



Enhancing Support for Victims of Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse

Background

The lack of local co-ordinated services in Cumbria for children, young people and adults who have suffered sexual assault and sexual abuse has been raised as an area of concern by partner agencies for some time. This has been reinforced by recent reviews of services to victims of sexual violence and a 2012 Care Quality Commission Inspection. Local research has shown that some professionals lack confidence in dealing with sexual assault and abuse cases. Support services have not all had sustainable sources of funding and what is available has varied across the county. In Cumbria, there are no facilities or sufficiently trained personnel to undertake forensic examinations of victims of sexual assault for either acute or historic cases. Currently, all Cumbrian victims of rape/ sexual assault who consent to forensic examination travel to the Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE) Centre in Preston. There are no consistent clinical pathways in place prior to examination, for aftercare or indeed for those who do not go for forensic examination. A multi-agency project was put in place to address these issues, with funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner, NHS England, Cumbria Constabulary, some local Councils, NHS Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group and the Home Office.

The Vision for Cumbria

Every child, young person or adult from Cumbria thought to be victim of sexual assault should receive clinically and age appropriate health care support and follow up. This would include dealing with the psychological, physical and safeguarding consequences. As much of this as possible should be delivered close to home, and by services which do not stigmatise the victim by association.

Service Enhancements

The following developments are expected to be in place by the end of 2015:

- The Bridgeway Sexual Assault Support Service, which brings together a number of newly commissioned services (forensic-medical, counselling, Independent Sexual Violence Advisors) with referral pathways to existing services, to provide co-ordinated support for victims;
- The Bridgeway Centre, a Sexual Assault Referral Centre, opening on the Penrith Hospital site, to provide forensic-medical examinations, access to advice and Achieving Best Evidence interview facilities in a non-police environment;
- Launch of a 24/7 telephone helpline, staffed by crisis workers, who can advise victims of sexual assault/ abuse, conduct a risk assessment and make referrals onto appropriate services;
- Clearer, agreed pathways for access to services, both new and existing, so that all professionals have a clear way to refer Service Users onto the right help.

What this Means for Professionals

There will be clearer pathways to services and The Bridgeway will provide a single point through which you can refer people you are working with to support services. This referral pathway will be available on www.thebridgeway.org.uk You will also be able to contact The Bridgeway for advice on what services are available to best support your Service User.

Contact Details- From 15th December 2015

The Bridgeway 24/7 free helpline for victims **0808 118 6432**

To make a referral, please complete the referral form at **www.thebridgeway.org.uk**
This can be sent to Fax: 01768 892527, Email: info@thebridgeway.org.uk. Once the referral has been sent, please call 01768 800670 / 01768 800671 to confirm receipt.

For advice on what services are available, you can contact The Bridgeway team during office hours, Monday- Friday on 01768 800670 / 01768 800671

Training and Further Information

As part of this project, a number of multi-agency **training sessions** have been developed which you may want to take part in. These are open to any professional working with children, young people or adults who may be victims and can be booked via the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. <http://www.cumbrialscb.com/training/>

❖ Intermediate: 1 Day Awareness Course

This course aims to provide participants with an understanding of the complex nature of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and a basic understanding of the services available.

❖ Intermediate: 2 Day Champions Network and MARAC Course

This course aims to provide participants with a more detailed understanding of the complex nature of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and the knowledge to act as a Champion in their own organisation, including dealing with a disclosure of sexual assault or domestic abuse. Additional courses are being arranged. Contact Donna Lancaster for course dates DonnaL@impacthousing.org.uk

❖ Advanced: 1 Day Specialised Course

This course aims to provide participants with the skills, understanding and confidence to identify, support and deal with Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence as part of their role working directly with children and young people, families and adults. It will deal with more complex case scenarios and provide an opportunity to build networks with colleagues from various key agencies. Available from 2016.

Updates on The Bridgeway will be provided via the LSCB and Safeguarding Adults Board newsletters.

You can also become a **Sexual Violence Champion** in your organisation by joining the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Champions Network: contact Donna Lancaster at Let Go for more details: DonnaL@impacthousing.org.uk