

Rape and Sexual Assault

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About rape and sexual assault

Being raped or sexually assaulted is a very distressing experience with effects that can be long lasting.

It can happen to both women and men. Here at the Student Counselling Service we will offer support to all casualties of rape. Therefore, throughout this page advice and suggestions are relevant to either gender.

People who have suffered sexual attacks describe feeling:

- Frightened.
- Guilty.
- Powerless.
- Angry.
- Ashamed.
- Depressed.
- Numb.
- Lacking self-confidence.
- As if they are not really here, or part of them is missing.

Sometimes people have difficulty with eating or sleeping. They may lack concentration and find this makes academic work difficult. Every person reacts differently, and it is not unusual for feelings to change from day to day. In particular there can be a long gap between the assault and the emotional reaction.

Men who have suffered sexual attacks experience similar feelings to women. Men may have extra issues to deal with due to society's belief that men should be able to protect themselves.

It can be difficult to talk about the attack to friends or family, yet it is important to have understanding and support. It can be helpful to talk to a trained person in confidence - one of the Counsellors, or a local Rape Crisis Centre - listed below in contacts.

Facts about rape and sexual assault

The perpetrator of the rape may well be known to the victim.

There is a myth that sexual violence is only carried out by strangers. In fact, the majority of offences are committed by a person known to the attacked person. They may be a friend, a partner, a workmate, a relative, a neighbour or a person in authority. Rape is always a crime whether it's committed by your friend, date, boyfriend/girlfriend, partner, husband/wife or a stranger.

Rape is not always accompanied by other physical violence.

When a person is sexually assaulted, they may react in various ways. Some people scream or fight back; many become quiet - too shocked to speak or cry out. Paralysed by fear, they may be unable to resist. If violence is threatened some may take the decision to struggle less in the hope of getting away with the least amount of physical harm. Consequently, they may or may not have torn clothes or signs of struggle afterwards. Verbal intimidation, threats or emotional blackmail may be used by the assailant. Therefore, a person does not need to show physical injuries to prove they have been assaulted.

Rape and sexual assault, whether by a stranger or a friend, is never the victim's fault.

Rape and sexual assault are always more about the use of force or power to humiliate, control, hurt or violate a person than about sexual desire or passion. There is evidence to suggest that a very large number of attacks are premeditated. The appearance of the person in terms of status, age, cultural background, occupation, previous relationships is irrelevant; any person can suffer sexual assault or rape.

What to do after a rape or sexual assault

People react differently after sexual assault or rape. It is important to trust and validate your feelings and do what you need to do in order to recover. This may entail telling a friend, going to a place where you feel safe or having a bath or shower or crying.

In order to cope with the trauma of the event many people will just try to carry on as normal and not tell anyone for a long time. However, often distress can surface a considerable time after the event. No matter how much later, a person can always seek help from counsellors, GPs etc. Do not feel you have to cope on your own simply because you did not report the incident soon after it happened.

Health issues

Many people who have been raped or sexually assaulted are concerned about their health. Hospitals and GPs must see you on a confidential basis and not report the assault to the police unless you request this.

You may decide to be tested for pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted diseases. If you prefer not to use your GP there are many clinics which offer free and confidential advice. The Genitourinary Clinic is situated at Leicester Royal Infirmary.

Victims may have bruising and other injuries that need immediate attention by visiting a Casualty Department at a local hospital or the campus Medical Centre.

Reporting to the Police

Sexual violence is a criminal offence and you can, if you wish your perpetrator to be prosecuted, report the crime to the police. It is your choice. You can do it later if you wish but the reason for reporting a sexual assault immediately is so that forensic evidence can be taken. The evidence is collected by means of a medical examination by a sensitively trained doctor (you can request female or male) employed part-time by the police. Even if you change your mind later and decide not to go to court, it can be helpful for the police to know about the crime in case there are other related incidents. Your decisions and choices will be respected throughout. You should have the right to withdraw your complaint at any time in the proceedings.

Nowadays the police have training in tact and sensitivity and recognise the ordeal you have been through. Locally they have made special arrangements. Information about Leicestershire Police contacts for victims of rape is available on [their website](#). You can go to Loughborough Police Station or telephone them (01162 222 222) and they will come to you. Ask for an officer with special training. This is usually a woman. They will take you to a special suite of rooms away from the police station at [Juniper Lodge](#), in the grounds of Leicester General Hospital. The trained staff here will help you and respect your need to take your time. No one has the right to ask you to disclose any personal details about your previous relationships and sexual life. If you are very traumatised after the assault you can arrange another time to make a statement. If English is not your first language, they can arrange for an interpreter to be present. They will explain all the procedures and will give advice and information about the next stages including the court process if you want to proceed with that.

You can take a friend or professional worker with you. You may be asked to leave clothing with the police for forensic evidence and they will provide you with other clothing. You may prefer to take a change of clothing with you.

The staff at Juniper Lodge will help you liaise with counsellors at Leicester Rape Crisis and they can take you to the GU Clinic if you wish. They also link up with the Victim Support Service if you want that. Juniper Lodge also have a helpline offering support and information on 0116 273 5461.

You can also ask to see a counsellor here at the University Counselling Service. We offer confidential support within our normal code of confidentiality as would your GP.

Useful contacts

Loughborough Police Station: 01162 222 222

University Security: 01509 22 2141 or 0800 526966

Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity team: 01509 228338

studentwellbeing@lboro.ac.uk

To book an appointment with any of our services within Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity (including the Counselling Team, Mental Health Support Team and the Wellbeing Advisers), please complete [the referral form](#).

University Medical Centre: 01509 22 2062 (Enquiries - office hours)

Appointments & emergencies: 0845 0450557

Juniper Lodge: 0116 273 5461

For rape and sexual abuse of both men & women

UAVA: 0808 80 200 28 - Text support: 07715 994 962

info@uava.org.uk

Three local specialist providers of domestic abuse and sexual violence services.

Survivors UK: 0845 122 1201 (Mon, Tues & Thurs 7-10pm)

Support for anyone affected by male sexual violation.

Victim Support Line: 0808 16 89 111

Samaritans: 116 123

Quetzal: 0116 253 3383 (helpline 10-12 am, 7-9 pm)

0116 253 9103

Support for women recovering from childhood sexual abuse

Leicester Rape Crisis: 0116 255 8852