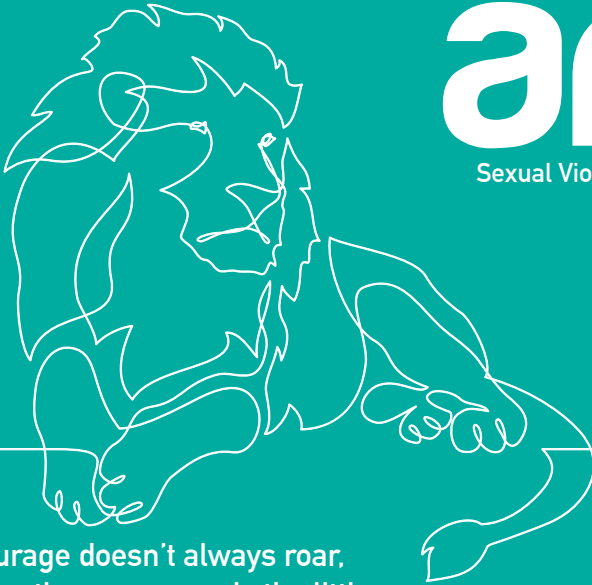


arch

Sexual Violence Services in Teesside



Courage doesn't always roar,
sometimes courage is the little
voice at the end of the day that
says I'll try again tomorrow

LET US ROAR
FOR YOU - BUT
ONLY WHEN
YOU'RE READY

Your Arch ISVA is:



"Welcome.
Breathe. Just breathe.
The hardest part is over.
You're here now."
Arch Client

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

All of our ARCH workers have lots of knowledge helping young people who have experienced sexual violence and abuse and we want you to know

WE BELIEVE
WE CARE
WE ARE WITH YOU



Some of the words and abbreviations you might read or hear while you are with us.

CAMHS: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Disclosure: A fact, especially a secret, that is shared

Counsellor: A person trained to give guidance on personal or psychological problems

OIC: Officer in Charge of your case

Counselling: Professional assistance in resolving personal or psychological problems

DC: Detective Constable

CPS: The Crown Prosecution Service

PC: Police Officer

ISVA: Independent Sexual Violence Advisor

Psychological Problems: The mental and emotional state of a person

SARC: Sexual Assault Referral Centre

You will see a selection of messages from some amazing young people who wanted to share their experiences, in their own words about how they found the courage to speak out and what happened when they did.

We would like to give a big thank you to all those young people from ARCH Teesside and the Amethyst service in North Wales who shared some of their stories in the hope that it will help others.

Always ask if someone uses a word or an abbreviation you're not sure of or have not heard before.

THE JOURNEY



What we can tell you from our experience is that everyone's journey is very personal to them and what happens depends on so many different things. To begin this little book, Annie from Amethyst wrote this and we think it is spot on!

"Dear Friend, I've heard that you are going on a journey through a similar thing to me and I want to say don't be scared. Just be strong, there are people to guide you and tell you that you're a strong and independent person just like the rest of us. Be safe. Don't worry because you'll feel you have millions of supporters with you who are on your side. Love and look after yourself and never give up on your dreams. From all of the people like you. You got this!"

Annie

People sometimes ask us if it's worth telling the police and if it would actually change anything if they did? Everyone is unique and copes differently with any given situation depending on the circumstances, but most young people tell us they didn't look back once they told someone and got the support they needed.

"They will believe you!"

"Be brave"

"Just breathe"

"Do it - you owe it to yourself."

TELLING SOMEONE

You might hear the word disclosure when talking about your experience but all it really means is when it was you first told someone.



"If you feel like you can actually do it then definitely go for it. Do it cos in the short run it sucks, it really does suck, but overall and looking back on it now, I'm happy I did it. I know it took a lot of strength and courage and bravery or whatever anybody wants to say. I'm just glad that it's finished and I don't have to endure it anymore."

Abbie

"I told no one until I was 14, the first person I ever told was my teacher. Saying what happened aloud was tough, I had built up so much fear about telling anyone but you know what - it felt great."

Jack

Many young people have told us that the hardest thing they ever had to do was to actually tell someone.

"As a child I'd gone through similar situations and felt like it kind of had a knock on effect of the person I am today and it had a knock on effect on my anxiety, everything and I just felt like no other girl should have to feel like that and if I were to not go to the police then he would have carried on doing it and I felt like... in a way... I had to stand up for the people who weren't willing to speak out who were just too scared to."

Ellie

Sometimes people don't tell anyone about what happened to them because they think they won't be believed. ARCH will always believe you and IN YOU.

"There are always going to be people who don't want to understand or believe in you but don't give up on finding the ones that do believe in you.

After years of not being able to tell what really happened to me, I felt a relief that I said the words. They knew and it wasn't me keeping his secret anymore."

Even though you might not want us to, sometimes we have to tell others about what happened. This is called safeguarding and all our workers are very experienced in this and will do everything they can to help keep you and others safe.

"When I first opened up to someone about what happened, I was in counselling and despite me not wanting anyone to know, my counsellor had to inform the police and social services as well as the people I was dreading: my mum and dad. This may be scary because you never know how your mum and dad will react. Will they be angry? Sad? Disappointed? Turns out they were all three, but luckily those feelings weren't towards me. They were extremely supportive and even though they felt so much hatred for this boy, they were so patient and understanding."

TALKING TO THE POLICE

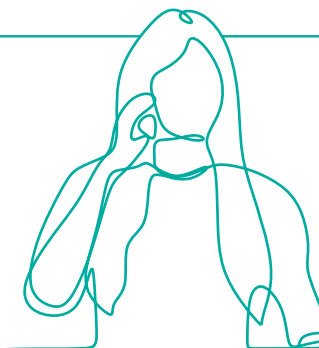
It's not unusual to be a bit cautious of the police as a young person who may not have come across them before. We have lots of experience working with the police and helping to make sure they do their very best for you.

"The day I spoke to the police I had never been more nervous, anxious, scared, the list could go on. Walking into the room my tummy went into knots and I thought my heart was going to beat out of my chest. A million and one thoughts were racing through my head "What if I can't speak" "What if I cry" "What if I'm not going to be believed" "What if I just can't do it" the room went quiet and then the police lady asked me to say my name. As soon as those first words left my mouth the words began to tumble out. It feels like a blur."

Robyn

Many officers in the Cleveland police force are specially trained by us to help people who have gone through your experiences.

"The police sorted an interview. For me, this was the hardest bit because I'd never spoke to anyone about what happened until now. The officer was really nice and a good listener. She made me feel like it was okay to talk about it."



MEDICAL AND CHECK UP

Every case is different but sometimes there might be a need to get some specialist and confidential medical advice or treatment from somewhere like a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). We can help you to get the support you need when you need it.

"The SARC isn't a place anyone wants to go, but it is not as bad as what you think in your head. The SARC is a safe place. Everyone is kind and understanding, you will get the support you need even if at first it seems really scary, you're safe and you'll receive all the support and advice you need."

Sophie

"I was expecting an entire, like lab facility and, it was kind of like that but a lot more welcoming. Definitely go for it because if there is something there, better catch it early on."

Will

"I have never been so uncomfortable in my life! But I knew in the long run it was better to be safe than sorry!"

Danni



WAITING FOR THE CPS

Once the police have investigated and gathered as much evidence as they can, they will decide if they have enough to send a case to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) who have specially trained lawyers to take a case to a court trial. Sometimes the police will not have enough evidence and will tell you in person. This does not mean you are not believed, just they have been unable to collect as much evidence as they need for the CPS.

"Waiting for the CPS decision does take time. It can feel as if it is taking years like your happiness and life is on hold but eventually their decision will come through but remember their decision doesn't determine your life."



GETTING SUPPORT

Many of the young people we have supported told us the most important thing once they had spoken out was to have someone to talk to and not judge them.

"Working with my ISVA helped me realise that it's not my fault, that you know, there's nothing to be ashamed of because what happened, happened"

Louise

"I honestly have no idea what I would have done without my ISVA. She's been there every step of the way. I never knew that people like ISVAs even existed but I wouldn't be where I am without her. Words can't describe how helpful and how much of an impact she's had on my life."

"My ISVA organised some ARCH counselling because I was still really low and suicidal. This is where I felt things were getting better. Every week I went to see my counsellor and she helped me pick at all the anxieties and worries about what happened, my future relationships, my current friendships and how all these could (and surely were affected) by the events."

Gill

PREPARING FOR COURT

The thought about going to court can be very daunting but your ISVA will speak to you about the measures that can be put in place to help you. One of the measures is visiting the court beforehand so you can have a look around and ask questions.

"It wasn't so scary on the actual court day, going into the court cos I knew what to expect, I think if I had gone into the court and thought it was something it wasn't I would have been a bit more overwhelmed and a bit more scared. I mean, I was scared but it was a bit more 'I know this'."

"I'm glad I took the chance to view the court before my case because it allowed me to take in my surroundings and meet all of the staff beforehand."

Charlie

"You get a realisation of the court itself because its hard to think of what it would be like and you get shown where you sit and where everything will be."

"I think my advice to someone who is waiting to go to court after being victim to a crime like I suffered would be to stay calm. Talk about your problems, don't hold them in or when you get to court it will be worse than it should be. Also, prepare yourself, its hard. But I think you shouldn't try to put on a brave face like I did, if you're upset be upset, if you're angry be angry (to a certain extent), but it will be the best decision you have made in your life to even come this far, because believe me, I know it's hard. And I hope you get the outcome you deserve."



GOING TO COURT



This court survival guide was written by one of our amazing young people who went through what you might be going through now.

HOW NOT TO STRESS TOO MUCH

Step 1:

Think about all your loved ones and how proud they will be of you today

Step 2:

Make yourself comfortable (trust me, it helps) and keep close to your ISVA who will help you through the day with any questions or worries – they are the best

Step 3:

Think about 10 things that make you happy

Step 4:

Make sure you tell the truth, nothing but the truth (it will count in your favour)

Step 5:

Don't overthink what might happen or be said on the day and just keep focused

Step 6:

Last but not least, relax. I know it's hard and I've been in your situation, twice, but it helps if you can relax.

"Throughout the days of my trial the staff were very helpful, making sure you have security with you to make you feel safe. My ISVA was extremely helpful during this as she not only offered advice and guidance, she gave me distractions and a shoulder to cry on."

"I imagined the court would be 1000 x worse than it actually was. I was so scared going into the court room and so anxious, but I was reminded that I'm not the one on trial here, I'm just here to tell the jury what happened."

"It was to me personally awful but amazing. I overcame something I'd feared for months but also had to go through the hardest part of being put on the box and dealt with by the barrister. It's worth it in the end though."

"The judge... was really nice, he made it easier cos he wasn't a scary person, he was nice, and he was friendly so it was just easier."



AFTER COURT

For many, the day after court is a great relief especially if the verdict is guilty. For others it is more difficult and can be something that really impacts on them, no matter what the verdict was. ARCH can help before and after court.

"We'd been waiting all day. My phone rings and it was My ISVA and I looked at my Mum and I was like "now is the time" so I answered it and she said, well done and she said are you ready to hear the verdict and I was like, NO! I was scared, I was worried, I was like, what is going to happen, have I done enough, but part of me was also like, I must have done enough."

Sarah

"Months after court I was stressed, anxious, constantly annoyed at everything and everyone. I kept telling myself every tiara will fall, you just got to pick it back up and keep moving forward towards the crown."

"Once you're out of the court room you'll feel the relief and it'll be worth it. Keep fighting."

"How I felt the day after court was awful, I felt weird, and I've spoken to other people about that, so the feeling after court is normal, like I had a bit of me missing, like I'd had everything held in then a bit taken out. I think cos I had to talk about everything and it was all sort of brought forward. I just felt like it was like anxiety times a million, all of the symptoms you could have times a million for a few days."

"I was very sad when the verdict came back but my ISVA helped me make sense of it and you know, I am stronger now than I have ever been and I'm not his victim anymore"

"To others who've been through similar I would say you're not alone. It feels like the weight of the world is crushing you, but with time and support it does get easier."



COPING

This is the last page. It can be difficult to cope once the criminal justice process is over with and many young people tell us this is when they sometimes feel a little lonely as so much was happening and then nothing. We can help so talk to your ISVA and they will do their very best to help.

"I'm not going to sugar-coat it, I was suicidal and self-harming for a long while. It also felt hard as it felt like everyone was treading on ice around me. I just wanted to stop being a problem. But then a few months ago, I realised that I deserve to be here and I deserve to be heard, just like you deserve to be heard. You have a right to live, have fun, be free to do well and things that bring you joy despite what has happened to you. So the real advice I have to tell you, is to just talk to someone, let them know the situation and make it clear to whoever did this to you, that it's not okay and you are worth more than what they did to you."

"It's easy said than done, but it's going to be okay. Talk to your ISVA about the feeling and thoughts you are having, they are there for YOU! Be proud of YOU."

"I've struggled and at many points I couldn't see a way out. It's been a huge rollercoaster but so happy I done it and as the process continued, I began feeling better bit by bit."

"But talking to someone and re-engaging in the things that make you happy. The storm doesn't last forever. It feels like it, but it won't."



If you are worried or scared for your safety in an emergency you should always call the Police on 999. Childline can be also be contacted 24/7 if you need someone to talk to. Calls to 0800 1111 are free and confidential.

www.archteesside.org
(01642) 822331
f @archnortheast
t @ArchTeesside