

We understand that some of the content in this leaflet is sensitive, it may have triggered a difficult memory and it may have caused distress.

Please speak to a member of the team who can support you.

You can also contact:

The Survivors Trust

For information, advice and emotional support.

Call on **08088 010818** (Freephone)

Mon-Fri 10am-8.30pm

Sat 10am-12.30pm
1.30pm-4.30pm
6pm-8.30pm

Sun 1.30pm-4.30pm
6pm-8.30pm

24hr answer machine available

Email helpline@thesurvivorstrust.org

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

Call on **03302230938** Mon-Fri 9am-5pm
03302230099 24hr out of hours

Email hackenthorpelodge.sarc@nhs.net

SEXUAL SAFETY DURING YOUR STAY AT FOREST CLOSE INTENSIVE REHABILITATION UNIT SHEFFIELD



About this leaflet

This leaflet focuses on a specific area: **sexual safety**.

In 2018 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published a report called 'Sexual Safety on Mental Health Wards'. It found that people who use mental health services often feel that staff do not always keep them safe from harm during their admission to hospital.

Improving sexual safety in mental health and learning disabilities inpatient settings is a key priority area for improving overall safety in mental health care.

This leaflet will give you information about what sexual safety is, how staff will try and keep you free from harm and what you can expect if a sexual safety incident occurs. Some of the content may be distressing so a traffic light system will warn you of these pages. There are some useful telephone numbers on the final page.

I would like to disclose an incident

Yes	No

This happened to me or someone else whilst in hospital

Yes	No

The member of staff I would like to talk about it with is:

If they are not available I would talk to:

Having difficult conversations

It can be difficult to find the words to explain what happened to you. This page allows you to get the support you need without having to discuss what you may need it. You can fill it in alone or with support from a staff member, an interpreter or friend.

I prefer staff that are:

Male	
Female	
Don't Mind	

If I have to be restrained for my or others safety as a last resort I want you to do your best to support it to be

Seated	
Standing	
Prone	
Supine	

Prone restraint is usually avoided due to the risks of physical health deterioration however it can be used if this is part of your care plan.

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What is sexual safety?

Sexual safety can mean different things to different people and can take many forms. However in general it means that everyone has a right to feel safe and free from:

- * Inappropriate sexual comments or questions
- * Being asked for sex or sexual favours
- * Unnecessary exposure of a person's body parts
- * Any sexual act without consent
- * Inappropriate touching
- * The exchange of drugs or other goods or services for a sexual act
- * Harm caused by another person's sexually disinhibited behaviours
- * Being pressured into sending/receiving naked pictures
- * Online harassment such as: inappropriate sexual comments on social media, sharing explicit images and videos with someone who doesn't want to see them or hasn't given permission for them to be shared

Physical Symptoms

- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Tiredness
- Headaches
- Low motivation
- Sweating
- Breathlessness
- Change in appetite

Behaviours

- Difficult relationships
- Avoiding reminders
- Not do things
- Worrying
- Using alcohol/drugs
- Self-harming
- Smoking
- Avoiding thinking

Ways to look after yourself

- Talk to friends/family/staff/people trained in helping victims of sexual violence
- Avoid drugs/alcohol
- Do one nice thing a day for yourself
- Challenge your difficult emotions
- Challenged your difficult thoughts—remind yourself that you were not to blame
- Eat balance meals
- Use lavender to help you sleep
- Remind yourself that there is no right or wrong way of responding

Common responses

Everyone reacts differently to sexual safety incidents. However, the following are thought to be common responses to trauma, you may wish to tick those that apply:

Emotions

- Anxiety
- Shock
- Disgust
- Guilt
- Shame
- Anger
- Sadness
- Loneliness

Thoughts

- It was my fault
- Difficulty remembering
- Difficulty thinking
- Others are untrustworthy
- I am dirty or contaminated
- I am overreacting to this
- Why me?
- Did it really happen?
- I should have done something

This is not an exhaustive list, so it does not mean that an incident has to be on this list to count.

Sexual safety incidents are rare, however they do occur and can involve another patient, a visitor, family member or a staff member.

Rape or sexual violence can happen to anyone regardless of age, gender, race, social status or religion. These are criminal offences and can be reported to the police in the same way as any other crime.

Sexual assault affects all communities including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ+). Sexual assault is an abuse of power, not a question of sexuality.

All sexual incidents are serious, none of it is okay and it is never the victims fault.

Why does sexual safety matter?

Sexual safety matters because a sexual safety incident such as those described:

- * Can cause significant distress and harm
- * Damages a person's self esteem
- * Affects other relationships
- * Can potentially result in sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy
- * Can never be justified or excused
- * Can leave a person feeling that they were to blame—this is a normal response, but it is important to know that it is never the victims fault

How you may respond to a sexual safety incident

It is important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to respond if you have been the victim of sexual violence or have been sexually assaulted. Everyone reacts differently .

In these situations, your brain has five possible options to keep you safe from harm: fight, flight, appease, freeze or dissociate. It has a split second to decide the best option so the decision is an automatic response.

In the days and weeks after the incident it is likely to impact your thoughts, beliefs and your behaviours. Sexual violence can cause both psychological and physical symptoms. Common reactions are to question what happened, how you responded or trying to block it out completely. To feel shame, anger or confusion.

It is essential to remember you are not to blame, that your reactions during the assault were automatic.

What you can expect from staff

Staff will do their best to create an environment where you will:

- * Feel safe from sexual harm
- * Be heard and listened to if you experience harassment or sexual assault, whether this is something that occurred during your past or during your admission to hospital
- * Together we will devise a plan of care that enables you to stay safe even if your mental illness causes you to be disinhibited
- * Feel able to make requests and receive care that takes into account your individual needs and any past experiences of trauma; this is called trauma informed care
- * Be informed of your options if a sexual safety incident occurs

How staff should support you if a sexual safety incident occurs

- * You will be treated with compassion and understanding when disclosing an incident
- * You will be informed of your options
- * You will be protected from further contact with the person alleged to have caused you harm regardless of whether this is another patient, a family member, a friend, a staff member or visitor.
- * You will be supported to receive emergency contraception, get tested for STIs and be considered for Hepatitis B vaccination and PEP (Post Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV infection) as post exposure prevention if needed
- * You will be informed that you can attend a sexual assault referral centre (SARC), these can provide medical care and forensic examination. You will also be put in touch with an independent sexual violence advisor (ISVA) who has specific training in these matters

- * You will be supported to make a report to the police and have the incident fully investigated
- * You will receive appropriate support and after care

If you do not feel able to tell staff or do not think that a response was adequate we encourage you to contact the free and confidential Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0800 783 4839 or the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 0300 0616161

You can report the incident to the police with support from the nursing team or alone. You can do this online or by calling 101 or 999

If you would like to do this anonymously you can call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 1111

Sheffield Rape and Abuse Centre (SRASAC) is a service offering free and confidential support to anyone who has experienced rape or sexual abuse at any time in their life. You can call them on 0114 2412766 or visit their website at www.srasac.org.uk

It is best to do this as soon after the incident occurs as possible but you can also report it at a later date feel ready to.