



## **An introduction to The Survivors Trust...**

**Over 7.7 million adults in the UK have experienced childhood sexual abuse;  
1.55 million women have reported being raped;  
and 1.55 million adult men have reported being sexually victimised.**

The impact of sexual victimisation is linked to the development of mental, physical and health issues in survivors of rape, sexual abuse and sexual violence. People affected by sexual crime need somewhere to turn where they can be sure that they will receive expert help and support. The Survivors Trust is a confederation of agencies and organisations which exist to provide this expert service.

Our role is to provide a national voice for the specialist voluntary sector, offering mentoring and organisational support to member groups to reach their full potential and to deliver services of quality. We are the largest network of rape and sexual abuse support services in Europe.

Solicitor General Vera Baird QC MP stated - *"We have funded the Survivors Trust ... to strengthen support for the sector and to advocate on their [member agencies] behalf in relation to national developments on sexual violence and abuse."*

The Survivors Trust advise and work alongside the UK Home Office; Department of Health; Her Majesty's Prison Service; Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO); and the National Policing Improvement Agency and the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) to establish best practice in dealing with the needs of our client groups

**Included within this pack are information and a case study on the following:**

**Rape and sexual abuse services – whose responsibility?  
Rape victims must be supported to speak out...  
Childhood sexual abuse is an epidemic...  
Additional barriers for male victims...  
Learning disabilities and sexual abuse: more victims, less justice...**





## **Rape and sexual abuse services – whose responsibility?**

**12,654 people reported a rape last year;  
7.7 million survivors of sexual abuse in the UK**

The voluntary sector Rape and Sexual Abuse agencies comprising The Survivors Trust provide essential crisis and therapeutic support services for victims. Funding for these organisations is at crisis point – eight of The Survivors Trust's member agencies have closed due to lack of funds since 2007. There is a postcode lottery in service provision where traumatised and vulnerable individuals who desperately need to access specialist support can face huge delays. This is if they are able to access a service at all.

**All victims of rape or sexual abuse have the right to be able to access a local specialist service that will provide them with appropriate support for as long as they feel they need it.**

### **Factors affecting services...**

- *Expertise in the voluntary sector adversely affected by lack of funding*
- *Skilled and experienced workers subject to job insecurity*
- *Pressures on staff to fund-raise to ensure project sustainability means compromised service provision in other areas, potentially affecting long term service development planning*
- *Cost effectiveness of services*
- *Short-term funding results in lack of ability to make long term plans for the service.*

**The Survivors Trust works to ensure that there is equality in the provision of public funding for ALL agencies supporting victims of sexual violence. It is vital for victims across the UK and Ireland that Survivors Trust member agencies secure sufficient funding to sustain their support services and to develop.**

**The crimes: Under-reported  
The services: Under-funded  
The victims: Under-supported**



## Case Study – Rugby RoSA

Rugby RoSA was established in 1996 and we provide support, counselling and independent sexual violence advice for victims of rape or sexual abuse. Our clients either self-refer or are referred by police, schools, mental health services or general health services. We also operate a helpline, which is the source of many referrals. Much of our support is carried about by volunteers who we train and supervise regularly to enable them to carry out high-quality support.

Many of our clients are distressed by the lack of understanding and practical support that was available to them after their abuse and before they found our support service. Furthermore, the ever-increasing evidence of the widespread nature of rape and sexual abuse means that there are a countless number of victims who have not yet approached us.

Funding has been a difficult issue for Rugby RoSA from the outset, varying significantly over the years since we were set up in 1996. Recently our support service provision was reduced due to insecure funding. This resulted in our inability to fully respond to requests for help. It also caused the imposition a small fee for the support service, which was necessary in order to keep afloat. This resulted in a significant reduction in clients who received support or counselling from Rugby RoSA. This is unsurprising as many of our clients come from financially insecure backgrounds and simply could not afford to pay for their support.

Even small grants make a significant difference to the services that we are able to provide. A recent incident at a school prompted the police to ask us to run a personal safety education programme in local schools, and they provided a grant to enable us to do this.

Due to the success of this programme we are now aiming to expand our education service to all of the schools in our area, and potentially to the colleges and the local university. There is certainly enough demand for our specialist services to merit this expansion. However, despite this ongoing need we currently do not have sufficient funding or staff to expand the programme.

It is essential that we continue our existing specialist support to victims of rape and sexual abuse and also spread information about our service as widely as possible. Without knowing about the support that Rugby RoSA provides, potential clients are likely to continue feeling distressed, being vulnerable, and experiencing severe emotional, health and social difficulties. Additionally, our existing clients are also at risk of losing the ongoing support that is fundamental to rebuilding their lives. Sustainable funding is essential to ensure that we can continue to provide this service.





## **Rape victims must be supported to speak out...**

**6,628 rapes were reported in 1997**

**12,654 rapes were reported in 2007-8**

**In total, 68,156 rapes have been reported in the last 5 years**

Rape of men, women and children continues to be one of the most under-disclosed and under-reported crimes. Only 20% of rapes are reported to the police. As few as one in fifteen (6%) of reported rapes will result in a conviction and victims continue to feel isolated, unsafe and under-supported in coming forward. Many victims stay silent forever.

### **Statistics reveal...**

- *About 5% of women are raped at some point in their life.*
- *Only 17% of rapes are performed by strangers. We are much more likely to be raped by someone we know.*
- *A quarter of reported rapes are of children.*
- *In 1997 the number of reported male rapes was 347, a figure which rose to 1,116 reports in 2006. This is more than a threefold increase in less than ten years.*

### **Why are conviction rates so low?**

- *There is a widespread under-reporting of rape*
- *Failure of criminal justice systems*
- *Public attitudes to victims of rape*

### **Men suffer in silence...**

- *Male rape and sexual assault is still a taboo subject*
- *Societal attitudes about what it means for a man to be raped*
- *Men are more likely to be gang-raped*

The Sexual Offences Act 2004 set out the definition of rape as the penetration of a person's vagina, anus or mouth by a penis without their consent. It can happen to women and men. Penetration of someone's vagina, anus or mouth by any body part or object is defined as serious sexual assault.

**All victims of rape have a right to receive high-quality support that will enable them to gain access to justice and to rebuild their lives. At the moment this is not possible in many cases. We demand that this failure is rectified immediately so that victims receive justice.**



## Case Study – Emily

Emily (not her real name) was sixteen when she went out one evening to meet two female friends in the local park, and was also met there by three young Eastern European men. Emily had not met these men before, but as they had been invited by one of her friends she decided to stay and try to enjoy the evening as a group. They spent several hours in the park drinking and chatting and Emily found that she got along well with one of the men and he paid her a lot of attention.

Later in the evening, the young man who Emily had been talking to asked her if she wanted to go for a walk so that they could be alone together. Emily felt relaxed by this point as he seemed kind and friendly and so she agreed to go with him. They walked through the park talking and then before long they were kissing.

Emily began to feel uncomfortable with what was happening and asked the man to stop. He wouldn't leave her alone despite her protests and before long he had overpowered her. Although she tried, she couldn't get away from him. The man ended up raping her.

After the event Emily was extremely traumatised. She went to the police but all of the young men who were out with her and her friends that night had by now disappeared without a trace and could not be found. Nobody knew if they had moved to a different town or gone back to their country. Emily felt extremely angry towards her friends who had brought these unknown men to meet her that night, and blamed them for what had happened. She hasn't spoken to the friends since and found it hard to trust other people who were close to her before the attack, as well as being unable to form friendships with new people.

A few months afterwards Emily made contact with her local support service, Family Matters. There she met with a counsellor who talked to her about what had happened and helped her to work through what had happened during and since the night she was raped. After a few sessions Emily began to trust the counsellor enough to talk to her about how she felt. This meant Emily was able to address the feelings of anger and depression that she had experienced since the attack and with the counsellor started to find ways to overcome them.

Some time later Emily has begun to move on from the attack. She still feels some anger towards the girls she had gone to meet that night, but she is beginning to rebuild her life and move on. Emily knows she will never be able to forget what happened to her, but is slowly starting to concentrate on the positive aspects of her life. She has started to trust people again and recently met a young man who has become her boyfriend. She feels that this progress would not have been possible without the support she received from her counsellor at Family Matters.





## Childhood sexual abuse is epidemic...

**Up to 7.7 million adults in the UK have suffered sexual abuse as a child.**

Victims of childhood sexual abuse are the largest client group of specialist rape and sexual abuse support services. Childhood sexual abuse occurs more often and more widely than people realise. Most childhood sexual abuse takes place in the home and the perpetrator is usually known to the victim and their family.

Adult survivors typically experience any combination of shame, guilt, anger, post-traumatic stress, self-harming behaviours, low self-esteem, depression, misuse of drugs, alcohol, sex and pornography and have a high suicide rate.

### Key facts...

- *21% of young women and 11% of young men report being sexually abused as a child. This means that overall 15% of the adult population has experienced sexual abuse at some time in their childhood. In other words, **7.7 million adults** in the UK have suffered sexual abuse as a child.*
- *Sexual abuse, violence and neglect happen to millions of children. Most victims do not tell anyone (disclose) or report the abuse when it happens.*
- *Even after disclosure the extent of the problem may not be recognised or properly assessed and individuals and families often do not get the help that they need.*
- *Sexual abuse of men is much more common than people think. Over 5% of men (1.55 million) report being sexually abused as a child.*

**The Survivors Trust believes that the abuse of men, women, girls and boys is preventable. We demand that everybody in society takes responsibility for this pervasive crime and to acknowledge the widespread prevalence of the problem. There must be appropriate specialist services in place to support victims of childhood sexual abuse. Additionally, action must be taken to raise awareness and to break the silence surrounding this hidden cruelty.**



## Case Study – Kay

As far as she can remember Kay (not her real name) believes her sexual abuse first took place when she was around 3 years of age and by her grandmother. Her father took up the cause fairly shortly after and for many years this continued with the occasional uncle and aunt humiliating and abusing her as well.

In her teens her father hawked her around a paedophile ring in London where she lost count of the number abusers she met. This led to her engaging in some bizarre and bullying behavior at school for which she still feels guilty.

Despite the hold her father had over her by this time, she felt she had escaped when she married and left home in her late teens. A few weeks later her father arrived unexpectedly at her new address and her abuse began again – an all too common occurrence - and this carried on until she was in her thirties.

Sadly, this is not the end of the story, her husband also quickly became first physically and then sexually abusive and Kay felt she had gone from the frying pan to the fire. She could not lose the sense of shame and guilt, a key factor in reducing her self esteem to the degree she stayed and put up with the abuse. Slowly an overpowering belief she was tainted or dirty inside grew within her which she tried to counter by gargling and bathing with bleach and taking antibiotics whenever she could get hold of them in an endeavor to cleanse herself, inside and out.

After a particularly severe beating the police were called and her husband was eventually put in prison. It was then that she sought help from her local specialist support service. The therapist did not know it at the time but had he in any way judged Kay, or said anything that could have been construed as criticism, she would have been determined to kill herself. She was, as she said, 'drinking at the last chance saloon'.

In the event the therapist passed the test and so did Kay as she has now rebuilt her life. She has stopped self-harming totally, has married again and now has a promising career as Specialist Care Worker.





## **Additional barriers for male victims...**

**5% of men have been subject to some form of sexual victimisation in their lifetime. This is 1.55 million men.**

Men and boys are also subject to rape, sexual violence and sexual abuse. Many people find it difficult to accept that men and boys are raped and abused. This in itself can make it difficult for a victim to find the help and support they need. There are also many myths around male rape and sexual abuse that can act as barriers to male victims telling people what has happened and then seeking help from an appropriate specialist support agency.

Social attitudes can include:

- *'Men should be able to deal with it'*
- *'If it's happened to you you are more likely to do it to someone else'*
- *'It makes you gay'*
- *'Men should be able to fight it off, not submit to abuse'*

It is accepted that sexual violence and abuse of males is massively underreported. However, British Crime Survey statistics show that:

- *10-15% of boys are sexually abused*
- *1.5% report that they have suffered 'a serious sexual assault' at least once in their lifetime (465,000)*
- *Specialist male services estimate that at least 80% of the male prison population in the United Kingdom has suffered some form of sexual abuse, either as children or adults*

**The Survivors Trust demands a full acknowledgement of the rape, sexual abuse and sexual violence which men are also subjected to. The taboo surrounding male victims must be broken immediately.**

**The Survivors Trust recognises that male victims may face additional difficulties and barriers in seeking the help and support they need. We promote the need for services to be available to all victims.**



## Case study - Ben

Ben (not his real name) was forty when he came to Survivors UK for help in dealing an experience of rape 17 years previously. On a night out Ben believes his drink might have been spiked with drugs and he subsequently found himself regaining awareness whilst being gang raped by a group of men. He felt that it was his fault that this had happened; he felt deeply ashamed, dirty and bad inside. His sense of complicity and guilt contributed significantly to him not reporting the rape to the police.

After his attack Ben had isolated himself from the group of he used to socialise with and he kept his experience a secret. He moved away from the area in which he'd been living and went on to have a successful career as a lawyer, although his continuing use of alcohol and cocaine at times worried him.

He said *"I didn't want to tell any of my friends what happened because I was afraid they'd call me a batty boy"*.

Ben attended a psycho-educational group with Survivors UK. Initially he was quite anxious about what it would be like being in a group with other men. He was worried that he might not fit in, for example that he'd be the only Afro-Caribbean man there.

After the group he admitted; *"The group wasn't what I expected at all. There were men there of all ages and backgrounds. Although at first I felt afraid that no one would understand me, I realised that this wasn't the case. It felt like such a relief to be amongst other men who'd had similar experiences to me, and so many of us had been feeling bad about ourselves for years and never been able to talk to anyone about it"*

Ben then started to work with a male counsellor based at Survivors UK. During counselling Ben was able to admit that he'd had a volatile relationship with his ex-partner and feared the level of his anger at times. He began to be able to understand how that anger was linked to his rape and how this experience had impacted on his life, in particular on his personal relationships and difficulties around feeling confident in getting promotions at work. He'd also found it hard to have a sexual relationship with his ex partner, but during counselling started a new relationship and was able to work through some of these issues

Ben now reports that he now feels better able to control his anger (as well as generally feeling it less) and is feeling more confident in his work and friendships. He has been able to disclose his experience of rape to some close family members and feels more able to be emotionally and sexually intimate with his partner. Ben no longer uses cocaine and feels that his alcohol consumption is now in the normal range. He continues to attend a peer to peer support group.





## **Learning disabilities and sexual abuse: more victims, less justice...**

**Up to 90% of people with developmental disabilities will experience some form of sexual abuse at some point in their lives.**

Vulnerable adults and children are much more likely to be sexually abused or raped. Disabled children are nearly two times more likely to be maltreated than non-disabled children. However, despite higher rates of abuse people with learning disabilities have less access to justice. This is because people think they are unable to provide a reliable account of their experiences. Those with learning disabilities who have been sexually abused or raped often take many years to tell somebody what has happened. This means that they are often disbelieved. In many cases, the abuser has a central role as a 'care giver' in the victim's life.

### **Key facts...**

- *Children and adults with disabilities are at increased risk of sexual abuse.*
- *39-68% of learning disabled girls and 16-30% of learning disabled boys will be sexually abused before their eighteenth birthday.*
- *Individual residential schools for deaf children have also reported abuse rates of 50%.*
- *In a sample of adults with learning disabilities 61% of the women and 25% of the men had been sexually abused.*
- *Sexual abuse of people with disabilities is less likely to be detected or reported.*

Many services are not set up to work with people with learning disabilities because this group of victims requires a high level of expertise to provide them with appropriate support. People with learning disabilities have often been unable to access mainstream therapeutic services because they are not equipped to help this group of victims.

**Without these specialist support services this large group of victims will remain marginalised and silent. Developing both new and existing services is the only way to enable victims with learning disabilities to access support. This will help them to gain the justice they deserve.**

**The Survivors Trust demands sustainable funding so that services can become better equipped to help victims of rape and sexual abuse who have a learning disability.**



## Case study - Gavin

This is the story of a 20-year-old called Gavin (not his real name), a young man with mild learning disabilities. Gavin lived in a residential home for people with learning disabilities and also took part in an amateur dramatics group and local church. A local man who attended the group and the church struck up a friendship with Gavin and Gavin started to visit the man's home. As their friendship developed the staff at Gavin's home felt more and more confident that this was a healthy relationship and that Gavin was happy.

After a church meeting one Saturday afternoon Gavin did not return to his home at the expected time. Gavin returned to the home at about 1pm the next day, after the staff had called the local police to inform them of Gavin being missing.

Gavin had gone back to man's home, been held captive all night and had been forced to perform sexual acts and to watch pornography involving children. He had also been threatened with rape if he even told anyone about what had happened. Gavin was very scared and needed a lot of reassurance before he agreed to be interviewed. Fortunately a very experienced officer was assigned to Gavin and he was able to give a detailed account of the offences.

After the man's arrest Gavin was supported by an advocate to attend the subsequent trial and, unusually in similar cases, conviction of the man that assaulted him.

Gavin was referred to Respond for psychotherapy and he started in treatment that was funded for one year by the Home Office's Victims Fund. The early stages of the treatment were difficult for Gavin as he had never attended therapy before and he found it scary to be alone in a room with a man again. However as time went on Gavin was able to trust his therapist and he began to use the time he had to explore the abuse, as well as other issues from his childhood that he had never had the opportunity to address.

Towards the end of the treatment Gavin was able to concentrate on what it was like for him to have a learning disability. This made him feel sad and the fear of ending the treatment at this crucial time was an important area to discuss. Eventually Gavin felt able to move on and to see that the abuse he experienced was not his fault. He continues to have 'bad days' when he thinks about what happened to him but he is able to ask for support and to talk about how he is feeling.

For Gavin the opportunity to attend an appropriate service that understands the often complex needs of people with learning disabilities who are the victims of sexual violence was an essential part of his recovery.

