

SUMMARY  
INFORMATION FOR  
PARTNERS, FUNDERS  
AND COMMISSIONERS



# Foreword

Rape Crisis England & Wales (RCEW) and Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS) are the national organisations for specialist Rape Crisis Centres which provide immediate crisis and longer term specialist counselling, support and independent advocacy to adults and children who have experienced any form of sexual violence and sexual abuse at any time in their lives.

The Rape Crisis National Service Standards (RCNSS) represent a collaboration between RCEW and RCS. They provide a quality assurance framework that enables specialist Rape Crisis services to demonstrate how their services are provided within professional frameworks that prioritise safety, governance, empowerment and continuous improvement.

In a climate of competitive funding with ever decreasing resources, funders and commissioners need to be assured of the quality and professionalism of the services they are purchasing and the positive difference these services will make for service users, the RCNSS provide that clear assurance.

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‘The Care Inspectorate welcomes the commitment of Rape Crisis Scotland to support continuous improvement in the services it provides and the people it supports. The standards will be very useful in doing so, and we welcome the fact that they have been developed in line with the Health and Social Care Standards to which the Care Inspectorate refers in our scrutiny and improvement work.’

The Care Inspectorate Scotland

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The Care Quality Commission's key lines of enquiry have been developed to make sure that when we look at services, we focus on the things that matter to people and drive high-quality, compassionate care. This is why they are at the heart of the way we regulate health and social care.

One of CQC's strategic aims is to help develop a “single shared view of quality” among everyone involved in healthcare from CQC as the regulator, to commissioners and providers. This is why it is encouraging to see providers, and other bodies such as Rape Crisis England and Wales, use the key lines of enquiry as a guide when developing their own standards and policies. This helps people using a range of services to be confident about what they can expect in terms of good care.

There are clearly times when people need care and support from a mix of services – some registered by CQC and others that are outside of our scope of regulation, such as Rape Crisis Centres. By aligning their service standards with our key lines of enquiry, Rape Crisis England and Wales is helping develop practices based on a shared understanding of care quality. This helps people using services to access consistent care and support built around their needs.

*The Care Quality Commission  
(CQC) England*

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# Introduction

The Rape Crisis National Service Standards (RCNSS) set out what it is that makes specialist services different from generic support services. Much of what distinguishes a Rape Crisis approach relates not only to the quality of the services provided, but to the value base and ethos which underpins all of our work. Values and principles are crucially important to our model for working with survivors of sexual violence and sexual abuse.

For more than 40 years, Rape Crisis Centres have been providing specialist services primarily to women and girls who have experienced sexual violence. They have continued to develop and grow in response to presented need and demand and many specialist Rape Crisis Centres have expanded their service provision, over a number of years, to support children, young people, trans survivors including non-binary people and men. A primary purpose, of providing services and dedicated spaces to women and girls, has been retained. This is in response to a gendered understanding of sexual violence that both recognises and responds to the United Nations definition of sexual violence as being both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality and, as such, a crime that disproportionately affects women and girls.

Underpinning the approach of all specialist Rape Crisis Centres is an evidence-based understanding of how experiences of sexual violence and sexual abuse can impact individual survivors. Rape Crisis Centres provide a trauma informed approach to practice and delivery that is both appropriate to and effective when supporting survivors of all forms of sexual violence.

The RCNSS enable specialist Rape Crisis services to demonstrate the quality and professionalism of each of the services their Centre provides, whether this be counselling, Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) or Advocacy workers, Helpline, training or outreach and awareness raising activities. They provide an assurance of quality alongside a benchmark for excellence in the delivery of specialist services for survivors of sexual violence.

The RCNSS reflect the high quality of services being provided throughout the UK and are the culmination of a long process of research, reflection, consultation and definition. They have been refreshed in consultation with Rape Crisis Centres which means they are informed by the collective experiences of frontline practitioners and the voices of survivors.

# Background to the Rape Crisis National Service Standards

The Rape Crisis National Service Standards (RCNSS) were first developed in 2008 as a joint collaboration between Rape Crisis England & Wales (RCEW) and Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS) to provide the specialist Rape Crisis sector with a set of quality service standards that both reflected the specialism held within the RC sector to meet the needs of survivors of sexual violence and assured survivors that they received a high quality service that was consistent across the country. The standards were mapped against a number of existing quality assessment frameworks at that time, including those of the Rape Crisis Network Ireland.

The RCNSS were integrated into the Sector Sustainability Standards, shared values that apply across the VAWG sector in England & Wales (2016). These standards represented collaboration between RCEW, Imkaan, SafeLives, Respect and Women's Aid (England) to agree the core principles that should underpin all service standards for services to women and girls who have experienced any form of sexual and domestic violence.

With support from Home Office funding, the RCNSS (2018) have been refreshed and updated.

The standards were re-mapped against key quality assessment frameworks including:

- Care Quality Commission (CQC): Key Lines of Enquiry for Healthcare Services (and successfully aligned with their assessment frameworks)
- The Care Inspectorate (Scotland) Health and Social Care Standards
- Quality for Health: Quality Assurance System
- Quality Standards for Supporting Male Victims/ Survivors of Sexual Violence: Male Survivors Partnership (MSP)
- Women's Aid Federation of England: National Quality Standards
- Scottish Women's Aid National Service Standards

The standards were piloted, with a representative selection of member services between May-July 2018 to ensure they accurately captured and reflected the knowledge and practice that has evolved from front line provision and could provide the quality benchmark for future provision.

The quality standards are underpinned by the requirement for services to demonstrate that they are Rape Crisis specialist services that are independent and community-based which work from a trauma informed perspective to provide confidential **specialist service provision** to survivors of all forms of sexual violence.

The standards are divided into four core sections.

**Strong Leadership:** Rape Crisis specialist services have strong leadership and governance that ensure services for survivors of sexual violence are inclusive and participatory and delivered to the highest standards.

**Responsive to Need:** Rape Crisis specialist services are responsive to the diverse needs of survivors and actively work towards ensuring they are relevant, accessible and survivor led.

**Safe Practice:** Rape Crisis specialist services seek to expand the safety and wellbeing of all survivors and work within safe models of practice which facilitate this.

**Effective Provision:** Rape Crisis specialist services are effective in promoting a culture of empowerment that supports survivors to regain control in their lives and in actively challenging misperceptions and social tolerance of sexual violence.

Each individual section contains 4 core standards and there are up to 4 core indicators under each standard, a total of 50 standards in total. The RCNSS are achieved via a process of review, documentary evidence and site visits and accreditation awarded by an external panel of independent professionals and survivors.

Successful accreditation entitles a RCC to display the Rape Crisis England & Wales (RCEW) or the Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS) Quality Mark.



# Core Principles Underpinning the Standards

The Rape Crisis National Service Standards (RCNSS) are reinforced by core principles:

- **Understanding sexual violence and its impact**  
Organisations demonstrate an appropriate and trauma informed approach, relevant to their service users, that recognises and understands the dynamics and impact of sexual violence, using a gendered analysis within an equalities and human rights framework.
- **Safety, security and dignity**  
Organisations ensure that all interventions prioritise the safety, security and dignity of service users and staff/volunteers.
- **Diversity and fair access to services**  
Organisations respect the diversity of service users and positively engage in anti-discriminatory practice, and service users are supported and assisted to access services on an equitable basis.
- **Advocacy and support**  
Organisations provide independent institutional/individual advocacy and/or support to promote the needs and rights of service users.
- **Empowerment and participation**  
Organisations promote empowerment and self-help to enable service users to take control of their lives and inform the delivery and development of services.

- **Confidentiality**  
Organisations respect and observe service users' right to confidentiality and all service users are informed of situations where that confidentiality may be limited.
- **A co-ordinated, multi-agency response**  
Organisations operate within a context of relevant inter-agency cooperation, collaboration and coordinated service delivery.
- **Challenging social tolerance of sexual violence and holding perpetrators accountable**  
In all aspects of what they do, organisations challenge social tolerance of sexual violence and gender inequality and work from the core belief that it is preventable.
- **Accountability and governance**  
Management is effective so that users receive a high-quality service from appropriately skilled staff.

# Rape Crisis National Service Standards

## Specialist Service Provision

Rape Crisis specialist services are independent, community-based services, which work from a trauma informed, gendered analysis and empowerment perspective to provide confidential specialist services to survivors of sexual violence.

Core Standard	Core Indicator
<p>The organisation meets and adheres to Rape Crisis England &amp; Wales or Rape Crisis Scotland membership criteria and is defined as a specialist Rape Crisis service.</p>	<p>The organisation has as its primary or major purpose the delivery of services to women and girls who have experienced any form of sexual violence at any time in their lives.</p>
	<p>The organisation strives to meet the needs of survivors in their area who have experienced any form of sexual violence at any time in their lives.</p>
	<p>The organisation works from a feminist perspective that recognises sexual violence as a crime of violence, an abuse of power, and as a cause and consequence of gender inequality.</p>
	<p>The organisation is women led and is committed to remaining women led.</p>
	<p>The organisation provides and protects dedicated spaces and times for women and girls to access services.</p>
	<p>The organisation is a Registered Charity, Company Limited by Guarantee (not for profit), Community Interest Company, Charitable Incorporated Organisation or Industrial and Provident Society – Community Benefit Society and so adheres to the principles and expectations of The Charity Commission (England &amp; Wales) or The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (Scotland).</p>

## 1. Strong Leadership

Rape Crisis specialist services have strong leadership and governance that ensure services for survivors of sexual violence are inclusive, participatory and delivered to the highest standards.

Core Standard	Core Indicator
1.1 The organisation has a clear strategic plan that outlines the aims and objectives of the organisation and promotes values supporting empowerment, dignity and respect.	a) The organisation has clear and transparent aims and objectives and trustees are aware of these and their part in achieving them.
	b) The organisation has clear values that are survivor focused and support a trauma and gender informed empowerment approach where service users are treated with dignity and respect within a culture of belief.
	c) The organisation has a written strategic plan that supports the long-term sustainability of service provision and quality and is reviewed regularly.
	d) The organisation's approach and delivery is in line with relevant professional ethical frameworks, legislation and evidence based good practice guidance appropriate to specialist service provision.
1.2 The members of the governing body are aware of their legal duties and responsibilities and quality, performance and risks are understood and managed.	a) Trustees are provided with sufficient information and training about their legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities to enable them to govern effectively.
	b) Trustees undertake regular strategic planning that includes reviewing and responding to relevant external developments and identifying, assessing and taking steps to mitigate organisational risks.
	c) The organisation has transparent policies and procedures to support effective governance and to govern the lawful and relevant use and control of its funds.
	d) Trustees periodically review and improve their efficiency and effectiveness.
1.3 The organisation works in an inclusive and participatory way that facilitates service users to be involved in their service at all levels and to actively engage in the evaluation and strategic development of the service.	a) Service users are informed about a range of opportunities to give feedback on all aspects of the service they receive and opportunities to respond to relevant external consultations and campaigns in relation to wider social issues affecting their lives.
	b) The organisation has a policy for actively involving service users, and other key stakeholders, in strategic planning for the service and in the planning of specific services.
	c) The organisation ensures it enables all service users to participate in feedback and consultation opportunities in a way that is appropriate and relevant to them.
	d) Service users are informed how and to whom they can complain if not satisfied with any aspect of the service or response they receive.
1.4 The organisation has a structure in place for collating and analysing service user feedback and using it to inform service provision, quality and growth.	a) The organisation demonstrates that service user feedback is used to inform and improve service planning and development.
	b) The organisation has processes in place to ensure need and demand are identified and responded to and there are clear service performance measures that support continuous quality and improvement.

## 2. Responsive

Rape Crisis specialist services are responsive to the diverse needs of survivors and actively work towards ensuring they are relevant, accessible and survivor led.

Core Standard	Core Indicator
<p>2.1 The organisation monitors and responds to diversity of need within the population it serves and uses this knowledge to inform service planning and delivery.</p>	<p>a) The organisation assesses the diverse needs of the community that it serves across all protected characteristics and equality strands and takes this into account when planning and delivering services.</p>
	<p>b) The organisation conducts equalities monitoring of its staff, volunteers, trustees and service users and takes positive steps to respond to needs identified and under representation within the service.</p>
	<p>c) The organisation ensures, through policy, procedures, training and supervision that staff and volunteers are aware of, and able to respond to, the specific and diverse needs of its service users.</p>
<p>2.2 Service users are informed about the scope, independence and any limitations of the services being provided.</p>	<p>a) Service users are informed about the scope, independence and provision of services available to them and systems are in place to enable appropriate access.</p>
	<p>b) The organisation supports children and young people in accessing the service in their own right in a way that is accessible, empowering and appropriate to them.</p>
	<p>c) The organisation works alongside all service users in a holistic, flexible and person-centred way to enable them to re-establish control and direction in their own lives.</p>
<p>2.3 Services are informed by the needs of service users and each service user is an active partner in the service they receive.</p>	<p>a) Service users are enabled to make their own choices about the support and interventions they receive and who provides them.</p>
	<p>(b) The organisation seeks explicit and informed consent from service users, in line with relevant consent and decision making guidance and legislation, to enable service users to engage meaningfully with services provided.</p>
	<p>c) Individual support plans are in place for service users that recognise and are tailored to meet their specific needs and are flexible to meet these needs. Service users are an active partner in their development and review.</p>
	<p>d) The organisation ensures that children and young people are enabled to be active partners in the support they receive and are empowered to make their own decisions in line with their age and development stage.</p>
<p>2.4 The organisation takes positive steps to maximise the accessibility of the services it provides and the settings from which it provides them.</p>	<p>a) The organisation recognises the impact of multiple, intersecting oppressions and takes positive steps to maximise the accessibility and appropriateness of the services it provides and the settings from which it provides them for all its service users.</p>
	<p>b) The organisation ensures that information in relation to its services is inclusive and reflective of its service users as well as being accessible and targeted appropriately.</p>
	<p>c) The organisation is committed to equality and human rights issues and actively works to reduce or remove barriers to accessing specialist services.</p>

### 3. Safe

Rape Crisis specialist services seek to expand the safety and wellbeing of all survivors and work within safe models of practice which facilitate this.

Core Standard	Core Indicator
3.1 The organisation has robust and reliable systems and practices in place to keep people safe and safeguarded from harm.	a) The organisation has in place robust policies, procedures and practices that reflect good practice guidance for safeguarding children and adults, which adhere to legislation and local statutory frameworks.
	b) The organisation has robust risk assessments in place that reflect and respond to specific risks to service users and client facing staff, and these are reviewed and updated at regular intervals.
	c) Staff and volunteers are supported to carry out need and risk assessments and receive sufficient training and information to do so safely within the remit of the service.
	d) The organisation keeps up to date with knowledge and good practice in relation to changing legislation, forms that abuse may take, and risks related to diverse service users and this learning is incorporated into the service's policies, training and response to safeguarding issues.
3.2 The organisation ensures a safe working environment for staff, volunteers, trustees and service users.	a) Robust policies and procedures are in place to assess and manage the physical safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers and service users, both within the centre and when working off site, and action is taken to provide and maintain a safe place of work.
	b) The organisation ensures the safe and reflective practice of its staff through systems for recruitment, training, support and supervision.
	c) The organisation sets out and observes clear professional boundaries to guide appropriate relationships between service users and staff/ volunteers.
3.2 The organisation ensures a safe working environment for staff, volunteers, trustees and service users.	a) Robust policies and procedures are in place to assess and manage the physical safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers and service users, both within the centre and when working off site and takes action to provide and maintain a safe place of work.
	b) The organisation ensures the safe and reflective practice of its staff through systems for recruitment, training, support and supervision.
	c) The organisation sets out and observes clear professional boundaries to guide appropriate relationships between service users, and staff and volunteers.
3.3 The organisation operates policy and guidance on confidentiality and data protection which is compliant with current legislation and good practice.	a) The organisation has clear policy and procedures in place that protect service user confidentiality. Limitations to confidentiality are clearly communicated.
	b) The organisation has transparent policy and procedures in place that relate to the lawful collection, handling, processing, movement and disposal of data and all trustees, staff and volunteers are aware of their rights and responsibilities in line with current data protection legislation.
	c) Service users are active partners in the collection and control of their personal information and are made aware of their rights to access, amend or delete data in line with data protection legislation.
	d) Where information is shared with a third party, it is relevant and proportionate, and governed by robust protocols that protect the interests and privacy rights of service users.
3.4 The organisation has processes in place to support the continuous improvement of safety and protection across the service.	a) The organisation has a process in place to enable the recording, review and learning from safety incidents and relevant staff, volunteers and trustees are involved in this process.
	b) The organisation has an open, transparent and blame free culture that encourages reporting, learning and continuous improvement.

## 4. Effective

Rape Crisis specialist services are effective in promoting a culture of empowerment that supports survivors to regain control in their lives and in actively challenging misperceptions and social tolerance of sexual violence.

Core Standard	Core Indicator
4.1 The organisation identifies outcomes for its service users which are meaningful to those users and to funders and commissioners.	a) The organisation has an outcomes framework in place that is meaningful and relevant to all of its service users.
	b) The organisation monitors progress towards service user outcomes and uses monitoring methods which give opportunities for all service users to express themselves in their own words.
4.2 The organisation ensures that staff and volunteers have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to deliver effective and high-quality service provision.	a) The organisation ensures that all staff and volunteers are sufficiently skilled, trained and experienced to work effectively within their role and the aims and objectives of the service.
	b) The organisation has effective policies and procedures in place to support the on-going training and development of staff, volunteers and trustees to ensure they are sufficiently trained for their specific role and client group.
	c) The organisation sets clear development objectives for all staff/volunteers, reviews progress against these regularly and takes effective steps to improve performance.
	d) Mechanisms are in place to ensure staff and volunteers have the information and knowledge they need to deliver effective specialist support services.
4.3 The organisation develops productive partnerships with other services to effectively meet individual needs.	a) The organisation works effectively in partnership with other relevant services to effectively address and enhance the safety and wellbeing of its service users.
	b) The organisation has clear protocol and referral pathways that support sensitive and appropriate signposting and referral to other services. Staff and volunteers are enabled to signpost or refer service users to organisations which are reliable and appropriate based on information which is up to date.
4.4 The organisation promotes awareness of the impact of sexual violence and works to challenge misperceptions and social tolerance of sexual violence.	a) The organisation provides anonymous data on service delivery outputs and outcomes to enable national pictures around prevalence and demand to be formulated and used in all its work.
	b) The organisation actively engages in public awareness activity across wider communities in regard to the impacts of sexual violence and to challenge misconceptions of sexual violence.

**If you require any further information regarding the  
Rape Crisis National Service Standards please contact:**

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