

# APPLICATION PACK

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Being a SARSVL helpline  
volunteer





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# Welcome Message



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Thanks so much for your interest in volunteering on our helpline. Support After Rape and Sexual Violence Leeds (SARSVL) began when a small group of local volunteer-activists came together in 2009 to start up a specialist Rape Crisis Centre, and volunteers are still vital to what we do 16 years later. If you go on to successfully complete our training course, you'll be joining a great team in a vibrant, intersectional feminist organisation, and have the chance to make a real difference to the lives of women, girls and non-binary survivors of sexual violence and abuse across our city.

You'll find all the information you need to decide whether to apply in this pack. After you've read it in full, if you have any questions, feel free to get in touch at [info@sarsvl.org.uk](mailto:info@sarsvl.org.uk)

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**Katie Russell**

CEO OF SARSVL



# Overview of SARSVL

## 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 women and girls (cis and trans) and non-binary people (who are comfortable with our woman-centred approach) 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's 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 and Counselling.

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## 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 and non-binary people who are 13+, 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.

Volunteers deliver the majority of the frontline support to survivors who contact our Helpline. Volunteers are a central and important part of SARSVL and the SARSVL Helpline.

The Helpline is currently open 5 days week and survivors can contact us via telephone, text (SMS) and email.

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?

## 1. Attend Training

To become a helpline volunteer you will complete a specialist, in house, 11 week training course. You can apply for either the Spring or Autumn cohort this year. The course is aimed to help increase your knowledge of violence against women and girls from our feminist perspective and train you to support survivors with our empowerment model. You can learn more about this and the training schedule on the next two pages. You will also take part in ongoing training and development opportunities whilst volunteering at SARSVL.

## 2. Carry out helpline shifts

Helpline volunteers undertake a weekly helpline shift of around 3 hours on our freephone, SMS and email emotional support helpline. You will always work alongside at least one other person at our premises in Leeds City Centre. 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.

## 3. Take part in part in ongoing support

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

- General peer support - volunteers support each other. 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.
- A quarterly clinical group supervision session facilitated by an external therapist.
- 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.



*"The calls made an impact to me as finally there was someone to talk to, they knew how to reply, what to say and made me feel good calling me a survivor."*





# About the training

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

All new volunteers to the Helpline will have to complete a training programme that consists of 9 sessions covering a range of topics around sexual violence and building skills needed to be a Helpline volunteer with skills practice embedded into this. In addition to the 9 sessions, there is a 2-week period of purely skills practice before you start on the helpline. Overall this is a 11 week course on supporting survivors of sexual violence on a helpline. After your initial training there will be an opportunity to engage in further training and development whilst volunteering with us.



## Passing the course

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.

SARSLV 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.

## What skills do I need?

You don't need any special qualifications or experience to become a SARSLV 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 (trans or cis) or a non binary person.
- You are 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
- Be available to do one regular 3 hour shift each week
- Be able to use a telephone headset, and sit in an 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 once you have completed the training.



# Training Schedule: Spring dates

We run our training course twice a year to train and induct new volunteers to run our specialist emotional support helpline. On the next 2 pages you will see the timetable for both the Spring and Autumn cohort so you can decide which course you would like to apply for or, if you have the flexibility that you could attend either round, you can let us know and we can slot you into the next one we have available.

All sessions will be held in our office in Leeds City Centre, apart from the selection evening which will be held online via Zoom. Each training session is around 3 hours long. Each week you will have some self-guided learning; this will be a mix of reading, videos, and reflective exercises or planned pair activities.

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 90% of the training programme (this gives flexibility to miss up to 1 session). If you are unable to commit to attending at least 90% 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.

<u>Spring course timetable</u>					
<b>Session</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Hours guided by SARSVL</b>	<b>Estimated hours self-guided</b>
<b>Mandatory Selection Evening</b>	<b>Wednesday</b> (online via Zoom)	11/02/26	6-8pm	2	0
Session 1	Monday	23/02/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	1
Session 2	Monday	02/03/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	0.5
Session 3	Monday	09/03/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	1
Session 4	<b>Wednesday</b>	18/03/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	0.5
Session 5	Monday	23/03/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	1.5
Session 6	Monday	30/03/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	0.5
Half term break w/c 06/04/25				0	1
Session 7	Monday	13/04/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	1.5
Session 8	Monday	20/04/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	1
Session 9	Monday	27/04/26	5:30-830pm	3	1
w/c 04/05/26 & wc/ 11/05/26	Final 2 weeks skills practice and final course check in to be self-arranged for 1 hour each week, plus observation shifts.				



# Training Schedule: Autumn dates

<u>Autumn course timetable</u>					
Session	Day	Date	Time	Hours guided by SARSVL	Estimated hours self-guided
<b>Mandatory Selection Evening</b>	Tuesday (online via Zoom)	08/09/26	6-8pm	2	0
Session 1	Tuesday	15/09/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	1
Session 2	Tuesday	22/09/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	0.5
Session 3	Tuesday	29/09/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	1
Session 4	<b>Wednesday</b>	07/10/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	0.5
Session 5	Tuesday	13/10/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	1.5
Session 6	Tuesday	20/10/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	0.5
Half term break w/c 26/10/24				0	1
Session 7	Tuesday	03/11/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	1.5
Session 8	Tuesday	10/11/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	1
Session 9	Tuesday	17/11/26	5:30 - 8:30pm	3	1
w/c 23/11/26 & wc/ 30/11/26	Final 2 weeks skills practice and final course check in to be self-arranged for 1 hour each week, plus observation shifts.				



# What happens after the training?

After completion of the training programme, there will be a post-course informal catch up 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.

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## Induction

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.



## Probation

There will be a 6-month 'probation' period during which you will have the opportunity to attend additional training sessions and monthly Peer Support groups and any scheduled quarterly clinical supervision sessions. 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 could 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 document.



# I've read this application pack and want to apply. What happens now?



## 1 Apply

To apply, please complete our 2 online forms by **midnight Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February**

- [The volunteer application form](#)
- [Diversity monitoring form](#) (this isn't a requirement. It is separate from your application form. It helps us monitor if we are meeting one of our core aims to 'reflect the community we serve')

## 3 Outcome of application

Applicants for the Spring round will be contacted about the outcome of their application by email on Friday 6th February. Depending on the suitability for the role, applicants will be invited to an online Selection Evening on **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February from 6-8pm so please put this date in your diary now.**

Applicants for the Autumn round, depending on the suitability, will later be invited to a selection evening on **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September. Please put this date in your diary now.**

## 2 Other formats

If you are unable to complete an online application form, you can request to be emailed a word document version or posted a paper version of both forms by emailing [info@sarsvl.org.uk](mailto:info@sarsvl.org.uk) or calling the office on 0113 243 9102.

If you are using either of these formats please return your forms to [info@sarsvl.org.uk](mailto:info@sarsvl.org.uk) with the subject line "Helpline Volunteer Application" by **midnight Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February.**

## 4 Attend Selection evening

A selection evening is a space to learn more about the role and for you, and us, to see if the volunteer role seems like a good fit for you.

Following the Selection Evening, applicants will be informed by email whether they been offered a place on the Helpline Volunteer training which commences on **Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February for the Spring cohort or Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September for the Autumn cohort.**



# Contact details

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, disabled women and transgender women in our helpline volunteer cohort. We especially welcome applications from racially minoritised women, disabled women and transgender women.

## 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 – 0113 243 9102

\*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](mailto:info@sarsvl.org.uk).