



Annual General Report

2022 - 2023



**Rape and
Sexual Abuse
Support Centre**

for adults, children and young people
in Cheshire and Merseyside



Introduction

Welcome to our Annual Report for April 22 to March 2023. This year referrals have continued to increase and the demand for our services, especially specialist counselling and Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Support continues to rise. We are very proud that our staff team manage this demand on our service in a robust manner that still puts the survivor at the centre of everything we do.

Our wonderful Funders, Board, Senior Management Team and Staff continue to have a focus on the needs of our service users and continue to deliver an excellent service and we would like to take this opportunity to thank them all. In particular the last couple of years has also seen a significant increase in staffing levels and we want to thank the Police and Crime Commissioners of Cheshire and Merseyside who have continued to support and champion our work.

Finally, as always we want to thank all of our service users who have accessed our services who continue to inspire and shape our service.

Julie Evans
Operations Director

Helen Wardman
Therapy Services Director

Key Events This Year

- Awarded two contracts to deliver aftercare services for all survivors across Cheshire, Knowsley and St Helens.
- Received additional funding from the Ministry of Justice, Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner and Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner to assist with service demand.
- A 25% increase in the staff team (thanks to the above funding).
- Refurbished our existing client rooms and in some locations added more.

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). 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 The Rape Support Fund, 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 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 nearly 50 trained and experienced specialist workers.

“

The service I have received has been brilliant, very supportive, informative.

I felt seen, heard and like I was important and that people care.

”

Mission Statement

The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre 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
- Group work
- Training and awareness raising
- Volunteering



Highlights

Stakeholder Event

In June 2022 we were so pleased to welcome our staff team, volunteers and stakeholder to our Stakeholder event at The Village Hotel, Warrington. The day was a great opportunity for the team to

get together and look at planning for the year ahead. We planned some team exercises to identify gaps, discuss best practices and to gather areas that we can improve. It was wonderful to see such a mix of staff, funders, volunteers and service users whose input into the event was invaluable.



New spaces

We are really pleased to now have additional rooms to our offices in St Helens, Knowsley and Halton during this year, allowing us to offer more counselling and support sessions in those areas.



Safer Streets Launch

In January 2023 we were pleased to get involved with the launch of Cheshire Safer Streets. We have worked with the Cheshire Police team to deliver some of the work set out in the bid including delivering bystander training through purple leaf and offering vouchers to our survivors for the Holli guard personal safety app.

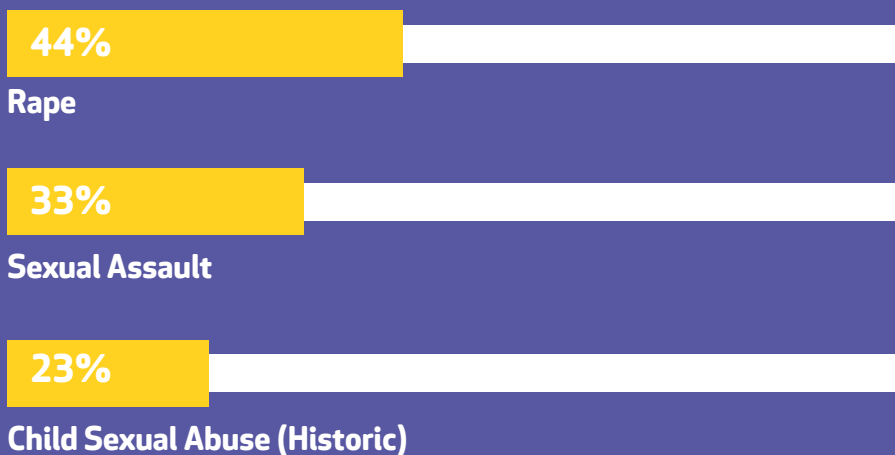
Online Support Programmes - Taste of recovery & Supporting Parents/ Caregivers programme

We are delighted to have 2 online programmes available on our website. One is focussed on the recovery journey called 'Taste of recovery' for any adult survivors to access a tailor made set of workshops online and in their own time.

Our online parent support programme has offered more accessibility for parents and carers to have access to further advice and information on supporting children through the impact of sexual abuse. This has been a way of aiming to further strengthen a child's support network around them. The series of videos on the programme provide advice on supporting children with emotional regulation, understanding and responding to symptoms of trauma and also considerations around self care for the caregiver. This can be especially useful for parents who have children on our waiting list for counselling, such parents will then have access to more immediate advice and information of helpful strategies they can implement to support their child whilst awaiting additional help.

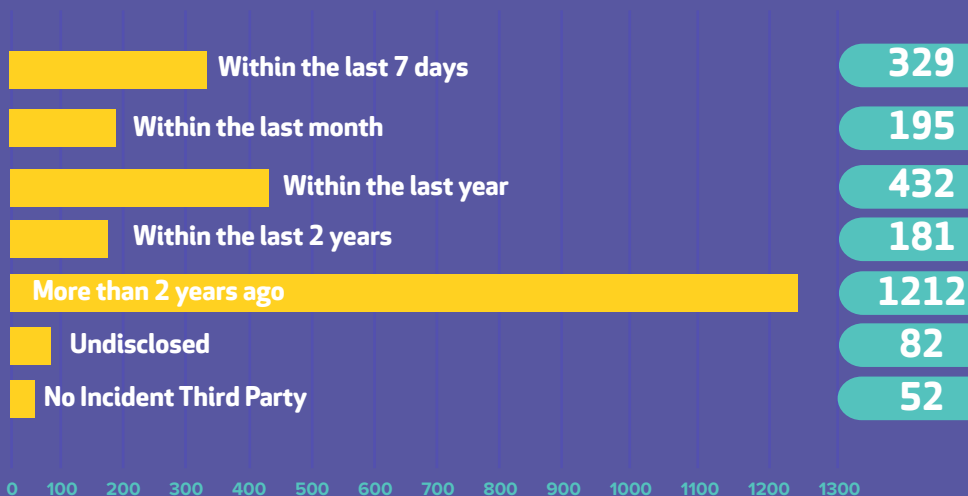


Type of sexual violence reported

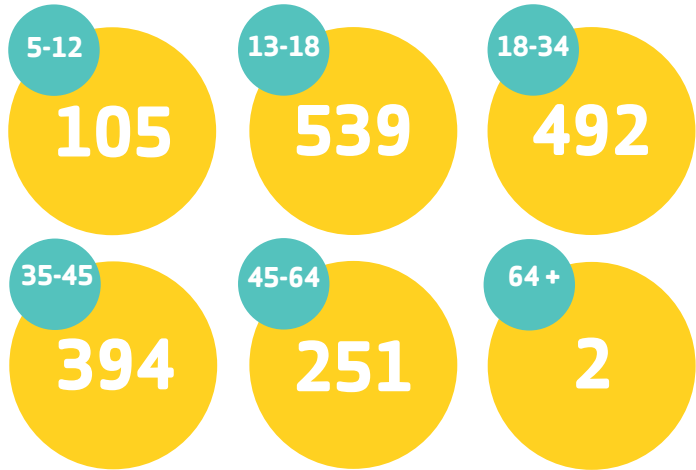


Statistics

Timeframe of Incident

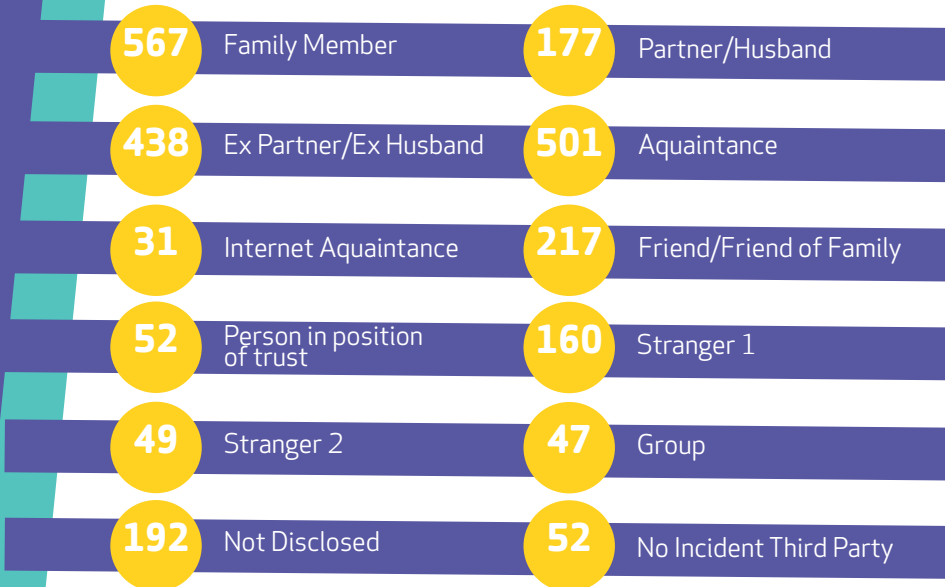


Age Groups



Perpetrator Details

The type of perpetrator identified & number of referrals



Referral Source

Self Referrals	717
Police	710
Mental Health	196
St. Mary's SARC Cheshire	137
Domestic Violence Services/Sexual Violence Services	134
Other	130
Social Care	128
Schools/Education	118
GPs/Hospitals	99
SafePlace SARC Merseyside	56
Witness Care/Victim Support	26
Alderhay SARC	17
SARC out of area	15

We've Offered...

Counselling F2F Sessions Offered	9222
Assessments Offered	2283
ISVA Interventions (hrs) Offered	6974

94%

of survivors felt that accessing support with us helped in reducing symptoms of anxiety.

91%

of survivors using our service increased their feelings of safety



2022 Statistics

We received
1,860
referrals from
Cheshire

We received
566
referrals from
St Helens and
Knowlsey

We received
57
referrals from
out of area

Total referrals
2,483
24% increase in
referrals from 2021

ISVA Service

Across Cheshire & Merseyside our ISVAs (Independent sexual violence advocates) and CHISVAs (Childrens sexual violence advocates) have been committed to ensuring that anyone who has experienced sexual violence, whether recently or in the past has the information and support to help them make informed decisions and to help them navigate the criminal justice system.

This year has seen our ISVA team expand again to cope with the increase of cases and meet the needs of our service users, we have had a strong focus on how we deliver services to those with neuro-diversity and how we can ensure they have equitable access to our services including an easy read version of our service agreement and easy read leaflets and information, we are also pleased to have recruited a child ISVA with a lot of experience in this area.

We have recently been reaccredited by Limeculture for our ISVA and CHISVA services and we are extremely pleased to have again been awarded the quality mark that shows we are working to the highest standards for survivors and their families. As the quote below from Limeculture shows our service is examined to ensure we are delivering a consistently high service at all levels.

“The Quality Standards for ISVA Services set out the standards for ISVA services across four domains: Leadership and Governance, Access and Engagement, Service Delivery, and Outcomes and Evaluation. They set out expectations of the ISVA service’s leadership and staff and articulate what the client should experience as a result” -Limeculture website.

“

Working with RASASC has started a process for me, by which I can rebuild myself into the person I deserve to be rather than the one I was taught that I only deserved to be. The two are not the same!

Female 47

We have been working closely with the police, courts and CPS to help shape the way reports of sexual violence are handled and that the survivors have a better journey through the system and courts, we are encouraging more suspect focused investigations whereas previously the survivor felt they were the one on trial.

We have delivered training to Judges and court ushers around the work we do and why having an ISVA is so important when survivors attend court. We will continue this vital work to ensure all survivors feel that when they choose to report they are believed, supported and have confidence in the criminal justice system.

Our Pathway Navigator team have been extremely busy answering calls and triaging over 2000 referrals into our service this year from across Cheshire and Merseyside, the team are all ISVA trained and have specialist knowledge to ensure all survivors are spoken to in a sensitive way as they understand that making this initial step for support can be hard and can be very emotional. The team conduct initial assessments ensuring anyone referred to us is directed to the correct service and support is in place as soon as possible.



Counselling Service

RASASC provides a specialist counselling service which is accredited with the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy, our skilled and experienced Counsellors provide therapy across Cheshire, Knowsley and St Helens. During the past year we have worked hard to adapt to the needs of our clients and offer face to face appointments from easily accessible centres as well as online and telephone counselling sessions. Our approach to counselling is client centred, and interventions are trauma informed in all elements of our practice. We aim to help people to work through and understand the impact of their experiences, and to develop a new perspective and ways of coping.

“

I have developed a better sense of self-worth, a reduced dependence on unhealthy coping mechanisms, and I feel like I have a future beyond a victim.

Thanks for everything.”

”



Counselling Evaluations

My counsellor has been amazing in helping me to work out my feelings, thoughts and working through the trauma of my experience. I appreciate their support and knowledge and definitely their understanding

Female 48

Having sessions with my counsellor helps me understand how I'm feeling. Appreciated that they took things at my own pace, and they were never judgmental.

Male 40



Children & Young People

Our child and adolescent service has continued to offer support in the form of specialised child and family ISVAs and trauma focused therapeutic interventions to children aged 5 and above. This year we have also recruited a Children and additional needs ISVA and a therapist who specialises in working with clients over the age of 13 who present with learning disabilities and neurodiversity. Both services have enabled us to further meet the individual needs of the clients we support.

It is a real privilege to have been able to witness the individual personal growths of the children and adolescents we have supported over the last year. Highlights have included witnessing children really finding their voice and developing the confidence to express their individual needs to ourselves, parents, school and statutory services whilst also seeing the positive impact this has had on their own wellbeing when they feel listened to and taken seriously.



Children & YP Feedback Quotes

My counsellor gave useful and helpful coping strategies. I felt very comfortable in all sessions

Female 15

I am happy with the counselling that my son has received. The counsellor has been really good engaging them and has been reassuring to us both. My son says he like coming to see them and it has been helpful.

Male 8

It has given me a safe, confidential space where I can just talk about my experiences without having to look after the person I spoke to because they're upset about it. Thank you.

Non-binary 17

“ The ISVA at RASASC was the first person (professionally) who has got back to me when they have said they would. I can't tell you how good that feels. I know that they will always listen to what my daughter wants and put them first. I really appreciate them making us feel respected. I would recommend your ISVA service to anyone, you have helped us so much. Thank you.

Female 16

“ I felt 'better and happy' during the time with my counsellor. I really enjoyed getting to draw and write when I talked to them about stuff.

Female 7

“ I would just like to say how comfortable I was made to feel during my sessions - it was so helpful being able to talk through what I needed to and look at different ways of relaxing and coping with my feelings. Thank you for understanding and respecting my decision to not continue with counselling after my uncle's death and needing to focus on settling into my new school. I know I will come back when I need to.

Female 14

Community Events

Throughout 2022 we have continued to attend community events alongside partner to raise awareness of the impact of sexual violence on women, men, children and young people. We were pleased to work with local colleges throughout sexual violence awareness week and we were delighted to speak at Alpha Omega's Women in security event.

Here are just a few of our highlights:



Outreach & Engagement

Volunteers

Our volunteers have continued to offer their valuable time and commitment throughout 2022. Our volunteers have supported our training offer this year, getting involved in the delivery of training to professionals by sharing their own journey as a survivor of sexual violence and supporting professionals to recognise the importance of responding to disclosures. This has been a huge success throughout the feedback and couldn't have achieved this without the support of volunteers.

Stakeholder Group

We are continuing to involve stakeholders such as previous service users, staff, volunteers and those with an interest in the work we do. During 2022 we have met with stakeholders monthly to get their thoughts on our service delivery and ideas for the future. We are keen to ensure the voice of the survivor is the centre of our work. All stakeholder group members also have access to our 'Slack' chat group so there is a constant space for conversation and ideas to be shared.

Throughout 2022 we have continued to support various campaigns and



work together with partner agencies to share messages across our social media channels. We have worked on our social media strategy to ensure that the posts we are creating are relevant and reaching a variety of audiences by carefully choosing language, times and dates for posts to go live.

Some of the campaigns we have supported include:

- Stress Awareness Month
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Volunteer Week
- Loneliness Awareness Week
- World Suicide Prevention
- Sexual Health Week
- North West Sexual Violence Week
- White Ribbon
- 16 Days of Activism
- Sexual Abuse & Sexual Violence Week
- UK Says No More Week
- International Women's Day

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Female 47

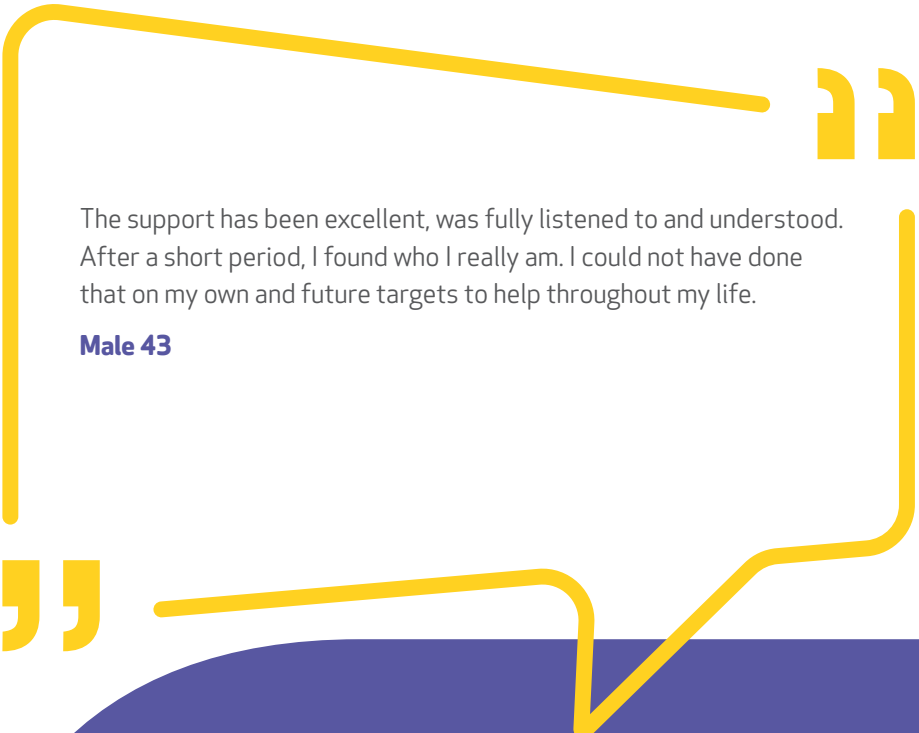
Business Continuity

RASASC Business Continuity Plan aims to implement a systematic approach to risk management across all service operations. The primary objective of the Business Continuity Plan 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.

Our Funders



A large yellow graphic consisting of two quotation marks. The opening quote is at the top right, and the closing quote is at the bottom left. A yellow line connects them, forming a frame around the text.

The support has been excellent, was fully listened to and understood. After a short period, I found who I really am. I could not have done that on my own and future targets to help throughout my life.

Male 43

Thank you

Our wonderful Funders, Board, Senior Management Team and Staff continue to have a focus on the needs of our service users and continue to deliver an excellent service and we would like to take this opportunity to thank them all. The last couple of years has also seen a significant increase in staffing levels and we want to thank the staff and the Police and Crime Commissioners of Cheshire and Merseyside who have continued to support and champion our work.

To the survivors who have accessed support with us, your strength and determination continues to inspire us everyday. Thank you.

RASASC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre)

Cheshire and Merseyside

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www.rapecentre.org.uk



@RapeSupport



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@rasasc_cm

**Call our confidential
information line
0330 363 0063**