



Somerset & Avon
rape & sexual abuse support

SARSAS - Our Voice

Annual Report 2020/21

Charity No. 1126682



A message from our CEO and Chair

2020-21 was undeniably a challenging year for SARSAS with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. We saw a huge spike in demand for our support services and witnessed increasing concern for women's safety in public spaces following the high profile murders of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman in 2020 and the rape and murder of Sarah Everard in March 21.

The pandemic has impacted heavily on some of our clients, and we have seen an increase in trauma symptoms and mental ill health as a direct result. This came at a time when many other avenues of support (personal or professional) were not available. We have seen an increase in self harm, eating disorders and suicidal thoughts and plans. Other complicating factors such as domestic abuse, housing, debt and addiction have also been more prevalent.

We want to extend our thanks and gratitude to all the staff, volunteers and trustees who have shown such resilience and dedication in ensuring that we have been able to provide high-quality and life changing services to our clients throughout the challenges of the last year.

In the 12 months to 31st March 2021, we supported a total of 4,316 clients across all of our services. Our amazingly flexible and committed team of staff and volunteers demonstrated their ability to adapt rapidly in the face of Covid and we have been able to, not only, deliver more one-to-one work to clients than ever before but we have also started new services. This includes launching our Live Chat service in September 2020, providing clients with a secure and anonymous way to speak with our team and seek support.

The team have grown this year, due to new posts being created as a result of successful funding applications and also through investment in some new roles and structures within the organisation. The new team have done a great job of picking up their roles and becoming key team members despite rarely seeing their colleagues in person.



It was wonderful to have this hard work acknowledged as a GSK Impact Award Winner for 2021. It was a reminder of the positive impact of our work and what a true privilege it is to stand alongside the incredible victim-survivors locally. We are so proud of the team and feel real hope for the future. Mel, one of the women that has accessed SARSAS services and who spoke on our GSK video beautifully summed this up, saying "Hope is stronger than your fears, and once you're given that, which SARSAS do, then you know you are going to be alright"

With gender-based violence on the radar more than ever before, this is a moment in history when it really feels like change is possible and we are hopeful for the future..... every day.



Claire Bloor

Claire Bloor
CEO



Penny Walster

Penny Walster
Chair

Service Impact 2020-21

In February 2020, we launched a new triage and assessment service, enabling us to better respond to the **37% increase in referrals.**



Individuals
referred
to SARSAS

1,292



Clients
supported
across
all our
services

4,316

768.58

hours of
support
through our
helpline
services
(helpline,
live chat and
e-support)





229

clients
supported
through
counselling



106

clients supported
through
Specialist
Support Work
(SSW)

Volunteering

Our volunteers are an amazing group of women with diverse backgrounds and life experiences. We have 39 volunteers who provide support through our helpline services, fundraising and communications.

Last year we took on and delivered training to 12 new amazing volunteers.



Case Study - Mel

Mel is 60 years old and lives in Bath. When she contacted SARSAS it was the first time she had ever spoken to someone about the sexual abuse she experienced as a child.

"Throughout my life I have managed to find ways to function, but always carried with me the heavy pain of the trauma caused by the sexual abuse. I felt worthless, unseen and had terrible nightmares.

In my late 50s I fulfilled a life's dream of completing an MA in creative writing and publishing a book. I thought this achievement would make me feel better about myself but instead I just fell apart. It was at this moment I decided to find help and a google search brought up SARSAS. Eventually I plucked up the courage to call the SARSAS helpline. I felt so nervous but the person I spoke to really listened to me and I felt heard and believed. In this moment I realised I did not have face this in silence or alone.

I was then referred to a SARSAS counsellor. She was sensitive and kind. I felt like I really mattered. My counsellor helped me explore and understand my trauma. We worked together on strategies to help me feel calm and safe.

After my counselling ended, I was able to continue to access support at SARSAS through the helpline and e-support which has been really important to me. Every member of the SARSAS team I have spoken to have been so warm and reassuring

SARSAS has saved my life. I no longer feel worthless or to blame. I am still on a journey but for the first time in my life I feel peace and hope."



Case Study - Tanya

Tanya is 29 years old and lives in Somerset.

"When I think back to the person who walked into SARSAS for the very first time, I think about how far she'd come already, yet she still felt broken. I think about how terrified she was about what she was about to do, because she knew she needed to finally do it. I thought about how no amount of preparation could make her feel anywhere near ready.... But she made it; this girl who wanted so much for the pain and difficulties she faced every single day to JUST go away, but wondered if they ever would...

I had gone from feeling anxious every single day to the point where sometimes I couldn't bring myself to leave the house. I used to only see negativity in my life. I had no confidence in myself, my thoughts or my beliefs. I blamed myself for all that happened to me. I used to feel like I and everyone around me would be better off if I no longer existed. I wanted to be free and I wanted those I loved to be free of me.

Reflecting on how I felt on that first day, walking into the small, unfamiliar room and meeting my therapist for the first time, to how I felt at the end; about to walk out of that same small room that has become my safe place, saying goodbye to this woman who had become such an important person in my journey, I realised just how much I had changed.

I feel different now. I don't feel like the same person who walked in all that time ago. She was a different person. I am happy, I am starting to love the person I am and feel so optimistic about my future. SARSAS helped me realise that I was finally ready to show the real me to the world."



"SARSAS made it so much easier to talk about things. You get a sense of empowerment because you're not letting those people who have hurt you have any control over your life anymore."

Campaigning and projects

Shining a light on hidden areas of rape and sexual abuse:



Learning Disabilities and Autism Project

Our Learning Disabilities and Autism project includes support for individuals, training for professionals, and developing accessible support resources. We are one of the few specialist services for women with learning disabilities and autism in the country.

Older Women and Sexual Violence

It is a myth that only younger women are raped, sexually assaulted or sexually abused. Women can experience rape and sexual abuse at any time in their life. We have developed a guide for people who support older women:

[Download a copy of the guide here](#)

and an information leaflet for older women who have experienced sexual violence:

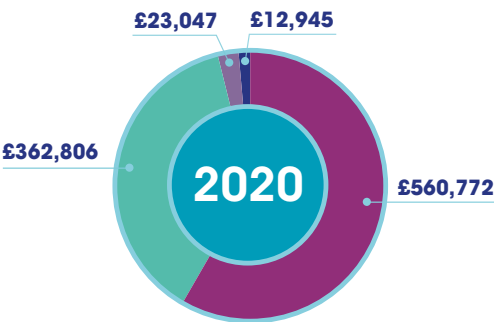
[Download the leaflet here](#)

The Rape Crisis England and Wales (RCEW) National Project on Sibling Sexual Abuse

Sibling sexual abuse is the most common form of child sexual abuse within the family setting in the UK, yet it remains a hidden, chronically under-estimated and untreated form of child sexual abuse. The findings from this ground-breaking national research project will be published in February 2022.

Financial Report

Income



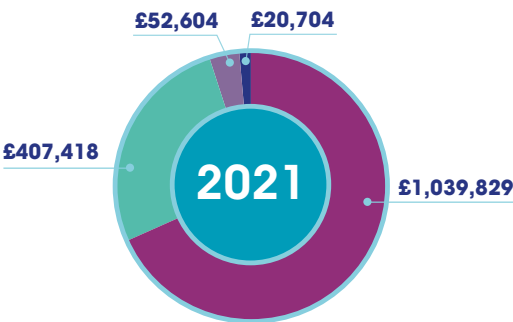
1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020



Public Sector



Trusts and foundations



1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021

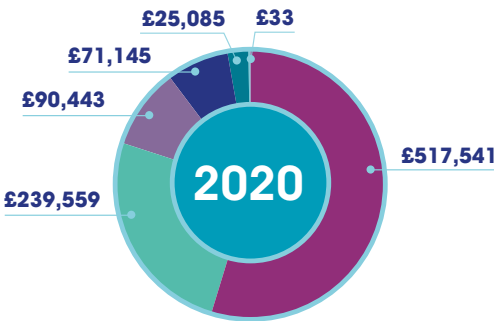


Fundraising



Interest and earned income

Expenditure



1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020



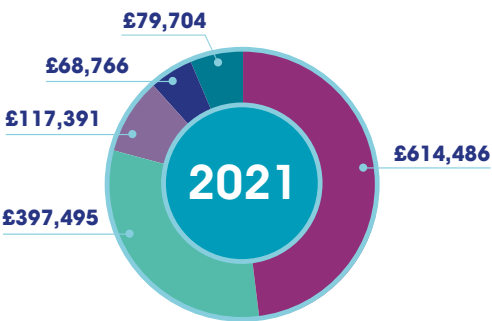
Service delivery: Staff costs



Service delivery: Direct costs



Service delivery: Overheads



1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021



Service delivery: Support costs



Expenditure on raising funds



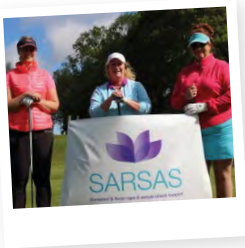
Other

Fundraising

We owe so much to the incredible community fundraisers who come up with so many imaginative ways to raise money to help us continue providing support to people affected by rape and sexual abuse.

Some of the events this year included:

Eve's Cycle



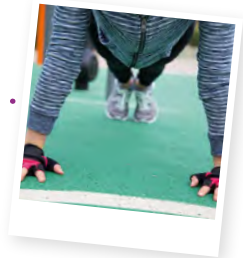
Enmore Women's
Golf Club



Limara's 10 day
burpee challenge



Birthday Fundraisers
on Facebook



The Big Give
Christmas
Challenge
raised over
£10,000 in
just 7 days

Thank you

We would not be able to offer the life-changing services that we provide without the incredible support of the people and organisations who work with us.

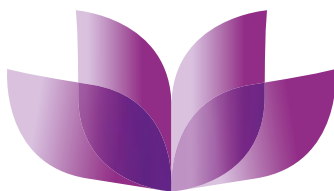
Through offering their time, expertise, experience and fundraising, there are so many people who contribute to us supporting as many victim-survivors as possible.

Thank you to our wonderful volunteer and staff team whose dedication, flexibility and genuine compassion enable SARSAS to continue to stand alongside all victim-survivors, supporting them to reclaim their lives.

We are incredibly grateful to our funders, donors and supporters. Your contribution allows us to provide life changing support to survivors.

Thank you to our partner organisations. Together we continue to share learning, provide high level support to those who need it and grow awareness of gender-based violence and the impact of trauma across our region.

And thank you to all of the amazing people who offer us the privilege of supporting them and for sharing their journey to recovery with us. They continue to inspire us every day. This is all for them.



Somerset & Avon
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Call our Freephone Helplines

0808 801 0456

0808 801 0464

Trans and non-binary callers welcome

Live Chat via our website:
www.sarsas.org.uk

Confidential specialist support for
people who have experienced
rape or any kind of sexual assault or
abuse at any time in their lives.



Somerset & Avon
rape & sexual abuse support

listening · believing · supporting

B&NES Bristol North Somerset Somerset South Gloucestershire