



Sexual Assault & Abuse
Support Service
Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes

Three Year Business Strategy 2024 - 2027

“This service has helped to restore my faith that there are good women out there who will listen and help without expecting anything in return”

Introduction

Originally established in 1995 as Aylesbury Vale Rape Crisis (AVRC), we have expanded into Milton Keynes and all of Buckinghamshire to formalise our commitment to provide high quality services to any survivor living in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Our mission is for everyone affected by sexual assault and abuse to be able to access support to live fulfilling lives.

The organisation defines sexual assault and abuse as a crime of violence, control and abuse of power originating in gender inequalities and stereotypes. The individuals we work with are survivors of different kinds of sexual violence, including but not restricted to rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, rape within marriage/relationships, forced marriage, so-called honour-based violence, female genital mutilation, trafficking, sexual exploitation and ritual abuse.

Our primary purpose is to provide support to women and girls, acknowledging the disproportionate impact of sexual violence on women and girls and that it is almost always perpetrated by men, even when the victim-survivor is also male. However, our intersectionally feminist and empowering approach enables survivors of all genders to improve their wellbeing and live fulfilling lives. The aim is to deliver a wide range of support to meet individual need and choice. Support is provided to family members, partners and friends of survivors of sexual violence. We deliver holistic support to meet individual needs and the charity's objects.

We take into account the many different ways each survivor experiences sexual violence and discrimination and are committed to anti-racism. This includes additional oppressions based on an individual's sex, gender identity, age, marital status, disability, race, colour, ethnic or national origin or sexual orientation. SAASSBMK is a trans-inclusive organisation and welcomes individuals to self-identify and access the gender-specific space that aligns best with their gender identity.

SAASSBMK is a woman-led charity and is committed to promoting female leadership both in the CEO and trustee board positions. We employ staff and volunteers of all genders but reserve the

right to make certain roles women-only under the Equality Act 2010 pursuant to Schedule 9, Part 1 to access to women-only support and referral pathways where required.

SAASSBMK is aiming to raise awareness of consent and change the perceptions of sexual violence within our local area to bring an end to sexual assault and abuse. To achieve this, the charity participates in different partnerships and events and offers training and talks.

SAASSBMK is a full member of the;

- Rape Crisis England and Wales Network (and holds the National Service Standards),
- The Survivors Trust (and holds the National Service Standards),
- Male Survivors Partnership,
- The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Survivors have told us;

"It makes me emotional writing this but my counsellor was the ultimate gift. The time spent together helping me learn about myself, understanding my feelings and working through my trauma and depression is priceless.

She saved me. She saved my life.

I cannot thank her enough for how much of an impact she has had on my life and ultimately my children's lives and their future."

"SAASS has gone far above and beyond anything I ever expected. They really helped me when I was in crisis as I worked through some very difficult things. Having had trauma with mental health professionals, this experience has gone a long way towards changing that perspective."

"Before I joined the group I was struggling with severe anxiety and depression. I was isolated in my bedroom and I regularly self-harmed. It's hard to describe how the group works but for me just being with people who understand why I'm there without having to mention it is so freeing. I was given a purpose when I felt like I had none."



**The King's Award
for Voluntary Service**
The MBE for volunteer groups

Services



Information, Advice and Guidance

When you refer yourself or are referred to us, we'll invite you to attend an Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) appointment by phone or using a secure online platform. This appointment is an opportunity to explore your concerns in a safe environment and consider the type of support that you would find most beneficial.



Stabilisation Intervention Programme

Our Stabilisation Intervention Programme offers a safe space where survivors can explore the impact of sexual violence on their life and learn how to cope with the emotional and physical effects of trauma through psychoeducation.



Support through the criminal justice system

Our Independent Sexual Violence Advisors provide emotional and practical support to survivors of all genders who have experienced rape, sexual abuse or assault who have reported to the police or are considering reporting to the police.

We also provide the same service to male survivors of domestic abuse in Buckinghamshire.



Counselling

Up to 24 free therapeutic counselling sessions to anyone aged 16 years or older, regardless of gender, who has experienced any form of rape or sexual violence at any time in their lives, or who is supporting a survivor.

Our specialist volunteer counsellors are trained in working with survivors of sexual assault, abuse and trauma.



Peer support & Group Therapy

Our weekly peer support service, Thrive2gether, provides a safe and sociable space for individuals with shared experience of sexual assault and abuse to support each other.

Group therapy takes place with a group of people together, rather than with an individual counsellor during a one-to-one session.



SASH is a partnership project with SAFE! providing support to children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse or sexual harm.

SASH is able to provide support to children, and young people aged 5 to 18 years by delivering a responsive, individually tailored specialist support service in Buckinghamshire to those who have been affected by rape, sexual assault, and domestic abuse.

This includes 1:1 counselling, project work, DAY programme and parent/carer support.



We offer specialist support to male survivors of sexual and domestic abuse, which includes 1:1 counselling in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocacy in Buckinghamshire and group therapy across the Thames Valley region (including Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire).



In partnership with MK-ACT, we support survivors of domestic abuse with 1:1 trauma-informed counselling to help them cope and move forward positively with their lives.

Strategic Priorities

1 - Growth Consolidation

Since 2016, the organisation has progressed from a turnover of approximately £60,000 to a turnover of over £700,000 per annum. With survivor demand continuing to increase (11% increase from 2022 to 2023), work was undertaken in 2023 to review this growth, and implement a new structure with the aims of reconciling worker capacity with the increased levels service delivery.

With increasing numbers of survivors who need our support, we will implement and monitor the new staffing structure to ensure survivors are able to access the service they need whilst workers have capacity to deliver their role and achieve excellence. We will continue to build infrastructure into our organisation, to ensure robust governance and operational management and delivery.

2 - Sustainability

Following the pandemic and cost of living crisis, SAASSBMK is now being contacted by double the amount of survivors of sexual violence in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes for support. However, SAASSBMK does not have confirmed access to the level of resources and funding required to meet this increased demand.

This lack of substantial and sustainable funding presents an ongoing risk to the sustainability of SAASSBMK services and the necessary back-office functions. It also presents a risk around staff and volunteer wellbeing and retention.

Survivors and their supporters need and deserve access to stable, specialist services. We will continue to seek long-term, dedicated funding with national government, local commissioners, trusts, foundations, philanthropists, and others. This will ensure the continuity of trained staff and volunteers to deliver specialist services.

3 - Quality Service Delivery

SAASSBMK delivers a range of services to survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse, tailored to their individual needs. We are committed to ensuring all survivors across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes has access to high quality, specialist, professional support.

We go to great lengths to ensure that our services meet the National Service Standards of Rape Crisis England and Wales and The Survivors Trust, as well as following guidance and ethical frameworks from the Male Survivors Partnership and the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

SAASSBMK have been recognised locally and nationally for their expertise, including receiving the High Sheriffs Award for Buckinghamshire in 2022 and 2023 and The King's Award for Voluntary Services in 2023.

Informed by the national service standards, we will focus on creating a dynamic and cohesive environment that fosters commitment and supports continuous improvement in developing our specialist services to meet the individual needs of survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse.

4 - Partnership Working

SAASSBMK partners with a range of organisations across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes to deliver holistic and high-quality services to survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse. With our partners we identify gaps in support and explore and deliver solutions which make a measurable difference to the lives of survivors.

We have done this by reciprocal training to raise awareness of the impact of sexual violence and our services as well as creating robust referral pathways. We also sit on a number of partnership boards and meetings within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and the Thames Valley region to ensure that survivors are represented within operational and strategic decision-making processes and to feed in any patterns, trends or feedback into government and policing authorities for their continual learning and improvement.

We will ensure that survivors voices are being heard and shared with those who have power or authority to implement improved responses to and treatment of survivors.

5 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

SAASSBMK considers Equality, Diversity and Inclusion a core value of the organisation. Research tells us that an individual's risk of experiencing sexual violence increases with the additional layering of marginalised identities and vulnerabilities they may hold². In particular, women of colour/Black and minoritised women are disproportionately impacted and underserved³.

We aim to review current services and systems for their effectiveness in creating pathways to accessing specialist sexual violence and domestic abuse support for marginalised individuals as well as foster an empowering work environment that embraces intersectional feminist leadership and anti-racist principles.

¹ <https://rosauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Women-and-Girls-Sector-Research-Mapping-Report-Amended.pdf>

² De Schrijver et al (2022) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8998422/>

³ Imkaan (2020) https://829ef90d-0745-49b2-b404-cbea85f15fda.filesusr.com/ugd/f98049_a0f11db6395a48fbbac0e40da899dcb8.pdf

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