

Rape Crisis National Service Standards

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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**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. **They cover a Rape Crisis Centre's work with all survivors who are eligible to access its services, including women and girls, men and boys, trans and non-binary people, and children, young people and families.**

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. In total, Rape Crisis specialist services have to assess and evidence the quality of their provision against 50 indicators. **In England and Wales, successful accreditation against the RCNSS is achieved through a rigorous process of document evidence gathering, internal review, site visits, interviews with staff, volunteers and trustees, and external assessment by a panel of independent professionals.**

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

*Rape Crisis  
England & Wales  
(RCEW) 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.

# Assessment, verification & quality assurance process

Rape Crisis England & Wales (RCEW) and Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS) have their own processes for rigorously assessing the quality of services provided by their Members.

The flowchart below illustrates the RCEW process.

## **STAGE 1: CORE MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA**

Each organisation wishing to join RCEW (new members) or renew its membership (existing members) is assessed by RCEW to confirm that it is eligible for RCEW membership and that it offers specialist sexual violence and abuse services.



## **STAGE 2: NATIONAL SERVICE STANDARDS**

### **SELF ASSESSMENT**

Rape Crisis Centres self-assess against 16 core standards and 50 indicators. Where needed, they develop action and improvement plans to strengthen their existing arrangements. Centres upload evidence and supporting documentation to the dedicated online NSS portal.



### **DOCUMENT REVIEW**

All evidence and supporting documentation is reviewed by RCEW. Gaps are identified and clarification sought where needed in preparation for the site visit.



### **SITE VISIT**

Trained NSS assessors conduct site visits and interviews with Rape Crisis Centres' staff, volunteers and trustees. Site visits verify and document the culture and ethos of specialist sexual violence and abuse support services, and the levels of knowledge and understanding of strategic and frontline delivery staff and volunteers.



### **REPORT PRODUCTION**

A report is produced for each Rape Crisis Centre summarising the findings of the document review and site visit.



### **INDEPENDENT QUALITY ASSURANCE PANEL**

An independent panel of external experts and a strategic member of RCEW review each NSS report. This element contributes independent scrutiny and external challenge, making the process even more robust.



### **ACCREDITATION**

Successful completion of the NSS process allows Rape Crisis Centres to secure the RCEW quality mark. RCEW quality mark is subject to renewal every three years.

# 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

The organisation meets and adheres to Rape Crisis England & Wales or Rape Crisis Scotland membership criteria and is defined as a specialist Rape Crisis service.

## 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

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.

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.

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.

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.

## 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

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.

2.2 Service users are informed about the scope, independence and any limitations of the services being provided.

2.3 Services are informed by the needs of service users and each service user is an active partner in the service they receive.

2.4 The organisation takes positive steps to maximise the accessibility of the services it provides and the settings from which it provides them.

# Rape Crisis National Service Standards

## 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

3.1 The organisation has robust and reliable systems and practices in place to keep people safe and safeguarded from harm.

3.2 The organisation ensures a safe working environment for staff, volunteers, trustees and service users.

3.3 The organisation operates policy and guidance on confidentiality and data protection which is compliant with current legislation and good practice.

3.4 The organisation has processes in place to support the continuous improvement of safety and protection across the service.

## 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

4.1 The organisation identifies outcomes for its service users which are meaningful to those users and to funders and commissioners.

4.2 The organisation ensures that staff and volunteers have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to deliver effective and high-quality service provision.

4.3 The organisation develops productive partnerships with other services to effectively meet individual needs.

4.4 The organisation promotes awareness of the impact of sexual violence and works to challenge misperceptions and social tolerance of sexual violence.

specialist services  
strong leadership  
responsive safe  
effective

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

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