

## Have you been the victim of rape or sexual assault?

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What is an ISVA & CHISVA?**

*An ISVA stands for Independent Sexual Violence Advisor. ISVA are specially trained workers who is able to provide support in relation to any sexual abuse that you have experienced. This can be recently or something that happened in the past?*

*CHISVA's are specially trained ISVAs that work with children and young people and their families.*

#### **I don't want to report to the police, can I still receive support?**

*Yes, you will still be able to access specialist support from the ISVA service. We will provide independent information to support your decision making, can talk you through your options and different types of support that is available to you regardless of any engagement with the criminal justice process.*

#### **What happens if I report... Will I have the same police officer throughout the course of my case?**

*Generally Yes. Once you report a member of the specialist teams would interview you. In most cases they are the same officer in charge of your case throughout the police and court process. There can be occasions where officers can change for example if they are going on maternity leave. All specialist officers are trained in this work so the level of support will not change.*

#### **I haven't heard from the police since I did my interview?**

*After you complete your interview the police then start the investigation. During this time you may not hear from your officer regularly. It's not because they are not concerned about your case. They are investigating for you and will be carrying out interviews, getting evidence from other agencies. If you are concerned contact your ISVA and they can check progress of your case with the officer.*

#### **I have never reported before, I am scared about the process.**

*The ISVA service can talk through the whole police/court process and you will have a keyworker as your advocate throughout the reporting, investigation and court process. You will not be alone.*

#### **How long after I report or a referral is made will I get a call from the ISVA service?**

*Most referrals come to our service through the Police or our local Sexual Abuse Referral Centres (SARC). Once we receive your referral we will aim to contact you within 48 hours. Initial contact will be made by a safe method, normally through a safe contact number provided to us. During initial contact our specialist workers will discuss the support options available to you and advise you on the next steps. Initial contact for referrals for children is normally made with an appropriate parent/guardian in the first instance.*

### **What support can I expect from the ISVA service?**

*The nature of the support that an ISVA provides will vary from case to case and will depend on your needs and your particular circumstances. Our ISVAs provide impartial information about all of your options, such as reporting to the police, accessing Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) services, and specialist support such as pre-trial therapy and sexual violence counselling.*

*ISVAs also provide information on other services that are available, for example in relation to health and social care, housing, or benefits. Our team works closely with the other UAVA services to provide ongoing continuity, advocacy and impartial advice and information to support your recovery.*

*We aim to look at all your needs and then we can make the necessary referrals to ensure all your needs are met.*

*Your support needs will be reviewed every time you have contact with your ISVA.*

### **I don't want to see the perpetrator in court, is that possible?**

*Yes. There are special measures that can be applied to the court so that you do not see the perpetrator or their friends and family. Your ISVA will talk you through all of this.*

### **How long will the police/court process take?**

*The whole process is a long process but you will have the support of your ISVA/CHISVA all the way through this process. All cases are different, but it can take on average up to 2 years maybe longer for this process.*

### **Can I see the court before the trial?**

*Yes, your ISVA can arrange a pre-court visit. This is where you go and see the court and familiarise yourself with the whole court. This is completed with your ISVA who can accompany you and witness service who are based at the court for support as well.*

### **Will I get to see my barrister if my case goes to court?**

*You can request to meet with your barrister before your trial. Your ISVA can also assist you with this.*

### **What can friends and family members do to support survivors of sexual abuse?**

*We understand that providing support to loved ones in the time after rape or sexual assault or can be incredibly difficult. Knowing that someone you care about has been hurt may leave you feeling overwhelmed, helpless and angry.*

*You may have difficulty in knowing what to say or do to help your loved one. It's okay to not have all the answers; listening and simply being there helps. Let your loved one know that you care, that you don't blame them, and that you believe in them.*

*Unfortunately, there are no quick fixes for healing from sexual violence, so it's important to be patient when the process seems to be taking what some consider to be a long time.*

*Acknowledge the impact that this has on your own life, it can help to have someone to talk to for yourself whether that be a friend, family member, a helpline, or counsellor.*