

RCSAS
RAPE CRISIS SURREY & SUSSEX
rape & sexual abuse support centre

Recent rape and sexual assault

Helpline: 0808 802 9999
Telephone: 01293 538 477
Email: info@rcsas.org.uk

If you have just been raped or sexually assaulted, it can be difficult and overwhelming to decide what to do next. Below is some information on what support is available and the steps you can take, depending on what you would like to do:

Forensic medical examinations

You can report a sexual offence to the police at any time after the crime has taken place. There is no time limit to reporting and it is important that it is your decision and you have not been pressured into it. However, if you were raped or sexually abused recently there may be evidence, such as DNA, that could be useful to a police investigation.

Forensic evidence can form an important part of police investigations. There are various steps you can take if you would like forensic evidence to be gathered so you have the option to use it at a later stage.

A forensic medical examination can be carried out to collect evidence that may be useful in an investigation or trial. The examination is completely your decision and you can agree to some parts and not others. You can stop the examination at any time. If you want to, you can take somebody with you such as a friend or anyone else you feel comfortable with.

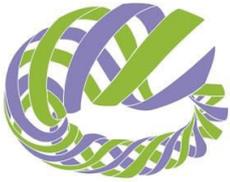
A forensic medical examination will gather any traces of bodily fluid, skin or hair that has been left by the perpetrator. You may be asked to give a sample of your blood or urine. You will be examined for injuries and, if these injuries are visible, they may be photographed.

There are some steps you can take to keep as much forensic evidence as possible before you are able to have a forensic examination:

- Do not wash or have a shower
- Do not brush your teeth
- Do not smoke
- Do not eat or drink
- Do not change your clothes
- If you have changed your clothes, put them unwashed in a clean paper or plastic bag
- Try not to go to the toilet
- If you do need to go to the toilet, you can do so into a clean jar and keep a note of when you did this

Don't worry if you have already done some of these things. There may be other evidence that can be collected. It's important to do what feels best for you during this time.

If you feel able, having a forensic medical examination within 72 hours means there is likely to be a better chance of collecting evidence that may be used later.



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There are a number of options you can explore if having a forensic examination is something you'd like to do at this time.

Visiting a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

If you are in any physical pain or would like medical attention, you can attend a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). The information below describes the services generally provided at a SARC, but SARCs may differ from place to place, so it is always worth checking in with your local SARC about how they work and what support they can offer. You can find your nearest SARC via the NHS website: <http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/Rape-and-sexual-assault-referral-centres/LocationSearch/364>.

What happens at a SARC?

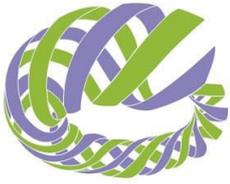
If you have been raped or sexually assaulted, you can use any of the services at a SARC without involving the police. When you arrive, you can speak with a female crisis worker and doctor. Everything that happens at a SARC appointment is completely your choice.

A SARC can provide medical check-ups, forensic medical examinations and can give you information on counselling and other specialist support. A SARC can also screen you for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, and can give you emergency contraception and a pregnancy test.

There are showers, toiletries and refreshments available at a SARC. If you need an interpreter, a SARC can usually provide you with one.

What are my options for a forensic medical examination?

- You can have a full forensic medical examination and not report to the police.
- You can have a full forensic medical examination and wait for any results to come back. It is then up to you what you do with these results.
- You can have a full forensic medical examination with any forensic results stored at the SARC for a period of time. The SARC will be able to give you further information on how long they are able to store any results.
- You can have a full forensic medical examination with any results sent to the police anonymously. You can then take some time to decide whether to report to the police. If the police find any matching DNA evidence they will ask the Haven to approach you to ask if you would like to report.
- You can have a full forensic medical examination and decide to report what happened to the police. The police can be called while you are at the Haven and things will begin moving forward. They will ask to take a brief statement from you, and may then ask you to complete a video recorded interview (VRI).



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Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVAs)

If you are thinking of reporting to the police, an **Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA)** can provide practical, factual and emotional support and information throughout your involvement with the criminal justice system.

Our ISVAs at RCSAS can help explain the whole process from reporting to the police and attending court, and provide you with honest choices so you can make informed decisions.

Our service is free of charge. Our offices are women-only, anonymous and close to the centre of Crawley, creating a safe and comfortable environment for you to feel believed, supported and to be yourself.

If you have any questions, or would like to know more about the support ISVAs can offer, please call **01293 538 477**, Monday to Friday 10am - 6pm, or email: advocacy@rcsas.org.uk.

Above all else, you need to know that what happened to you was not your fault. You deserve the very best help and support.

Other support

- If you need urgent medical attention or if it is an emergency, call **999**. You can also contact the NHS non-emergency service by calling **111**.
- Our national Freephone helpline (**0808 802 9999**) is open 365 days a year from 12.00 - 2.30pm and 7.00 - 9.30pm, as well as from 3.00 - 5.30pm from Monday to Friday.
- The National Domestic Violence Helpline (**0808 2000 247**) is open 24 hours a day.
- There is more information about your local Rape Crisis Centre at <http://rapecrisis.org.uk/centres.php>.