



Annual General Report 2023 - 2024



**Rape and
Sexual Abuse
Support Centre**

for adults, children and young people
in Cheshire and Merseyside



Introduction

Welcome to our Annual Report for April 2023 to March 2024. 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.

Julie Evans

Julie Evans
Operations Director

Helen Wardman

Helen Wardman
Therapy Services Director



About us

Established since 1995 we are an independent charity that provides specialist trauma 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 a high quality, specialist care service within a safe, non-judgemental environment. Each service user 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 and Child Independent Sexual Violence Service is accredited by Lime Culture, and our therapeutic service is organisationally accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Our work covers the counties of Cheshire and parts of Merseyside. 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).



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 work in partnership with Merseyside RASA to provide a seamless aftercare service to all survivors of sexual violence in Knowsley and St Helens (with RASA covering the rest of Merseyside). This is funded 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, 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.

I'm so pleased that I came to RASASC for support, it has given me so much hope that I can recover and be ok. I really appreciated being able to talk things through with my ISVA and to understand that I had more options than I thought. It has helped me to put things into perspective and not to feel weak anymore. I felt really comfortable talking to them and know I can come to them with anything that's worrying me. Thank you so much for being at the meeting with the Police and helping me to choose the right way for me. I would not have been able to get through all this without knowing all the information which they explained and the therapy that I've had. I cannot thank you enough for being there and helping me through everything

Female 59

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

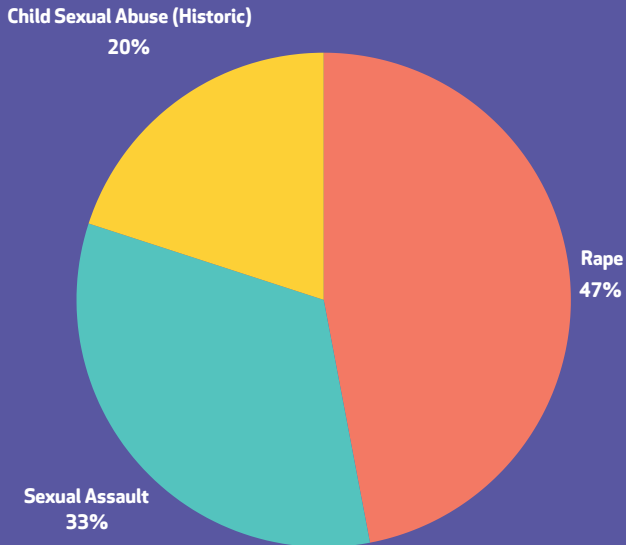
- Information line
- Independent Sexual Violence Advisors
- Specialist counselling
- Children and young people's service
- Group work
- Training and awareness raising



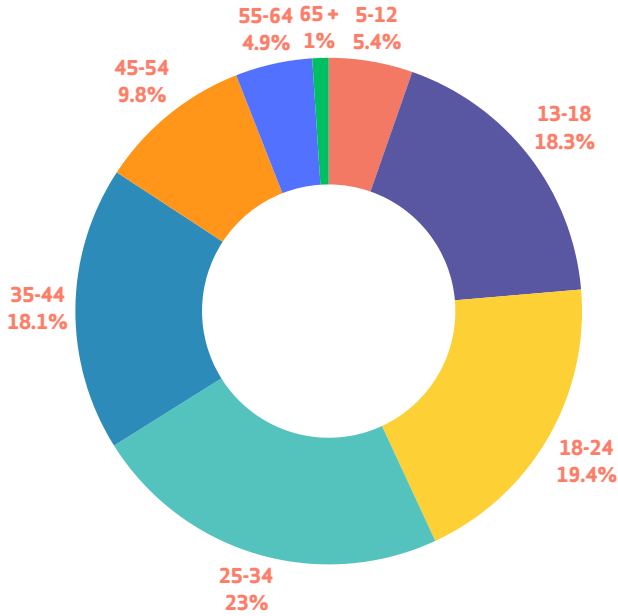
Statistics



Type of sexual violence reported

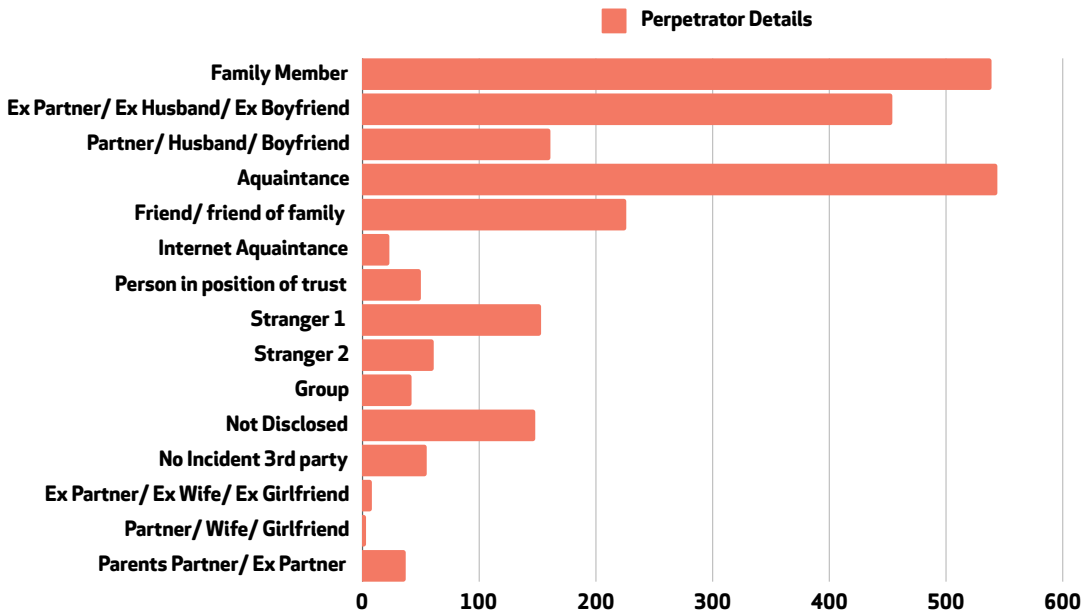


Age Groups

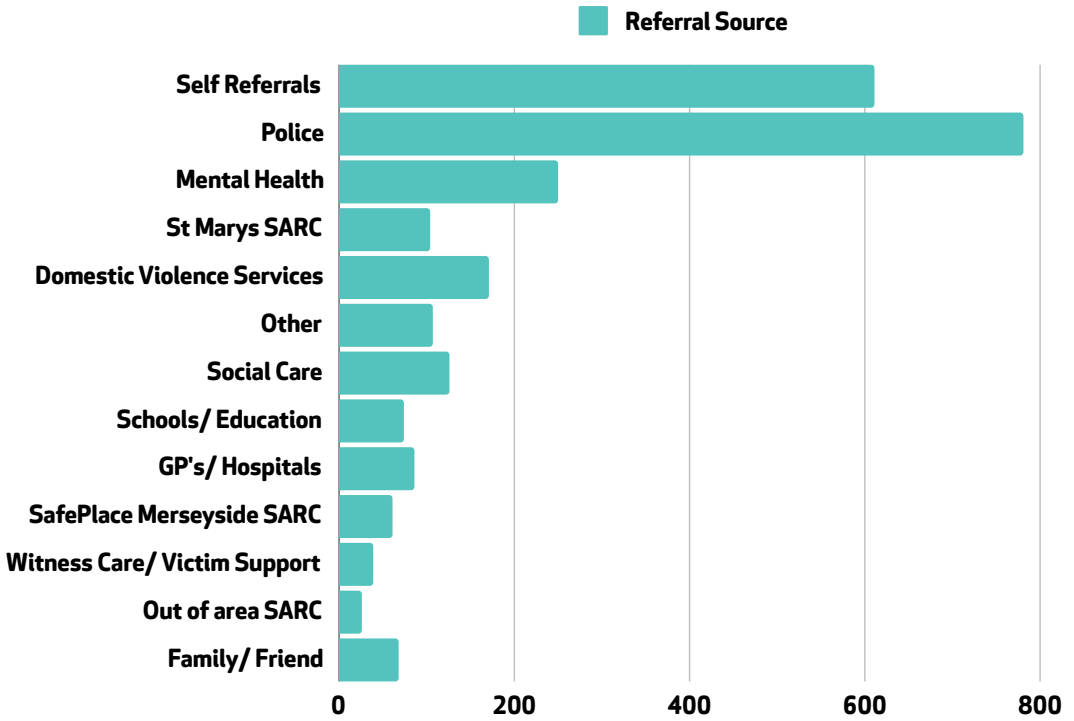


Perpetrator Details

The type of perpetrator identified & number of referrals



Referral Source



We've Offered...

9860

**Counselling F2F
Sessions**

2273

**Offered
Assessments**

7009

**ISVA
Interventions
(hrs)**

**We received
1,908
referrals
from
Cheshire**

**We received
540
referrals from
St Helens and
Knowlsey**

**We received
56
referrals from
out of area**

**Total referrals
2,504**

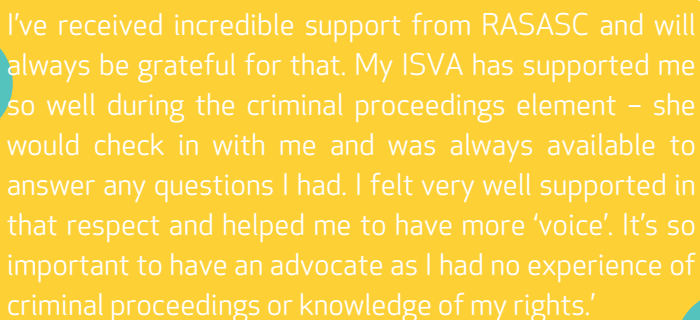
Across Cheshire, St Helens & Knowsley

ISVA Service

During this year, our dedicated ISVA team have worked hard across local areas within Cheshire and Merseyside. Throughout the criminal justice process, ISVA's have provided over 7,000 hours of specialist support and advocacy to victims and survivors of sexual violence. The ISVA service delivered ongoing continuity, information and impartial advice which enabled and empowered survivors to make informed decisions to help them navigate the criminal justice system.

We have also extended our team to manage the increase in cases referred into the ISVA service. Staff have also been busy managing survivors expectations around the length of time cases are taking to progress through the criminal justice system. All members of the ISVA team have successfully completed their ISVA accreditation training to ensure they are delivering high quality support and advocacy to anyone accessing our service.

This year the team have attended events and community groups within the local area to establish and maintain further relationships. By networking with others, this has enabled knowledge to be shared, increased professional connections, and given people the opportunity to access information around what support is available in local areas. The team have also attended events in terms of mental health and wellbeing, local colleges, local children's/women's centres to ensure information is given around what support can be offered to anyone who has experienced rape or sexual assault and how to refer into RASASC.



I've received incredible support from RASASC and will always be grateful for that. My ISVA has supported me so well during the criminal proceedings element – she would check in with me and was always available to answer any questions I had. I felt very well supported in that respect and helped me to have more 'voice'. It's so important to have an advocate as I had no experience of criminal proceedings or knowledge of my rights.'

To further improve professional relationships, ISVA's have been attending regular ISVA clinics based within police stations to help develop partnership working. This has also helped both agencies understand each other's professional roles within the criminal justice system. Following on from the launch of Operation Soteria, regular meetings have also been introduced with the CPS, this has been beneficial to allow that strengthened engagement and communication between agencies and to ensure the victims and survivors voice is heard.

The ISVA and CHISVA service has been re-accredited by Lime Culture. As a service, we are extremely pleased to have been awarded the quality mark for another year that shows we are working to the highest standards for survivors and their families. The Quality Standards aim to ensure every victim and survivor of sexual violence can access a high-quality, well managed ISVA service. The Quality Standards provide a benchmark for services to monitor their provision against, and expectations required for the delivery of a safe and effective ISVA service. ISVA Quality Standards cover all essential aspects of ISVA Services. These are set out across four domains: Leadership and Governance, Access and Engagement, Service Delivery, and Outcomes and Evaluation.



Specialist Counselling Service



The specialist counselling provided by RASASC is fully accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). We are delighted to have successfully completed a virtual site visit this year and received very positive feedback from BACP about our therapeutic practice.

The specialist counselling service offers trauma focused therapy to any adult or child (over five years of age) who is a survivor of sexual violence. We employ counsellors from a wide range of modalities who tailor treatment to meet the needs of each person engaged with our service. Therapy is always client centred, meaning that we strive to meet the needs of each individual in a non-directive way. We use a range of approaches to build upon the strength of the therapeutic relationship with the aim of meeting specific needs, including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT); Trauma Focused CBT; Solution Focused Therapy; EMDR; Psychoeducation; and creative interventions.

A trauma informed approach to therapy incorporates:

- Stabilisation & emotional regulation
- Psychoeducation
- Processing of feelings, thoughts and behaviours
- Reconnection & looking to the future



“I’ve received incredible support from RASASC and will always be grateful for that. My Counsellor was brilliant, and I don’t know what I would have done without their support - at the time I was very scared and anxious, feeling suicidal, and it really helped having the talking therapy.”

I was at the lowest point I've ever been in my life and was desperate. I was open to counselling but a little doubtful due to past experiences of counselling I've received. But with my counsellor's style of facilitation and his support and insight I felt able to embrace the process and the change to my outlook has been incredible. I can't thank my counsellor enough. He's just been brilliant and he clearly loves his job and has been a genuine support. It's so heartening to have met someone like him doing a really good job.

Reported feeling better informed and empowered to act.

95%

98%

Were satisfied with the service received and would recommend to others

Children & Young People's Service

Our Children and Young People's Service has continued to offer support in the form of specialised child and family ISVA's and trauma focused therapeutic interventions to children aged 5 and above.

“
Sessions with my counsellor made me feel: 'Heard, better, relaxed, prepared and confident'
Male 11
”

“
I feel I am coping much better now, I am seeing friends, spending more time downstairs with my Mum, and looking forward to starting an apprenticeship. Everything seems much more positive for me now. I also feel confident ending these sessions now knowing if I did need support again in future, it is still available to me. I have not felt judged at all by my counsellor and now know it's OK not to be OK all the time.
Female 16
”

“
It helped me feel like I was heard and cared for. It helped me find out things about myself and helped me grow. I no longer feel anxious or worried. I feel more confident with the people in my life. I feel so much better, like a new person. It no longer has a daily impact. I feel I could say anything without judgement. I would highly recommend RASASC.
Female 15
”

“
Our counsellor has helped our family by understanding my daughter. The thanks for this validation alone and how it has been received by my daughter is immeasurable. **Female 5**
”



Case Study- Amanda

Amanda is 7 years old and has recently completed therapy at one of our centres. Initially Amanda's mum was very concerned about how the therapy would impact on Amanda, as she was currently experiencing anxiety and night terrors. I was able to reassure her by explaining that therapy at RASASC is very child centred, and that all work would progress at Amanda's pace.

I used the Trauma Focussed CBT approach, which involves both the child and the parent throughout sessions. I was able to provide Amanda and her mum with stabilisation and grounding techniques before moving on to further explore the impact of the trauma that she had experienced. In the sessions I used a variety of age appropriate tools to encourage Amanda to look at her fears around sleep and night-time.

Amanda particularly found the use of puppets helpful and with mum decided to make one of her own that she put above her bed to "catch her nightmares". Within the sessions we used worry jars/ miniatures/sand play and drawing to explore what 'worry' and 'fear' felt like in the body, and to develop breathing techniques to ground Amanda and lessen her anxiety. Both mum and daughter found the grounding techniques helpful in managing her anxiety, and mum reported that Amanda was more settled at school.

By the end of the sessions both reported that the night terrors had diminished. In her final session Amanda reported that " the dinosaur (her puppet) has taken him away" and that she was experiencing less anxiety.



“ Our counsellor has helped our family by understanding my daughter. The thanks for this validation alone and how it has been received by my daughter is immeasurable. ”

Wellbeing Project

This year we welcomed funding from the National Lottery Community Fund for 5 years to launch a brand new Wellbeing Project for survivors of sexual violence, with a focus on physical activities to build on confidence, self esteem in a safe environment with other survivors. We were really pleased to start the project in the beginning of 2024 and the response we had so far has been positive.

Our Wellbeing project offers:

- Weekly Walking Groups
- Creative Spaces
- Coffee & Chat Groups
- Online Support Group
- Wellness Events
- Gardening Group- Coming Early 2024

Here are just a few of our highlights:

“ I felt very supported within the group and it was nice to be surrounded by likeminded people it makes you feel less alone ”



Training & Outreach

We have continued this year to offer support and training in the community across Cheshire. We work together with Local authorities- Cheshire East, Cheshire West, Warrington and Halton with our partners over at St Marys SARC to deliver helpful sessions to professionals. We have also delivered additional lunch and learn sessions for professionals who just wanted a short insight that have been well received.

We have also been out attending individual team's meetings to talk about our service offer as well as attending health & wellbeing events, mental health events and local community sessions to talk about the support we offer to both professionals and members of the public.





Fundraising

We had some incredible support from individuals wanting to raise money for our charity. Fundraising events have included

- Abseil down Liverpool Cathedral,
- A 50K Ultra Marathon
- Sponsored Beauty Event in Manchester.

A huge thanks to all of those who supported these amazing women to raise funds for us.

if you are interested in fundraising or corporate sponsorship please email kirsty@rapencetre.org.uk.

The Team and ISVA @rasasc_cm saved my life , with the support and kindness they showed me , when I thought I couldn't carry on . They were amazing . I have struggled to run long since with not being well , and never thought I'd be able to do it again . But over the last 6 months have started to feel well , heal , become who I was meant to be . So to turn up on the start line yesterday and complete the run means the absolute world 🌍 , showing up for me is the best thing I've ever done . I am so proud and so grateful

Rachel- 50K Ultra Marathon Fundraiser

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 and risk register 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



The service has helped me a lot. My counsellor has been so supporting, I would recommend the service to anybody that is struggling. It has been a massive help for me

Male24

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 every day. Thank you.

RASASC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre)

Cheshire and Merseyside

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support@rapecentre.org.uk

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