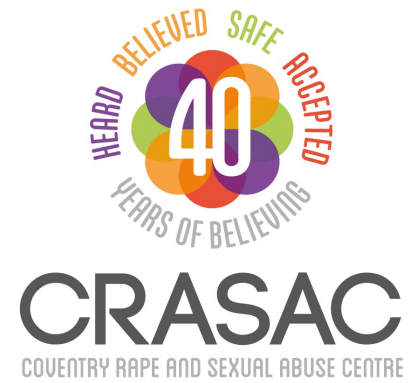


# ANNUAL REPORT

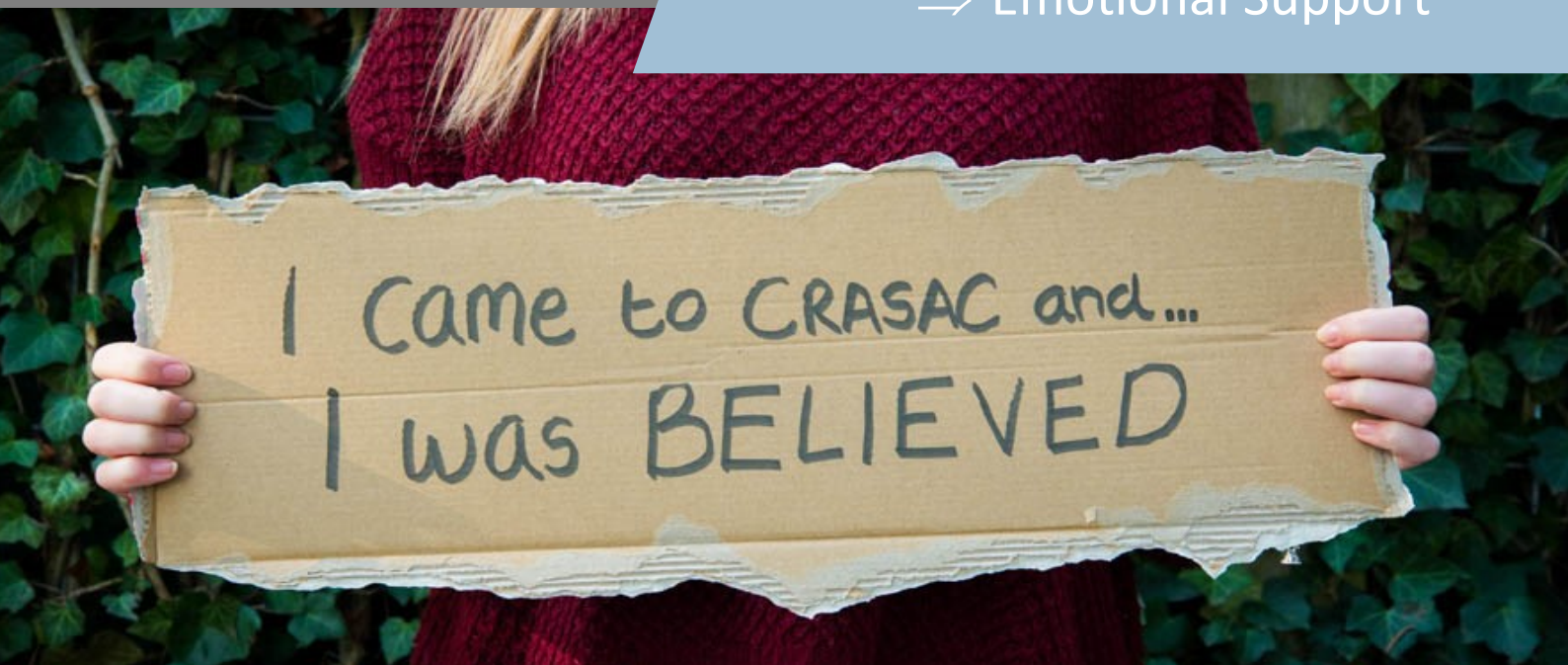
## 2020/2021



- ⇒ 40th Anniversary
- ⇒ The Impact of Covid
- ⇒ 2020/21 in Numbers
- ⇒ Plans & Objectives  
2021/22
- ⇒ A Survivor's Story

### Services:

- ⇒ Counselling
- ⇒ ISVA Service
- ⇒ Training & Outreach
- ⇒ Helpline
- ⇒ Emotional Support



Heard Believed (Safe) Accepted

# Message from our CEO

In 1978 a group of women got together to talk about the lack of provision for survivors of sexual abuse in Coventry and they looked to a London Rape Crisis centre for inspiration. In 1980 they created an informal group and in 1981 opened a telephone helpline on Monday evenings. Later that year two full-time workers were employed to cover hours in the daytime and ever since then, Coventry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre (CRASAC) has been going from strength to strength.



Today CRASAC employs 35 staff, has over 10 dedicated volunteers and eight Trustees, and we continue to develop specialist services in order to help victims/survivors to cope, recover, and to have a voice.

Over the last 40 years we have supported over 76,000 people and in 2020/21 alone helped 2,235 people who have either been directly or indirectly affected by sexual abuse or are friends, family and professionals seeking to help others affected by sexual violence.

All clients have the opportunity to provide feedback when they leave CRASAC and 100% rated our service as excellent. The key areas clients said we helped with were dealing with flashbacks, panic attacks, depression, suicidal feelings, self harm, prescribed medication and substance use.

This is an amazing achievement and our thanks and gratitude go to all our previous volunteers and staff members who have shaped the organisation over the last 40 years and who made it into the highly regarded and respected service it is today.

Our purpose remains the same, but our services are continuously being developed and adapted to meet the ever-changing needs.

Thank you to all our supporters, partners and funders for continuing to give us so much of your time, energy, and the resources we need to keep supporting our clients.

We will continue to work with our partners locally, regionally, and nationally in order to make real and necessary system changes for victims/survivors in order for them to be heard, believed, safe and accepted.

**Natalie Thompson**  
**Chief Executive Officer - CRASAC**



Heard Believed Safe Accepted

# The impact of Covid

*I really appreciate how as a charity, you guys still found a way to help myself and others during lockdown. Everyone I spoke to made me feel safe and I felt comfortable asking questions regarding certain topics. (Client)*

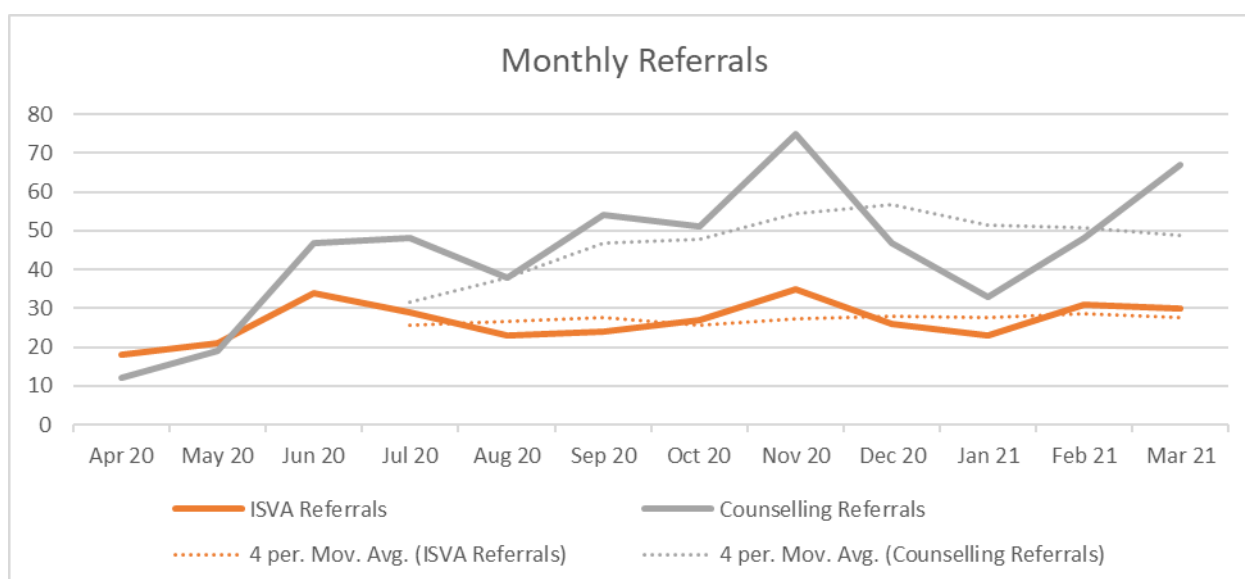
The most significant impact on CRASAC in 2020/21 was the Covid pandemic which disrupted services and caused high levels of anxiety amongst clients and staff members; however, staff showed their resilience and commitment, and worked hard to ensure that clients got the support they needed. In the first lockdown services were delivered by phone or online as the premises had to be closed. The logistics to enable staff to work from home in a safe and confidential manner was challenging, but within a few days, and a great deal of effort, all staff were able to access the necessary systems to continue providing services.

Over the next 12 months a large amount of funding was secured which enabled us to purchase essential ICT equipment and resources to allow us to operate through the pandemic; the building was cleared and cleaned and brought up to Covid health and safety standards, and in September 2020 face-to-face services started to resume.

There was concern that the number of referrals had dipped in the first 6 months, and this was thought to be in part due to the lack of 'first responders', such as teachers and doctors, who were no longer gaining access to children and young people and therefore unable to identify the signs of abuse; also the fact that many victims were now more unsafe than ever being effectively 'locked in' with their abusers.

As we went in and out of lockdowns and school closures, referrals picked up and more people became willing to try online support.

The graph below shows the constant change in referrals over the last year and how it reflects the opening and closing of school and wider society.



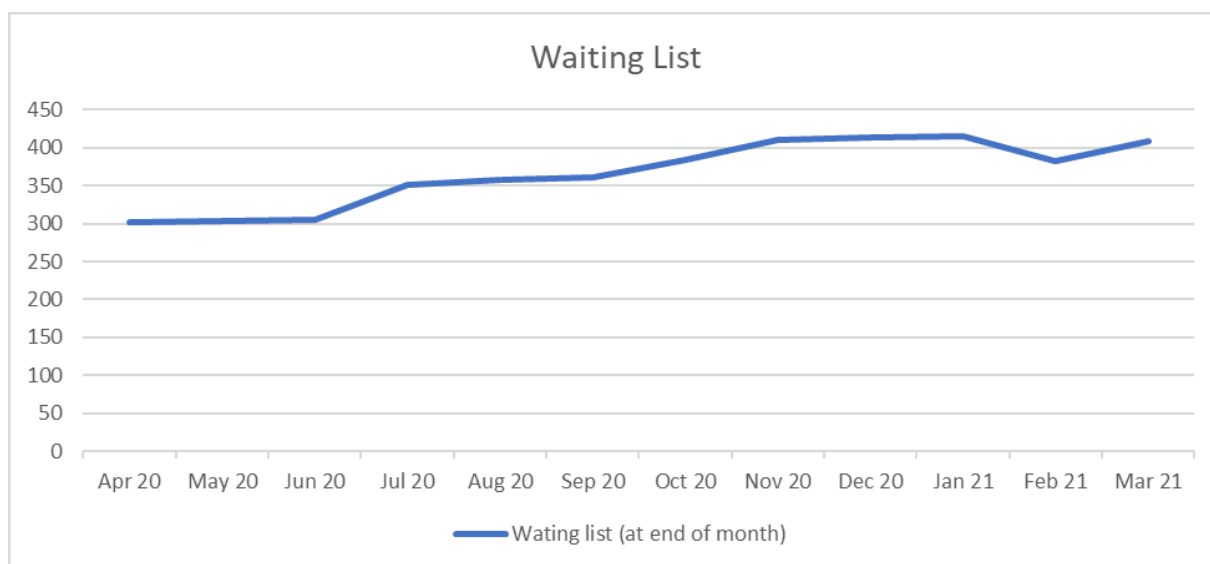
Heard Believed Safe Accepted

# The impact of Covid

*...appreciated the fact that [CRASAC] was able to offer an efficient and professional service through lockdown ... – the pace, ease, and encouragement of transitioning to online was commendable.*  
(Counselling Client)

The number of people waiting for counselling and the time people were having to wait steadily increased throughout the year, to our highest ever levels, with **Children and Young People most affected** due to it not being possible to offer online support to under 12's (support instead was offered to parents/guardians).

The waiting list peaked in January 2021 at 415 people.



The **helpline** was also severely impacted as volunteers were unable to provide support from home and staff members were affected by Covid. The helpline operated a 'call-back' service until it finally resumed a live service in May 2021.

Despite all the challenges Covid brought, we have **witnessed many positive impacts** too. Staff should be commended on how well they have looked out for one another and supported each other. Bonds between workers and within teams have grown and strengthened and the team have proved their resilience in the face of adversity and challenge.

The organisation is now **more agile**, and staff have the equipment to work seamlessly between home and work, making us more resilient to any future unexpected incidents.

We continue to offer online and telephone services making us more accessible to those who may have previously struggled to access our support.

There have also been significant **improvements this year to our systems and infrastructure**, and a real move towards a greener paper-free environment.

*Heard Believed Safe Accepted*

# 2020/2021 in Numbers

Much work has gone into developing our bespoke cloud-based customer relations management system (CRMS). This system was named LUNA by our admin staff meaning *Learning & Understanding, Network & Analytics*.

We are now able to better understand, manage and use our data to enable us to improve planning and service development and feed into local and national sexual violence strategies.

The following statistics relate to achievements between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021:

**2,235**

people were supported by CRASAC

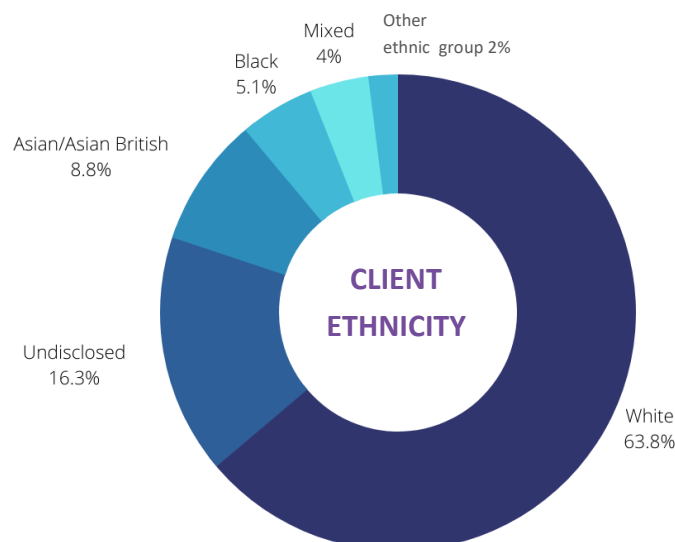
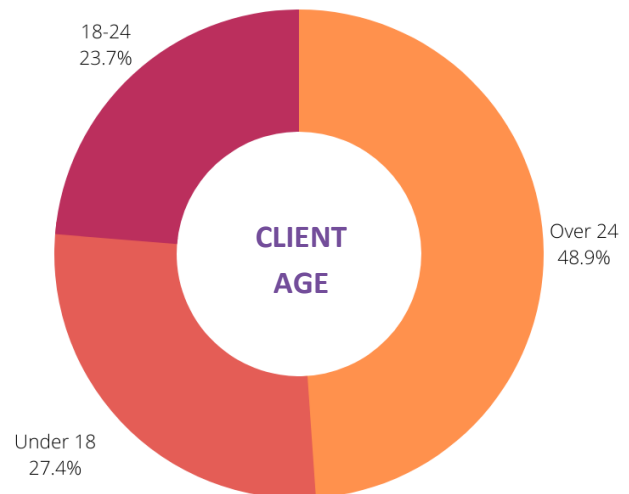
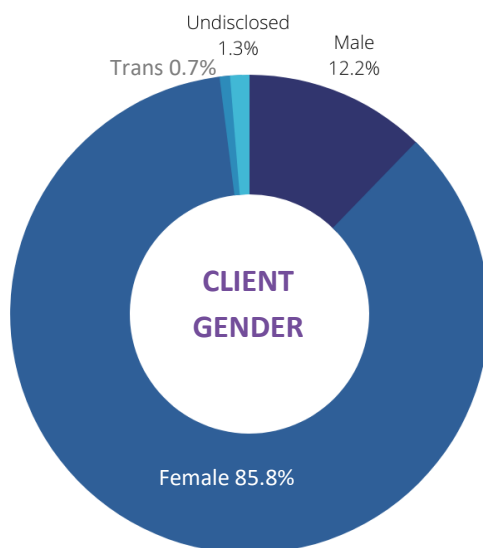


**889**

people were referred for services

**443**

people started a service



*Heard Believed (Safe) Accepted*

The counselling service received **689** new referrals for counselling including 197 for short-term crisis counselling referred directly from the SARC (Sexual Abuse Referral Centre); they delivered 2,841 sessions to 255 people.

Counselling clients are asked to complete a self-assessment questionnaire at the start and end of their counselling journey; the graphic overleaf shows the average improvements over this time for 109 clients who completed counselling in 2020/21.

*"I felt quite defensive and sceptical at the beginning and was at first worried my responses or cynicism would be interpreted as rude or disengaged but [counsellor] helped me open up not just to her but also my family. My friends were somewhat aware of what happened but I never envisaged I'd be able to discuss this with my family but I did. [Counsellor] was great at speaking to me at not only a professional level but at a friendly level and I didn't feel as though we were pressured to 'fix' the issue and call it a day. The sessions weren't focussed on just using them up to see what we could achieve, and I really appreciated that. [Counsellor] explained a lot to me which I needed to hear and I'm very grateful I was able to use the service." (Counselling client)*

*"Having the space to work through those messy weird questions I had. The questions I had and feelings I had would make people outside of CRASAC question me and tell me not to think that way and that is stupid. But CRASAC supported me through it and worked through it with me, you never told me that it was a stupid thing to think of and you helped me to let go." (Counselling Client)*

We are very proud of so many of our volunteer placement counsellors who have progressed into paid employment this year and wish them all the best in their counselling careers.

We would like to say a huge thank-you to all our volunteer counsellors who give their time to support clients whilst gaining their qualification.

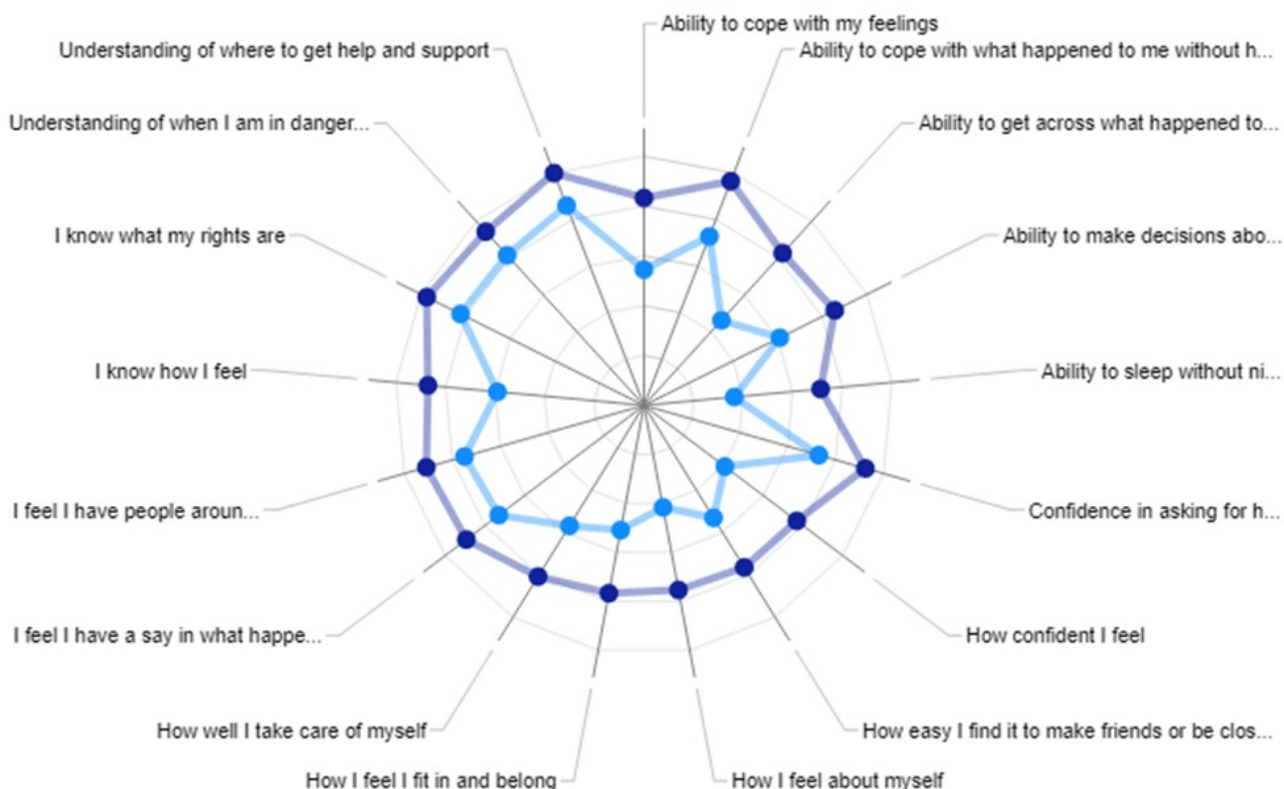
### Average improvements over time for clients completing counselling in 2020/2021

Counselling clients reported over 80% improvement in the way they feel about themselves after counselling, and 50% more able to cope with their feelings.

#### Average Rating Before, Average Rating After

BY QUESTION

● Average Rating Before ● Average Rating After



The ISVA service received **323** referrals and supported 561 clients.

We made 25,625 external contacts (phone calls, emails & letters) and attended 1,733 sessions with or on behalf of our clients, with 20% (5,526) of these contacts relating to advocacy issues such as housing, health and education.

Throughout the year we supported 264 clients with active Police/CPS cases and saw 145 new clients start their Criminal Justice System process alongside an ISVA.

ISVA clients are asked to complete a self-assessment questionnaire at the start and end of their ISVA support; the graphic on the following page shows the average improvements over this time for 149 clients who left the ISVA service in 2020/21.

*The ISVA service is invaluable to Police investigations leading up to Court, the Court process, and the conclusion of Court. Without ISVA support I think that a lot of victims would disengage. Police cannot provide the emotional support for victims as they need to remain impartial so as not to undermine the case.*

*The investigation I have recently had resulted in a child being able to go to Court and speak out about historical sexual abuse from her father. The ISVA support was part of the reason she was able to do this. The victim continues to have support from the ISVA as she has also had mixed emotions after sentencing.*

*I have also found it useful when ISVAs start to conversations with victims about victim personal statement and have often found these more impactful as the victim can open up more to ISVA than a Police officer.*  
(West Midlands Police Officer)

*"I felt listened to and supported in areas above and beyond my assault. It was a calming presence when I felt far from it. Nothing appeared to be too much trouble. I didn't feel pressured to report the incident and was then supported when I wanted to report it." (ISVA Client)*

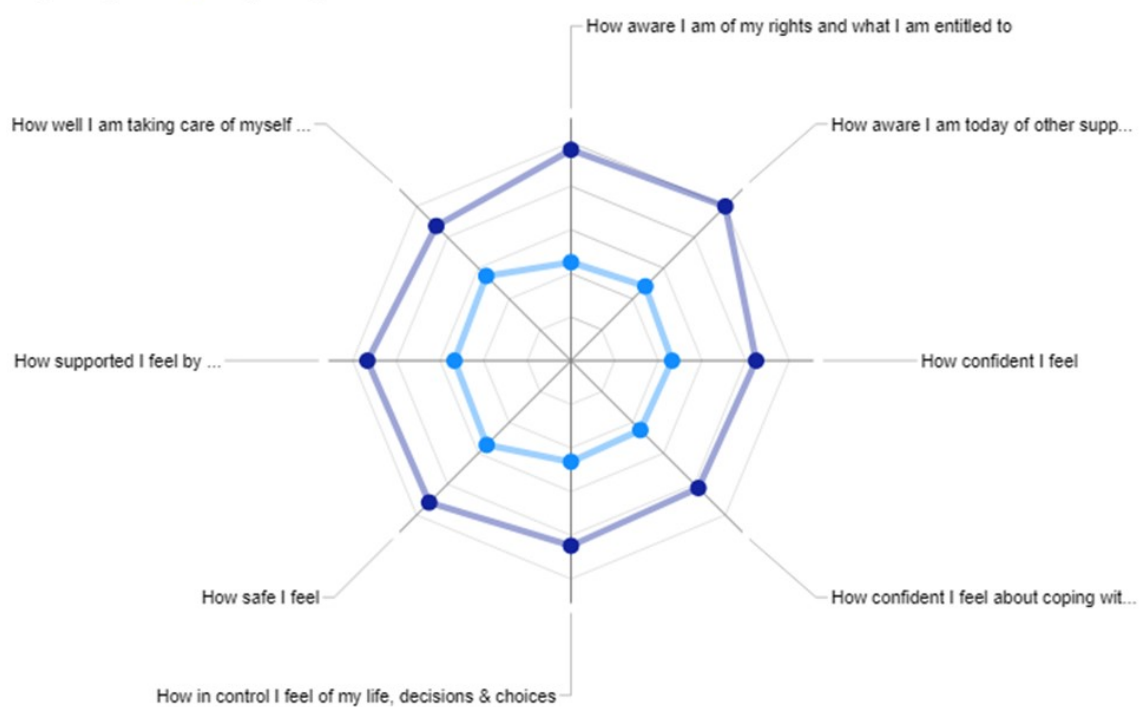
### Average improvements over time for clients who left the ISVA service in 2020/2021:

After working with an ISVA clients felt over 110% more aware of their rights and entitlements, almost 85% more confident, and 70% safer than they did before accessing the service.

#### Average Rating Before, Average Rating After

BY QUESTION

● Average Rating Before ● Average Rating After



Heard Believed (Safe) Accepted

# Services

## Training

**Vicarious Trauma training** was delivered via a series of online workshops to around 60 frontline staff at Penderels Trust—a national charity which supports young people and adults with disabilities. We also provided Vicarious Trauma training to the staff of a Local Authority Family Hub who provide information, advice and guidance to children, young people and their families in need of help.

**Coventry University** commissioned CRASAC to provide specialist training to their Social Work Degree Apprentices to inform their work supporting vulnerable adults, families and children at risk of sexual abuse as part of their study programme.

Over thirty students took part in CRASAC's evidence based half day workshop which covered all aspects of sexual violence including prevalence, the criminal justice system, myths and stereotypes, dealing with disclosures and trauma informed practice.

*"A huge thanks to CRASAC for an informative and powerful workshop today for our Year 2 Apprentices, considering all aspects of sexual violence. What challenging yet vital work they are doing. It was an incredibly important session which the Apprentices all really appreciated."*

Course Director for the Social Work Apprenticeship

*"An excellent training session which was hosted very well and much needed. It was informative, insightful and easy to follow. The content was pitched at the right level and exactly what we needed."*

Manager, Penderels Trust

## Outreach

The Outreach service attended 26 events this year.

Outreach was particularly affected by Covid and a creative approach to 'online' outreach was followed. Our Outreach worker even went on national Pakistan TV to talk about sexual violence in front of an audience of over 7,500 people.

*Heard Believed (Safe) Accepted*

This year our Helpline received **3,900** incoming contacts and made 2,658 outbound communications.

For many people this is the first point of disclosure and the first time they had spoken about their experiences. The Helpline is an essential element of CRASAC's ability to reach out and support people with early intervention and start them on their pathway to recovery.

*"Volunteering at CRASAC is volunteering within a community, it's a family. It's hard what we do at CRASAC and sometimes it can feel unbearably hard but having the unwavering support of other volunteers and the staff at CRASAC means we can support survivors to the best of our ability and really feel like we have made a difference."*

*"For me personally, I get a lot out of CRASAC and sometimes feel it helps me an individual in my own journey as much as we are helping the service users. I can only thank the organisation for this, you really can't explain how empowering it is to work with such strong, brave women. It really is a privilege to work alongside the staff and volunteers at CRASAC and I wouldn't change it for the world".*

(Helpline Volunteer)

### Emotional Support Service

2020 saw the introduction of a new Emotional Support service, providing assistance to those on the waiting list. Sixty-six clients were supported, 129 sessions were offered and 114 sessions attended.

*"It's nice talking to someone who understands what I have been through without feeling guilty."*

*"Since the provision of grounding exercises, I have been able to manage my anxiety when in public."*

# Plans and objectives for 2021/2022

Our strategy was refined this year and over the next 12 months we will focus our work on the three key areas below:

## Services & Prevention

Develop and deliver sufficient **high quality responsive services** capable of meeting need and demand including **prevention activities**

## Influence

**Influence policy** to address the causes and consequences of gender based sexual violence

## Sustainability

Ensure an **excellent and sustainable** organisation capable of growth

We have spent the last couple of years stabilising the organisation after a period of significant growth and change. This year we will start to build on what we know works and is needed, and this involves the recruitment of the following posts:

- ⇒ Outreach Coordinator
- ⇒ Helpline Volunteers
- ⇒ Placement Volunteer Counsellors
- ⇒ Training Officer
- ⇒ Young Persons Prevention Worker

# A Survivor's Story

CRASAC provided advocacy support in 2015 to a young person who was entrenched in CSE for many years. Ellie's\* case was at the centre of a big operation between West Midlands and Warwickshire police where the DS received an MBE for her part in the operation and CRASAC were highly commended for their input.

After receiving support from CRASAC, Ellie went on to talk at Police & Safeguarding Conferences across the country to share her experience and highlight how they could make a difference to the young person's journey through the Criminal Justice System.

Ellie is now a mum and is keen to start volunteering for CRASAC, she says of her experience:

*"I once found myself in a situation I could not see myself ever getting out of with no one to talk to. I was moved to over 50 foster care placements as they could not handle me.*

*"I was referred to CRASAC and met someone who never judged me, worked very hard to get me engaged, and never gave up on me. I was helped with so many police planning meetings, the [Missing Person's Unit] and carers. [My ISVA] was there at the trial and sentencing and her colleagues always made me feel comfortable and made me tea.*

*"During those few years, CRASAC provided me with a safe place where I could meet all the many professionals and police involved.*

*"You are not nine to five workers ladies, you are life savers."*

\* Name has been changed to protect identity.

*Heard Believed (Safe) Accepted*