



## **What is a SARC? What is the Saturn Centre?**

A Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) 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 victims can be taken by the police, to have forensic samples taken, receive medical care and be offered ongoing support and counselling.

SARC services are available to anyone aged 14 and above.

People who have experienced rape or sexual assault but do not want police involvement may 'self refer' to the service. Through self referring forensic samples can be taken anonymously and support can be provided by a dedicated crisis support worker who will explain all the various options available.

If at a later time someone who has self-referred decides to report the assault to the police all the relevant forensic evidence will be available.

Forensic evidence may still be passed to the police (with the victims permission) even if the victims themselves want to stay anonymous.

## **2. What services were on offer before the SARC for sexual assault victims? Why was the SARC needed?**

Before 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 victims should be offered all services for support from one facility- therefore to provide this in Sussex the SARC was developed.

### **3. How is the SARC funded?**

Since April 2010 the Saturn Centre has been funded by a multi-agency board comprising Sussex Police, West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Primary Care Trusts, and the three local authorities. All organisations have provided funds, facilities and premises.

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

### **4. Why was Crawley chosen for the SARC location?**

As a joint project between Sussex Police, West Sussex Primary Care Trust and West Sussex County Council, the SARC was originally jointly funded by all three.

As the health trust involved in its development, West Sussex PCT 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 an external and discrete entrance.

### **5. How will victims access ongoing support if they live a distance from Crawley?**

Since April 2010 the Saturn Centre has been in the fortunate position to have Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA's) based in East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

An ISVA is a dedicated support worker who will keep in touch with anyone who attends the centre, and works to provide welfare support, and information about other services and organisations (such as counselling) that may be of help.

If anyone who has attended the Centre and has any questions they can speak to a support worker on 01293 600469, Monday to Friday, 09.00-17.00.

### **6. Is there a high demand on 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 be offering the best service possible to our public and through the centre, in particular to victims of serious sexual assault.

There has been a consistent reduction in rapes reported to Sussex Police since 2005 when they peaked at just under 500. Detections have increased, from 14.04% in year 2004-05 to 22.42% 2007-08.

## **7. How does the service make a difference to detection rates of rape and sexual assault?**

The centre provides 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 have the confidence to work with the police and justice system to see their case through to conviction, therefore improving on the rates of cases that reach court.

## **8. What happens out of hours?**

The SARC is available 24 hours for referrals which come through Sussex Police (0845 60 70 999).

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

Contact can also be established by email through the Saturn Centre website ([www.saturncentre.org](http://www.saturncentre.org)) by clicking on the "contact us" tab

The opening hours and SARC contact details can be found within the Saturn Centre leaflets. These leaflets were distributed to GP surgeries, Community centres, Voluntary organisations and Pharmacies across Sussex at the start of 2010.

A new updated electronic version of the leaflet can also be found on the Saturn Centre website ([www.saturncentre.org](http://www.saturncentre.org)).

## **10. Were any services at Crawley Hospital affected by the development of the SARC?**

No service provisions were removed from Crawley Hospital to develop the SARC; existing services were relocated elsewhere on site to allow for the re-fit and opening of the centre.