



Support After Rape and Sexual Violence Leeds

Volunteering Guide Helpline Services

This pack gives you more details about who we are, what is involved in volunteering on our Helpline and about our basic Helpline Training Course.

Our basic Helpline Training Course consists of 12 sessions, held over an 11 week period, plus a selection evening and post course interviews. Of the 12 sessions 10 of those are evening sessions, usually a weekday evening 5.45pm—8.45pm and four are full days 9.30am—4.30pm either a Saturday or Sunday. All are held in our City Centre premises.

The Helpline Training Course includes sessions on: an introduction to SARSVL, violence against women and rape, listening skills, oppression, adult survivors of childhood sexual violence, child sexual exploitation and trafficking, email, text and face to face emotional support, record keeping, good practice.

Because each training session builds on knowledge and skills gained in previous sessions we require you to attend every session.

If you are unable to attend even one of the session dates — which we always publicise in advance — we will not be able to consider your application.

Who are SARSVL?

Support After Rape and Sexual Violence Leeds (SARSVL) is a member of Rape Crisis England & Wales.

Our mission is to support women and girls who have been affected by sexual violence of any kind, at any time in their lives.

We are a volunteer led service, run by women for women, and our Centre is a women only safe space.

We provide support through our helpline service, and through our advocacy service, as well as carrying out outreach and awareness raising work.

Who can use the helpline service?

Our helpline is open to any self identified woman or girl, of any age. This means that we support trans* women and girls at any stage of their transition, and that we support children and young women as well as adult women.

The helpline can be used by women and girls who have been raped or sexually assaulted, and also by the women around them — their friends, family and partners — who may also need support.

Our service is not available to men or boys, but we will provide initial support and help male callers find an appropriate service for their needs.

What qualifications do I need to be a SARSVL Helpline Volunteer?

You don't need any special qualifications or experience to become a SARSVL Helpline Volunteer. However there are a few basic requirements that all Helpline Volunteers need to meet to be able to carry out the work on the helpline.

- Be available to carry out one regular 3-4 hour shift each week.
- Have basic literacy and numeracy. Good spelling or grammar are not important, but you must be able to read and write basic English.
- Have access to email and/or a mobile phone. We can provide support to set up an email account.
- Have a good level of spoken English. You don't need to be a native English speaker, or even speak completely fluently, but you must be able to understand spoken English and make yourself understood clearly and effectively.
- Be able to use a telephone headset, and sit in an adjustable office chair for 2-3 hours at a time.
- Commit to being a Helpline Volunteer for a minimum of 12 months.

Please do consider carefully if you feel that you can carry out the work. You are the best judge of your ability. If you are unsure please do contact us, as we can often provide support with access needs and learning.

What do SARSVL Helpline Volunteers do?

Helpline volunteers provide emotional support to women and girls on the phone, by email and SMS, and face to face.

You will be expected to:

- Commit to one regular shift per week. Shifts are 3 or 4 hours long.
- Complete admin and paperwork.
- Attend two sessions of ongoing training per year to learn new skills and ensure a high standard of service on the helpline.

You'll never work on a helpline shift alone, and there will always be an experienced SARSVL woman with you.

What training will I receive?

Helpline volunteers attend 12 sessions which are taught over an 11 week period, and which cover a range of topics around sexual violence.

We can't cover every topic during basic training, and we want to prepare you with the skills to support any woman or girl, regardless of her background or what has happened to her. This means that we may not talk about how to support women from particular groups, or may talk about one or two groups only. This doesn't mean we are ignoring other groups of women.

The skills we teach are universal and can be used to support all women and girls.

You are encouraged to continue your learning in your own time, and SARSVL has a small resources library which you are very welcome to use to facilitate this. We also offer ongoing training on a range of topics.

Before starting to take calls you will attend at least two observation shifts where you will listen in to real helpline calls.

All Helpline Volunteers have a six month probation period, during which they attend two further training sessions. To pass probation you must demonstrate that you can deliver the service appropriately, and that you are reliable.

How is training assessed?

There is no formal assessment, however as you go through the course you will be observed by trainers, and if you need any additional learning or support that will be discussed with you as and when a need is identified. You will also be asked to complete a Learning Journal for each session.

It's important to think about your own learning needs, and approach trainers if you have any specific concerns about your performance or your understanding of a topic.

What happens after the course?

Once you complete the training course you will have a post course interview. This is where you will be given feedback and told about what's involved in the next stage of becoming a SARSVL helpline volunteer. It's also an opportunity to discuss anything that's come up for you personally during the training.

You will then attend at least two helpline shifts as an observer. You will listen in to real helpline calls and will take part in debrief after each call. You will also be shown where to find everything, and have the opportunity to ask any questions.

You will then be a Probationary Helpline Volunteer, and will start taking calls.



I worry that listening to women's stories might be upsetting for me. What kind of support is available?

We understand that the helpline work can be upsetting for volunteers, and that helpline volunteers require support. The following support is available to all helpline volunteers:

- Debrief after each call and shift with shift partners. This is a chance to talk through the call and discuss any emotional impact, as well as a chance to learn and improve your call practice.
- Peer support – volunteers support each other and you are encouraged to form friendships and bonds with other women, and to both seek support and offer it.
- Volunteer Coordinator – she is there to provide additional support and guidance if you feel you need this. For example if you can't shake a particular call from your mind, a chat with the Volunteer Coordinator can help.
- We ask all volunteers to think about their own sources of support outside SARSVL. Remember that confidentiality rules mean you can't talk about the content of a call with anyone outside SARSVL.

What follow on training is provided?

After you have been on the helpline for two to three months, you will attend a follow on training session. This will give you an opportunity to tackle any issues that have come up in your first few shifts, and will give you a refresher on some of the basic skills.

After six months you will attend a further follow on session. After this you will be told whether you have passed your probationary period.

Once you have passed probation you will be a full SARSVL helpline volunteer.

Is any ongoing training offered?

Once you are through probation you will be expected to attend two sessions of ongoing training each year. These sessions cover a wide range of topics that may not have been discussed in basic training.



I have some support needs. Who can I speak to?

If you have any additional support needs, please mention this on your application form. A trainer will get in touch with you to talk about what you need, both for the course itself and on the helpline.

If you'd like to discuss support needs before you apply, please email the Training Co-ordinator on the address given at the end of this booklet.

I have a past criminal conviction — can I still volunteer?

Most of the time a prior conviction will not be a barrier to volunteering, but failure to tell us about convictions will result in you being asked to leave the training course.

We carry out enhanced Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks on all our Helpline volunteers, so we will see any convictions, including 'spent' convictions.

This means that you should tick 'yes' on the application form if you have any prior convictions, even if they are considered 'spent'.

We understand that disclosing a previous conviction can be embarrassing. Like all aspects of your application, any disclosures will be kept confidential to the Training Team. If you'd like to discuss this issue before applying, please do email the Training Co-ordinator on the email address given at the end of this booklet.

I want to become a SARSVL Helpline Volunteer. What do I need to do next?

- **Wait for the next round of recruitment** which will be advertised on our website www.supportafterrapeleeds.org, twitter @sarsvl, facebook 'sarsvl'.
- Check that you meet the minimum requirements (see page 5), and are able to commit to attending selection and every training session date which will be advertised.
- Complete the application form which will be uploaded to the website *when we are recruiting*.
- Send your completed application form to us as instructed on the form.

I've got a question — who should I contact?

When we are advertising the latest round of recruitment you can contact the Helpline Training Team by email: sarsvl.helpline.training@gmail.com. During training a training coordinator is present at every session of the training course, and they are your main point of contact for any questions or concerns.

At other times general enquiries should be directed to info@sarsvl.org.uk or PO Box 827, Leeds LS1 9PN

I'm not sure the Helpline is for me. Is there any other way I can volunteer with SARSVL?

Yes! There are lots of ways to volunteer with SARSVL outside of the helpline. You could:

- Become an Advocacy Volunteer and work with women on a one to one basis providing practical support.
- Join our Steering Group and help with administrative and policy decisions. This group meets on a monthly basis. Members of our Steering Group are required to join at least one of our Sub Groups on a particular subject, for example Monitoring & Evaluation, Fundraising, Making Links, Advocacy, Communications.
- Fundraise for us.
- Donate your skills and time.
- Something else that we haven't thought of!

To find out more about volunteering with SARSVL please check out our website www.supportafterrapeleeds.org.uk/volunteer or contact info@sarsvl.org.uk



General Enquiries:

e. info@sarsvl.org.uk

t. 0113 243 9102

Training Coordinator:

e. sarsvl.helpline.training@gmail.com