

RAPE AND SEXUAL ABUSE (RASA) CENTRE LIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT YEAR TO 31-03-2020

CARING FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE SINCE 1986



FINANCE AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER REPORT 2019-20



Here we are in the middle of 2020 trying hard to write a report about 2019-20 – a year that seems so long ago and far away that it is difficult to remember how life was before Covid-19 hit.

But hit it did – towards the end of this year and despite all it threw at us and the challenges it faced we were ready.

It does feel somewhat that RASA has already prepared for all possible disasters and we were able, in March 2020 to move swiftly and smoothly into a remote service delivery that ensured we remained in full contact with our clients.

We were only able to do this thanks to the marvels of technology and our dedicated use of the cloud-based data performance management system we know affectionately as DPMS.

In former times, going back as far as I do to 2004, clients were logged and recorded in a worn red folder and a large pile of paper in an individual file for each client.

When you moved a client to a different service, or when a client's status changed, you rubbed out the pencil mark you had made in the folder and made a new one. And that was that. Your client file could reach the size that required a small wheelbarrow as everything was recorded on paper and monitoring was a nightmare that still gives many of us sleepless nights.

It involved, at each quarter end, a meticulous count of every client's contacts, telephone calls, appointments etc and HUGE spreadsheets that went on forever and were carried round on locked portable drives to allow access in each base or centre. It was a true nightmare, and we would never have been able to manage a remote service. It involved counsellors trekking in and out of the house in Birkenhead, to log changes, note movements and make notes in ever growing files.

So – while we were a little reluctant at first, to invest in this new, all seeing, all doing system of working online and in a "cloud", RASA commenced the use of DPMS in 2013 and our first client was logged on 15-11-2013.

Since then – to 31-03-2020, RASA has logged 10,418 entries – now that would have been a lot of papers and files.

Each counsellor has her own individual log on to this system, controlled centrally for strict client management and security, and she accesses her clients from any secure location in this way.

So, we were already onto a winner when we were all told to go home and stay home.

True – we had to swiftly invest in several laptops, mobile phones, and enhanced internet services – and yes we all had to suddenly become experts in Zoom, Teams, Skype, and WhatsApp, but we could do this. Towards the end of March, when we could see what was about to happen, each counsellor contacted her individual clients and advised them of the need to move to a remote access service. Clients were offered a choice of waiting until life returned to normal – which we all believed would be a few weeks or continuing with counselling and support by phone or through one of the media mentioned before.

Offices and centres were mothballed and visited only for weekly safety checks. They became silent spaces, screaming out for the people they were missing. Something very strange was going on.



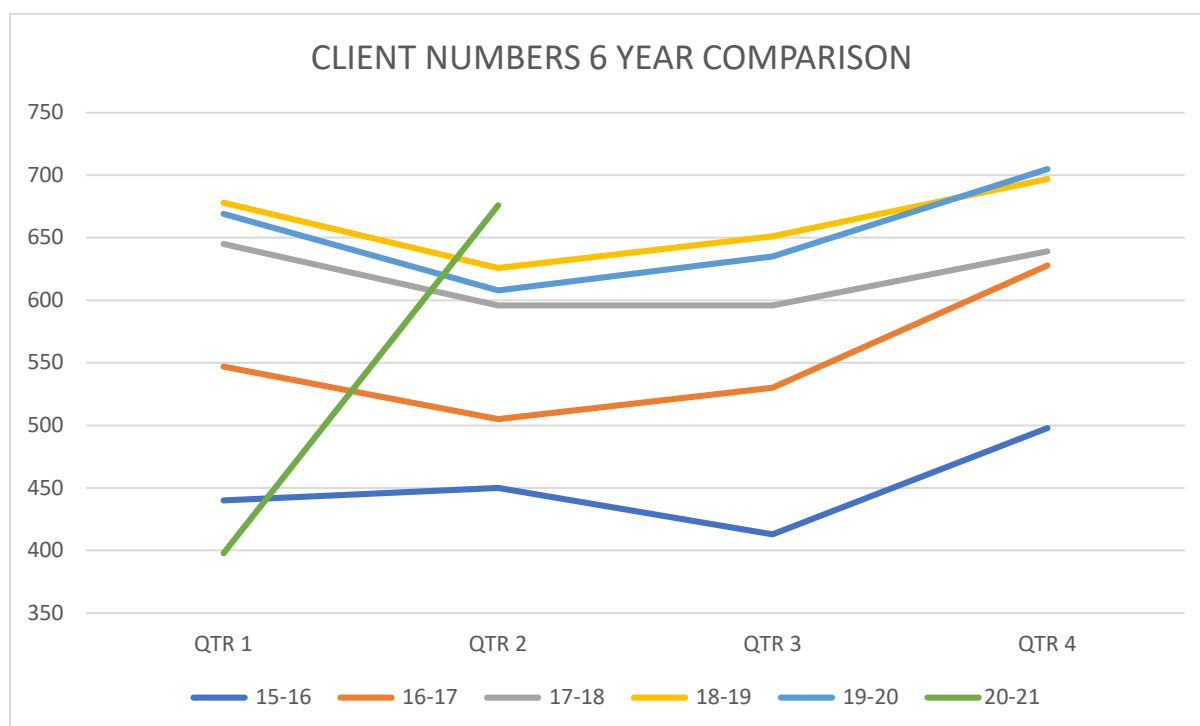
In this time of extreme crisis, several funders and grant givers stepped up quickly to help us deliver this new way of working and we will forever be grateful to Steve Morgan Foundation and the CAF Bank Foundation who stepped in immediately and gave us the funds we needed to make a smooth transition.

Against this drama, the rest of the year almost disappears in the mist of time, but we must hope that we can one day return to the freedoms we had in the previous months.

In the year to 31-03-2020, RASA welcomed 2177 new cases into service (2270 in previous year) The decrease in numbers can be easily attributed to the nervousness felt as Covid-19 struck.

The chart that follows indicates all referrals for the previous six years. Remarkably, referrals follow a clear pattern month on month, a pattern that is repeated annually with a drop in referrals in December and a subsequent increase in January. This post-holiday increase would usually continue throughout February and March but in this year it can clearly be seen that there was a drop in February 2020 to a similar referral number to the previous year and in March a drop to a level not seen for 4 years.

As we start our new year at RASA, we are in discussions with our major funders, the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Ministry of Justice. We have no idea of what is to come, but we do know that as a team, we are ready to face whatever it might be and to ensure we are able to continue to provide the level of service our clients need and deserve. It is simply what we do.



CLINICAL LEAD & ISVA SERVICE MANAGER

ISVA Service

In May 2019 we welcomed a promotion within the Team, our new ISVA lead, Sarah Tipton to continue to ensure effective management and delivery of the ISVA service.

The ISVA team continue to manage large caseloads but the clients contact remains at the heart of the work we provide. These have been challenging times for the ISVA team feeling the impact extended periods of up to 2 years for trial dates while observing a decrease in cases getting to court.

The CPS and Ministry of Justice's own figures show that while rapes reported to the police have nearly tripled (up by 173%) between 2014 and 2019, the number of cases charged and sent to court is down by 51% across 5 years and is the lowest on record.

A national coalition of women's organisations, the End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW), represented by the Centre for Women's Justice, was on 17th March 2020, refused permission to bring a full judicial review challenge against the CPS which alleged the CPS had changed its policy and practice on decision-making in rape cases.



The ISVA's continue to offer empathic support and listen without judgement. Offering advice and information, they allow the client to make decisions that are right for them with no pressure.

ISVA Service Accreditation

In October 2018, Lime Culture CIC launched the Quality Standards for Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) Services.

The development of these new Quality Standards included consultation with a wide range of ISVA services, commissioners and individuals who have accessed ISVA services. They are made up of 20 individual standards across four domains: Leadership & Governance, Access & Engagement, Service Delivery and Outcomes & Evaluation.



The Quality Standards create a framework and benchmark that can be used to develop and improve ISVA service provision. They set out the expectations for the organisational leadership and staff and the client experience.

The main purpose of these Quality Standards is to improve consistency, practice, and the overall quality of ISVA services across the UK. They create a framework and can be used as a benchmark to drive up standards and improve ISVA service provision.

After signing up to Independent Accreditation Programme for the Quality Standards for Independent Sexual Violence Adviser Services in March 2019, with some hard work and commitment RASA Merseyside adult ISVA service has been awarded the Independent Accreditation Programme 'Quality Mark' for achieving the Quality Standards for Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) Services.

The awarding of the Quality Mark demonstrates the commitment of the team to improving the quality of the support provided by the ISVA service.



Digital Transformation Project

RASA Website – With financial support from the Rape Crisis England and Wales Digital Transformation Project, we have been redeveloping our website to Increase accessibility for survivors. The new look website will be ready to go live in April 20, with a fresh new design and some new features such as.

Responsive Design/Development – so the website re-adjusts its layout to suit the device you are viewing it on. For example, the websites width shortens, the images shrink, the layout changes to suit, on mobiles the menu changes to a mobile friendly etc.

- Contact Form
- Feedback form
- Resources and information for clients/ services (Downloadable pdfs and Word) documents
- Improved links to social media



Sexual Violence Campaign –

As partner of Liverpool Citysafe an Action Plan 2017/19 included a campaign to address Sexual Violence in the Night-time Economy.

This project is designed to direct and govern the management of sexual offending and harm in Liverpool's night-time economy through a cross cutting multi-agency plan. Analysis has shown that:

- Over a quarter of all sexual violence in Liverpool occurs in the City Centre
- There has been a 10% increase year on year (similar to increase in other core cities)
- There was an increase of 153% over a 5-year period (131% in core cities)
- ONS have recently reported that increases in sexual violence are thought to reflect a greater willingness of victims to report offences
- Marketing campaigns in Liverpool could also be linked to increase
- Over the last 5 years both rapes and sexual assaults have increased at similar rates
- Trends in sexual offences are very similar to violence offences, increasing towards the weekend, night-time and third quarter of the year

Previous work in the city has included awareness raising campaigns, sexual violence advice incorporated into pub/club staff training, and recommended policy on sexual violence circulated for partners to adopt. Services have been commissioned in the city to support sexual violence victims,

such as Safe Place (the Sexual Assault Referral Clinic - SARC), RASA Merseyside - Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) and counselling. Below is summary and findings of The Good Night Out Campaign: evaluation of a nightlife worker training programme to prevent sexual violence in Liverpool.



Liverpool Good
Night Out training €

A working group has been established to develop and deliver this action plan, with representation from Liverpool City Council, Merseyside Police, Liverpool University, Liverpool John Moore's University, Edgehill University, and voluntary sector partners. The group will report to the City Centre JAG, Violence Against Women and Girls Group and the Student Safety Group. Progress will be monitored through annual review. Consultation will be undertaken with service users and target audiences via partner agencies, such as through the Young People's Advisory Group, the Universities' Sexual Violence Consultation in September, and the Drink Less Enjoy More survey in November.

Pre-trial Therapy & Record Keeping Training



In relation to being reactive to the continuing the increase in client(s) RASA record disclosure requests and listening to our staff and volunteers with issues such as Maintaining boundaries of Pre-trial therapy and note keeping, clients presenting with symptoms of PTSD/ complex trauma, limitations to supporting clients during an investigation.

Consequently, we have listened and have been rolling out training since February 2020 to skill up volunteers and staff to improve support survivors through an investigative process and prior to a criminal trial. Each attendee receives a file of Pre-trial resources. Over 30 staff and volunteers have attended so far, we will continue to schedule more dates.

Trauma Courses

We are now offering new courses, such Introduction to Counselling, Adult and Children working with Trauma courses. We ran a pilot courses for both Trauma courses and had some great feedback from learners:



Child Trauma
Course 2020.pdf



Adult Trauma
Course 2020.pdf



NEW Introduction
to Counselling Flyer

'I thoroughly enjoyed this course and think it was one of the best courses I have ever been on. It was very informative, interactive and the facilitator was very knowledgeable. I have already started applying what I have learned with clients and feel it is having a huge benefit. Thank you!'

Adult Trauma Course 2019.

'The course was very informative and delivered to a very high standard. Tutor who is clearly very knowledgeable on the topic. I felt comfortable to ask questions and Tutor was very good at adapting her approach to help understanding'.

Adult Trauma Course 2019.

SUNFLOWERS SERVICE, CHILDREN'S TEAM LEAD



It is hard to say what makes me most proud of the work we do at RASA. There are many things.

However, I feel that really understanding our clients, and the support that we offer them in connections with others is what I value most.

Our trauma informed service means that we are constantly updating our knowledge with

evidence based informed practice. The culture of learning and personal development supported both by RASA, and independently, enables us to offer best practice in our support to clients.

We are best placed to attune to our client's lived experience as we are fortunate enough to work with such a diverse group of clients, and this is of particular benefit to me in our children's service. Rape and Sexual Abuse are prevalent across class, culture, gender, age, and ethnicity. This year has been of value as I have supported two young people who have been in very challenging times when they have been struggling with their gender identity.

The crime of rape and the impact upon sexuality especially at times of puberty has many challenges and places many demands upon a young person, This has been further complicated in my experience of working with a young Muslim girl in care, who struggled with her identity, heritage culture and sexuality.

To work with young people at this time has been enriched by the many diverse groups and presentations and has presented a unique opportunity to reach a group of LGBT clients experiencing challenging times, some in isolation from family, friends, and peers.

To be able to walk alongside them in their growth and development has been an absolute privilege. Working at RASA has enabled me to reach that client and learn from them.



I am fortunate to be able to reach young people and adolescents who have experienced the same abhorrent act, yet it has many meanings, consequences, and actions regarding their social group and heritage. As a practitioner I have learned to understand the reach that we have in being able to access these young people and their families and support them in their social systems.

I feel very proud also of RASA's reach within social care, and the links and relationships that we are fortunate to work with a multiagency approach. Our trauma-informed approach mean that we can work within social care and the educational sector in our support of our clients. I feel I have been able to make a difference in supporting a young person and their families in Child Protection Services with our many ways of supporting the child, parents with the many services that we offer.

Another important part of the service this year has been the links and communication with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Liverpool, Sefton, and Wirral.

I feel that we are supporting young people in processing the effects of rape and sexual abuse, but also assessing for more severe and enduring mental health risks and signposting those vulnerable clients to CAMHS. We enjoy a positive relationship within our multi agency setting by the trauma informed approach to our service and greater links outside of that.



This year that there were quite a few opportunities to support young people at risk of exclusion from school by working with the schools and social workers. I was able to educate and support other agencies about the impact of rape and sexual abuse on the young person. It can really make a difference to be able to explain that this young person is not being, lazy, defiant, and aggressive in school, getting distracted and spacing out, rather they are experiencing trauma and symptoms of posttraumatic stress.



With the support of a key person at school and an understanding of the psychological trauma of sexual abuse, a young person can be able to engage again with their studies and regulate themselves at school.

The work with parents in supporting their child has helped them to develop better relationships and enhance their communication with each other. Lots of parents who engage in our parent sessions are very grateful for the understanding of how trauma will affect their child and ways of responding to and supporting them.

In making the unseen seen every day in our work we move closer to helping to develop conversations and dispel myths around rape and sexual abuse.

COUNSELLOR

In the past year, the main things that stick out are: -

The change in assessment procedure, which means that we can assess client suitability quickly. We send them out resources and signpost after that first call and they get a chance to have telephone communication with us BEFORE being added to a waiting list. It also means that they tell their 'story' 'narrative' to the one person who will continue to support. This is less triggering for the client, as they

do not have to repeat their experiences and is less triggering for the workers, not having to hear content that adds to vicarious trauma.

The other is the way that we are having more conversations about how we work with clients, what we can offer for clients on the waiting list, (hypnotherapy) and always with an eye on change that will be beneficial to support clients to recover from trauma.

WIRRAL MANAGER

We were lucky to receive £15,000 from the Community Cashback Fund this year and with this we were able to deliver the Parents Protect workshop to 57 professionals and 130 parents and caregivers. We received excellent feedback from participants with many saying that they felt more confident to spot signs of child sexual abuse and more confident to respond appropriately.

I feel hugely proud of all the Wirral staff and volunteers for their continued commitment, dedication, and hard work over the past year. The client feedback has been very positive and through the various training opportunities available to both staff and volunteers, we ensure that we strive to offer clients the best possible standard of specialised sexual violence support.

Personally, I have benefitted from the training provided this year and feel very privileged to be part of this organisation!



FORMER CHILDREN'S SERVICE LEAD

2020 will mark my ninth year as a RASA employee. It all seems to have flown so quickly, however when I reflect on all the changes and transitions that have occurred during my time here, it feels a lifetime ago!

I started my journey as an administrator before quickly progressing to the role of an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor. I spent several years supporting adults through the criminal justice process before I was then given the opportunity to develop a children's service. From this the Sunflower's Project was created and a children's team slowly developed from two team members, to five, and what a great team it is. I am both proud and privileged to have such fantastic women on the team who are great colleagues and great friends.

The past year has also seen my role adapt and change, again opening new and exciting opportunities. Not only have I had the opportunity to create and develop trauma focused courses for RASA education, but I have also been able to marry my love of yoga with my love for RASA.

I have long had an interest in the mind/body connection of psychological trauma and the profound positive impact yoga can have on this. For this reason, I decided to write a bid to Sports England asking for funding to develop Yoga for Positive Mental Health Courses; the bid was successful!

As we draw towards the end of another year, I have reflected upon my journey through the organisation, the interesting and diverse people I have met along the way, and the colleagues who have become life-long friends. What all these people share is a passion and commitment to their work, and I am honoured to be part of it with them.

COUNSELLOR

RASA has a deep place in my heart for many reasons; accessing the service as a client and the life changing support I received, to an opportunity to volunteer and to work with other survivors. It has been a source of education in many ways; academically such as CBT and the Supervision course, the amazing in-house training, which helped me to remove the myths of sexual violence from myself and to challenge with conviction those who still see them as facts.

Working in a feminist organisation has helped me challenge my own stigmas around how I saw myself as a developing girl – the constraints put on by a patriarchal society and has over time allowed me to dismantle such views and stereotypes. As a mum of two girls, I value this astronomically as I work to empower and encourage my daughters (and my husband!!) to view themselves as worthy and equal in a world that still has a lot to learn.

As an employee of RASA, I am privileged to work alongside so many amazing and supportive women. It is an honour to provide support to our client base and I value this above all else. As we get ready to go back into the centre, I have reflected on the fantastic support I have received from the management team over the lockdown/pandemic and the real sense of supporting me to do the best job I can do.

RASA has been a lifeline for me, and it is such an honour to contribute to what is a lifeline for so many other survivors.



ISVA TEAM LEAD

In the past year I have carried out the role of ISVA Team Lead, providing line management to two ISVA team members and hosting monthly team meetings. The role has also included liaising/meeting with other professionals, helping to develop ISVA procedures & protocols and providing any additional support and advice to the team when needed.

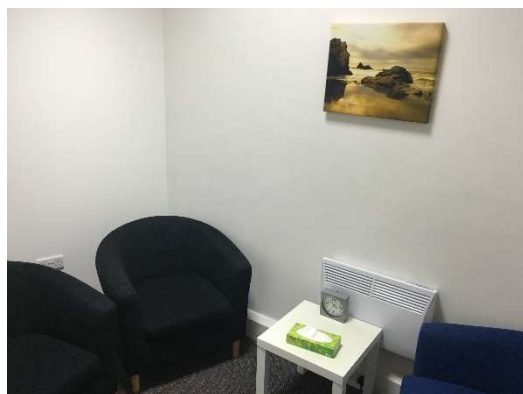


I have continued to provide adult ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advice) support. This has been carried out across the Sefton area, with some support offered occasionally to Liverpool clients in support of a team member. My case load has been roughly between 45 to 58 clients at a time. I split my working time between our Bootle office and providing outreach to clients in Southport.

It has been my choice to remain working 4 days rather than 5 to carry out the above roles. Personally, for me working 4 days a week at RASA is a better balance for my wellbeing to be able to carry out the challenging work.

My counselling skills continue to be of great benefit to carrying out the ISVA role and now the role of Team Lead. Empathy, non-judge mentality, and congruent person skills are needed to be transferred into the relationship I build with both ISVA clients and ISVA team members.

With regards to providing ISVA support, we have in place a full risk and needs assessment which we continue to cover in each session with clients.



The role enables me to provide a voice for those who do not feel they are able to communicate their needs to others in the criminal justice system, an explanation in understandable terms for the client with informed choice sessions, regular communication from myself with experience of supporting others through this process and independent advice based on the client's best interest with a person-centred approach.

Throughout the support, I manage client expectations of the criminal justice process and help to focus them on their best coping strategies. I can assist clients in helping other professionals involved and potentially their employers, to understand the process and to have some concept of what the client is going through.

I continue to liaise with other agencies, providing a multi-agency approach, seeking advice and support within the RASA team, and referring clients to other support when needed.

Referrals mainly come from the police, Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC), followed by various other agencies and self-referrals. I have had a mixture of cases, some more challenging and time consuming than others. The criminal justice system continues to be under pressure, with the awareness of an ongoing appeal from the Centre for Women's Justice for the legal system to be investigated against due to the low number of cases resulting in a decision to charge. Cases are generally taking longer to be investigated, clients are waiting longer for a case decision and if the case goes to court, there have often been legal complications. Some resulting in cases being withdrawn from court.



Providing support to clients at court can make a huge difference to their ability to cope with the process. I am there for that emotional support and person-centred empathic reassurance, particularly just after the client has been questioned.

Case outcomes have been varied, a number have been deemed by CPS or by the police that there has not been enough evidence for the case to go to court.

I had 5 cases that resulted in court over the last year. One was a re-trial, receiving a guilty verdict and 18 years prison sentence. One put in a guilty plea, sentence 4 years 4 months prison. Sadly, the other three resulted in not guilty verdicts. I have also supported in two pre-recorded questionings at the courts, both due to be presented at trial 2020.

Due to the current COVID-19 situation, I have had a few clients who had court proceedings postponed and a few others warned that their cases are likely to be postponed. This sad situation has caused further anxiety and need for support.

In relation to my ISVA Lead role, I am enjoying carrying out this work and supporting the ISVA team. I have received some lovely feedback about the support I have given and continue to review with their input on how the team can best be supported. It is an enormous help and reassurance to be part of such a great team. We try to support one another as each of us have particularly heavy workloads. I look forward to being able to give more to the role once we have recruited another team member.



I often seek advice and support from my line manager Vicky Green. Her knowledge and support are an integral part of me being able to sustain the roles and work I do. I am thankful and appreciative of her input. One of the achievements in this role which I feel has been particularly useful, is the work myself and Holli (RASASC) have done with Liverpool Crown Court.

Raising awareness and creating links with the court professionals, has enabled me to develop a pathway to refer ISVA support as a recognised special measure for clients. This is going well so far; clients have verbalised they have appreciated the close support in court, and I think the team feel more confident being recognised widely by court professionals. It was a proud moment to hear from a senior judge how highly he thought of our services once he was fully aware of what we offer.

In February we had a site visit from LimeCulture, a Community Interest Company which is a national sexual violence and safeguarding organisation. After much hard work from our Clinical Lead in the months leading up to the visit, a team effort to follow new procedures and showing how we can provide an excellent service to clients. We were accredited for LimeCulture Quality Standards.

There are so many things I feel both RASA and I individually have achieved over this last year, too many to include in this report. I have developed in my role, as a person and the team have grown stronger in many ways despite such heavy workloads. I look forward to the opportunity for further development, continuing to lead and support the ISVA team. Once the country has come through the other side of the current pandemic, I hope the rest of the year will be kind to us and we will allow ourselves time to reflect on what is important.

RECEPTION – STATISTICS AND COUNSELLING



During the last year I became a qualified counsellor after studying for 3 years with RASA Education. For 4 years before this my role at RASA was purely administrative. Although I continue this administrative role (reception, checking DPMS reports, being the student engagement officer for RASA Education) I am thoroughly enjoying working with our clients face to face within counselling.

I feel I am now better able to support and empathise with clients because I am working alongside them in their process. I thought I already enjoyed my role at RASA before this, but I have developed a greater love for my job and for the organisation.

Working with clients at RASA is a challenge. As a newly qualified counsellor it is daunting to work with trauma, but I feel I have had such a great opportunity to learn and grow because of our clients. They have shown me how trauma feels for them and we have worked together to find their way out of the dark tunnel. The clients I have worked with have taught me so much and I feel each week I grow in confidence.



After qualifying as a counsellor, I completed the Clinical Hypnotherapy course that took place at RASA. At first, I was slightly sceptical about the results of hypnotherapy, but I wanted to learn more about it. As soon as I started to practice hypnotherapy I was amazed by the results. I have since gone on to run the Reducing Anxiety

Depression and Stress group hypnotherapy sessions for clients at RASA. The results from these have been amazing and I believe it is a great way of reducing clients difficulties while they are on our waiting list for counselling. I feel privileged to be able to support multiple people at one time and implement some subconscious strategies that they can use during difficult times.

I have also used hypnotherapy with some of my counselling clients. One client stands out to me because I had worked this client for several months, and she had steadily made massive progress. We were coming to the end of our sessions and I offered her hypnotherapy for her negative self-image and to improve her confidence. As soon as she opened her eyes after the session she began to cry. She said she had not felt that relaxed in years and she could not believe how good she felt.

I saw the client a week later and she was like a different person. She was wearing makeup which I had never seen her wear. We discussed this and she felt she wanted to be normal again and to pamper herself. She also disclosed that she had reported the offence to the police.

This was something that she would never dream of doing at the start of our sessions, but she said she finally felt confident and wanted to report it even if nothing came from it. This was a huge step for her, and she surprised herself by doing this, but she felt very happy with her decision.

I enjoy having many different roles within RASA and no two days are the same. The variety makes it more enjoyable for me and I feel I am most productive this way.

I love going from talking to professionals, to taking self-referrals on the phone as someone discloses their abuse for the very first time, to supporting colleagues with their admin duties, to providing counselling to clients, to helping our students to become the best counsellors they can possibly be and so much more. It is a total privilege for me every day I am at RASA.



WIRRAL ISVA, ASSESSMENT OFFICER AND COUNSELLOR



This year marks the fourth year that I have been a member of the RASA Merseyside team. As recent global events relating to COVID-19, and the change in service provision/ lifestyle this has brought, I have had plenty of time to reflect on my role.

As I sit at home, still able to provide a crucial and often life-saving service to survivors of sexual violence via the telephone when so many other services are no longer able to do so I feel humbled.

As the usual professional and personal support systems are being chipped away by social isolation guidelines over the last week, I have often been the first person that a client has spoken to about how they really feel in a while, and the first person to really sit and let them know that their experience is still valid, is still painful, and is still worth listening to even when the world outside seems to have a different focus entirely.

I have had a client tell me that knowing that RASA is still functioning, and that the telephone support is still available, has prevented suicidal thoughts over the last week and reduced

severe feelings of isolation and/or having been forgotten about. This to me highlights what RASA is and always has been about; providing a service to the most vulnerable and the most in need, even when others cannot or will not help.

I feel privileged to be part of an organisation that, at such a difficult time, is still pulling together to do the utmost for our clients; changing and bending ourselves and our routines to make sure we are still reaching survivors of sexual violence in the community and make sure that they are listened to and understood.

As the future for the UK and everyone in it may still look uncertain, I take comfort in the fact that I am part of an organisation that never fails to care, and work amongst women who continue to support and drive each other even at the most difficult of times.

VOLUNTEER COUNSELLOR

I have been a volunteer counsellor at Rasa for 11 years. I came on placement and stayed. There have been many changes in those eleven years, some good some not so but the main aim is the wellbeing of our clients who bravely come through the door.

In that time, I have been privileged to have been on the journey of recovery with many clients. For me working at RASA is all about seeing clients make the changes with issues such as confidence, self-esteem/worth, nightmares, flashbacks etc and empowering them get on with their life.

The best part of my job is when therapy comes to an end knowing the client leaves with the tools and strategies and support to have the life they want.



COUNSELLOR, ASSESSMENTS AND MORE



The self-care kits RASA put together have been really successful. We have since partnered up with Beauty Banks, another charity that collects beauty products from a range of different companies and provides them to select charities who have signed up. Last year, we received several huge boxes filled with shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, deodorant, personal wipes etc. It was amazing and helped to fill out our self-care kits.

Alongside that, we have many generous supporters who have been sending in gifts from our Amazon wish list. We have many colouring books, colouring pencils, stress balls and face masks, all ready to be sent out. Unfortunately, this is on hold now due to the pandemic, but it will be amazing to get going again when everything is safer for us all.

Keeping up with social media has been important as we have more people following us all the time. As a result, we have more people engaging with us through social media. Facebook has a feature where you can schedule posts which is helpful, so when I have some spare time, I ensure that important dates are planned so as we do not miss out.

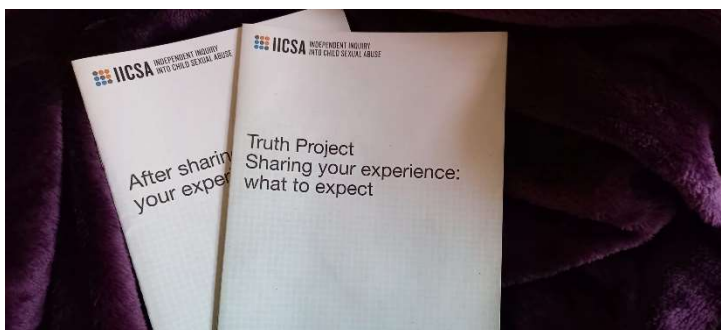
The newly developed Pre-Assessment Call system (PAC) has made a huge difference. I have found it much easier to determine who is and is not suitable for our service. I feel as though it has made completing the full assessments much easier for myself and others.

It has been interesting as I have had a few people choose our Helpline over counselling, so to be able to see this right from the start saves them waiting for a service that they did not particularly want – especially if they are referred by someone else.

I have also found that I am able to speak to more people through completing a PAC than seeing them for a face-to-face appointment. It is definitely a much smoother, quicker, and efficient change and I just wish we had thought of this sooner.

It has also given me more time to work through my admin. As I also attend both Sefton and Liverpool MARAC, I feel I can manage my time more efficiently.

WIRRAL ISVA AND ISVA ASSESSMENT OFFICER



I took on the role as Wirral ISVA in June 2019, after having completed 9 months as ISVA Assessment Officer and Truth Project Support Worker. The transition between the two roles was complete in full by September 2019. Overall, I feel that my previous dual role prepared me well for the role as an ISVA. I was already well

established in using SAS Assessments in appointments, as well as supporting individuals in a risk/needs focussed way towards an ultimate goal (e.g., Truth Sessions).

The prospect of managing my own caseload of ISVA clients was daunting at first given the importance of our role in the criminal justice process and the wealth of knowledge/ skill that is required to do the role justice. Currently, I work at the Birkenhead office 3 days a week for my Wirral casework, and spend the other two in the Liverpool office to complete assessments for my colleagues.

Initially, the main challenge of taking on this role was boundaries. As my previous role at RASA has been as a counsellor and has not been relative to criminal processes, the transition between this and entering into (crucially) boundaried emotional/ practical support relationships with clients was a challenge. I feel my experience in completing initial assessments, however, gave me the tools to do this. Having said this, I feel that my qualification and experience in counselling is crucial in the role. Oftentimes clients need a deeper and more in depth understanding into their own emotions and traumatic responses, which can only be achieved in some level of therapeutic interaction. Psychoeducation is also key in this, and I feel allows clients to empower themselves in self-knowledge and find the tools within themselves to cope more effectively with the challenges brought forward by the criminal justice process.

Practical elements of the role were ones that I had not yet been accustomed to but have grown to appreciate and master more so as the role has progressed. I often have been the line of communication between officers and survivors where relationships had previously broken down, as well as been able to act as an impartial conduit for the client's grievances with their investigating officer and therefore enabled changes to be made and investigations to continue. On the other hand, I have also been able to manage the burden of the Officer in Charge, by managing client expectations of the investigative process and providing the much needed sounding board for those in it for the long haul (upwards of 18 months, as it stands). Using coping mechanisms, establishing social support, making links with other organisations and safety planning/ signposting has also been a key feature in this.



Multi-agency work, though relatively new to me, has also been an aspect I have come to appreciate in this role. As my experience has progressed, I have learned the importance of opening strong lines of communication with other professionals involved with a client including, but not limited to, social workers, police officers, Independent Domestic Violence Advocates, domestic violence support workers, hospital staff, GP's, and others. I have found, particularly in high risk/ high need cases, that the more collaboration between professionals means the

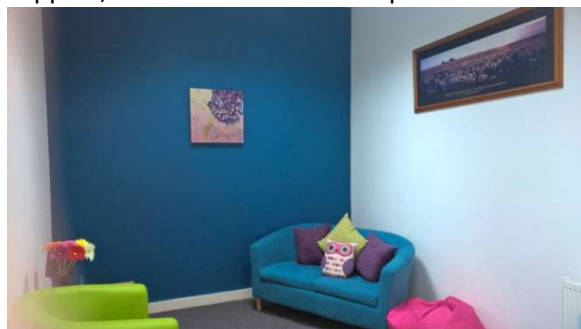
client is happier, healthier, and feels more secure. In my Wirral case load, I currently have several clients who are of limited capacity or have special educational/ learning needs. With these clients I have learned to keep good communication with learning disability nurses, social workers, and care staff to make sure the support is appropriate, and that the client's vulnerability is limited as much as possible. A challenge in this, however, has been to keep in mind the autonomy and the voice of the client. I have found that in some cases with clients who have additional needs, that their voices can become lost in a sea of professionals (and even parents) who "know better", and so it has been paramount that I check in with the client in a way that they can understand and ask them the question: "what do you need right now?".

I have, so far, also completed 3 modules of the accredited Lime Culture ISVA training; travelling to Manchester two days a month to complete each. This was projected to end in June this year, however

as module 4 and 5 have been cancelled due to COVID-19 I am as of right now unsure when my training will be completed. The two days out of office a month, I have come to learn, has had an impact on client work. These two days have had to be taken back at the Wirral office, and so have eaten into my time in Liverpool. This has resulted in a longer waiting time for Liverpool assessments, and has had to be assessed by the team leader and clinical lead both for efficiency and to avoid my feeling overwhelmed with referrals. Currently, all Liverpool assessments are completed over the phone to complete 4 assessments in each day I work at Liverpool and leave time for subsequent paperwork.

This leads me to a very important part of my last 10 months as a Wirral ISVA; I have been thankful for the support of my colleagues. My team leader, Sarah Tipton, has been integral to my acclimation into this new role and has stopped at nothing to make me feel settled and supported. My other colleague, Olivia Lewis, has been a crucial sounding board for the common challenges of the role. Both have been invaluable mentors for me in building up the confidence and support network I needed to succeed. Of course, supervision, line management and team meetings have been a huge part of this and have given me the space to check things out both with clients and myself.

As it stands, I have only attended two court cases. My first was shadowing Sarah to get a feel for the process and how ISVA support works at court. I found this to be extremely helpful in the sessions that followed with my own case load, as it allowed me to give a clear picture of how things run and a better idea of what I can do for them on the day/days. The client I supported myself at court was in October 2019. This was daunting, and my main worry was how I would fit into the process and doing the right thing for the client; however, once I was there this became clear and easy and followed on from the support I had completed with the client in sessions, namely breathing, information, emotional support, and distraction techniques. This client had an extremely difficult time at court and did not



manage her emotions successfully on the stand, however I encouraged her to look at how far she had come and feel proud for the fact that she had been able to complete the court process. The verdict was not guilty, as many are. However, once we had tied up my support and accepted the verdict, I was extremely confident in passing her over to our amazing counselling team who I knew would use their expertise and skill to help her to

move forward from her assault. To date, I have had two court cases postponed/ adjourned due to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and government self-isolation guidelines. This has been a challenge, as it has created extreme anxiety and frustration, which I can currently only manage over the phone with them as all RASA staff have been instructed to work from home.

Finally, I must mention my extra role as a trainer for the Good Night Out nightlife staff training. I have been involved in this campaign for several months and take lead on it on behalf of RASA Merseyside with a member of public protection. We have, so far, completed training with 135+ staff members in various venues across Liverpool. The training is aimed at educating nightlife staff around identifying sexual violence in their place of work, intervening where necessary and supporting survivors at the time. This was the subject of a research project completed by Zara Quigg at Liverpool John Moores University, including a post evaluation of trainees that had completed training which stated: 98.5% felt that their knowledge of sexual violence in the night-time economy had increased, 97.8% felt more confident in responding to incidents of sexual violence that occurred and 99.3% felt that they now knew where to go for help and support in identified cases. We hope to continue this training well into 2020 to reduce the incidents of serious sexual violence in the night-time economy, empower survivors

to report incidents to staff where they occur, and hopefully in turn increase the likelihood of reporting to police. The training also hopes to tackle escalation of violence in clubs and pubs, to avoid perpetrators continuing to offend/offences becoming more serious.

I would like to sign off by acknowledging the statements made at last ISVA conference on the 5th of this month. The statistics that are available are showing, very clearly, that the ISVA role is making a huge difference to survivors of sexual violence in the criminal justice process. Our role is now being highlighted as crucial for the continued support and engagement of survivors in the investigation and court processes; with many who do not have access to this support dropping charges at an alarming rate. I am proud to be a part of the ISVA work force, particularly the one that resides in RASA Merseyside, and am hopeful that the role will continue to be recognised and championed across the UK for years to come.

INDEPENDENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE ADVOCATE - LIVERPOOL



In the past year I have continued to provide adult ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advice) support to men and women. This has been carried out across the Liverpool area. My case load has been roughly between 58 to 70 clients at a time.

I work full time at our Bootle office and provide occasional outreach to

clients. Although the assessments are primarily done by the assessment officer, the consistently high case load continues to place demands on my time/availability. Therefore, I continue to offer three weekly face to face appointments as the top level of frequency, aside from honouring those longer-term clients who I saw fortnightly prior to being under resourced in 2019.

As a qualified counsellor, I feel the skills I have are a great asset to the ISVA role and enable me to help sustain the well-being of the clients over what is often a very long period of time.

The practical side of the ISVA role varies depending on the client's needs. Advocacy is primarily what is needed for many, particularly when it comes to communicating with other professionals, namely those working within the criminal justice process. Understandably, the needs of the clients fluctuate depending on where the criminal justice process is up to. Thankfully, not all clients require the same level of support; this would certainly be impossible to maintain due to the consistently high level of caseload if they did. Managing client expectations of the criminal justice process has been another dominant part of the support, particularly as expectations can be unrealistically high due to misleading information provided by Police on occasion. This issue seems to have increased in recent months.

I have continued liaising with other agencies, providing a multi-agency approach, seeking advice and support within the RASA team, referring clients to other support within RASA, group meetings and reflection, supervision for quality of work and self-care, as well as keeping record of all information and activity within my role. I often seek advice and support from within the ISVA team and equally give support and advice when able to. The camaraderie of the team is first class and helps to be able to perform what is becoming more of a challenging role as time goes by.

My line manager has continued to offer support and ensured that I continue to implement necessary adjustments to sustain an acceptable level of service.

I also continue with my personal development attending training and workshops around the work I carry out and keeping up to date with standards, policies and safeguarding; SAS assessments have proven to be a very useful and concise tool.

I have continued with a full case/workload at RASA over the last year. Referrals mainly come from the police, Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC), followed by various other agencies and self-referrals.

An ongoing concern is the overall systemic issues within the criminal justice process. Timeframes are continuing to increase to an unacceptable level, both within investigation and CPS reviewing stages. Alongside this has also been the issue highlighted by the recent whistle blowing/subsequent investigation re percentages of sexual assault cases. In which no further action is taken.

In March 2020, I had three trials scheduled; one changed into a direct sentencing due to a guilty plea made by the defendant. This defendant was sentenced to 3.5 years which was a good result. The other two have now been postponed due to the impact of COVID-19. Once the trials are reinstated, I look forward to being able to sit alongside my clients in the witness box if granted by the presiding judge. This is now being regarded as a special measure, just as important as other special measures, due to the fantastic work undertaken by Sarah Tipton and Holly from RASASC; truly ensuring that the ISVA role is continuing to be taken more seriously. This was also highlighted at the ISVA conference in March 2020, which I found to be a very useful and informative event.

I have another case in which the client completed a section 28 on 23rd March 2020. It is unknown at this stage when/if the trial will go ahead.

I feel very proud of the ISVA team, particularly as we have worked so long under such scarce resources which has been extremely challenging. I/we eagerly anticipate the much needed, long awaited new ISVA team member. However, I realise that this could be delayed significantly due to current societal circumstances.

Despite all the difficulties and challenges that we continue to face, specifically with the very recent impact of COVID 19, working with such wonderful colleagues and being supported so well by management, specifically Sarah Tipton, helps me to be able to provide a much-needed service to all of those whom we support who are without doubt, facing very unsettling times and who need RASA now, probably more than ever. 😊



RASA EDUCATION LIMITED

Counselling Courses



The Education Team has grown in the past year. Initially, Lorraine Wood, Vicky Green and I were teaching Level 2 Concepts, Level 3 Counselling Skills and Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling.

Jessica Traverse was employed as our Learner Engagement Officer and the liaison for all students, whilst Jo Wood managed the finances.

For the Education team in 2019 we saw our first Cohort of Learners complete the Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling. This was a real achievement for the Education Department and for RASA Merseyside who have supported the Education team, enabling them to grow and develop.

Our first group of learners worked hard to complete the Level 2 Counselling Concepts Course in December 2016, the Level 3 Counselling Skills Course in July 2017 and finally completed the Level 4 Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling course in June 2019, with our very own Jessica Traverse becoming the first ever RASA Education student to become a qualified counsellor in July 2019 after passing the internal modules and the externally marked Unit 7 module in record time!

In July 2019 we received our first moderation visit from an External Moderator for ABC and Certa Awards (Skills and Education Group Awards) for the Level 4 Diploma and received the following feedback:

This is a well-established centre now offering all three levels of counselling courses.

This is the first L4 cohort to be completed.

Overall, the samples were of a high standard and the assessor had detailed the number of resubmissions. Thorough internal moderation process was evident.

Centre strengths

Standards of teaching

Organisation of teaching

Learner satisfaction

Internal moderation process

This feedback has given us the confidence to grow, we decided to offer a Level 3 Fast Track course which commences every January as well as the Level 3 Skills Class which commences every September, thus increasing learner numbers for the Level 4 Diploma.

Due to the high demand and number of students enrolling in September 2019 we needed to employ a new Tutor, Olivia Lewis teaching the Level 3 Counselling Skills course, Olivia has worked hard and integrated well with the whole team.

By the end of March 2020, we were running a Level 2 Counselling Concepts, a Level 3 Skills Course and a Fast-Track Level 3 Skills Course, a second year Level 4 Diploma and a first year Level 4 Diploma.

Level 5 CBT and Level 6 Supervision Courses

As part of the programme for the Education Department we decided to offer the qualifications for Level 5 CBT and Level 6 Supervision with Awarding Body CPCAB by engaging a tutor qualified to teach these qualifications. This has enabled RASA Education to produce a full programme of certified qualifications and offers a natural progression for all learners.

It has been successfully implemented for RASA staff and volunteers as well as external learners interested in the next steps of counselling practice. Both courses are delivered annually.

Rewind



RASA Education is fortunate to be able to offer Rewind Training. We have 2 accredited trainers who can teach the Rewind Technique, and this is now offered to all staff and volunteers as part of their development. External practitioners may also attend for a small fee.

The training course is approved by the British Psychological Society Learning Centre for the purposes of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). It is a one-day course to enable practitioners to understand the difference between PTSD and PTS. It explores the theoretical basis on how the Rewind Technique works at neuronal level and compares the advantages of the Rewind Technique with other treatments. The course also covers how to assess the severity of the impact of the trauma on the individual and how to assess treatment has been successful. Learners are given the opportunity to be both therapist and client. This course is offered quarterly.

QLS

As part of the Education programme and for further professional development we signed up to the Skills and Education Group Quality Licence Scheme. The QLS Scheme has given us the opportunity to develop CPD courses that are endorsed by ABC and Certa Awards for practicing counsellors to further develop their knowledge and expertise. Helen Leach and Vicky Green created a Level 5 Diploma in Counselling Adult Trauma Course and a Level 5 Diploma in Counselling Child Trauma Course, whilst Lorraine Wood and I created a Level 5 Diploma in Clinical Hypnotherapy Course, which all fall under the remit of Continuing Professional Development for practicing counsellors.

Learners are registered with the Skills and Education Group and any written work is moderated internally and the processes are regulated by an External Moderator and certificates are issued by the Skills and Education Group. This has given RASA Education continuity with regards to further professional development and ensuring standards of teaching are maintained due to the moderation process.

The aim was to upskill the RASA Merseyside workforce, ensuring all staff and volunteers are given the necessary skills and training to offer the best service possible for clients. Additionally, it means that we can offer the courses to external professionals who wish to gain more knowledge, skills, and competencies to provide Clinical Hypnotherapy and to work with Complex Trauma within their own client groups.

The RASA Education Team is passionate about creating and delivering high quality courses that will benefit practitioners, allow it to grow as an Educational Establishment and enable us to offer more exciting opportunities for staff, volunteers, and external practitioners.

A big thank you for the hard work and dedication of all staff who go above and beyond to ensure that RASA Education Ltd maintains its high standards and that all learners have the best learning experience possible.

Lois Arch - Head of Curriculum



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