

Evaluation of the Rape Crisis Scotland National Advocacy Project

Final Report
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1. Introduction

This is the final report detailing findings from the evaluation of Rape Crisis Scotland's National Advocacy Project (NAP). It draws upon data gathered since the launch of the NAP in February 2016 to the end of August 2017. Findings are presented in three main sections: key national stakeholder perspectives; survivor data and perspectives; and practitioner perspectives. Key themes and learning points from the evaluation findings and recommendations for future policy and practice are then identified. A shorter executive summary of this report has also been made available for use as a policy and practice briefing.

1.1 The National Advocacy Project: context for development

There has been an increase in attention paid to sexual violence in recent years by both the UK and Scottish Government, amidst a context in which the response of the criminal justice system in dealing with offences of rape and serious sexual assault, and its impact upon those reporting these offences, has been subject to scrutiny. Enduring concerns such as 'secondary victimisation' throughout the criminal justice process (Kelly et al., 2005; Burman, 2009), high numbers of cases which do not reach court (Kelly et al., 2005), a 'culture of scepticism' leading to an over-estimation of the scale of false allegations (see Kelly et al., 2005), and a lack of coordinated service provision to victims (Feist et al., 2007; Robinson, 2009) reveal a challenging landscape for the pursuit of safe and effective routes to justice for survivors of rape and sexual assault. Recognition of these issues has led to commitment across the UK to make support and health services more accessible to victims of rape and sexual assault (see: Home Office, 2007, 2011; Scottish Government, 2009, 2016). In Scotland, a key part of this commitment has centred on the delivery of advocacy support to victim-survivors engaging with, or considering engaging with, the criminal justice system (Brooks and Burman, 2016; Blake Stevenson, 2017).

The National Advocacy Project (NAP) delivered through Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS) arises out of an earlier pilot based in Glasgow, known as Support to Report (S2R). Launched in December 2013, S2R provided 24-hour advocacy support to men and women reporting rape to the police. Following the success of the pilot, RCS secured funding from the Scottish Government to continue the work of supporting survivors nationwide, and in February 2016, launched the NAP: a larger national project comprising 15 local advocacy services across Scotland based within local Rape Crisis Centres (RCCs) (with the exception of West Lothian where the NAP is housed within the local authority-run Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Team). The NAP provides dedicated advocacy support from RCS trained Advocacy Workers (AWs) to survivors of rape and serious sexual crime. Funding for the NAP, secured up until March 2018, is distributed equally between the 15 local Advocacy Projects to provide one FTE Advocacy Worker per project. The work of the local Advocacy Projects is coordinated by Rape Crisis Scotland and overseen by a National Advisory Group comprising representatives from RCS, Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), which is Scotland's prosecution service.

The NAP anticipates three broad outcomes:

- i. an improvement in the support available to survivors of rape and serious sexual crime;
- ii. an improvement in the experience of the criminal justice process for survivors of rape and serious sexual crime; and
- iii. the development of a better understanding of survivors' motivations to proceed or not to proceed with the criminal justice process and the difference advocacy support makes to this decision.

1.2 Evaluation: purpose and data collection methods

The main purpose of the evaluation is to:

- a. Assess the impact of the NAP, and the extent to which the key objectives have been met.
- b. Identify the lessons learnt from the work, in particular the delivery of the NAP model by partner organisations.
- c. Identify best practice for wider dissemination.
- d. Identify the extent to which the NAP has influenced policy and practice within key justice agencies.

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods design drawing on: quantitative data from RCS's client database OASIS; semi-structured qualitative interviews with key stakeholders and with victim-survivors; an online survey of all 15 local NAP project sites, and in-depth qualitative case studies of four local NAP projects. To take each strand of data in turn:

Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (n= 4)

Interviews with members of NAP's Advisory Group (police, prosecution and RCS) provided insights into the 'theory of change' envisaged through the introduction of the NAP, and key strategic issues related to the national roll-out, operability and sustainability of the NAP.

Quantitative monitoring data

Data has been gathered on key operational elements of the NAP through RCS's client database, OASIS. In addition to existing client data collected by RCS, another module developed specifically for NAP service users was added to OASIS. Generating information on 1,004 clients, this combination of general RCS data and specific advocacy data provides a picture of how the service is being accessed and delivered to survivors engaging, or considering engaging, with the criminal justice process.

Semi-structured interviews with victim-survivors (n = 16)

A total of 16 victim-survivors were interviewed from across ten of the 15 local advocacy projects. Victim-survivors were approached through Advocacy Workers as they were reaching the end, or had concluded, their court case and contact with the Advocacy Project. In 15 out of the 16 cases, a report was made to the police and of these 15 cases, three did not proceed to trial, three were awaiting trial and nine went to trial.

Local case studies (n = 4)

Four case study areas were identified on the basis of providing a representative mix of urban/rural and high/low volumes of clients. Researchers conducted in-depth qualitative interviews (n = 18) across the four sites with local Advocacy Workers, Rape Crisis Centre Managers, representatives from the police and prosecution service. To capture different stages of the NAP's development during the evaluation period, a staggered approach to data collection was adopted; the first two case studies were conducted 3-6 months after the NAP was launched and the final two case studies were conducted at the 9-12 month stage. The case study data have been crucial in generating a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which the NAP operates on local levels and how it might be developed for future operation.

Online surveys in all 15 sites (n = 68)

After the first year of the NAP's operation, surveys seeking qualitative and quantitative information on the implementation and operation of the NAP at a local level were distributed to Advocacy Workers, Rape Crisis Centre Managers, police and court-based Victim Information and Advice (VIA) officers in all 15 sites. This data has helped provide a nationwide understanding of the impact of the NAP and the extent to which the key objectives have been met, as well as highlighting key lessons learnt from the work.

Finally, in addition to data gathered above, the evaluation team attended and observed quarterly NAP Advocacy Worker meetings and Police Scotland/Advocacy Worker training events. Attending these events proved invaluable to enhancing understanding of the NAP, its day-to-day operation, and the longer-term sustainability of the project.

2. National perspectives

2.1 Key Stakeholders

Interviews with key national stakeholders were conducted at an early stage of the evaluation in order to gain insight into the 'theory of change' envisaged through the NAP and, relatedly, to facilitate understanding of the purpose and vision informing the roll-out of the NAP project at a national level. It is important to note that stakeholder interviewees are also members of the NAP Advisory Group and so, along with RCS, have key responsibility and vested interest in the strategic direction provided to the NAP.

All stakeholders warmly welcomed the introduction of the NAP, stating that it filled a much needed 'gap' in provision and constituted a key way to engage with survivors who may be reticent to engage with criminal justice. This was a shared view across agencies, although the following quotes sum up this view:

Stakeholder 3: There's no other equivalent service in Scotland which is why we are able to identify the gap so clearly. So there is a lot of advocacy services been developed for domestic abuse but not really any equivalent around sexual offences. And it's work that Rape Crisis Centres had already been doing to a degree. But they were very restricted in what they could offer because they didn't have any dedicated resources and this can be so time intensive particularly doing court support. So if you don't have dedicated staff, if you've got a member of staff who's got lots of other commitments, and then you've got a court date that changes every week or every day, it can be really hard to then meet that commitment.

Stakeholder 3: It is just about providing support and advocacy to anyone engaging the justice system or thinking of reporting and to us there was a really clear gap And it...I think just the justice process can be really bewildering. It can be very complex. There is a lot of legal jargon involved and also I think sometimes we kind of forget just how intimidating it can be just for example phoning the fiscal's office to find out what's happening with your case.

Stakeholder 4: Also just there was such a clear need for it as well, just given, I think, what a difficult process the justice process can be. Over and over before this project started what we heard was that people really wanted one person to support them throughout the process.

There was a clear recognition of the limits to which statutory agencies are able to provide support to survivors, and an acknowledgement that whilst a consistent and professional victim-oriented criminal justice response is crucial, the primary role and responsibility of statutory agencies in investigation and prosecution is not to provide support:

Stakeholder 1:..... it's about making sure that that victim of a sexual crime is afforded the right support, you know. the police, by their very nature, [are] there to, yeah, ... support victims to a certain extent but can't go that extra step at times. One, because it's not in the remit and because at times they are not the holders of the information. So it needs to be someone else that fills that gap, and I think there is a gap between Police and the Crown that needs to be filled by someone that can carry that on. Offer that support and continue to offer it.

As such, all acknowledged the potential value of the role played by Advocacy Workers in supporting survivors throughout the investigation and prosecution process.

Stakeholders clearly wished the NAP to be successful in meeting its objectives, first and foremost in providing support and assistance to victim-survivors to help them make informed decisions, as summed up by Stakeholder 4:

Stakeholder 4: [W]hat we hope ... is to improve, to some degree, people's experience of the justice system by having one person ideally that can support them right the way through the process. I mean that might just be from deciding, talking through, and deciding not to report or it could be somebody reporting and then to court and after. But having a dedicated support there but also the advocacy role I think is really important about getting information for you where you want the advocacy worker to do that. But also if there are any problems coming up having someone that can really clearly advocate on your behalf.

However, some stakeholders also hoped that the NAP would lead to more confidence in the criminal justice system, and would lead to more victim-survivors willing to report their experiences:

Stakeholder 1: So our aim is, you know, to get to increasing public confidence going forward and that's the key. That's the key thing that we hope to get out of the Advocacy Project is say if, you know, if ten people come forward that wouldn't have come forward. Well we've achieved something out of that.

All stakeholders were keen to emphasise the need for a shared understanding of the role and remit of statutory agencies in relation to that of Advocacy Workers, and believed that the operation of the NAP had strong potential for facilitating that shared understanding.

Whilst most stakeholders held the view that the introduction of the NAP had been relatively smooth, the initial information communicated about it at a national level was considered to be too limited. In raising this issue, stakeholders considered that the relatively brief outline of the purpose and objectives of the NAP and the contact details of the Advocacy Workers which were circulated to the police and COPFS at a national level prior to the NAP's introduction were insufficiently detailed:

Stakeholder 2: I do think better information would have been critical. And I think if we can address that we can then educate our staff a bit more But it's like anything else, you suddenly have a new system and then somebody who wasn't there before is now then saying right, well, this is what I want to do and that's what I wanted to do. And that's where rubbing points come because people then maybe don't understand where the parameters are. And that can be our side and that can be... So people are thinking right, well, why are you suddenly involved here and what's your role?

This was considered to have contributed to an initial lack of clarity about the roles of the Advocacy Workers and the advocacy service on offer, and how it could be accessed. This initial lack of clarity was soon 'worked through' and rectified over the first months of the NAP, but points to the need to ensure full information at an early stage.

According to stakeholders, one of the most valuable aspects of the NAP is its national scope and coverage. The relative scarcity of support provision in some parts of Scotland has been highlighted elsewhere (Coy et al., 2007) and the NAP was considered to potentially provide improved services in areas which have been less well served. Whilst some stakeholders voiced concerns about the likely 'thin spread' of coverage in some of Scotland's more geographically remote areas, all viewed the NAP as a most welcome initiative. In those (highly populated, predominantly urban) areas where there is an established Rape Crisis presence and the existence of other support organisations, stakeholders were keen to learn how the NAP would 'fit in' with existing services. It

was felt that arrangements in each of the project sites required careful consideration to ensure that the potential for duplication and confusion was minimised through communication and clarity of role.

Whilst there were some '*rubbing points*', as one stakeholder put it, relating to how Advocacy Workers work with or through different agencies that need careful and ongoing consideration (such as between the NAP and the services offered by Victim Information Advice (VIA) in relation to the provision of court support), overall however, the development of the NAP was considered to have facilitated stronger professional relationships and greater exchange of information between statutory agencies and Advocacy Workers, which could facilitate smoother and swifter processes. Importantly, after the initial lack of clarity over the role of the Advocacy Workers, stakeholders reported enhanced levels of mutual understanding of the role of Advocacy Workers within the statutory agencies:

Stakeholder 2: What I always think with these things is there can be real mutual benefits, and I think for us to have that conduit to get, particularly if you're engaging with somebody who's maybe really vulnerable, really reluctant or whatever, it can be really beneficial. It can give us a lot of information. But we can pass information back and it can just really help the process.

It was also seen to have improved communication, both locally and nationally, between statutory agencies and Advocacy Workers, with some clear examples provided of increased telephone communication and greater familiarity between individuals breaking down professional barriers. As such, all stakeholders believe the NAP to have great potential to inform policy and practice in key criminal justice agencies.

There was a clear view that the future success of the NAP should not only be measured in terms of level of uptake of the service, but also needed to be measured and seen in qualitative terms, through the provision of clear information about their rights and one-on-one support:

Stakeholder 3: ...a better quality of service to victims, but also to guide that victim through the criminal justice system as well... But ultimately, what success would be to me, particularly at an operational level, would be about some of the additional uncertainty and distress caused by the justice system being minimised to a degree by this project. That's what I would like to see that people feel better supported, less uncertain, that they've got more information and also more awareness of their rights, where they have rights, and that they would be able to act on that and get support to act on that.

Stakeholders, as members of the NAP Advisory Group, meet regularly and maintain a watching brief over the direction and dealings of the NAP. All stakeholders recognised the clear strategic value of the NAP, and the role played by the Advisory Group in ensuring that issues arising from local projects which may have national relevance are aired, discussed and fed back into the respective partner agencies at a national level where appropriate, or indeed into the various policy and practice forums that Advisory Group members are part of. For example, through the information conveyed to the Advisory Group through the NAP, regular meetings have been set up with senior operational leads in the High Court Sexual Offences Team. In addition, and in order to ensure clarity and awareness of respective roles, a representative of VIA has joined the Advisory Group which has improved communication and understanding around court support.

The Advisory Group is also a means through which to get direct feedback from victim-survivors fed into processes and systems, ensuring wherever possible that stakeholders are listening and learning from people's direct experiences across the country:

Stakeholder 4: *...what the Advocacy Project means is that I think we probably have the best overview that we've ever had of what the issues are in terms of justice responses to sexual offences. I think that's helpful because it gives us more knowledge and information to help work with others to make things better.*

3. Victim-survivor data and perspectives

This section draws on the quantitative monitoring data gathered for the NAP in its first 18 months of operation (from 01 February 2016 to 31 July 2017) to provide a broad descriptive overview of the NAP case-load and key characteristics of service users. In order to provide a more textured analysis of the experiences of the advocacy service users, it also details findings from interviews with 16 victim-survivors who had accessed advocacy support.

3.1 Number and profile of service users

In the first 18 months of the NAP's operation, the total number of clients was 1,004, comprised of 991 victim-survivors and 13 friends or relatives. The statistical information presented here is based on information (where known) regarding the 991 victim-survivors.

Advocacy Project	Number of survivors	% of NAP cases	% population share ¹	% of recorded sexual crime ²
Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire	78	8	9	10
Angus and Dundee	102	10	5	7
Argyll and Bute	20	2	2	1
Ayrshire	62	6	7	6
Edinburgh	65	7	13	14
Fife	68	7	7	8
Forth Valley	49	5	6	5
Glasgow	130	13	22	23
Highland	66	7	6	6
Lanarkshire	90	9	12	7
Perth and Kinross	43	4	3	3
Scottish Borders	54	5	2	1
South West	44	4	3	4
West Lothian (DASAT)	111	11	1	3
Western Isles	9	1	3	<1
TOTAL	991	100	100	100

Table 1: Number of survivors accessing the service by project 1st February 2016 - 31st July 2017

The number of victim-survivors supported by each local Advocacy Project is detailed in Table 1 above. The project covers all local authority areas with the exception of Orkney and Shetland. As can be seen from the figures, there are large differences in the numbers of survivors supported by each project, ranging from 9 to 130. Population figures and recorded sexual offences for each geographical area have been included to give an idea of the size of the potential client base each area covers. Generally, client numbers broadly reflect population share and recorded sexual crime, although some areas have disproportionate numbers (e.g. West Lothian has 11% of advocacy cases but only 1% of the population share and 3% of recorded sexual crime in Scotland, while Glasgow has 22% of the population share and 23% of recorded sexual crime but only 13% of advocacy cases – though Glasgow has the largest proportion of advocacy cases). However, as detailed elsewhere in the report, each geographical area has unique challenges and those projects with high client volumes are facing resourcing issues.

¹ Mid-year population estimates Scotland, Mid-2016, National Records of Scotland

² Recorded crime in Scotland, 2015-16, Scottish Government

3.1.1 Victim-survivor age and incident profile

The vast majority (96%) of victim-survivors accessing advocacy support were female (97% of perpetrators were male). There was a wide age range of victim-survivors supported by the advocacy service, from under 13 years of age to over 60 years (see Appendix 1, *Chart 10*). The age groups most likely to access advocacy support were those aged 20-24 and 30-39 (both 19%), followed by those aged 40-49 years (17%) and 16-19 (15%) suggesting a relatively even spread through the age groups.

Rape was the most common type of incident, present in 43% of cases: child sexual abuse and sexual assault occurred in 20% and 21% of cases each (note that more than one type of abuse can be reported in each case). Other less frequently reported forms of abuse were sexual bullying, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, ritual abuse, grooming, online abuse and stalking (see Appendix 1, *Chart 11*).

With regard to perpetrators, just 9% were strangers. In common with what is known from the international literature, perpetrators were generally known to the victim-survivor, with 23% being a partner or ex-partner, 24% being a family member and 44% being another known person – which includes recent acquaintances, a parent’s lover, a person in relationship of care, a work colleague and/or a buyer of sex/pimp, however, most (62% of this category) were simply categorised ‘other known person’ (see Appendix 1, *Chart 12*).

Almost four out of five (78%) incidents were reported to the police. Of those (and where a timeframe was known), 44% were reported at the time and a further 17% were reported within a year. Almost a third (32%) were reported to the police more than two years after the incident (see Appendix 1, *Chart 13*).

3.2 How and when victim-survivors accessed advocacy support

3.2.1 Referral routes

There are a range of referral routes for victim-survivors accessing advocacy support. Most NAP referrals are either existing RCC clients (26%) or referred from the police (23%). Referrals from the RCS national help-line and self-referrals are the next most common referral routes (16% and 15% respectively).

Source of referral	No. clients	%
Existing RCC Client	240	26
Police	210	23
RCS national help-line	147	16
Self-referral	133	15
Other statutory agency / project	75	8
Other voluntary sector agency / project	61	7
Other Criminal/Youth Justice agency	12	1
COPFS	18	2
SARC	4	0
Other	11	1
TOTAL	911	100

Table 2: How the victim-survivor was referred to the advocacy service

Victim-survivors interviewed had a good prior awareness of Rape Crisis as a support organisation, though the vast majority were not aware that the NAP existed prior to their referral there. It is likely

that this is, in part, due to the NAP being a new development within the landscape of service provision. However, interviews with victim-survivors who used the advocacy service suggested that more information about the service could be made publicly available:

Geraldine: *I don't think that there's enough like advertisement about things like this.*

While a notable proportion (almost a quarter) of the referrals came from the police, it was also suggested that the police could do more to make victim-survivors aware of the support available including making automatic referrals to advocacy support. Some victim-survivors described their limited ability to take in information or make decisions when reporting to the police, particularly in the context of a recent assault. It was therefore suggested that written information about the advocacy service would be useful at this point:

Olivia: *They should have cards. But even at that, I know there's information cards, but they could at least give you something when you report it. Don't just tell you about it, 'cause people aren't taking it in, they really aren't, do you know what I mean. You've not got time to take it in, it's, here's a number, oh, you can contact Rape Crisis. Nobody is listening to that at that time, you know.*

The provision of written information would also be helpful for victim-survivors who may not wish to contact an Advocacy Project until some time after reporting to the police due to a sense that it may be 'too much' just after giving a statement:

Dee: *I wish I'd known about the advocacy earlier when I went to the police. If, when I went to the police, it was offered to me there, I might not have taken it straight away but, knowing that it was there, I would have probably taken it up at some point between then and now ... It wouldn't be years down the line, it would probably be a couple of weeks after I'd think, okay, I think I'm ready to do that now.*

3.2.2 Point within the criminal justice process that advocacy is taken up

Currently, the majority of victim-survivors (69%) come in contact with the advocacy service at some point *after* they have made a report to the police (*Chart 1*). Most commonly, first contact occurs following the police statement (44%), although a number of cases are referred in the latter part of the criminal justice process; this includes 9% of victim-survivors initially making contact with an Advocacy Project prior to trial and 1% following a trial. A quarter (25%) of service users access the service *prior* to reporting to the police (or when considering reporting). Of those who receive advocacy support prior to any police report, almost two thirds (62%) go on to make a report to the police, suggesting that victim-survivors feel supported to engage with criminal justice.

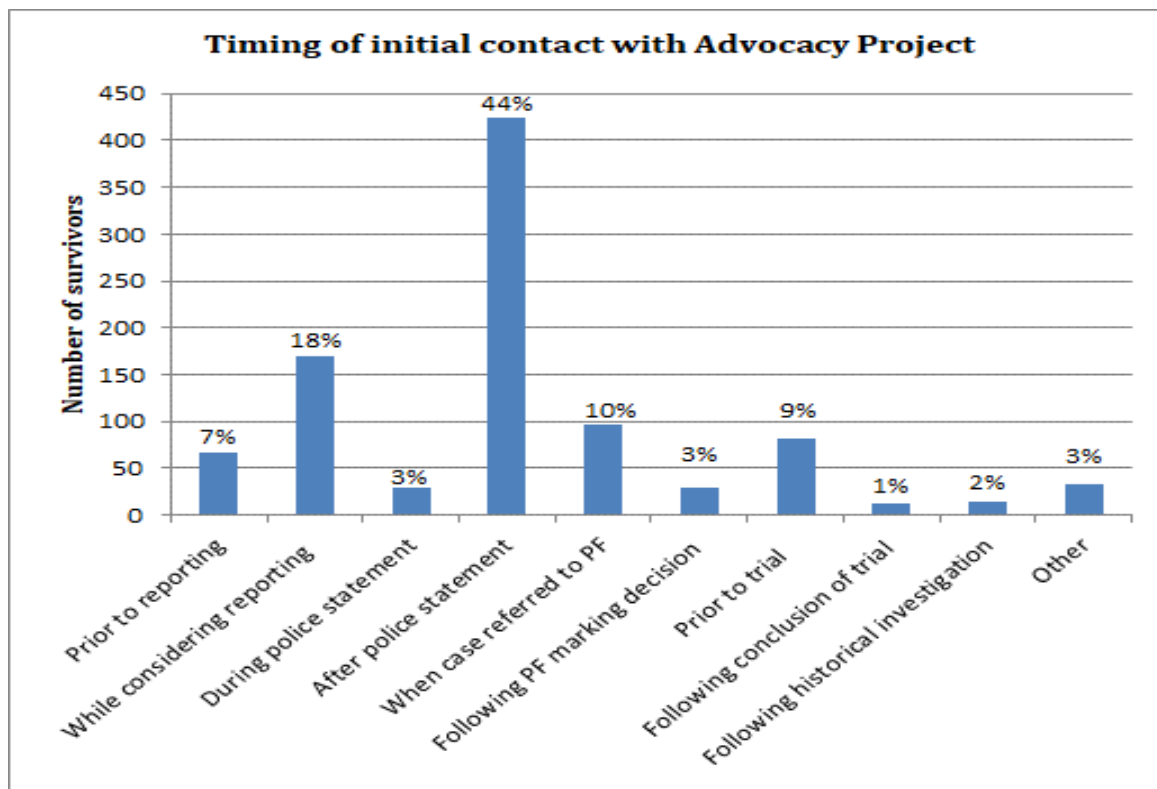


Chart 1: Point in the criminal justice process that the advocacy service was accessed

The victim-survivors interviewed accessed advocacy support in different ways and at different points within the criminal justice process, including while considering reporting to the police, following a police statement, upon hearing that a case would not be proceeding to trial, and on the lead up to court. While support can be provided prior to any report being made to the police, for some victim-survivors interviewed the service was only taken up at a point where the criminal justice process had become particularly difficult to cope with, including when a decision was made not to progress with a case:

Carly: I didn't really know what to do...I just felt so let down ... I think I had maybe a bit too much hope that something would have been done about...because I've been waiting since I was, kind of, little, you know, to have some sort of justice because I felt like I was just, kind of, cast aside.

For others, the service was taken-up when they became aware that the service was available. For a number of the victim-survivors interviewed, their report to the police pre-dated the launch of the NAP in February 2016. Almost all of these interviewees, and those who chose to access advocacy at a later point in the criminal justice process, stated that they wished they had accessed support earlier or that they would recommend taking up advocacy support at the earliest opportunity to others.

3.2.3 The nature of support accessed

A wide range of support is provided by Advocacy Workers, and individual victim-survivors access a number of different forms of support. Chart 2 (overleaf) highlights the ten most common types of support provided to victim-survivors. Each victim-survivor often received multiple types of support; the boxes below therefore include percentages of victim-survivors who received each type of support. The most common form of support was emotional support (52%), followed by provision of advice and support on criminal justice matters (36%), including the decision about whether to report to police (22%). Support not relating to the criminal justice process was also commonly

provided; this included information about other support services that were available (22%) and advice on other matters such as health, housing and welfare (19%).

Support during the investigative and criminal justice process was also a key feature of the service provided, with 33% of victim-survivors given support following the police statement and 22% given support through criminal justice proceedings. Whilst support was most commonly given after the police statement (which reflects the timing of the initial contact with the advocacy service), support was sometimes taken up at the time of the police statement (6%). Relatively few (5%) victim-survivors had an Advocacy Worker present during their police statement though it was suggested that this would be a helpful form of support. The relative lack of advocacy support taken up at this stage is likely to reflect lack of existence or awareness of the service at the point of reporting. However, it may also reflect some of the logistical challenges of providing support during police statements, particularly in the aftermath of a recent assault:

Jane: ... it's unlikely that they would have any [out of hours] people that were available to be there if you end up in a police station in the middle of the night. In an ideal world, there would somebody that could be with you...but I suspect that's a bit of a pipe dream.

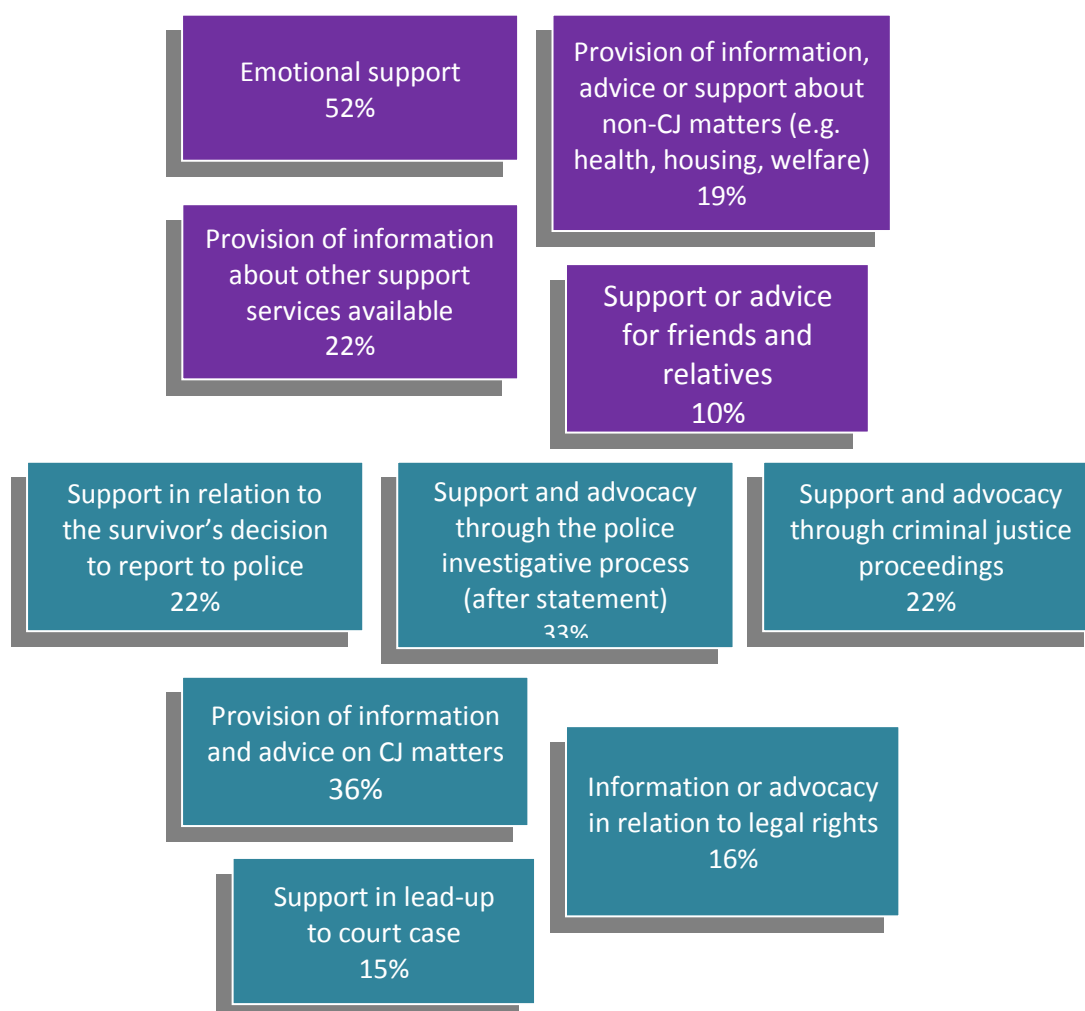


Chart 2: Most common forms of support provided to victim-survivors

Advocacy workers provided support during the court process and the trial, including the precognition (4%) and during the trial itself (4%), as well as when the victim-survivor was considering whether to continue with criminal justice process (9%). In some cases, Advocacy Workers have also provided support following the court case (6%).

Other support provided included advocacy in relation to the decision not to report to the police (3%), making a police complaint (3%), support in relation to a Criminal Injuries Compensation application (5%), and support in relation to making a third party report (3%). Advocacy Workers supported victim-survivors through a range of different circumstances, including historical investigations (9%) and incidents that had taken place abroad (1%). In addition to providing support for the victim-survivor, some Advocacy Workers have provided support, information or advice to friends and relatives of the victim-survivor they supported (10%), as well as to workers from other agencies (9%), highlighting the partnership working involved. The comprehensive range of criminal justice and non-criminal justice related support was highly valued due the all-encompassing impact that a rape or sexual assault can have on the lives of individual, their friends and family:

Kerry: I think they're so invaluable because you're not just dealing with rape. It's everything else that goes on in your life while trying to re-build your life from rape and domestic violence. I know [AW]'s helping a lady out with housing issues. Or whether it's, you know, me trying to get access to GP services, she's done the letters for them. So I think they're not just dealing with one aspect of it. They have to be able to look at everything and they'll support you on that. I think that is hugely important.

Harleigh: ... but she [AW] would sort of say to me like we're here and if you ever get stuck with what you want to ask the police or if you get stuck with going anywhere, you know, that you might struggle with or that's going to be sore for you, your past, or anything like that, court cases, this, that and the next thing; that's what I'm here for... and I thought, 'oh this is great'.

Bethany: They are there to help and they will support you through absolutely everything and anything possible - even if you feel like they are not going to, they will, they'll find a way. They have been absolutely incredible with me from start to finish.

The way that victim-survivors received advocacy support varied on both an individual and project basis; this included via telephone support, one-to-one support, group work and accompaniment to appointments and hearings. In addition, some victim-survivors accessed support via their Advocacy Worker alone though others also accessed support via the main Rape Crisis Service (e.g. through the telephone helpline or a one-to-one support worker). While this may indicate a lack of consistency in service provision between Advocacy Projects and individual victim-survivors, this flexible approach to service provision appears to meet the individual needs of victim-survivors well. It was apparent, from the perspective of victim-survivors, that there was consistency of service provision even where they were in contact with different workers from other parts of the Rape Crisis Service. This sense of consistency stemmed from victim-survivors viewing the Advocacy Project as part of Rape Crisis, sharing the same premises, ethos and survivor-led approach:

Niamh: Just the overall support, feeling comfortable here, I call it my safe place.

Fiona: ... the phone line is brilliant.

Jane: all the rooms are more...I don't know, comfortable and less sterile and it's just...it's quite a...although you're there for something quite serious, it's a friendly service. But you feel they're professional and they know what you're talking about,

but you're, kind of, in control that they obviously...the give and take things as much as you can...but they generally steer you, if you like, to whatever level you need.

Victim-survivors particularly valued the provision of support that was both flexible and reliable. The flexibility of support available extended beyond the range of issues that the Advocacy Worker could address to when or how they could be contacted:

Eilidh: I'm always able to phone [AW], anytime, if I've got any issue about anything.

Use of a more fluid approach to make contact with Advocacy Workers (e.g. by text) rather than a rigid appointment system was described as a more 'human' approach and one that meets the needs of those who have experienced abuse:

Harleigh: She's obviously got a works mobile ... So if there's something that I come away from and think, Christ I'm going to ask [AW] that, I dinnae feel as if I'm putting upon her to ask, even if it's slightly unrelated ... It's like a human thing rather than, you know, don't text me till four o'clock or an appointment system... It's a bit more laid back, you feel as if you're not intruding, because a lot of victim-survivors of abuse feel ... they've got irrational cognitive approaches, so that they might feel deterred from phoning somebody even though the offer's there that they can phone. You know, all it takes is for somebody to be told ... 'oh you'll have to make an appointment'; that would be enough to push them away. Whereas I like the system, you know, that if they can't talk now they say but leave me a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can, and you know that that person will be there as soon as she can – she's never let me down.

However, provision of flexible and reliable support creates particular demands on resources. This demand is exacerbated by the often very lengthy nature of the criminal justice process. The figures outlined in *Chart 3* below indicate the duration of time that clients receive advocacy support for, ranging from one-off contacts to support that extends for over a year. These figures are likely to be an underestimation of the time that clients engage with the service since they are a snapshot in time, just 18 months since the launch of the NAP, and it is estimated that approximately two-thirds of the cases included in this snapshot are still ongoing (just under one-third of cases analysed were marked 'case closed' on the OASIS database).

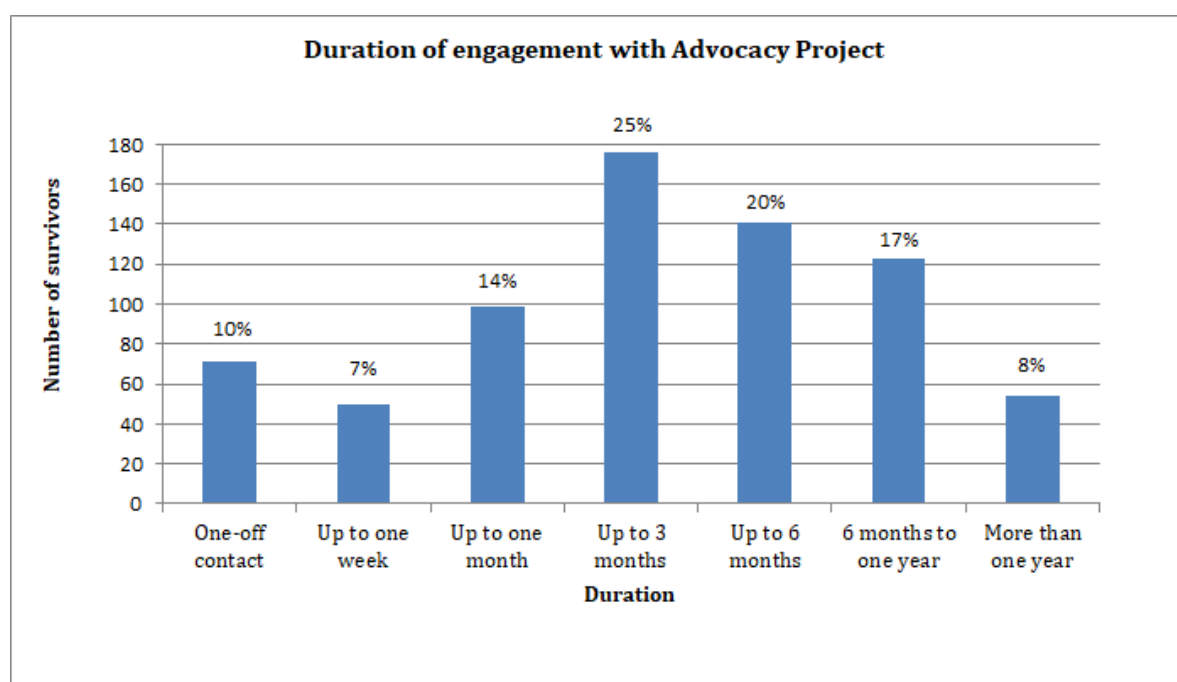


Chart 3: How long survivors received support from the advocacy service

With the caveats that some cases are still ongoing, these figures are nevertheless interesting. While 10% of victim-survivors engaged with the NAP for under a week or on a one-off basis, the most common duration of engagement with the advocacy service was between one and three months (25% of victim-survivors engaged with the service for this amount of time) followed by three to six months (20%). 17% of victim-survivors were in contact with the project for up to a year and 8% have been in contact for over a year (*Chart 3*). Overall, it is notable that almost half (45%) of victim-survivors are accessing advocacy support for over three months. A number of the victim-survivors interviewed, described their engagement with the criminal justice system after reporting a rape or sexual assault as being two to three years long. While victim-survivors may not be receiving intensive support throughout all of this period, clearly there are resourcing implications attached to providing support through such a lengthy process. Some victim-survivors conveyed an awareness of the challenging nature and resourcing implications of providing 'end to end' support through the justice process:

Pippa: ... had she been at the start I would have really heavily relied on her and then she's got a job to do and there needs to be more of them, you know. 'Cause there's only so much one person can do.

3.3 An improvement in the support available to victim-survivors?

3.3.1 Victim-survivor appraisal of the advocacy support they received

All of the victim-survivors interviewed described advocacy support, and the benefits that they have derived from it, in the highest terms. The identification of advocacy support as an invaluable and life-changing service was a recurring theme:

Alice: ...women from all backgrounds need the chance to talk over the experiences they've had. It can be like a lifeline for some people.

Bethany: to me it's turned my life around, like, completely...

Geraldine: I'm not exaggerating but if [AW] wasn't there ... through the whole process ...I wouldn't be like the person I am just now ... [AW] was a big massive part in all of this to help us get through it. Like not just get over it but... it's a really hard like process when you're going through it because it can take ages ...or it could take two weeks or it could take two years... [AW], she always, through the full process of the both incidents, she was brilliant.

Isobel: I found it just invaluable.

Kerry: And having that reassurance and someone to speak to when you've had your voice kicked out of you how many times, the difference it can make to you is phenomenal.

Lynzey: This has been invaluable, it's changed my life, it's been fantastic.

Morven: I think it's a really good support for women in my situation, definitely. I mean, I feel that it's a vital support to us.

Notably, none of the victim-survivors interviewed reported negative experiences of advocacy support though some suggested that the service could be expanded or developed further. These suggestions, and the reasons why advocacy support was considered helpful, are discussed under the relevant sections below.

3.3.2 Features of advocacy support valued by victim-survivors

In addition to the range and flexibility of advocacy support described earlier, the provision of advocacy support was perceived by victim-survivors to fill gaps within the criminal justice process, augment existing services, and enhance personal support networks:

Jane: ... it's like somebody between a friend and a lawyer, I suppose ... just filling in all the gaps between all the different bits of the system where I think ... you just become another number on the list.

Pippa: The saving grace is being able to come, speak to somebody that wasn't...only two people know and it was my mum and my best friend. ...although I wanted to them to know ... once I told them, I didn't want to talk about it ...I didn't want somebody else being distressed.

A recurring theme within victim-survivor accounts was the value of being listened to (Carly: *whenever I speak to her she takes it in*). The benefits of advocacy support extended beyond an appreciation of being listened to, however, to addressing the additional worry, uncertainty and stress associated with understanding the progress of their case. This included acting on their behalf and accompanying them to appointments:

Kerry: I think anyone who's within the Advocacy Project has to be pro-active and willing and able to help in a way that perhaps just a counsellor sitting nodding her head ... they're not going to achieve much. Whereas being able to listen, able to support you, go places with you and get you answers. There's nothing worse when you're in that situation and you're being told you can't speak, or you can't do anything. When you go into a domestic abuse situation you're too scared to talk. Once you find your voice again you know you've got someone to help you.

Support in dealing with other agencies was especially valuable when victim-survivors were likely to be too emotionally distressed to fully comprehend developments in their case or where difficulties with other agencies were encountered:

Pippa: that's pretty much all I can remember, is being really upset and really distressed and them [PF] saying, 'oh well do you want to do this another time?'. No, I don't want to do this another time. That's why I had [AW] there. 'Cause I knew I wasn't going to remember anything. 'Cause I don't want to remember anything. But I need to go back and make sense of it and I could go to [AW] and say, you know, just feeling more together. Okay, right, so what does this mean?

Kerry: I suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder which is normal when you've been in such an abusive situation. And I found my solicitor who got threatened to be shot, she'd no understanding of domestic violence at all. She was an ex advocate and she was quite arrogant if I'm honest with you, and the way she would speak to you was a trigger for me. So having to face her was almost impossible. I could face her in a second now and I would put her back down to earth. However at that time my level of anxiety was quite high and there was just no talking to her. That's why these solicitors need training. No understanding at all. Having [AW] meet me and come to them with me, my first thought was having a witness there to how bad she was. But equally it was having that person there that you trusted who was able to give me

that support in dealing with her, so it was huge. Thinking back to those times and having [AW] there with me, the difference it made to me going myself was phenomenal.

In one particularly challenging case where issues associated with the police investigation resulted in a victim-survivor being charged with wasting police time, and which later formed the subject of a police complaint, the Advocacy Worker played a crucial role in supporting the victim-survivor and advocating on their behalf:

Bethany: Without the support here I would have been going ahead and pleading guilty and saying no, I'll plead guilty because the lawyer is telling me to do that, but without that support that I had then well I don't know where I would be just now.

When this case proceeded to trial, Bethany was found, unanimously, not guilty. Some victim-survivors reported positive encounters with other agencies such as the police (Morven: *the police were fantastic*), though they were recognised as having a limited role and remit which does not extend to providing emotional support:

Olivia: See how, likes of, the ones [police officers] that do statements, do they ever talk to you people, to actually know how people actually feel? You know, police officers get trained in police officers' ways, but at Rape Crisis they get trained to support people. I don't think the police actually know how to support a raped person.

Where victim-survivors reported positive encounters with the police, this was largely with SOLO Officers. This is likely to be a reflection of the specialist training provided to these officers, supported by RCS and the use of training aids such as 'Trauma and the Brain' with the intention of enhancing understanding of the impact of sexual offences and the needs of victim-survivors. Other support agencies, such as Victim Support, were acknowledged as being supportive though their remit and specialist knowledge was not considered to be on a par with that of an Advocacy Worker when it comes to dealing with serious sexual offences:

Olivia: I got hold of Victim Support, as well, and they are a great support to me ... but [AW] just happened to know a wee bit more when it came to, she knew about how to protect you, and about taking you into court, how to talk to people, make sure you were getting treated in the same manner you want treated.

Jane: I would hate to see something like the services of Rape Crisis not being there, because I don't know how you cope without that. Because there isn't really...I don't think Victim Support and that are necessarily, kind of, specialist enough.

In addition to the provision of individual case level advocacy, a crucial aspect of advocacy support provided by an independent organisation such as Rape Crisis, is the scope to provide victim-survivors with a voice in the policy process and lobby for reform. For a number of the victim-survivors interviewed, provision of this support was transformative in terms of their personal situations and influencing policy and practice to improve responses to victim-survivors:

Kerry: they're [AWs] not just dealing with the bad stuff and the really terrible stuff. Also the things that are pro-active ...I need to take something so negative, so shit and turn it into a positive, the most amazing thing, and for me that's what I'm doing. And I've got that full support. I don't think you would get that in many other places. From my experience in this for all the years I've been in this situation I can't think of anyone that can offer the exact same level.

In the instance outlined above, Kerry describes how her Advocacy Worker has supported her 'during really bad times of child contact' and the challenges associated with living in the same geographical area as the accused, including the need to go to the same doctor's surgery. When the NHS failed to resolve this issue, Kerry took further action with the support of her Advocacy Worker:

Kerry: So I went straight to the Justice Ministers who wrote to the Health Ministers. [AW] supported me with that and she's come to all the meetings with me as well. And now Michael Matheson, the Justice Minister, has had a meeting with Mary Fee [Labour MSP]. They're all aware of my situation and there are certain changes within the law they're making so that you can get access to GP services as well as other issues I've brought up round about child contact and how it's used as a form of abuse... [AW]'s fully supported me with them, so it's been phenomenal.

Another example of how victim-survivors have used the Advocacy Project and Rape Crisis, as an independent organisation, as a channel for raising issues of serious concern is highlighted by Jane in relation to the gender of forensic medical examiners:

Jane: so I think for a lot of victims, having a male doctor probably wouldn't have been a good experience ...and wonder, kind of, if it is that point a lot of victims walk away saying, 'no I don't want to do this'. It's obviously in a lot of cases that that point in the examination is quite important. That was something I brought up with Rape Crisis as well ... 'cause obviously there's a lot of stuff they're not totally happy with and they're trying to make it better. We need an organisation like that to be putting all that stuff across because if you don't say...aye, the systems just not as good as it should be.

Similarly, Harleigh, accompanied by her Advocacy Worker, gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee regarding the implications of passing the Limitation (Childhood Abuse) (Scotland) Bill. The Bill proposed to improve the lives of victim-survivors of historical childhood abuse by removing the 3-year time bar that was in place for suing in the civil courts for damages for personal injuries. The Bill received Royal Assent in July 2017. Harleigh was then invited back to attend First Minister's Questions to thank her for taking part in the Justice Committee.

3.4 An improvement in the experience of the criminal justice process?

Interviews with victim-survivors clearly indicated that advocacy support improved their experience of the criminal justice process. For those who started the criminal justice process without advocacy support (largely due the service not having been launched at that time), it was commonly noted that their experience improved markedly once the Advocacy Worker was with them and there was consensus amongst this group that advocacy support at an earlier stage would have been beneficial.

Advocacy support was particularly valued by some due to their lack of confidence in the criminal justice system, while for others this was due to a lack of confidence in their own ability to engage with what they understood to be a difficult process, or their awareness that they had a very limited understanding of what the criminal justice process entails. The following interview extracts give some sense of victim-survivors being overwhelmed by the criminal justice system and its associated processes:

Isobel: [the criminal justice system] ... it's almost like a fortress that you can't get through.

Pippa: *I did want something to happen. I didn't know what because I didn't know how these things work. And it just got bigger and bigger and more scary and intimidating and then you start talking about procurator fiscals and courts and witnesses and, sort of, safety screens, protective measures in court and things that...and you just start thinking, oh my God, why do I have to do all this, you know? This is really scary.*

Victim-survivors interviewed talked in very positive terms about the helpful role that Advocacy Workers fulfilled in terms of providing information about the civil and criminal justice system as a whole and specifically in relation to their own case. This was particularly helpful given that those interviewed had little or no prior knowledge of criminal justice processes and terminology:

Dee: *She [AW] was able to explain a lot of court terms and jargon that me and [family member] didn't understand, like indictments and just a lot of the words, because me and [family member] sat in the first diet and we sat looking at each other like, what the hell are they going on about? We were sitting there and we couldn't even make sense of our own court case because it was too much political words and all these fancy terms. We asked [AW] and she went through it with us and made it so much easier to understand what was going to happen, and when and why.*

An important feature of the knowledge and information that Advocacy Workers were able to impart was their ability to manage the victim-survivor expectations about the criminal justice process, both in terms of the time, direction and possible case outcome. This was especially valued by victim-survivors who felt misled by other commentators suggesting that by reporting to the police, they would 'have their day in court'. Having an informed and realistic expectations about the process, and information about the progress of their case, played an important role in allowing victim-survivors to have a sense of 'control' over what was happening to them. Arguably, this is of paramount importance after being subjected to sexual violence; an experience whereby an individual's control is taken away from them:

Linzey: *...just being informed I think is really, really important at every stage. It just allows you to feel a bit more in control, I guess, because everything's been out of control for so long.*

The information sharing aspect of the Advocacy Workers role was clearly valued by victim-survivors but a small number of those interviewed indicated that both they and their Advocacy Worker had experienced difficulties in obtaining information from those working within the criminal justice system. While these difficulties were described as being resolved over time and as the Advocacy Workers became more established in their role, one victim-survivor stressed the importance of the Advocacy Worker being able to receive information from key agencies at an early stage in proceedings:

Linzey: *...I think the Advocacy Worker having the direct link with the PF obviously would be hugely beneficial to future people going through this. I think that would be massive for me, to not have to have gone out and found that information myself would have been a great help because that's been really hard. It's been overwhelming, I've had lots of tears and lots of stress from not having information. Had [AW] been able to access that when she first started here, that would have been amazing. That would have really helped me a lot and alleviated a lot of the fears that I had about going to court, about being involved in the criminal procedure, the whole lot.*

The development and maintenance of good working relations between Advocacy Workers and criminal justice agencies is key to improving the experience of victim-survivors. This is particularly evident in cases where there have been difficulties or errors. The extract below, based on such a case, highlights the contribution that the Advocacy Worker was able to make in resolving difficulties with the case through liaising with the PF:

Isobel: Because it was supposed to go to court many times and it was cancelled, people didn't turn up, blah, blah, blah. And [AW] was there with me at every appearance...I don't know where I would have been without them honestly... she was able to organise...my evidence went missing, that was one of the things that went wrong with the case, so she was able to get me to see my statement, because the PF was more or less ignoring me. They told me they couldn't discuss the case, so she was able to liaise with them, with a bit of difficulty, but she got there. And so I was able to go and see my statement again, because it had been so long. And I was able to identify that evidence was missing, so she followed that up for me.

In this instance, the case was closed by mistake and then reopened when the Advocacy Worker prompted the victim-survivor to re-contact the PF to query the decision. The case then proceeded to trial.

A key theme within victim-survivor accounts was their sense of an imbalance within the criminal justice system. As Jane said, *the whole court system seems to be more geared towards the accused than the victims*. This sense of imbalance is perhaps unsurprising within the context of an adversarial system where, contrary to the expectations of some, the victim-survivor is a witness in the case and not represented by 'their' lawyer in the same way as an accused person; rather the COPFS prosecute in the public interest:

Linzey: having the legal support is really important because you can't have a solicitor, you can't phone the PF every day and go, well, I've just thought of this, how about if we do that? You know, you've got none of that, so having a legal advocate that can explain that to you is really good.

Olivia: When you go up against the Procurator Fiscal, who are on your side, it doesn't feel that way. It just feels as if everybody is actually against you. So [AW] was the only person, I didn't feel like she was against me, you know, when I came forward. And again, the advocacy work, when it came to the court, I think they would have been overpowering ... if you never had the supportive person in place ... [AW] was saying to them, you need to have this, you need to have that, you know, and making sure that everything went properly, you know.

From the perspective of victim-survivors, a key function of the advocacy support they received in relation to the criminal justice process was the provision of someone who was 'there for them', representing and protecting their interests:

Morven: I just felt like she was there for me. It was absolutely fantastic having somebody that I could kind of rely on and go to if I needed anything.

Jane: ... with Rape Crisis, I never, kind of, felt they were trying to push me in to doing anything ...at any point I needed a question answered, or I wanted to talk about something, they were just there ... you, kind of, feel like there isn't anybody on your side. And they are.

Harleigh: ... it's like having an army, you know, somebody's got your back and it gives you a bit of courage.

Olivia: *when you go to court, you know you're on your own, and she [AW] made sure I didn't feel that way, I didn't feel alone.*

For those victim-survivors whose case proceeded to trial, support around the court case was clearly identified as a point where advocacy support is most beneficial. Again, the provision of information to help victim-survivors and their families understand the court process was welcomed. Particularly beneficial, however, was the emotional and practical support provided at court and in the lead up to the trial:

Carly: *I can't explain like how amazing she was there when we were in court ... she sat next to me in court and even just having her sitting was ... she wasn't allowed to do anything like but I could look at her and just like know that she's like a familiar face.*

The victim-survivors interviewed were aware that as a support person in court, their Advocacy Worker would have a limited role. However, the value of having the Advocacy Worker as a support person in court stemmed from their prior relationship, within an unfamiliar and daunting setting:

Dee: *I just found [AW] ...especially as she's able to sit in with us when we're giving evidence in court. That was such a great help ...because we had group sessions before. I thought that really helped ... because I knew her face and she was so familiar, and she was so helpful. Having her even just sitting next to us, she obviously wasn't allowed to say anything in court, but just having her there was such a great help ... It was amazing to have her there... It made me more confident, especially how experienced... [AW], she is so clued up with the ways of the court ... it made me more confident going back if I had to ... At the start, I was like, oh, the thought of it just filled me with dread, just the thought of it made me sick, but now I do feel more confident.*

The existence of a prior relationship with an Advocacy Worker meant that victim-survivors had established a relationship of trust and considered their Advocacy Worker to be someone who understood them, their needs, and any specific difficulties that they may have in and around the trial:

Niamh: *... because me and [AW] have a relationship. She knows what triggers me, epilepsy, and that as well, she knows how to handle that. But a Victim Support worker, they don't really show interest, they just sit there... she's the only person I'm comfortable with, as well.*

Fiona: *[AW] was there for whenever there was breaks in evidence, and, you know, obviously, the screen used to cut out when I went into full blown panic attacks, and she was there to try and help me get, you know, focus on the breathing, and deep breaths, et cetera. And just there for, kind of, like, reassurance type things. With the flashbacks, obviously, it's like you're getting, it's like, happening again. You know, like, right there. Especially at that point. And she was able, for the reassurance, et cetera, which was really invaluable. Because I would not have managed five days of that, and the majority of that was by his horrible solicitor. That would have just took things too far, completely, really, too far, completely. It was just...[AW] was there, so she was a brilliant support.*

Again, the specialist knowledge and understanding that Advocacy Workers have in relation to sexual violence and abuse was identified by those interviewed as an underpinning feature of the support that they received:

Isobel: ... the Advocacy Worker was with me all through the court proceedings, and she sat with me as well while I gave evidence. It was really, really useful. Because they've got a background in abuse, unlike the people in the court who don't understand the wider picture. So they had more empathy and more understanding of what it was like for me.

Fiona: That she was, like, there, specifically for me, and I knew, in a non-judgmental way. Because nothing bad against the lady from the court that was sitting in, but I don't know who she is. And that's one of the major things, especially having to give specific details of a lot of the things that he did.

The value of the Advocacy Worker as a known supporter in court extended beyond their role in court to the provision of support post-trial, irrespective of whether a conviction was secured. For some victim-survivors, the need for support at this stage comprised of support to process the impact of the case. For others, their support needs were met by taking up longer-term emotional support with another worker within Rape Crisis now that they had reached a point, following criminal justice proceedings, where they were able to process other emotional needs and aspects of the abuse that they had experienced:

Carly: I would definitely say that you need the support afterwards. Like I don't know what I was expecting. Like maybe I thought of it like as soon as I seen him getting taken away in the handcuffs, you know, I thought that would have be it but I think it's more all these like emotions and like the thoughts that are going through your head afterwards like having someone...like I was able to speak to [AW] about it...

3.5 Impact of advocacy support on victim-survivor decisions

Analysis of project monitoring data indicates that over 1 in 5 (22%) of victim-survivors accessed advocacy support around their decision to report to the police and, as discussed previously, almost two-thirds of those who accessed advocacy support prior to reporting to the police went on to make a report. Meanwhile, almost 1 in 10 (9%) accessed support in relation to their decision to continue with the criminal justice process. Findings from victim-survivors interviewed, however, point to advocacy support having a more significant role in facilitating and sustaining victim-survivor engagement with the criminal justice process than these figures suggest.

Some of the victim-survivors interviewed highlighted the positive impact that advocacy support had, or would be likely to have, on the ability to report rape to the police:

Jane: I don't tell very many people and ... to have somebody there that was, kind of... holding your hands ... I think for a lot of people that would be really important. That would make the difference between reporting and not reporting.

Eilidh: And when [AW] had came out, I wasnae wanting to charge him, because he was blaming myself, and ken, I didn't know what to do. But [AW] actually made me, she kind of gave me the strength, and like, assured me - it's not your fault, and ken, a lot of folk feel like this. She gave me the strength for to be able to phone the police, and ken, give them details about it.

Further, one victim-survivor (Geraldine) made a second report to the police, involving a different accused, following their previous positive experience of reporting with the support of an Advocacy Worker. Both of these reports proceeded to trial and both accused were found guilty. However, it was also suggested that more could be done to encourage reporting through specialised provision at police stations:

Olivia: ... *that's another thing they should have a look at as well, is that, they should have a wee office in the actual police station. Because rape is one of the highest things, you know. And they might actually find that more people will come in, because they can walk into a separate part of the police station to report a rape, you know. Because how many people don't report it nowadays, but I don't know if the government would finance just a wee separate room in every police station.*

Some victim-survivors interviewed stated that they had never considered withdrawing from the criminal justice process and this was largely grounded in their commitment to securing 'justice' and holding perpetrators to account. However, most considered withdrawing at some point in what was typically a very lengthy process:

Bethany: *I was just close to giving up constantly, that's why I just kind of gave up at the beginning when the police were constantly coming out and things.*

Pippa: *Do I really want to do this anymore? This is just making my life miserable because this is hanging over and I don't know what's happening. Why am I doing this? ...I just thought seriously about just leaving, relocating. And taking my son with me and just starting all over again and saying...you know, just forget it. I can't do this anymore. I can't live like this.*

It was apparent that the provision of advocacy support bolstered victim-survivors' ability to cope with the civil and criminal justice process. This, in turn, facilitated continued engagement with the criminal justice process:

Eilidh: *It's a great support for people. Whereas, see if I hadn't have had [AW], I wouldn't have got my, got the accused prosecuted. I wouldn't have done that, I wouldn't have went to trial. I probably wouldn't have got my trauma therapist. I don't know what would have happened to me, to be honest.*

Kerry: *everyone in my situation should have a [AW]. That's what I say, everyone in this situation. Because for me what I've realised too many women are being dragged through the contact case situation and they don't have the right advice. They don't have the right solicitor. They may not be in the right head place to be able to say to a solicitor, no, I'm not agreeing to that. You're made to be terrified of that sheriff. Whereas thankfully with the support I have ... I've been able to, you know, keep fighting. And now he doesn't have contact with my son, so my son's now safe.*

Fiona: *I phoned VIA, that time, in April, in absolute tears. And I said to them, I just couldn't do it anymore.*

I: *Had you reached a point where you'd thought about not continuing with the criminal justice process?*

Fiona: *Oh, yeah, because, obviously, that's what it was he'd [accused] been wanting all along. And it was just a constant intimidation.*

In the last case outlined above, VIA referred Fiona to the Advocacy Project and with the support of an Advocacy Worker, she proceeded to trial where the accused was found guilty. For other victim-survivors whose case had been called to court, advocacy support at court was described as essential to proceeding to trial:

Morven: *[AW] was really so supportive and I don't know if I could have done it [gone to court] without her.*

Olivia: *I don't think anybody can get through a court case without these [Advocacy Workers], you know, if it's that type of court case, you know...she actually kept steering us in the right way ... and I knew more of my rights than what I did beforehand. So by the time I got to court, I was quite able for it, you know. Because me suffering with anorexia doesn't help, you know, because I'd taken weight off with nerves, and it was getting closer, you know ... Because when she first met me, honestly, I could hardly talk, and I was crying, and I was like that, I just need your help 'cause I don't know what to do. And she just knew everything to say to me, and I was like that, this is definitely the person I need to get, is her, you know... I had dropped down to five stone ... I really was stressed at the time, I was like that, 'I don't think we're gonna be able to get any further than we have'. Because my doctor was talking about me being not fit enough for court.*

In this instance, Olivia's case went ahead, she was able to give evidence, and the accused was found guilty of rape and sentenced to eleven years in prison.

4. Practitioners' perspectives

This section presents the key themes that emerged from interviews in the four local case study sites and the survey responses from practitioners across all 15 local sites (n = 68). Practitioner survey respondents included Advocacy Workers (n = 18), RCC Managers (n = 13), police (n = 31) and VIA Officers (n = 6). The findings presented below detail survey responses where known (some survey respondents opted not to answer every question asked). A breakdown of the survey responses for each of the four respondent types is provided in Appendix 2 though it should be noted that these findings are based on a relatively small number of respondents. To protect the anonymity of case study respondents, case study sites are referred to using the designators Case Study A, B, C and D rather than by their geographical area.

4.1 Improvements in support

Surveys returned by Police and VIA Officers, Advocacy Workers and Rape Crisis Centre Managers (RCC Managers) reveal a very positive view on improvements in support made by local Advocacy Projects with 82% (n=50) of all respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the service had improved the support available to victim-survivors in their local area.

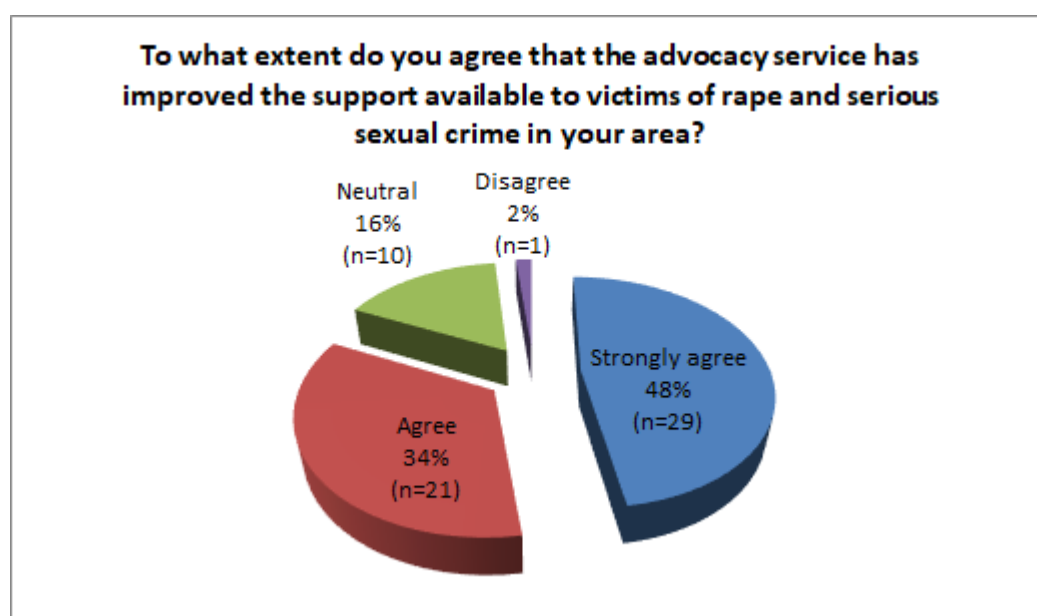


Chart 4: Overall survey respondents' views on support provided by the advocacy service

A wide range of respondents shared the view that the advocacy service had *filled a gap* and had done so in a very positive way:

VIA survey respondent: *I find that overall from my experience the advocacy service is exceptionally good at providing effective support ... My experience of the service is that they have the 'right' kind of people in place who know their role and constantly deliver a professional and caring service to victims.*

RCC Manager: *All in all, the outcome for victim-survivors has been enhanced by this project as they are able to make informed decisions, be able to choose the level of support they wish if they choose to report and have ultimately, received a more holistic service from us.*

VIA survey respondent: *The service has helped provide a more holistic service towards victims and by engaging with them more regularly and openly thus*

providing them with a 'roadmap' in where and who to go to for help with particular issues.

Some police survey respondents described the service in particularly positive terms ('Fantastic facility, victim friendly and considerate with well-informed staff', 'Advocacy Workers do a great job in supporting victims of sexual crime', 'a very positive addition to the service'). There was also a positive sense that Advocacy Projects were fitting in well within the landscape of existing services. Overall, 82% (n=50) of survey respondents believed that the advocacy service in their area has either a positive impact on, or is a helpful addition to, the provision of other services. Only 5% of respondents, all police, felt that the advocacy service had no impact or had unhelpfully crossed over with other services.

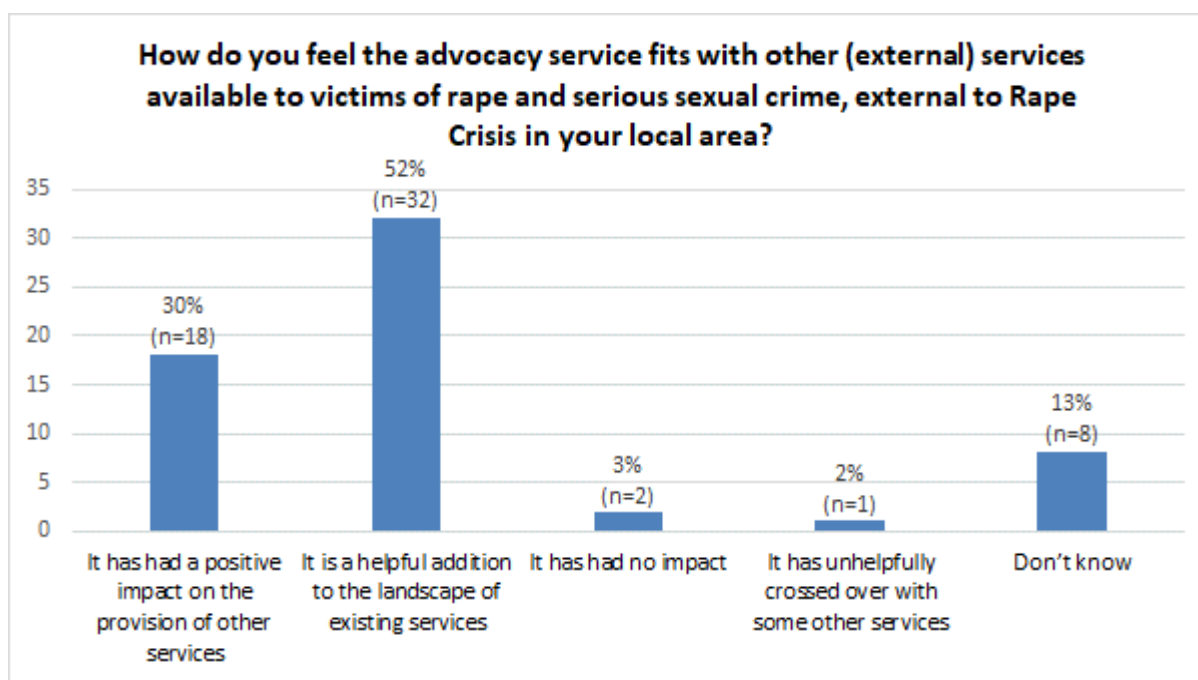


Chart 5: Overall survey respondent's views on how the advocacy service fits with other services

Within Rape Crisis Centres, the majority view from RCC Managers and Advocacy Workers was that the NAP compliments existing work within the centre and had 'freed-up' capacity elsewhere in organisation, though some work was required to avoid overlap with other support roles and ensure clarity of the Advocacy Worker remit:

RCC Manager: *[other] support workers have been better able to manage day to day diaries without having the stress and uncertainty of trying to 'fit in' court support when dates are so indeterminate and keep changing.*

However, some Advocacy Workers also highlighted potential duplication with the services provided by other agencies:

AW survey respondent: *At times it has felt there has been a duplication of support but this is more likely because the advocacy role is in its infancy and so how it fits with the police and VIA is progressively being more understood, it will take time to filter through other services before stronger partnership working can begin to exist.*

RCC Manager, CSA: *I think there have been some teething issues. I mean, with the police, with the Rape Investigation Team, with Victim Information and Advice, and with other services, you know, so I think there has been some kind of feeling like, perhaps it feels a bit like we're stepping on toes.*

On the whole, however, Advocacy Workers and the services they provide were described as not simply of benefit to the victim-survivor, but also to other agencies. For example, they are able to broker relationships between a victim-survivor and the police in such a way that they are able to put her at ease and allow the police to obtain a clear statement in order to pursue a criminal case. The benefits of providing access to advocacy support, particularly at an early stage, was emphasised by police in relation to both the welfare needs of those reporting and the gathering of evidence:

Police, CSA: we have had cases where we've gone out and you're so concerned about the person's wellbeing and you think, I can't speak to you today. I couldn't get a statement from you today but they need help. We obviously have a duty to look after these people [...] if we go out and are really concerned about somebody then we have just at that point in time offered a referral to [the Advocacy Worker] just because even before we start the process you just think it's better to have them in beforehand.

Police, CSC: One thing I've really noticed is a very positive step too, and it's happened two or three times since I've come here, where we have had a line of communication through [AW], we've gone up for that informal chat, and the decision has been made not to go ahead. However, because of that informal chat and the communication lines between the police and the Advocacy Worker, we've explained that we can take intelligence rather than information. [...] So if you don't want to report it, we can take intelligence, and actually through the Advocacy Worker as well. The Advocacy Worker can give us some loose intelligence and provide the name of a perpetrator, without telling us exactly what's happened and what's been done, and we can feed that into our intelligence system. So, once we've fed that through our intelligence system, we can do checks to see if this person's being looked at for any other similar crimes. [...] just that link has given us something else. So, we're able to feed a name, which we wouldn't have got because this person wasn't coming forward, that's fed through our intelligence system and, through that intelligence system, every police officer in Scotland can see that intelligence, that this male is suspected of committing sexual offence.

Similarly, in the case below, a police officer describes a situation which would have benefited from advocacy support at an early stage since the victim-survivor had initially not wanted to make a police report, but due to subsequent behaviour of the perpetrator had decided to report six weeks later when the opportunities to gather forensic evidence were lost:

Police, CSB: ... if that had gone to advocacy from day one and they'd had the self-referral we would have all the forensic samples probably taken, we'd have all that. Instead [...] that's all my physical evidence gone whereas if we'd had the self-referral system in place she could have gone there got a proper medical done and if she didn't want to tell us that's fine, it goes into the cupboard until the time she feels ready. And I'm happy with that and it would have made my life so much easier. [...] You can imagine there are many cases where people are not sure for various reasons, they're still in love with the perpetrator or I'm actually not sure if that fits the legal definition of rape or I really don't want to get him in trouble he's my friend's brother. There a number of reasons why you don't want to at the time but if we get that initial forensic capture and we get that initial support then I think that's the important thing is to get the support in there then I can come back at any time."

There was also a suggestion from a police survey respondent that Advocacy Workers could potentially collect items of evidence (e.g. clothing) from victim-survivors and deposit this at a police station if they were not at a point where they felt able to make a report to the police. Whilst the

feasibility of this requires detailed consideration, it suggests that the NAP has further potential to contribute to investigative processes.

Resonating with the view of some police officers, Advocacy Workers questioned whether more could be done to ensure that victim-survivors are accessing support at the earliest possible stage in the process, ideally before, or at the point of, reporting to the police. For some, referrals directly from the police rather than from the police via the RCS helpline would be valuable in ensuring advocacy support is accessed at an earlier stage in proceedings. The possibility of Advocacy Workers being co-located with police (as is the case with DASAT, West Lothian) was also raised though this was accompanied by concerns about the independence of the service – perceived or otherwise – being compromised when this was a feature of the project which is highly valued by victim-survivors.

4.2 Improvements to victim-survivors' experiences

The NAP is perceived to have made an overall positive impact on victim-survivors' experiences of the criminal justice process, with the majority (70%, n=43) of survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the advocacy service had improved victim-survivors' experiences in their local area.

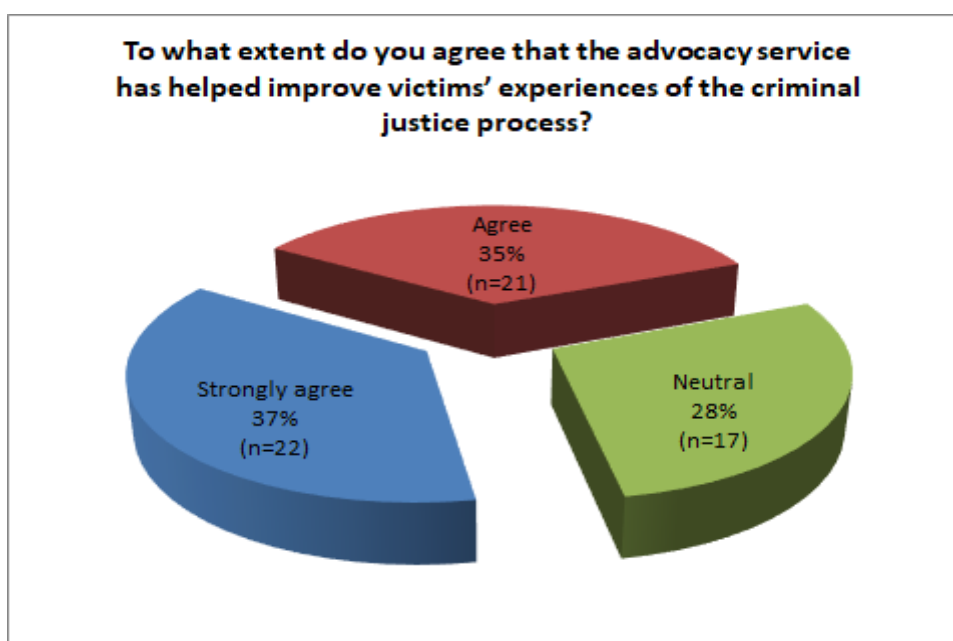


Chart 6: Overall survey respondents' views on impact of the advocacy service on victims' experiences

Similar to perceptions of improvements in support available, this positive effect was explained in a number of ways by both survey respondents and interviewees, but with much of it coming down to the individual Advocacy Workers, and their capacity to act and advocate in the interests of the victim-survivor. Advocacy Workers' relationships with partner agencies and their knowledge of the criminal justice process has appeared to smooth potentially difficult contact between victim-survivors, police, VIA and other agencies, and has filled in the silences that many victim-survivors have to endure through lengthy criminal justice proceedings:

AW survey respondent: Many people talk about feeling abandoned once the case is passed to the PF and struggling to have questions answered. People often have a

very minimal explanation of the process which makes them really anxious. The advocacy service is able to remedy that.

RCC Manager: We are much more consistent and have excellent links with the police and courts - so can now act as a 'buffer' between the bureaucratic world of the police and courts. Victim-survivors report feeling much better informed about the process - even if the desired outcome is not what we achieved. Central to this has been getting to know the individual police officers, court reporters, staff, PF, forensic examination staff... so it's much easier to share information / experiences than it was before this project.

Likewise, in a survey response one RCC Manager considered the Advocacy Worker's ability to *explain things in simple terms [...] to explore coping strategies for giving evidence as hugely impactful in improving experiences of the criminal justice process* for victim-survivors.

Echoing the findings from interviews with victim-survivors, Advocacy Workers described improvements in support in terms of the provisions of a dedicated service to allow victim-survivors to be more informed and in control during the criminal justice process through having 'someone on their side' to provide consistency and continuity of support and information:

AW survey respondent: The role of advocacy is paramount to improving the experience for woman facing the CJ system; the accused gets access to a defense solicitor and the police are neutral, woman say they are made to feel that it's their fault and that they are on trial. Advocacy gives woman a better, fairer experience.

RCC Managers and Advocacy Workers highlighted the important role that advocacy has to play in addressing victim-survivor concerns about not being believed, and relatedly, understanding why difficult or upsetting questions may need to be asked as part of the investigative process:

Advocacy Worker, CSD: I understand that some horrible questions need to be asked [by the police] [...] sometimes difficult questions have to be asked so they can clear up any misunderstandings. [...] it makes them [VSs] more comfortable to answer the questions because they're aware they're going to happen, and they don't automatically think that they're not being believed.

Indeed, the ability of Advocacy Workers to prepare a victim-survivor for the potential difficulties within the criminal justice process, including the demands of the investigative process, delays and undesirable outcomes was valued by victim-survivors interviewed. However, a small number of police survey respondents noted negative impacts of the advocacy role in terms of undermining the SOLO role to the detriment of victim-survivors' experiences:

Police survey respondent: Advocacy Workers have informed victims that they are a burden to the police who regularly forget about victims. This has caused victims to fear contacting their SOLO.

At later stages within the process, the capacity for Advocacy Workers to support victim-survivors during precognition and in court was identified as particularly valuable by RCC Managers, Advocacy Workers and other stakeholders:

VIA, CSD: I would think if you have an Advocacy Worker who's been with you and who is going to go into court and she is going to be sitting next to you, I think that must go a long, long way to helping [...] since Rape Crisis have come on board as a supporter in court I think recently, the last few cases I've had out of many the ones with the Advocacy Worker to me we've got good results, good outcomes, yeah. So I think it does make a real difference to the victim having an Advocacy Worker there...

I would imagine that it's particularly good or extra good if an Advocacy Worker since day one or day two has been with them and they're going to go to court right to the case completion, I think that pays off big time.

However, the arranging of special measures at court, including a court supporter, is an issue which raises questions about the respective roles of Advocacy Workers and VIA officers and represents one of the 'rubbing points' referred to by Stakeholder 2. At times, this has presented challenges that require careful attention, particularly at the local level, to ensure that roles and responsibilities are understood and well communicated.

It was also argued, by Advocacy Workers and RCC Managers, that improvements in victim-survivor experiences delivered by the NAP were hampered by continued difficulties within the criminal justice system:

RCC Manager: ...whilst things have improved greatly in terms of experiences in providing statements to the police we have still a huge way to go to improve victim-survivors' experiences of the courts and engagement with the PFs.

AW survey respondent: I think that the service might have improved access and provision of information throughout the criminal justice process. However, experiences continue to be impacted due to the decision making used by those in the system, the continued lack of understanding (or how this is perceived by victims) and the limitations of existing laws and frameworks, which can only be addressed at a higher level. Resource limitations in organisations carrying out the criminal justice process continue to impact on victim-survivors - the advocacy service attempts to mitigate this where possible, but cannot always do so.

4.3 Partnership working and communication

Effective partnership working and communication was identified by all practitioners as essential to the effective operation of the NAP and the best possible service provision for victim-survivors:

AW survey respondent: Woman are frustrated and confused by the number of people they currently speak to or disclose to before getting to the right service. Building better relationships with the police and having direct communication with VIA have been paramount to the development of the advocacy work that's been carried out.

Beyond relationships with criminal justice agencies, there was also a sense that the NAP had created momentum in broader partnership working. Advocacy Workers surveyed described developing positive relationships with a broad range of youth, health, education, social work and housing agencies. However, differing definitions and understandings of advocacy existed amongst practitioners from partner agencies. Given the importance of partnership working, it is important that partner agencies understand the role, remit and purpose of advocacy. Case study and survey data indicate that a more formal introduction of the NAP and its specific function(s) would have helped smooth the early implementation and understanding of the NAP, something which was echoed in the Stakeholder interviews. Within RCCs, it appears that local Managers first learned of the planned introduction of a national advocacy service separate from their existing remit in a very time-sensitive way. This appears to have given Managers insufficient scope to feedback to RCS their views on the proposed model, and comment upon its efficacy for their local areas:

RCC Manager: A more planned lead in period would have been preferable but wasn't possible. Probably now it's less info and support that's needed, but more discussion

between managers about how to make it work in the best way possible/share learning.

Likewise, findings reveal that other stakeholders would have benefited from a fuller briefing to introduce the new service. Whilst introductory information circulated by RCS raised awareness of the NAP at more senior and strategic levels, it appears that those tasked with dealing with the NAP on a day to day operational basis were not as informed, often leaving Advocacy Workers the task of advising local stakeholders of the project, their role and their remit. This, in some ways, was positive insofar as it allowed Advocacy Workers to define their presence in ways pertinent to local needs, networks and relationships. However, any such gains appeared to be outweighed by 'teething issues' of the NAP concerns about 'stepping on toes' and worries over it being accepted into local networks (RCC Manager, CSA). Some Advocacy Workers also reported poor recognition of the offer, value, qualification and/or professional standards of Advocacy Workers to the detriment of the service provided:

Advocacy Worker, CSA: On a professional level, I would say that professionals that I've come into contact with are, on the one hand they understand the role [...] but what I've really found is that [...] it doesn't appear to be of any significance [...] the more I understand about the national project, as such, to me this is so incredibly important. And my impression at this moment in time, only seven months down the line, from other professionals, is that they don't get it.

AW survey respondent: the advocacy service has not had as widespread an impact as it could have in the last year. Reactions to and interest in working with the advocacy service has been mixed.

Nonetheless, findings from the survey, completed after the first year of the NAP's operation, point to strong gains in partnership working over time with 72% (n=44) of respondents overall agreeing or strongly agreeing that the service had a positive impact on partnership working in their local area.

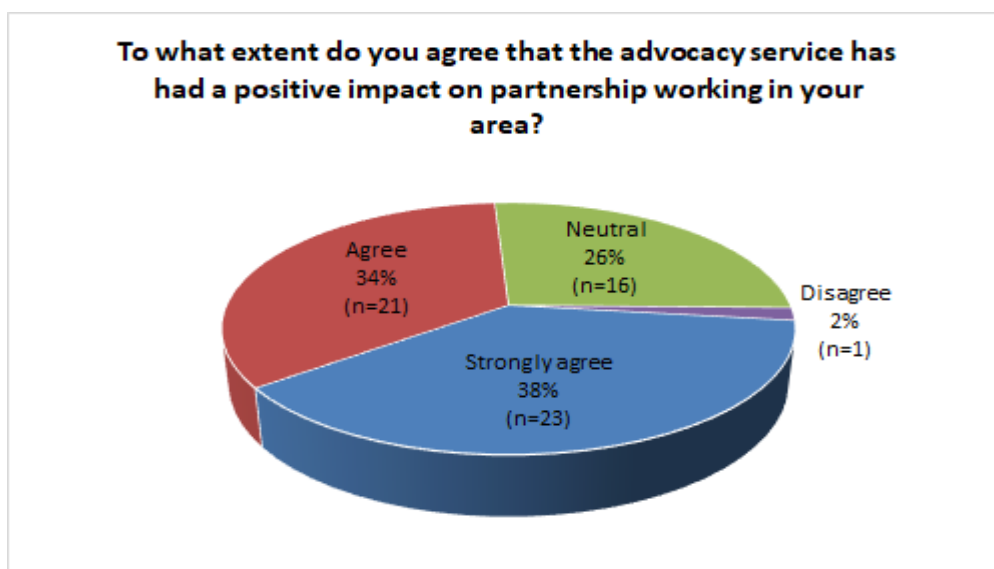


Chart7: Overall survey respondents' views on the impact on partnership working

Case study interviews and comments provided in the survey revealed that some very strong links and fruitful relationships have been forged through the project and, more importantly, there is a sense that these strong relationships will come to have a positive effect on victim-survivors' engagement across all services:

VIA, CSD: *I'd just say I'm glad to see them, Rape Crisis, coming more and more into the foreground because they do a good job, they really do. [...] And we can learn from them as well and they learn from us. They learn about our processes which is all the better for them, and we can always learn from them and their approach and how they're doing things. And they can tell us something about the victim that maybe the victim's not said or not wanted to say, or what her real fears are. So they're a good help to us.*

Survey responses from RCC Managers and Advocacy Workers indicate that existing relationships have been strengthened and improved, particularly with the police:

RCC Manager: *In terms of relationships with the police, it's been hugely beneficial.*

RCC Manager: *An improved relationship with Police has resulted, and this is extremely beneficial to victim-survivors who might feel less threatened reporting.*

AW survey respondent: *Links with the police are much more frequent and positive relationships have been formed. This has allowed for easier and more effective communication.*

RCC Manager: *We now meet regularly with the Rape Investigation Unit with a focus on improving responses to victim-survivors. This has been really important in ironing out difficulties as and when they arise. It could be better linked into other organisations though - but capacity just won't allow for this just now.*

4.4 Impact on policy and practice

At a local level there appears to be increased movement towards different agencies thinking collectively about how best to support victim-survivors, exemplified by the working relationships described in section 4.3 above. At a national level, the NAP provides a conduit for local Advocacy Workers to raise policy and practice issues with RCS, Police Scotland and COPFS. Quarterly national Advocacy Worker meetings provide the main forum for raising these issues and identifying common or recurring problems of victim-survivors, though Advocacy Workers also liaise with RCS out with these meetings. As such, the NAP provides an important and strategic platform for both development and review of operational and strategic matters.

Overall, the majority (64%, n=38) of survey respondents reported that the advocacy service had influenced day to day practice within their organisations.

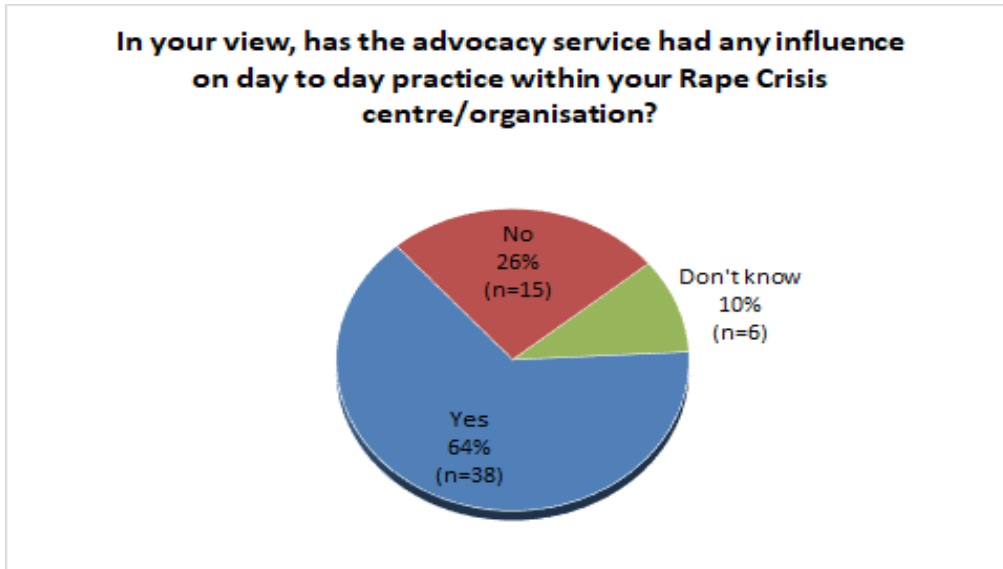


Chart 8: Overall survey respondents' views on influence on practice

Survey responses from RCC Managers provided a strong indication that the introduction of an Advocacy Worker role had resulted in an 'upskilling' of other RCC workers in terms of their knowledge and understanding of criminal justice issues. Since the introduction of the NAP there have also been some directly attributable changes in service provision for victim-survivors of rape and serious sexual assault in adjacent services. These include local, and quite specific changes to practice, such as introducing different entrances for complainers and the suspects by the police in Case Study A, underscored by a sense that the NAP is prompting practitioners to think about victim-survivors' experiences in ways they might not have previously:

Police, CSA: that's our routine entrance but that's, you know, obviously there's lots of cops there, it's a busy area and also if prisoners are getting released that is where they would get released at the door as well. [AW] picked up on it and quite rightly said, 'is there not another entrance we could bring them in?' [...] It just took somebody from the outside to come in and say, what are you doing there?

With regard to the influence of the advocacy service on policy, 60% (n=35) of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the project had influenced short or long-term organisational policy.

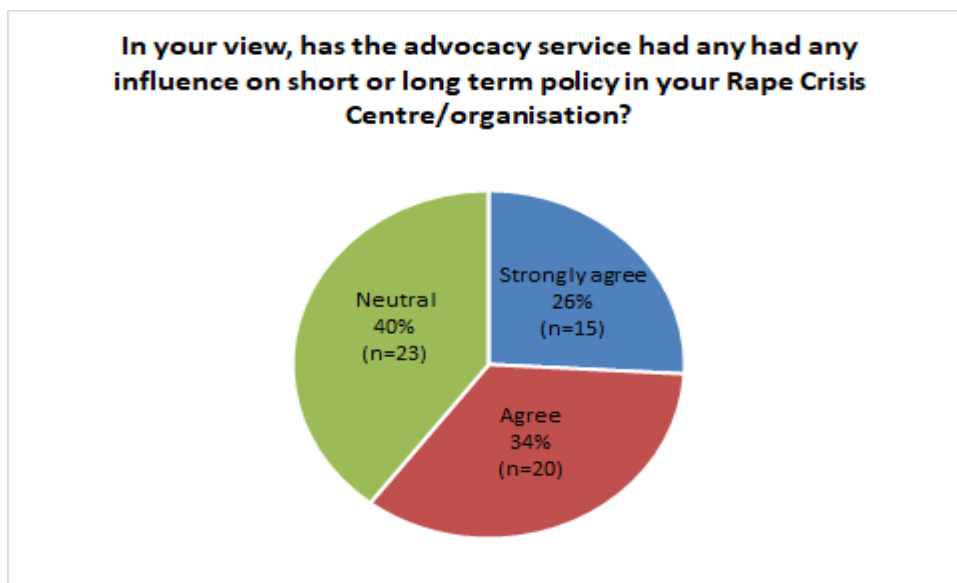


Chart 9: Overall survey respondents' views on policy influence

Work addressing policy and practice issues is ongoing. Some issues identified via the NAP, which require broader system change (e.g. the difficulties posed by floating trial diets) have not yet been resolved, though it is apparent that a number of policy and practice developments designed to improve the experiences of victim-survivors engaging with the criminal justice system have progressed. The policy and practice developments that have occurred through the NAP include:

- Regular meetings between RCS and senior operational leads in the High Court Sexual Offences Team, to resolve issues arising for victim-survivors, have been set up.
- Victim-survivors have fed their views and experiences into the recent Inspectorate of Prosecution Review of the Investigation and Prosecution of Sexual Crimes (2017) via four focus groups.
- Clarity has been provided in relation to the use of 'a Rape Crisis worker' rather than a named worker as a supporter in court.
- COPFS have developed guidance on the role of support persons in court and training on this has been delivered by RCS to Advocacy Workers.
- Concerns raised about the use of victim-survivor medical records have been fed into COPFS, to inform their internal review of guidance on how they approach obtaining sensitive records
- Insights from victim-survivor experiences have been fed into the Scottish Government's Evidence and Procedure Review.
- COPFS have revised their policy on pre-petition cases so that VIA will be involved in these cases, therefore providing a better flow of information to victim-survivors awaiting communication about the progress of their case.
- Victim-survivors have given evidence to the Justice Committee on the Limitation (Childhood Abuse) (Scotland) Bill. The Bill received Royal Assent in July 2017 resulting in the removal of the 3-year time bar that was in place for suing in the civil courts for damages for personal injuries.

4.5 Training for Advocacy Workers

At the start of the NAP, in February 2016, an initial training day was arranged for Advocacy Workers, many of whom had been in post just a matter of days at that stage. This was considered to be valuable by those who attended and it included inputs from Police Scotland and the Crown on criminal justice processes, and an input on civil remedies from the Scottish Women's Rights Centre (SWRC). Further training has been provided to Advocacy Workers on an ongoing basis through their quarterly national meetings. This training included additional inputs on: the criminal justice processes (Police Scotland and COPFS); the national helpline (RCS); legal advice (SWRC); and Criminal Injuries Compensation claims (CICA). The content of this training was well received though Advocacy Workers and RCC Managers surveyed suggested that more in-depth training on the civil and criminal justice process at the outset of the project would have enhanced the support that could be provided to victim-survivors. Further, it was suggested that initial training could run over a few days to allow knowledge gained to become embedded in practice and reflect the highly specialised skills and knowledge required for the Advocacy Worker role.

At a local level, training and induction arrangements for Advocacy Workers appear to have varied considerably, reflecting the experience of the Rape Crisis Centre and the individual Advocacy Worker. Some workers with prior experience of working within Rape Crisis immediately found

themselves immersed in the fine workings of their new role, partly as a continuation of previous roles and caseloads. Meanwhile, other workers, many new to the organisation, underwent lengthy induction processes allowing them to get to know and mould the distinctiveness of their role within and beyond the RCC in which they were based:

Advocacy Worker, CSA: I had a three-month induction period, which was fantastic. I realise, having spoken to other Advocacy Workers who maybe haven't had that, I got a very good, supportive grounding and starting to that [...] apart from getting induction into the organisation, I was given a lot of room and space to understand my role... [...] I was given a lot of space and time to develop and create relationships with the other workers, and things like that.

Crucial here is that such diverse approaches in induction appear to be at the discretion of individual RCCs rather than a national assessment of the essential operating criteria for the post and the variation in Advocacy Workers backgrounds prior to taking up the role. Once established in their roles, there is evidence of AWs taking responsibility for recognising and attending to their own learning gaps and building relationship with local partner agencies:

Advocacy Worker, CSA: although it's not been training – some of the visits that we've done, like I have been to the Rape Investigation Unit; I've sat and spoken to a SOLO for an hour, and she showed me round the suite, and gone through the entire process, as far as they're concerned; so there have been quite good inputs, you know, that you wouldn't quite class as training, but it's been an information-sharing sort of thing.

Local approaches to developing training and partnership working were clearly important though these efforts would be bolstered through the provision of recognised core national training for Advocacy Workers. This may go some way to addressing questions raised by workers within partner agencies about the qualifications, status and expertise held by Advocacy Workers.

Similarly, while local RCCs have mechanisms in place to manage and support Advocacy Workers in their role, development of national forums for Advocacy Workers to discuss the unique challenges of their roles were considered beneficial. The quarterly National Advocacy Worker meetings provided one channel for such support and, following the recommendations of the interim evaluation report, it was agreed that a national online support forum would be a welcome development in the provision of support for Advocacy Workers.

4.6 Capacity

A central issue that the project now faces relates to capacity. It is noteworthy that Advocacy Workers, RCC Managers and police and other stakeholders, in both survey responses and in case study interviews, all reported the challenges that the NAP now faces in some areas, and importantly, the potential for this to have a negative effect on victim-survivors:

RCC Manager, CSA: I suppose weaknesses are just the kind of capacity and yes, unfortunately, it's probably looking like we'll need to start operating a waiting list of some kind, but you know, rather than kind of miss people or, you know, at least we can kind of hold them as best we can ... my concern with the project is because of capacity is that those women that have reported and are waiting on their court case and there is that lull and lack of support is that actually they're maybe the ones that are still not getting enough support ... because there is still all these kind of really recent assaults coming in.

Local stakeholder, CSA: *I don't think it's sustainable, I cannot imagine it would be sustainable, because the more successful they become, the more demand will be placed upon them, and the less individual attention and support they'll be able to give to the...so the new cases coming on will get...it would become a difficult thing to manage [...] It will become diluted, yeah. And I think that's the danger here, that the better you become at it, the more demand there will be for services.*

Very much linked to this issue of capacity, the resourcing of the NAP was raised by many RCC Managers as something that must be considered for the maturation of the project beyond this initial phase.

RCC Manager, CSB: *Well, I think you're going to...if advocacy's got a future role...it's certainly got a role for more than one Advocacy Worker. I can't imagine any Centre being able to cope, maybe other than tiny wee places.*

There was also a sense that funding and resources must be sensitively matched to different centres. While projects based in more heavily populated urban areas were facing particular pressures in the form of client volume, there were also calls for greater recognition of rural resourcing issues such as the time and resources required for travel arrangements.

This issue of resourcing is not just linked to services being at capacity, however, but also a concern that RCCs were supplementing the running of the NAP through other budgets not tied to the project. On one hand, the establishment of the NAP and the deployment of Advocacy Workers have alleviated pressures on RCC's through the provision of a dedicated resource to address criminal justice related support; in some areas, it is clear that the NAP has effectively taken away a relatively large number of cases that may otherwise have come into 'mainstream' RCC services. However, it is also very important to note that the increasing workload for advocacy services in several sites means that some RCCs need to find additional resources to cope with demand. The need to 'balance' demand for more mainstream and advocacy services is a concern for some RCC Managers, and clearly poses a challenge related to the future sustainability of both.

5. Key Learning Points

This section identifies the key learning points from evaluation findings presented in the earlier sections of this report. A number of common themes across the data gathered have been identified and these are discussed in turn below. It is perhaps important to note that a number of these resonate with the findings of the earlier evaluation of the Support to Report pilot (Brooks et al., 2015).

5.1 Project implementation

There was wide-ranging support for the introduction of the NAP across partner agencies based on a shared understanding that advocacy support fills an important gap in the criminal justice process. In this context the NAP was viewed as a positive development providing vital support to victim-survivors engaging, or considering engaging, with the criminal justice process while also delivering benefits to partner agencies and the criminal justice process.

The implementation of the NAP was assisted through its operational location within local Rape Crisis Centres, overseen by RCS as an organisation with substantial expertise in supporting victim-survivors and established working relationships with key agencies including Police Scotland and COPFS. Following the announcement of funding for the NAP from the Scottish Government, however, there was relatively little scope for local RCCs to be consulted about the development or the potential efficacy of the proposed advocacy model for their local area, and limited time to set up training for new Advocacy Workers. Similarly, Police and COPFS report comparable time challenges and a lack of detailed information at an early enough stage to develop their protocols to accommodate the NAP and brief their personnel about the role of the Advocacy Workers. For the most part, these initial challenges have been resolved over time, though training and partnership working are areas that require ongoing attention.

5.2 The level, nature and scope of advocacy support delivered

The level of service take-up within the first 18-months of the NAP's operation is further evidence of the need for the service, with 1,004 clients (991 victim-survivors) accessing advocacy support in this initial period. A core feature of the service delivered is the provision of support throughout the criminal justice process (e.g. attendance at police statements, support following a police report, at precognition and at court). Support is also provided in relation to victim-survivors' decisions to report to the police and their decision to continue with the criminal justice process. The advocacy support provided by the NAP is broad ranging, however, encompassing both criminal justice and non-criminal justice related support. This is indicative of the far-reaching impacts of rape and serious sexual assaults, and the associated support needs of victim-survivors. While not always directly related to the criminal justice process, holistic practical and emotional support facilitates sustained engagement in the criminal justice process.

Perhaps reflecting the broad-ranging nature of advocacy, different understandings of advocacy appear to operate, including between Advocacy Workers, RCC Managers, COPFS, the police and other stakeholders. These differences are primarily related to the perceived purpose of advocacy in terms of whether it supports the needs of the victim-survivor or the needs of the investigative and prosecution process (though these aims are not mutually exclusive). This is likely to have implications for how the advocacy role is understood and communicated to partner agencies, and ultimately victim-survivors.

5.3 Impact on improving the support available to victim-survivors

Victims-survivors were overwhelmingly positive about the advocacy support that they had received, describing it as invaluable and life-changing. The most valued features of advocacy support relate

to: the extensive range of criminal justice and non-criminal justice support provided; the flexibility, reliability and consistency of support; the provision of information to assist understanding of developments in both individual cases and the criminal justice system more generally; and emotional support provided within an ethos of victim-survivor-led empowerment. Victim-survivors and practitioners alike, however, suggested that more could be done to improve access to advocacy support prior to, and at the point of, making a report to the police. At the other end of the spectrum, victim-survivors identified a need for support to continue post-trial, either with the Advocacy Worker or another support worker within Rape Crisis.

The majority of practitioners were in agreement that the NAP improved the support available to victim-survivors and that local projects fitted in well with the existing landscape of services. There were some notable exceptions to this agreement, however, where concerns were raised about overlap with other roles within the police and VIA. The interface with these agencies requires careful attention to avoid duplication and ensure that each are mindful of respective roles and responsibilities. However, there are also clear indications that the existence of the NAP is improving responses to victim-survivors through enhanced communication between partner agencies at a local and national level.

5.4 Improving the experience of the criminal justice process

Both victim-survivors and practitioners described the NAP as ‘filling a gap’ in the justice system. Victim-survivors described imbalances in the criminal justice system, reflecting its adversarial nature and the perception that it protected the interests of the accused before that of the victim. Advocacy support was, therefore, understood to improve victim-survivors’ experiences by providing someone who is independent of any investigative or prosecutorial process and whose sole remit is to protect and represent the interests of the victim-survivor.

Amongst practitioners, other notable responses related to the ways in which the NAP acted as a roadmap and was independent of other services. Also common was a view that the NAP provided a buffer between victim-survivors and others, not simply to the benefit of the victim-survivor but also to the other agencies, and enabled the Advocacy Worker to act to broker a relationship between a victim-survivor and the police to facilitate the provision of clearer, stronger statements to support criminal proceedings.

Court support is also highly valued, as attested by victim-survivors, even though the Advocacy Worker ‘couldn’t do much’ or couldn’t say anything at trial. This points to the value of a ‘known person’ who has a clear and informed understanding of the effects of sexual violence and a recognition of the likely ‘triggers’ that may precipitate distress and confusion in a victim-survivor.

For some, however, improvements in victim-survivor experiences were hampered by the continuing difficulties within the criminal justice process, relating primarily to its adversarial nature, lengthy timescales, delays and uncertainty about proceedings.

5.5 Supporting engagement with the criminal justice process

It is clear that the majority of those who were supported through advocacy services did engage in a sustained way with the criminal justice process, moving through investigation and prosecution through to trial outcome. This is clear from the accounts provided by the victim-survivors, the police and Advocacy Workers. In that respect, the NAP has had a positive effect in supporting engagement with the criminal justice system. For some victim-survivors the NAP provided the support or impetus to facilitate making an initial report to the police while for others, their engagement with the ensuing processes was underpinned by emotional and practical advocacy support.

5.6 Partnership working

Successful partnership working was identified as key to the effective operation of the NAP; it facilitates smooth referrals and supports the flow of information about particular cases, which in turn can support investigation and prosecution processes and enhance the experiences of victim-survivors. In the early phase of the NAP, local projects encountered mixed responses from other services in terms of their receptiveness to the new service and willingness to share information or make referrals; this was primarily linked to a lack of understanding about the role and remit of the NAP and how it might interface with the work of other agencies.

Over time, however, findings indicate that the NAP has facilitated new lines of communication between Rape Crisis and other agencies. This has resulted in shared learning across agencies whereby agencies have learnt from one another and now have a better understanding of the day-to-day roles and remits of other agencies. The survey findings endorsed the view that partnership working has improved as a result of the NAP. Whilst there is evidence of overall improvements in partnership working, information exchange and a recognition of the actual and potential benefits of the advocacy service to enhance the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault at local levels, there remains some need for close attention to maintaining professional relations and clear communication across organisations.

5.7 Improving policy and practice

The NAP has made an important contribution to influencing policy and practice in responding to rape and serious sexual offences at both a local and a national level. While RCS already work to improve responses to victims-survivors, the NAP has provided an effective mechanism for gathering the experiences and concerns of victim-survivors going through the criminal justice process. These concerns have been fed into policy and practice decisions through a number of channels. Within the relatively small sample of victim-survivors interviewed, for example, there were notable examples of how the NAP had effectively provided a channel for clients to influence policy and practice developments. Quarterly National Advocacy Worker meetings also provide a useful conduit for workers raising policy and practice issues on an ongoing basis with Police Scotland and COPFS directly, and to other relevant policy forums and review processes via RCS.

5.8 Training and support for Advocacy Workers

Across local areas, Advocacy Workers bring a wide range of skills and expertise to their roles, although they have entered their roles with varying backgrounds, training, and experience of working within a RCC. The content of initial training, including inputs from external partners, was well received, though both Advocacy Workers and Rape Crisis Centre Managers highlighted the need for more training at the outset of the project. Local approaches to developing training and partnership working were clearly important though these efforts would be bolstered through the provision of recognised core national training for Advocacy Workers. This may go some way to addressing questions raised by partner agencies about the qualifications held by Advocacy Workers.

The quarterly National Advocacy Worker meetings provide an invaluable source of ongoing training and support for Advocacy Workers, though additional support for Advocacy Workers and opportunities for RCC Managers to discuss best practice and shared learning points would be welcomed.

5.9 Capacity and resources

Capacity and resourcing are pressing issues for the NAP. Going forward, the workloads of some Advocacy Workers may become difficult to manage due to growing client numbers and the often long-term nature of the criminal justice process and corresponding advocacy support, with a

quarter (25%) of clients accessing advocacy support for six months or more. Both victim-survivor numbers and the duration of their engagement with the service are likely to grow over time as the NAP matures. The current standardised level of funding allocated to each advocacy project may not be adequate, particularly in areas where client volumes are high or considerable travel is involved on the part of the Advocacy Worker (i.e. in rural areas). In some areas this may result in aspects of the Advocacy Project being subsidised by the host RCC or the operation of waiting lists, which is problematic for such a time-sensitive service. It is also likely that aspects of the service most valued by victim-survivors, such as flexible and reliable support, will become increasingly difficult to deliver if the service is overstretched.

Finally, while the coordination of the NAP by RCS has provided considerable expertise and strategic direction for the project, the absence of any funding at a national level to coordinate and support the network of Advocacy Projects has impacted on the implementation and administration of the NAP, and is likely to impact on its sustainability going forward.

6. Recommendations

- 1) Consideration should be given to developing a core and/or accredited training programme for all Advocacy Workers to support them in their roles.
- 2) Peer support and communication mechanisms for Advocacy Workers should be prioritised (e.g. through the continued support of the online forum developed in response to interim evaluation report recommendations).
- 3) Enhanced publicity at a local level and national level (including online and print materials) should be developed to raise awareness of the advocacy support available for potential clients, encourage early take-up of the service, and clarify the nature and scope of advocacy work undertaken.
- 4) Early opportunities to introduce advocacy support to victim-survivors, potentially as part of a routine response to sexual offences, should be identified and explored by partner agencies.
- 5) The model of advocacy support adopted should continue to be victim-survivor-led, reflecting variation in the timing and nature of support required by those engaging with the criminal justice process; this should include post-court support and support for those whose case does not proceed.
- 6) Further consideration should be given to how RCC Managers can best be engaged in dialogue about NAP development, best practice and shared learning points.
- 7) At a local level and national level, partnership working and embedding mechanisms for communication should be prioritised to ensure that the NAP is fully understood and utilised by all partner agencies.
- 8) Consideration should be given to how the workloads of Advocacy Workers can be managed, particularly in relation to high-volume areas and court attendance. There may be some (limited) scope for Advocacy Workers from neighbouring areas or other RCC workers to provide 'back-up' in relation to court support.
- 9) The model of a standardised level of funding, providing one FTE Advocacy Worker per local advocacy project should be reviewed. Areas with high case volumes or travel requirements are likely to need additional workers and resources.
- 10) Dedicated funding is required to support, coordinate and promote the work of the NAP at a national level; this would support many of the recommendations outlined here and assist the NAP in realising its full potential.
- 11) The value of the NAP Advisory Group should be recognised with continued support for this group, providing an important strategic hub for improving policy and practice across key agencies.
- 12) While the evaluation findings provide strong evidence of the need for, and the value of, the NAP in improving victim-survivor experiences, a contingency plan for supporting existing service users and should be developed at the earliest opportunity in preparation for the possibility that project funding is discontinued.

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APPENDIX 1: Profile of service users and incidents

The statistical information presented here is based on information (where known) regarding the 991 victim-survivors who accessed support. This information is discussed in Section 3.1 of the main report.

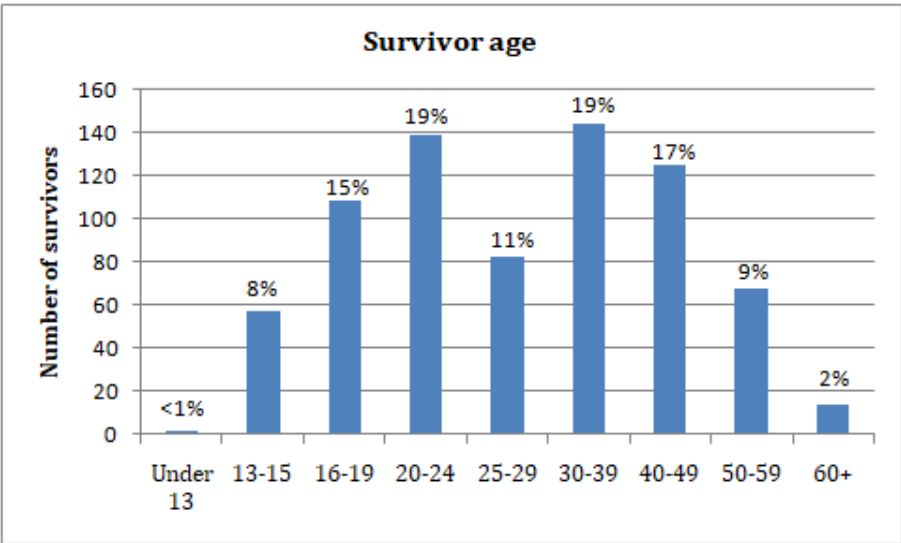


Chart 10: Age group of victim-survivors accessing the service

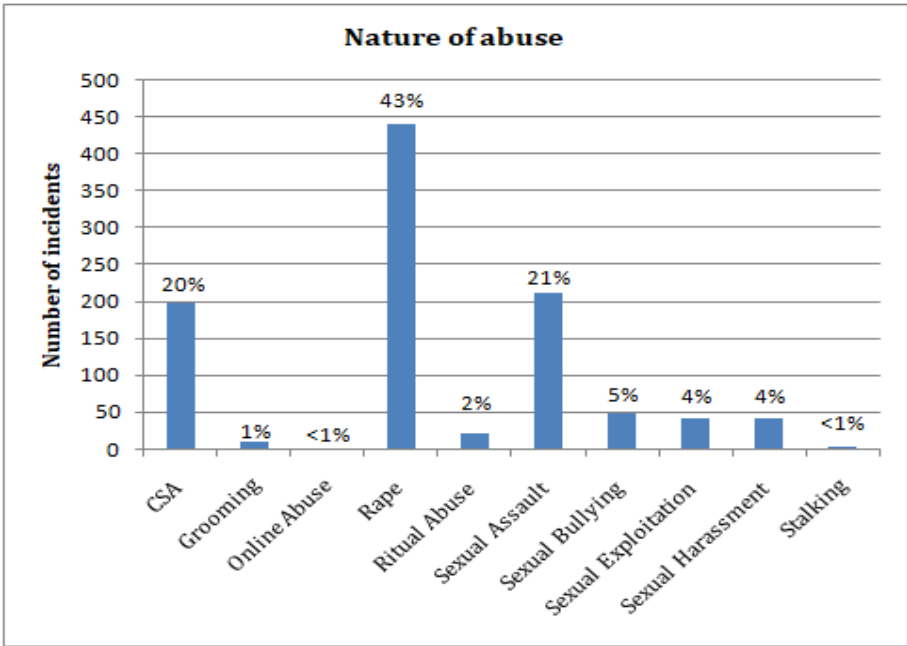


Chart 11: Type of abuse experienced

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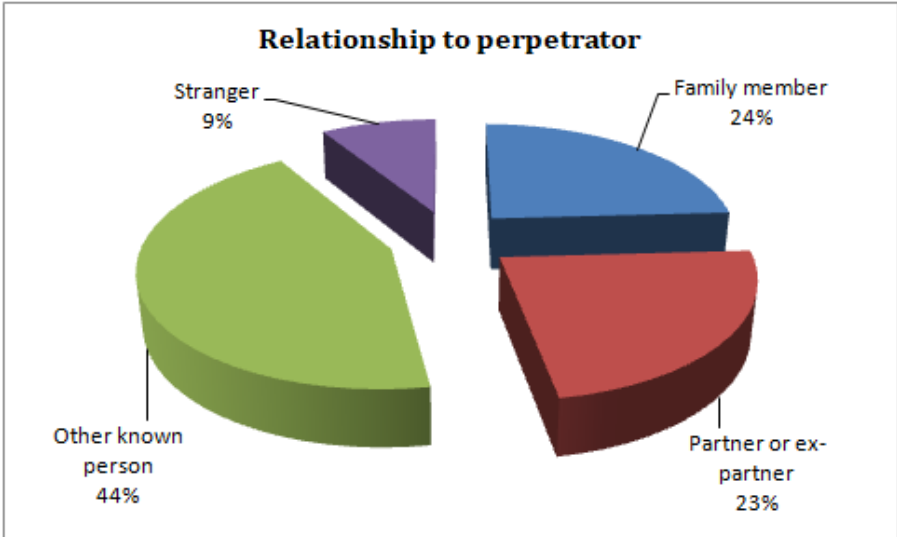


Chart 12: How perpetrator was known to the victim-survivor

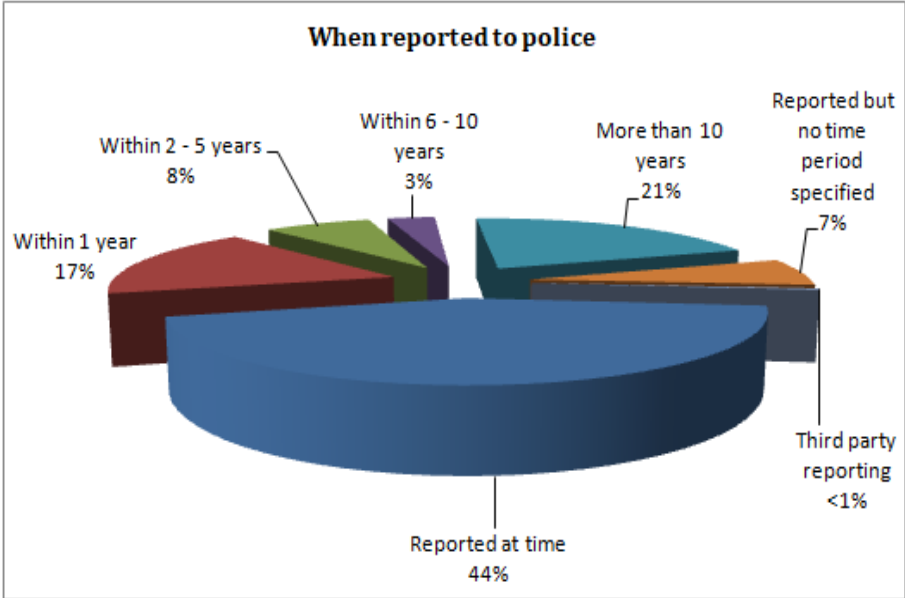


Chart 13: Timeframe of victim-survivor reporting incident to police

APPENDIX 2: Survey responses by respondent type

To what extent do you agree that the advocacy service has improved the support available to victims of rape and serious sexual crime in your area?

	AW	Police	VIA	RCC managers	Overall
Strongly agree	14 (88%)	5 (17%)	1 (25%)	9 (75%)	29 (48%)
Agree	2 (13%)	15 (52%)	2 (50%)	2 (17%)	21 (34%)
Neutral	-	8 (28%)	1 (25%)	1 (8%)	10 (16%)
Disagree	-	1 (3%)	-	-	1 (2%)
Strongly disagree	-	-	-	-	-
Total	16 (100%)	29 (100%)	4 (100%)	12 (100%)	61 (100%)

Table 3: Survey respondents' views on support provided by the advocacy service

To what extent do you agree that the advocacy service has helped improve victims' experiences of the criminal justice process?

	AW	Police	VIA	RCC managers	Overall
Strongly agree	13 (81%)	3 (10%)	1 (25%)	5 (42%)	22 (36%)
Agree	2 (13%)	12 (41%)	1 (25%)	6 (50%)	21 (34%)
Neutral	1 (6%)	13 (45%)	2 (50%)	1 (8%)	17 (28%)
Disagree	-	-	-	-	-
Strongly disagree	-	1 (3%)	-	-	1 (2%)
Total	16 (100%)	29 (100%)	4 (100%)	12 (100%)	61 (100%)

Table 4: Survey respondents' views on how the advocacy service has improved victims' experiences

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How do you feel the advocacy service fits with other (external) services available to victims of rape and serious sexual crime, external to Rape Crisis in your local area?					
	AW	Police	VIA	RCC managers	Overall
It has had a positive impact on the provision of other services	5 (28%)	8 (29%)	1 (33%)	4 (33%)	18 (30%)
It is a helpful addition to the landscape of existing services	13 (72%)	13 (46%)	2 (67%)	4 (33%)	32 (52%)
It has had no impact	-	2 (7%)	-	-	2 (3%)
It has unhelpfully crossed over with some other services	-	1 (4%)	-	-	1 (2%)
It has had a negative impact on the provision of other services	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know	-	4 (14%)	-	4 (33%)	8 (13%)
Total	18 (100%)	28 (100%)	3 (100%)	12 (100%)	61 (100%)

Table 5: Survey respondent's views on how the advocacy service fits with other services

To what extent do you agree that the advocacy service has had a positive impact on partnership working in your area?					
	AW	Police	VIA	RCC managers	Overall
Strongly agree	9 (50%)	5 (19%)	1 (25%)	8 (67%)	23 (38%)
Agree	9 (50%)	11 (41%)	-	1 (8%)	21 (34%)
Neutral	-	10 (37%)	3 (75%)	3 (25%)	16 (26%)
Disagree	-	1 (4%)	-	-	1 (2%)
Strongly disagree	-	-	-	-	-
Total	18 (100%)	27 (100%)	4 (100%)	12 (100%)	61 (100%)

Table 6: Survey respondents' views on the impact on partnership working

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In your view, has the advocacy service had any had any influence on short or long term policy in your Rape Crisis Centre/organisation?

	AW	Police	VIA	RCC managers	Overall
Strongly agree	3 (19%)	8 (30%)	1 (33%)	3 (25%)	15 (26%)
Agree	2 (13%)	9 (33%)	2 (67%)	7 (58%)	20 (34%)
Neutral	11 (69%)	10 (37%)	-	2 (17%)	23 (40%)
Disagree	-	-	-	-	-
Strongly disagree	-	-	-	-	-
Total	16 (100%)	27 (100%)	3 (100%)	12 (100%)	58 (100%)

Table 7: Survey respondents' views on policy influence

In your view, has the advocacy service had any influence on day to day practice within your Rape Crisis centre/organisation?

	AW	Police	VIA	RCC managers	Overall
Yes	14 (82%)	12 (44%)	1 (33%)	11 (92%)	38 (64%)
No	1 (6%)	11 (41%)	2 (67%)	1 (8%)	15 (25%)
Don't know	2 (12%)	4 (15%)	-	-	6 (10%)
Total	17 (100%)	27 (100%)	3 (100%)	12 (100%)	59 (100%)

Table 8: Survey respondents' views on influence on practice