



Update for Bute & Cowal Community Planning Group Argyll and Bute Rape Crisis 7th May 2019

Organisation Background

Argyll and Bute Rape Crisis (ABRC) provides free and confidential support and advocacy to women, men and transgender survivors (aged 12 +) who have experienced rape, sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual bullying, stalking and commercial sexual exploitation – whether this is recent or historic. We also offer support to non-abusing partners and family members of survivors of sexual violence.

We aim to provide high quality specialist support to help address the impact that sexual violence has on survivors' lives and enable them to take control over their lives. Many survivors have complex needs and our specialist support helps:

- To focus on increasing chances of improved life skills and reduced harmful, risk taking behaviour.
- The promotion of self-esteem and personal safety, reducing risk of sustained sexual abuse through the practice of negative coping strategies.
- To reduce dependency and misuse of prescribed and non-prescribed medication, drugs and/or alcohol, improving health, well-being, education and employment prospects.

We are committed to the improvement of the lives of survivors through a strong foundation of Provision, Protection, Prevention and Promotion, working to achieve the following outcomes:

- Responding to and promoting the needs of survivors of sexual violence through an empowerment model of work
- Reducing the impact of sexual violence by supporting, educating, informing and advocating for survivors
- Challenging societal attitudes that condone and collude with sexual violence and doing that in ways that both educate and empower

Service Delivery Bute and Cowal

As Argyll and Bute is such a large geographical area we have 4 small offices spread across the region in Dunoon, Oban, Rothesay and Campbeltown. These offices are vital as they provide a safe, confidential space for survivors to receive our support, survivors in Argyll and Bute are additionally disadvantaged as it is a diverse local authority area and very transport deprived. These factors mean we cannot centralise our services and therefore survivors would have to travel long distances at considerable cost if there is no service available in their locality.

We currently provide services in a variety of ways:

Specialist support and advocacy services for historic or recent trauma.

These services are available via face to face, by telephone, Skype or email in line with the preferences of the survivor. Non-offending family members and friends are also able to access support. Survivors of sexual trauma are very likely to have who have additional complex needs i.e. poor mental health, addictions and homelessness due to the acknowledged crossover between these issues and sexual trauma. Due to the trauma and

negative emotions linked to sexual abuse, survivors may be at risk for mental health conditions, therefore survivors of sexual abuse are more likely to develop; depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress (PTSD), personality disorders and addictions. It is well documented and researched and we know that face to face support and advocacy can make a difference to a survivor by enabling them to develop positive strategies for coping, which better aids them to; - maintain and improve relationships - sustain education/employment or seek training/volunteering/employment opportunities - overcome isolation and social exclusion - reduce self-harming practices - improve mental health and wellbeing. By accessing our service we help address the impact that sexual violence has on survivors' lives and enable them to take control over their lives.

Support for Bute

A very unique challenge in the last 6 months has been supporting the communities on the Isle of Bute in the aftermath of a tragic event in the summer. This tragedy has devastated the island which is a small close knit community with almost everyone being affected in some way. As soon as the incident was confirmed ABRC were approached by the school to offer support to young people and their parents who had been impacted, as well as the Head Teacher and the staff group who were also struggling to come to terms with what had happened. We are very well known to the school and the Education Department and they had full confidence in our ability to help. Our workers provided additional support over the summer and during police investigations to the young people affected.

This unprecedented issue has been challenging for our workers who are very at risk of vicarious trauma as a result of hearing all the individual stories so they have required additional clinical supervision sessions to assist them cope with this. The school were very concerned about on-going support for the students once the trial began so they were able to secure funding until June '19 for our workers to be based within the school so we are on hand to support anyone who needs it. We are very happy to provide support in whatever way we can at this time and in the future as we are concerned about long term impacts on the young people.

Youth Support and Prevention Programme (TESSA)

Provides workshops to young people in secondary education in Argyll and Bute, increasing awareness and understanding of all forms of sexual abuse/exploitation and to feel confident in making disclosures, having access to early intervention of specialist support services where necessary by facilitating a range of age-appropriate workshops (these could include cyber bullying, sexual harassment, peer pressure, grooming, media, sexual abuse, legal issues, consent, body image and internet safety) and support to young people in mainstream education, looked after children and to young people identified by schools as being particularly vulnerable. The workshops/support gives them a safe place to explore issues around healthy relationships, grooming and internet safety and to increase their awareness and understanding of sexual abuse, personal boundaries, harassment and sexual bullying, to feel confident in making disclosures and have access to early intervention of specialist support services where necessary. It is very difficult for young people to express their experiences and feelings and may never have verbalised their experiences before, so having the confidence to this in a safe place is vital.

Both Secondary schools have received this support in the last school year but sadly, our Comic Relief funding ceased in September '18 after 6 years of funding and despite our best efforts we have been unable to secure funding to be able to continue this service in the current format. We applied to 10 different funders all of which were unfortunately unsuccessful, we were able to gain small amounts of funding to deliver a very 'piece-meal' service to complete 2018-19 timetable but there is no further scope for this at the moment. We whole-heartedly believe a Prevention Programme is vitally important to our young people and communities, it is such an important area of work to raise awareness on and tackle entrenched attitudes and behaviours. Early intervention is always key and the spotlight on

ACES highlights just how damaging adverse experiences in childhood can be in terms of lasting impact, therefore we have put a lot of effort into researching and completing funding applications, we have met with many different people and highlighted it with Education, NHS, Local Councillors and MP/MSPs.

Tessa (Learning Disability) programme

Due to funding constraints this was available in Dunoon Grammar School only, RS Macdonald Charitable Trust continued to fund the TESSA LD (Learning Disabilities) Support and Prevention Project which is part of TESSA Project. This project provides early intervention support and advocacy services for young people who have learning disabilities in the 12 – 18 age group, who are at increased risk of sexual abuse/sexual exploitation. To increase their awareness and understanding of sexual abuse, personal boundaries, harassment and sexual bullying; feel confident in making disclosures and have access to early intervention of specialist support services where necessary. This is undertaken by developing and delivering bespoke, face to face, support and prevention workshops.

To undertake this work the Workers developed and sourced specialist workshop materials to meet the specific needs of the young people. This included craft materials, videos, apps and resources that the worker created. When the young person begins with the worker they identify their abilities, level of understanding and the issues needed to be addressed. The worker then customises the workshops to them and sources the specific materials needed. The range of workshops which have been developed and undertaken are as follows:

- **Child's Rights**
- **Emotions and Feelings**
- **Friendships/Relationships, online & offline, positive and negative**
- **Safe Strangers**
- **Internet Safety**
- **Bullying/Cyberbullying**
- **Safe/Unsafe Touch**
- **Consent**
- **Anxiety and self-harm**
- **Online reporting**
- **LGBTQ++**
- **Sexting/nudes**
- **Sexual abuse**
- **Grooming & Exploitation**

As already reported, the funding for our Tessa Prevention Programme came to an end last year, and the Tessa (LD) element sadly will end at the summer holidays. Although we understood the challenges we would have once our funding for Tessa and Tessa LD came to an end, I don't think we realised just how difficult it would be to gain further funding for these essential projects, with so much emphasis on prevention and young people we weren't quite prepared for what a seemingly impossible, frustrating and time consuming task it has been.

Individual Survivor Art Therapy Project

We have been lucky enough to be able to begin offering individual Art Therapy to survivors across the area, funded by The Big Lottery for 2 days a week. The idea for this project came from our PGW as well as our face-to-face support work it had been identified (through worker experience, participant feedback and feedback from third parties) that there would be a need and a want for us to be able to offer a bespoke one-to-one Art Therapy programme either as a follow on from the group work, in conjunction with Talking Therapy or as stand-alone support. As art-making can be an ideal form of expression for people who have difficulties with verbal expression this type of support would be also be beneficial for people who have

difficulties around speech and language, learning disabilities, people on the Autistic Spectrum as well some younger survivors, therefore making our service more inclusive.

Helpline

We operate a helpline for survivors to access information and support out with normal working hours.

Partnership Group Work Creative Therapies (PGW)

This programme is funded through the Survivor Scotland Innovation and Development Fund and is aimed at survivors who have additional complex needs i.e. poor mental health, addictions and homelessness due to the acknowledged crossover between these issues and sexual trauma. People suffering from one or more of these issues are often left more vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to the lifestyles these issues bring. PGW sessions run for 10 weeks for approx. 2-2.5 hours at a time and are run locally across Argyll & Bute making them easy for survivors to access. The sessions allow survivors to build a relationship with ABRC prior to committing themselves to engaging in support. Within each cluster of sessions groups in Dunoon and Rothesay are included and we have excellent links with our partner agencies.

The activities in these sessions have included:

- **Many forms of experimental art such as;** wax on canvas, silicone oil and acrylic on canvas, encouragement of use of mixed media and experimenting with many unique combinations of materials to “see what happens”
- **Papier Mache art bowls**
- **Hands That Tell a Story** – these are plaster hands that can be decorated with a personal theme or can just be used as another surface with which to make art on.
- **Wire and tissue paper sculptural objects /wire and mod-roc object**
- **Group Paintings**
- **Individual Paintings /Artwork** using acrylics, water colours, gouache, pastels etc.
- **Artist’s Postcards** using various art materials and collage

By giving people a safe place to meet and do something creative, they can experience life where, for that short period of time, the difficulties and challenges of everyday lives recede to a more manageable size. This can show them an alternative to other coping strategies which may be harmful. By using the creative processes from the sessions in their homes, they can continue the benefits beyond those two hours.

Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP)

ABRC provides support to students in the two high schools. This is funded through the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) to provide 1:1 support and education sessions in Rothesay Academy and DGS, to pupils affected by drugs and alcohol or who are experiencing a range of mental health issues. The council’s objective is to support the work of the provider and to ensure this support results in wider community benefits and achieves the Council’s **four** strategic objectives:

- **Working together to improve potential of our people**
- **Working together to improve potential of our communities**
- **Working together to improve potential of our areas**
- **Working together to improve potential of our organisation**

We work in close partnership with school staff and the ADP to deliver this support, we believe this fits well within our prevention agenda and again raises our profile within the Education department and ADP. Feedback from key school staff has been very favourable with both schools requesting continuation of this service for next term.

Women’s Empowerment Group

It was suggested during our evaluations that a peer support group would be '**a great and beneficial addition**', we have taken this feedback on board and have applied to fund a Women's Group, we submitted a successful application to the local Health and Wellbeing grant fund for this project. We were very thankful to be awarded the money to provide this. We are currently providing specialist support and advocacy services to several young women survivors of a wide range of sexual trauma who are all self-isolating because of their trauma and we are aware of other young women who are at increased risk of abuse because of their lifestyle choices. As we know peer support can make a difference as positive outcomes are well researched and documented in a wealth of studies. In particular Repper 2013 sums it with the following quote:

'Peer support offers many health and quality of life benefits. Both peer support workers and the service users they are supporting feel empowered in their own recovery journey, have greater confidence and self-esteem and a more positive sense of identity, they feel less self-stigmatisation, have more skills and feel more valued.'

A peer group would provide them with a safe and confidential place to identify and discuss common issues which, once addressed in a positive manner, could help improve their mental, physical and emotional health. The group would also give the young women access to other organisations which could help with community engagement. Supporting self-management in conjunction with peer support can only be beneficial to participants and, in time, to the wider community.

The group will enable participants to make, and be supported to make, more positive choices in their lives which will impact on their overall mental, emotional and physical health. This will enable survivors to pass on the information and skills they learn to others, thereby having an impact on their own social circle. In time this will also benefit their wider communities as they will be more able to engage with their communities, rather than continuing to live fairly isolated lives. In addition this will also impact on their families in terms of living healthier lifestyles.

This will take place through a combination of facilitated peer group support, education and practical skills sessions, learning through experience in a supportive, nurturing and safe environment.

LGBTI Charter

We have also achieved the LGBT Bronze Charter award facilitated by LGBT Youth Scotland. The LGBT Charter is a powerful tool to help everyone in the organisation focus on the quality of services we provide to survivors of all genders. It helps demonstrate our commitment to LGBTI+ people in the local areas sending a positive message to LGBTI+ people that they are included, valued, supported, and will be treated fairly when they engage with our organisation.

According to figures from Police Scotland reports of sexual crimes in Argyll and Bute have risen by nearly 40% being attributed to a rise in rape, sexual assault and crimes relating to indecent images or communications, this indicates that the need and demand for our services will remain consistent or rise in the coming months.

