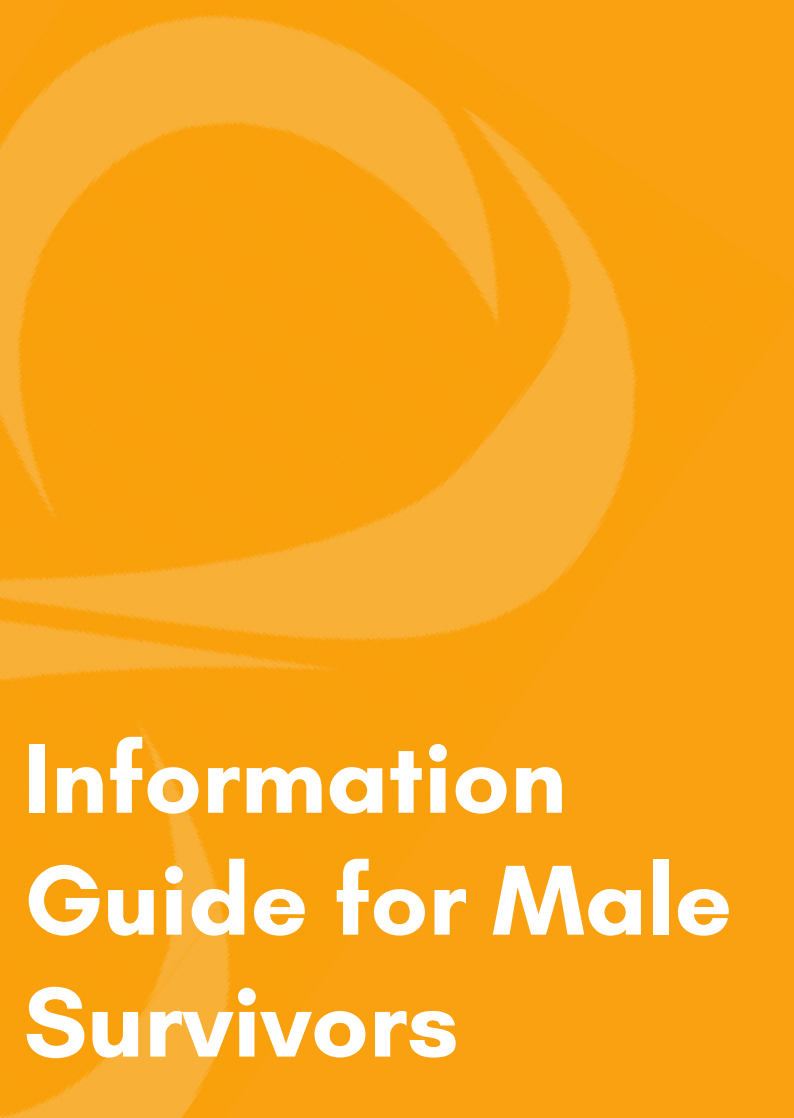




Information Guide for Male Survivors

What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence is any sexual act or activity which is unwanted. This may be by: force, manipulation, threats, deception, bullying, intimidation or pressure. Sexual violence, as such, is any sexual act or activity that is enacted without consent. The legal meaning of consent is understood as 'free agreement', which means that consent cannot be given if the individual is under the age of 16, unconscious or asleep, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or the individual complied with the act because of coercive or threatening behaviour (as listed above).

Types of sexual violence can include (but are not limited to):

- Rape
- Sexual assault
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Assault by penetration
- Sexual harassment
- Spiking
- Indecent exposure
- Cyber flashing

Prevalence of Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is more common than we think and can happen to anyone. Yet less than 1 in 5 men who are survivors of sexual violence report to the police. To be clear, it is never the survivor's fault that they experienced sexual violence; it is not because of who they are, but because of who the abuser is.

- Around 3% to 13% of men have experienced sexual abuse as children
- Recent crime stats estimate that around a quarter of victims of 'other sexual crime' (such as indecent exposure, making someone watch images, online sexual abuse) are male
- Around 6% of victims of rape and attempted rape, and around 13% of victims of sexual assault are male

Male Sexual Violence Myths

There are many myths and misconceptions around how men experience sexual violence. Below are some examples.

Myth	Reality
Women cannot sexually assault men.	Men can and are sexually assaulted by women. This myth also stems from masculine stereotypes, suggesting men should always desire sex with women, and that a young boy having sex with an older woman is a sign of masculine prowess.
Sexual assault only happens to gay men.	Anyone can experience sexual violence. This myth derives from homophobic views, believing that sexual assault is indicative of an individual's sexuality which ignores the force and manipulation used in perpetrating the crime.
Survivors become perpetrators.	There is no direct correlation that an individual who has been abused will abuse another person.

**Erection or
ejaculation means
you 'wanted it' or
'enjoyed it'**

Erection or ejaculation are automatic physiological responses and are not indicative of whether a person 'enjoyed' or 'wanted' the sexual act. Sometimes perpetrators will use these responses to confuse, emotionally manipulate, and control the victim to dissuade the individual from reporting the crime.

**Men can't be raped
or sexually assaulted.**

Men can be raped and sexual assaulted. This does not have anything to do with the survivors gender or sexuality.

How can sexual violence affect men?

Sexual violence can affect individuals differently. This may depend on the nature of the abuse, others reactions to the abuse, who the perpetrator is and when it happened. Effects can include physical, emotional, and psychological harm, which may include shame, embarrassment, fear, guilt, injury, traumatic symptoms, and mistrust of others.

Childhood sexual abuse can cause physical damage to sexual organs, lead to unhealthy relationship attachment styles, problems with memory, difficulty in regulating emotions in later life, including post-traumatic symptoms such as anxiety, emotional and physical 'numbing', flashbacks, nightmares, and panic attacks.

Experiencing sexual violence as an adult can disturb our worldview, values and beliefs and lead to confusion, shame, embarrassment and fear. It can also lead to secondary mental health problems such as OCD, anorexia, depression, emotionally unstable personality disorder and more.

The abuse can make individuals feel powerless due to the control and manipulation involved in the act. And this sense of powerlessness can become associated with later post-traumatic effects where a survivor feels out of control of their own physical, psychological, and emotional responses. Furthermore, an abuser may have told the survivor that they are to blame, that they are worthless or may have threatened them. This can make it difficult for a survivor to speak openly about the assault/s, which can prevent healing and exacerbate the effects of abuse.

Common concerns male survivors have

Some men have worries or concerns following what happened to them. Often, these are based on false beliefs and can stop some men from seeking out help and support. These are:

Reaction to the abuse

Just as people have involuntary physical reactions (like erection), they react involuntarily to danger, attack, fear or threat: the flight, freeze or fight response. These are all protective responses. You don't know, and can't control, how you will respond. If you freeze, it doesn't mean you let something happen. If you run away, it doesn't mean you are a coward. If you can't remember anything from that time, it doesn't mean it didn't happen.

Whether it's OK to contact us

RASAC services are here to support all people of all genders. Many men who contact us were abused as children, and have never spoken to anyone, or were not listened to or taken seriously when they did. Some men worry that we might assume, because they are men, that they are the perpetrator. We know that some men will experience unique barriers to reaching out for support, but we understand that everyone's experience is different and we'll listen and believe you.

Being a male survivor

Men (and society generally) may assume that 'real men' can't be raped/sexually assaulted because they should be able to defend themselves against attack. Any man can be abused, no matter their size, strength, appearance, age, occupation, race or sexual identity. Sexual violence is about controlling someone. People can be controlled in all sorts of ways: by physical force and through fear, threats, and psychological abuse. Beliefs about how men are supposed to be, such as 'boys don't cry' and 'men don't talk about their feelings', can also make men feel as if they are not 'real men' because they do cry, they do have feelings, and they want to speak about them.

Sexual orientation and gender identity

Men who identify as straight sometimes end up questioning their sexual orientation; they may think the abuse made them gay or that it happened because they are gay. Some trans men may find that their experience of sexual violence increases their dysphoria, or impacts how they feel about their transition or gender identity. Sexual violence has nothing to do with sexual orientation, sex or gender identity. It happens because of who the abuser is, not who you are.

Culture, shame and disclosing

Some men find it hard to speak about the abuse because of their culture, religion, family or community. This may include the fear of 'shaming' their family/community or losing their status. They may think that their family/community will blame them for the abuse, and punish or shun them. This could also be the case for men who live in a small community or a rural area. They may not ask for help because they are worried that other people will find out. It can be hard to be anonymous, even if what you say is treated confidentially, because someone who knows you, or perhaps works with you, could still find out. Services offered by RASAC are anonymous and will not share their information.

How long it takes to recover

Some men ask why they are still affected long after the abuse happened. This is most likely because they were not able to deal with what happened at the time: they may not have had the words to say what happened; they may have buried it. It may have felt as if it went away for a time, but has come back because of some sort of trigger or significant life event (positive or negative) such as having a child, forming a new relationship, or further assault. It is a positive if you can ask for help now.

Further information and support:

RASAC:

Website: www.rasac.co.uk

Helpline: 0300 303 4787

Email: helpline@rasac.co.uk

West Yorkshire Survivors:

Website: www.survivorswestyorkshire.org.uk

Call: 07393 140 250

Rape Crisis England and Wales:

24/7 Support line: 0808 500 2222

Website: www.rapecrisis.org.uk | Live chat via their website

Survivors UK

Website: www.survivorsuk.org

Helpline: 02035983898

Andys Man Club:

Group support for men

Website: www.andysmanclub.co.uk

Platform 1

Website: www.platform-1.co.uk

Samaritans:

Website: www.samaritans.org

Call: 116 123

NHS Talking Therapies | 01484 343700 |

www.southwestyorkshire.nhs.uk/services/iapt-kirklees/

Police non-emergency: 101

Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre Kirklees, Calderdale and Wakefield

PO Box 230
Huddersfield
HD1 5UY

Helpline: 0300 303 4787

Websites: www.rasac.co.uk

Email: helpline@rasac.co.uk

