



Organisation Name	Aylesbury Vale & Milton Keynes Sexual Assault & Abuse Support Service
Project Name	Crisis Counsellor
Funding Stream	Community Area Priorities
Total Cost of project	£21,391
Amount of Match Funding	£10,696
Amount being applied for	£10,696
Amount suggested	£10,696

Project Summary

[Aylesbury Vale & Milton Keynes Sexual Assault & Abuse Support Service](#) (SAASS) are a local charity whose primary aim is to provide support, information, advice and guidance to victims and survivors, empowering and enabling them to work with the trauma and suffering caused to them and their loved ones by sexual assault and abuse, including non-recent and childhood sexual abuse.

SAASS provide holistic support to women and men over 16 living in the north of Buckinghamshire and accept self-referrals and referrals from voluntary and statutory organisations. SAASS currently support individuals by providing Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), up to 24 face to face counselling sessions, Advocacy, group therapy, Thrive 2gether weekly drop-in service and cyber therapy (including webchat, counselling telephone support), Referral to the Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service, telephone helpline and emotional support. Services are delivered, when possible, from premises in Aylesbury or online or by telephone.

Last year 139 of SAASS service users are adults who were sexually abused and assaulted when they were children mostly by family members, 185 people had non recent experiences and 273 were recent incidents. 163 reported that they had been abused multiple times. 308 unique individuals from Aylesbury Vale were supported.

SAASS are looking for funding to set up a pilot crisis counselling service for 14 months, in response to increased need for support services due to Covid-19. SAASS advise that their referral rates have increased significantly, especially since the schools returned following lock down, that new service users are presenting with more complex experiences and needs, and that many are in crisis following a lockdown in which they experienced traumatic sexual assault and abuse events. SAASS advise that those who have suffered childhood sexual abuse or non-recent assault the emotional experiences of the lock down have triggered memories of fear and being trapped with the perpetrators of their abuse.

Funding will enable SAASS to deliver a pilot short term intervention crisis support service to help survivors to receive assistance, resources, stabilisation, and support to decrease emotional pain, provide emotional support, make sure that the person in crisis is safe, and help develop a plan for coping with the situation. (Crisis counselling is not intended to provide psychotherapy or similar). The service would include a programme of 6 support sessions for clients, including counselling, to new service users living in

Aylesbury Vale. The service will be open to both male and female victims of sexual assault and abuse and male survivors of domestic abuse. Sessions will be delivered one to one, Face to Face when possible and/or using online platforms such as Zoom, Teams, Messenger/WhatsApp, or telephone.

The support given will include:

- Preparatory work including an Information Advice and Guidance session to identify individual need, referral when appropriate to appropriate agencies e.g. One Recovery, Women's Aid, Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA)
- An assessment to identify their individual need and ensure SAASS are the most suitable agency to support them
- Exploration of the individual's response to the situation
- Support and self-care planning to include family, friends, and SAASS services including telephone helpline, telephone support and advocacy
- Exploration of tools the service user can use in order to cope and reduce panic attacks and bouts of anxiety.

SAASS's expected outcomes are:

- Survivors will be more in control of their lives- they know what options are available to them, they feel able to decide what they want to do about the sexual violence, they feel able to make decisions about their future
- Survivors have better health and well-being- they understand how the sexual assault and abuse (and domestic abuse) has affected them, they have positive coping skills and strategies for taking care of their emotional well-being
- Survivors are more able to access further support- they know what resources are available to them and they feel able to access the support they need

Evidence which supports the need:

- The Thames Valley Police (TVP) Crime Summary for Aylesbury Vale for September 2019 – August 2020 records that reports to the police totalled 371- 134 Rape and 237 non rape sexual assaults.
- Rape Crisis England and Wales estimate that only 15% of incidents are reported to the police and the NHS report Strategic Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services Lifelong care for victims and survivors: 2018 - 2023 estimate that 20% of cases are reported. SAASS therefore estimate that between 1885 and 2473 sexual assaults have taken place in Aylesbury Vale over the last 12 months. However, due to Covid-19 it is expected that incidents are above average due to the lockdown.
- [Equation](#) reports that 'due to current measures, it is anticipated that domestic and sexual abuse incidents and risk posed to survivors will increase'.
- Since the reopening of schools, SAASS have seen a rise in referrals as survivors have found safe spaces and time to reach out for help. The Ministry of Justice have told centres to expect a surge of referrals.
- SAASS's Ministry of Justice Mid-Year monitoring report for 2019 – 2020 shows they supported a total of 255 unique individuals. The report for this year shows 334 unique individuals have been supported, an increase of 24%. However, this does not reflect the increase in contacts SAASS have made as many survivors have required increased number of interventions/contacts as mental health conditions deteriorated.
- SAASS's baseline assessment based on the first 2 weeks of March 2020 show 191 contacts were made to professionals and survivors, at the height in lock down over 450 contacts were being made per fortnight.

How does the project address local priorities?

Health & Wellbeing (including Covid19 social recovery) & Community Safety: The SAASS Crisis Counselling project will support the development of local services to meet the challenges of survivors who have experienced deteriorating mental health through lockdown. This will include those who have lived through high levels of abuse during lockdown and have been unable to find safe places and times to seek support. SAASS services will help to empower individuals, build their resilience and improve their health and wellbeing, providing urgent support to stabilise their mental health whilst they wait for longer term therapeutic support.

SAASS's work supports the wider priorities of the Aylesbury Community Board, including preventing homelessness, supporting clients to seek benefits and ensuring that clients (and their families) who are at risk of food poverty can access healthy food provision through partner organisations. Other outcomes that support the Aylesbury Community Board priorities include tackling social isolation and loneliness. With feedback from survivors shared in the application including:

"My anxiety has calmed down, relationship with husband is better and I am more assertive"

"It has helped me to feel more empowered and less worthless, it has been a critical opportunity for me to be able to move on from a difficult past and build strength"

"It has helped me to process and come to terms with the difficulties I faced to go forward with my life and that of my family"

"I am so grateful to come in lay all my thoughts and feelings down, to be listened to and not judged and come out feeling positive"

"When I started, I had anxiety- now leaving I am off my tablets"

"I really hope that every woman in the county that has been affected by sexual trauma has access to the same amazing support that I've had access to. Please keep doing what you're doing. I really value you all so much more than you could ever know"

How does the project align with the values, objectives and corporate priorities of Buckinghamshire Council?

Strengthening our communities: SAASS's project will support residents of Aylesbury Vale whose lives have been affected by sexual violence in all its forms to live independent, fulfilling lives. SAASS aim to prevent the deterioration of mental health through providing tailored support and counselling. SAASS will support people to understand their trauma and the challenges they face with individual support and safety plans. Initial support through the crisis counselling offers early help and interventions designed to meet individual need and reduce or prevent mental health deterioration before it becomes too hard to manage and has lasting impacts on an individual's life. SAASS will improve knowledge of, and access to, services and support enable healthier lifestyles for all, enabling the development of strong positive and healthy relationships, building resilience and reducing the possibility of the survivor becoming a repeat victim and raising the quality of life for those disadvantaged.

Protecting the vulnerable: SAASS's work with survivors of sexual assault and abuse can build self-esteem and confidence, empowering individuals and reducing the possibilities of them becoming repeat victims. SAASS support individuals from the age of 16, with the oldest client 84 years old- who had been assaulted by her father between the ages of 8-14. SAASS advise that survivors often blame themselves for their experiences and the impact of trauma results in the loss of self-worth, which results in them becoming isolated unable to build positive friendships and integrate within the local community. SAASS's mission is to rebuild lives so that survivors are able to become resilient and identify their own solutions, so they are healthy, safe and protected from harm able to reach their full potential and not living defined by their trauma.

How does the project achieve value for money?

The SAASS monitoring and evaluation report shows that in 2019 – 2020 94% of service users reported a positive improvement in their health and mental wellbeing; 96% reported they felt their ability to cope with aspects of everyday life had improved; 90% reported feelings of safety had increased; 97% reported they were better informed and empowered to act. It is therefore felt that this project represents good value for money for the outcomes that can be achieved through providing early intervention services via the project.

Funding will be allocated to:

Clinical Lead, Management of the service, Counselling support, Data, monitoring and Evaluation. Support to sessional counsellors= £10,775

Sessional Counsellors- 2 counsellors supporting 8 individuals per week = £6,912

Counselling Supervision costs 12 sessions @ £50 per session to meet Ethical standards £600

Management Time for performance and project management= £1,278

Overheads to include database licenses, IT software licenses and support, Zoom Licenses and mobile phone costs= £1,826

Total cost: £21,391

The Aylesbury Community Board is being asked to fund 50% of this cost, £10,696, to support residents within the Aylesbury Community Board area. Match funding is currently being sought from 5 other community boards to enable the full project to be delivered. The project is still viable for Aylesbury if the other community boards do not agree to allocating funding towards this project.

Please note that applicant will be required to provide financial evidence to show that the funding has been spent as agreed.

Community Board Coordinator comments

This application has been fully assessed in line with the Community Board funding criteria and is recommended as a project which is suitable to receive funding from the Aylesbury Community Board. A representative from SAASS presented at overview of the project at the Aylesbury Community Board's Health & Wellbeing subgroup, and its Community Safety subgroup, where it was agreed that the aims of the project did meet the priorities of the group which provides an additional indicative view that this project should be funded.

This report has been reviewed by Buckinghamshire Council's Unitary Members and the majority have voted in favour of allocating £10,696 of community board funding to towards this project.

The project has therefore been agreed, and the decision will be formally ratified at the Aylesbury Community Board meeting on 17/11/20.

Funding is conditional on SAASS providing a Covid-19 risk assessment that details how the project will be delivered in line with national lockdown restrictions and any subsequent localised tiered restrictions that are put in place for Buckinghamshire.

The applicant will be required to agree to terms and conditions, which include a monitoring agreement, as discussed with the Community Board Coordinator before the fund will be formally awarded.