

SOSRC

Southend Rape and Sexual Abuse Specialist Service

STRATEGY

2023 - 2028



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INTRODUCTION

SOS (Southend on Sea) Rape Crisis has been established since **2011**. In **April 2021** we became a **CIO (charitable incorporated organisation)** which invoked a new **charity no. 1194207**.

Since 2011 SOSRC has been supporting survivors of any form of sexual violence; sexual abuse or sexual assault that has occurred at any time in their lives. SOSRC supports survivors who live in **Southend-on-Sea, Castle Point and Rochford**. SOSRC is an accredited member of **Rape Crisis England and Wales** (www.rapecrisis.org.uk) this means that the services we provide to survivors and relatives/supporters of survivors are to a quality assured standard. The services we provide are in line with the **The Rape Crisis National Service Standards**.

SOSRC works in partnership with **SERICC** (West and South) and **CARA** (Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse(North and East Essex). Together we support all survivors throughout the county of Essex working under the partnership of **SYNERGY**.

SOSRC supports all survivors and their family members and or carers. Children can access our services from the age of 4 years old but if they are younger we are able to provide specialised support for their parents. We work with women, men, children and young people.

SOSRC believes in intersectional feminism, which means we recognise the multiple different oppressions which women and girls may face. This includes oppressions based on aspects of a women's identity such as age, class, relationship status, employment status, race, physical health, mental health, education, wealth, sexuality, family structure, religion, nationality, immigration status, and many others.

This document outlines our five-year **strategy for 2023-2028** and it will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure we are constantly developing our service to meet the needs of the people who access our services.



Partnership of Rape and Sexual Abuse Specialist Services



OUR VISION AND MISSION

Our vision, mission, and core values inform the way we work and behave. They encapsulate our aspirations, delineate our purpose, and uphold the principles that govern our work. These foundational elements not only shape our collective direction but also intricately inform the ethos of our organisation, anchoring us to a shared identity and purposeful journey.



VISION

A society where women and girls are equal and free from all forms of rape and sexual abuse.



MISSION

To alleviate the trauma and distress of women and girls who have suffered any form of sexual violence. To promote education and research in the subject of rape and its effects on the survivor.

CORE VALUES

Our **feminist approach** and **core values** will inform our emerging work with survivors and their supporters to ensure they can access appropriate support.

Our women-only spaces are open to all woman or girls, including women with physical and learning disabilities; women who identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, questioning; black and minority-ethnic women; refugees, asylum seekers, all faiths and religions and women who work in the sex industry. **We also provide specialist spaces and services for men and all other genders.**

WOMEN ONLY SPACES

These spaces are essential to provide a safe and supportive environment where women can feel understood and heal.

NON-JUDGEMENTAL

We do not judge survivors on their decisions.

COMMITTED TO GOOD PRACTICE

We ensure a quality service working in line with the Rape Crisis England and Wales National Service Standards.

WOMEN-LED

Rape and sexual abuse sexual is both a cause and consequence of women's inequality and discrimination.

FREE

We provide free services to enable all survivors, the support they have a right to access.

BELIEVE

We believe what survivors tell us and will encourage them to use their voice.

NON-DIRECTIVE

We refrain from exerting influence on survivors' choices or imposing our perspectives on their decisions.

CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATION

We will challenge discrimination in any form.

EMPOWERMENT

We aim to empower survivors to make their own decisions and to support them in whatever way they need and want.

CONTEXT

Sexual violence remains a **global issue for women and girls**. Despite our unwavering **commitment to supporting survivors**, there have been numerous challenges that have impacted us and our survivors - austerity measures, the escalating cost of living, the enduring effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, global conflicts, and the erosion of human rights all contribute to these obstacles.

SOSRC diligently works to raise awareness and **dismantle barriers** hindering survivors from accessing vital support. We have strived to optimise our services to **prioritise survivor well-being**, albeit within the constraints of our available resources. However, we increasingly see more survivors who access our services who have more profound **complex trauma symptoms**, often exacerbated by limited access to alternative services and the systemic shortcomings in addressing the needs of sexual violence survivors.

Despite a growth in income, which has helped alleviate historical funding shortfalls for Rape Crisis Centres in Essex, the demand for our support continues to outpace available resources. This imbalance results in **prolonged waiting times for our survivors** and places strains on the **well-being of our staff**.

SOSRC has consistently **expanded its support for survivors** since obtaining charity status in 2011. Initially focused on helpline, emotional support, and advocacy, our organisation has since broadened its scope to **encompass comprehensive wrap around holistic services**. Over the past five years, our financial resources have grown substantially, with our annual budget increasing from £361,000 to a projected expenditure of £678,000 for 2022-2023. Similarly, our staff team has expanded significantly, growing from a modest team of 3 (3.5 FTE) to a robust team of 15 (11.75 FTE).

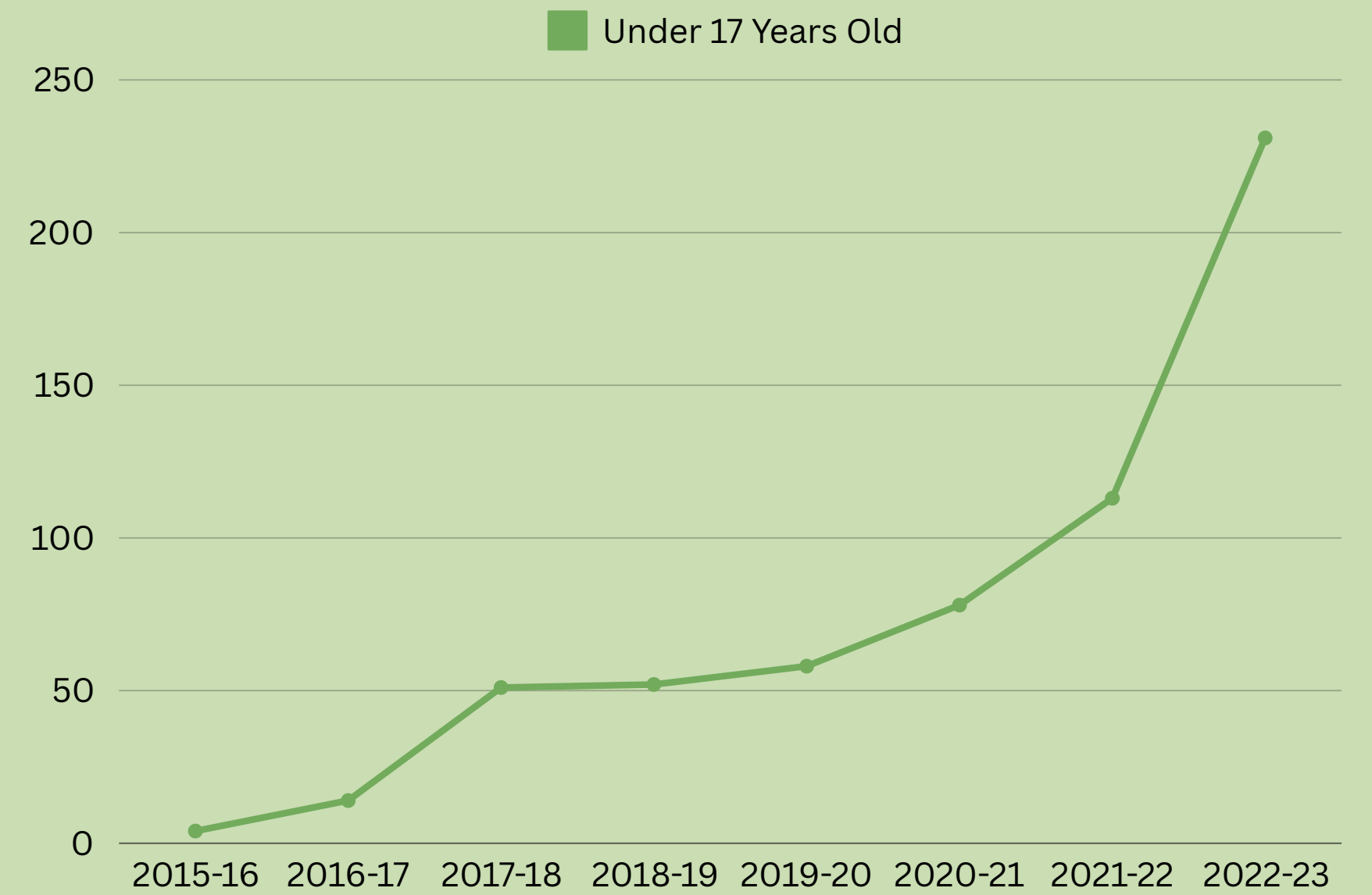
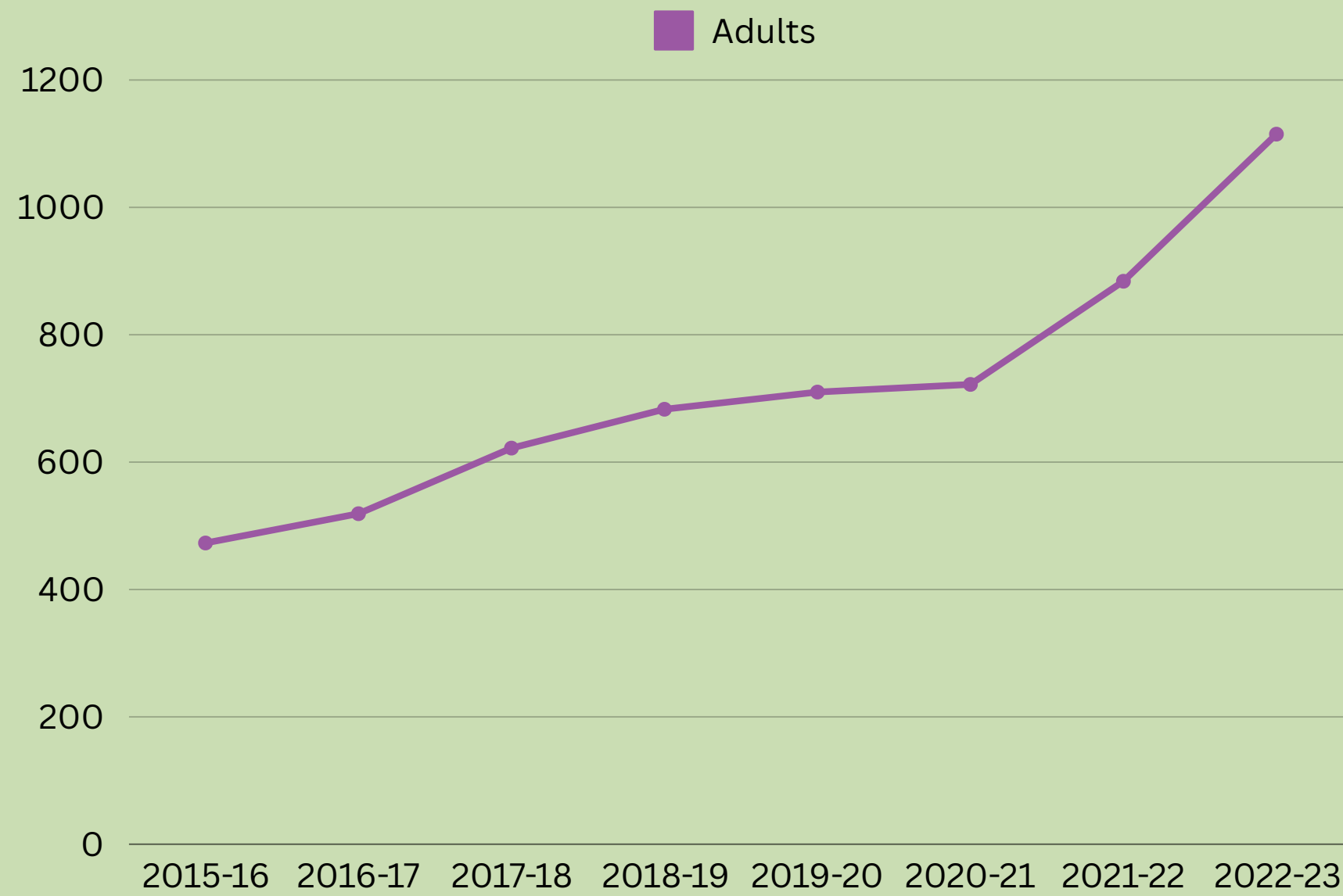
During this period of growth, we have experienced notable improvements in our capacity to serve survivors of sexual violence. In the fiscal year 2022-23 alone, we provided support to 1,114 survivors and received a total of 666 referrals across our services. Moreover, we have observed a rising demand for our assistance from individuals across various age groups, including children, adults, and young people.

The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic prompted us to adapt our service delivery methods, allowing us to offer support through online platforms, in-person sessions, and via telephone. Our in-person services are primarily delivered from our main base in Southend-on-Sea, supplemented by accessible outreach locations in Canvey Island (Castle Point) and Ashingdon (Rochford). Since 2016, we have extended our support to survivors of all genders aged 4 and above, regardless of when they experienced sexual violence.

Despite our achievements, we continue to face challenges due to insecure, short-term funding and the persistent growth in demand for our services. These obstacles hinder our ability to provide consistent and comprehensive support to survivors.



OUR GROWTH



SOUTHEND, CASTLE POINT AND ROCHFORD - ESSEX

Southend is the seventh most densely populated area in the United Kingdom outside of the London Boroughs. **Save The Children estimates that 12% of children living in Southend live in poverty.** The Department for Communities and Deprivation data shows that Southend is one of Essex's most deprived areas. Kursaal Ward which is located in Southend ranks as **being 99 out of 32,482 most deprived areas in England.** As well as Kursaal ward there are another 5 areas located in Southend which sit in the top 10% most deprived in England. Many of the women we see have been impacted from the cost of living crisis which has added more stresses and worries to them and their families.

The urban area of **Southend spills outside of the borough boundaries** into the neighbouring **Castle Point and Rochford districts**, including the towns of Hadleigh, Benfleet, Rayleigh and Rochford, as well as the villages of Hockley and Hullbridge. Castle Point and Rochford sit under Essex County Council, whereas Southend sits under its own local authority.

According to the 2011 census, Southend had a population of 295,310, making it the largest urban area within the East of England. In 2021, 5.5% of Southend-on-Sea residents identified their ethnic group within the **"Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh"** category, up from 3.7% in 2011. The 1.8 percentage-point change was the **largest increase among high-level ethnic groups in this area.** In 2021, **87.5%** of people in Southend-on-Sea identified their ethnic group within the "White" category (compared with 91.6% in 2011), while 3.1% identified their ethnic group within the "Mixed or Multiple" category (compared with 2.1% the previous decade). The percentage of people who identified their ethnic group within the **"Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African"** category increased from **2.1% in 2011 to 2.9% in 2021.**

April 2022 - March 2023 there were 181 reported sexual violence crimes to the police in the borough of Southend, Castle Point 220 and Southend 813. This means there were over 1214 reported incidents of sexual violence in our community. **The combined population for Southend, Castle Point and Rochford is 360924** this would mean that **1 in every 296 people have reported a sexual violence crime to the police.** According to a report conducted by Queen Mary University of London it is estimated that **only 20%** of women and girls aged 16 years who have experienced sexual violence report it. This could mean that there could be a minimum of **6070 survivors** in Southend, Castle Point and Rochford every year who **have a right to access specialist support.** This would mean **1 out of every 59 people** living in our community has experienced some form of sexual violence.

We support over 1000 survivors every year to recognise and recover from the impacts from rape and sexual abuse they have experienced.

Data taken from 2022 - 2023

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

In the United Kingdom, sexual violence is a pervasive issue with far-reaching consequences. Statistics reveal a staggering impact, with an estimated 20% of women and 4% of men experiencing a sexual offence in their lifetimes. This translates to approximately 3.4 million female and 631,000 male victims across the nation. Moreover, recent studies indicate that 3.1% of women (equivalent to 510,000 individuals) and 0.8% of men (about 138,000 individuals) aged 16 to 59 have suffered a sexual assault within the past year alone.

Within England and Wales, around 85,000 women and 12,000 men aged 16 to 59 experience the most severe forms of sexual violence annually, including rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault by penetration. Shockingly, this equates to roughly 11 of these serious offences against adults every hour. Despite the alarming prevalence, only a mere 15% of survivors choose to report these crimes to the authorities*

Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE)

A new report from the **Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP)** was able to show a detailed picture of reported Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) crimes across England and Wales. The report was published in January 2024 and highlighted that there was ‘significant’ under-reporting of CSAE crimes. The report was able to tell us that:

- **There were around 107,000 offences reported in 2022** – a 7.6% increase compared to 2021, nearly quadruple what it is was 10 years ago.
- **Around 75% of CSAE offences related to sexual offences** committed directly against children, and around 25% relate to online offences of Indecent Images of Children.
- **CSAE within the family environment remains** a common form of reported abuse, accounting for an estimated 33% of reported contact CSAE crime. Parents and siblings were the two most common relationships featuring.
- **Reported CSAE is heavily gendered, as expected**, with males (82% of all CSAE perpetrators) predominantly abusing females (79% of victims). Sexual offending involving male victims are more common in offences involving indecent images and younger children.
- **The number of recorded incidents of Online Sexual Abuse** continues to grow. It accounts for at least 32% of CSAE.
- **52% of all CSAE cases involved reports of children (aged 10 to 17)** offending against other children with 14 being the most common age. This is a growing and concerning trend involving a wide range of offending. Whilst some include exploratory online sexual behaviours, some of the most prevalent forms include serious sexual assaults, including rape.

This **SWOT analysis provides** an overview of the internal and external strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats facing our organisation and service **delivery to Survivors in Southend.**

STRENGTHS

- Accredited to RCEW NSS
- Community Trust
- Strategic Location
- Partnerships and Networks
- Survivors' Voices
- Specialist Staff and Volunteers
- Accessibility
- Staff Well-Being Programme

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OPPORTUNITIES

- Future Partnerships / community leaders
- Advancement in Technology
- Expansion of holistic wrap around support
- More Awareness of SV - more reach
- Policy Change - Victims Code
- Survivors - co-productions
- Well-Being Groups - Survivor Led

WEAKNESSES

- Funding Challenges
- Staffing Constraints
- Limited Resources
- Societal Barriers
- Emotional toll of staff and volunteers
- Capacity Constraints
- No long term funding

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THREATS

- Legal and Regulatory Changes
- Competing for Limited Funding
- External Crisis / Emergencies
- Cost of Living Crisis - Funding Cuts
- Misinformation and Myths
- Underreporting and Hidden SV
- Staff Burn Out / High Turn Over

OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2023-28

We have formulated our priorities for 2023-28 by using the overall goals of our organisation goals, reviewing our vision and mission, a SWOT analysis, engaging our stakeholders, looking at our current performance and establishing and responding to gaps in our service. We will constantly review and update our strategy and priorities through-out. We will Ensure that our strategic priorities are clearly communicated throughout our organisation and that all stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities in achieving them.

1**WOMEN AND GIRLS
CENTRED SUPPORT****3****INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE****2****REACH AND INCLUDE
SURVIVORS IN OUR
COMMUNITIES****4****EMPOWER PEOPLE TO
INFLUENCE CHANGE**

1

WOMEN AND GIRLS - CENTRED SUPPORT

We will ensure that all services are women centred. We will do this by:

- Continuing to provide **women only spaces**.
- Recognising that sexual violence affects people of all genders, but impacts **disproportionately on women**.
- Continuing to be **feminist organisation** and letting this inform the way we support all survivors.

2

REACH AND INCLUDE SURVIVORS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

We will work in collaboration and solidarity with marginalised groups, organisations, and individuals to ensure all survivors can access our support services and help shape and steer the direction the work we do. We will do this by:

- **Creating roles for engagement workers** who are able to build and foster relationships with local leaders and organisations with the ecosystem in Southend.
- **Expanding our services to offer more out of hours** appointments to survivors to ensure they do not have to miss education or work.
- **Supporting survivors to have a voice in decision** making spaces and drive change within SOSRC.



3

INVEST IN OUR PEOPLE

We are committed to establishing an organisation that priorities the well-being of both our staff and volunteers who support to survivors, whether directly or indirectly. We will do this by:

- **Implementing a comprehensive** framework that includes regular line management support, robust case management, and access to external clinical supervision.
- **Investing in the wellbeing, skills development and ambitions of our people.**
- Exemplifying transparent, accountable, collaborative, and **feminist leadership**.

4

EMPOWER PEOPLE TO INFLUENCE CHANGE

We will be a radical voice to create change on bring attention to the impacts of sexual violence by:

- Recognising, documenting, and disseminating the **impacts of our work**.
- **Fostering agreement within the community**, to comprehend sexual violence and strategies for its eradication.
- Establishing **platforms for constructive discussions and initiatives**.
- **Advocating for change**.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Feminism

The advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes. The understanding that due to their gender, women inhabit an unequal place in society

Sexual Violence

SOSRC uses the World Health Organisation definition of sexual violence which outlines sexual violence as *"any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work"*

Violence against women and girls

SOSRC uses the United Nations definition of violence against women and girls which defines it as *"any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life"*

Intersectional

SOSRC acknowledges that gender alone does not solely define a woman's experience and aims to acknowledge other factors that may influence an individual's level of power, including age, race, socioeconomic status, health, marital status, and more.

SOSRC

Southend Rape and Sexual Abuse Specialist Service

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 www.sosrc.org

Southend on Sea, Castle Point and Rochford

All our support and information services are free.

SOS Rape Crisis is a registered charity in England and Wales
charity no. 1194207

