

A GUIDE FOR LESBIAN, GAY,
BISEXUAL & TRANS INDIVIDUALS
WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY

SEXUAL VIOLENCE



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INTRODUCTION



Trade Sexual Health has produced this guide for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGB&T) individuals who have been affected by sexual violence. Our aim is to provide a brief overview of the basics and to help you to navigate the services that can provide support.

If you've been the victim of rape or sexual assault and are looking for support, then by picking up this booklet, you've already made the first step in your journey towards moving on. Sexual violence is an issue which is commonly misunderstood; our Myths & Realities section on page 4 looks at some of the common assumptions people make about rape and sexual assault.

Sexual violence is a complex issue which impacts on the lives of victims in very different ways, but there are some common reactions, which we'll help you to get to grips with, on pages 8 to 11. We want you to know that you're not alone; there is support out there if you'd like it. See pages 16 to 19 for local and national support services.

MYTHS & REALITIES



“Only women can be raped or sexually assaulted – it can’t happen to men.”

An estimated 1 in 10 men have been affected by sexual violence* and it is something that can and does happen to men regardless of their sexual orientation, size, strength or appearance.

“A woman can't sexually assault another woman or person.”

When it comes to sexual assault the gender of the perpetrator is irrelevant. Anyone who engages in a sexual act with you without your consent is committing a crime. Although mostly unreported, it is estimated that as many as 1 in 3 lesbians have been sexually assaulted by another woman*.

“I must have done something to ask for it.”

Absolutely no one deserves to be victimised, attacked or violated. No means no and if you've not consented then it's wrong.

“It’s not rape/assault because I know them.”

Many cases of rape and sexual assault involved perpetrators who are known by the victim; whatever relationship you might have with the perpetrator, it doesn’t give them the right to engage in sexual activities you haven’t consented to.

“Getting an erection/ejaculating/orgasm must mean that I consented to it/enjoyed it.”

The body will react in certain ways whether we want it to or not and getting an erection, ejaculating or orgasming certainly does not mean that you enjoyed it or gave consent. Many perpetrators use these physiological responses to cause confusion for the victim, and to make them feel even more powerless.

“I must have to report the rape or sexual assault to access support services.”

Support services are there to support you regardless of whether or not you have formally reported the assault. Only you can decide whether or not to report an incident to the Police, nobody should make this decision for you.

“I’ll fall through the gaps because I don’t conform to gender binaries/because I’m trans.”

When accessing services, or reporting to the Police, incidents are not categorised as either opposite-sex, or same-sex assault but on an individual basis. Support is available for you, regardless of your gender identity.

*The Hate Crime Report 2016 - Galop

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Being the victim of any form of sexual violence can be horrific and devastating. For some people, understanding what things mean can help them to take steps towards talking about what has happened. Having said this, many people find that following a trauma they are unable to remember, so please don't be alarmed if this is the case.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is a general term that includes many acts such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape, sexual exploitation, sexual slavery and forced prostitution.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual assault is any sexual contact that is against a person's will or without consent. This may be because of force, violence, manipulation or where the victim has been too intoxicated or too scared to give consent.

ASSAULT BY PENETRATION

An assault on an individual will be classed as assault penetration if a male or female penetrates the anus or vagina without their consent. The offence is committed where the penetration is by a part of the body (for example, a finger) or anything else (for example, a bottle) for sexual intent.

RAPE

According to the Sexual Offences Act (2003), it is classed as rape when the anus, vagina, or mouth is intentionally penetrated by the perpetrator's penis without consent. It is also classed as rape if the perpetrator continued to penetrate you after you withdrew consent. It is not relevant what relationship, if any, the perpetrator has or had with you, or if the perpetrator is your partner.

COMMON REACTIONS



The hours, days, months and years following a sexual assault or rape will be different for each person. Sometimes how we react and how we feel in the aftermath of a trauma have neither bearing on how 'strong' we are nor a reflection on our gender; it is just getting by in whatever way we can.

For many people, knowing that they are not alone can be what leads them to seek support. Knowing that your reactions and thoughts are common amongst other LGB&T survivors of sexual violence can bring some comfort and help you start to make sense of how you're feeling.

SHAME

“I feel disgusting.”
“I can’t get clean.” “I feel filthy.”
“What will people think of me?”

DENIAL

“I must have consented to it
otherwise it wouldn’t have happened.”
“Maybe it wasn’t as bad as I think it was.”

ANGER

“How could they do this to me?”

SHOCK & NUMBNESS

“Why can’t I cry?”
“Why don’t I feel anything?”

DESPAIR

“I can’t cope...”
“I can’t live with myself knowing this has happened to me”

DISGUST & REPULSION

“I got aroused; does it mean that
I enjoyed it/consented to it?”

GUILT

“Why didn’t I fight back?”
“Did I do something to attract this?”

FEELING POWERLESS

“They still have control over me.”
“There’s no way I can tell anyone...”
“They made me orgasm and there was nothing I could do about it”

FEAR

“What if they’ve given me HIV or another STI?”
“What if I see them again?”
“What if I report it and they find out?”

CONFUSION

“I got aroused – does that mean I’m gay/bi/lesbian?”
“Was being raped what led me to question my sexuality/gender?”

DISORIENTATION

“I keep forgetting things.”
“I don’t even know what day it is.”

There are also a number of physical, emotional, and cognitive effects that you may experience in the aftermath of a sexual assault:

ANXIETY/PANIC

Shaking, shortness of breath, feeling overwhelmed, breathlessness, light headedness, churning stomach.

FLASHBACKS

Can be triggered by smells, sights, sounds, feelings.

PHYSICAL REACTIONS

Change in appetite, problems with sleeping, physical pain such as headaches, feeling jittery.

REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Everyone has their own ideas about whether to report to the Police. If you are in danger, the only way the Police can protect you is if you tell them. However, you should make an informed decision about whether to report or not. Investigations can take a long time and may not always result in a conviction at court. For many people telling the police is helpful for their healing process, whether charges are brought or not.

If you have been raped or sexually assaulted but are unsure about whether to report to the police, you can contact Juniper Lodge, which is a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), to discuss your options with a crisis worker. If there are forensic opportunities, they can discuss with you the process of a forensic medical examination, with or without a formal report to the Police. This examination is conducted by a trained specialist nurse and the samples can be stored so that you can consider your option in reporting to the Police if you are unsure. You can also access all services available from Juniper Lodge, including referrals to support, emergency contraception and assessment for Post Exposure Prophylaxis after Sexual Exposure to HIV (PEPSE), Hep B and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) who are able to support you throughout the process.

If you feel that you would like to report to the Police, you can contact them via calling 101 if there is no immediate threat to you. The call handler will ask you a series of questions to establish if you are safe, what has happened and agree the next steps with you. If the assault is recent then you will be offered the opportunity to attend the SARC where your medical needs can be assessed. You will also be able to access a sexual health screening and a forensic medical examination. You will be put in touch with a member of the Signal Team who are specialists in this area. They are aware of the sensitivity of reporting sexual violence and are committed to fully investigate each report made to them. Please be assured that they will treat you with respect and dignity at all times.

All men, women and trans individuals aged 18 years and above can access the SARC and you can do this with or without reporting the incident to Police. If you are under 18, please contact us and we can put you in touch with the SARC service that deals with under 18's.

For more information on the reporting process, please take a look at the website **www.juniper.lodge.org.uk** or call on **0116 273 3330**.

SEEKING SUPPORT



Being the victim of rape or sexual assault can leave you feeling isolated and alone. When you are ready to talk, there are lots of people out there who can help you to find where to start, including a number of services who specialise in supporting the LGB&T communities. Here are three things to help you on your way:

- If you decide to seek support through counselling or another support service, then you should never be pushed into disclosing what happened in any detail. Trauma needs to be treated very delicately, and re-living what happened can actually have an adverse effect - therapy should be at a slow and safe pace that you feel comfortable with.
- It's never too late to ask for support; even if the rape or assault is historical. For some people, it can take decades for them to talk about sexual violence, but this doesn't mean that their need for support is any less.
- Shop around for the support that suits you (see page 16) - deciding which services you want to access, can help you to feel empowered and more in control of your own healing journey.

The Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) offers practical and emotional support throughout the Criminal Justice System to anyone who has reported or is thinking of reporting to the police. Support is available for anyone who has been raped, sexually assaulted/abused, groomed or experienced child sexual exploitation (CSE). This can be recent or in the past, from birth to any age and any gender identity.

ISVA cover the whole of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and are based at the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (Juniper Lodge).

ISVA offer:

- Confidential advice and support to the victim and the family
- Help develop positive coping strategies and support network
- Support attending Sexual Health Services/medical services
- Provide information and support with the Criminal Justice System
- Talking through the options if the victim has not reported the incident to the police or support to report to the police if that is what the victim wants to do
- Support with going to court and after court
- Helping get other specialist support, e.g. counselling, mental health, sexual health, substance and alcohol misuse.

LOCAL SUPPORT SERVICES



TRADE SEXUAL HEALTH

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities

Offer a range of services, including HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) screening clinics. Trade Sexual Health also provides counselling and one-to-one emotional support for a whole range of issues around relationships, sexuality and health; including supporting individuals through the aftermath of sexual violence.

www.tradesexualhealth.com • 0116 254 1747

JUNIPER LODGE

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

Anybody over the age of 18

Offering appropriate forensic medical examinations, assessment of your health and emotional needs, access to a crisis worker, referrals to ISVA for anyone, male, female or trans over the age of 18. You do NOT have to report to the Police to access these services. To speak to a member of staff and/or to book an appointment contact Juniper Lodge.

www.juniper.lodge.com • 0116 273 3330

FIRST STEP

Men, trans men and boys over the age of 13

Offer face to face counselling or emotional support to victims of sexual abuse and their families/partner.

www.firststepleicester.org.uk • 0116 254 8535

LEICESTER RAPE CRISIS

Women, trans women and girls over the age of 13

Women led therapeutic services for survivors of rape, sexual abuse and sexual violence either recently or in the past.

www.jasminehouse.org.uk • 0116 255 8852

UAVA

(UNITED AGAINST VIOLENCE AND ABUSE)

Over the age of 13

UAVA is a support and information service for anyone affected by domestic violence, rape and/or sexual assault. Services include a helpline, one-to-one and group support, advocacy, counselling and other information resources.

www.uava.org.uk • 0808 80 200 28 (calls are free and will not show up on bills)

QUETZAL

Women only

Offer face to face and telephone counselling for women who have been victims of childhood sexual abuse.

Sessions are delivered in city centre premises or within the outreach services across the county.

www.quetzal.org.uk • 0333 1014280

VICTIM FIRST

A free independent and confidential service for victims and witnesses of crime and high risk antisocial behaviour. Whether or not the crime has been reported, and regardless of when it happened, Victim First is there for you.

www.victimfirst.org • 0800 953 9595

NATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES



RAPE CRISIS

Women and girls only

Support for women and girls who have experienced rape, child sexual abuse or any kind of sexual violence.

www.rapecrisis.org.uk • 0800 999 5428

NATIONAL MALE SURVIVORS HELPLINE

Male and trans men

Helpline and support service via telephone, email, text and instant message.

www.safeline.org.uk • 0808 800 5005



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