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Rape and Sexual Assault Abroad

Information for Volunteers

Notes

Notes

Information for Volunteers

Rape and sexual assault can happen to women and men of all ages and backgrounds. While most visits abroad are trouble-free, we are becoming aware of Volunteers being sexually assaulted whilst they are abroad.

Sexual assault can be a very traumatic experience whenever and wherever it happens, but the trauma can be made even more difficult to deal with when it happens abroad.

Project Trust will be helpful and supportive to anyone who tells us they have had sex against their wishes or been assaulted by someone wanting sex.

If you've been raped or sexually assaulted

- > the most important thing is to make sure that you are as safe as you can be. If you are alone, or with a stranger, get help from the police, a hospital or the British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate as soon as you are able to. If you want to contact us outside working hours, our office operates a 24 hour emergency cover system. The office contact number is **+44 (0) 1879 230 444** or you can refer to the emergency contact details on page 14 of this document. It is important to get to a safe place. This should be your first priority. If possible, ask someone to contact your project partner or a trusted friend.
- > Do not keep the attack to yourself. It can be very helpful to talk to someone straight away. If possible, talk to a friend or relative, and contact your Country Coordinator or a member of Project Trust staff as soon as you can.
- > We understand that you may find it painful or embarrassing to talk about what happened. We will be polite, patient, sensitive and non-judgmental. In cases of sexual assault, victims, regardless of their sex, may prefer to talk about their ordeal with a female. If this is what you prefer, we will do our best to ensure that a female member of staff is present for any telephone call or at any meeting.

Project Trust Emergency Contact Details

Project Trust Office

+44 1879 230444 (*Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm*)

Your Country Representative

Name _____

Tel _____

Mobile _____

Email _____

Victim Support

Victim Support provides information and confidential support to victims of rape and sexual assault, and can refer victims to other support networks and local agencies if necessary. Their national helpline is open from 9am to 8pm, Monday to Friday, and from 9am to 7pm at weekends and 9am–5pm on Bank Holidays.

0845 3030 900

www.victimsupport.org

Project Sapphire

Project Sapphire is a Metropolitan Police scheme aimed at improving rape investigation and victim care. Project Sapphire can put you in touch with local police and support services wherever you live in the U.K.

www.met.police.uk/sapphire

Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (South London)

Will provide support and counselling for women and girls, but can refer male victims to other organisations.

0808 802 9999 (12 noon–2.30pm and 7pm–9.30pm daily)

- > You may suffer from a range of emotions, including post-traumatic stress disorder (a type of shock).
- > Male victims of rape and sexual assault may experience erections and/or ejaculation as a result of the prostate being stimulated. This is an unconscious and uncontrollable physiological reaction to the assault and not something you should be ashamed of, or embarrassed by.
- > Consider reporting the crime to the local police. Although we cannot give you legal advice, we can tell you about the local police and legal procedures, as these can often be very different to those in the U.K. You should be aware that cultural and social attitudes to rape and sexual assault victims may vary greatly in different countries. If you choose to report the incident to the police, ask your project partner, Overseas Representative or a trusted friend to go to the police station with you – many people find it helps not to be alone. Where possible we can request that a female police officer interviews you if that is what you would prefer. Only you can decide if you want to take legal action: we cannot make the decision for you. Whatever you choose, we will support your wishes.
- > If you choose not to report the crime to the local police soon after the incident but change your mind later, forensic evidence may be lost – particularly if you have washed or changed your clothes.

- > In many countries, you must report the crime **before** leaving the country if you want it to be investigated. **If you wait to report the crime on return to the U.K., countries may not open a criminal investigation.**
- > We can help you deal with the local authorities in arranging a medical examination, where possible with a female doctor if you prefer. Depending on local conditions and laws, we can also arrange for you to see a doctor who can give advice on sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, abortion or emergency contraception. Even if you do not want to report the crime to the police, you may wish to be examined by a doctor.
- > If you need medical treatment, you will need to provide details of your travel insurance policy. You will also be covered by your travel insurance for any personal injuries you receive as a result of a crime. It is likely that you will have to report the incident to the police in the country that you are in for the insurance to be valid.
- > If you want us to, Project Trust can contact your next of kin or other family and friends.

Relate

Relate offers a relationship counselling service, and provides a counselling service for victims of rape and sexual assault and their partners, particularly where trauma leads to relationship difficulties. Their helpline is open Monday– Thursday, 8am–10pm, Fridays 8am–6pm and Saturdays 9am–5pm.

0300 100 1234

www.relate.org.uk

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust offers advice on personal safety and tips on how to avoid being the victim of aggression. The Trust publishes a 'Worldwise' handbook and video on safer travel abroad and has a 'Worldwise' website from which you can download specific 'safety' guidance on countries throughout the world.

020 7091 0041 (*Monday to Friday 9.30am–5pm*)

www.suzylamplugh.org

Samaritans

Samaritans have a 24-hour helpline that offers confidential emotional support for people who are suicidal or distressed.

08457 909090

www.samaritans.org

FPA

FPA (previously called the Family Planning Association) provides advice and details of local sexual health clinics in the U.K.

www.fpa.org.uk

Survivors U.K.

Survivors U.K. supports and provides resources for men who have experienced any form of sexual violence. Their national helpline for men and their families, partners and friends is open 7pm–9.30pm Monday and Tuesday and midday to 2.30pm on Thursdays.

0845 122 1201

www.survivorsuk.org

Refuge

Refuge has a 24hr helpline that offers support and practical help to women experiencing domestic violence, including rape and sexual assault.

0808 2000 247

www.refuge.org.uk

Terrence Higgins Trust

The Terrence Higgins Trust helpline is open 10am-8pm Monday to Friday and provides information and counselling for people who know or fear they might have a sexually transmitted infection, particularly HIV or AIDS.

0808 802 1221

www.tht.org.uk

Providing Support

It can be very difficult to know how to help a friend or partner who has been sexually assaulted or raped. But you can be a good source of support for them, even though you might find it daunting.

It will have an emotional impact on them, and it is likely to affect you, too. You may feel a range of emotions such as anger, shock, guilt and a general feeling of helplessness. All of these are normal. But it is important that you think of your own wellbeing as well. Your friend or partner will be trying to make sense of what has happened. It can take time but with your support you can help to ease their trauma and come to terms with the assault.

The following simple guidelines give you some ideas about how you can help.

> Listen, don't question

Listen to them but try not to ask for details. They might not want to tell you everything that happened. Let them know that you are ready to listen whenever they want to talk.

And don't ask why the rape or sexual assault happened or why they didn't stop it happening. It can sound as if you blame them.

> Believe them

Believe what they are saying and tell them this.

> Let them show how they're feeling

Allow them to cry whenever they need to. You might find it upsetting but it is important that they are able to show their emotions.

> Ask about touching

Respect their feelings about being touched by you and give them some space. Many people who have been raped or sexually assaulted don't want to be touched, especially in the days after the assault. Even a comforting hug might upset them. Ask them if it's OK, or let them make the first move.

If you are in a sexual relationship, accept that they may find sex frightening at the moment. Respect their wishes and don't put any pressure on them to have sex.

> Offer practical support

Try offering some practical support, such as asking them if they would like you to come with them to any appointments.

Rape Crisis (England and Wales)

On this website you will find information about rape and other forms of sexual violence, and details of your nearest Rape Crisis Centre if you are looking for support. There is also information for family and friends of sexual violence survivors, students and professionals.

Freephone 0808 802 9999 (*between 12–2.30pm, 7pm–9.30pm*)

Contact email: info@rapecrisis.org.uk

www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Rape Crisis Scotland

Freephone 0808 801 0302 (*everyday 6pm til midnight*)

or if you're hard of hearing or deaf minicom number **0141 353 3091**

The Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre (N.I)

The Rowan is the regional Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) for Northern Ireland.

24 hour free phone 0800 389 4424

(calls may be charged when calling from a mobile)

<http://therowan.net/>

The Survivors Trust

An umbrella group which provides a link to over 70 member organisations working with victims of sexual crime, including child abuse.

www.thesurvivorstrust.org

Useful contact information

Sexual Assault Referral Centres

SARCs are specialist medical and forensic services for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted. They aim to be one-stop service, providing the following under one roof: medical care and forensic examination following assault/ rape and, in some locations, sexual health services. Medical Services are free of charge and provided to women, men, young people and children. SARCs are mostly able to assist in the immediate aftermath of an assault but do not offer long term specialised counselling and advocacy services that are provided by Rape Crisis Centres. SARCs are funded and run in partnership, usually between the NHS, police and the voluntary sector. Most SARCs are able to offer medical services to anyone including those who do not wish to report the assault to the police ('self referrals'). Service users can then choose whether they would like to inform the police at a later stage and have their samples stored whilst they are considering what to do next. It is hoped that through this option, service users can take back some control over what is happening whilst allowing more time to make such an important decision. In order to preserve any evidence that may be present it is vital that help from the SARC is accessed as immediately as possible after an assault. In addition, SARCs can advise on and assist with other medical needs. For information and to book an appointment, phone the SARC nearest to you.

For further information please visit:

www.nhs.uk/service-search/Rape-and-sexual-assault-referral-centres/Location/364

> Let them remember

Don't tell them to forget about what has happened. It will take time for them to work through their feelings and memories. You can help by listening to them and being patient.

> It's not about you

Don't become the injured party. Your friend or partner needs to focus all their energy on themselves, so they may not have enough strength to support or care for you at this time.

If you think you've been drugged

- > Trust your instincts – they are there to warn you of danger. You may feel strange, sick or drunk after only a couple of drinks. Even if you have not drunk alcohol, someone could have put a drug in your soft drink.
- > Tell a friend and, if possible, ask them to take you to a safe place, such as your accommodation. Ask your friend to stay with you until the effects of the drug have fully worn off – probably the following morning. Be very sure that you fully trust the friend you are asking to help you, no matter how long you have known them.
- > Try to avoid going anywhere with a stranger.
- > Try to avoid giving out your personal details, including where you are staying or your room number to strangers.
- > Consider getting medical attention. Drugs can affect people in different ways, and may react badly, particularly if you are taking any medication.

Returning home

- > A sexual assault may change the way you feel for a long time. People react to the trauma of sexual assault in different ways. You might feel angry, ashamed, frightened or guilty. You may have different feelings at different times. You may have some of these feelings soon after the attack and some may develop later on, even years later. This is normal after such a trauma and you should consider getting help and advice from a counsellor or support group whenever you feel you need to. Project Trust can provide you with information on what professional help is available locally and in the U.K. for you.
- > One of the distressing things about sexual assault is that, if you are a woman, it may result in pregnancy. If your period is late, you may wish to consider having a pregnancy test. Stress, tension and worry can also sometimes delay your period, however, if you are in doubt, it is best to get medical advice.
- > For both men and women, the possibility of sexually transmitted infections is a very real risk. If you are examined by a doctor, they should be able to give you the appropriate advice, but when you return home, you may also want to consult your own G.P.
- > Even if you did not report the attack while you were abroad, you may want to report the crime to the police when you return to the U.K. Your local police force should be able to tell you what action they may be able to take and what options may be available to you. They will also be aware of local support organisations. You must understand that the U.K. police will not generally be able to investigate an attack that has taken place abroad.