

Counselling, self-care and support options

Whether you have chosen to report to the police or not, specialist support is available to you.



Counselling and support

Here is an explanation of the types of counselling and support available to survivors of sexual violence.

For more detailed information, please contact your local provider directly.

You can find your local sexual violence support organisation via our website:

www.sexualviolencesupport.co.uk

- **Forensic medical examination** – This usually takes place in a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) by a doctor or nurse specially trained in sexual assault forensic medicine. They will ask you any relevant health questions and take samples and swabs from anywhere you have been touched. It will also involve taking a urine and blood sample, and sometimes a hair sample. In some circumstances they may also retain some clothing or other items.
- **Sexual health screening** – Professionals can address any concerns you may have about Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), pregnancy etc.
- **Emotional support** – This is offered throughout the various counselling and support services.
- **Practical support** – This can include offering you the option to carry a personal alarm or looking at the security within your home. You can also request crime prevention advice.
- **Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs)** – ISVAs work with survivors and offer impartial advice regardless of whether you are reporting to the police.



- **Counselling** – This can help you to gain an understanding of yourself and a perspective of your experiences. It can also help you find positive ways of coping. All sessions are confidential unless there is a risk of significant harm to you or someone else.
- **Pre-trial Therapy** – If you have chosen to report to the police and your case is going to trial, you will be offered pre-trial therapy. This follows specific guidelines from the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure that it does not impact the outcome of the case.
- **Person Centred Therapy** – You are at the centre of the therapy and it is led by you. It allows you to be in control of the sessions with regards to what you wish to talk through.
- **(Trauma Focused) Cognitive Behavioural Therapy** – This addresses thoughts, feelings and behaviours you are experiencing in order to help you make sense of them, and also find ways of challenging any negative or distressing thoughts that may be having an impact.
- **Psycho-education** – An evidence-based therapeutic intervention for survivors and their loved ones that provides information and support to better understand and cope with situations.
- **Creative Therapy** – A non-verbal therapy that uses expressions such as art or music as a way of communicating.
- **Group sessions and peer support** – Brings together survivors of sexual violence, reducing feelings of isolation and encouraging survivors to support one another.
- **Online support groups** – Take place virtually rather than in person on platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams.



Self-care and looking after yourself

It is really important that you take time out to look after yourself. Worries, anxiety and fear can be debilitating but there are steps that you can take to make this easier.

You may be taking time to reflect on your journey, be juggling new thoughts/feelings or waiting to access support. Whatever your situation, taking just a few minutes a day to focus on yourself and your wellbeing can be hugely rewarding.

Whether it is watching the sunset one evening or treating yourself to a bit of chocolate, these are all steps to looking after yourself.

Here are some ideas for you to consider:

- Listen to music you enjoy.
- Pick up that book you've been meaning to read.
- Eat food that you enjoy and nourish your body.
- Rest, spend an extra 10 minutes in bed one morning or try to go to bed earlier.
- Exercise, whether it is a stroll, run, or something else.
- Try meditation or simple breathing exercises for relaxation. There are plenty of free apps available to download.
- Take a warm bath and perhaps even treat yourself to a luxurious bubble bath.
- Stretch, take a few minutes in the morning to stretch out your muscles.
- Try some mindfulness exercises such as listening to the birds and surrounding sounds, or watching the clouds go by.

Do what you can and, on days when it doesn't feel that great, offer yourself a bit of kindness and compassion. You can always reach out and speak to someone you trust or a support organisation.

