



Sexual Assault & Abuse Support Service

Aylesbury Vale & Milton Keynes



Volunteer Information Pack

We're glad you found us!

Around 20% of women and 4% of men in the UK have experienced some type of sexual assault since the age of 16. Last year alone, more than 300 people in Buckinghamshire were referred to SAASS.

We exist to provide support and information to survivors of recent or historic sexual assault and abuse, to help them manage the emotional effects of trauma, address practical difficulties that stop them living a full life, and connect with other survivors in a safe and nurturing space.

But we can't do it without you.

Our volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. You bring us your enthusiasm, skills and commitment, and in return we provide a supportive environment for you to learn new skills, get invaluable work experience, and help shape SAASS services, all while making a real difference to the lives of those affected by sexual violence.

This information pack contains everything you need to know about volunteering with us, along with an application form.

We hope to hear from you soon!

Why Volunteer with Us?

Life is busy, with so many competing priorities: family, work, friends; maybe you have caring responsibilities or are at college or uni. So why spend your free time volunteering for SAASS?

You'll Make a Real Difference

People who have been affected by sexual violence, whether they are a survivor or someone supporting a survivor, can face enormous challenges. Trauma leaves in its wake emotional upheaval and sometimes practical difficulties that can feel overwhelming.

Our service users tell us that it's hugely helpful knowing they're not alone. Our counselling, advocacy, ISVA and peer support services offer the support they need to empower them to make choices and heal from their trauma.

Our volunteers play a central role in making sure we can provide a safe, supportive environment, and very often leave a big impression on service users.

You'll Get Specialist Training

Our bespoke training will equip you with an understanding of the prevalence and nature of sexual violence, and its impact on survivors, their loved ones, and society. You'll learn about trauma-informed practice, and how to best support people who are struggling with the effects of sexual violence.

You'll Use Your Unique Talents

Whatever you're good at, there's an opportunity to use your talents at SAASS, whether it's interpersonal skills like empathy, active listening, or having a warm and caring demeanour, or practical skills like social media, fund-raising or being an organisational whiz.

You'll Learn New Skills

Volunteers are part of the team at SAASS. You'll get an inside glimpse at how charities operate and have the chance to help us shape our services.

We offer regular Continuing Professional Development, and management or clinical supervision. There are plenty of opportunities to meet other volunteers, in peer reflective practice sessions.

Recognition and Support

We think it's important to recognise the value and importance of the work our volunteers do. We'll give you feedback and support your development, and offer opportunities to take on new challenges if you want to. We'll also provide references for job applications and reports for trainee counsellors.

— “

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” *— Helen Keller*

” —

Volunteer Roles

If you've got time and skills to offer, chances are we can use them. We have Core Roles, responsible for delivering our services, as well as ad hoc or occasional needs that require specific skills. Most roles can be done from home, but you'll have plenty of support from staff.

Core Roles

These roles actually deliver services, and we always need volunteers for them.

Welcomers

This highly important role is the first point of contact for new service users. You'll contact new referrals and conduct an initial IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) session to help us understand their needs and offer appropriate support through our services or by signposting externally.

Telephone Support Specialists

You'll take calls to our Helpline, or provide regular 30-minute check-in calls with service users who are waiting for a place in counselling, providing emotional support and referring them internally or externally, if needed.

Advocates

You'll support service users to make decisions and have their voice heard when decisions are being made about their lives, e.g. in areas such as housing, healthcare or benefits. You'll help them access other services and support them as they become more able to advocate for themselves.

Counsellors

We take on trainee and qualified counsellors twice a year. You'll receive specialist counselling training as well as clinical and peer supervision.

Trainee counsellors are asked to spend at least 3 months in a non-therapeutic core role as part of your training.

Other Roles

Fundraising

You might 'shake a tin' outside a supermarket, help at fundraising events, or make calls to local businesses asking for support.

Marketing & Communication

Social media guru? Designer of eye-catching digital or physical marketing collateral? Journalist or influencer itching to get the word out? We have a huge opportunity to increase our presence in the communities we serve, but we need help to do it.

Administration

If you're the Marie Kondo of offices, great with databases, or able take calls or answer emails, we need you to help us keep things on track.

What Are We Looking For in a Volunteer?

Our volunteers are diverse, and we want to keep it that way. Empathy, understanding, and acceptance are more important than qualifications (with the exception of Counsellors). We welcome applications from all genders, and are keen to hear from older people, disabled people, those identifying LGBTQI+, and members of ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups.

Our Criteria

We value all of our volunteers for being uniquely them! That said, they tend to share some traits, and you'll probably share them, too:

- **Passionate:** you want to make a difference to individuals and society.
- **Compassionate:** you acknowledge others' challenges while believing in the possibility of hope and change.
- **Empowering:** You know that each person is the expert in their own lives and you encourage them to make the choices that are right for them.
- **Empathetic:** you're able to see the world from other perspectives, and put yourself in someone's shoes.
- **Non-judgemental:** you understand that everyone's experience is unique, and you won't judge others' choices and beliefs.
- **Respectful:** you treat everyone with dignity and consideration.
- **Inclusive:** you work to remove barriers to participation, and are willing to challenge discrimination.
- **Committed:** survivors may find it difficult to trust, and they need consistency. You're willing to volunteer for at least a year.
- **Curious:** you enjoy helping to develop ideas, learning new things, and sharing your ideas.

What our Service Users Say

“It has made me come out of the bubble I've been in for so many years, just pretending to be happy. I am now able to stop pretending and also know how to deal with situations much better than before.”

“I've had an incredible mental journey, with many ups and downs. I'm glad I had someone to go on that journey with me. The emotional guidance and support I received is invaluable. I really do thank you for the help and support I have received. I never thought I'd fully open up to anyone.”

“After 38 years I have finally found the courage to acknowledge that I am a survivor of sexual abuse. It has helped heal and better manage my emotions. I am truly grateful.”

Meet Some of our Volunteers



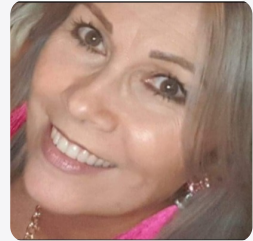
Shermeen

I joined AVMKSAASS as a volunteer counsellor in November 2019, in the second year of my diploma. My interest in trauma work has developed with my work here, and with the support of the agency, I've started providing specialist multilingual counselling for people from black, ethnic minority and refugee communities.

From the start, I've felt held and supported here. At present, I'm working with three other agencies and what makes AVMKSAASS unique is its inclusivity. Staff and volunteers work together to fulfil the mission and provide the best possible service to their clients.

Chrissy

I started out on the Helpline at AVMKSAASS in 2018. I chose the agency because I wanted to work with people who had experienced trauma and PTSD. I first became interested in that during my 9 years of service in the military, before moving into the corporate world. Later, my own counselling for panic attacks, planted a seed for a career change!



After 30 years working for IBM, I'm excited to be doing something different, helping people to process trauma and find their voice again. The best thing about volunteering with SAASS (other than working with amazing colleagues), is seeing our wonderful, courageous clients grow and even flourish while they're with us.



Michele

I joined SAASS in Oct 2017 as a volunteer and started off answering calls on the helpline and then moved over to be a volunteer counsellor. I came across the agency at a placement fair while I was at college and what initially drew me to the volunteer at the agency was the warmth and supportive staff.

Although the work can be challenging at times it is also rewarding in many ways and provides a lot of opportunity to grow and learn. For these reasons and many more I am happy and proud to still be part of the agency today.

The Application Process

Our training will equip you with the understanding and skills you'll need to work effectively with people who have been affected by sexual violence, and to look after your own wellbeing while you do this important work.

The first step is to complete the [application form](#) in this information pack. You can do it by hand and then scan and send it to us, or download an form at avmksaass.org.uk/volunteer/ and complete it electronically.

Email your completed form to us at: support@avmksaass.org.uk.

If you meet the criteria outlined on the last page, we'll invite you for an [informal interview](#), which may be in person or by Zoom. We will most likely contact your references beforehand.

If there's a good fit, we'll invite you to attend [specialist training](#).

All volunteers will need to complete the core training, which will provide you with an understanding of sexual violence and skills for working with survivors. If you're volunteering to be a counsellors, you'll receive additional training before taking on a caseload of service users.

All volunteers are required to have an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. We'll arrange this for you if you're offered a place.

About Our Training

The Core Training programme takes around 8 hours to complete and is held over two days/evenings. Additional counsellor training will be arranged as needed for each cohort. Training may be in person or by Zoom.

Core Training

- Understanding sexual violence
- The effects of trauma
- How survivors experience the world (e.g. barriers, coping strategies)
- Communication and listening skills
- Toolkit for helping survivors
- Suicidal thoughts and self harm
- The role of the advocate
- Making referrals and signposting
- Boundaries and safeguarding

Counsellor Training

- Core training, plus a more in-depth look at:
- Types of sexual violence
- Trauma and its impact
- Safeguarding
- Domestic abuse and victim blaming
- Child sexual abuse
- Male survivors
- Working with survivors in a feminist framework



Ready to Join Us?

We're committed to providing a richly rewarding experience to all of our volunteers. From the moment you join us, you'll be welcomed, supported and included shaping an outstanding volunteer experience.

Working with survivors of sexual violence isn't for everyone, but our support and training will equip you with everything you need to make a huge difference to survivors' lives.

And it really is a huge difference. As one of our service users said

"You've given me the final piece to my puzzle and helped me move on with my life. You've made a huge impact on my life that I'll never forget."

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