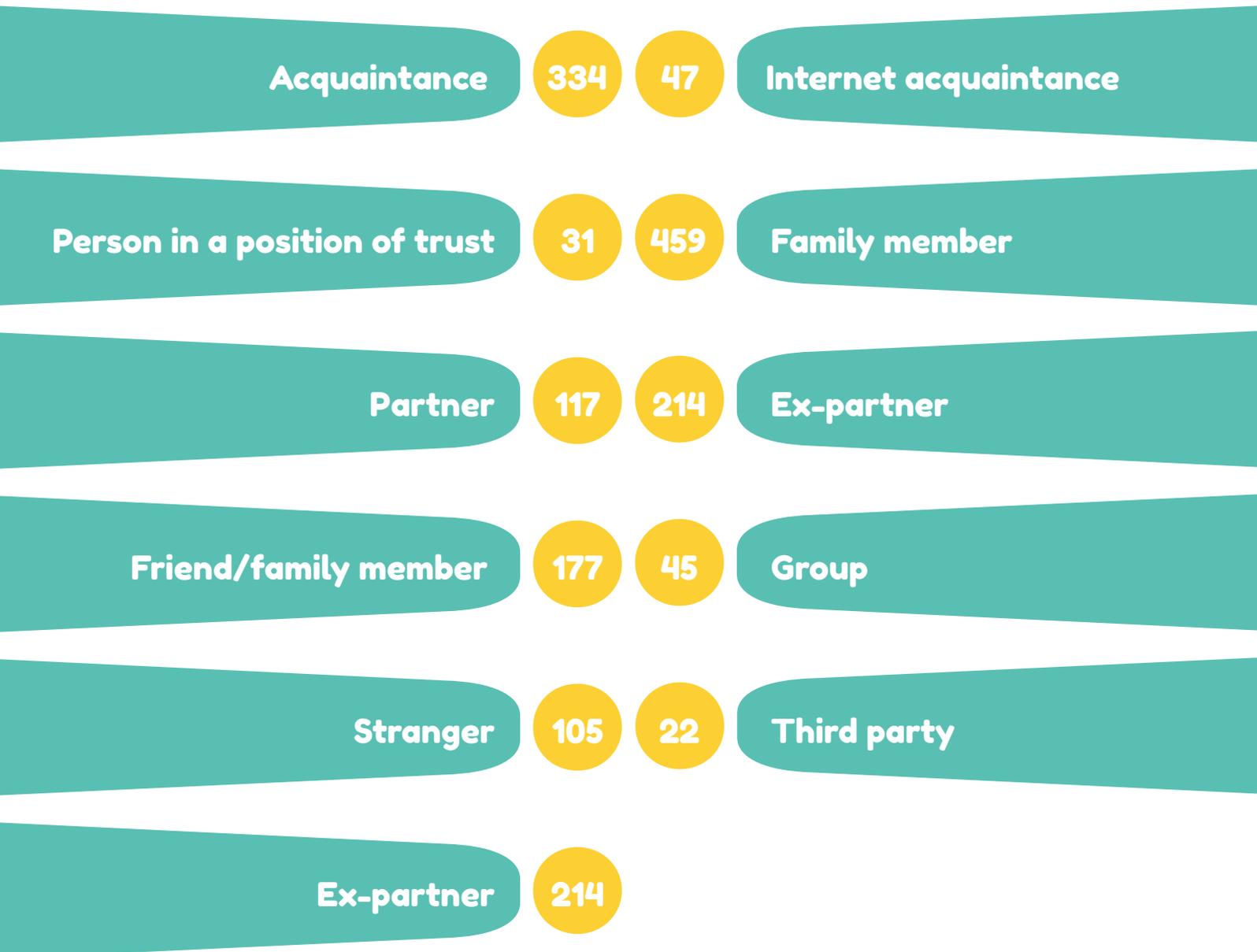
86%

Reported an improvement in their well-being



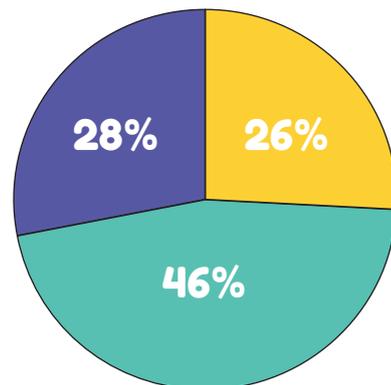
Perpetrator Details

The type of perpetrator identified and number of referrals



Type of Sexual Violence Reported

-  Sexual assault
-  Rape
-  Child sexual abuse



Timeframe of Incident

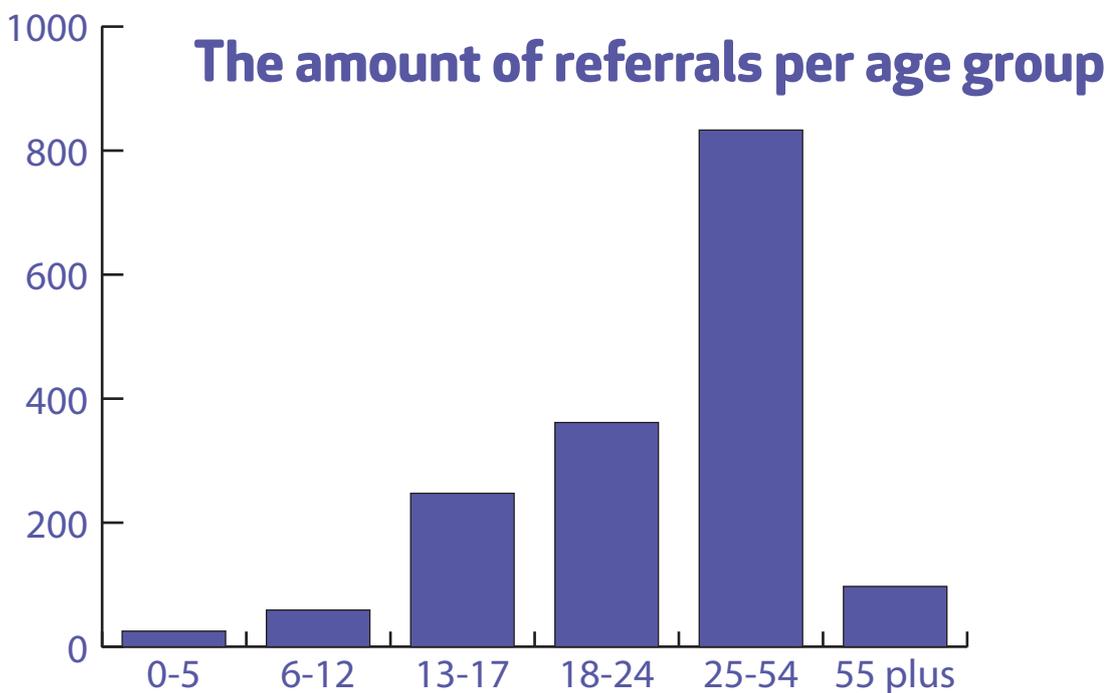
When did the incident occur?



"I am thankful for the service you provided; I wish I had found out about your service years ago... It's the first time I have ever started to open up."
Female, 52

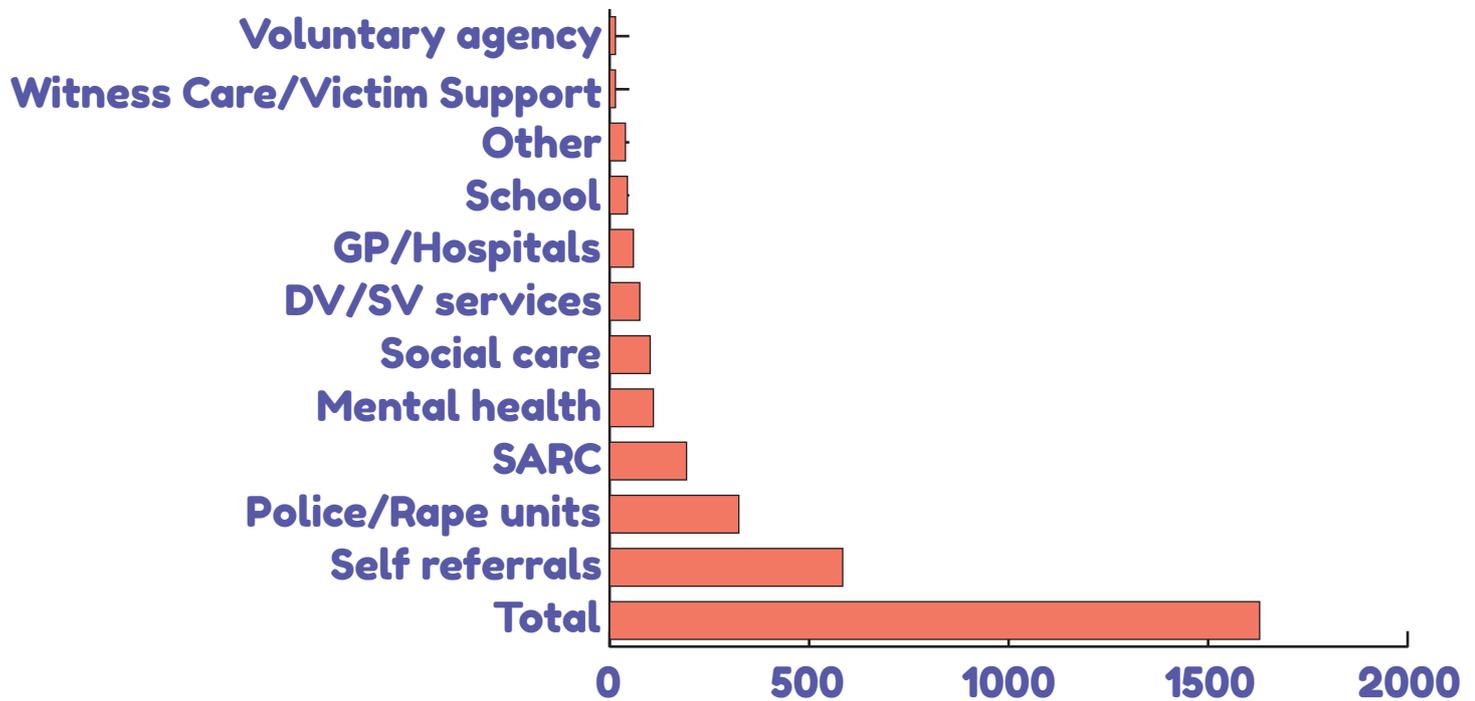


Age Groups



Referral Source

The number of referrals we received from other organisations



“I have realised that what happened wasn’t my fault.”

Female, 36

COVID-19 – Working To Support Our Clients Through Lockdown

When lockdown was introduced in March 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, our office systems allowed the whole team to seamlessly switch to providing remote support for our clients.

We have made use of digital technology to offer sessions online, by telephone, text, and email. Each staff member worked hard to create a safe and confidential space from which to continue to offer remote support to their clients.

We recognised that remote therapeutic support was not ideal for all clients for lots of different reasons, and so we gave people the option to defer counselling until face-to-face services resumed and ensured that they were offered appointments when we returned to office-based work.

The feedback from our clients helped us to realise that some people prefer remote services, as it has made support more accessible for people who have problems getting to our offices, or for those with childcare commitments etc. We will be continuing to offer appointments by Zoom or telephone for any clients who prefer to access support in this way.

Training

We offer training through Local Authority Safeguarding Boards and within local communities to ensure that professionals understand about the services we offer alongside our sexual assault referral centre partners. The training explains our partnership work and clearly demonstrates the referral and care pathway.

Making professionals aware of the pathway of care available to survivors of sexual violence and to raise awareness of our range of services has never been more important. During 2020, it was vital for us to work with local authorities and our partners to offer this training and awareness raising throughout the pandemic, in any way we could. We were the driving force in working with local authorities to get training sessions about our services set up on a virtual platform, and pulling together all parties to ensure this happened was a priority for us.

We are pleased to say this is now happening with all of our training events, and we are looking to add to our current offer with a video about our support services and additional sessions for more professionals and community groups, going into 2021-2022.

“Thank you for the consistent support throughout the lockdown, alone in my house with my young daughter has been such a challenge...I cannot thank you enough for being at the end of a phone for me.” Female, 52

Volunteers

It's been a challenging year for volunteering, a lot of the community based face-to-face work that our volunteers did around awareness raising stopped due to the pandemic. However, we worked with our existing volunteers to use social media platforms to raise awareness as much as possible and experimented with more creative ways of engaging the public across these channels.

We were also pleased to have our survivor support groups delivered through a virtual platform and were able to offer volunteers a space to support these sessions.

Focus Group

Although the opportunities for volunteering were reduced over the past year, we still had people wanting to get involved with the work we were doing so we set up a brand new focus group in 2020. The idea was to bring together volunteers, service users and those interested in this work together.

The group meets monthly via a virtual platform and talks about all aspects of our work including any key dates, social media posts and updates from our charity. We gather their thoughts and feedback on any new ideas to ensure we are client-led.

We were really pleased to include both volunteers and focus group members in some training videos we delivered to Cheshire Police which reflected their own experiences as survivors.

Development Opportunities

- Continuation of remote working through telephone and online support
- Co-location of services when face-to-face work resumes
- Continuation and development of more virtual groups
- Rebranding of the service and marketing to highlight the good work that we do
- Volunteer awareness and fundraising projects



The Year Ahead 2021 Development Plan

Rebrand

Following extensive consultation with stakeholders, we have rebranded our organisation with a new logo and consolidated our literature and promotional products. During 2021 we will be extensively promoting our service across communities within Cheshire, Knowsley and St Helens.

Plan for 2021/22

What we will do	How we will do it	When will we do it
<p>Organisational re-branding and website update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous liaison with North West Sexual Violence Communications and Engagement Manager to ensure strong links across all sexual violence support services • Launch new branding including promotional and informative literature • Website update and refresh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing from April 2021 with regular review • April 2021 • April 2021
<p>Increase engagement rates for people referred to RASASC services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid response assessments for all appropriate referrals to the service • Evening and weekend appointments for counselling • Evening and weekend ISVA support • ISVA live chat facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation will begin 1 April 2021

<p>Awareness raising and training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced training programme to include increased capacity, video sessions and development of partnership work with police, CPS and other stakeholders • Community events to promote the service through staff and volunteers • Community engagement work to promote our services to as many hard to reach groups as possible • Raise our profile within the LGBTQ community • End of year review of feedback from participants and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation will begin 1 April 2021
<p>360 degree review of services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team event • Client forum event • Stakeholder event • Evaluation feedback, event feedback, Survey Monkey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2022 to identify themes and gaps for development in 2022/23
<p>Business continuity and risk management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RASASC Business Continuity Plan aims to implement a systematic approach to risk management across all service operations. The primary objective is to show how we would respond to identified risks and continue to manage service operations under adverse circumstances. The plan takes a comprehensive approach to identifying; assessing; and managing risks to the organisation and is regularly reviewed by the Trustees and senior management team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and ongoing with regular review

Thank you

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our supporters including; commissioners, funders, trustees, staff and volunteers who have enabled us to continue to offer and improve our essential service. Most of all, thank you to our clients who have shared their experiences and helped shape the services we offer. We could not have done this without you!

Your dedication and motivation over the past twelve months has been inspiring and allowed us to remain resilient during such an unprecedented time.

Julie Evans
Operations Director

Helen Wardman
Therapy Services Director

Our Funders

- Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner
- Cheshire East Council
- Cheshire West and City of Chester Council
- Halton Council
- Warrington Council
- NHS England
- Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner
- Knowsley Public Health
- Ministry of Justice
- Rape Crisis England and Wales Digital Transformation Fund
- Big Lottery Fund
- Ebenezer Baptist Church in Chester

“It is the first time I have felt listened to by a professional. You have helped me so much.”

Male, 20



“I found it difficult to talk about my feelings at first but settled down and found it helpful to have someone I could talk to who was there just for me. I did not want my mum or dad to be part of these sessions because they were my sessions, about my thoughts and feelings.” Male, 16

rasasc



Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

for adults, children and young people
in Cheshire and Merseyside



Contact Details

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**Call our confidential
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0330 363 0063**