

Self-referral to a Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS)

Important information for anyone who has accessed this service

Easy Read



What is this leaflet about?

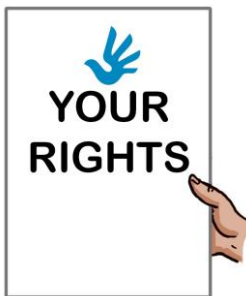


This leaflet is for anyone who has self-referred to a Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS). This means that you have not told the police about the assault. You made the appointment at the SARCS by yourself.



This leaflet contains important information that you need to know. If there is anything you do not understand, staff can help explain.

I have self-referred to a SARCS – what happens next?



You can decide if you want to tell the police about the assault at a later date. Help is available if you are not sure what to do.

What evidence will be kept by the SARCS?



The medical professional who looked after you, may have been able to collect evidence. If you decide to tell the police, this evidence could help find the person who carried out the assault.

This evidence may include:



- samples of blood, urine or hair
- underwear, a condom or sanitary wear
- images or photographs of any injuries or bruising
- written notes
- certain items of clothing.

These items make your forensic record. This information is only passed to the police if you decide to tell them about your assault.



As part of the examination, staff will have looked after your health and wellbeing needs. This information will be kept on your health record. It may be shared with other healthcare professionals to support you.



Your health record does not count as evidence. The evidence from your forensic record will only be shared with the police if you tell them about your assault.



All of your personal data will be held securely. This meets data protection law.

What evidence will not be kept by the SARCS?



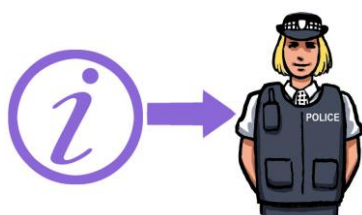
Other evidence will not be collected unless you make a report to the police. This may include crime scene evidence, bedding, or photos from a CCTV or on your mobile phone.

How long will my evidence be kept for?



26 months

The SARCS will keep your evidence safe for 26 months (2 years and 2 months), from the day of your examination. This is called the retention period.



During that time, you can decide if you want to tell the police about the assault. If you do tell the police, they will ask you to sign a form. This will allow the SARCS to give your evidence to them.



Remember you are in control. Your evidence will not be shared with the police unless you choose to tell them.



You may wish to keep a note of when your retention period ends. This is the date that your evidence will be destroyed. You might want to share the date with a trusted friend or relative. They can remind you nearer the time and help you to make a decision.

SARCS staff will not contact you to remind you when this is.



The staff at the SARCS can also talk you through your options. You can find more information at www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs



Rape Crisis Scotland provide an advocacy service. You can talk to them about what reporting to the police would involve. They can support you through the process if you decide to go ahead. Contact details for Rape Crisis are at the end of this leaflet.

Can I have my evidence returned to me?



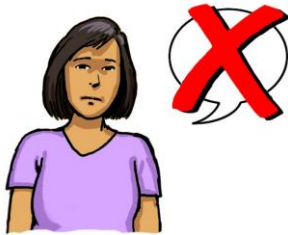
26 months

During the retention period, you have the right to request the return of certain items. These are items that were kept as evidence. The health board must do this as soon as they can.



You cannot request the return of samples taken during the examination. These will be kept for the retention period unless you ask for them to be destroyed. A health board can refuse to return evidence if they do not think it belongs to you or if it is not safe to return it.

What do I do if I want my evidence destroyed?



If you decide that you do not want to tell the police, you do not have to do anything. Your evidence will automatically be destroyed at the end of the retention period.



Or you can contact the SARCS at any point in the retention period to ask them to destroy the evidence. Information in your healthcare record will not be destroyed.



30 days

The SARCS will wait 30 days from the date you ask for this before destroying the evidence. This is in case you change your mind.



Remember - if you decide to report to the police, you cannot ask the health board to destroy or return items of evidence. This is because they will have been passed to the police.

Will anyone know if I have self-referred to a SARCS?



This is a confidential NHS service. The police and other services will not know about the assault or that you have had an examination.



In certain cases, a health professional may have told them if you or others are at risk of further harm. If so, this would have happened before your examination.

If I tell the police, what will they do with the evidence collected?



If you tell the police about the assault within the retention period, remember to tell them that you self-referred to a SARCS. This means they can ask the SARCS for your evidence. No testing of your evidence will happen until you make a report to the police.



If the police have enough evidence to prove a crime has been committed, they will tell the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. They will decide if there is enough evidence to charge the person.



If that happens, you will be contacted by the Victim Information and Advice Service. They will provide you with information about the case. They can also tell you about other support that may be available.

Support information



Victim Support Scotland give free and confidential advice to all victims and witnesses of crime. They are an independent charity and not part of Police Scotland or Scottish Courts.



You can ask the SARCS to refer you or you can contact them directly. Their contact details are at the end of this leaflet. Information about other victim support services can also be found at

www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs



You can get a copy of the Victims' Code for Scotland from the SARCS which has more information about your rights.

Support and information

NHS Inform

www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline (5pm – midnight, every night)

Call: 08088 010302

Text: 07537 410 027

Email: support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Police Scotland

In an emergency dial 999

Non emergencies dial 101

www.scotland.police.uk

Victim Support Scotland: 0800 160 1985 (Mon to Fri 8am to 8pm)

www.victimsupportsco.org.uk

Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87 (Mon – Thur 6pm to 2am and Fri 6pm to Mon 6am)

www.breathingspace.scot

Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline: 0800 027 1234

www.sdafmh.org.uk (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

www.sdafmh.org.uk

Childline: 0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Information about other support services and organisations can be found at

www.nhsinform.scot/sarcs

Important information that you might want to keep:

SARCS you attended:
Address:
Telephone number:
Email address:
Healthcare professional to ask for:
Date you attended the SARCS:
Your 26 month retention period will end on:



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

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Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

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