

# Self-Referral to a Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS)

Where to get support if you have recently been raped or sexually assaulted

Easy Read



## What is this leaflet about?



This leaflet is about where to get support if you have recently been raped or sexually assaulted.

Rape is when someone has sex with you when you do not want to have sex. Or someone having sex with you when you are not able to tell them to stop is also rape.



Someone trying to have sex with you when you do not want to or when they are aware you are not able to tell them to stop, is attempted rape.

Sexual assault is when someone touches your body in a sexual way when you do not want them to.



Rape and sexual assault are against the law. If it has happened to you, you have done nothing wrong. It is not your fault. You should tell someone that you trust.

## Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS)



If you do not know what to do or where to go after a rape or sexual assault, a Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS) might be able to help you. This is a NHS service. It can offer healthcare and support after an assault.

## What options are available to me?

**You can tell the police.**



If you have been raped or sexually assaulted, you can tell the police at any time. Contact details for Police Scotland are at the end of this leaflet. You might want to ask someone you trust to help you do this.

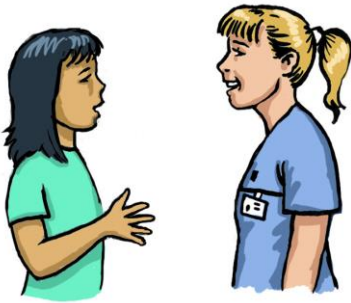


Depending on when the assault happened, the police can support you to attend a SARCS. The SARCS staff will look after your health and wellbeing needs. If the assault took place in the last 7 days, you may have a medical examination.



This examination is carried out by a medical professional. They may be able to collect evidence. This could help the police find the person who carried out the assault. This evidence may include bodily fluids or hair.

## You can self-refer to a SARCS



You may not be ready to tell the police or are unsure. Self-referral means that you can make an appointment at a SARCS by yourself. You do not need to ask your GP or anyone else to do it for you.

This self-referral service is for anyone age 16 or over. If you are under 16, you can find information about where you can go for help at [www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs](http://www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs)



If you self-refer, the SARCS staff will look after your health and wellbeing needs. If the assault has happened in the last 7 days, you may be offered a medical examination. The examination will happen in the same way as it would if you tell the police.



**26 months**

The SARCS will keep your evidence safe for 26 months (2 years and 2 months) from the day of your examination. This is in case you want to tell the police later. If you choose not to tell the police, your evidence will be destroyed after 26 months.

## Important information



There is a difference between a police report and a self-referral. Other evidence will not be collected unless you make a report to the police. This may include crime scene evidence, bedding or photos from a CCTV or on your mobile phone.

## How do I self-refer to a Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS)



You can phone a dedicated NHS telephone number 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can speak to a trained healthcare professional who can help to arrange the care you might need.



You can find out more information about how to self-refer to a SARCS and the telephone number to call on the NHS inform website: [www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs](http://www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs)  
You might want to ask someone you trust to help you do this.

## What can I expect when I arrive at the Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS)?



Whether you tell the police or self-refer, the staff are there to help you. They will look after your health care needs and provide emotional support. A nurse will be with you during your appointment.



You will be treated with kindness and respect at all times.

## What will happen after the examination?



You will have the chance to ask questions. If you need healthcare appointments or referrals to other services these will be arranged.



If you self-refer to a SARCS, the staff will make sure you have somewhere safe to go when you leave.



They will also support you to make a police report if that is what you decide to do.

## What will happen to any evidence collected?



**26 months**

Any evidence taken will be stored safely for 26 months. During that time you can decide if you want to tell the police. Your evidence will only be looked at if you decide to report to the police.



You can ask to have your evidence destroyed early or have some items returned to you. After the 26 months, your evidence will be safely destroyed. This does not stop you from being able to make a report to the police if you decide to do so.



Rape Crisis Scotland provide an advocacy service. You can talk to them about what reporting to the police would involve. They can support you through the process if you decide to go ahead. Contact details for Rape Crisis are at the end of this leaflet.

## If I decide to tell the police after I have self-referred, what will happen next?



If you decide to tell the police within the 26 month period, remember to tell them about the examination you have had. This means they can ask the SARCS for your evidence.



If the police have enough evidence to prove a crime has been committed, they will tell the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. They will decide if there is enough evidence to charge the person.



If that happens, you will be contacted by the Victim Information and Advice Service. They will provide you with information about the case. They can also tell you about other support that may be available,

## Will anyone know if I self-refer to a SARCS?



This is a confidential NHS service. The police and other services will not know unless you tell them. In certain cases they may need to be told if you or others are at risk of harm.



If you are being forced or pressured to have sex or sexual activity, the SARCS staff can help you. They can support you to contact the Police or can refer you to support organisations.



## Things to remember



**It is your choice.** You will not be rushed into making any decisions. You are encouraged to ask questions before deciding to go ahead. You can ask to bring someone with you, such as a trusted friend or relative.



**You are in control.** You can ask the healthcare professional looking after you to pause or stop at any time.



**You should try to get help as soon as possible after an assault.** An examination is normally carried out within 7 days of the assault. In some circumstances, it may be helpful to have one after that time.

If you are unsure about what to do, you should contact the telephone number at [www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs](http://www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs) to talk to someone about your options.



**You are not alone.** SARCS are here to help you.

## **Support and information**

NHS Inform

[www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs](http://www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs)

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline (5pm – midnight, every night)

Call: 08088 010302

Text: 07537 410 027

Email: [support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](mailto:support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

[www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

Police Scotland

In an emergency dial 999

Non emergencies dial 101

[www.scotland.police.uk](http://www.scotland.police.uk)

Victim Support Scotland: 0800 160 1985 (Mon to Fri 8am to 8pm)

[www.victimsupportsco.org.uk](http://www.victimsupportsco.org.uk)

Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87 (Mon – Thur 6pm to 2am and Fri 6pm to Mon 6am)

[www.breathingspace.scot](http://www.breathingspace.scot)

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline: 0800 027 1234

[www.sdafmh.org.uk](http://www.sdafmh.org.uk) (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

[www.sdafmh.org.uk](http://www.sdafmh.org.uk)

Childline: 0800 1111

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Information about other support services and organisations can be found at

[www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs](http://www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs)





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