

SEXUAL OFFENCES FACT SHEET

Definition

- Sexual offences are a group of offences that are covered by the Sexual Offences Act 2003. The Act strengthened and modernised the law on sexual offences, whilst improving preventative measures and the protection of individuals from sexual offenders.
- The Act extended the definition of rape to include the penetration by a penis of the vagina, anus or mouth of another person.
- The Act also updated the law about consent and belief in consent. Consent is defined as when a person agrees by choice to the sexual activity and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Sex with somebody under the age of 13 is statutory rape.
- Sexual assault is an act of physical, psychological and emotional violation, in the form of a sexual act, which is inflicted on someone without consent. It can involve forcing or manipulating someone to witness or participate in any sexual acts, apart from penetration.
- There are also offences of: trafficking persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation, child abuse, sexual abuse of vulnerable persons with a mental disorder, voyeurism, exposure, preparatory offences and engaging in sexual activity in a public lavatory.

Key Drivers and Risk Factors

- Whilst there is no defined list of risk factors that increase the likelihood that someone will sexually offend, research shows some key characteristics:
 - Being a victim themselves at some point in their youth and wishing to be the one who has power rather than being the one subjected to the power of others.
 - Having impaired emotional development, particularly with regards to empathy. This prevents the offender from understanding the impact of their actions on others and so limiting them.
 - Having low self-esteem and using their actions to exercise control and power to enhance their own self-image and feelings of being powerful. Conversely, having high self-esteem can also be a risk factor as they may react aggressively if their actions are questioned or obstructed.
- There are certain risk factors associated with existing offenders that indicate that they are more likely to re-offend:
 - Sexual preoccupation.
 - Victim access.
 - Hostility.
 - Rejection of supervision.
 - Young age at first offence.
 - Being single.
- Analysis in the Home Office's 'Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales' (January 2013) shows that the following had an increased risk of victimisation:
 - Females aged between 16 and 19 (as age increases the risk reduces).
 - Single females, those who were separated and those who had no children.
 - Females from households in the lowest income bracket (under £10,000 per year), full time students and the unemployed.
 - Females with limiting disabilities or illnesses and those who were economically inactive due to long term illness.
 - People living in flats or maisonettes, in an urban area and in rented accommodation.
 - Females who reported visiting a pub at least once a week or a night club one to three times a month.

- Many of these characteristics will be closely associated, so should not be considered in isolation. Particularly, the relationship between age and characteristics such as marital status, full-time student status and use of nightclubs and pubs.

Local and National Picture

National

- The 2012/13 Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated that around 70,000 women were victims of rape and over 330,000 women and 75,000 men were victims of a sexual assault that year. 2% of women (16-59) and 0.5% of men had experienced some form of sexual assault (including attempts).
- In 2012/13, there were 3,043 rape offences, 7,982 serious sexual assaults and 1,780 other sexual offences reported to the Metropolitan Police Service in London.
- It is estimated that, on average, just 10% of rapes are reported to the police. Only 22% of reported serious sexual violence offences are brought to justice. The rape conviction rate in England and Wales is 6.5%, the second lowest conviction rate in Europe after Scotland.

Local

- From 1st October 2013 to 30th September 2014, a total of 331 offences were recorded in the borough, an increase of 31 (+10.3%) on the 300 offences recorded in the previous 12 months. Of these offences:
 - 93.7% were classified as serious sexual offence.
 - 9.4% were flagged as Domestic.
 - 41.7% involved alcohol.
 - 10.3% involved drugs.
- Of the 631 offences recorded over the two year period 1st October 2012 to 30th September 2014:
 - 75.8% had a location recorded and of these, 51.6% were residential addresses and 32.4% offences only had a street name recorded, which would suggest they took place in the street.
 - Most victims were female (90.1%) and most suspects were male (88.3%). Male suspects mostly offended against female victims (88.3%).
 - Most victims (44.0%) were aged 10-19, followed by 20-29 (26.3%). Most suspects were aged 10-19 (23.4%) or 20-29 (23.2%). Most suspects offend against a victim of the same age range or slightly younger. The main exception to this being offenders aged 40-49, who were more likely to offend against younger age groups.
 - A 'relationship' is recorded (or can be deduced from the report) in 61.5% of the offences. Where the 'relationship' is known:
 - In 34.0% of cases, the suspect was an 'acquaintance' of the victim (had only briefly known them in the time immediately before the offence).
 - In 23.3% of cases the suspect and victim were, or had been, in an intimate relationship. In 21.3% of cases the suspect and victim knew each other well but not intimately (e.g. friends, colleagues, neighbours).
 - In 12.4% of cases the suspect was a family member of the victim (including 'step' family).
 - In 8.9% of cases the suspect was a stranger to the victim.
- In the period April 2013-December 2014, the Her Centre supported 54 victims of sexual abuse. Of these victims, 49 had reported the incident to the Police. 53 of the victims were female and 1 was male. 18 victims were aged 19 or under. 2 victims were involved in prostitution.
- In the period October 2013 to September 2014, British Transport Police recorded 17

sexual offences in Royal Greenwich, an increase of 88.9% (8) from the 9 offences recorded in the previous 12 months. This compares to an increase across London of 33.9%. The Borough recorded 2.3% of all sexual offences recorded by British Transport Police and had the joint 11th highest number of offences.

- Between July 2012 and August 2014, the Youth Offending Service were working with 18 young people convicted of a sexual offence.
- Of the 1,329 assessments carried out by Probation (on offenders residing in Royal Greenwich) between August 2013 and July 2014, 73 (5.5%) were for offenders monitored by probation for Sexual Offences; this compares to 4.8% for London. Of these 73 offenders: 100.0% were male (compared to 86.3% for London); 24.7% were aged 18-25 (compared to 25.4%).

Resources for Professionals

- Joint Crown Prosecution Service and Police Action Plan on Rape: sets out clear commitments to addressing the issues preventing rape cases from successfully progressing through the criminal justice system. Available [here](#).
- Protocol on the Investigation and Prosecution of Allegations of Rape: Joint Crown Prosecution Service / Association of Chief Police Officers protocol setting out how both organisations will deal with all rape cases from the initial complaint to after the verdict in a trial. Available [here](#).
- Young People who Sexually Abuse: Guidance document from Youth Justice Board. Available [here](#).
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) Helpline: 24 hour helpline offering advice and support for anybody with concerns about a child. 0800 5000 or www.nspcc.org.uk

Services for Victims

- Guide for Lesbian and Bisexual Women Affected by Sexual Violence: Guide by the Lesbian & Gay Foundation aimed at providing survivors of rape or sexual violence with information and help to find the support they need. Available [here](#).
- The Havens: Specialist centres in London for people who have been raped or sexually assaulted. www.thehavens.org.uk
- Little Fish: Delivers 'New Leaf', aimed at engaging and supporting young people in developing healthy relationships. Available [here](#).
- Metropolitan Police Service Sapphire Unit: Investigates all allegations of non-familial abuse or assault, regardless of the age or gender of the victim. This includes allegations of rape, sexual assault, indecent exposure and any other offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Available [here](#).
- Rape Crisis: Provides information, advice and a helpline for survivors, as well as their family and friends. www.rapecrisis.org.uk
- South East London Rape Crisis Centre: Provides face-to-face support or counselling and Independent Sexual Violence Advocates. Based in Croydon, with a hub in Lewisham Police Station. 0808 802 9999
- Survivors UK: Support for men who have been raped or sexually assaulted. www.survivorsuk.org

- Victim Support: Provides confidential support and advice to anyone who's been raped or sexually assaulted, including home visits and a support line. Information for men is available [here](#). Information for women is available [here](#).
- Greenwich Domestic Violence and Abuse Services: Provides a specialist Information Line, outreach and accommodation services for women and children experiencing domestic abuse. www.gdva.org.uk
- Her Centre: Provides support and advocacy for victims residing in Royal Greenwich. 0203 260 7772 or www.hercentre.org
- Metropolitan Police Service Community Safety Unit: Every London borough has a team of specially trained officers whose task is to investigate crimes of domestic abuse. Available [here](#).
- Childline (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children): 24 hour helpline for young people. 0800 1111 or www.childline.org.uk

Further Information

This information has been taken from the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2015-18. For more information contact the Safer Communities Team on 020 8921 8396 or community-safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk