

Under 18 Support for Parents/Carers

If your child has been raped or sexually assaulted, it can be difficult to know how to react and how to support them. Even though it may feel daunting it is possible for you to be a good source of support for your child.

Rape and sexual assault will have an emotional impact on your child but it is also likely to impact upon you. As a parent you may experience a range of emotions such as shock, anger, horror at what they have experienced and a general sense of helplessness. You may also feel angry if you feel that he or she has acted irresponsibly.

You might also feel guilty about what happened and blame yourself for not being able to protect them. In the weeks after the assault you may feel frustrated that your child is not reacting in the way you would expect them to or would consider 'normal' following a sexual assault.

All of these emotions and thoughts can feel overwhelming and difficult to manage while still supporting them. The following information and suggestions may help you to understand their needs, and provide effective support.

If your child does not want to talk to you

When your child has been harmed, it is natural for you to want to know what they have been through and you may feel that they should be talking to you about it. However, it can be very difficult for survivors of rape and sexual assault to talk about their experience. They may feel ashamed about what has happened to them and worried about your reaction to the things they tell you. They may also be worried that you will not be able to cope with what they have told you. It is not unusual for young people to feel uncomfortable at the idea of talking to their parents about personal feelings and of matters relating to their sexual health. If you are concerned about your child, then you may want to think about other professionals that they could talk to. Although there are benefits to talking about traumatic experiences, your child should not be pressurized to do this, it is a good idea to make them aware of all the services available that can support them.

Understanding trauma

Responses to traumatic events vary from person to person. There is no right way to react to traumatic experiences. Your child may experience symptoms usually associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

These symptoms include: sleeping problems, nightmares, flashbacks, frightening thoughts, outbursts of anger, anxiety, alcohol/drug abuse, refusal to discuss the experience, lack of interest in life, numbness, difficulty concentrating, feeling depressed.

These responses to trauma are normal and in most cases their severity decreases over time. However, if your child's symptoms persist or you are worried about their ability to cope then you can discuss it with a professional such as your GP, a social worker or a school nurse.

Remember, it will take time for your child to feel better but if they are struggling to cope with the assault, then it may be helpful for them to speak to a counsellor or a clinical psychologist. While your child's reactions can leave you feeling confused and concerned, it is important to remember that they are trying to make sense of events that have perhaps changed the way they see themselves and their world. Allow your child to have space but also let them know that you are there to support them in whatever way they need you to.

Blame

It is not uncommon for young people to blame themselves for being raped or assaulted. However, it is important that this view is not reinforced by you. You may have concerns about the way your child has behaved and you might feel that their behaviour is one of the reasons why they were assaulted. This is not a helpful or supportive position to take as the only person to blame is the assailant who chose to assault your child. However, a conversation concerning personal safety and personal boundaries can also be positive if it is approached in a way that encourages self-care in all areas of their life, not just as a means of preventing an assault. You may also be experiencing feelings of self-blame and perhaps you are questioning what you could have done to prevent the assault. This is a natural response for you to have but it is very important for you to acknowledge that the responsibility for the assault lies with the assailant.

Help

At The Hampton Trust, your child will have an opportunity to talk to the Children & Young Person's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (C&YP ISVA) who specifically works with young people.

What is an YPISVA?

A Children & Young Person's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (C&YP ISVA) is a person who is trained and experienced to look after your child's needs following an experience of sexual violence, abuse or exploitation.

They specialise in looking after young people who have suffered any unwanted sexual experience, regardless of when the incident happened, or characteristics such as gender or sexuality.

In particular, they offer information and advice regarding the criminal justice system. However, there is never any pressure or obligation to report to the police. A C&YP ISVA is there to help your child decide what next best steps are.

How can C&YP ISVA help my child?

They will take time to speak to your child and listen to what's going on for them and what their needs are. An C&YP ISVA can talk to your child about the criminal justice system. They can help them to understand the processes such as reporting to the police, providing a statement and retrieving evidence. This can be very helpful for anyone who is thinking about reporting but unsure of the processes.

If your child chooses to report to the police, your C&YP ISVA can be there to support you all through it. They can be there to offer you help, support and reassurance throughout the entire process.

They are there to make the process as easy as possible for your child and you and to make sure your needs are looked after. The C&YP ISVA is there to act as an advocate for your child and will offer them a confidential service. Your child may want space and privacy and it is important to respect that. If the C&YP ISVA has concerns about the emotional and physical safety of your child, they will encourage them to discuss these with you. If they consent for us to do so or we feel it necessary, then these concerns will be discussed with the Safeguarding Children and Young People Team. Your child is likely to be seen alone, but please do not feel shut out by this. Talking about upsetting and frightening experiences can be much easier when there is no another person present, so the C&YP ISVA will always offer to see or communicate with your child on a one-to-one basis.

Supporting your child through the criminal justice process

You may not agree with the decisions your child makes but it is important that you listen to their views. You may, for example, feel that they should pursue the allegation they have made but they may not wish to do so. Conversely you may feel that going to court will be too stressful and disruptive for them. While it is important for you to discuss the positives and negatives of pursuing the allegation with your child, it is ultimately your son or daughter who should make that decision with your support and guidance.

Getting support for yourself

It is possible that your child's experience has brought back painful memories for you, perhaps related to your own experiences. Even if this is not the case, it is still important that you look after yourself, so if you are finding it difficult to cope with the assault then you may want to consider accessing counselling or psychological support. You can access these services via your GP or ask the C&YP ISVA who can advise you about the appropriate services available. Having a strong family network can make a significant difference to how well a young survivor of sexual assault copes with their experience. Your love, patience, concern and understanding will help to provide a base of support that your child can draw upon during this difficult time in their life.

National Support services

NSPCC 24hour child protection helpline providing information and advice to anyone worried about a child's physical and emotional safety. Helpline: 0808800 5000 Text/phone: 0800 056 0566 Email: help@nspcc.org.uk www.nspcc.org.uk

Young Minds Freephone helpline for parents concerned about their child's emotional and mental health. 0808 8025544 (Parent's Information Service) 0207 336 8445 (General) Email: enquiries@youngminds.org.uk www.youngminds.org.uk

Childline A free, private and confidential service where you can be you. Whatever your worry, whenever you need help, however you want to get in touch. We're here for you online, on the phone, anytime. <https://www.childline.org.uk/> Phone Number: 0800 11 11



Papyrus Parents' Association for the Prevention of Young Suicide. Raising awareness and offering support and information to parents about young people and suicide. Helpline: 08000 684141 Email: admin@papyrus-uk.org www.papyrus.org.uk

MOSAC Support, counselling and advocacy for non-abusing parents/carers of children who have been sexually abused. Helpline: 020 8293 9990 www.mosac.org.uk

Kidscape Support for parents whose children are being bullied. Office: 020 7730 3300 Email: webinfo@kidscape.org.uk www.kidscape.org.uk

NAPAC The National Association for People Abused in Childhood. Support for adult survivors of childhood abuse. Helpline: 0800 085 3330 www.napac.org.uk

Parentline Plus Support, information and advice for parents on different aspects of parenting. www.parentlineplus.org.uk

ACE Advisory Centre for Education. Independent advice centre offering parents free telephone advice on education, bullying at school, special needs education. www.ace-ed.org.uk Office: 020 8888 3377 Advice line: 03000 115 142 Closed during school holidays

BACP British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. This website has details of counsellors and therapists working in the UK. www.bacp.co.uk

Gingerbread Advice and support for lone parents. Helpline: 0808 802 0925 (Freephone) www.gingerbread.org.uk

Childnet International Providing tips and advice on how to use the internet safely. 0207 639 6967 Email: info@childnet.com www.childnet-int.org

PACE Parents Against Child Exploitation <http://paceuk.info/>
<http://paceuk.info/for-parents/>
<https://secure.toolkitfiles.co.uk/clients/25263/sitedata/Documents/PACE-Keeping-itTogether.pdf>

Samaritans If you need someone to talk to, we listen. We won't judge or tell you what to do. <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

Lucyfaithfull Where abuse has already taken place, we work with all those affected including adult male and female abusers; young people with harmful sexual behaviour; children with concerning sexual behaviours; victims of abuse and other family members. But we also work in families and with adults and young people where there has been no abuse, to help them keep themselves and others as safe as possible. <https://www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk/>

Local Support Services (IOW)

Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children's Partnership (Lots of links and information)
<http://www.iowscp.org.uk/parents-carers>

Barnardos

We provide a range of services to help and support families across the UK, working with organisations and professionals so that children get the best start in life.

<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/helping-families>

CAMHS

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) service provide a service to children and young people aged 0 – 18yrs, and their families, who are experiencing emotional health and wellbeing difficulties. The community mental health clinic offers support, consultation and training to children's services and provides primary and specialist mental health services in the community and to inpatient treatment services as required. <https://www.iow.nhs.uk/our-services/mental-health-services/CAMHS/camhs.htm>

CRISIS SUPPORT

Do you need help, support or advice?

There are various services available to Isle of Wight residents should you need urgent mental health advice or treatment.

Mental Health Crisis Advice	01983 522214
Community Safe Haven	01983 520168

Samaritans	116 123
NHS 111 Advice and Guidance	111
NHS Emergency	999

To access mental health support, for adults or children, speak to your GP practice if they are open. You can also contact:

Mental Health Crisis Advice (Single Point of Access): 01983 522214 available 24/7.

Community Safe Haven: 01983 520168 or visit 7 High Street, Newport PO30 1SS during opening hours 5pm-10pm Monday-Friday and 10am-10pm Weekends and bank holidays.

Positive Minds is a totally confidential, online self-help resource for anyone experiencing anxiety, worry or stress. There are a number of online modules offering support and guidance that can be accessed including relaxation, work stress, sleep well, health anxiety and living a healthier life and all in complete privacy, when and where you want.

If you feel that you could benefit from this support, then access is provided through the Isle of Wight Safe Haven. All that is required is access to the internet on a computer, on a tablet or through an internet enabled mobile phone. We encourage anyone who would like to access this support to contact the Isle of Wight Safe Haven during their normal working hours (Monday to Friday 5pm – 10pm, weekends and Bank Holidays 10am – 10pm) by telephone - 01983 520168.

The Urgent Care Service (UCS) at St. Mary's Hospital treats urgent care needs. Anyone who thinks they need to be seen urgently should call NHS 111 first.

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week if you need to speak to someone urgently. 111 will carry out an assessment over the telephone and direct you to the best place to get treatment.

999 and the Emergency Department at St. Mary's Hospital are for serious, life-threatening injuries and illnesses including loss of consciousness, heavy bleeding, severe chest pain or breathing difficulty, serious burns, strokes and persistent fits. Misuse of ambulance services can cost lives - think before you dial 999.

Local directories Isle Find It and Isle Help currently hold a lot of information and signposting to local and national support organisations and groups.

<https://www.isleofwightccg.nhs.uk/health-and-services/mental-health-services/crisissupport.htm>

All4kidsuk Psychological support

<https://all4kidsuk.com/psychologists-therapists-childrens/isle-of-wight>

Parents Voice has been designed to help parents and carers find the right support for children with special educational needs and disabilities. <http://parentsvoice-iw.co.uk/> emailing parentsvoice@peoplematteriw.org or telephoning 01983 823898 ext 2838.

Jigsaw Family Support is a community based, non profit child-focused organisation that works with everyone affected by family separation. <https://www.jigsawfamilysupport.com/>

Strengthening Families Programme Strengthening Families Programme (SFP) is the Isle of Wight's response to the national 'Troubled Families' initiative. It is a key component of the Early Help offer of services designed to reduce or prevent specific problems from getting worse and becoming deep seated or entrenched.

The programme covers the whole Island and the intensive support is delivered by the charity called Barnardo's. It focuses on families who are currently experiencing difficulties and who meet at least two of the following eligibility criteria:

1. Children are not in school when they should be (poor school attendance, exclusions).
2. Parents and/or children are involved in crime and/or anti-social behaviour.
3. Children who need help (for example, families identified by Early Help Locality Hubs as needing help, pre-school children who don't thrive; children who are going missing; children on a Child Protection Plan, children in need)
4. Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of worklessness. This includes young people at risk of becoming or already are NEET (not in education, employment or training), families at risk of homelessness, families with unmanaged debts, families who regularly use services of the Food Bank.
5. Families affected by domestic violence and abuse.
6. Parents and children with a range of health problems. This can include adults and/or children with physical and/or mental health problem, adults and/or children with drug or alcohol problems, adults and/or children with concerns about dental health or unhealthy weight.

<https://www.iow.gov.uk/council/OtherServices/Support-for-Families/StrengtheningFamilies>