

Specialist Sexual Violence Services Risk Collapse Without Urgent Government Action

Tuesday 12 August, 2025

Three of the UK's leading sexual violence charities; The Survivors Trust, Rape Crisis England & Wales, and We Are Survivors; have today warned that vital services are on the brink of closure unless the Government urgently commits to sustainable funding.

In an open letter to the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor, the organisations, alongside over 70 other frontline and membership services, say that without action, tens of thousands of survivors of rape and sexual abuse will be left without the specialist support they need to cope and recover.

Despite their life-saving work, many of these community-based services face an uncertain future, threatening the support they currently offer for the majority of survivors who never report to the police or engage with statutory services.

The scale of the crisis:

- Around 500,000 children are sexually abused each year in England and Wales
- 14 million adults live with the trauma of childhood sexual abuse
- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 18 men have been raped or sexually assaulted since the age of 16

Less than 15% of rape survivors report to the police, and fewer than 3% of those reports lead to charges in the same year

Research has estimated the lifetime economic cost of sexual violence and abuse against children and adults in one year to be over £400 billion, yet the sector remains chronically underfunded compared to domestic abuse services.

The letter, sent today, calls on the Government to:

1. Guarantee the continuation of the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund (RASASF) beyond April 2026, with a 15% uplift and multi-year funding for stability.
2. Provide urgent additional funding for specialist voluntary sector services who do not currently receive funding from the RASASF.
3. Place a duty on NHS England, Police & Crime Commissioners and local authorities to work with specialist voluntary agencies to assess and meet local sexual violence and abuse survivor support needs.
4. Ensure sexual violence is not conflated with domestic abuse in policy or funding, recognising the distinct expertise required.
5. Ensure the upcoming VAWG strategy recognises the distinct needs of sexual violence survivors, including men, and children, and reflects these in departmental spending.

A spokesperson for the signatories said:

"Without urgent government action, there is a realistic possibility that the majority of specialist sexual violence services will have to close, leaving limited support for survivors and hindering the Government's own ambitions to halve violence against women and girls. These services save lives, save money, and help aid prevention efforts. Losing them would be catastrophic."

Duncan Craig OBE, founder and Chief Executive Officer of **We Are Survivors**, the largest male survivor organisation in the UK, said:

"I know personally the pain and distress of trying to find somewhere to help you with what happened. Back in 2007 when I was looking for help for myself, resources were scarce, really scarce for boys and men. Thankfully, In the last 18 years, the sexual violence sector has really mobilised itself and has taken on a more proactive and collegial attitude to delivering for all victims/survivors, male and female, children and adults, not forgetting adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse – those that have stayed silent for 20+ years."

We cannot afford to go back in time and see fewer and fewer specialist rape and sexual abuse organisations delivering services. Of course there are financial pressures on government, but the

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seeming lack of engagement recently in the decisions being made that impact victim/survivors of sexual offences deeply concerns me"

Fay Maxted OBE, CEO of **The Survivors Trust** said:

"Many survivors of sexual violence and abuse suffer in silence for years, sometimes decades, before seeking help. Thankfully, more people are reaching out, however this means demand for support is rising every year, and our specialist voluntary sector services are a unique national resource that must not be lost. For decades they have provided life-affirming and often life-saving counselling, advocacy and therapy for women, men and children, as well as for families and loved ones. The knowledge and expertise in this sector is unrivalled and vital for ensuring Government understands both the devastating impact of sexual violence and the healing power of effective, trauma-informed, survivor-led therapy and support. These services are essential

Ciara Bergman, Chief Executive Office, **Rape Crisis England & Wales** said:

"Together with all other services delivering sexual violence and abuse services across the UK, Rape Crisis England & Wales join the call for the work we do and the survivors we support to be recognised in the upcoming VAWG strategy and associated funding commitments. Many people assume that specialist care and support, delivered independently and in the community, will be available to those who need it after rape or sexual abuse. But the reality is that this will not always be the case. The work our centres do, and the people they work with, are amazing. We want to be there for them for as long as we're needed, whilst working towards a longer-term end to rape and all forms of sexual abuse".

The organisations have requested formal responses from the Home Secretary and Lord Chancellor by the end of September 2025.

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Additional Assets:

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