

Impact Report

April 2024 — March 2025



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Weathering the Year:

Navigating Pressure, Sustaining Support



Survivor centred . Together in crisis . Standing firm

Welcome to our Annual Impact Report

From the Chair



Rachel Scott

This year has been very difficult for everyone at RSVP, the ongoing uncertainty around funding having a huge impact on planning services for the people we support. Remember, RSVP supports people of all genders, all ages and all ethnicities, we work hard to reach out to all survivors in our community. You will read some of the stories of our survivors in this report.

The interest around the Government's commitment to end violence against women and girls (VAWG) is necessary; as the need for our services grew with a rise in the number of referrals we received. Added to this, we are facing unprecedented wait times for rape cases to be heard in court with some victims even waiting 9 years to be heard. Just imagine holding your nerve for this long, maybe even moving on with your life and then having to revisit your trauma again in court. We salute those brave people to continue to move forward with their cases in the current climate. We are incredibly grateful to **all** our staff and volunteers across the charity for their bold, believing and big hearted approach. However, we have to call out the ISVA team (Independent Sexual Violence Advocates), who are managing an increasing workload of cases and for a much longer time than was ever anticipated.

We emphatically thank our supporters and funders for continuing to stand up for survivors of rape and sexual violence.

And finally, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, we take a moment to remember our colleagues and friends, Karen Garry and Hollie Craske who we sadly lost in 2025. We are very thankful for Karen's support with our theory of change and evaluation work, and Hollie's selfless work on the Helpline. They are greatly missed by all at RSVP. May they rest in peace, we send our deepest condolences to their families.

5,479

adults and children needed support from our counselling and wellbeing services

2,057

adults and children needed support from our ISVA services (including ASR Support)

86% female

11% male

3% trans, non binary, other

16,745

counselling sessions offered to children, young people, and adults, a 5% increase on the sessions we offered last year.

1,214

additional needs assessment sessions were also offered to adults.

1,255

Children, young people and their supporters needed support from our services, 16.7% of all survivors needing our support last year.



The number of survivors needing support through:

- Adult counselling (at RSVP premises, or on phone or online) – 2,331
- Adult counselling at outreach sites – 211
- Refugee/asylum seeker counselling – 70
- Adult crisis/time-limited counselling – 129
- Children and young people's counselling – 598
- Children and young people's crisis/time-limited counselling – 50
- CSE Counselling services – 30
- Supporters' Counselling & Support – 36
- Our wellbeing social groups and coffee mornings – 259
- Pre-Therapy groups – 52
- Adult ISVA services – 1,302
- LGBT+ ISVA services – 100
- Sex Worker ISVA services (The Red Project) – 57
- Refugee/asylum seeker support – 57
- Children and young people's ISVA services – 498
- CSE ISVA services – 43
- Helpline calls – 1,679
- Web chats – 34

Reflection from Anjella Darcy

Head of Adult Counselling and Wellbeing Services

From the first day of the year to the final counselling session in March, the Adult Counselling and Wellbeing Team showed extraordinary commitment, compassion and grit. In a year marked by financial challenges, rising need and sector-wide uncertainty, their dedication ensured survivors continued to receive life-changing support. The team's unwavering presence through every challenge and for every survivor, was truly remarkable.

Team Achievements

- **Counselling Delivery:** We offered 3,015 adult counselling sessions in quarter four alone, a 17.5% increase from quarter one, and a 9.8% annual increase from last year. This was a testament to the team's stamina, big hearted approach, and commitment to reducing waiting times for survivors.
- **Placement Counsellor Expansion:** 16 new placement counsellors were recruited, trained and welcomed to the team. They contributed to the increased sessions we offered to adults over the year, and keeping service quality.
- **Volunteer Expansion:** Our volunteer Helpline and Webchat Team worked with our staff to maintain service quality and survivor care, contributing to 1,679 calls being taken.
- **Admin Excellence:** New systems were created and embedded, demonstrating the team's determination and commitment to create smooth processes for survivors and staff.
- **Training & Leadership:** Our new LMS was rolled out, trauma-informed leadership development and safeguarding training, kept the team informed and skilled. Participation in the Kings Fund's "Shift Works" programme helped nurture leadership across RSVP.
- **Reception & IT Support:** A new receptionist was recruited and trained, and we welcomed our first-ever IT volunteer to support infrastructure and systems.

We remained focused on what matters, kept our specialist support services accessible and impactful, and true to our values of a believing, big-hearted and bold approach, keeping survivors at the centre of everything we did.

Adult Counselling

2,741

adult survivors
needed support
through our main,
outreach, time
limited, & specialist
asylum seeker/refugee
counselling.

This was an 6.7%
increase compared to
the number of adults
needing counselling
support last year.

Adult Counselling

Challenges Faced

- **Funding Cuts:** The end of our Home Office funding in March 2025 for our Pre-Therapy Groups, and the reduction of our Ministry of Justice Rape Support Fund grant, reflected national trends of shrinking public investment in survivor services. These cuts directly impacted service capacity and staff hours.
- **Staffing Strain:** Continued high need for counselling, gaps in our team structure and the impending reduction in our Wellbeing Team Leader's weekly hours, added stress and strain, and limited our ability to further expand services.
- **Assessment Capacity:** Despite offering 1,214 needs assessments over the year, we need to increase capacity. This would prevent some survivors facing long waits for their needs to be assessed, a vital step before their counselling begins.

Core Themes

- **Funding Fragility:** National cuts to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) services, uncertainty around Home Office and Ministry of Justice grants, and local council deficits created a volatile funding landscape. RSVP's challenges mirrored a wider crisis in the specialist sexual violence sector, with many organisations reporting closures or emergency appeals. Increased competition for funds led to unsuccessful bids, and compounded the pressure.
- **Service Protection:** Despite the challenges, the team focused on preserving core services, counselling, helpline, social wellbeing groups, to ensure that survivors were never left without a lifeline.
- **Survivor-Centred Care:** Pre-Therapy Groups, the Support Hub and Helpline/Webchat Services remained vital points of contact and increased support for survivors, especially when waiting for counselling. The team's trauma-informed approach and deep empathy helped survivors feel heard and supported, right from the first contact.
- **Operational Strength:** Major improvements in admin systems, data accuracy and volunteer training helped sustain quality care and smoother processes. The resolution of some system issues, in a short space of time, was a standout achievement, reflecting the team's dedication, determination and collaboration.
- **Team Wellbeing:** Recognising the emotional toll of working with sexual trauma, team wellbeing remained a priority throughout the year. Supervision and peer support was strengthened and training investments helped the team feel confident and more equipped to respond to increasingly difficult issues.

Our confidential counselling services offer safe supportive connection, empathy and understanding to enable survivors to thrive and live a hopeful, confident future.

Strategic Priorities Ahead

- Secure new funding to restore Pre-Therapy Groups and increase Wellbeing Team Leader hours
- Launch an online referral system to make it more smooth for survivors to request support, streamline internal processes, and reduce pressure on our Admin Team
- Resume monthly waiting time updates to better understand and inform survivors of waiting times, and make more tailored plans to reduce waiting times across our different service locations
- Continue our Lime Culture independently accredited, quality standards for our counselling services for male survivors
- Continue trauma-informed leadership development and safeguarding work

Adult Counselling



National Context: Waiting Times & Sector Strain

Waiting times for sexual abuse counselling at rape crisis services, like RSVP, remained one of the most pressing challenges across the UK. Survivors often faced delays of many months, sometimes many years, before receiving specialist therapeutic support. According to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sexual Violence, some survivors waited up to 14 months for counselling, a delay that can compound trauma and undermine recovery. Rape Crisis England & Wales's recent report highlighted that over half of centres expect to reduce counselling services due to funding shortfalls, despite rising need. They reported that some services had a 2 year wait for counselling. These delays reflect systemic inequalities in access to care and underscore the urgent need for sustained, ring-fenced investment in specialist sexual violence services. Without it, survivors are left waiting far too long for the support they deserve.

In a year where national policy shifts, local authority deficits, and grant freezes threatened the foundations of survivor support, RSVP's Adult Counselling and Wellbeing Team stood firm. Their compassion was unwavering, their commitment unmatched, and their determination held services together, and in turn preserved hope. While our waits were too long, they were less than national figures, and ranged from 1 month (at some of our outreach sites) to no more than 11 months (at our city centre site).

Over the past year, we faced a rise in need, with many survivors coming to us in crisis with multiple needs and complex trauma. The team responded with care and resilience. It wasn't easy, but in the face of external challenges, and through team work, collaboration, compassion, and a trauma-informed approach, we continued to be there for those who needed us most, and for each other too.

To every member of the team—thank you. Your big-hearted work continues to change lives.

A story of Discovery, Safe Connection and Empowerment, through counselling

Adele self-referred to RSVP having been subjected to prolonged sexual abuse and coercive control, beginning in her childhood. She described feeling 'tainted' from that point on. Now in her thirties, she expressed a desire to reconnect with herself, reclaim her sexual and romantic life, and more clearly identify and assert her own personal boundaries and needs.

In counselling, Adele described the space as non-judgemental, and appreciated the opportunity to explore deeply personal aspects of her life with another person, free from shame.

Together, we explored the links between her past experiences of abuse, and her current trauma, feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Through this process, she gained several insights into herself, including the ability to reframe some internalised narratives rooted in victim-blaming.

She spoke about feeling more able to express herself openly, without the fear of coercive and negative consequences that had been a large part of her past. As counselling progressed, Adele became more attuned to her own needs, responding to herself with greater care and compassion. Toward the end of her counselling, she began making future plans that focused on her own wants, needs and desires, a meaningful step toward reclaiming her power and life.

A story of Increased Confidence, Change and Renewed Hope through counselling & practical support for asylum seekers

We supported Hodan a survivor in her twenties, who sought refuge in the UK after being subjected to repeated sexual abuse in childhood and adulthood, in her birth country. Initially, Hodan found it challenging to open up and engage with counselling due to the severity of the trauma, the intensity of her flashbacks and the deep loss she felt, being separated from her loved ones.

Over time, Hodan shared the deep sense of isolation and aloneness she felt after leaving behind her family and community, to escape the abuse.

She recognised the need for emotional support to reduce the loneliness, alongside help with some of the practical challenges she faced. Having access to our specialist ASR support worker was vital, this parallel support complemented the counselling process.

Through this integrated approach, Hodan gradually gained confidence and began to feel safer to express her emotions. She now feels empowered to make her own choices about her life. Hodan arrived at our specialist asylum seeker services deeply traumatised; it has been a hard, humbling and deeply rewarding journey to witness the positive changes she has made due to the support she received. Despite the stress of not being granted asylum yet, Hodan sees her future with more hope and optimism.

Our Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVAs) offer practical & emotional support after sexual trauma. They are independent from other agencies, like the police and social services. They advocate on behalf of survivors to ensure survivors' voices, feelings & needs are heard & responded to by other services.

Reflection from Yvonne Langham

Head of ISVA Services

In my annual overview of our ISVA Services I want to celebrate the truly incredible support our team provides and explore how our local experiences fit into the wider national picture, especially the ongoing challenges in the justice system.

I couldn't be prouder of the Team's dedication, resilience and profound impact. They are, quite simply, remarkable.

Making a Difference Every Day

Our ISVA Services consistently deliver crucial support to survivors, even when faced with significant challenges. Their dedication shines through in every interaction and is a direct reflection of our team's exceptional care and commitment. Their hard work has repeatedly led to tangible results. In the past year, we've helped secure over **143 prison years** for offenders of sexual violence and rape crimes against adults. We've also helped achieve other vital court outcomes, such as offenders being placed on the sexual offences register for life and sexual violence prevention orders being issued. These aren't just numbers; they represent people who now have justice, safety, and can take steps towards healing.

“
RSVP
is so important
and I can't put into
words how much
I appreciate the
organisation and
what you do.
Thanks again.
”

Adult Advocacy

1,302

survivors needing
support this year from
Adult ISVA Services

(this excludes the number of adults who
needed support from our tailored LGBT+
& Sex Worker ISVA services)

an increase of
7.2% on last year's
figures

For more information on our ISVA/
Advocacy service visit our website:

www.rsvporg.co.uk

Advocacy

Collective Effort.

Profound Results.

Better administrative support benefitted our ISVAs by reducing the daily admin tasks they have to do, freeing up their time to support survivors. We celebrate all our ISVA Admin, Assessors and Assistants, and newly welcomed Raj and Jocelyn into the team.

Our Dedicated Team: A Force for Support & Advocacy

A recurring theme has been the heavy workload our ISVAs hold, due to increasing numbers of survivors they support. Yet our team consistently rises to the challenge, providing tailored, professional, consistent support. We're incredibly proud of our diverse team which includes:

- **Adult ISVAs:** Emotional & practical support for 1,302 adult survivors with reporting, the criminal justice system & some intimate health needs.
- **Children and Young People ISVAs:** Emotional & practical support for 541 child/young survivors with reporting, the criminal justice system & some intimate health needs.
- **Sex Worker ISVA:** Dedicated, active outreach support for 57 survivors subjected to rape, sexual violence & sexual exploitation from/while working in the sex trade.
- **LGBT+ ISVAs:** Ensuring tailored support for 100 LGBT+ survivors.
- **Race & Equality ISVA:** Crucial support for our team to increase their awareness of Black & Minoritised survivors & the additional barriers they face, when reporting rape, sexual abuse and sexual violence.
- **Asylum Seeker and Refugee (ASR) Support Worker:** Vital support to 57 adult asylum seekers/refugees who have fled their homeland due to sexual violence or rape, and/or who are subjected during the journey to/in the UK. Their needs are multiple, they typically lack permanent status in the UK and have little access to basic necessities like food, clothing and shelter. Our ASR worker is a lifeline, addressing their profound needs.

We also partner with Umbrella Sexual Health Services to enable survivors to access vital sexual health testing, treatment and contraception. ISVAs are an integral part of Umbrella's Abuse Survivors Clinic (ASC), attending clinics twice monthly, to ensure that once medical needs are met, survivors have immediate ISVA support about their choices about reporting/not reporting, and the trauma they have experienced. Our ISVAs champion survivor advocacy, supporting survivors to make choices & decisions that are right for them.

Advocacy

12,532

The number of sexual offences cases waiting for trial, across the UK, (in March 2025) a 83% increase from 2022

[Rape Crisis England & Wales](#)
and [MOJ Accredited official criminal court statistics](#)

Navigating Delays in the Justice System

The impact of the criminal justice system on survivors and ISVAs is a constant theme. While specific local court waiting times aren't detailed, we know our ISVAs provide continuous support throughout lengthy court processes. The frustration and distress survivors experience, from last-minute court changes to unacceptable waits of up to 9 years, is immeasurable. This demands substantial extra support from our ISVAs, who always rise to the occasion, and any positive court outcomes, such as significant sentences passed, provide a much-needed morale boost for the entire team.

Alongside Fiona, our Sex Worker ISVA, as Head of ISVA Services, I regularly contribute to awareness sessions for the police. This reinforces how our approach and work is collaborative, together improving outcomes for survivors.

Our Future Goals

Securing ongoing funding for additional ISVAs and administrative support remains a top priority. Looking ahead to the next financial year, a key goal is to lobby the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) through the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) about the insufficient number of ISVAs funded in Birmingham and Solihull, especially given our large population. We are determined to ensure our ISVA staffing levels truly reflect the needs of increasing numbers of survivors, who need our support for longer than ever before.

The experiences and challenges faced by our ISVAs in Birmingham and Solihull – from higher caseloads and providing tailored, holistic support to diverse communities (including asylum seekers and refugees), to navigating the profound impacts of the criminal justice system on survivors – mirror the national picture. Our ISVAs and the UK's ISVA workforce is a dedicated but under pressure workforce. We see growing backlogs, incredibly long waiting times for sexual offences in UK courts and low conviction rates. All deeply impact survivors and ISVAs.

The challenges we face here in Birmingham and Solihull strongly echo the national issues of court delays and backlogs in sexual violence cases across the UK. Here are some of the statistics.

Advocacy

393
days

From court to
completion for
adult rape cases

439
days

From court to
completion for
child rape cases

10
months

Average wait for
police to charge
an offender

3 years +

The number of years
half of the cases Victim
Support analysed took
from reporting to the
police to the first court
date

59%

Adult survivors
withdraw before
charges are even
brought

48%

Number of survivors
whose trial dates are
rescheduled (often
multiple times and
last-minute

Our local efforts to expand our ISVA Team and advocate for increased funding are absolutely vital to ease the burden on survivors, of these systemic issues. We are all incredibly proud of the ISVA Team's unwavering dedication and profound impact on the lives of survivors in Birmingham and Solihull. Every day, they create meaningful progress for survivors, despite working with the pressures of these immense challenges.

Sources: Victim Support: [Suffering for justice: sexual violence victim-survivors' experiences of going to court and cross examination:](#)

Rape Crisis England & Wales: [Breaking Point: the re-traumatisation of rape and sexual abuse survivors in the Crown Courts backlog](#)

Adult Advocacy

A Story of Speaking Out, Taking Control and Making Choices through Advocacy

Mira was referred to us by the police following the sexual abuse she'd been subjected to as a child. The perpetrator was a family member, a reality that made speaking to the police even more terrifying. Before reporting, Mira feared she wouldn't be believed by some of her family. This is a common and profound fear shared by many survivors, especially when abuse happens in the home. Thankfully, her mother and aunts stood with her, forming a vital part of Mira's support network.

Criminal justice processes can be overwhelming, the role of an ISVA is to walk alongside survivors each stage, from reporting, through the court process, and even beyond, including support around compensation. ISVAs ensured everything was explained well, so Mira knew what to expect and could make informed choices at every step.

Mira often spoke about how positive and empowering it felt to have ISVA support. It gave her space to make conscious decisions, not only about the abuse, but about how she wanted to engage with reporting and court processes. Through ISVA support, she took an active role in deciding what was right for her. She chose whether she wanted special measures in court or not, and which of RSVP's wider specialist support services felt right for her. The sense of control was key. She was very encouraged and began to move forward and imagine a future not shaped or defined by the sexual trauma, but by her own choices and voice.

When the trial reached a critical point, all the key agencies, RSVP, CPS, Witness Care and the police, worked together to ensure Mira's needs were prioritised and her rights upheld. This kind of partnership is essential, since communication and collaboration is key.

Later, due to changes in the Adult ISVA Team, there was a change in Mira's ISVA. Transitions like these can be unsettling, especially when already navigating so much. We were mindful of how this might feel for Mira. Working carefully to minimise any possible distress.

Mira's story is a powerful reminder of the importance of meeting survivors with belief, choice and trauma-informed support, to ensure that survivors can shape their own path through criminal justice processes.

Name and some details changed to protect identity

Tailored Advocacy - For Survivors who are Sex Workers

via our Red Project

Our Sex Worker Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (SW-ISVA) provided tailored emotional, practical and advocacy support, which included:

- Information on the **National Ugly Mugs** reporting system.
- Street based outreach sessions, a weekly drop-in and peer-led sessions.
- Delivering **sexual health advice** from Whittal Street's **SAFE Clinic**.
- Providing information and guidance on reporting sexual offences.
- Referring into the **National Referral Mechanism** for trafficking support.
- Referring into **food banks, clothing support, and supported housing**.
- Signposting to recovery services for those with addiction needs.
- **Wellbeing sessions** to build confidence and bodily connection.
- Working with **WM Police** to arrange drop-ins in new areas.
- Sitting on the **Sex Worker Safety Steering Group**, contributing to the development of new outreach cards.

A survivor supported by this service said:

“I’ve never had support like this. I was scared, defensive and avoided others and myself for a long time. You guided me back to who I am. I am now, gradually, feeling like the genuine person who means and is worth something”.

“You (my SW-ISVA) and the staff from the SAFE clinic are the only support I have through this traumatic part of my life. **You literally have all saved my life.**”

Name and some details changed to protect identity

57

The number of survivors who needed support from our Sex Worker Advocate this year

100%

of survivors felt supported to explore their options around criminal justice processes

72%

of survivors had improved wellbeing after support from the Sex Worker ISVA

Adult Wellbeing Support

250

adults needed support through our social and wellbeing groups

“ Before coming to the group, I felt completely alone. Now I’ve made friends with people who understand me. ”

At RSVP, our social and wellbeing groups are designed to nurture the whole person, meeting physical, emotional and social needs in a safe and supportive space. Through activities like yoga, mindful walks, creative arts and personal development activities, survivors reconnect not only with themselves but other survivors too. These groups help to reduce isolation, foster meaningful friendships between survivors, and build a sense of community rooted in empathy and shared experience. Whether it's stretching together in a yoga class or sharing stories over a walk, these moments contribute to healing, empowerment and a renewed sense of wellbeing.

Groups offered to survivors:

- Young Women’s Group
- Women’s Evening Group
- Women’s Day Group
- Mixed Gender Group
- Chinese Women’s Group
- Coffee Mornings
- Connections Group (for asylum seekers and refugees)
- Arts with Hearts (arts and crafts group)

“ RSVP and the social groups are my safe island. ”

“ I used to dread going out, but the yoga and walks gave me confidence again. I feel calmer and more like myself. ”



Wellbeing Activities Offered:

- Mindfulness Art
- Self-Care Booster
- Self-Love Collages
- Cook and Grow
- Arts and Crafts
- Xmas Quiz
- Creative Writing
- Bowling
- Winterbourne Gardens
- Moseley Park

Our Adult Wellbeing Support

“

"Calling the helpline was the first time I said what had happened to me, out loud.

I really didn't have to explain myself. The person I spoke to just got it, talking to her made a big difference.

”

Telephone Helpline Service and Webchat Services

Our mixed Staff and Volunteer Helpline and Webchat Team took 34 Webchats and 1,679 calls from survivors and the people supporting them (partners, families, friends and professionals). This is a significant 32.4% increase from the 1,268 calls taken last year. Maintaining a larger Helpline Team and having longer, more varied opening hours meant we could offer more support.

We know that some survivors prefer to call the Helpline or speak on a Webchat instead of or before seeking face-to-face support. Accessing support in this way offers anonymity and more immediate support. It can also give survivors more control, vital for those when trust has been deeply eroded. For male survivors, who face different barriers to accessing support and often take longer to reach out, a helpline or Webchat can be a crucial lifeline. These services means all survivors feel they can speak more freely, often for the first time, enabling them to overcome the fear of being judged or misunderstood.



“

The Hub was so useful. It helped me understand why I blamed myself and how I change this. I now know the abuse is not my fault and never was.

”

RSVP Support Hub: Online Support Programmes

Our online Support Hub was created by a survivor for survivors, and this year was accessed by nearly 200 survivors, with 631 pages viewed. The Hub has three support programmes:

Taste of Recovery: tools & techniques to reduce self-blame and increase control; information about how the mind and body responds during and after trauma; how others might respond to disclosure and how to manage these conversations.

MindBody: explores five grounding practices in detail: Grounding, Breathing, Sleep, Mindfulness and Music, all to aid wellbeing and improve mind and body connection.

ReConnected: develops mind-set and restores balance. Modules include: Foundations, Unlearning, Connection, Self-Love and Planning. Builds confidence and helps survivors reclaim dreams and live a joyful life.

Children & Young People's Services

Our Children's Services mission: to meet children & young people (CYP) with timely, appropriate, & compassionate specialist support

Reflection from Katrina Blake

Head of Children & Young People's Counselling and Wellbeing Services

This year has been one of growth, resilience and renewed energy for our Children and Young People's (CYP) Counselling & Wellbeing Services. After a nearly 9 month gap in the Head role, I was proud to join as the new Head. Since then, together, we have expanded the team both in numbers and capacity, while maintaining a trauma-informed, survivor-centred approach. We have supported children, young people and their families through some of the most challenging periods in their lives, adapting our services to meet multiple needs and changing circumstances.

Supporting CYP Survivors Through Counselling

RSVP has a clear ambitious strategic goal: to ensure no child or young person waits more than four weeks for counselling. Although high need, the external environment and fundraising challenges have made this target aspirational, we still made tangible progress by team expansion, refining our approach and reducing barriers to support.

- **Reduction in waiting times:** We reduced the average times CYP waited for RSVP Counselling, from 26 weeks in quarter one this year, to 18 weeks in quarter four.
- **Expanded reach:** We placed CYP counsellors in more schools in Birmingham and Solihull, as well as in our Chelmsley Wood outreach centre. This brought RSVP closer to the community, providing wider choices of where to receive support.
- **Increased team capacity:** We offered 834 CYP counselling sessions in quarter one this year & 1,059 in quarter four, a 27% increase, enabling us to support more children, more quickly.
- **Flexible and blended delivery:** We maintained weekend counselling for CYP and had a broader range of weekday appointments, offering wider choices to families.

CYP Counselling

598

children and young people needed support this year through longer term counselling

50

children and young people needed support this year through time-limited counselling

Children & Young People's Services

Holistic Family Support

The Programmes and Circle for Supporters have continued to provide safe, nurturing spaces for parents and carers of children and young people affected by child sexual abuse. By supporting those closest to the child, we can help strengthen the wider relationships that surrounds them, restoring hope, deepening understanding of trauma and its impacts, and reducing the isolation families often feel.

This year, we extended our wellbeing support for both CYP and their supporters, ensuring it was more timely than counselling, and accessible and responsive to their needs. Supporting the supporters is both an act of care and a strategic intervention that reinforces safe relationships around the child. When carers feel empowered, they are better able to offer consistent, trauma-informed support, which in turn directly benefits the child's recovery and healing.

Empowering Young People's Voices

We remain committed to further amplify the voices of CYP. Through creative expression, poetry, art, feedback forms and participatory activities, we want CYP to increasingly shape our service design and delivery. One young person, reflecting on their counselling, said: **"I've reinvented myself. I feel better because I make my own choices. I'm learning it wasn't my fault."**

Our Learning

As a team, we have deepened our understanding of being trauma-informed, especially in relation to CSE. The importance of language, informed consent, disclosure being through behaviour not words, and unravelling the impacts of grooming, trauma bonds and manipulation, has been central to our evolving approach. We also recognised the need to strengthen internal communication and team cohesion, with increased investment in supervision, reflective spaces, and professional development.

CYP Counselling

“

At first, I thought I was a bad mother because of what happened to my daughter.

I now understand that this wasn't my fault.

The support RSVP gave me helped me rebuild my relationship with my daughter.

We are looking forward to the future now.

”

Challenges we're tackling

- **Team pressures:** Recruitment and retention, especially for school-based and weekend roles, have been a challenge. We have offered more term time posts and are seeking new ways to grow our team, including through volunteers & student placements.
- **Funding uncertainty:** Since some of our key contracts are soon due for renewal, the uncertainty about our future funding creates uncertainty and stress. We're preparing for new tender processes and continuing to advocate for investment in our vital services.
- **Longer-term support needs:** Many young people are involved in complex legal processes that take years. Alongside the support from ISVAs, CYP often need to return for more counselling, as the trial date approaches. This creates higher demand for CYP Counselling and it can also impact on waiting times.

What We've Achieved

- **More Counsellors, Less Waiting.** We expanded our team, adding over 49 hours of support a week. While need still exceeds capacity, our average waiting times have dropped from the start of the year to the end, from 26 to 18 weeks, a huge step and a win for our CYP Team.
- **Support Where It's Needed Most.** Counsellors now work in more schools across Birmingham and Solihull, removing barriers like travel costs and missed education. We also offer weekend sessions and outreach support in local communities.
- **Support for Families Too.** We launched a new programme for parents and carers affected by CSE. The first group has already run, offering emotional support, education and connection. We know that supporting families, helps children feel better supported too.
- **Safer, More Inclusive Spaces.** Thanks to Bright Spaces, two new counselling rooms have been revamped to be more child and neurodiverse friendly, filled with creative resources to help young people express themselves safely.
- **Real Impact, In Their Words.** Through shared stories, artwork and case studies, young people and their families told us how much the service means to them, from earning to reduce traumatic impacts, to rebuilding family relationships and self-worth.

In the year ahead, we aim to:

- Further reduce waiting times through targeted recruitment and volunteer placement expansion.
- Build participation by embedding young people’s voices at every level so they know even more, they are heard, believed and supported.
- Strengthening links with other services, like those working with Black & Minoritised and neurodiverse people to share lived experiences.
- Launch a family-focused weekend counselling offer to enable families to access support together.
- Secure sustainable funding to protect and grow our services.

To provide context and accountability, we’ve compared our performance with national trends in children and young people’s counselling services:

Area	RSVP Performance	National Average / Trend	How We Compare
Waiting Times	Reduced from 26 weeks to 18 weeks	Average NHS CAMHS wait: 21 weeks (some greater than 12 months)	Better than national average
Goal: 4-week wait	Not yet met	Only 27% of services meet this goal (<i>Youth Access, 2024</i>)	Aspirational, but strong progress
Access (Schools/ Outreach)	School counsellors, community hubs	Lack of embedded school provision nationally	Responsive and inclusive delivery
Re-engagement & Justice Delay	Ongoing counselling support during court delays	Sector-wide challenge: survivors often re-enter counselling during long court cases	Facing national systemic issue
Neurodiverse Support	Tailored support & outreach work	Gaps in provision across UK (inc. neurodiverse youth)	Modelling inclusivity to the sector

Emma came to counselling carrying the weight of sexual abuse and the impact of everything that followed.

Emma is autistic, has ADHD, and communicates in her own unique way, so I adapted to meet her where she was and communicate in a way that worked for her. From the very first session, Emma was open, courageous and ready to talk.

Counselling seemed to give Emma space to breathe. Space where she could speak freely, make sense of her feelings and start to rebuild her confidence. It helped her understand her reactions, learn how to regulate them and slowly begin to trust others again. We formed a strong connection, enabling her to explore confusing thoughts without fear of judgement. As she increased her awareness and understanding, she seemed to feel more empowered too.

Her ISVA was a lifeline to Emma too. She guided her through the legal process, helped her feel less alone and was there every step of the way. This type of practical support made a huge difference, especially when the court proceedings were looming. Emma built a strong bond with her ISVA, and it gave her the confidence to keep going even when things felt overwhelming.

Being at school after the abuse was tough at first. Emma struggled to focus and emotionally felt all over the place. Through our support she has grown so much, academically and personally. She's learned to self-regulate, reflect and express herself more clearly. Creativity has been her outlet. As a performer, she's used her voice and talent to reclaim her story and inspire others.

There are still challenges. She finds conflict hard and avoids it, and speaking up doesn't come easy. However, she's still learning and she's still growing.

Emma's story is one of determination, growth, hope and confidence. Counselling and advocacy didn't just help her survive, they helped her heal. Emma's story shows that with the right support, young people can start to mend despite the trauma they have been subjected to.

Name and some details changed to protect identity



Our Children and Young People's (CYP) Advocates, called CYP ISVAs, offer practical & emotional support after sexual abuse. Independent from other agencies such as the police or social services, they advocate on behalf of child survivors (& parents & carers too) to ensure their voices, feelings, & needs are heard & responded to by all services.

Our deep appreciation is a direct reflection of our team's exceptional care and commitment. Their hard work led to tangible results. In the past year, our ISVAs helped secure over **141 prison years** for sexual offenders committing sexual crimes against children and young people. The impact of our ISVAs goes beyond the survivor, often extending to the parents of children impacted by sexual trauma.

ISVA collaborate closely with Birmingham Children's Trust to support children affected by child sexual abuse and childhood sexual exploitation (CSE), including those exploited by groups, guiding them through reporting and court processes.

Survivor Story of Building Trust through CYP Advocacy

Leila needed our support after CSE. Like many young people impacted by exploitation, she wasn't ready for counselling. Trust and rapport needs to be established first. This takes time. Sometimes supportive relationships can feel "hot and cold", when trauma bonds are involved. This can make the young person wary about professionals and rejecting of support.

As Leila's ISVA, I was patient, knowing it could take time before she trusted me, and consistent, never letting her down. I supported her mother too, who was initially unsure and conflicted about accessing counselling herself before her daughter. Later, mum engaged, strengthening Leila's support.

I worked closely with other professionals, always keeping Leila's voice at the centre. I arranged appointments with Umbrella Sexual Health Services and chaperoned her and her mum, easing fears about testing. I attended regular child in need meetings, working in partnership with social workers, DSL's from schools and others. I challenged victim-blaming attitudes and advocated for Leila's wellbeing.

Gradually, Leila saw I was on "her side". That trust opened the door to counselling, a decision she made when she felt safe enough. Her story shows how vital it is to meet young people where they are, to be patient and adapt our approach. **It is our always our job to find ways to engage with them, not the other way around.**

Children and Young People's Advocacy

498

children & young
people needed support
this year through CYP
ISVA services

43

children & young
people subjected to
CSE (Child Sexual
Exploitation) needed
ISVA support too

How our training supports survivors

“ *The message about dealing with people with compassion and respect was delivered so well and I feel positive about the impact this will have on achieving best evidence for our investigations and witness care.* ”

Our Specialist Trainers Tracey and Michelle both joined RSVP in April 2024.

Tracey has experience of training in domestic abuse and knowledge of trauma and other forms of abuse. She has delivered to multi-agency organisations, frontline services and in commercial sectors.

Michelle is an experienced sexual health trainer; since 1993 she has worked within the NHS, Local Authorities, third-sector and as a freelance consultant.

Tracey and Michelle reviewed, standardised, developed and delivered our training sessions. They are responsible for income generating for RSVP; their training includes contract work, bespoke sessions and internal training. During the period they delivered 48 sessions to 714 professionals, and generated valuable income.

“ The session was enjoyable. The topic can feel like a minefield. You had great content. I love the handouts and the trainer’s knowledge. ”

“ Trainer was really engaging, she made anyone giving an answer feel heard. Really enjoyed that the groups were mixed up throughout. ”

“ Thank you. A really helpful session. I found it useful to think about ways in which we can re-phrase questions for witnesses. ”

714

professionals
trained by our
specialist trainers

It can be hard to support survivors of sexual violence and abuse when you may not know how to. How do you recognise abuse, or challenge victim blaming? How do you best support someone going through trauma due to rape?

At RSVP our specialist trainers create and deliver high quality training sessions for professionals supporting abuse survivors. We’ve supported the police, prison staff, medical professionals, universities, schools, care staff, counsellors and many other services, to consider their impact on those they support.

How our training supports survivors

Some of the courses we've run:-

- Boys will Be Boys: Challenging the Manosphere, Incels and Mr Tate
- Challenging Victim Blaming Language in the Workplace
- FY2 Training
- Intersectionality: Supporting Sexual Abuse/ Violence & Diverse Identities
- Introduction to Sexual Violence and Abuse
- Introduction to Trauma-informed Practice
- Male Survivors of Sexual Violence
- Responding to Disclosures
- Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
- Sex Worker Needs Analysis Findings – Implications for Practice
- Understanding the Rise in Image-based Abuse and Pornography
- Why Become a Trauma-informed Employer?

Organisations who have benefited from our training:-

- Anthony Collins – Solicitors
- Birmingham City University – School of Jewellery
- Birmingham Tech Week
- Birmingham Women's & Children's Hospitals
- Colmore BID
- NHS Arden
- Safer Dance
- Solicitor Regulation Authority
- Umbrella Community Partners
- University Hospital Birmingham
- University of Birmingham
- Walsall College
- Westminster Insights

RSVP New Online Courses – these generated £1,425 for RSVP

Bitesize sessions targeted employers focussing on sexual violence, addressing sexual harassment in the workplace & trauma-informed approaches.

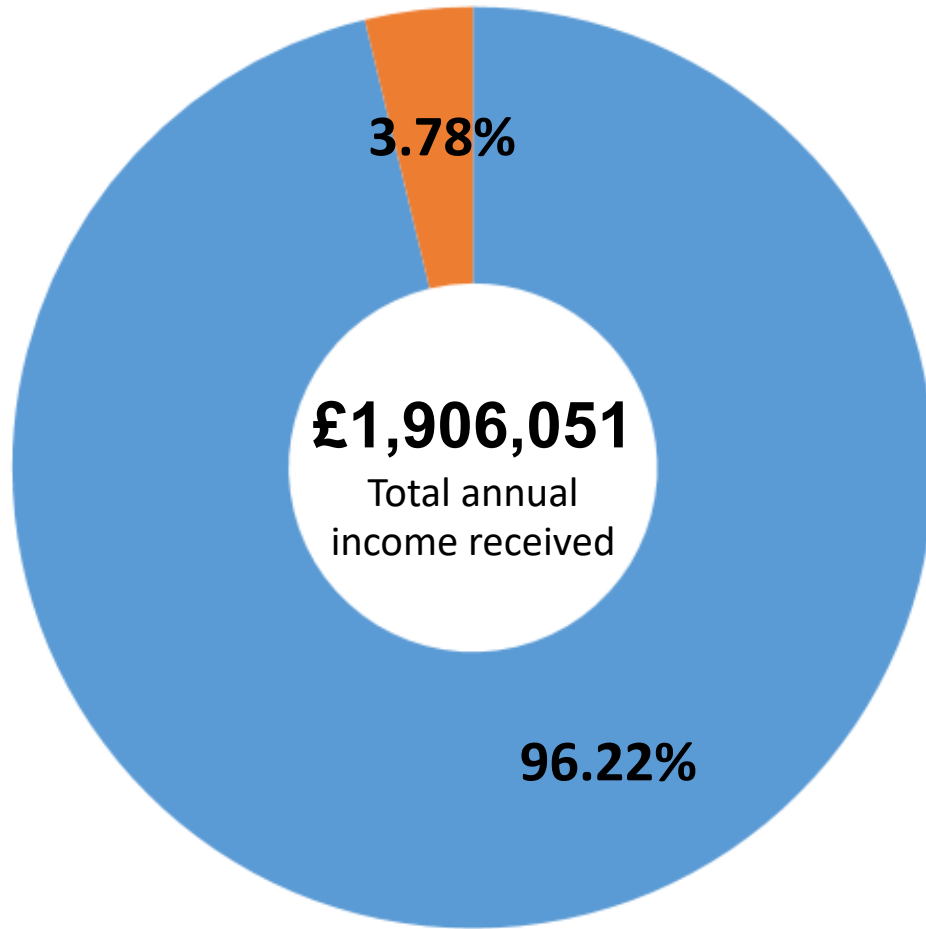
INSET Twilight Briefings tailored for schools & addressed specialised topics for Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) & teachers of Personal & Social Health Education (PHSE).

48

sessions delivered
by our specialist
trainers

“ It's been a really helpful and informative training which will help in my practice. I enjoyed looking at lived experiences, research, potential barriers and how to consider this in practice in a trauma informed and person centred way. Thanks very much! ”

Finance and Funding



- Restricted funding — £1,834,085
- Unrestricted funding — £ 71,966

Breakdown of Our Unrestricted Income: Small Grants, Donations, Gifts, & Traded Income

- Individual donors - £15,742
- Corporate/organisation/group donations – £9,198
- Donated services from Ekco — £13,236 :
Gift Aid - £1,394
- Training — £26,848
Sale of goods: £48
- Small Unrestricted Grants— £5,500



Large Grant Funders

- Adult Sexual Assault Referral Centre (ASARC)
- National Community Lottery Fund: Reaching Communities
- Birmingham Children's Trust CSA
- Birmingham Children's Trust CSE
- BBC Children in Need
- Brook Trust
- Charles Hayward Foundation
- Eveson
- Heart of England Charitable Trust: Inclusive Communities Fund
- Henry Smith

- Home Office –VAWG
- Mazars Charitable Trust
- Ministry of Justice Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Fund
- NHS England
- WM CYP Services (previously P-SARC)
- UHB Foundation Trust
- West Midlands PCC—Victims Fund

Small Grant Funders

- Squire Patton Boggs
- WA Cadbury Trust
- The Grimmitt Trust
- Warwickshire Masons

We're incredibly grateful to everyone who supports RSVP, from generous individuals to community groups, corporate partners and everyone in between. Whether you give monthly, donate once, or play the Birmingham Lottery in our name, your support changes lives and means the world to us.

Special thanks to GINA, our sister organisation, the local Mothers' Union group, our friends at Bournville Harriers, and the brilliant students at Birmingham Medical School, your contributions help us keep going strong.

A huge shout out to Lisa our CEO, who went above and beyond, and on her fourth attempt completed the 220-mile Race Across Scotland, raising over £2,000 in sponsorship for RSVP. Her endurance, determination and fundraising inspired us.

Together, each donation helps create futures filled with hope and confidence for children and adults after sexual abuse.

£1,906,051

Annual Income

0.66%

decrease from last year's annual income

Maintaining funding & finding ways to sustain support services

Head of Fundraising & Partnerships Report

Paula Dower

This year has been a pivotal one for fundraising at RSVP. Despite a tough economic and funding landscape, we've made real strides in securing vital support, building relationships and developing long-term strategies to sustain our specialist support for survivors.

The Big Picture

Nationally, the cost of living crisis and a change in government have shaped the funding environment. Budget decisions, like the increase in employers' National Insurance from April 2025, will directly impact charities like ours, increasing annual costs by approx. £39,000. Despite these challenges, we have remained focused on finding solutions, adapted to a shifting external context and continued to prioritise sustainability and specialist survivor centred support.

Some of Our Key Fundraising Wins

We're proud to have secured a number of important grants this year, including:

- **Grimmitt Trust** – £3,000 contribution
- **W.A. Cadbury** and **Warwickshire Masonic Lodge** – small but meaningful grants
- **National Lottery** – extended counselling service funding until 2027

Investing in Strategy & Systems

A major focus has been building foundations for sustainable future fundraising. We continued to work with Tony Carr to develop a long-term fundraising strategy. We engaged with The Donor Whisperer (Rachel Collinson) to increase individual giving, by donor research and improved communication. We started work with the Cranfield Trust, to help streamline our processes, freeing up more time for the team and for a focus on impact and fundraising.

Huge thanks to all our funders and donors, individuals and companies. Your generosity means so much to us and shows your belief in survivors. The economic climate is still challenging, making the support you gave us all the more important and appreciated. You enabled us to continue to support people subjected to sexual violence and abuse to live a future filled with hope and confidence.

Want to be a digital fundraising volunteer? Visit our website: <https://rsvporg.co.uk/support-us/> or email Nandy Phatowali on: nandana@rsvporg.co.uk

Want to explore how your business could support and partner with us? Email Paula, our new Head of Fundraising and Partnerships:

paula@rsvporg.co.uk

Finance and Funding

Maintaining funding & finding ways to sustain support services

Growing and Diversifying Income

Expanding our income sources continues to be a key goal. Over the year:

- **Individual giving** was **£15,742**, with scope to grow and expand next year.
- **Corporate support** included a £1,000 donation from the Davies Group and partnership building with Lodder's Charitable Foundation
- **Our training** generated nearly **£27,000** and uptake of online training is growing, a huge achievement for our trainers.

We're also developing relationships with Business Improvement Districts to explore funded training for security staff & considering "Charity of the Year" opportunities with corporate partners.

Learning from Challenges

Like many organisations, we've faced challenges around capacity. With multiple reporting demands and various legacy systems, time for new funding applications has sometimes been squeezed. However, progress is being made: new staff have joined the team, donor data is being consolidated and a communications plan is in the pipeline. All will help us better evidence our impact and connect with more donors and supporters.

Looking Ahead

Next year, our goals remain clear:

- Strengthen and diversify income, particularly unrestricted funds
- Develop our 2025–2028 fundraising strategy and 2025–2026 action plan
- Nurture relationships with aligned trusts, foundations, and corporate partners
- With a passionate team, improved systems and a focus on the long-term, we're in a strong position to grow our impact and continue supporting survivors with the care they need & deserve.





The Team

Final Words from Lisa, CEO:

RSVP is only able to deliver its services due to the bold, big-hearted and believing dedication of all the people who work here. We couldn't have achieved what we have, were it not for their skill, commitment and loyalty.

This year brought even more uncertainty than before, more unknowns, more pressure and a bigger stretch on our team than I have ever known (and I have been at RSVP since 1999). Through it all, the determination, passion, and unwavering commitment of our team shone. I saw you. You were noticed. I know you showed up boldly, with big hearts and deep belief in what we do. You make RSVP more than an organisation, you are a collective who stands strong, for survivors.



- Bookkeeper
- Counsellors
- Senior Counsellors
- Placement Counsellors
- Team Leaders
- Support Worker for asylum seekers & refugees
- ISVAs
- Helpline volunteers
- Webchat volunteers
- Administrators
- Executive Assistant
- Receptionists
- Social Group Facilitators
- Specialist Trainers
- Digital Fundraiser
- Fundraising Volunteers
- IT Volunteers
- Trustees
- Leadership Team



Here's just a few of our amazing team.