



Sexual Assault and Rape

You might be reading this because you have experienced a sexual assault, rape, sexual abuse or another form of sexual violence. If so, you may have mixed feelings about what happened, and whether you want to tell anyone, including the people closest to you. Some people are very certain that they want to report what has happened, while others may be less sure. Decisions can also change over time so confusion about reporting is not unusual.

How should I feel?

No two experiences are the same. It is not unusual to experience a delay in emotional response to what has happened, or for emotions to change, sometimes quite frequently. If you have been subjected to a sexual assault you may feel:

Numb	Confused	Afraid
Angry	Guilty	Ashamed
Depressed	Powerless	Lacking confidence

It can feel destabilising and any part of your life can be affected. Your eating and sleeping patterns can be disturbed; it can be hard for you to concentrate, affecting your ability to work. As sexual violence is inter-personal it is not unusual for it to have an effect on your relationships with others. Not everyone will experience all these feelings, or to the same degree, and there is no right or wrong to how you feel.

However guilty you may feel about what has happened to you, it can be important for you to know that if you have been subjected to rape or sexual assault it is **not** your fault.

Some facts

- Nearly half a million adults are sexually assaulted every year in England and Wales.
- Many people believe that there is a greater risk of sexual violence from a stranger but in fact the vast majority of sexual assaults (90%) are committed by someone the person knows, often someone they trust.
- Sexual violence affects people from all backgrounds, ages, sexualities and gender identities.
- Similarly, people who commit sexual violence come from all backgrounds, ages, sexualities and gender identities.
- Drinking alcohol, taking drugs or otherwise being unable to consent to sexual activity does not make a sexual assault less serious. Nor does it remove responsibility from the person who carried out the assault.
- Sexual violence does not always result in physical or external injuries.
- Only 15% of people who experience sexual assault choose to report it to the police.

More information and statistics are available at the Rape Crisis website: www.rapecrisis.org.uk.

What to do after a rape or sexual assault

The Elms Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Peterborough offers free support and practical help to anyone in Cambridgeshire who has experienced sexual abuse. The service is completely confidential and is available 24/7 at 0800 193 5434 or www.theelmssarc.org. They can give you advice and provide information that might help you make an informed choice about what to do. The information covers: being in a safe environment; time limits that apply for gathering forensic evidence, testing if drugs have been given, emergency contraception or anti-HIV medication; Police procedures; and where to find support within the wider community.

If you are unsure whether you want to report the incident to the Police but would like to retain this possibility, staff at the SARC will be able to talk through the different options with you and can store forensic evidence until you make up your mind about reporting. Should you choose to do so, they, or you, can make a report anonymously.

You can also access advice and information about your options through the Rape Crisis website: www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Reporting what has happened

If you want to report an incident immediately, particularly if the incident has just taken place or you are in danger, call 999. Alternatively, you can call Cambridgeshire Constabulary on 101. It is possible to ask to speak directly to the Rape Investigation Team, but it may take longer to speak with them. The operator will be able to advise you who is available at the time. The Police's priority is safeguarding and this will determine what action they take.

Whether you choose to report to the Police or attend the SARC, you might want to go with a friend or family member as it can be a lengthy and upsetting process.

Where to get help

You do not need to be alone with your feelings and it is important for you to have support and understanding. There are a number of agencies that are able to help you, including:

- The University Counselling Service: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk
- Cambridge Rape Crisis: www.cambridgerapecrisis.co.uk 01223 245888
email: support@cambridgerapecrisis.co.uk
- National Rape Crisis: www.rapecrisis.org.uk – information for people who have been assaulted or are supporting someone who has been assaulted
- Survivors UK (for men): www.survivorsuk.org
- The Elms - Cambridgeshire Sexual Assault Referral Centre (Peterborough): www.theelmssarc.org helpline: 0800 193 5434 (24/7)

Staff Counselling Service
1st Floor, 17 Mill Lane
Cambridge, CB2 1RX
Tel: 01223 762160

Email: staffcouns@admin.cam.ac.uk

Website: <https://staff.counselling.cam.ac.uk>