

Victim Support

Rape and Sexual Assault

Information for Women

Coping after rape or sexual assault

Being raped or sexually assaulted is a shocking experience and the effects can last a long time. Everyone reacts differently and your feelings may change from day to day. The important thing is to be aware that you may be affected in many different ways, both mentally and physically.

It can be difficult to talk about what has happened. Most people do come to terms with their experience in time, especially if they get support and understanding. Friends and family can be very helpful. But many people find it easier to speak to someone they don't know and who understands what they have been through.

A few facts

There is a myth that only strangers carry out sexual assaults. But many assaults are committed by someone the woman knows, including partners and close friends. Whoever the attacker was, the important thing to remember is that it is not your fault.

How we can help

Victim Support is the independent charity for people affected by crime. We help victims of rape and sexual assault every year. Our specially trained volunteers give information, practical help and emotional support. Our services are confidential, free and available to everyone. We can help, regardless of whether you have told the police or anyone else about the assault.

Our volunteers can visit you at home (if you want us to, and if doing so will not put you at

further risk) or somewhere else if you prefer. If you don't want to see anyone face-to-face, you can also talk to us on the phone at 01481 713000 or by email at victimsupportgsy@cwgsy.net

If you choose to report the assault we can go to the police station with you. If you give evidence in court, our Witness Service can help you to cope with the experience.

Health issues

You may be worried about pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) after an attack. If you prefer not to use your own GP there are clinics which offer free and confidential testing and advice.

Risk of pregnancy

If you are worried about being pregnant after a sexual assault you can get free treatment and advice from the Guernsey Contraception Service or the Orchard Clinic or your GP.

You can get free and immediate testing and emergency contraception to help prevent pregnancy. If you chose contraception, it may be the 'morning after pill' (which must be taken within three days (72 hours) of unprotected intercourse)

Sexually transmitted infections

Even if you have no symptoms, a check up for STIs is a safeguard. You can get help and advice from your GP or practice nurse, the Orchard Clinic or the Guernsey Contraceptive Service.

For confidential advice about HIV, call the THT Direct helpline on 0845 12 21 200 (10am – 10pm Monday to Friday, 12pm – 6pm Saturday and Sunday), www.tht.org.uk

Telling the police

Only you can decide whether or not to report the assault to the police. If you don't know what to do, we can talk with you about what it would mean and what your options are.

You can report the assault to the police straight away, later, or not at all if you choose. If you report an assault soon after it has happened, however, it may give the police an opportunity to get physical evidence against your attacker that might be gone if you report the crime later. A police officer (usually a woman) will take basic details from you. If the assault happened recently, the police will arrange an examination by medical staff to collect evidence.

The police will take further details from you only when you feel ready. The statement you make will be used as the main evidence if your attacker is caught and there is a court case. The police should arrange an interpreter for people who have difficulties with English.

You will be told the name of the officer dealing with your case. The police will let you know if someone is caught and charged and whether or not they are released on bail. You should tell the police if you are worried that the attacker will harass or intimidate you.

If the police charge someone with rape or indecent assault, they pass the evidence to

the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) who prepare the case for court.

If you wish, Victim Support can help you in your contact with the police and the CPS.

The court process

You may have to wait a few months for the case to go to court. The police will contact you telling you the date of the hearing. If the person pleads 'guilty', you will not have to give evidence but you can still choose to go to court if you want to. The police should tell you what sentence has been given. If the person pleads 'not guilty' you may be asked to go to give evidence. If this happens, remember that you can take a friend for support, or we can arrange for one of our volunteers to go with you (see the information on the Witness Service below).

Going to court

If you have to go to court in connection with the attack, we have information on what to expect and how we can support you. Talk to one of our staff or volunteers or ask for a copy of our "Information for Witnesses Going to Court" leaflet. There are also a range of measures to help protect you and your privacy through the court process – we can give you details.

The Witness Service

Victim Support runs the Witness Service where trained volunteers can support you and anyone who you wish to bring to the court. They can give you information about court procedure and what to expect and can usually arrange for you to see a courtroom

before the trial. You will be able to wait in the self-contained Witness Suite on the day of the trial. Volunteers cannot discuss evidence you are giving as a witness or give legal advice. You can contact the Witness Service on 713000.

Trained volunteers provide a free and confidential service including:

- General information on court proceedings
- Personal support before, during and after the hearing
- Someone to go with you into the courtroom
- A visit to the court before you give evidence so it will not seem strange to you.

- **Other legal action**

- If you are worried about your safety you should tell the police and you may be able to obtain an injunction to help make sure that your attacker stays away from you.

- **When an offender is released**

- If your attacker is sentenced to one year or more in prison, the Probation Service must ask if you want to be informed about plans for his or her release. You should tell the Probation Service if you have any concerns about this.

Other useful addresses:

The Orchard Clinic

Tel: 01481 707707

For free and confidential screening and treatment for HIV, Hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections and emergency contraception.

Guernsey Contraceptive Service

Tel: 01481 714954

Or 07781 103434

For sexual health screening and advice and emergency contraception.

National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)

0800 085 33 30

www.napac.org.uk

Victim Supportline

0845 3030 900

**Contact your local Victim Support
Scheme**

**Victim Support & Witness Service
Royal Court
St Peter Port
GY1 2PB**

Tel: 01481 713000

Fax: 01481 710024

victimsupportgsy@cwgsy.net