

Information for students – what you can do if you have recently been sexually assaulted

York St John University is committed to providing a safe environment for students, and to responding appropriately to any incidents. This guidance has been produced for students who have recently been sexually assaulted or raped. It provides information that you might want to consider when making a decision about what to do next. Whilst the guidance is aimed at students who have recently been sexually assaulted, it includes information about sources of support which may be useful for any student who is a survivor of sexual assault or sexual abuse.

If you have just been raped or sexually assaulted you may be feeling many things. Some people report that they feel numb or shocked, confused or frightened or fragile or angry. There is no right or wrong way to feel. It might be helpful for you to know that many people report that these feelings do not last. **However you are feeling, try to remember that this is not your fault, you are not to blame, and you are not alone.**

You should not feel under any pressure to act in any specific way. Any decisions made will be yours alone and will be respected.

1.
 - Are you in a safe environment?
2.
 - Do you want to take some time to talk or think things through?
3.
 - Deciding what to do next
4.
 - Time limits to be aware of
5.
 - Continuing support
6.
 - Other useful information and contacts

1. Are you in a safe environment?

If the assault has just occurred, you might want to consider whether you feel safe where you are.

EMERGENCY HELP

If you or others feel at risk or consider the situation to be an emergency, you can call the Police on 999. If you require urgent medical help you should call for an ambulance (also on 999).

If you do not feel at further risk and the situation is not an emergency but you wish to report the assault to the Police, you can call the Police on 101. You may not wish to report to the Police – it is entirely your decision. See below for further information about the options available to you.

If you are in **University accommodation**, you may choose to alert Security on **01904 876444**.

Please note that the Security Team are not trained to provide specialist support, however they can help to establish your immediate safety and signpost you to relevant support services.

If you are not at further risk...

- Try to find somewhere safe and warm as you may be in shock. If you can, phone a friend to be with you. If you think you might want forensic evidence to be collected, see Section 4 on 'Time limits to be aware of'
- If condoms or other protection were used and you think you might want forensic evidence to be collected, keep them, and any bedding, in a clean paper or plastic bag if possible.
- **You can also choose to do nothing now. If you feel that it would be useful for you to take time and to think about the options open to you then that is a perfectly valid decision.**

During normal office hours (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm), you can speak to a member of staff from **Student Services**. Come to the Student Information Desk in Holgate or telephone them on 01904 876477 and, if possible they will put you in touch with a University Welfare Adviser or another member of the Wellbeing Team. Alternatively, you can email the Wellbeing Team at welfareenquiries@yorks.ac.uk

2. Do you want to take some time to talk or think things through?

If the situation isn't an emergency, you may want to take some time to think things through or to talk to someone you trust, such as family, a friend or a member of staff at the University.

University staff are not trained to provide specialist support for survivors of sexual violence, however they can provide initial support and signpost you to specialist services. A University **Welfare Adviser** will be able to give you more detailed information and an appointment can be booked directly at <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/wellbeing-support/welfare-adviser-appointments/> or just search 'YSJ Welfare' on the internet for find the booking page.

The Wellbeing Team in Student Services provides a range of support services, including **counselling**. You can register here <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/wellbeing-support/register-for-wellbeing-support/> or just search 'YSJ Wellbeing' on the internet.

YSJ Students' Union also provide independent advice and support on a range of issues. Further information about their services can be found at <https://ysjsu.com/support>

3. Deciding what to do next

The choices you have in terms of expert support and advice can vary according to the time and place at which the incident occurred. However, you can seek advice from a number of agencies at any time after the incident, even years later - support is not limited to those who choose to make an immediate report. **Any decisions made will be yours alone and will be respected.**

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) The York SARC is called **Bridge House** and it provides a range of services, including forensic medical examination, to anyone in North Yorkshire aged 16 and over who has been raped or sexually assaulted. Bridge House is located in Bishopthorpe and the services are available whether or not the assault has been reported to the police <https://www.bridgehousesarc.org/>

You can telephone the centre to make an appointment on **0330 2230099** (24 hour helpline).

- **York St John University has a 'Report & Support' system**

This website can be used for either named or anonymous reports and also contains support information and articles. Access by visiting <https://reportandsupport.yorksj.ac.uk/>

- **Reporting the incident to the Police anonymously**

The University has developed close links with Bridge House and can facilitate anonymous reporting. A SARC worker can meet you to take a brief account of your experience which will be relayed to North Yorkshire Police without disclosing your details. If you would like to know more, or to progress this, you can book an appointment with a University **Welfare Adviser** (see p.2). During your initial meeting you will be able to explore different support options and if you are interested in anonymous reporting via SARC, the Welfare Adviser can arrange the meeting here on campus and support you through the process.

If you would like to use the SARC anonymous reporting service, but don't want to involve the University Welfare Adviser in this process, you can contact Bridge House independently to arrange this.

- **Reporting the incident to the Police**

You can report an incident to the Police at any time. You can call the Police by dialling either 999 in an emergency or 101 (non-emergency). Another option is to go into your local Police Station. You may want to ask a friend or relative to go with you.

If you choose to report an incident of sexual violence to the Police, a specially trained Sexual Offences Liaison Officer (SOLO) will be sent out to see you or will speak to you over the phone. The officer will ask some basic questions to make sure you are safe and find out what happened, when and where, and who was involved. They will work out what needs to be done next and tell you about the support services that are available locally. A SOLO will also be able to take mouth and urine samples immediately so that forensic evidence can be preserved and you will be able to eat, drink and go to the toilet without fear of losing such evidence.

The SOLO may, with your permission, take you to the SARC at Bridge House (see above). There you will be looked after by a support worker and a specialist nurse who can collect forensic evidence. They

recommend that you take a supportive friend or relative with you. You may need to take a change of clothes, but don't worry if you haven't taken any as the SARC can usually provide a basic change of clothes. Also take any bedding or used condom if relevant.

The specialist nurse will be able to discuss your immediate concerns relating to the risk of pregnancy (if applicable) and sexually transmitted infections, as well as assessing any injuries that may be present. Staff at the SARC can also help and support you through the immediate trauma.

At some point you will be asked to give an official statement to the Police which will usually be video recorded. Bridge House has special rooms with comfy sofas and hot drinks, where you can be interviewed if that feels ok for you. Alternatively you could decide to be interviewed in another location where you feel more comfortable, when you are ready. **You should be aware that although you have called the Police, you can opt out of the reporting process at any point without losing the support of the SARC.**

Further information about the reporting process can be found on the North Yorkshire Police website <https://northyorkshire.police.uk/what-we-do/dealing-with-crime/advice-for-victims/rape-sexual-assault/>

- **Reporting the incident to the Police at a later date**

Many people do not wish to report an incident of sexual assault to the Police immediately, but may decide after a while that they want to do so. This is perfectly valid and there are steps you can take now to make it easier to report to the Police at a later stage.

If you are not sure what to do, you can still go to the SARC at Bridge House for information and support (see p.4). If you want to take a friend or trusted person with you, you can - the choice is yours. You will be allocated a Support Worker who can talk you through the different options available to you.

At the SARC, you can have a forensic medical examination and pregnancy test (if applicable). The SARC will not pressure you to report to the Police and they can store the results of the forensic examination (or evidence) for up to 7 years whilst you decide whether or not to make a formal report.

If there are signs of a disturbance at the scene of the assault, it would be useful if you could take photographs in case you decide to report it to the police at a later date. Remember to keep any relevant clothes, bedding or used condom.

- **Not reporting the incident to the Police**

If you are certain that you don't want to report the incident to the Police you can still access the support of Bridge House. You can choose not to provide forensic evidence but can still receive specialist medical support and be referred to an ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor) as well as other health and support services.

There are also local and national specialist services that can provide continuing support, guidance and counselling (see below for further information).

4. Time limits to be aware of

It is up to you to choose what kind of support you want to access and whether or not you want to report the assault to the Police. However, before you make a decision, there are a few time limits you need to be aware of:

- If you suspect you were given **any type of drug**, it is best to be tested within 24 hours.
- If you want **emergency contraception**, access advice as soon as possible. There are several options available. Two of these are available up to 5 days (120 hours).
- If you would like **HIV Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)**, the medication should ideally be started within 72 hours.
- Any **forensic evidence** can be collected at Bridge House SARC (contact details on p.3) and stored whilst you decide whether or not to report the incident to the Police. If you want forensic evidence to be collected, you should try and contact Bridge House straight away if you can, or preferably within 72 hours of the assault. Also try, if possible, to avoid the following:
 - **AVOID** washing, brushing teeth, smoking, eating or drinking. Do not change your clothes (if you have changed your clothes, do not wash them but do put them in a clean paper bag), Try not to go to the toilet. Do not clear up anything from the area of the incident. Don't worry if you have already done some of these things. It's possible that there is still forensic evidence to collect.
- **Forensic evidence may still be present up to 7 days after the incident.** SARC staff can help you decide if you would like evidence collecting and ensure your healthcare needs are met.

You could also discuss healthcare support with your GP, or at the local sexual health centre:

York Sexual Health Centre, 31 Monkgate, York, YO31 7WA

See their website for opening times <https://www.yorsexualhealth.org.uk/clinics/monkgate-health-centre/>

5. Continuing support

The University **Wellbeing Team** can provide short term help and support, but more a more specialist service is available in the local community. There are excellent local charities providing specialist support and counselling to survivors. The University Welfare Adviser can make a referral on your behalf, or you can contact the charity directly:

Independent Domestic Abuse Services (IDAS) <https://www.idas.org.uk/>

Phone: 03000 110 110 or 24hr national helpline: 0808 2000 247

E-mail: info@idas.org.uk

Survive <https://www.survive-northyorks.org.uk/>

Helpline for support and information 01904 642830 –
open Wednesday 1pm-3:30pm

6. Other useful information and contacts

The Samaritans are also available 24hrs a day to support people through any trauma including sexual assault. They can be contacted on 116 123 -24/7 <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Your GP or local Sexual Health Clinic can provide help and advice.

Rape Crisis England and Wales – national charity and umbrella body for network of independent member Rape Crisis organisations. They also have a national **Rape Crisis Helpline** which can be contacted on 0808 802 9999 between 12 noon – 2.30pm and between 7 – 9.30pm any day of the year.
<http://rapecrisis.org.uk/index.php>

Survivors UK – national charity supporting men who have experienced childhood sexual abuse or adult sexual assault/rape, as well as their partners and carers. <https://www.survivorsuk.org/>

The Survivors Trust (TST) - national umbrella agency for specialist rape, sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse support organisations throughout the UK and Ireland. <http://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/>

Refuge UK including National 24hr Domestic Violence Helpline – national charity providing a range of services for women and children affected by domestic violence. Services include a national Freephone 24 hour helpline: 0808 2000 247 <http://www.refuge.org.uk/>
<http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/>

Men’s Advice Line – advice and support for heterosexual, gay, bisexual and trans men experiencing domestic violence and abuse. Freephone: 0808 801 0327 (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm)
<http://mensadvice.org.uk/>

National LGBT Domestic Violence Helpline – advice and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people. Freephone: 0800 999 5428 (opening times on website) <https://galop.org.uk/get-help/helplines/>

National Stalking Helpline – the helpline can be contacted on 0808 802 0300 from 9.30am to 4pm on weekdays (except Wed, 1pm to 4pm) <http://www.stalkinghelpline.org/>

Paladin, National Stalking Advocacy Service – national service assisting victims of stalking in England and Wales. Services include national helpline: 020 3866 4107 <http://paladinservice.co.uk/>

Karma Nirvana – national charity supporting victims of forced marriage and ‘honour’ based violence. Services include a national Freephone helpline (open 9am - 9pm weekdays & 10am - 4pm weekends): 0800 5999 247 <http://www.karmanirvana.org.uk/>

Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) - joint Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office. Services include a public helpline to provide advice and support to victims of forced marriage. Telephone: 020 7008 0151 From overseas: +44 (0)20 7008 0151 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm), Out of hours: 020 7008 1500 - ask for the Global Response Centre <https://www.gov.uk/stop-forced-marriage>

Respect Phonenumber - information and advice line for anyone who is concerned about their violence or abuse towards a partner or ex-partner: 0845 112 8609 (Monday to Friday 10am – 1pm and 2pm – 5pm)
www.respectphonenumber.org.uk