

PARCS

PORTSMOUTH
ABUSE + RAPE
COUNSELLING
SERVICE

1981 - 2016

Contact Us

Portsmouth Abuse and Rape Crisis Service (PARCS)

PO Box 3

Portsmouth

Hants

Po2 8RX

Office: 023 9266 9513

www.parc.org.uk

@PARCSRapecrisis

Help Lines open Monday 1-3pm Wednesday and Friday 7-10pm

Women's Line 023 9266 9511

Men's Line 023 9266 9516

Registered Charity: 1079950

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All artwork has been created by individuals and groups who have accessed the services provided by PARCS unless otherwise stated.

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“PARCS is an essential and major part of the processes involved that people who have been abused at any level need to go through to help them conquer and become survivors”
(Survivor).

Portsmouth Abuse and Rape Counselling Service (PARCS) was set up in 1981 by a group of women in response to a number of rapes in the city of Portsmouth. They were concerned that there were no services available to assist in the statutory or the non-statutory sectors. Since that time PARCS has grown to be a very effective charity working with survivors of rape and childhood sexual abuse and domestic abuse. Over the years there has been an increasing emphasis on working with women, men and young people who have suffered sexual abuse, often in childhood, and this trend is expected to continue. PARCS is highly regarded in the community, by those who we set out to service and also by other counsellors, the local authorities, health professionals, police, charities, the universities, schools and colleges.

Our Mission Statement

PARCS aims to prevent inter-personal abuse through its community based educational programme delivered to young people, parents, carers and professionals.

PARCS also aims to address the impact of sexual abuse (no matter when the abuse took place) by providing specialist counselling, psychotherapy, group therapy and telephone help lines.

Our Vision

PARCS vision is:

To continue to offer services in a way that makes them accessible regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, relationship status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation or any other factor

To develop our team in a way that makes best use of their skills, abilities and to meet their ambitions and the co-operative culture of PARCS

To further develop and deploy our preventative programmes in schools and other appropriate venues

To extend our services in ways those are compatible with our objectives and in response to developments and demands in our community

To provide specialist training, supervision, consultation and education to individuals, agencies and statutory organisations about the effects of abuse on individuals and the wider community

To provide volunteering opportunities for women and men

To participate in inter-agency work via membership of, and regular input into, local multi-agency community groups, forums and networking activities, including participating in presentations and training on service provision and issues of sexual and interpersonal trauma

To build a strong research and evidence base for our practice

Our Values

PARCS core values include:

Ensuring that the services we provide remain client-centred and responsive

Being caring, compassionate and non-judgemental

Aspiring to high levels of innovation and quality in everything we do

Maintaining the highest levels of integrity and confidentiality

Achieving good results for our clients, staff and stakeholders

Why We Do This Work

“It’s the only place I’m safe at this time” (Survivor).

PARCS was established in 1981 in response to adult survivors of rape who were in need of practical and emotional support and were struggling to cope and recover in a culture of disbelief. Initially we provided practical help by accompanying women to hospital appointments, police interviews and sitting with them on the rare occasion that a case went to court. We provided safe spaces in which women could talk about what had happened to them and begin the long and often complex journey of recovery. We also campaigned at a local and national level challenging attitudes and calling for changes in the law and the criminal justice system.

Since those early days we have witnessed many changes in the law, the criminal justice system, police investigations and the public understanding of sexual abuse. In the 1980s it was commonly believed that rape was committed by strangers in dark alley ways and that children were most at risk from ‘stranger danger’. These stereotypical beliefs (alongside many others) discouraged survivors from coming forward, influenced reporting in the media and affected the verdicts of jurors. Little responsibility was attributed to those who raped

and abused and survivors were often held responsible for the abuse perpetrated against them. Education and awareness raising campaigns have played a big part in challenging myths and changing attitudes.

We have also seen the establishment of services including Sexual Abuse Referral Centres (SARC) such as Treetops based in Portsmouth and covering Hampshire, specialist police units such as Amberstone and the development of the Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) whose role is to support survivors who are thinking of reporting right through to trial. The Government's latest Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016 – 2020 continues to highlight the importance of education and specialist support. However, most people who work in this field recognise that there is still much work to be done.



PARCS was one of the first Rape Crisis Centres to provide services to male survivors (over twenty years ago) and to establish an educational programme in schools (nineteen years ago) alongside a dedicated counselling service for young people. In 2014 we extended this service to include a service for children (aged five to ten years) and their non-abusive carer(s).

PARCS has worked hard to maintain and develop provision in the face of increased demand and restricted resources. We continue to believe that it is important to offer choice through the provision of a range of services designed to meet the unique needs of survivors at different stages of their healing journey.

"The survivor should still be consulted about her wishes and offered as much choice as is compatible with the preservation of safety" (Herman, J., L., (2001) Trauma and Recovery. London: Pandora).

It is increasingly recognised that survivors of sexual abuse benefit from specialist support. In a recent study Professor Marianne Hester from the University of



Bristol argued that specialist services are crucial to all victims/survivors in providing a mixture of counselling (as adult or child), support in court and practical help. She states that it is important that these specialist services provide a changing mixture of targeted support as and when survivors needs change for instance pre and post court. Hester argues these services provide the only 'safe space' where support tends to be consistently positive.



Specialist services use the skills of enabler, holder and mender underpinned by detailed knowledge and understanding of the specific impact of sexual abuse and how sexual abuse affects on individuals and families combined with a range of skills and roles within and across services. (Hester M., and Lilley S.J. (2015) More than Support to Court Bristol: University of Bristol and Northern Rock Foundation).

Our Achievements April 2015 – March 2016

Worked with **349** adult survivors of rape and sexual abuse, including child sexual exploitation and provided **4280** hours of counselling including assessments.

Worked with **96** young people (aged 11 – 18 years) and provided **1378** hours of counselling including assessments.

Worked with **30** children (aged 5 – 10 years) and provided **253** hours of counselling

Worked with **23** parents and provided **167** hours of counselling

The Young Persons' Outreach Project has worked with **3512** young people

Counselling

“Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation” (Herman p 133).

“It has helped me a lot. I have a great bond with my baby and I have started a new life” (Survivor).

Since our establishment we have witnessed not only a significant increase in the number of people requesting specialist counselling but also an increase in complex mental health needs which are often compounded by poverty. When our records began (2000/01) we had 138 referrals compared with 573 in 2015/16. This rise can only partly be explained by an increase in the range of services we provide. It is likely that ongoing campaigning and awareness of the prevalence of sexual abuse and rape and enabled more survivors to come forward and seek help.

“PARCS is an essential and major part of the processes involved that people who have been abused at any level need to go through to help them conquer and become survivors” (Survivor).

When working with survivors of abuse we take into account an individual’s history, personal relationships, community support and economic circumstances. Where necessary, and in agreement with each survivor, we will liaise and signpost to other services. We also ensure that survivors have access to our group support and helplines where appropriate.

Survivors of sexual abuse (particularly those who have recently disclosed are likely to be coping with a variety of symptoms and to begin with may need help in developing techniques to manage the high levels of distress associated with the process of disclosure. This process often involves connecting with thoughts and feelings and emotions that have been shut down for many years. Counselling needs to be appropriately paced and survivor centred in order that an individual is not overwhelmed and re-traumatised.

“Counselling has been really good for me because I have learned strategies to cope with the abuse. I have learned to trust people and talk about things” (Survivor).

We believe that short-term counselling is often inappropriate when working with a survivor who has a history of sexual abuse. This was echoed by the Alex Jay’s Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997 – 2013)

“Both the Director of Public Health and two NHS Rotherham staff thought that local agencies should provide more consistent and longer term counselling” (p 77)

PARCS currently uses the Clinical Outcome for Routine Evaluation (CORE) to measure the effectiveness of its counselling and psychotherapy for adults. We also measure the subjective distress caused by a traumatic event using the Impact of Event Scale (IES).

The self-report measure records levels of intrusion, avoidance and hyper-arousal. We also ask everyone who uses the service to complete an evaluation form when the work comes to an end. Survivors who accessed the service reported a decrease in their subjective levels of distress. The average CORE score at the beginning was 104 (severe level of distress) with an average ending score of 43.5 (mild level of distress).

“I could not have managed to survive emotionally without the service you have provided. It has been a life saver for me. PARCS has been my magic wand. Thank you from the bottom of my soul” (Survivor).

Group Support

“Trauma isolates; the group re-creates a sense of belonging. Trauma shames and stigmatizes; the group bears witness and affirms. Trauma degrades the victim; the group exalts her. Trauma dehumanizes the victim, the group restores her humanity” (Herman, p 214).

PARCS has developed a number of groups this includes a singing and percussion group (open to adult women and men), a weekly drop-in/support group (open to adult women) and a pre-therapy group called ‘Beyond Trauma’ (open to adult women). Our holistic approach recognises that survivors are individuals who have different needs at different stages of their journey. We work with many survivors who because of their history of abuse and relationship betrayal understandably find it difficult to establish and sustain relationships. By developing a range of services individuals are able to engage with us in a number of different ways.



Beyond Trauma Group

“It is good to have an opportunity to connect with other survivors” (Survivor).

The group is facilitated by two experienced members of the PARCS team and is open to women who are on our waiting list. The group offers support and stabilisation to women who have approached the charity for counselling. It also provides opportunities to meet other survivors and tackles the isolation that often comes with abuse. The Beyond Trauma group also supports women in building and develop coping strategies and in preparing for counselling so that they can enter therapy with tools to help them cope and a better idea of what therapy is.

The initial group was evaluated in 2013 by Dr Nina Burrowes (ninaburrowes.com) who is a psychologist and researcher specialising in the psychology of rape and sexual abuse. Dr Burrowes interviewed several of the women who attended the group and reported a number of changes including a greater sense of belonging and a decrease in feelings of isolation, positive changes in self-perception, increased resilience, greater understanding of their behaviour (e.g. why they had not spoken out about the abuse) and increased feelings of safety. The women also reported feeling more prepared for therapy at the end of the group.

“The sessions helped me to gain some tools and techniques to help me get on with my daily life and at hard times. I’ve made some friends. The group provides hope and light at the end of the tunnel” (Survivor).

Mutual Support and Drop In

“Many survivors, especially those who endured prolonged, repeated trauma, recognise that the trauma has limited and distorted their capacity to relate to others” (Herman p 234).

“Before, I never met anyone who admitted they were an abuse victim. Being in a room full of others relieved my suicidal feelings and took away the loneliness” (Survivor).

“I value people’s opinions and views. The truth and worth that comes with it is extremely important to me” (Survivor).

PARCS provides a support and drop in group on a weekly basis at the Centre. It is open to adult women who are survivors of sexual abuse who have accessed (or continue to access) the services provided by PARCS.

We have called it a ‘drop in’ group because women can access the group for as long as they feel is necessary and they do not need to stay for the full three hours each week. It is facilitated by two members of the staff team. They aim to encourage and empower group members to contribute and to say what topics and activities they would like to see included. The group provides a safe space where individuals can build their confidence by supporting each other and getting help from the PARCS team. The group also provides information about health and wellbeing, wider opportunities like education, training and fitness and access to a computer.

The group has been running for a year and the membership is growing. The women have compiled (at their own suggestion) a leaflet for professionals and another for family and friends consisting of suggestions for how to support a survivor of abuse. They have also



created 'The Book of Helpful', a leaflet of their own 'top tips' for coping with, amongst other things, anxiety and panic attacks and the desire to self-harm. The leaflet has been made available to other survivors.

"Sharing feelings has helped me realise my feelings are O.K. I am less easily triggered....Talking about my issues here is much easier-nobody invalidates my feelings. It has helped me with my social anxiety. I am less scared of people. I don't feel like my experience is unique anymore, I thought I was the only person in the world who feels the way I do. Now I know there are others out there with similar experiences and sharing recovery with them is teaching me new coping skills" (Survivor).

We plan to carry out a formal review of the group in Summer (2016) with the aim of continuing the group into the future; funding permitting. Below are the reflections of one of the facilitators after six months of working with the women in the group.

"It has been a moving experience, working with this group and seeing the women gradually gaining confidence and supporting each other. A couple have already moved on and do not feel they need it now - but clearly appreciate the fact that it is just 'there' if they should need it in the future. As well as finding their own voices in the group, there is also something poignant and inspiring about the women's desire to reach out to other survivors, via the materials they are producing, and to have a voice in the world. This is a simple, low-cost, effective intervention model which helps survivors to move on with their lives and to learn new relational skills"(Facilitator).

"By the time she leaves the group, she has learned that the trauma can be surrounded by active engagement with others; she is capable of being fully present in mutual relationships" (Herman p 235).

Telephone Help Line

The Help Line service is the oldest and most established part of the service. It is open three times a week. Alongside ongoing support the helpline also provides information and signposting and can be accessed by professionals, family and supporters.

PARCS also takes a number of calls into the office. The service is currently open six days a week providing information and signposting.

Emotional Telephone Support (ETS)

"The calls have helped me so much to build my confidence. College people and my partner have noticed a vast improvement in me" (Survivor)



The Emotional Telephone Support (ETS) service was originally set up to provide support to survivors who were waiting for individual counselling and/or did not feel able or ready to access face to face counselling.

It is open to adult survivors. Alongside those who (for a number of reasons) are unable to access face to face counselling we have prioritised individuals who have recently disclosed including reporting to the police because we know that this is a particularly stressful time for survivors. Following an initial assessment by a member to the team individuals are offered between 6 – 12 telephone sessions.

Ongoing evaluation of the project using CORE and the IES has shown that those who've used the service valued the continuity of support (they speak to the same volunteer each week) and the specialist knowledge of those providing the service. Clients also reported positive changes in their health and general well-being and decreased feelings of isolation and vulnerability.

“The calls have been very helpful and supported me through a tough time” (Survivor).

“A really good way to get the ball rolling for face to face counselling, building trust means it will be less scary when I come for counselling” (Survivor).

Prevention



“This is the best thing I’ve ever done. I’ll always remember this” (Student).

PARCS launched its prevention programme nearly twenty years ago. The service aimed to challenge some of the myths associated with abuse and to promote our counselling service. Until four years ago (when we secured a grant from The Tudor Trust) the service was limited by funding. At that time we had 0.5 of a post covering the city of Portsmouth. Today we have two workers delivering the programme to young people aged thirteen years and above. We recognise that conversations about sexual abuse are not easy and challenging its root causes is a complex process. This was acknowledged by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham;

“The young people we met in the course of the inquiry were scathing about sex education they received at school...They thought sex education was out of touch and needed to be updated” (Alex Jay 2014: pg 71).

PARCS wanted to develop its existing 'one off' universal and didactic approach to prevention because we believed that this approach has limitations. There is a danger when using a more didactic delivery that the voices of young people are silenced because the facilitator is perceived as the expert. We also wanted to develop a co-production approach to delivery. This approach draws upon the knowledge of everyone involved in a project. PARCS recognises that individuals and community groups will have their own ideas about the causes and consequences of sexual abuse, and we wanted to facilitate a space in which this knowledge could emerge. However, in order to facilitate this co-emergent process where various perspectives can be shared we needed to work with groups over a period of time; a sustained relational approach. This sustained relational approach is in turn supported by a model of change known as the Bystander Approach. (Banyard, V. L. et al (2007) Sexual Violence Prevention through Bystander Education Wiley: Periodicals Inc. Journal of Community Psychology 35: 463-481).

The Bystander Approach – As a Model of Change

In 2010 PARCS asked Dr Nina Burrowes (nina.burrowes.com) to undertake an explorative study into our existing education and prevention programme. As part of her recommendations Dr Burrowes suggested using a Bystander approach as a theoretical model (Banyard et al 2007). The Bystander model has been associated with anti-bullying interventions in both primary and secondary schools.

The Bystander model views the target audience as potential allies in preventing gender based violence and abuse and it challenges 'bystanders' to develop what have been called prosocial behaviours; behaviours that benefit others. We believe this approach is particularly relevant because it supports the notion that everyone can play an active role in ending sexual abuse. It also avoids 'victim blaming' whereby the survivor is held responsible for sexual assault because of the way they behaved or because of who they are. This model also positions boys and men as potential allies rather than alienating or marginalising them as perpetrators. The value of the Bystander approach has been acknowledged in the Government's latest Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (pg 38).

Didactic and Sustained Relational Approach

Alongside offering one off sessions covering issues such as the use of social media, consent and sexting we have continued to develop our targeted work working with groups of young people over a sustained period of time and using the Bystander model of change. In the last year we have been developing our approach to meet the specific needs of young people who have a learning disability. We have also written and delivered a training programme for mentors. This is a new role within PARCS. The mentors will help us to deliver our prevention programme to more young people.

Counselling for Children and Young People

"I can see what PARCS has done for him. This is the only place that helps children with counselling for abuse; thanks to all at PARCS" (Grandmother).

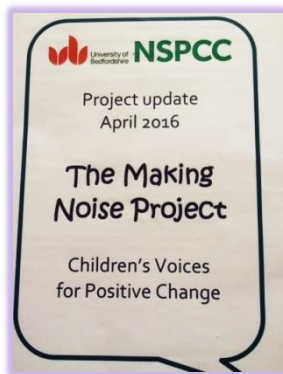
PARCS counselling service for young people began nearly twenty years ago and in 2014 we began to offer a service for children aged 5 – 10 years alongside their non-abusive or safe parent/carer. We established the service in response to demand from parents and professionals. The experience of sexual abuse is associated with a complex range of psychological and behavioural symptoms in both childhood and adulthood including post-traumatic stress, depression, suicide, sexualised behaviour and disrupted education. The impact of child sexual abuse may be heightened when the child's experience of sexual abuse occurs within the context of other victimisation and exposure to early trauma including domestic abuse. (Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Hornby, S., and Ormrod, R., (2011) Polyvictimization: Children's Exposure to Multiple Types of Violence, Crime and Abuse. US Dpt. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention).



Our therapeutic approach is grounded in an understanding of trauma, attachment and resilience and rests upon an understanding of the responses to abuse including betrayal, powerlessness, shame and traumatic sexualisation. We see the relationship between the child/young person as a key element to bringing about change and we use a number of creative approaches in order to support a child/young person in working with, and containing, a range of feelings. We also offer sessions to the safe parent/carer to help them process the impact of discovering that their child has been sexually abused and to support the child in their recovery.

Awareness of the existence and impact of sexual abuse in childhood has grown during the last twenty years and in recent years there has been much publicity surrounding a number of high profile cases of abuse by public figures alongside concern about child sexual exploitation. The Children’s Commissioner for England (2015) has also re-focused attention back to abuse that takes place within a ‘family context’ and perpetrated by a family member, or someone linked to the family.

The Making Noise Project – Children’s Voices for Positive Change



This year PARCS has contributed to The Making Noise Project. The project Making Noise: Children’s Voices for Positive Change after Sexual Abuse is focused on children and young people’s experience of help-seeking support after sexual abuse in the context of the family, or family home. The project is being led by the University of Bedfordshire and the NSPCC and has been commissioned by the Children’s Commissioner. Three young people who have accessed counselling with PARCS have taken part in the project. Taking part helps children and young people’s views be heard by professionals who make decisions about services. The report is yet to be published.

Counselling for Survivors of Domestic Abuse

“I have really felt glad to have had sessions with Natalie and get past the very dark time I went through I am very happy with all that has come out of these sessions and how it has helped me to cope with my situation in an extremely positive way” (Survivor).

There is a growing recognition of the links between domestic abuse and mental ill-health, post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety (Safelives.org.uk). Whilst there are specialist crisis services which largely address external risk factors (e.g. through the provision of safe accommodation there is a lack of specialist trauma focused counselling which focuses on the legacy of psychological and emotional legacy of abuse.

The provision of timely specialist counselling addresses relational trauma supports the development of self-esteem and self-advocacy and enables survivors to re-build and set appropriate and safe relational boundaries. PARCS has been providing a specialist service for over three years and have evidence from an undergraduate research project that the provision of specialist trauma focused counselling can support a victim in her/his recovery from domestic abuse disrupting repeating patterns of victimisation and enabling individuals to rebuild their lives.

Domestic abuse often shatters an individual’s internal sense of safety and trust in others and the counselling provides a safe space in which to re-build trust and support independence. Survivors of domestic abuse are often forced into a ‘compliant’ role in order to survive abuse and individuals can begin the process of re-discovering their personal

power and sense of agency. This in turn, increases self-esteem and reduces the feelings of blame often associated with being a victim of abuse.

The Team

PARCS services are delivered by a team of paid staff who collectively have over sixty years' experience of working with survivors of sexual and domestic abuse. They have worked in a variety of settings including the NHS, Social Care, Education and Local Authorities. All are committed to providing a high quality survivor centred service.

PARCS is fortunate to have up to fifty volunteers supporting the service at any one time. This dedicated team bring a wealth of experience and a commitment to making a difference in their local community. All volunteers have regular supervision and high quality training is available to them throughout the year.

“A very supportive and professional organisation – a good balance between support and trust in your practice; feeling supported gives you confidence to work with clients and freedom to develop your own way of working” (Volunteer).

“Supportive atmosphere, friendly staff, detailed/in-depth training and lots of practical advice and theoretical information” (Volunteer).

In June 2015, one of our volunteer team, Karen Benac was awarded the title of Volunteer of the Year at the Portsmouth Inspiring Volunteer Awards event. The award ceremony coincided with Volunteers' Week and followed on from a community initiative called 'Portsmouth Together'. At that time, Karen, who still volunteers with the charity, had been a helpline volunteer with PARCS for seven years and said that. “volunteering is a wonderful thing to do. It's important to give something back to the community and to bring hope and change to people's lives”.



The PARCS team would not be complete without our dedicated team of Trustees who lead the charity and use their skills and experience to help PARCS meet its aims and objectives.

Community Profile



PARCS remains committed to raising the profile of the charity and the issues faced by survivors at a local and national level. We attend a variety of forums locally and are an active member of The Survivors Trust. The PARCS team also attend a number of community events each year. PARCS recognises the importance of working in partnership with other organisations with the aim of improving services for survivors of abuse irrespective of when the abuse took place.

PARCS is an organisational member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, a full member of the Helpline Association and the Survivors Trust. We abide by The Survivors Trust National Standards.

Thank you

We are extremely appreciative of everyone who has supported the work of PARCS over the past year. It is only with their dedication and commitment that PARCS is able to continue to make a difference to the lives of survivors, their families and the wider community.

Thank you to everyone who has made donations, organised events, sponsored fundraisers and helped repair our building.



Wonderful Windows	Diocese of Portsmouth	Clare
Shaw Swanton	Southsea Sangha	Melanie
Karen and David Moore (ABar Bistro)	Helen	Joyce
Waitrose (Southsea)	Andy	Lizzies Cake Factory
Tesco (Fratton Park)	David	Polly Friedman
Morrisons (Horndean)	Carolyn	Mr Purves
Protyre (Hilsea)	Claire	Danielle
Louise	Kate	Mike
Sarah	Dr Nina Burrowes	

Thank you to everyone who has provided professional support and expertise.

Patrick Stratford (Accountant)	The Really Helpful IT Company Phil Burner (Photography)	Paloma (Data Base) Martin A Horton (MAH Associates)
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Thank you to our clinical supervisors.

Mary Burner	Stella Ridley	Sandy Wilks
Diane Mackay	Liz Strain	Helen Molden
Maggie March	Linda Ellis	Anna Lane
Dr. Marie-Anne Chidiac		

Thank you to all of our grant makers and partners for their ongoing support.



And finally an enormous thank you to all of our amazing volunteers who have given their time, energy and skill to volunteer and support the work of PARCS and collectively transform the lives of survivors of abuse and their families.