



# RAPECRISISPARTNERSHIP

## CAMBRIDGE & PETERBOROUGH

# Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) Service Guide

## About Us

The Cambridge and Peterborough Rape Crisis Partnership (CAPRCP) is made up of two independent dedicated specialist sexual violence organisations; Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC) and Peterborough Rape Crisis Care Group (PRCCG). The partnership has over 40 years' experience in the design and delivery of specialist support services to survivors of rape and sexual abuse, regardless of when the abuse happened.

Our core purpose is to alleviate the psychological and emotional trauma that affects survivors of sexual violence. We aim to assist them to overcome both the short and long-term effects of sexual violence whilst they work to regain control of their lives and make positive decisions about their future.

The principles of being confidential, non-directional (letting you make your own choices) and non-judgemental underpin all our services. We believe that survivors are experts in their own healing, which is why receiving your feedback on our services is so important to us.

## Our Advocacy Service

CAPRCP offers practical information and advocacy support for survivors of sexual violence through its Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) service. The adult ISVA service works with people aged 19 and over and the Children and Young People's ISVA (ChISVA) supports survivors aged 18 and under, and their families where appropriate.

ISVAs offer practical and emotional support to anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted, recently or in the past, and help you to access other available support services to address both short and long-term needs. They can support you through the criminal justice system, providing information on what happens when you report to the police. You do not have to report to the police to get support from an ISVA. They can help those who are not reporting to access support for their emotional needs as well as help with safety planning.

They will help you understand how the criminal justice process works, such as what will happen if you report to the police, or the importance and process of forensic DNA retrieval.

CAPRCP's advocacy service is constantly developing, led by what survivors tell us is helpful, and responsive to changing need. We therefore welcome your feedback about our service.

The service is free and confidential, and you do not need to have reported anything to the police to access it.

## **SUPPORT AGREEMENT CONFIDENTIALITY**

The ISVA service is confidential. Everything you tell us will be kept within the team providing the ISVA service, to make sure you get the best support possible, but we will not provide information about you to other agencies without your explicit consent.

The only instances in which we may be legally obliged to pass information about you to another organisation, even if you do not consent to this, are if:

- 1.** You give us identifying information about a child or vulnerable adult who is currently or imminently at risk of harm.
- 2.** You disclose information that leads us to believe that you or someone else may be at risk of harm.
- 3.** We receive a court order to release your notes.

In cases like these we will only pass on relevant information and will always try to let you know that we need to share information and involve you in discussions about how this is done.

You can see any of our policies by asking the ISVA.

## **Initial Assessment**

We carry out an assessment of your needs by phone, prior to you being allocated an ISVA, which will help shape your individual support plan. This is a chat that takes around 20-40 minutes and looks at your current situation, what types of support you would find most useful and what areas you most want help with. If the person being referred is under the age of 16, the administrator will also speak to their parent or legal guardian to establish what their main needs are.

This information will help us establish what services might be helpful to you, and if there are any risks to you, for example if there is any ongoing risk from the perpetrator. If so, we will discuss managing risks with you and agree what role we could have in helping you to be safe.

Due to the demands on the service, there can be a small waiting list for both ISVA and ChISVA support. Our administrator will keep in contact with you while you are on the waiting list, so that you can speak to someone about any changes in your circumstances or concerns that you may have.

## Note-taking and data protection

To ensure we are providing you with an open and accountable service, the ISVA will take notes during your meetings and will store these securely on an electronic database. Notes are objective and will factually reflect what is discussed during the meeting.

Your notes will not be shared with anyone else without your permission. In rare cases, your notes may be ordered by a court of law. If, in this case, you were not willing for your notes to be shared, we would consult with Rape Crisis England & Wales and a solicitor.

Notes can be made available to you upon written request at any stage.

## Evidence

If you are currently engaged with the criminal justice system or are considering reporting to the police, it is important to be aware that your account of what has happened to you is considered to be key evidence.

The ISVA will need to take some basic factual details from you about what has happened (as much as you're comfortable sharing in your own words) during the initial meeting. However, if you are reporting to the police, there may be some limits on what you can discuss with your ISVA about what has happened. This will ensure the ISVA service can avoid compromising your evidence.

## Appointments

The frequency and method of contact needed is different for everyone and this is something you can decide with the ISVA. It is important to attend meetings on time and to give as much advance notice as possible if you need to change or cancel an appointment (this applies to both you and the ISVA).

If you arrive at a meeting under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs, the ISVA will ask you to reschedule the appointment for a time when you're able to attend without using these substances.

## Contacting the ISVA

Contact details will be provided so that you can get in touch with the ISVA between appointments if needed. Please be aware that the ISVA's availability and working hours may vary due to training, external meetings or absences from work.

The ISVA usually works from 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. Meetings and phone calls may be available on appointment outside these hours if needed.

Details of additional support available locally and nationally will be given to you by the ISVA on request.

## Self-harm and Suicide

CAPRPC has a policy on responding to self-harm and suicide. This is available on request.

We understand the reasons why some survivors may self-harm/injure. However, we ask you not to self-harm/injure during support calls or appointments. If the ISVA is of the view that you are self-harming during an appointment, they will ask you to refrain from doing so. If you continue, then the appointment will be brought to a close and if necessary, the emergency services will be called.

Support will be offered at another time.

We also respect and understand the reasons why women may experience suicidal feelings.

If you threaten or attempt suicide, we will take appropriate action. If you attempt suicide during a face-to-face session, or on the premises where session is taking place, we will call an ambulance with or without your permission. If an ambulance is called, the fact that you are receiving Rape Crisis support will remain confidential, as this ensures that the fact that you are a survivor of sexual violence remains confidential.

## **Our commitment to you:**

We are fully committed to providing a respectful and accessible service to survivors of sexual violence.

*In order to deliver this service, we will:*

- Respect your confidentiality in line with our policy
- Value you as a person and treat you with respect
- Not blame you for the sexual violence you have experienced nor judge you because of the behaviour of an abuser or as a result of abuse within your family
- Agree with you what support we can offer
- Be on time for arranged appointments
- Offer you uninterrupted time

*We ask that you:*

- Be respectful to staff and other visitors to our Centres or any place where the support may be taking place
- Let us know if you cannot attend an appointment
- Be on time for arranged appointments
- Not come to appointments if under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Not self-harm while attending an advocacy session

## Challenging behaviour

- We understand the reasons why some survivors of violence and abuse may present with challenging behaviour. At the same time we have a responsibility to ensure the safety of staff, volunteers and other service users, and to maintain appropriate boundaries within support work.
- If your behaviour is unacceptable, we will tell you why, and also tell you what we feel you need to do to make your behaviour acceptable. Wherever possible we will respond to your needs and feelings, and will do what we reasonably can to be able to continue to offer you support.
- If your behaviour continues to be unacceptable we may withdraw the advocacy service. Again we will tell you what you need to do to make your behaviour acceptable, and a further appointment for support will be offered as appropriate.
- If your behaviour leads us to decide that we can no longer offer you a service, if you so wish we will work with you to do what we reasonably can to identify an alternative source of support.

## Frequently asked questions

### **Can I access the Advocacy Service if I am already engaged with another agency?**

If you feel that we are the right service to offer you support you can access our Advocacy Service regardless of whether you are engaged in other services. If we are not the right service for you we will try to find one that is.

### **If my case is being handled by another police force, can CAPRCP still help me?**

If a police force, other than Cambridge Constabulary police is handling your case, provided that you live in Cambridgeshire or Peterborough and you feel that you need support, you can still access our service. We may, however, be unable to accompany you to court as the case will be tried in the area where the relevant police force is located. We can refer you to an ISVA service in that area, if there is one available and if they have capacity, for support at trial.

## **Who do the ISVAs work with?**

Our ISVA and ChISVA service supports anyone who lives in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and has experienced sexual violence, irrespective of age, gender, background, or how long ago the offence happened.

## **What is the difference between an ISVA and a ChISVA?**

An ISVA works with adult survivors, so anyone aged 19 and over. A ChISVA works with anyone aged 18 and under, as well as their families if appropriate.

## **How do I stay in touch with my ISVA?**

When you are assigned to an ISVA, they will give you their contact number and email address, so you can keep in touch by text, phone and email, whichever you prefer. Your ISVA will also arrange face-to-face meetings at safe times and locations that are convenient for you.

## **What kind of support can I get from my ISVA?**

It varies according to your needs. ISVAs can help with:

- providing impartial information and advice to those considering reporting sexual offences
- understanding the criminal justice process and supporting people from report to court as well as in the months following a trial
- liaising with the police, if you have reported the crime
- providing emotional support
- supporting your welfare and safety through a process of risk assessment and safety planning
- advocating on your behalf to enable you to exert some influence on processes that concern you
- providing practical help with issues such as housing and benefits
- putting you in touch with other services that may benefit you, such as specialist counselling or domestic violence support
- referring to agencies who can help you with specialist needs, such as counselling, sexual health, mental health, substance misuse and housing
- assisting you to apply for criminal injuries compensation



### **How do I get referred?**

You can refer yourself for support from an ISVA or ChISVA by going to the Cambridge & Peterborough Rape Crisis Partnership website and filling in the online referral form: [www.caprccp.org.uk](http://www.caprccp.org.uk). You will also be given the option to access the ISVA service if you report a sexual offence to the police or attend a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) for a forensic medical examination.

### **Do the ISVAs tell the police what I say?**

The ISVA and ChISVA services are confidential and entirely independent from other agencies. The only situation that may require an ISVA to share any of your information is where a child or vulnerable person may be at risk of harm. ISVAs do not share information with the police, although sometimes the police or Crown Prosecution Service may request a copy of ISVA records as part of their investigation. These will not be shared without your consent and you can discuss any concerns you have about confidentiality with your ISVA at your first meeting. Our confidentiality policy is also available on our website if you want further information.

### **Can I meet my ISVA at the weekend?**

Our ISVAs work Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, so they are not able to meet you in the evening or at the weekend. They can travel to meet you at a safe and convenient location and see you during the day at a time suitable for you.

### **I'm LGBT+/a man – can I have an ISVA?**

Our ISVA and ChISVA service supports anyone who lives in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and has experienced sexual violence, irrespective of age, gender, background, or how long ago the offence happened.

# Contact us

We accept self-referral, professional and third-party referrals and you can find our referral forms by going to:

[www.caprcp.org.uk](http://www.caprcp.org.uk)

Or contact us on: **01733 511250**

We are available Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm

Please contact us if you would like the information in this leaflet in another language, or in large print or Braille.

## Funding

This service has been made possible with funding from:



Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre and Peterborough Rape Crisis Care Group are members of Rape Crisis England and Wales and adhere to Rape Crisis National Service Standards.



  
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