The Role of Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) for Children & Young People

Introduction

In Warwickshire, the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) is provided by the West Midlands Regional Children & Young People Sexual Assault Service (CYPSAS)

This briefing aims to ensure staff understand how to refer children & young people who have or are suspected to have experienced sexual assault or abuse to the appropriate SARC service.



Further Information

- CYPSAS Website: Training Video for Professionals
- CYPSAS Website: Information for Professionals
- CYPSAS Leaflet: Professionals
- CYPSAS Leaflet: Parents & Carers
- CYPSAS Leaflet: Young People
- Migrant Help: Sexual Assault and Sexual Abuse Information

What Does the Service Offer

CYPSAS offer a **free**, **specialist SARC service** for **all children and young people** (under 18, or up to 25 with complex needs) who have experienced or are experiencing sexual abuse. The service provides 24/7, appointment-based support across the West Midlands, including urgent and non-urgent medical assessments, holistic care, and ongoing support tailored to the needs of the child or young person.

Joint Medicals

Child Protection (CP) and Sexual Abuse medicals differ in purpose; CP medicals examine a child for signs of physical abuse and neglect and do not include anogenital examination.
Where appropriate, a joint medical may be undertaken to reduce distress, with CYPSAS examiners and paediatricians working together and providing separate reports.
Professionals must clearly record the type of medical to support information sharing and avoid misunderstanding.

Making a Referral

Children under 13 years

- Referrals must be made by Police or Children's Social Care

Young people aged 13–17 years

- Young people can self-refer without police involvement
- Any professional can make a referral to the SARC with consent
- CYPSAS will make a referral to Children's Social Care to ensure the young person is safeguarded.

Call 0330 223 0099 to make a referral

What Happens at a Sexual Abuse Medical

A Sexual Abuse Medical is a specialist assessment carried out by a trained Forensic Medical Examiner or Forensic Nurse Examiner to check a child or young person's health, identify any injuries, and, where appropriate, gather forensic evidence to support any police investigation.
Afterwards, CYPSAS staff explain next steps and offer referrals to support services (e.g. Child and Young Person's Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ChISVA), counselling, GP or mental health services).

Inclusion at Strategy Meetings

Strategy meetings should be held for any child or young person where a referral has been made to the SARC.
It is recommended that CYPSAS attend strategy meetings where sexual abuse is known or suspected to ensure medical, forensic, and emotional needs are fully considered alongside safeguarding actions.
To invite a member of the service to attend a strategy meeting call:
0330 223 0099.

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