

**Southend On Sea Rape Crisis (SOSRC)** are extremely concerned and disappointed to learn that women attending the Gynaecology service at Southend University Hospital could find themselves being examined or treated by a Consultant Gynaecologist who has recently been identified in local and national media as working and seeing patients at Southend University Hospital.

We are concerned to learn that some of our existing clients, who use our specialist service, have contacted us to express their intention to cancel or not attend their pre-booked gynaecology appointments at the hospital. They have also told us that they do not feel reassured by the Trust's offer of chaperones attending their appointments. The implications for their long-term health could be highly detrimental, and in the worst-case scenario, life threatening. This justifiable lack of confidence must be considered carefully by Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust moving forwards.

All women deserve to attend the hospital trusting that they will receive the very best care in safety. This is most particularly consequential for those may already have a history of trauma caused by rape or sexual abuse.

The tone taken to justify the continued employment of the named individual is an insult to women. The findings of the tribunal that are in the public domain will undoubtedly deter some women from seeking care and treatment at Southend Hospital.

Twenty-four incidents of serious misconduct and inappropriate treatment by the named individual were proven while he worked at another hospital trust. These include the removal of women's ovaries without consent, touching a woman's clitoris, performing multiple intimate examinations without a chaperone present, kissing and hugging patients and inappropriate rubbing and touching of women. These are sexual assaults, by a medical professional and are wholly inexcusable.

It is unacceptable to dismiss these violations of women's bodies and the psychological trauma caused by suggesting that this individual is 'remorseful and will make efforts to improve his conduct'. That will come as cold comfort to his victims and will give future patients no confidence whatsoever.

At a time when misogyny and sexual violence towards women and girls appear to be running unchecked through our society and despite the current government pledging to reduce violence against women and girls by 50% in a decade. We remain to be convinced that not enough is being done to achieve this aim.

The Government's plan for halving violence against women and girls specifically states that;

'Anyone with a history of violence against women and girls will be barred from joining the police.' Astonishingly, there is no such specific statement regarding sexual violence perpetrated by medical professionals. All professionals in a position of trust must be held to the same high standards of ethical conduct. It is time to do better.

We call upon both Bayo Alaba and David Burton-Sampson, Members of Parliament representing Southend to take immediate action to hold Southend Hospital to account for making such an ill judged and institutionally blind appointment which demonstrates scant regard for the care women can expect to receive.

If you have been affected by any form of sexual violence and need support, you can contact the **SYNERGY Essex Information Line at 0300 003 7777** or visit our website at **www.synergyessex.org.uk** for more information.

Synergy Essex offers independent and specialised services for individuals who have experienced rape or sexual abuse in Essex.

Synergy Essex is a partnership of three services; Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse (CARA), SERICC Rape and Sexual Abuse Specialist Service, and Southend-on-Sea Rape Crisis (SOS Rape Crisis).

The services provided by Synergy Essex are independent of the police. This ensures individuals can seek help whether they choose to report the incident or not. This could be in relation to something that happened recently or in the past.

Survivors and victims can access support by reaching out on their own or through a referral from someone they trust. This could be a family member, friend, or professional.

At Synergy Essex, people of all ages can benefit from specialised emotional support. This includes counselling and advocacy.

For those pursuing legal action, they offer the help of an Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA). The advisers can guide and support them through the criminal justice process.

To learn more about the services available, please visit the Synergy Essex website.