

Volunteer Recruitment FAQs

1. Can I volunteer remotely?

Yes, we have volunteering shifts remotely on Zoom on a Tuesday and Wednesday evening and Friday daytime. You will, however, need to commit to 4 in-person training sessions in Bristol prior to volunteering and be from the Avon and Somerset area.

2. What kind of support can I expect when I'm volunteering?

There is always a Shift Supervisor experienced member of staff on shift to support with keeping you informed, de-briefing after calls and supporting during calls if needed. You will also be working alongside a team of lovely volunteers from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. We also have Reflective Practice sessions which are run online in small groups with a specially trained supervisor to help you reflect on your experiences alongside other volunteers.

3. I have personal experience of sexual violence and/or abuse. Can I still volunteer?

We welcome people with lived experience, as we know this can add to your empathy and understanding of callers. We ask that if you have used SARSAS services, you take a break for at least 6 months before volunteering. In the informal interview, we'll ask everyone about any potential triggers and support needs and will continue to support you during the training, induction and ongoing volunteering. Although lived experience is valued at SARSAS, we also have strong boundaries on the helpline which means we don't talk about personal experiences or opinions, and instead focus on emotional support and listening.

4. What do people talk about on the helpline

People will call the helpline for a wide diversity of reasons. Many regular callers will want to talk through day-to-day challenges (and successes). Some people will be calling us for the first time, wanting to start exploring their thoughts and feelings around what they have experienced and/or how we can support them. We support anyone affected by sexual violence, so we also sometimes hear from family and friends wanting to know how to support their loved ones or professionals wanting to refer to us.

5. How do the remote shifts work?

We have run shifts remotely through Zoom for a few years. All volunteers on shift are welcomed into a main room by a Shift Supervisor, who will brief you on any updates. Then when a phonecall or livechat comes in, you can use the

breakout room to talk privately, before coming back into the main room to debrief and get support from the supervisor. At the end of the shift, all volunteers come back for a final debrief and goodbye. The shifts are quite sociable and very supportive. We just ask that you have a private space at home available where you can be undisturbed and comfortable. We ask all volunteers to keep their cameras on.

6. Where is the training based?

In our offices in central Bristol.

7. Can I join the training remotely?

No. The training is just offered in-person in Bristol, as we feel that being face-to-face aids learning and a feeling of connection and community among volunteers.

8. Is volunteering just for women?

We support all genders on the helpline and throughout a lot of our services and so are inclusive of all genders as volunteers.

9. Do you offer volunteer expenses?

Volunteers can claim up to £20 per day of training and/or volunteering. This includes travel, parking and any required and agreed expenses. You will need to keep receipts or other proof of purchase and fill out an expenses form. We will sign off expenses and reimburse you as quickly as possible, usually within a couple of weeks.

10. What kind of commitment do I need to make?

To volunteer on the helpline, you need to initially apply, have an informal interview and then attend all 4 days of training in Bristol. You will then have an induction period when you listen into calls and are supported taking your first few calls with either a fellow volunteer or Shift Supervisor. We ask you to commit to one 2 or 3 hours shift a week and to volunteer for 6 months, to enable you to get established into the role and utilise your training.