

**ben's place**  
SPECIALIST SUPPORT  
FOR MALE SEXUAL ABUSE SURVIVORS



# Case for Support

February 2017

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*“Boots and all...”*

Ben's Place – working in collaboration with:



# Summary

West Yorkshire is unique – a large area (over 2000 km<sup>2</sup>) which is very diverse in terms of its geographical make-up: from very rural areas to densely populated cities. In this complex social and geographical environment there are currently only 3 specialist sexual violence support services that proactively cater for male survivors of sexual crimes: The Blast Project, KRASSAC and Ben's Place.

A widely-accepted statistic is that 1 in 6 males are victims of sexual abuse by the time they are 18 years old. The population of West Yorkshire was estimated at 2,227,400 in mid-2014. Assuming a 50/50 split of male/female residents, that means that over 185,000 men in West Yorkshire are survivors of sexual violence. The accurate figure is likely to be much higher.

No survivor's story is the same as another's, and the effects of abuse vary greatly from one person to the next. However, there are widely recorded negative impacts of sexual violence that are experienced by the majority of survivors – including mental health issues like depression, anxiety or anger, and physical health issues like harmful drinking, addiction and eating disorders.

Male survivors of sexual abuse face unique challenges:

- Boys and male teenagers are less likely to be identified as being at risk of sexual abuse or exploitation, and are less likely to disclose abuse if it happens
- Statistically, the majority of male rapes are unreported – due to a combination of factors including unhelpful gender stereotypes (conscious and unconscious), shame and self-blame. In 2015/16, only 5% of people accessing specialist sexual violence services were male, despite the fact that men make up more than 12% of rape victims in the UK each year according to the Ministry of Justice.
- Those who are able to access support often face stigma from many directions – entrenched stigma in the institutions they deal with, prejudice from friends, family and others, and internalised shame

Provision of support to these men in this area therefore needs a unique solution. SWY is developing a suite of services to meet the stated needs, including online counselling, phone support, web chat, etc., which will be coordinated using a bespoke cloud-based platform. This gateway support hub will enable survivors at all stages of their journey to be supported in the way they need, in a way that is sustainable and economical.

# Background – Male Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is an issue that is not often discussed – and that is doubly true with regards to sexual violence towards men and boys. The lack of understanding and open discussion around the issue means that male survivors of sexual violence can feel isolated and misunderstood, while their needs are often overlooked. Male victim-survivors of sexual violence face a range of difficulties: some of which are universal to survivors of sexual violence, and some which are unique to male survivors.

Sexual abuse and exploitation of males is consistently underreported and unrecognised. The reasons for this are multiple and complex. Current research estimates state that at least 1 in 6 UK males will have experienced sexual abuse in some form before the age of 18. Despite this, reported prevalence rates for male rape are very low due to complex cultural factors including reporting bias, belief that allegations will be disbelieved, and shaming/ridicule.

Research carried out by Barnardo's on children's service cases in Wales found that although a higher proportion of boys were identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation than girls (58% vs 42%), only 9.33% of referrals to Barnardo's Welsh SERAF (Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework) service were for boys .

Gender stereotypes play a huge role in the disparity in reporting rates between men and women. Research suggests that men are more likely to remain silent about sexual violence if they have no safe place to disclose their experiences. The Barnardo's report identified gender stereotypes as a risk factor for unrecognised child sexual exploitation (CSE) in boys:

*“...professional attitudes based on underlying traditional masculine or hyper-masculine stereotypes [are] presenting barriers to identifying boys and young men at risk of CSE, and to working successfully with them. These attitudes included the belief that males are better able to protect themselves, and therefore at lower risk of abuse... Professionals are more likely to consider boys as potentially involved in perpetrating the abuse...rather than being the victim” (2016).*

These gender stereotypes persist into adulthood: men are expected to be strong, with pressure to maintain an 'alpha male'-style lack of vulnerability, and certainly never to be seen as a victim. The pervasiveness of these stereotypes, and their role in perpetuating the damage inflicted on male survivors, should not be underestimated.

*“Because men are always under pressure to look strong there is a huge pressure in all societies not to draw attention to male vulnerability. These universal gender pressures are something recognised by all our great writers, storytellers and artists”*

Sexual abuse and exploitation is known to have long-lasting negative impacts in many areas of the survivor's life. Issues commonly reported by survivors include:

## Mental health

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD
- Suicidal ideation

## Physical health

- Addiction
- Anorexia/eating disorder
- Insomnia
- Health harming behaviours (e.g. excessive use of alcohol & drugs)
- Self harm

## Psychosexual

- Erectile dysfunction
- Sexual performance anxiety
- Unsafe & unhealthy sexual practices

## Crime & disorder

- Alcohol & drug misuse
- Hate crime (e.g. homophobia)
- Prostitution
- Violence

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including sexual abuse or exploitation, can have lifelong effects on physical and mental health – and are directly implicated in causing early death. Children exposed to ACEs [including sexual abuse/exploitation] “are more likely to go on to develop health harming and antisocial behaviours, often during adolescence, such as binge drinking, smoking and drug use” (Bellis & Ashton, 2016). Men who had been exposed to ACEs report higher levels of all health harming behaviours than women who had been exposed to the same ACEs. It is clear that there is a widespread need for male-specific sexual violence support.

# SWY Strategic Aims & Organisational Objectives

Survivors West Yorkshire was set up in 2000, with the aim of providing support for people who had been victims of child sexual abuse or adult rape. The service initially supported victim-survivors mostly in the Bradford area, using a combination of offline support and email- and telephone-based support. Over the past 17 years, SWY has expanded to help people from across the West Yorkshire area, and in that time has supported over 3,000 survivors of sexual violence.

- Survivors West Yorkshire aims to provide a victim- (survivor-) centred, trauma-informed service. Trauma-informed care takes into account the life experiences of the patient/client and has the potential to improve engagement and diverse health outcomes.
- Survivors West Yorkshire aims to expand its service both online and offline – implementing service innovations that will deliver solid outcomes across West Yorkshire's diverse areas.
- Survivors West Yorkshire aims to expand the range of services it provides – ensuring quality care for the diverse community of survivors SWY works with: for example, developing specialist advocacy and co-production/design projects.
- Survivors West Yorkshire aims to strengthen its partnership strategy which is built on the concept of collaborative impact and bi-directional learning. The ethos the strategy is built on can be shown by its ground-breaking partnership working with female rape crisis services in West Yorkshire through the West Yorkshire Sexual Violence Action Partnership (WYSVAP).

# The picture nationally

Official figures on annual reported male rape incidents have risen by over 800% since figures were first compiled in 1995 – from 150 to nearly 1,300. As stated previously, sexual violence crimes – and particularly male sexual violence crimes – are known to be drastically underreported. Knowing this, it is likely that the true number of male rape occurrences is much higher than the reported statistic.

In the year to March 2016, police in England and Wales recorded 3,443 occurrences of sexual assault on males aged 13 and over, and 1,282 occurrences of rape of males aged 16 and over. In comparison, in the same timeframe police recorded 27,892 occurrences of sexual assault on females aged 13 and over, and 22,569 occurrences of rape of females aged 16 and over. Male sexual violence therefore made up a small but significant proportion of all adult sexual violence that was reported last year (11% of sexual assaults and 5% of rapes). We can assume that due to the disparity in reporting of sexual violence crimes between men and women, the proportion of male sexual violence that occurred last year is even higher.

Recent events including the Jimmy Savile inquiries and similar investigations leading on from that have propelled sexual violence into the national consciousness. The current situation with regards to historical sexual abuse means that services anticipate a much higher volume of survivors coming forward over the next few years. The anticipated increase in service users will put an unprecedented strain on existing services – many of which are already at breaking point. Research commissioned by SWY recently found that services had been in greater demand in the wake of these events, with more people accessing services – but that there had been little increase in funding for services to enable them to keep up with demand. Even without the increase in demand, there is a desperate lack of funding across the third sector. A View from Inside the Box IV found that specialist sexual violence services were struggling as they were forced to compete for funding with larger ‘generic’ services. This is concerning as smaller specialist services closing through lack of funding will necessarily mean a decline in the quality of outcomes for sexual violence survivors across the country.

In this climate, an emerging pattern has been the diversification of women’s sexual violence services – services that had previously been women-only, but which have now begun to offer help to male survivors as well. This is problematic for a number of reasons:

- It is a more attractive proposition for funders: combining men’s and women’s services would seem to make economic sense, so funders feel that these proposals will give them better value for money than gender-specific services – therefore combined services are more likely to receive funding
- Women are less likely to access the service: research has shown that women are much more likely to seek help from sexual violence services that are a women-only space
- Men are less likely to access the service: similarly, research has shown that men are more likely to seek help from sexual violence services that are specifically for men

The current funding-driven trend for combined services is therefore not ideal for men or women, and is likely to result in fewer people overall reaching the services that they desperately need.

Experiencing sexual abuse in childhood is associated with higher numbers of adverse childhood experiences overall. For example, survivors of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) often report physical abuse (e.g. burning, electrocution, beatings) that co-occurred with the sexual abuse. Men who have experienced these concurrent and consecutive traumas have multiple and complex needs. The trauma manifests itself in physical, mental, emotional and behavioural symptoms, from the immediately evident – e.g. a post-traumatic psychotic episode – to the subtle – e.g. low self-esteem/lack of confidence. Male survivors of sexual abuse are ten times more likely to commit suicide than non-survivors.

# The picture locally

Recorded adult rapes per 100,000 of adult population in West Yorkshire have been higher than the England and Wales figure every year since 2012/13. In 2015/16, West Yorkshire had the second highest level of recorded adult rapes, and the highest level of recorded child rapes of any area nationwide. Despite this, in the same time period West Yorkshire had the 4th lowest charge/summons ratio for child rapes of any area in England and Wales.

In the 6 months between April-September 2016, West Yorkshire Police recorded 155 instances of sexual assault or rape of males aged 13 and over: equating to almost one rape or sexual assault per day .

From July-September 2016, 163 individuals were seen by West Yorkshire's Victim Support ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor) team. Only 7 of these (4%) were male.

Despite the known underreporting of male sexual violence, data released by West Yorkshire Police (as well as other services) indicates that male survivors are increasingly more willing to come forward – e.g. between 2012-2014, the number of male rapes reported to West Yorkshire Police almost doubled, from 63 to 101.

Recent research commissioned by SWY into West Yorkshire's sexual violence provision has found 3 core needs in the sector across the region (Scurlock-Evans & Mahoney, 2016):

- The need to reduce gaps in services, better meet demand, and offer diverse & creative therapeutic, support and advocacy services
- The need to preserve diversity of third-sector organisations offering a range of services based on different models of support
- The need to grow awareness with other professional groups, the public and systems such as the CJS and mental health services

Survivors West Yorkshire aims to address these needs with its service expansion over the coming 2 years, focusing on supporting male victims via its Ben's Place project.

## Current Organisational Position

SWY first started as a community-led organisation in 2000. Support for survivors at that time was very limited. In its early years, SWY pioneered the use of digital technology to meet the needs of survivors, with the aim of increasing the ability of survivors to be involved in informing policy and specialist service design. Over the past 17 years, SWY has delivered a virtual signposting service via email and phone, providing support to an average of 100 survivors each year.

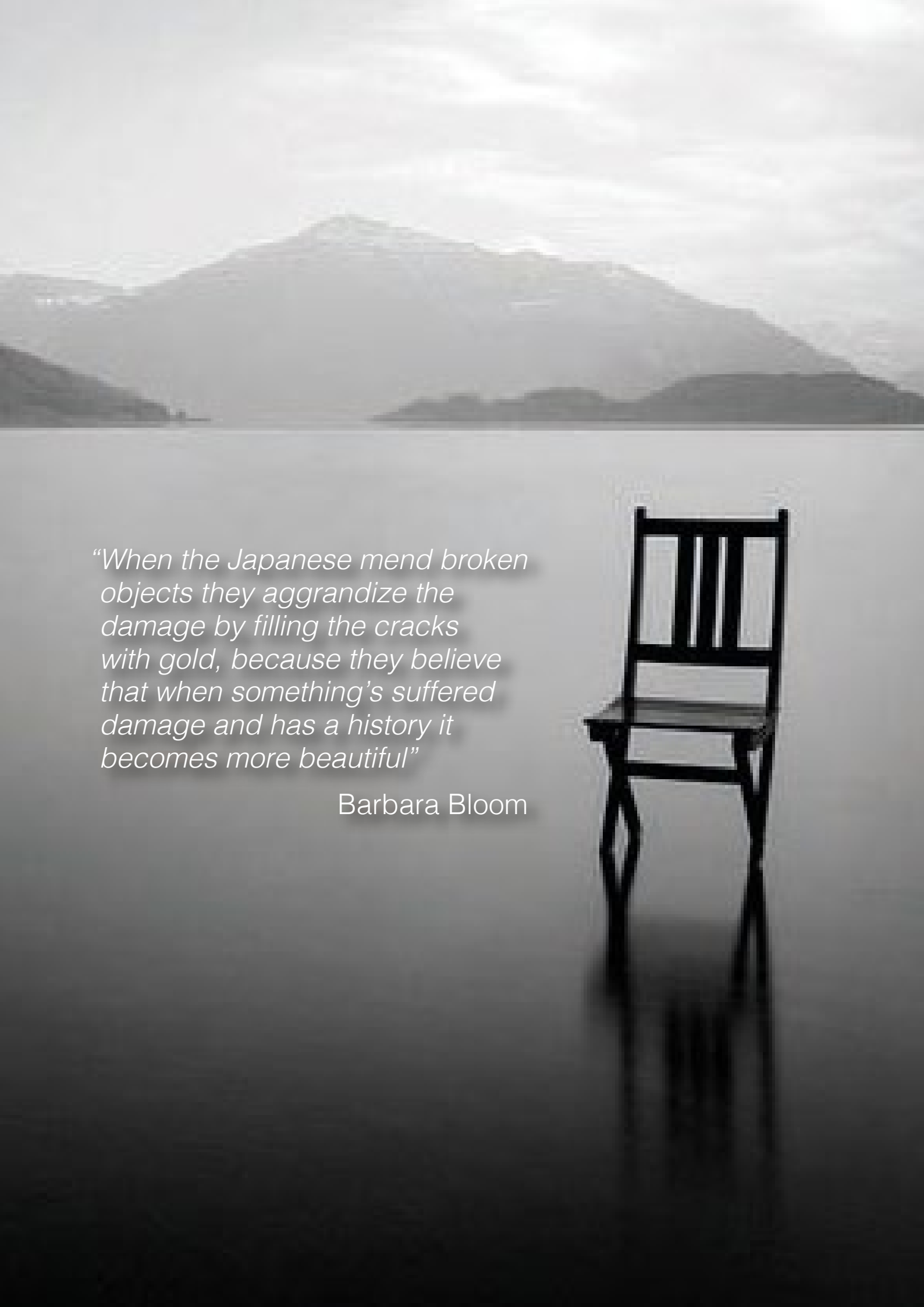
SWY has forged innovative and evolving partnerships and collaborations with rape crisis services and other organisations in the sector, aiming to challenge the silence around male sexual violence wherever it was seen to be holding back safe and evidenced improvements for survivors – regardless of age, gender or experience. As part of their partnership work, SWY pioneered UK workshops for male survivors (Victims No Longer) and those who support them (Healing the Healers) in partnership with Mike Lew, an internationally recognised specialist in psychotherapeutic interventions for men recovering from CSA.

SWY has commissioned several rounds of research in recent years, which has resulted in the 'A View from Inside the Box' series of reports (published between 2004-2016). These reports have been developed with a focus of lobbying at all levels of government over the past 13 years.

The virtual signposting service provided by SWY over the past 15 years has been very successful and is well regarded across the statutory and voluntary sectors. With the latest advances in digital technology, SWY is keen to take up new opportunities to develop and expand this type of service provision.

Since August 2016 SWY has been registered as a CIO – charitable incorporated organisation (registered charity number 1168928).





*"When the Japanese mend broken objects they aggrandize the damage by filling the cracks with gold, because they believe that when something's suffered damage and has a history it becomes more beautiful"*

Barbara Bloom



# Current SWY Service Provision

SWY currently has the technological capability to provide support in a number of ways:

- Email support: emotional support & signposting for male survivors of CSA and/or adult rape
- SMS text message support: quick response, text-based emotional support
- Telephone support: real-time, personal emotional support
- Online self-help resources: for male survivors and those around them
- Signposting to other services: e.g. local ISVA services

These services have been designed to enable survivors at all stages of their journey to access the support they need. Research commissioned by SWY found that many survivors in the area felt that the support available to them lacked range and did not reflect the spectrum of recovery :

“Some survivors are in crisis but not all of us are. There seems to be an attitude of either you are fine (recovered) or in crisis and a complete wreck. We need a less black and white approach”

# Future SWY Service Provision

SWY's vision is to expand and improve its services, moving towards offering more real-time support interventions through its virtual portal. New additions to the suite of services available via the SWY website will be:

- Voice counselling
- Email counselling
- Video counselling: real-time, face-to-face emotional support & counselling
- ‘Radio SWY’: an online radio station which will bring a range of perspectives and insights from around the world.
- Blog: offering different perspectives, disseminating research, signposting and sharing self-help resources
- An online ‘one stop’ knowledge centre hub, collating resources for everything to do with supporting survivors of sexual violence.

Virtual support systems have been shown to provide great benefits for complex trauma populations: users report enjoying the ease of access and are shown to benefit from significant positive outcomes . The use of online support systems has the added benefit of sustainability and efficiency – once the system is set up, it requires minimal maintenance, ensuring that project staff have maximum time to devote to direct service delivery. This means that the system will enable SWY to efficiently achieve their stated outcomes.

The most recent A View from Inside the Box (IV) report identified several barriers that may prevent potential service users in West Yorkshire from accessing sexual violence services, including:

- Geographical barriers (due to West Yorkshire's size and geographical makeup)
- Disabilities
- Cost (e.g. travel costs)

Providing a virtual service will go some way towards addressing all of these barriers as service users can access support at a time and place that is convenient to them.

SWY's intention going forward is to drive collaborative impact working with other organisations to deliver additional discrete projects that will enrich the support offer it is able to provide e.g. a theatre project, adventure therapy, co-production and survivor leadership development projects.

# Funding & income projections

Prior to 2016, SWY existed without core funding, adopting a nomadic strategy to fund its awareness-raising projects (e.g. its 'A View From Inside the Box' series of reports). The existing and growing levels of demand for support mean there is a pressing need for SWY to increase its capacity to respond.

The core work that the charity currently delivers is funded by the West Yorkshire Police & Crime Commissioner. SWY has conducted thorough research into similar services, which indicates that running the specialist holistic and ecologically survivor-focused service that SWY aims to deliver for males across West Yorkshire would cost around £300,000 per year. This level of funding would enable SWY to deliver a complete wrap-around service delivering all the services outlined previously at the highest standard.

With full funding, the service will be fully engaged in developing professional research and co-production projects: enhancing collaborative impact across Yorkshire and beyond, while increasing the quality and quantity of evidence supporting the model, ensuring increased positive outcomes for all stakeholders.

SWY plans to increase and broaden its funding sources to ensure a sustainable and consistent service. SWY's funding strategy going forwards will focus on:

- Local Police & Crime Commissioner Fund
- Central government
- NHS commissioning
- Trusts & foundations
- Lottery funding
- Donations: public and corporate

Relating to this, a core operational aim is to support sustainability by building a long-term relationship with a professional bid writing agency to add specialist capacity to the SWY management team to work effectively to ensure good grant bid and tender submissions.

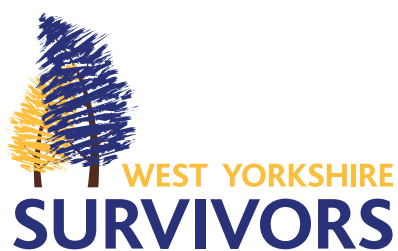
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[survivorswestyorkshire.org.uk](http://survivorswestyorkshire.org.uk)

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*"Boots and all..."*