**Helpline Volunteer Application Information Pack Autumn 2021**

Thank you for your interest in volunteering on the Helpline at Support After Rape and Sexual Violence Leeds (SARSVL). Our volunteers make a huge difference in the work that we do, and the service we provide to women, girls and non-binary survivors of sexual violence and we’re really pleased that you are interested in volunteering to support survivors.

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

**What is SARSVL?**

Support After Rape and Sexual Violence Leeds (SARSVL) is an accredited Rape Crisis Centre, providing free, independent and confidential specialist support services to all women and girls (cis and trans) in Leeds whose lives have been affected by sexual violence and abuse of any kind, at any time.

All our services are underpinned by our feminist rationale, which recognises that sexual violence, as a form of violence against women and girls, is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. We actively tackle sexual violence against women and girls, by providing specialist support services, in a women only safe space, designed to meet the needs of survivors, by raising awareness and understanding of sexual violence, and by providing specialist training to other agencies.

We offer three free and confidential specialist frontline services – Helpline, Advocacy, Counselling.

**What is the SARSVL Helpline?**

The Helpline is made up of specially trained volunteers who provide free, anonymous and confidential emotional support to women and girls of any age affected by sexual violence of any kind, and at any time. The support offered through the Helpline is grounded in non-judgmental listening and emotional support.

Although we have one paid part time member of staff to support volunteers, the majority of the frontline support to survivors who contact our Helpline is delivered by volunteers. Volunteers are a central and important part of SARSVL and SARSVL Helpline.

The Helpline is currently 4 days week and survivors can contact us via telephone, text (SMS) and email. We hope that as we start transitioning back from our reduced Covid-19 hours that we move towards our full shift model in which the SARSVL Helpline was open 6 days a week.

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 do Helpline Volunteers do?**

Helpline Volunteers normally do one shift every week providing emotional and listening support via our various contact methods. You will always work alongside at least one other person. During the office being closed, we are operating a remote volunteering system where you will be volunteering from home at the same time as another volunteer and a SARSVL staff member. You will be in contact with them for the duration of the shift, so there will be no lone-working. Once it is safe to do so, we hope to stop volunteering remotely and to volunteer in the office once again. This means your initial training will be online and your volunteering will, at least for the start, be based at home.

Apart from providing the frontline service, Helpline volunteers are also required to complete a small amount of admin on each shift. Volunteers will have the opportunity to engage with ongoing training and development throughout their time at SARSVL and other opportunities as they arise.

Volunteers do not offer advice, answer legal or medical questions or disclose anything personal about themselves to callers.

**What qualifications or experience do I need?**

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:

* You are a woman, aged 18 or over
* Have basic literacy and numeracy - good spelling or grammar are not important, but you must be able to read and write basic English
* Have a good level of English and be able to make yourself understood, as well as understand spoken English
* Have access to a mobile, laptop, earphones with a microphone, reliable wi-fi and a quiet room with a door to take confidential calls where you will not be disturbed or overheard, when you are volunteering remotely
* Be available to do one regular 3 hour shift each week
* Be able to use a telephone headset, and sit in an adjustable office chair or chair at your home for 2 –3 hours at a time
* Commit to being a Helpline Volunteer for a minimum of 12 months

If you have any specific access or support needs that you wish to discuss with us prior to application, please contact us using the details at the end of this pack.

**What training and support will I get?**

SARSVL is committed to providing you with a thorough induction, training and support necessary in meeting the responsibilities of your volunteering role.

All new volunteers to the Helpline will have to complete a training programme which consists of 8 -9 sessions covering a range of topics around sexual violence and building skills needed to be a Helpline Volunteer. In addition to the 8 sessions, there will be an opportunity to engage in further training and development.

Volunteering on Helpline can be challenging for volunteers, and we are committed to providing ongoing support including:

* Peer support - volunteers support each other, and you are encouraged to form friendships and bonds with other volunteers and to both ask for support and offer it to others
* Debrief after each shift with shift partners. This is a chance to talk through your shift and discuss how you feel. It’s also a chance to learn and improve your call practice
* A monthly Peer Support group facilitated by the Helpline Coordinator
* The Helpline Coordinator who is available for any additional support

We encourage volunteers to think about their own sources of support outside SARSVL in addition to the above.

Throughout the training, you will be invited to reflect on your experience by completing a learning journal. Although rare, sometimes volunteers do not ‘pass’ the training programme due to not fully meeting requirements to be a Helpline volunteer. If any concerns are identified during the training programme, or if volunteers are concerned themselves, we encourage both our trainers and volunteers to be open and honest about this. If you feel, at any stage, overwhelmed or like being a Helpline volunteer isn’t for you, please talk to the Helpline Coordinator as soon as possible so that we have the opportunity to provide you with any additional support that you might need.  
  
SARSVL values its volunteers and wants to ensure that we can reduce barriers to volunteer involvement. All reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the course of a volunteer’s role will be reimbursed, including expenses for travel.

**Training Timetable**

Below is the training timetable for our Autumn 2021 recruitment of volunteers. All sessions are online and are 3 hours long. Each week you will have some self-guided learning, this will be a mix between reading, videos, reflective exercises or planned pair activities. Estimated hours of self-guided learning is detailed in the table below. The course had a total of 32 hours of learning.

All the sessions are important and build on each other as you progress through the weeks. For this reason, we ask that volunteers attend all sessions with a minimum requirement that you will attend 80% of the training programme (this gives flexibility to miss up to 3 hours of training depending on topic). If you are unable to commit to attending at least 80% of the training programme, we might not be able to accept your application this time, but encourage you to apply during the next recruitment period.  
Please indicate on your application form whether or not you are able to make each session of the training programme.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Session number** | **Day** | **Date** | **Time** | **Hours guided by SARSVL** | **Estimated hours self-guided** |
| Selection Evening | Monday | 27/09/2021 | 18:00 -20:00 | 2 | 0 |
| Session 1 | Thursday | 07/10/2021 | 17:30 – 20:30 | 3 | 0.5 |
| Session 2 | Thursday | 14/10/2021 | 17:30- 20:30 | 3 | 1 |
| Session 3 | Thursday | 21/10/2021 | 17:30- 20:30 | 3 | 0.5 |
|  | w/c 25th Oct - Half term break | | | | |
| Session 4 | Thursday | 04/11/2021 | 17:30 – 20:30 | 3 | 1.5 |
| Session 5 | Wednesday | 10/11/2020 | 17:30 – 20:30 | 3 | 0.5 |
| Session 6 | Thursday | 18/11/2020 | 17:30 – 20:30 | 3 | 0.5 |
| Session 7 | Thursday | 25/11/2020 | 17:30 – 20:30 | 3 | 1 |
| Session 8 | Monday | 29/11/2020 | 17:30 – 20:30 | 3 | 0.5 |
| Post course interviews | Flexible | w/c 29th Nov and 6th Dec | Flexible slots | 0.3 | 0 |

**What happens after training?**

After completion of the training programme, there will be a post-course informal interview to support your transition onto the Helpline. This will also be an opportunity to discuss any remaining concerns regarding meeting requirements to be a Helpline Volunteer.

During the last few weeks of the training or once we’re happy that you’ve completed the training course and are ready to become a Helpline volunteer, there will be a formal induction process which includes observation of more experienced Helpline volunteers. You will observe at least two Helpline shifts, listening in to calls from our service users and will have a chance to debrief after each call. When you feel ready, you will start taking calls by yourself with support from an experienced volunteer.

There will be a 6 month ‘probation’ period during which you will have the opportunity to attend additional training sessions and bi-monthly Peer Support groups. At the end of the 6 months, we will collectively review how you are doing in terms of Helpline Service delivery and whether you require any additional support.

**Disclosure Barring Service**

All Helpline volunteers are legally required to have an enhanced Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check due to the nature of the service we provide on the Helpline. Everyone who applies to be a Helpline volunteer will be asked to disclose if they have a criminal record or not. In most cases, having a criminal record does not automatically bar you from volunteering. However, due to the sensitive nature of our work, we would need to make a decision on a case-by-case basis.

Please note if you do disclose a criminal record, we will treat this information in line with our confidentiality policy. If you chose not to disclose any criminal convictions which are later found out through the DBS check, this would bar you from volunteering at SARSVL.

If you’d like to talk to us about your past convictions before applying, please email to the email address given at the end of this booklet.

**I’ve read this pack and want to volunteer. What do I do?**

Great news! To apply, please complete and return:

* The volunteer application form
* Equality and diversity form (this isn’t a requirement and will be separated from your application form. It helps us monitor if we are meeting one of our core aims to ‘reflect the community we serve’)

Send your completed forms to us:

* By email to: [info@sarsvl.org.uk](mailto:info@sarsvl.org.uk) with the subject line “Helpline Volunteer Application” by **Monday 20th September at midnight.**

When will I hear back?

* All applicants will be contacted about the outcome of their application by Wednesday 22nd September by email. Depending on the suitability for the role, applicants will be invited to a **Selection Evening on Monday 27thth September from 6pm.**  
    
  Following the Selection Evening, applicants will be informed by email whether they been offered a place on the Helpline **Volunteer Training which commences on Thursday 7th October.**

At SARSVL we are committed to providing a service that is reflective of the people we serve in Leeds. We currently have an underrepresentation of women of colour and transgender women in our volunteer cohort. We especially welcome applications from women of colour and transgender women.

Please note our current building has 3 flights of stairs to get to the office. We do have a lift, though this is currently out of use due to its size as we cannot adhere to social distancing in the lift. Therefore our office, at the moment, is inaccessible to wheel chair users or those with limited mobility.

**Contact Details**

All information regarding the Helpline volunteer role, responsibilities, training dates etc are included in this pack. If you have any additional questions.

* **Email** – [info@sarsvl.org.uk](mailto:info@sarsvl.org.uk)
* **Phone** – 01132439102

**\***Please note all applications are processed and stored in compliance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

To request a copy of our complete GDPR Policy, please email info@sarsvl.org.uk.