



**University of  
Sunderland**



*Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre*

*Grace – Northumberland*

*Sexual Violence Project*

**Evaluation and  
Sustainability Report**

**August 2011**

**Centre for Children, Young People and  
Families**

**Professor Catherine Donovan, Dr. Nicola  
Ballantyne and Ms Angela Wilcock**

## Executive Summary

Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre (TRCC) is the longest established, continuous Rape Crisis Service in the UK (Jones and Cook, 2008:9) with aims to: provide a service to women aged 16 and over who have been raped or sexually abused; raise awareness and provide training about sexual violence; improve service provision for women survivors; and promote the development of initiatives aimed at prevention of sexual violence (TRCC 2011).

Recently TRCC identified a gap in provision of services responding to sexual violence in rural Northumberland. Following a consultation with key agencies in Northumberland Grace: Northumberland Sexual Violence Project (hereafter Grace) was set up housed within TRCC to develop a new model of delivery that would address the particular needs of women living in a rural county.

- The aims and objectives of the Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre (TRCC) have been achieved:
  - Grace has raised awareness about sexual violence in Northumberland with partner agencies and potential service users;
  - Six counselling outposts have been developed across the county; and this mode of delivery is identified by stakeholders as a model of good practice for this kind of service;
  - 125 referrals to Grace have been received of which 68 women have received counselling;
  - Indirect and direct feedback about the counselling offered is extremely positive;
  - The waiting time is, on average, four weeks. Blyth's waiting list is consistently the highest though none of the counselling outposts have reached full waiting lists;
  - Two training events on sexual violence have been run and both have received very positive feedback;
  - The location of Grace and its services (for women and training) within Northumberland has been positively received both by partner agencies, the volunteer and service users.
- The age profile of those referred to Grace suggests that more monitoring of this might prove fruitful for funding and development of work agendas. The (older) age profile of women referred to Grace seems at odds with the national trends about who experiences sexual violence. Whilst there is some evidence that messages are reaching younger women about seeking support for sexual violence, additional work is needed to target young women across the county. In keeping with other research, age is a factor in rural communities affecting victim/survivors' help-seeking and the older age profile reflects

this. Being able to compare the age of the group that have been referred with the group that take up the counselling offered may shed further light on this.

- Most referrals are for those for whom child sexual abuse is a factor. This is in keeping with the national picture of Rape Crisis Centres but again may suggest that more work is required targeting young women experiencing sexual violence as adults.
- Most referrals come from health agencies but referrals from mental health agencies (both statutory and voluntary) are significant which suggests that there is recognition by these agencies that specialist services are required to meet the needs of victim/survivors of sexual violence. This may have implications for the development of Grace, its relationship with partner agencies, and future funding streams.
- The capacity of the development worker, counsellor and administrator should be monitored and reviewed. Maintaining multi-agency working relationships, ensuring the service remains visible and operating reasonable waiting lists may require increased hours for both roles. In addition, it may be useful to review the use of the administrative support, especially in terms of when, where and how it is available.
- The consensus amongst funding, partner and TRCC stakeholders interviewed is that sustainability of Grace will be best achieved, in the short to medium term at least, by remaining part of TRCC:
  - The current funding context means that the infrastructure, reputation, ethos and knowledge/skill base are crucial to future funding bids. However:
    - It is crucial that the Northumberland identity Grace has created is retained and developed;
    - The Grace project should also explore using alternative, web-based tools to: improve visibility across the county; maintain multi-agency working relationships; and provide different kinds of support and communication to those who may find travelling difficult.
- The database could be improved in three ways: decreasing the amount of missing data; changing the ways that referral sources are identified to facilitate more accurate data collection; and collecting data on those women who take up the counselling offered as well as those who are referred. The latter particularly would facilitate a comparative analysis between women who are referred to the service and those women who actually use the service.