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Qualitative research to understand the support needs of disabled rape victim-survivors

We want to talk to disabled adult victims and survivors of rape or sexual violence. A disabled adult rape victim survivor is a disabled person who has experienced rape and/or sexual violence and/or sexual abuse. We want to find out:

- What do rape victims want from services that support them in terms of content, delivery format and service?

We want to talk to you between March and April 2022. We will speak to disabled victim-survivors in interviews and focus groups.

About us

We are a team of disabled and non-disabled researchers who are passionate about ending violence against disabled people. All of us have experience of working or doing research with disabled victim-survivors. We work for the University of Leeds, Liverpool Hope university, Stay Safe East (a user led service for disabled victim-survivors) and SignHealth (a user-led service for Deaf victim-survivors). We have received funding from the Ministry of Justice to do this research.

Why now? And why is it exciting that the Ministry of Justice is funding this work?

Maybe you have heard about the End-to-End Rape Review or about the government's tackling violence against women and girls strategy.

You may have seen recent news reports about violence against women and girls.

The Rape Review revealed that victim-survivors of rape are not always getting the support that they are entitled to. Victim-survivors of rape include women, men and nonbinary people. The Ministry of Justice will be conducting a large-scale survey with rape victim-survivors with the aim to understand their support needs, but they know that this survey is unlikely to reach as many disabled victim-survivors as they had hoped for. They know very little about the support needs of this group. They are therefore funding us to do some qualitative research with disabled victim-survivors.

Why do you want me to take part?

We do not know enough about the support needs of disabled adults after experiencing rape and/or sexual assault. The only people who can tell us about this are disabled people themselves.

We are inviting disabled adult rape victims to help us understand their support needs and how these can be met in order to make suggestions to improve how victims and survivors work with support services and the criminal justice process.

We will write a report about the things disabled adult rape victim-survivors have said. This will be published on the Ministry of Justice website. We also hope to write academic journal articles and to give presentations about what people have said. In other words: We want to tell other people what people like you have said to us. We want to make sure that your voice is being heard and helps make a difference to the services that are available to you in the future.

Do I have to take part?

No – you do not have to take part. It is your choice whether you would like to take part in this research.

If you read this document and want to take part, we will ask you to sign a sheet that checks your understanding of the research and what is involved.

You can change your mind at any time before and during the interview and up until two weeks after the interview. If you do change your mind, you can stop taking part and do not have to tell us why. If you have already done your interview, it will be deleted up until 2 weeks after.

You only have 2 weeks to change your mind. This is because we have a short deadline for this piece of research and after 2 weeks your interview will be typed up and anonymised. This means we won't be able to identify your interview within the data.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will take part in EITHER an interview OR a focus group. They are described below.

Interviews

You will talk to one of the researchers about your experiences of support services after rape and/or sexual assault. This will be an interview that will take place on Zoom in a place that you feel safe and are able to talk about your experiences.

If you are not able to talk using Zoom, please let us know and we will talk about meeting in person, in a safe space.

This interview will last up to 90 minutes, and we can have breaks.

Focus groups

You will talk as part of a group of three to five disabled wo/men (Amend as necessary. Focus groups will be single sex only) about your experiences of support services after rape and/or sexual assault. This will be a focus group that will either take place in a private room at Stay Safe East, at another public venue or it will take place online via Zoom.

This focus group will last 90 minutes, and we can have breaks.

What do you want to ask me?

We will ask if you have used rape and/or sexual assault support services. If you have, we will ask about your experiences of using these services, what you knew about them, whether they helped you to cope and recover from your experiences. We will also ask what extra support could meet your needs and how you would prefer to access such support.

If you haven't used support services, we will ask about why you chose not to and what might support you to do this in the future.

When thinking about your experiences at each point of this journey we will be using the board game "Snakes and Ladders". This can work in person and online. In works in focus groups and interviews.

You do not need to answer any questions that you do not want to. We will not ask directly about your experiences of rape and/or sexual abuse.

Will I be recorded?

Yes, your interview or focus group will be recorded on a protected device so no one else but the researchers can access the recording.

Conversations in English will be audio recorded. Those in British Sign Language will be video recorded.

The recordings of the interviews and focus groups will be kept in a secure environment. They will be written up and the recordings will be deleted by September 2022 when this project concludes.

When we write the recordings up into text we will remove all names, places and any other information that could make you identifiable. We call this an anonymised interview transcript.

We will also keep electronic copies of the artwork created in interviews (Snakes and ladders board).

Will taking part be good or bad for me?

There are good and bad things that might happen if you take part. By talking about your experiences of support, you might become upset or angry. There is also a risk of re-traumatisation. However, personal experiences of violence are not the focus of the interview or focus group. We are interested in talking to you about what happened next, when you sought support (or not).

You can pause or stop the conversation at any time. We will be supportive and do our best to make sure that you have a good experience. After your interview, we will give you contact details for support in your local area. If you feel the need to speak to someone about your experiences after the interview, one of the Stay Safe East counsellors will offer support in a one-off session on Zoom. They can then help you think about your local support options.

Taking part in this will also take up some of your time. To say thank you for giving up your time, we will compensate you with a £30 shopping voucher.

By telling us about your experiences, you are helping us to learn about how to create better support services for other disabled adult rape victims.

Will you tell other people what I say?

We will be sharing your quotes and personal accounts when writing our report and academic publications and when presenting the findings. But, we will not use any of your personal information, such as your name and where you live when we share this research. This will protect your identity.

We follow all relevant GDPR and data protection guidelines to make sure your information is kept safe and secure. We will delete any personal information that can identify you by September 2022 when this project concludes.

Additional information for focus groups

By taking part in a focus group, you will also be telling other disabled people about your experiences. Everyone who attended the group will be told to keep what was said in the group confidential.

We will respect your confidentiality. However, we need to be clear with you about the unlikely circumstances under which we will have to breach confidentiality. If we need to do this, we will tell you we are doing it.

It is a legal requirement:

- to report new disclosures if the person disclosing admits to having committed a crime;
- to report concerns about anyone under the age of 18 being at risk of harm;

- to follow the safeguarding principles outlined in the Care Act 2014 if a disabled person discloses ongoing cases of sexual assault and rape.

What will happen to the data after the project ends?

The research team will keep the anonymised data (interview and focus group transcripts and electronic copies of the artwork) for up to seven years after the project end date, until the end of August 2029. This will be archived in a secure environment. Only Andrea, Leah, Ruth and Abigail will have access to this. (Please see our contact details at the end of the form.)

We want to save the data to be able to write publications and give presentations about the things people have said to us. We want to use this data to tell more people about the experiences of people like you and about your ideas for making things better.

Additional information for service users of Stay Safe East

Some Stay Safe East volunteers will be doing interviews. Ruth Bashall is doing even more. She is part of the team of researchers who will analyse the findings. That means she will read some of the anonymised written interviews. This means that Ruth may know who you are when reading. She will not tell anyone who you are, and she will keep what you have said confidential.

If you are a Stay Safe East service user, you can choose to be interviewed by someone from Stay Safe East or by someone else. If you choose to be interviewed by someone from Stay Safe East, please remember that the interview will be a separate interaction to your usual involvement with Stay Safe East. Like other respondents you have a right to refuse to answer questions or to change your

mind about taking part. This will not impact on the usual service you receive from Stay Safe East.

Who can I contact for more information or to register my interest in taking part?

On our website, there is a contact form that you can complete. Or you can send us an email to suvivors-project@leeds.ac.uk

The research team is led by Dr Andrea Hollomotz, who works at the University of Leeds.

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