



What is a SARC? What is the Saturn Centre?

A Sexual Assault Referral Centre is defined as:

A 'one stop' location where victims of sexual assault can receive medical care and counselling whilst at the same time having the opportunity to assist the Police investigation into alleged offences, including the facilities for a high standard of forensic examination.

The SARC in Sussex is a safe place where a victim can be taken by police, so they can be medically examined, receive medical care, be offered support and counselling, and have the opportunity to provide evidence to police.

In addition, the SARC in Sussex will also be available for victims of sexual assault to 'self refer', meaning anyone can refer themselves to the service if they need support and advice but do not want the police involved. They will receive the same help, treatment and support, including having forensic samples taken anonymously. If they decide to report to the police at a later stage, the relevant evidence will be available.

To ensure discretion for anyone visiting the centre, the Sussex SARC has been named "The Saturn Centre".

2. Where were sexual assault victims offered this type of help before the SARC? Why is the SARC needed?

Before the SARC, victims would be taken by police officers to local medical rooms at interview suites, located in converted houses in Sussex. There would be a specially trained officer throughout the investigation but medical and support services were not immediately available.

This service was of a high standard. However national guidelines suggest that the victim should be offered all services for support from one facility, to provide this in Sussex, the SARC has been developed.

3. How is it funded?

The set-up funding has been provided by Home Office Grant. This was a joint bid from Sussex Police, West Sussex Primary Care Trust, and West Sussex County Council, all of whom have provided funds, facilities and premises.

Arrangements are being finalised to secure on going funding to support the SARC long term.

4. Why was Crawley chosen as its location?

As a joint project between Sussex Police, West Sussex Primary Care Trust and West Sussex County Council, the SARC is jointly funded by all three. As the health trust involved in its development, West Sussex PCT has provided the premises. Crawley was chosen because of the access it can provide for people across the whole of Sussex and the suitability of rooms made available with their own external and discrete entrance.

5. What happens if the victim / client does not want to go to Crawley?

The wishes of the victim are always the paramount concern. However, very few victims have refused to attend the centre at Crawley. If they are not comfortable going to Crawley or in the case of an emergency the existing witness suites, based at either Hastings or Barnham can be made available.

6. How will victims / clients access ongoing support if they live a distance from Crawley?

Service users will be able to have telephone contact with the centre. The support services will signpost local provision, and facilitate that referral, helping the victims to receive the medical and counselling they may need in their local area.

7. Is there expected to be a high demand for the service? What are the rates of rape and sexual assault in Sussex?

Sussex as a county does not have a high reported rate of sexual assault. However, we should clearly be offering the best service we can to anyone who is a victim of serious sexual assault.

There has been a consistent reduction in the number of cases of rape reported to Sussex Police since 2005 when they peaked at just under 500. From those cases, detections have increased, from 14.04% in year 2004-05 to 22.42% 2007-08. In relation to rape cases that have proceeded to court, there was almost double the number of successful rape cases compared to unsuccessful rape cases.

8. Will the service result in more rape and sexual assault cases being formally reported?

The centre will provide a safe and comfortable environment for victims to receive the help they need, not only initially, but for as long as they need.

By nature, being sexually assaulted or raped can be very traumatic for a victim and anything that can be done to support them throughout the process is vital.

It is hoped that victims that use the service will have the confidence to work with a Support Worker, the police and justice system, to see their case through to conviction, therefore increasing the number of cases that reach court successfully.

The centre will allow for and encourage self referral, making sure that victims receive the appropriate help and support, even if they don't wish for the Police to be involved at that time. With the victims' permission, forensic evidence may be passed to the Police, even if the victims themselves want to stay anonymous.

9. What are the opening hours of the Saturn Centre?

The centre is available 24 hours for police officers to take victims of recent crime.

The centre is staffed Monday to Friday 9-5pm, and messages can be left out of hours on 01293 600469.

The opening hours and out of hour number is also provided within leaflets being distributed to GP surgeries and community centres across Sussex. It can also be found on both Sussex Police website (<http://www.sussex.police.uk>), West Sussex Primary Care Trust website (<http://www.westsussexpct.nhs.uk>), and on The Saturn Centre's own website (www.saturncentre.org).

10. Have any services at Crawley Hospital been affected by the launch for the SARC there?

No service provision has been removed from Crawley Hospital to develop the SARC; existing services have been relocated on the site to accommodate the Saturn Centre.

11. Why don't East Sussex and Brighton & Hove have their own SARC?

The Saturn Centre is available to victims throughout Sussex. We hope to develop services across Sussex in the future.