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Support After Rape & Sexual Violence Leeds
(SARSVL)

Volunteering Guide

ADVOCACY SERVICE

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



About Advocacy

Advocacy is about helping people to access information and services, be involved in decisions about their lives, and explore their views and wishes. It assists people in exploring choices and options, defending their rights and speaking out about issues that matter to them, to regain or maintain power and control over their own lives. SARSVL Advocacy service will work specifically with women affected by sexual violence, whenever in their lives it happened. Volunteer advocates will be provided with the training and support to enable them to work with survivors, from a person-centred, empowerment approach, grounded in a feminist analysis of violence and taking a human rights approach.

Our basic Advocacy Volunteer Training Course consists of 16 sessions, held over a 12 week period. This includes an initial training weekend where you will learn more about SARSVL, the Advocacy service and the role of an advocacy volunteer. There is no commitment at this stage to take the training further, and you will have the opportunity to decide whether the role and the service is right for you at this point. The sessions are held on some weekdays, weekday evenings and weekend daytimes, and the dates are listed below. All are held in our City Centre premises.

You will receive comprehensive training on understanding and working with survivors of sexual violence within the context of gender-based violence, using advocacy skills. The training will be interactive, participatory and designed to meet a variety of learning styles. The training is intensive, and we will ask that you take responsibility for your own learning, ensuring that you have the necessary time and interest to bring to your own continuing development, both during and after the initial training. Rape Crisis training is widely respected and will offer you many opportunities for further work in support, advocacy, campaigning and simply for your own development. We want to invest in you, and would ask you to invest your time and energies in us and the survivors we work with.

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

SARSVL provides travel expenses for volunteers attending training, and has a limited budget for childcare expenses, to enable women to attend. If you would like to claim childcare expenses you will be asked to indicate this on your application form.

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 SARSVL services?

Our services are 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.

Our helpline services can be used by women and girls who have been raped or sexually assaulted at any time in their lives and also by the women around them — their friends, family and partners — who may also need support.

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

Why Volunteer at SARSVL?

Volunteering at SARSVL brings...

- Increased employment opportunities
- Increased learning opportunities
- Increased personal and professional confidence
- A chance to challenge yourself and develop new skills
- The opportunity to work with people with similar values and ethos

Rape Crisis training is widely respected and offers an excellent grounding to the women who take part. Many have gone on to rewarding careers, both in Rape Crisis and other services such as Social Work, Probation, Psychology, Social Care and Welfare Rights, and many working in these areas have found that their work is enriched by their experience of volunteering for SARSVL. For others, the opportunity to contribute and to learn has enriched their lives and relationships.

Volunteers tell us they value the welcoming and supportive atmosphere of SARSVL and the opportunity to be part of a women-centred team, where they are listened to and valued, and where they can play a part in improving the lives of women affected by violence and abuse.

What Qualifications do I Need to Become an Advocacy Volunteer?

You don't need any special qualifications or experience to become a SARSVL Advocacy Volunteer. However, there are a few basic requirements that all Advocacy Volunteers need to

meet to be able to carry out the work of the Advocacy Service:

1. Be committed to supporting women by working on a one to one basis with them and being able to work with a range of professionals from a number of different agencies in order to negotiate the best possible outcomes for their clients.
2. Have basic literacy and numeracy. Good spelling or grammar are not important, but you must be able to read and write basic English.
3. Have access to email and/or a mobile phone. We can provide support to set up an email account.
4. 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.
5. Commit to being an Advocacy 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.

Our comprehensive training programme and ongoing support will help develop new and existing skills and will provide all the information needed to fulfill the role of a volunteer advocate.

What do SARSVL Advocacy Volunteers do?

Advocates are independent of the police, the courts and other service providers and will be there just for their clients.

The SARSVL Advocacy Service can offer a range of different types of support. Advocacy Volunteers will work with clients to help them identify what type of support they may require in their current situation. The service is new, and will develop in response to needs that survivors identify, and from the ongoing input of volunteers themselves.

It is intended that service users will be supported in a number of ways, such as:

Emotional - the advocacy service can offer some emotional support but is not a counselling service. However we can point clients towards counselling services in Leeds if they think that is what they need.

Legal - we can offer support by talking through reporting an incident of sexual violence and explaining what may happen and what to expect in the legal process, including accompanying a service user to court.

Health – we can, for example, help service users to make arrangements to go to a clinic or doctor.

Housing – we can talk through and help our service users to find out about their housing options.

Safety - we will work with service users to help them to assess if they are safe and support them to put relevant orders e.g. restraining orders, in place, if necessary.

Finances - if service users are struggling financially, we'll inform them of where to seek the appropriate help from, e.g. attending the local CAB with them.

Support network - we'll help service users to identify what support they already have in place and anything that their family and/or friends can do to help support them.

Children – if service users have any concerns about their children, we'll offer help to explore these and discuss their options.

You will be expected to:

1. Commit to being available to support our service users for at least one 2 hour session per week during office hours (9-5)
2. Complete admin and paperwork.
3. Attend a bi-monthly team meeting / training where we will provide ongoing training to learn and share new skills and ensure a high standard of service.
4. Attend regular support & supervision.

What Training Will I Receive?

Advocacy Volunteers attend 16 sessions, taught over a 12 week period, and covering a range of topics around sexual violence, the experience of survivors and the skills and knowledge necessary for an advocacy worker. You will learn, for example, about some of the ways that experience of violence impacts on survivors' lives, including trauma responses and the coping strategies many survivors use. Key areas such as understanding the criminal justice system as it applies to sexual violence will be covered, looking at survivors' experience of accessing justice and the way that sexual violence is investigated and prosecuted in England. You will learn about child and adult protection, and working safely in safeguarding. We will look at approaches to advocacy, and develop skills in providing advocacy with survivors of sexual violence. We will explore boundaries and self-care, understanding the impact of this work on us and ways to keep ourselves well while working with others. This and much more!

While the training covers a lot of ground, it cannot cover every aspect, and it is intended as an introduction, offering the knowledge and skills development to begin working with survivors as a volunteer advocate. Inevitably we will identify areas for further training and development, which we will plan to meet in ongoing training and development.

You are also 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.

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 learning or your understanding of a topic.

What Happens After the Course?

Following initial training, there will be opportunity to consider your readiness to begin working with survivors. You will meet individually with trainers, who will help you to assess your readiness to provide advocacy to survivors. This is where you will be given feedback and plan further

development and plan next steps in volunteering. It's also an opportunity to discuss anything that's come up for you personally during the training.

If you are ready to begin providing advocacy support you will be supported in this work, with an experienced worker attending your initial meeting with a service user, and meeting with you regularly to provide support and supervision. Experienced workers will also be available throughout your time at SARSVL, to provide guidance and ongoing support to you. It is intended that Advocacy Volunteers will also provide peer support to each other.

I'm worried that I may get upset when supporting women who have experienced rape or sexual violence, what support is available for me?

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

1. Debrief – a chance to talk through the session with the service user and discuss any emotional impact, as well as a chance to learn and improve your practice.
2. 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.
3. Support and Supervision – regular supervision is an essential part of your own practice. Meeting with a supervisor offers a chance to talk through impacts of the work you do, your own learning and development and any issues you are experiencing which might impact on your wellbeing in this work.
4. 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 any disclosures with anyone outside SARSVL.

Ongoing Assessment

After 6 months, you will be asked to meet with the Advocacy Coordinator to discuss your experience so far of volunteering with SARSVL, any need for further training and development, and or support to enable you to continue volunteering with us.

Is There Any Ongoing Training Provided?

Bi-monthly team meetings / trainings will be provided, offering the opportunity to build relationships within the team, keep up to date with (and contribute to) developments in the Advocacy Service and further develop your own practice.

I Have Some Support Needs, Who Can I Talk 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 when you are volunteering with SARSVL.

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

I Have a Past Criminal Conviction – Can I Still Apply?

Most of the time a prior conviction will not be a barrier to volunteering with SARSVL, 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 Advocacy 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 Advocacy Co-ordinator on the email address given at the end of this booklet.

I am interested in applying to volunteer for the Advocacy Service, What Next?

Advocacy does not currently have confirmed dates for our next recruitment & training programme, however regular training is offered. If you think you might be interested in finding out more, or making an application, then please join our mailing list to be contacted with details.

I've Got a Question, Who do I Contact?

You can contact the Advocacy Co-ordinator via phone 0113 243 9102 or email to:
cath@sarsvl.org.uk

You can write to us at PO Box 827, Leeds LS1 9PN.

I'm not sure the Advocacy Volunteer role 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 Advocacy. You could:

- Become a Helpline Volunteer and work with women via our helpline.
- 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

Email: info@sarsvl.org.uk

Office phone: 0113 243 9102