

Support at LSE: What is a Sexual Violence Support worker & how they can support you?

Rape Crisis South London, or the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC), is an independent organisation based in Croydon, providing a range of specialist and confidential support services for female survivors of sexual violence, who are aged 5 years and over and who live, work or study in South London. Our specialist sexual violence services include; providing the national Rape Crisis helpline, long-term therapy, advocacy/ISVA support for women either considering reporting or who have reported to the police and outreach support for women experiencing further societal marginalisation. We have been standing alongside survivors of sexual violence for the past 32 years and all of our support centres' survivors needs, wants, choices and their voices.

I'm a Specialist Sexual Violence Support worker and once a month I'm based here at LSE, offering specialist support and information to women and girls (aged 13+) who have experienced any kind of sexual violence, at any time in their lives. To book a confidential appointment with me, email edi.svsupport@lse.ac.uk . If you have just been raped or sexually assaulted, you can also find more information on the [Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre website](#).

You may not be sure whether you want to, or are able to, access support. Whatever you have experienced, I hope that reading our responses to the following common concerns may help.

1. I am not sure if what happened to me counts as sexual violence

There is no hierarchy of sexual violence. Whatever you have experienced you deserve support. Something can be defined as sexual violence whether or not any additional violence occurred – the term is an acknowledgement that all sexual violence is inherently violent, and can be profoundly traumatic.

Some examples of sexual violence include:

- Unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment
- Any sexual acts or attempt to obtain a sexual act by coercion
- Image based sexual abuse, aka. 'Revenge Porn'
- Sexual assault and assault by penetration
- Rape or assault within marriage or intimate relationships, by friends, acquaintances or strangers
- Childhood sexual abuse and exploitation
- Ritual or satanic abuse

Trafficking

Violent acts against the sexual integrity of women, including female genital mutilation and obligatory inspections for virginity

If something has happened to you and you feel unsure how to define it; if you were coerced, or if you are not sure about whether you were able to consent; you deserve support and you can book an appointment to talk things through.

2. I am not sure if I feel ready to talk about what I have experienced

It is normal to feel afraid about accessing support. It is important to remember that you are always in control of what we talk about in the session, and that you can always end or leave the session at any time. You can also make a call to our [National Helpline](#) (which can be done anonymously) as a first step.

If the day of the appointment comes and you don't feel ready to attend, we completely understand. It can be very difficult and overwhelming to think about talking about sexual violence that you've experienced. The door is always open for you to book another session if and when you feel ready.

3. What will happen in my appointment?

When you arrive at the appointment, we will talk through what my role is and the confidentiality policy. The appointment can last up to 50 minutes, and you can always end it or leave earlier if you want to.

The rest of the appointment is completely up to you. You can use the space to talk about what happened to you, how you are feeling and what the impacts of what happened have been. You can also ask questions about reporting to the police, accessing counselling or about any other kind of support you are looking for.

At the end of the appointment you can take away any leaflets that might be useful for you, or ask me to send any additional information to you. You can also fill in a feedback form if you would like to – this is just to make sure that the service and support that is being offered is useful to you and other students.

You can have up to three appointments, so if you would like another one, you can book that in exactly the same way that you booked your first appointment.

4. I don't want anyone to find out

Rape Crisis South London is a completely independent and confidential service. This includes when we are based at LSE. You can book a confidential appointment with me without disclosing any further information to LSE, or, if you choose, you can engage with the support available at LSE alongside. Either way, I will not share information about who you are or what you have talked about with any member of LSE staff, or anyone else.

The only exceptions to this would be if you spoke about seriously harming yourself, about a named child who is currently being abused or is at risk of abuse or if the perpetrator is also a student at LSE **and** you give me their full name. If you don't want me to pass on the name of the perpetrator to the university, you absolutely do not have to tell me their name – it's completely up to you.

You can access our support with or without additional support from LSE – for more information about the support available at LSE have a look at [\[this page\]](#).

5. I don't want to report this to the police/I am not sure if I want to report this to the police

As a survivor it is your choice whether you report to the police or not.

If you are considering reporting or if you have already reported, our support is here to explain and explore all your options and give you an overview of what will happen.

We will not try to persuade you, nor can we advise you on what is the right decision for you. But whether you would like to report or not, you always deserve the very best support.

If you would like long-term support around the reporting process, then at your request we can give you the contact for your nearest [Independent Sexual Violence Advocate](#) (ISVA). We also provide a written [overview of the criminal justice system](#) on our website, and in our [Break the Silence films](#).

6. I am a survivor who is also a sex worker and I don't want to be judged

If you are involved in the sex industry and you have experienced sexual violence, you did not deserve it. You do deserve the very best support, which doesn't judge you or make you feel uncomfortable. Our support recognises that all violence (including the threat of violence) committed against women in the sex industry is a crime, not an 'occupational hazard'. If you would like more information on how we support sex workers, visit the [Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre website](#).

Whatever you have lived through, try to hold on to the knowledge that you will get through this – you deserve to, and you will. Guilt, blame and shame belong to the perpetrator, not to you. Your needs and feelings are important and unique. If you would like to explore your options and find out more about support, our Specialist Adviser is [here](#).

By Steph, Specialist Sexual Violence Support worker for Rape Crisis South London

For support from LSE visit [this page](#).