



Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service

Dear Colleague

I have the pleasure of writing to provide you with information about our newly opened Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS), The Willows.

Improving healthcare services for victims of sexual offences is a priority for NHS Ayrshire and Arran. We want to make sure that timely healthcare support, including a forensic medical examination (FME), is available to victims of rape and sexual assault, which is person centred and trauma informed.

With the opening of the Willows, healthcare and Forensic Medical Examinations can now be offered locally to Ayrshire residents, as part of the West of Scotland service model. Supporting individuals in this way is a multi-agency response and we look forward to working closely and collaboratively with Police Scotland colleagues, colleagues from the West of Scotland Centre of Expertise (Archway) and third sector partners.

In the first instance this new local facility will be available for individuals who have reported the incident to the Police and referrals will therefore be via Police Scotland (101).

As you may be aware, planning for a national self-referral service model is currently underway as part of the work of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Taskforce for the Improvement of healthcare and forensic medical services for adults, children and young people who have experienced rape or sexual assault in Scotland. Self-referral will provide easy access to FME and healthcare for individuals who are either undecided or are not ready to formally report a sexual offence to the Police. We look forward to providing a self-referral service locally within the Willows as part of the national service model and will write to you again with further information once this is in place. In the meantime, Ayrshire residents who wish to undergo an FME but do not wish to involve the police at the time of disclosure, will continue to access self-referral services via the Archway centre of excellence in Glasgow.

Person-centred and Trauma Informed Care

Person-centred care involves people and services working collaboratively and in genuine partnership. Care provision that focuses on personal goals, preferences and needs, results in more effective care with better outcomes and a better experience for people who use services.

Research confirms that a victim-centred and trauma-informed response to sexual crime can reduce further trauma and have a positive effect on the long-term recovery of an individual, continued engagement in any criminal justice process, and better quality evidence to support any criminal proceedings.

Research has also highlighted the following as good practice:

- Availability of a female examiner
- Privacy
- A non-institutional setting (for example comfortable and welcoming)
- Respect and sensitivity
- Talking through the process, and
- The person having some control over the process.

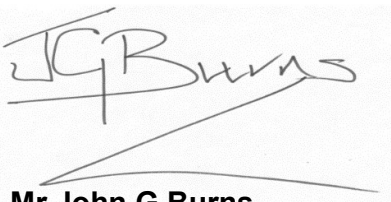
A leaflet has been produced to set out what people can expect during and following a forensic medical examination. It has been drafted from a person-centred, trauma-informed perspective and makes it clear to the individual that they are in control of the process. An easy read summary of the leaflet has also been developed in partnership with People First. These resources are available [online here](#)

Furthermore, the enclosed '7 Day Window Considerations' document has been developed as a guide for healthcare professionals who are supporting an individual who has disclosed a rape or sexual assault, and we hope that you find this to be helpful. This includes good practice guidance for all cases, as well as specific information about the options available for access to healthcare and FME, depending on whether or not the disclosure is within the 7 day timeframe and whether or not the adult chooses to initiate a police report.

Given the messages around positive recovery where timely access to healthcare, advocacy and support services have been made available, I would ask that you consider including individuals who have experienced rape or sexual assault as a priority group for your service. The sensitivity of this information may mean that it is not known at the point of referral but where it has been disclosed (either with the adult's consent or through self-disclosure) an expedited route into services may make the difference needed for a positive recovery.

If you would like to know more about The Willows or discuss this letter further please do not hesitate to make contact with Ann McArthur, ASP Lead (Interim) on ann.mcarthur@aapct.scot.nhs.uk, 07717226081, or Laura Parker, Business Manager on laura.parker@aapct.scot.nhs.uk, 07815633741.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J G Burns', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Mr John G Burns
Chief Executive

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