



DEVON
RAPE CRISIS
&
SEXUAL ABUSE
SERVICES

Impact Report

2023/24



**Devon Rape Crisis &
Sexual Abuse Services**



Chair's Report

As Co-Chairs of Trustees, we are pleased to present this year's report on behalf of the Board. The year 2023-2024 has been a period of significant growth and change for Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services. We welcomed our new Chief Executive, Davina, in September 2023. Her arrival brought fresh energy and reinforced our commitment to our mission and the survivors we serve.

With a substantial increase in demand, Davina has led the implementation of a new service delivery model that includes advocacy, trauma stabilisation, self-help, group work and community outreach, alongside our established therapeutic support, ensuring immediate access to help.

While much of this year focused on internal development, we also delivered impactful support, partnerships and activism, detailed in the following sections.

We extend our gratitude to our staff, volunteers, and community for making 2023-2024 a transformative year for DRCSAS. The courage of the survivors and the dedication of our volunteers continue to inspire us and highlight the importance of our work.

Thank you for your commitment and support. We look forward to our future accomplishments together.

Linda Regan & Maggie Parks

A word from Davina

I joined DRCSAS as Chief Executive in September 2023, halfway through the financial year, and was immediately struck by the team's dedication, warmth and care for those we support. While COVID had impacted our strategic capacity, the team's determination was clear. However, growing demand was unsustainable with our current resources, and referrals had increased significantly.

In October, the Board of Trustees and I initiated a comprehensive review of pay, conditions, and services, focusing on staffing, governance, pay and service user engagement, considering the cost of living and staff welfare. This review concluded at the end of the financial

year, leading to a new service model launched on April 1st, including advocacy, trauma stabilization, self-help, group work, and community outreach alongside our therapeutic support. The goal is to provide immediate support options and retain staff, not just meet growing demand. We will assess the impact of these changes over the coming year.

A key achievement, led by former CEO Caroline, was relocating to new, welcoming premises in Torquay, enhancing our capacity for trauma-informed care in Torbay and South Devon. While 2023-2024 focused largely on internal changes, we delivered impactful support, partnerships and activism, detailed in this report.



I want to thank everyone for a successful year, particularly the Board of Trustees for their leadership, our dedicated staff and volunteers, my senior leadership team—Joss, Mandy, Melissa, Ellen, and Emma. In particular thanks to Ellen from Coops and Co for her outstanding work on the pay and conditions review. Women like these exemplify feminism by empowering others.

*Dr Davina Cull,
CEO*

Service Improvement

In 2023/24, we made significant improvements to our service. An evaluation showed our delivery model no longer met survivors' needs, prompting a radical transformation to become a Rape Crisis Centre that welcomes a more diverse range of survivors, including those with complex needs and all trauma presentations.

We reviewed our support criteria, driven by our ethical obligation to serve all survivors of sexual violence and to reduce harm to those previously excluded. After 13 years, it was time to create a more flexible, survivor-centred model that meets needs creatively and innovatively by offering more choices and ensuring no wrong door to support.

Previously we excluded survivors experiencing current Domestic Abuse, despite 62% of those we support being faced with Sexual Violence in a DA context. Since Sexual Violence is often overlooked in DA cases, we are now collaborating with DA specialist services to provide appropriate support and prevent further trauma.

We have also adapted our approach to complex mental health needs. Through our work with the SV Trauma Pathfinder, we now help those with current mental health challenges to access our services through trauma stabilisation approaches. This is especially important as our equality data reveals that many survivors experience mental ill health and need support to regulate their emotions and develop skills in managing this daily.

Our new approach also offers flexibility in appointments, increases access for young people with more suitable times, and provides more accessible, private spaces for those with physical disabilities.



Service transformation

Case study

Since 1st April we have moved to the new implementation model of service delivery. As a result of this more flexible approach to supporting victims we have been able to meet survivor needs in a more creative and meaningful way.

An amazing example of this is a piece of work carried out with a service user recently. She had not left her home in five years due to previous domestic abuse and fear of being seen as a result of this. She mentioned during phone support with a therapeutic practitioner that she feared she was dying of cancer. She had been invited to medical appointments five years previous but had not attended due to the fear of leaving her home. This was never followed up on.

We made the decision that the service user's physical wellbeing needed to be addressed as an immediate need. The therapeutic practitioner was able to support the service user to leave her home to access urgent medical attention, where she was accompanied to attend an appointment at a local hospital with a positive outcome for her health concerns.

The flexibility of this approach allowed the worker to put therapeutic management skills to practice in the moment, supporting the Service User with techniques to overcome panic and fear. More work has continued with this woman and as a result she has now been able to stay with her sister for a weekend. This is something that would not have been possible without the considered and timely support enabled through our new support model.

Volunteers

This year, we welcomed 10 new volunteers, expanding our team to 23.

Our dedicated volunteers handled 264 helpline calls and 288 email support requests. This demonstrates that local demand for help is still needed despite the new national sexual violence helpline becoming more established.

Our Volunteers also promoted our services in the community and engaged in initiatives to reach those beyond traditional referral routes.

In total, our volunteers contributed 1240 hours, supported 594 people, and attended 10 events, generating an estimated £17,360 in social value.

We deeply appreciate their commitment, hard work and unwavering support for survivors.



Volunteering

“I have heard so many good things about the work of DRCSAS and I am so excited to be part of this community” Volunteer Trainee

Service in Numbers



927 referrals



1240 volunteer hours



1227 people supported



7 external training sessions



3855 support sessions



172 learners trained

Service User Impact

Impact on our service users remains at the heart of everything we do. This year, our expanded service model, which includes advocacy, trauma stabilization, self-help, group work, and community outreach, has allowed us to offer more tailored support options, meeting survivors where they are in their healing journey.

Through our commitment to data transformation, we have strengthened our understanding of survivor needs, ensuring that our services are more responsive and effective.

Our feedback from service users highlights the positive impact of these changes, with many expressing that they feel more empowered, supported and understood.

By centring our approach around the lived experiences of survivors, we continue to foster an environment where every individual feels safe, valued and heard.

This year marked the launch of the Sorella Peer Support Project, offering support to women affected by sexual violence and abuse, aiming to enhance resilience, wellbeing and quality of life through connection with empowering resources and lasting support networks.

Sorella recruited 9 volunteers and hosted 5 events, including yoga, collaging, sound baths, self-defence classes and acupuncture as well as longer running sessions of Sleepy Yoga and Joyful Dancing. One-on-one support was provided to 6 women.



"I want to thank everyone involved, it was such a positive experience for me and makes me want to carry on the support."

Survivor Feedback



Activism



This year at Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services we engaged in a strong programme of activism to raise awareness of violence against women and girls and the impact of rape and sexual abuse.

We delivered in partnership events during 16 days of Action, International Women's Day, Mental Health Awareness Day, Pride and Sexual Violence Awareness Day amongst others.

Our activism also includes prevention work and this year we launched and delivered Shout Up! in Torquay, which is a scheme supporting licensed venues to take a zero tolerance to sexual harassment in the night time economy.

“DRCSAS has helped me to grow in confidence, feel calmer, have less panic attacks, recognise my triggers and use coping strategies.” Survivor Feedback

Equality & Inclusion

We would like to highlight three incredible partnerships which have helped us to make a difference this year.

Through the Devon and Cornwall Victim Care Strategic Delivery Partnership, we secured funding for two projects to enhance support access. The first, with Living Options, included an accessibility audit, easy-read guides, disability and Deaf awareness training, and a British Sign Language video, greatly improving our accessibility for people with disabilities, who make up 24% of our service users.

The second project, with Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council, focused on becoming an anti-racist organization through training and support to address the needs of global majority communities and acknowledge their specific barriers. Striving to be an anti-racist organization allows us to create a more inclusive and equitable environment, ensuring that all survivors, regardless of their race or background, feel seen, supported and empowered in their journey.

Our third partnership, with NHS England's Sexual Violence and Trauma Pathfinder Programme, aims to improve care for survivors with complex trauma-related mental health needs. This has enabled us to co-locate an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor in Exeter, receive trauma-focused training and enhance our ability to support survivors.



Living Our Values



At Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services, our work is guided by a clear vision: a world without sexual violence. Our mission is to provide safe spaces where survivors are supported, believed and self-empowered through advocacy, listening, counselling, and solidarity. This year, we have continued to embody our values and work towards our mission, ensuring that every decision and action aligns with the core principles that define us.

Feminist

Our feminist values guide us to treat everyone with respect, dignity, and compassion, and to offer choice in all aspects of our support.

We have advocated for transformational change in societal attitudes and institutional responses to sexual violence through our campaigns, education, and training initiatives.

This year, we have amplified survivor voices and worked tirelessly to challenge harmful narratives and practices within our communities.

Trust

Providing ethical, safe, high-quality support is at the heart of our work.

Our pay and conditions review, conducted in collaboration with our staff, was a testament to this value.

By improving staff conditions and recognizing their contributions, we have reinforced a culture of trust and safety that extends to everyone we support.

Our commitment to offering women-only spaces, puts our understanding of trauma at the centre of everything we do.

Collaborative

We believe in the power of working together.

This year, we have strengthened our partnerships with local organizations, community groups, and agencies to break down barriers that prevent survivors from thriving.

By building effective collaborations, we ensure a holistic approach to support, connecting survivors with the resources and networks they need to rebuild their lives.



Inclusivity

We work in ways that are accessible and value diversity.

This year, we have focused on ensuring our services reach all survivors who need them, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Our relocation to new premises in Torquay has created a more welcoming, accessible environment, while our expanded service model—offering advocacy, trauma stabilization, self-help, group work and community outreach—reflects our commitment to meeting diverse needs.

Creativity

We recognize the individuality of each person and adapt our services to meet their unique needs.

This year, we have creatively expanded our service offerings to include a wider range of support options, ensuring that survivors have more choices and pathways to recovery.

We continue to listen and respond to the feedback of those we serve, co-designing services with survivors to ensure they are truly nourishing and empowering.

Looking Ahead

"Living Our Values" is not a static commitment—it is a dynamic and ongoing process.

As we look to the future, we remain dedicated to co-designing services with survivors, centring trauma-informed practices and advocating for change.

We will continue to embody our values—Inclusivity, Trust, Creativity, Feminism, and Collaboration—in all that we do, working towards a world where sexual violence is no longer a reality and where every survivor feels safe, supported, and empowered.

Partnerships

Reclaim the Night - March 2023

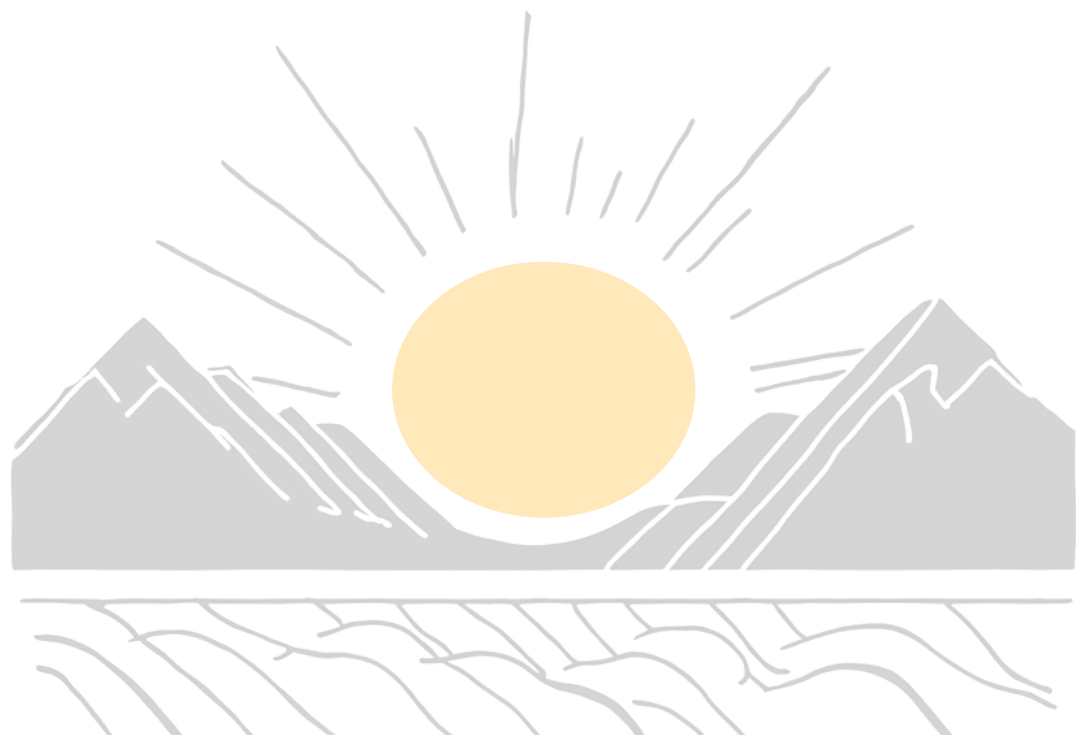
Despite wet, dark weather and afternoon snow, hundreds gathered in Exeter for the annual Reclaim the Night march, demanding an end to violence against women and girls. We met at Positive Lights Project to make placards, share stories and show solidarity. Women spoke about their reasons for marching, their fears, and their joy in coming together to feel safe and heard.

International Women's Day - March 2024

We participated in the 16-hour "Occupy the Airwaves" takeover on Phonic FM, discussing the launch of our Feminist Leadership Pledge and activism. A young woman from Urban Angels, a group working to make Exeter safe for women and non-binary people, joined us.

Women's Festival

We hosted a creativity workshop where participants designed plates for a "Volunteering: What Would You Bring to the Table?" theme. The event was led by two of our volunteers, Catherine and Karen.



Staff & Trustees

The Board of Trustees were very active this year supporting the charity with a pay and conditions review, service redesign, data collection and a review of the charities' vision, mission and values.

The change programme at DRCSAS saw some significant changes within the staff team resulting from a move away from using sessional workers in favour of employment and the new roles and responsibilities offered as part of the service redesign.

Despite the uncertainty of change the staff team adapted well and have embraced the change aimed at improving our support offer for those affected by rape and sexual abuse.

“I cannot thank this service enough – without the support, guidance, and expertise – I hate to think where I would be at this moment.” Survivor Feedback



**EMPLOYEES AND
TRUSTEES
AT DEVON RAPE CRISIS AND
SEXUAL ABUSE SERVICES**



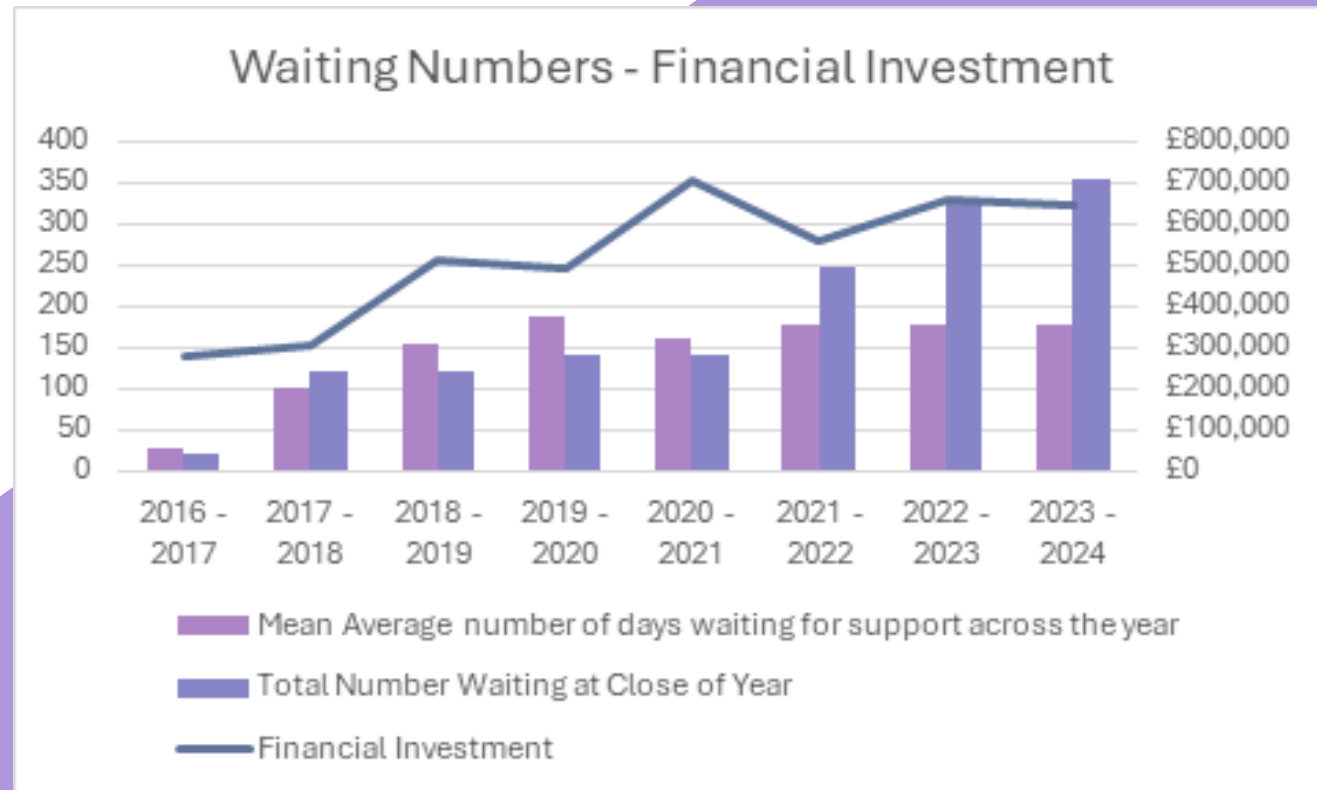
Governance & Compliance

Waiting times

In 2023/24, Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services received its highest-ever referral rate, highlighting the growing demand for support. However, it also saw a record number of people waiting for services.

The chart shows that while the number of people needing support has risen each year, funding has not kept pace. For the first time, in 2023/24, the number of people waiting exceeded available resources, leading to a three-month pause on referrals at the start of 2024/25 to prevent overwhelming the service and worsening wait times.

This decision was also influenced by anticipated budget demands for 2024/25.



Productivity

While all services aim to reduce attrition to better support survivors, higher attrition rates have the contrary effect of reducing waiting lists as people drop out.

One way to manage this issue is by improving productivity. In 2023/24, the Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Service maintained high productivity levels compared to the previous three years.

However, there is still a small gap between the current productivity and the total number of sessions required. To close this gap, productivity would have needed to increase further, despite a 2.5% reduction in available funding in 2023/2024.

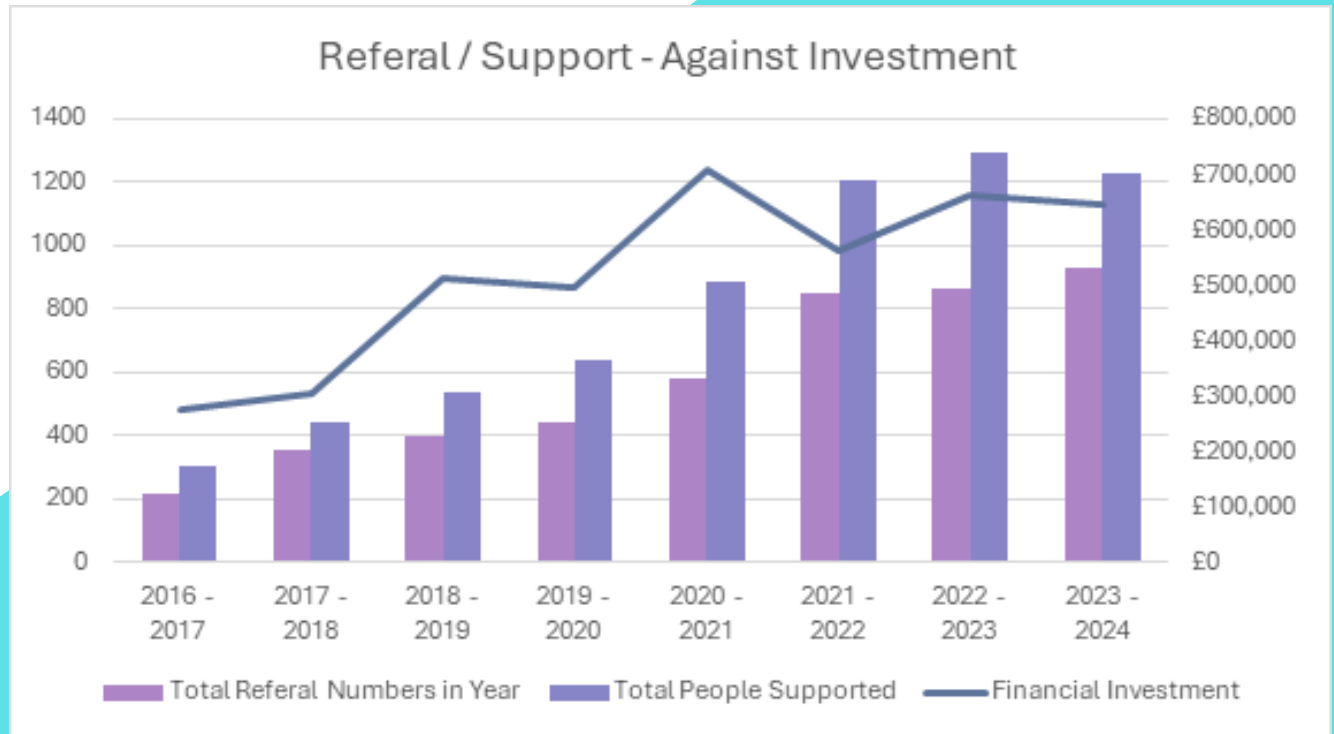


Value for Money

In 2023/24, Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services successfully maintained support levels despite limited funding and exceeded expectations.

While this has benefited survivors by maximizing resources, it has set an unsustainable precedent, raising expectations for more support without matched funding.

This is especially challenging as referrals continued to grow. Additionally, this approach to maximising funding to respond to demand has delayed investment in business infrastructure, creating an urgent need for technology upgrades in 2024/25 to stay competitive in the sector and sustain service delivery.



Attrition

In 2023/24, the service saw a positive decrease in attrition between referral and support, despite a record number of people waiting and long wait times. During the pause in referrals, the charity reached out to all 355 individuals on the waiting list to gather data, and only five opted to leave. This suggests:

- The right referrals are being made
- Survivors are willing to wait for the support they need
- Partners continue referring, undeterred by wait times

To prevent an ongoing trend in under-investment and over-expectation of support, the charity must adequately cost service delivery in 2024 / 2025 onwards if it is to remain an ongoing concern and be sustainable.



Our Supporters

We couldn't support as many people as we do without our community partners, donors and supporters.

This year we were particularly grateful to Exeter Chiefs, Exeter City Football Club Community Trust, The Law Society at Exeter University, Appen and the Crown Prosecution Service Devon who fund raised for us and to Woollens Law who donated furniture for our new office in Torquay.

We're very grateful to our two MSc Social Data Science students, Ella McLintic and Mikayla Lundt, on placement from University of Exeter who have supercharged our data transformation in recent months.

But we are always touched by the everyday help and support we get. From gifting services to us, to donating small gifts for our wellness packs, to giving us support resources - all of these acts of kindness help us to foster a community of solidarity that promotes healing. Thank you to everyone who supported us this year.



With thanks

Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services were funded by several commissioners and trusts in 2023 / 2024. With thanks to the Ministry of Justice, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall, Victim Support – Strategic Delivery Partnership, Torbay Council, Devon County Council (Fear Free), The University of Exeter, Garfield Weston and Jamieson-Bystock who all contributed vital funding to enable us to support survivors of rape and sexual abuse in Devon and Torbay.

Thanks also to all of our of our volunteer fundraisers, from running marathons to completing epic sea swims - we are so grateful.



Get in touch

Website: <https://devonrapecrisis.org.uk/>

Office line: 01392 208756

Email: info@devonrapecrisis.org.uk

Anonymous helpline: 01392 204174

Helpline email: support@devonrapecrisis.org.uk

Donate:

<https://www.justgiving.com/devonrapeandcrisisandsexualabuseservices>

Volunteer: mandy@devonrapecrisis.org.uk

*“From the bottom of my heart –
a HUGE thank you!!” Survivor Feedback*