

Responding to Young People's Experiences of Sexual Violence

Guidance for Staff



Table of Contents

1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction	Page 3
About This Guidance	Page 3
What is Sexual Violence?	Page 3
What is Consent?	Page 4

2

RESEARCH/LITERATURE

Extent of the Issue	Page 5
Impacts on Education, Health and Wellbeing	Page 6
Myths Around Sexual Violence	Page 6

3

IN PRACTICE

Best Practice Responses to Sexual Violence	Page 9
Supporting Young People with Experience of Sexual Violence	Page 9
Disclosure	Page 9
Retraction	Page 10
Confidentiality and Information Sharing	Page 10
Practical Actions and Support	Page 11
Working with Young Perpetrators	Page 13
Wider Organisational Culture and Prevention	Page 14

4

RESOURCES & APPENDIX

	Page 16
--	---------

Introduction

This guidance is to support staff working with young people who have been affected by sexual violence. We understand that this can be an emotive area of work and it can sometimes be difficult to know what to do to support young people who have experienced this or who have been identified as potential perpetrators. Young people tell us that we can improve our response to them, and this guide has been written to reflect their comments and experience.

About this Guidance

This guidance is aimed primarily at staff working in education, but many of the issues apply to staff and volunteers in other settings, for example within youth work or third sector specialist services for young people. This Guidance does not replace Child Protection Procedures, MARAC or MAPPA processes, but is intended to be used by staff to safely support students within school and other environments. It is designed to support staff with the challenges where both the reported perpetrator(s) of sexual violence and the survivor* are in the same school, youth group or organisation.

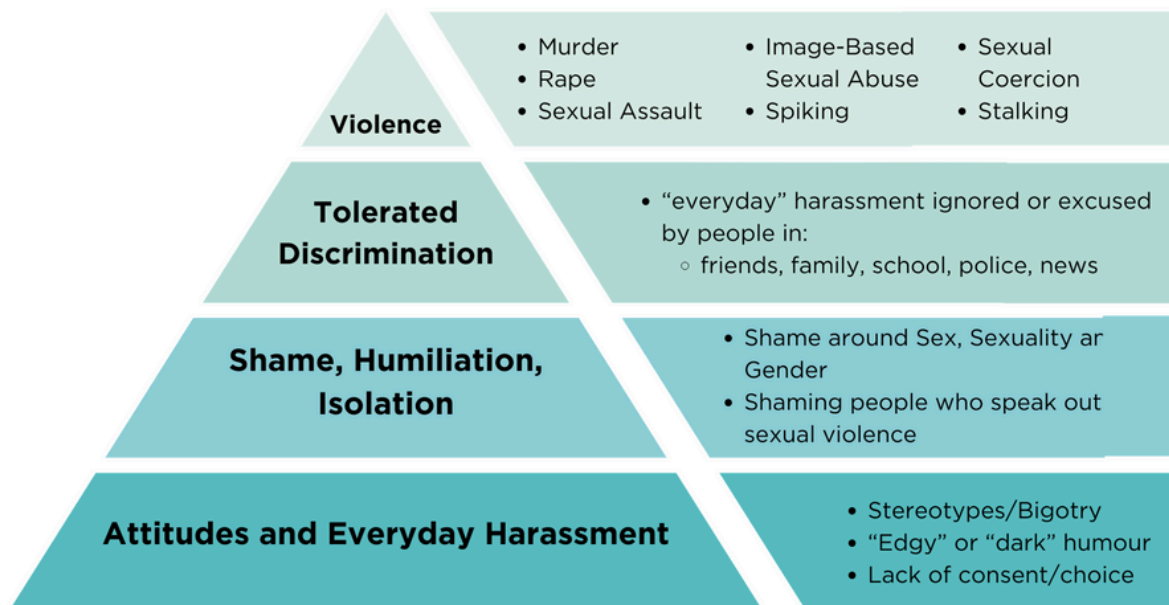
This guidance applies regardless of where the incident has taken place (within school, at a youth group or in the wider community), acknowledging the impact that will be experienced within the school / youth environment.

* Rape Crisis chooses not to use the word “victim” to acknowledge that the people we support can recover from their experiences

What is Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence is what happens when someone does not consent to a sexual act. It can involve a range of behaviours, including rape, groping, and indecent exposure, focused and unwanted sexual attention, harassment in the form of comments or jokes, displaying pictures or videos of a sexual nature, online sexual harassment such as comments on social media, threats, coercion, and can include child sexual exploitation. Sexual violence is part of a continuum of gendered violence.

Minimising the seriousness of incidents, dismissing reports of sexual harassment, and making excuses for behaviours (e.g., ‘boys will be boys’) are all common examples of how sexual violence is condoned and enabled. This creates conditions for serious sexual violence to occur, makes it more difficult to challenge sexual violence, and increases barriers for those affected to come forward and seek support.



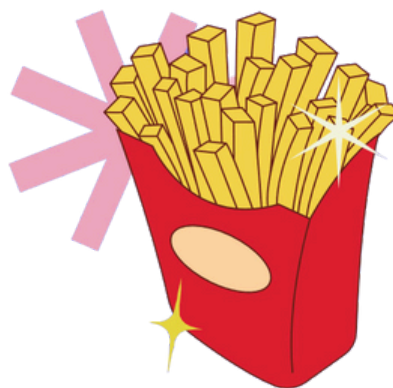
For more information and resources about sexual violence, please visit our website www.starcentreayrshire.org

What is Consent?

In Scot’s law, consent is defined as ‘free agreement’. This agreement must be free of factors such as violence, threats of violence, pressure, coercion, or manipulation. It cannot be given if the person is incapacitated due to a substance (i.e., alcohol or drugs); or if the person is unconscious or asleep. Key points to remember about consent -

Consent must be

Freely Given
Reversible
Informed
Enthusiastic
Specific



Consent (or the lack of) can be communicated verbally and non-verbally, through facial expressions and body language. Consent should be negotiated by both parties, checking in to see how the other person is feeling, especially if consent is not clear. It is okay for someone to change their mind about sexual activity at any point.

Teaching young people about consent should be a core element of a school's Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenting (RSHP) curriculum. The **STAR** Centre can deliver workshops to young people as part of the National Sexual Violence Prevention Programme. This project is coordinated by Rape Crisis Scotland and is an evidence-based programme, complementing the work already done by schools by providing workshops on the following topics:

- Power
- Consent
- Pornography
- Understanding Sexual Violence
- Accessing Support
- Social Media and Online Sexual Violence

Research/Literature

Extent of the Issue

Staff and volunteers working with young people will come into contact with survivors of sexual abuse and sexual violence whether they know it or not.

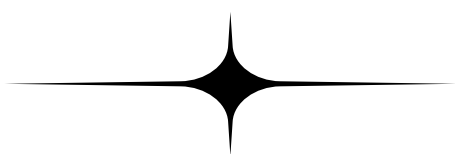
- In 2022-23 2,501 incidents of rape & attempted rape, and 5,159 incidents of sexual assault were reported to police in Scotland.
- At least 37% of the 14,484 Sexual crimes recorded in 2023-24 by the police were perpetrated against someone under the age of 18.
- 90% of reported rapes, attempted rapes and sexual assaults in 2023-24 were perpetrated against women and girls. [1]
- 70% of young people in Scottish Secondary Schools report experiencing sexual harassment.
- In over 70% of cases, pupils don't report sexual harassment, even if it is severe and includes unwanted sexual touching
- Around 4 in 5 young women agree that girls are coerced into sex acts because they are frightened their boyfriend will leave if they don't comply (85%), or that they will be bullied for being 'frigid' (79%). [2]

[1] Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs, Chief Statistician, and Director of Safer Communities (2023) 'Recorded Crime in Scotland: year ending September 2023'. Scottish Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-year-ending-september-2023/documents/>.

[2] Zero Tolerance Scotland (2023) 'Gender inequality and violence against women and girls in Scottish schools'. Zero Tolerance Scotland. Available at: <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/VAWG-in-schools---evidence-Nov-23.pdf>.

Sexual violence is widespread and significantly under reported. It can have a devastating impact on someone's life. Whilst anyone can be affected, and this guidance applies to all young people, not everyone is equally at risk. Sexual violence is disproportionately experienced by women and girls and overwhelmingly perpetrated by men. Women and girls are at increased risk of rape and other forms of sexual violence from family members, boyfriends, peers and acquaintances. Most often, people experience sexual assault from someone known to them.

Being young is not a protective factor, in fact, for women, it is a significant risk factor. Young people with learning and physical disabilities are also at increased risk of sexual violence. Another risk factor can include being (or suspected of being) part of the LGBTQIA+ community.



Impact on Education, Health, and Wellbeing

Experience of sexual violence and harassment can lead to a range of issues. In the short term, young people may be recovering from physical injuries, dealing with feelings of anger and shock at what has happened to them and want to spend time alone, missing school and social opportunities.

Longer term, the impact on mental and sexual health can be significant, including use of alcohol/drugs, self-harm, development of phobias, nightmares, flashbacks, pregnancy, STIs, sexual risk-taking behaviour, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and inability to have or enjoy sex. Young people's behaviour can also deteriorate over time, and this can result in them being suspended or excluded from school thus resulting in them losing their education.

Staff and volunteers can reduce the potential long-term impacts by believing young people when they disclose, ensuring they adopt a non-judgemental approach and by providing appropriate support.

Peer groups can respond in unexpected ways to survivors of sexual violence. Young people may feel that they are not understood or believed by their friends which can increase feelings of isolation.

A good way to support a young person might be to support their friends to understand the causes and consequences of sexual violence and enable them to also support the survivor

Myths and Facts About Sexual Violence

The majority of sexual violence is perpetrated by strangers

The majority of sexual violence that takes place is perpetrated by someone who is known to the young person: in particular by intimate partners (boy/girlfriends) or by close family members.

Sexual Violence isn't common

Sexual violence is much more common than most people think it is: according to the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 1/10 women and 2% of men in Scotland will experience rape. The majority of these take place when the survivor is under the age of 16: this means that there will be young people in your school who have experienced sexual violence.

Sexual violence is only perpetrated by adults

Many of young people experience sexual violence from their peers. This will create specific issues for schools to manage, some of which are covered in this guidance. If schools require further advice on how to safely manage this, they should contact the The STAR Centre to discuss it.

It's not possible to experience sexual violence from your partner

Most sexual violence is perpetrated by partners. Being in a relationship does not mean that you consent to any and all sexual acts within that relationship. A young person has the right to change their mind at any point that they no longer wish to engage in sexual activities and continuing without this consent is sexual violence, as is confirmed by the definition of consent in the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009.

If you were really assaulted, you would fight back or run away

The body automatically responds to a significant threat in one of five ways: to fight, flight, freeze, flop or friend. The majority of survivors of sexual violence will freeze as a response: this is a totally normal biological response and part of the body's mechanism to stay safe. It is extremely damaging to communicate to a young person that they should have fought back or run away as this encourages the young person to blame themselves for what happened to them.

People who have experienced sexual violence remember everything that happened to them

When someone experiences a traumatic event, the brain puts in place various protective responses which often means that a survivor's memory of what happens is fragmented. A young person may remember few details of what has happened to them. This is a completely normal response to trauma and does not mean that they are not telling the truth.

It is easy for young people to speak out about what happened to them.

There are many reasons why survivors of sexual violence may not tell other people about it. The young person may not understand that what they have experienced was not okay. They may fear being disbelieved, they may have been threatened or they may fear repercussion from making a disclosure about a friend or family member. It can be a long process for someone to acknowledge that they have experienced sexual violence and can take even longer to tell someone else about it. If someone is brave enough to tell you that they have experienced sexual violence, you should be clear that you believe and support them and won't put any pressure on them to do anything they don't want to do.

There is a “right” or “normal” way to respond to an experience of sexual violence

Young people may present in very different ways after experiencing sexual violence and all of these responses are valid: some young people may be very distressed, whereas others might seem very detached. Some young people will disclose very quickly: the majority will find this very difficult to do. In the school setting, a young person who has experienced sexual violence may start missing more school, may show a deterioration in their behaviour and may not appear their normal selves.

Sexual violence always involves physical force

There are many situations where a young person might experience sexual violence that does not involve physical violence. The perpetrator may use manipulation, threats, or coercion; the survivor may be heavily under the influence of alcohol or asleep; or they may immediately go into the 'freeze' response

Young people create false allegations for attention or special treatment

The evidence shows that false allegations of rape are no more common than false allegations of any other crime. Cases may not proceed to court because of high evidentiary requirements, but this does not mean that the survivor was lying. Talking about rape and sexual violence can be really scary and it takes a lot of courage to do it. Therefore, as a trusted adult, it is very important to believe a young person when they are disclosing abuse to you.

“Irresponsible” life choices cause sexual violence.

Survivors of sexual violence are never to blame for the abuse they have experienced. The choice to commit a sexually violent act is made by perpetrators. No matter what a person does it does not justify or excuse sexual violence. No one asks to be raped or sexually abused.

In Practice

Supporting Young People That Have Experienced Sexual Violence

Staff should already be confident in dealing with sensitive and potential child protection issues. Staff should follow existing child protection procedures in their organisation. Advice can be sought from Police Scotland, Social Work (Children and Families Team), and The **STAR** Centre.

Disclosure

Young people should never be pressured to disclose what has happened to them. An individual should not have to tell you the detail of what has happened – **conversation should be focused around the impact of the experience and what support the person needs now.** Consideration should be given to where this conversation takes place, who is present and what advice might be needed from a specialist service, such as The **STAR** Centre.

Ask

- Are they/anyone else involved **safe**?
- Are they/anyone else involved **hurt**?
- What do they **need** at this moment? (e.g., water, fresh air, space, information)

It is not your role to investigate what has happened and determine whether or not the person is telling the 'truth'. As a trusted adult, your role is to deal with the impact and provide support to the young person, regardless of any conclusion of child protection or criminal proceedings.

Be mindful that these processes can take some time and consider how the young person is supported by statutory and third sector agencies whilst any investigative processes are ongoing. How you discuss the outcomes of these (criminal or otherwise) is very important – ensure that you still believe the young person and communicate this to them.

Avoid asking a lot of “why” questions (e.g., why didn't you do X, why did you do Y) as they can come across as blaming or shaming.

Recognise that some things can be difficult to talk about. A strategy to support young people and enable disclosure might be to ask “Has something happened to you?”. Remain curious and understand that for some young people it might be easier to write it down for you to read, rather than having to say it out loud. Writing can give a little distance which is helpful for disclosure

Retraction

Occasionally, a young person who has disclosed sexual violence or abuse may retract their disclosure. They might say that they can't remember what happened or that they made it up. This can be a normal response to a traumatic experience because of the pressure that comes with disclosing. For example, having to repeat their story a number of times, feeling disbelieved, reactions from family and friends and lack of support can lead to a young person feeling overwhelmed and retracting what they have said.

Try Saying:

"We are here to support you, regardless of the outcome of any investigation. Your safety is always what matters the most".

Young people can often also feel out of control of the situation once any investigation starts. Whilst any retraction should be acknowledged, the chances of it happening are minimised if individuals are supported appropriately and sensitively. If someone changes their mind about what happened, staff should still take actions to reduce risk and take measures to increase the safety of the individual – always provide as many opportunities for individuals to come back and speak to you. Always follow existing child protection procedures in your organisation

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

If a young person trusts you enough to share this very personal information it is your responsibility to believe them, respect their confidentiality and to share information appropriately, safely and with their knowledge - unless it is likely to increase risk of further harm. Child Protection procedures should always be followed. Consider who in the school needs to know the information and if you must inform any other professional.

Also, informing parents should only happen in cases where the young person expressly wishes this to happen or in cases where Child Protection measures are to be taken. Education staff should seek advice from the Quality Improvement Officer (Child Protection).

Try Saying:

"Sometimes we do have to share information, for example, if you or someone else is at risk of harm, but I will tell you what I have to share, why I need to share it and who I will share it with"

Please see Appendix 1: Resources for further information. If information has been received by staff e.g., from another young person or from another agency, that a young person has been affected by sexual violence the Child Protection Coordinator should be notified. It may be appropriate for the Child Protection Coordinator to sensitively question someone about their experiences in order to put supports in place.

Appendix 2 could also be given to a young person to explain why information is being passed on and for them to refer to later.

Practical Actions and Support

There are a number of adjustments that schools and other organisations can make to support a young person who has experienced sexual violence. The list below is not exhaustive, and it is best to discuss what might be the best approach with the young person themselves.

The young person should never feel punished or disadvantaged. Therefore the presumption

should always be to change the perpetrator's mode of transport, registration class, etc, unless the survivor requests this for themselves. When the perpetrator(s) is also part of the same school or group, specific consideration may need to be given to:

The guiding principle should always be that it is the survivor's decision on how they would like to deal with the situation and how to make their school days comfortable.

- How individuals get to school/group – is there the potential for further harassment, repeat victimisation, etc.
- Altering times into and times from school so that there does not have to be contact between the parties.
- Supporting a young person to move registration class (if requested) or making arrangements to ensure separation in shared classes.
- Moving the alleged perpetrator to a different registration class or teaching group in particular subjects.
- Be mindful of contact during physical education activities; for example, during Scottish Country Dancing, progressive dances can mean contact with the perpetrator so allow the student to not participate or to only participate in certain dances, team sports or swimming.
- Consider the use of single toilets if available.

A roadmap for responding to a disclosure of sexual violence is in **Appendix 4**

Other supports could be:

- Ask the person what they need to feel safe and what support they want.
- Go at the young person's pace
- Assist the young person to put their own plans in place to manage contact with the perpetrator.
- Be flexible to ensure that someone can get access to specialist support – e.g., leaving classes early, allowing support services to come to school/ youth group.
- Alternative measures of schooling may need to be sought for a period of time, or a reduction in physical time at school.
- Be aware and supportive if there is a decline in educational attainment, recognise that lack of concentration on schoolwork is a common result and may last for some time
- Provide advanced warning of coverage of issues of sexual violence in class (e.g., in PSE), and give the option of not attending, whilst ensuring that alternative arrangements are made so that young people do not lose out on learning more about the issues.
- Consider single sex groups when delivering inputs on relationships, consent and sexual violence, particularly if there are survivors who have disclosed in the group.
- Consider how and when the young people will be changing for sport and put provisions in place.

Discussing Sexual Violence

When teaching in group settings where sexual violence is or could be discussed (see Impact on Education & Wellbeing Section), it is important that staff have clear ground rules. For example, staff should give a time and a place when they are free to listen to any issues that the session has raised for young people. Staff should also acknowledge that there might be individuals in the room affected by sexual violence and that those in the group should try to keep themselves safe. This means reassuring participants that no one is expected to disclose and, if someone needs time out, they should have clear guidance on where they can go. Information on support agencies should also be given. Reassure the group that sexual violence is never the fault of the survivor and, if possible, have another person available in the room who can offer immediate support if anyone becomes distressed.

Schools should also consider the composition of their Pupil Support Team and ensure that there are staff of different genders available for people to talk to. Research is clear that survivors of sexual violence prefer to seek support from women.

Working with Young People Identified as Potential Perpetrators

This part of the guidance outlines good practice in responding to young people who have been identified as potential perpetrators of sexual violence. Only the police and social work have the power to investigate reports of sexual assault, although other staff may have information that is relevant. Staff have a role to play in reducing potential risks posed by the individual(s). When considering what risks may be posed by an individual, the following factors should be taken into account:

- Is there a pattern of sexually violent and/or inappropriate conduct?
- Is this an escalation of behaviour?
- What attitudes have been observed about how this person thinks about sex, relationships, women/girls, other vulnerable or marginalised groups?
- What was the nature of the incident?
- What contact does the individual have with other people that may be vulnerable?
- What is the young person's status in the school?
 - Are they well liked/disliked? This can impact on how other young people respond.
- Where did it happen?
 - If it was in school, on school transport, after youth group, at a party, this may have an impact on active measures that the school may have to take to reduce risk

This should help inform a risk management plan where any current or future risks are reduced and should be developed even if any investigation concludes there is no evidence that the incident took place or if the individual maintains their innocence. It is the duty of staff to ensure the wellbeing of other young people they work with whilst providing positive support to any potential perpetrators of sexual violence.

Problematic sexual behaviour can be an indicator that someone has experienced sexual abuse themselves. However, the majority of sexual violence perpetrators have not been victims - any previous experience of victimisation does not cause perpetration of sexual violence. Options for support for perpetrators can be explored in discussion with Social Work Services.

Wider Organisational Culture and Prevention

Sexual violence exists today because of continuing gender inequality between women and men and society's acceptance of this. Prevention starts with adopting an approach to improve equality and tackling gender stereotypes. Schools and youth organisations have access to a range of materials to support this – included in the resources section here. It is best to tackle these issues directly and in advance of an issue being reported by a young person. Young people should be recognised and valued as experts – professionals have much to learn about the extent of sexual violence and how it impacts young people. Young people themselves will have creative suggestions for how we can improve our responses and we should value them as contributors and partners in continuing to address issues that affect their lives

All organisations have a responsibility to tackle what might be perceived as 'low-level' sexual harassment. Clear messages should be given about the unacceptability of behaviours such as wolf whistling, using sexualised or sexist language, calling people 'gay', bra-pinging, etc. This would include staff, without fail, calling out young people every time these behaviours are identified and modelling appropriate interactions amongst themselves.

Comments such as 'boys will be boys' and 'it's just banter' normalises behaviours which are very damaging and does young people a disservice. Actions to address behaviours at the lower end of the spectrum will make a solid foundation for not tolerating gender-based violence in any of its forms. Staff remaining silent or turning a blind eye to certain 'lesser' seeming behaviours directly enables gender-based violence to thrive and flourish

Staff working with young people in schools have reported being concerned about the high number of students who believe that there are high proportions of false allegations made about rape. Information about the level of sexual violence in society and the reasons why someone may wish to retract a report should be explored with young people. Myths about rape and sexual abuse should be explored with young people.

Organisations such as the The **STAR** Centre and Women's Aid are involved in delivering prevention education directly to young people in schools. It is widely recognised that whilst key messages around the unacceptability of sexual violence and discussions around the issues can (and should) be led by staff, including teachers, young people also value the additional input of specialist organisations on this topic. This is because they feel more able to discuss the issues openly and they recognise the organisations as highly skilled and knowledgeable.

Pupil Support staff in schools, and others with a responsibility for young people's health and wellbeing, should be knowledgeable about sex, relationships, and sexual violence. This includes being appropriately trained in issues, including gender equality, sexual orientation, gender-based violence, rape culture and how these issues specifically impact on children and young people. More generic skills in being confident and able to respond positively to young people, dependent on their needs, will also help in implementing this guidance and supporting young people with a range of issues. If you are interested in receiving further training on this topic, please contact the **STAR** Centre Prevention Team: prevention@starcentreyrshire.org

Best practice would be to work with young people to enable them to lead on developing guidance and policies on issues around their safety and wellbeing, including relating to sexual harassment, sexual violence and bullying. An example of where young people have led on this work includes this guidance and the Positive Relationships and Bullying Prevention Policy & Guidance developed with the Misty Isle Youth Forum.

Appendix 1: Resources

Prevention and Education	
<i>All of the below organisations and projects offer preventative education and resources for those working with young people to fight sexual and/or gender-based violence.</i>	
The STAR Centre Prevention Programme	https://www.starcentreyrshire.org/prevention-education-npp/
Zero Tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under Pressure – Preventing Teen Abuse & Exploitation • Just like a child – Early Years approaches to promote gender equality • Respect – Primary – Lesson Plans & Activities for children • Respect – Secondary – Lesson Plans & Activities for young people • Respect – Youth Groups – Youth Group Activities for young people https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/
Scottish Women’s Aid	https://loverespect.co.uk/
Mentors in Violence Prevention	https://education.gov.scot/improvement/practice-exemplars/Mentors%20for%20Violence%20Prevention%20(MVP)%20-%20An%20overview
Improving Gender Balance and Equalities (Education Scotland)	https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/improving-gender-balance-3-18
Equally Safe At School	https://www.starcentreyrshire.org/prevention-education-esas/

Further Information and Guidance	
East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee	https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/SocialCareAndHealth/Protecting-people/Child-protection/Child-Protection-Committee/ChildProtectionCommittee.aspx
North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee	https://childprotectionnorthayrshire.info/cpc/
South Ayrshire Child Protection Committee	https://hscp.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/article/35879/South-Ayrshire-Child-Protection-Committee
National Guidance for Underage Sexual Activity	https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2010/12/national-guidance-under-age-sexual-activity-meeting-needs-children-young/documents/0108880-pdf/0108880-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/0108880.pdf
MARAC Risk Assessment for Young People For identifying risk in young people's abusive relationship	http://www.safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/YP%20RIC%20no%20guidance%20FINAL%20%281%29.pdf
Scottish Government key messages for young people	https://www.gov.scot/publications/key-messages-young-people-healthy-relationships-consent-resource-professionals-working-young-people/
Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenting	https://rshp.scot/

Appendix 2: Sharing Information

Question: Why might we share what you tell us?

Answer: Because making sure you are safe is our top priority.

We provide a confidential service to you so you can talk openly about your personal business. But we also have a responsibility to be sure you are safe. This means that we might have to share some information if we are worried that you or someone else isn't safe.

Today you told us something that has caused us to be concerned and we have written it down. We've also talked with you about what we need to do with the information now.

Sometimes staff can't do their best to help young people without getting help and advice from other people. So they will share just enough information with people like pupil support teachers, social workers, school nurses or other helpful organisations e.g., The STAR Centre or the Police, to get you the best help possible.

Remember - we only start asking others for advice and sharing your information, so that we can help you or anyone else that we think is not safe.

We will always try to talk with you first about what's happening with your information and make decisions with you to plan the next steps. If you tell us not to share your information or in other words 'don't give your consent' we still might have to tell other people

If you have any questions or worries about what we have talked about today or any information in this leaflet, please contact:

Our Follow up appointment is on:

Date:

Time:

With:

Where:

Appendix 3: STAR Centre Referral Form



Name Address/Area Safe email address:	Age/DOB
Telephone Number: Safe to call anytime? Identify Ourselves? Leave Voicemail? Text?	
Police involvement?	
Any other relevant info?	
Referred By (Your Name): Organisation: Contact Number Date	
Preference for Support (e.g., telephone, face to face, video) Any Mobility/Accessibility Issues?	

Referrals can also be made directly to our website:
<https://www.starcentreayrshire.org/referral-agency/>

Appendix 4

Responding to a Disclosure of Sexual Violence A Roadmap



- Are they/anyone else involved **safe**?
- Are they/anyone else **hurt**?
- What do they **need** at this moment? (e.g. water, fresh air, space, info)

STEP 1: ASK

STEP 3: RESPOND

Support the person to share only what they are **comfortable** with. You do not need all of the details at this time. Avoid “why” questions as they often come across as blaming or shaming.

- **Do they want to report?**
 - Call 101 and request Police attend. Police will arrange a Forensic Medical Examination where appropriate.
- **Are they Unsure? Do they want to wait and think?**
 - They can attend as a self-referral by calling 0800 148 88 88 and exams can be done up to 7 days after the assault.
- **What if they don't want to?**
 - Nobody* has to report an incident of sexual violence if they don't want to
 - Support them as they explore their options regarding any **physical/sexual health concerns**.

STEP 5: EXPLORE OPTIONS

Nobody* has to report an incident of sexual violence if they don't want to

- Support them as they explore their options regarding any **physical/sexual health concerns**.

STEP 2: VALIDATE

Accept the disclosure and acknowledge the seriousness of what has been shared and that it can be difficult to share a disclosure. **It is important that from the word go you affirm that you believe the person coming forward, and that you will do what you can to help.**

STOP

STEP 4: TAKE A MOMENT

Take time to answer any questions the person may have. This can be a good opportunity to discuss any **confidentiality**/duty of care limits that might be relevant.

STEP 6: REFER

Refer the person on to appropriate services. These might be:

- **The STAR Centre** | 01563 544686
- Local Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (**SARCS**) | 0141 211 8175

**if the person is under the age of 16 you will be required to follow your organisation's child safeguarding and reporting procedures*