

Rape & Sexual Assault Disclosure: Information for students

University of Plymouth is committed to providing a safe environment for students, and to responding appropriately to any reported incidents. This guidance has been produced for students who have been sexually assaulted or raped. It gives information on the things you might want to consider to help you make an informed choice about what to do next. These guidelines have been produced in consultation with Devon and Cornwall Police and our local Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

If you have been assaulted you may have very mixed feelings about what happened, and whether to tell anyone. People can react very differently and there is no easy answer about whether to report or not.

You should not feel under any pressure to act in any specific way. The aim of these guidelines is for you to have access to some of the information that you might want to consider.

Please see below the checklist of steps to consider:

1.
 - Are you in a safe environment?
2.
 - Do you want to take some time to think things through?
3.
 - Time limits to be aware of
4.
 - Police procedures
5.
 - Who can you talk to?
6.
 - External agencies

1. Are you in a safe environment?

If the assault has just occurred, you might want to consider whether you feel safe where you are.

If you or others feel at risk or consider the situation to be an emergency, you can call the Police or an ambulance on 999. For incidents in University premises you can call the University Security Office on 01752 588400 or ext 3333.

2. Do you want to take some time to talk or think things through?

If the situation is not an emergency, you may want to take some time to think things through or to talk to someone you trust. You might want to contact a friend or a member of staff for support.

Each person's reaction to sexual assault or rape can differ as will the effect that it has on you.

You might be in shock so trying to be somewhere that feels safe and warm might help.

3. Time limits to be aware of:

- If you suspect you were given any type of drug, it is best to be tested within 24 hours.
- If you want emergency contraception, the medication should be started within 72 hours.
- If you would like HIV prophylaxis, the medication should be started within 36 hours.
- Any forensic evidence collected can be stored whilst you decide what to do next. Please see section below on the collection of forensic evidence.

It is up to you to choose what kind of support you want to access, but you might want to consider getting medical attention even if you do not want to report the assault to the Police.

<https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/advice/crimes-against-the-individual/rape-sexual-assault/>

4. Police procedures

- See the police website for more information on reporting:
<https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/advice/crimes-against-the-individual/rape-sexual-assault/reporting-a-rape-or-sexual-assault/>
- Reporting at a police station or attending a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) can be a very lengthy process that can take many hours, and can be upsetting. So bringing a supportive friend or relative along might be helpful. But if you come alone, don't worry as there will be independent support for you at the centre. It might be worth

bringing a set of spare clothes if you have not changed since the assault, as the Police might need to keep them as evidence; but again don't worry as the SARC have fresh clothes there if needed.

Reporting immediately

- If it is an emergency i.e. the offender is nearby or you are at risk, call 999.
- If you want to report immediately, but it's not an emergency, call 101. The line is staffed 24 hours a day by trained operators.
- You can either self-refer or the police can take you to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)- Plymouth at Hawthorne House, Darklake View, Estover, Plymouth. PL6 7TL. Helpline 0300 3034626 - where you can have a forensic medical examination and get medical and emotional help. To help get the best quality forensic evidence, the SARC recommends that you try not to eat, drink, smoke, wash, change your clothes, go to the toilet or clear up the area where the assault took place. If you have done any of these things, don't worry - it is often still possible to get some forensic evidence, so this **should not stop you reporting.**
- If you have changed, the clothes you were wearing at the time of the incident should be collected and placed in a clean plastic bag with the time, date and location where they were taken off, recorded and attached to the bag. Any bedding or a used condom, if relevant, should be placed in separate bags.
- If there are signs of a disturbance at the scene, it would be useful for photographs to be taken - especially if you are unsure at this stage whether or not to report the incident to the Police.
- If you think you may have been drugged you should produce a urine sample. If you can get to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) quickly (Hawthorne House, Darklake View, Estover, Plymouth. PL6 7TL. Helpline 0300 3034626) then that would be the best course of action. However, due to how quick date rape drugs leave the system it may be best to save a sample in a sealed unit (food-bag or small clean jar) in your fridge until you can get it to the Police. This way the Police will have something, rather than nothing, to consider for forensic examination.
- The student should also be advised to preserve any other possible evidence such as mobile phone lists, texts and voicemails; photos; and emails.
- When you give your statement to the police, try not to leave anything out, however embarrassing or painful it may be. If you can't remember something, it is okay to say so. Don't be afraid to tell the truth about things like how much you had to drink, or using recreational drugs,

because if the truth comes out later it may harm the chances of prosecution.

- It is also OK to have had prior consensual contact with the offender earlier; the police will only be interested in the non-consensual contact.
- Another option is to report anonymously. This can be done by contacting Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. It can put the perpetrator on the police radar. They might not be arrested, but it can help make another reported case stronger. Alternatively, you can give information as intelligence to the Police on the non-emergency number 101. They are then able to act on this information which could include a visit to an alleged assailant.

Reporting later

- Many people do not wish to report immediately, but decide after a while that they want to do so. This is perfectly acceptable and there are steps you can take to make this easier.
- If you are not sure what to do, you can go to the SARC where they can talk you through the different options available to you. SARC can store forensic evidence for you until you decide about reporting. If you wish, they can keep DNA results on record and let you know if it matches with other reported assaults, still with no obligation on you to report. The SARC also provides medical and emotional help, which you can access without reporting to the police. The SARC is located at Hawthorne House, Darklake View, Estover, Plymouth. PL6 7TL. Helpline 0300 3034626. <https://sarchelp.co.uk>
- If you do not wish to see anyone, information on this Rape Crisis website (<http://www.hertsrapecrisis.org.uk/gettinghelp.html>) states that it is possible to preserve some evidence yourself. They recommend putting your clothes (including e.g. sanitary pad) in a clean bag in the freezer can help preserve evidence, as can brushing your teeth and then freezing the toothbrush.

5. Who can you talk to?

If you experience an incident of sexual harassment, sexual assault, during your time at Plymouth, you are strongly encouraged to tell someone about your experience and seek support.

You can talk to any of the following people:

- University Medical Centre Nurse or Doctor
- Sexual Offences Surgery - drop-in service held in the Learning Gateway 6pm – 8pm (dates on website: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/whats-on/sexual-offences-surgeries>)
- Your local GP

- Tutor
- Senior Tutor
- Student Wellbeing Services
- The Listening Post
- Chaplain
- UPSU Welfare Officer
- Learning Gateway in The Wellbeing Centre, Endsleigh Place.

6. External agencies

For expert advice on these issues, you can contact the following agencies:

Sexual Assault

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

<https://sarchelp.co.uk/>

<https://sarchelp.co.uk/information-sexual-assault/>

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) - Plymouth

Hawthorne House, Darklake View, Estover, Plymouth, PL6 7TL

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) – Truro

The Willows, Truro Health Park, Infirmary Hill, Truro, TR1 2JA

First Light - Plymouth Therapy & Counselling Service counselling support for rape and sexual assault. <https://www.firstlight.org.uk/get-help/>
Helpline: 03458 121212. Email: info@firstlight.org.uk

Survivors UK – support for male survivors. Helpline: 0845 1221201, Mon, Tues and Thurs 7-10pm <http://www.survivorsuk.org/>

Operation Emotion. Support for male survivors. Helpline 07539 810096.
www.operationemotion.com

M-Power – for male survivors, Helpline: 0808 8084231, Thurs 8-10pm

Rape & Sexual Abuse Line,

<http://www.therapeandsexualabusehelpline.co.uk/> Devon Helpline: 0808 800 0188

Cornwall Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre CRASAC

<http://www.crasacornwall.co.uk/>

Truro Health Park, Infirmary Hill, Truro TR1 2JA. Helpline 01872 262100

Women's Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre WRASAC

<http://www.wrsac.org.uk/>

01208 77099 10am-1pm Mon-Thurs & 7.30pm-10pm Mondays

Domestic Abuse/physical violence

Plymouth Independent Sexual Violence Advocacy (ISVA)

<https://sarchelp.co.uk/information-sexual-assault/what-is-an-isva/>

Plymouth: Hawthorne House, Darklake View, Estover, Plymouth, PL6 7TL

Truro: The Willows, Truro Health Park, Infirmary Hill, Truro, TR1 2JA

Helpline: 0300 3034626

Domestic Violence and Abuse Service (South and West Devon)

<http://www.charitychoice.co.uk/dvaas>

Broken Rainbow – for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) people, experiencing domestic abuse <http://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/>

LGBT Helpline (the Intercom Trust) 0800 612 3010 Advocacy and Support

National Women's Aid <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

Southall Black Sisters – for black and Asian women and children experiencing domestic and sexual violence, including forced marriage and honour crimes.

Helpline: 020 85710800 10am-5pm Mon-Fri (closed Weds 12.30-1.30).

Languages: English, Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati and Urdu.

Rights of Women is a women's voluntary sector organisation which provides free legal advice and information to women affected by sexual violence. They publish a range of free information on areas of sexual violence law to support women through the criminal justice process, including From Report to Court: a handbook for adult survivors of sexual violence. www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/legal.php

Sexual health clinic

Derriford Sexual Health Clinic:

<http://www.plymouthonlinedirectory.com/kb5/plymouth/fsd/service.page?id=IWc6TFo6474>

Sexual Harassment

Advice Place

Disclosure <https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/healthandwellbeing/harassment/sexualharassment/>

Stalking

Stalking Helpline <http://www.stalkinghelpline.org/>

Network for surviving stalking <http://www.nss.org.uk/>