



Solent 
NHS Trust

Sexual Assault Referral Centre for
Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

If your child has been raped or sexually assaulted

Northern Road
Cosham
Portsmouth
PO6 3EP
023 9221 0352
www.solent.nhs.uk/treetops

Better health, local care



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 rest of this booklet contains information and suggestions that could help you to understand their needs, and provide effective support.

Protecting your child

It is understandable that you may want to try and take more control over your child's life following a sexual assault. You may stop them from seeing certain friends, not allow them to go out unless it is with you or take away their phone and internet access. You may be doing this because you want to protect them and also to set boundaries.

However, your son or daughter may perceive these actions as a form of punishment which can lead to feelings of self blame. These 'rules' could also isolate your child which could affect how they deal with the sexual assault. Allowing them to resume their normal routine could help regain some control over their life. It may help to lessen feelings of loss and helplessness and give them some structure during what can often be a chaotic time.

It is important for your child to have the support of friends which will help to foster a sense of normality. It may be a good idea to sit down with them and discuss the concerns you have about their safety and perhaps work together to agree a plan that covers when they can go out, what time they have to be back and where they can and cannot go.

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.

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 pressurised to do this, it is a good idea to make them aware of all the services available that can support them.



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 Treetops Centre, your child will have an opportunity to talk to the Young Person's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (YPISVA) who specifically works with young people. The YPISVA is there to ensure that your child understands what kind of medical care they are receiving and can answer queries regarding sexual health.

The YPISVA is also available to see your child for on-going emotional support or, with their consent, she can refer them to a counselling or clinical psychology service. The YPISVA 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 YPISVA has concerns about the emotional and physical safety of the child, she 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 Trust's Safeguarding Children and Young People team.

Your child is likely to be seen alone at the Treetops Centre, but please do not feel shut out by this. Talking about upsetting and frightening experiences can be much easier when there is no other person present so the YPISVA will always offer to see 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 a member of staff at the Treetops Centre to 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.

Support services

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

NSPCC

24 hour child protection helpline providing information and advice to anyone worried about a child's physical and emotional safety.

Helpline: 0808800 5000
Textphone: 0800 056 0566
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
www.nspcc.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

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

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

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

Tell us about it

We are always trying to improve our service and welcome any suggestions, comments or complaints.

In the first instance please bring them to the attention of the SARC Manager on 023 9221 0352.

Alternatively speak or write to our Patient Experience Service (PES). You can also pass on your comments via our website.

PES support line: 0800 0132 319

Email: patient.experience@ports.nhs.uk

Website: www.solent.nhs.uk/about/pes



**Please tell us how you feel
about the services we provide.**

If you have a compliment, concern or complaint please contact the Patient Experience Service on **0800 013 2319** or ***soc-pct.schpatientexperience@nhs.net***

Alternatively, visit: www.solent.nhs.uk/contact-us

 *sign up today*

To become a member of Solent NHS Trust, please visit
www.solent.nhs.uk/membership



For a translation of this document,
an interpreter or a version in

large
print

or



or



please contact  **023 8024 1300**

www.solent.nhs.uk