

50 Years of Standing with Survivors

Strategy 2026-2031

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Welcome

Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland has spent nearly five decades standing alongside survivors of sexual violence.

Through significant social, political and financial change, our commitment has remained constant: to ensure that survivors are believed, supported and empowered.

This strategy sets out how we intend to build on that foundation and shape the next chapter of our work. The breadth of engagement in its creation reflects our commitment to RCTN's strategy being grounded in lived experience and shared purpose.

Our strategic framework for 2026-2031 is structured around six priorities: three focused on the external impact we seek to create, and three focused on the internal conditions required to sustain that impact. Together, they reflect our understanding that safe, effective services depend not only on what we do, but on how we work and who we are as an organisation.

Looking ahead, 2028 will mark 50 years of RCTN, an opportunity to honour the survivors and activists whose courage created this movement, to celebrate our collective impact, and to strengthen our foundations for the decades ahead.

The Board of Trustees is fully committed to the delivery and accountability framework set out in this strategy. We will monitor progress, remain responsive to an ever-changing environment, and ensure that survivor voice continues to shape our direction.

We are proud to present this strategy and confident in the organisation's ability to deliver it.

Anne Fry
Chair

Introduction

Sexual violence remains a significant and under-reported issue across the Northeast. Survivors continue to face barriers to disclosure, access to support and justice.

Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland (RCTN) is part of a wider feminist movement that has challenged the silence surrounding sexual violence for decades, advocating for survivor support, justice and social change. This strategy has been shaped through extensive consultation with survivors, staff, volunteers, partners, funders and commissioners. Over 90 stakeholders contributed through surveys, workshops and facilitated sessions.

The consultation confirmed strong alignment around our purpose, values and impact, alongside clear priorities for growth, sustainability and future readiness.

This strategy sets out our direction of travel for 2026-2031. It defines the change we exist to make, and the organisational conditions required to make that change possible.

Our Mission

Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland exists to end sexual violence. We provide specialist, trauma-informed support for survivors and work to ensure they are believed, supported and empowered. As a survivor-led organisation, we challenge the systems and inequalities that allow sexual violence to persist and work for lasting change.

The Change We Seek

By 2031 we want to see:

- Survivors accessing support earlier and with fewer barriers.
- Survivors reporting increased safety, belief and empowerment.
- Greater public and professional understanding of sexual violence.
- Systems that respond to survivors with greater fairness and trauma-informed practice.
- Stronger, more sustainable specialist services for the future.

Our Values

Belief

We believe survivors.

We recognise the courage it takes to disclose experiences of sexual violence and respond with trust and empathy. We centre survivors' voices and experiences in our work.

Courage

We speak out against sexual violence and challenge injustice.

We are willing to raise difficult issues and advocate for change.

Inclusion

We value diversity and recognise that sexual violence affects people differently.

Our work is informed by an intersectional feminist understanding that inequality relating to gender, race, disability, sexuality, class and other factors can shape people's experiences of violence and access to support.

Collaboration

We work together to achieve the best outcomes for survivors.

We share knowledge, support each other and build strong partnerships.

Our Strategic Framework 2026-2031

Our strategy is structured around:

- External Impact Priorities – the change we seek to create for survivors, communities and systems.
- Internal Enabling Priorities – the organisational conditions required to sustain safe, effective and ethical impact.

This distinction reflects consultation feedback that both survivor services and workforce sustainability are essential and interconnected.



External Impact Priorities

The change we exist to create



Internal Enabling Priorities

The foundations that make safe impact possible



PART A: External Impact Priorities

Priority 1: Survivor-centred Services & Access

Why this matters

Consultation feedback highlighted high confidence in the quality and safety of our services, alongside concern about waiting times, access barriers and geographical reach. Survivors emphasised that asking for support is often the hardest step and that delays can increase distress and risk.

By 2031 we will:

- Reduce waiting times and improve timeliness of access.
- Increase equitable access across all geographical areas served.
- Expand participation and peer-led opportunities.
- Protect and strengthen survivor-led, trauma-informed practice.
- Maintain high levels of survivor-reported safety, belief and empowerment.

Success will look like:

- Improved outcome measures.
- Reduced access disparities.
- Increased survivor participation.
- Sustained quality standards.
- Reduced waiting times.

Priority 2: Prevention, Education & Early Intervention

Why this matters

Ending sexual violence requires cultural change. Consultation identified a strong appetite for expanded prevention and education work, particularly with schools, professionals and communities.

By 2031 we will:

- Expand prevention and education programmes.
- Strengthen partnerships with schools and youth settings.
- Increase professional training and awareness activity.
- Contribute to long-term cultural change initiatives.

Success will look like:

- Increased reach of education programmes.
- Stronger professional partnerships.
- Evidence of improved awareness and confidence among participants.

Priority 3: Influence, Partnerships & System Change

Why this matters

Survivors continue to experience re-traumatisation within wider systems. Consultation emphasised the importance of maintaining a strong, values-led voice and influencing policy and practice.

By 2031 we will:

- Strengthen strategic partnerships locally and nationally.
- Increase our influence on policy, commissioning and system reform.
- Use survivor voice and evidence to inform change.
- Be widely recognised as an expert voice in the sexual violence sector.

Success will look like:

- Increased representation in strategic forums.
- Evidence of policy or practice influence regionally and nationally.
- Stronger commissioning relationships.

PART B: Internal Enabling Priorities

Priority 4: Workforce Wellbeing, Development & Sustainability

Why this matters

Staff and volunteers are the foundation of safe survivor support. Consultation highlighted the importance of leadership consistency, wellbeing support and opportunities for development.

By 2031 we will:

- Strengthen leadership throughout all levels of the organisation.
- Improve supervision, wellbeing and reflective practice.
- Increase staff retention and satisfaction.
- Embed vicarious resilience and shared learning.
- Develop clear workforce development pathways.

Success will look like:

- Improved staff survey results.
- Reduced turnover.
- Strong leadership confidence.

Priority 5: Inclusion, Equity & Accessibility

Why this matters

Inclusion was consistently described as core to our identity. Our work is grounded in an intersectional feminist understanding that inequality and discrimination shape people's experiences of violence and access to justice. Consultation identified the need to be more visible and accountable about intersectional practice and to reduce cultural, digital and geographical barriers.

By 2031 we will:

- Embed intersectional practice across all areas of operation.
- Increase accessibility for digitally excluded communities.
- Strengthen EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) governance and accountability.
- Be explicit and visible about inclusion commitments.

Success will look like:

- Broader reach across diverse communities.
- Clear EDI metrics and reporting.
- Positive feedback from marginalised groups.

Priority 6: Future Readiness, Growth & Sustainability

Why this matters

The external political, funding and regulatory environment is uncertain. Consultation identified the need to proactively explore organisational identity, accreditation and future growth.

By 2031 we will:

- Increase financial resilience and diversify income streams.
- Reduce reliance on single funding sources.
- Review and future-proof quality and accreditation frameworks.
- Undertake structured scoping of organisational identity, including our name and brand.
- Explore opportunities for collaborative partnerships.

Success will look like:

- Brand and organisation's name reviewed.
- Clear partnership working workplan.
- New services scoped.
- Clear plan for financial sustainability.

Cross-cutting Commitments

Across all priorities, we will:

- Centre survivor voice and leadership.
- Deliver trauma-informed practice.
- Embed inclusion and intersectionality.
- Use evidence and impact data to guide decisions.
- Maintain our feminist foundations and a clear stance against sexual violence, recognising that violence against women and girls is rooted in inequality and requires both survivor support and systemic change.

2028: 50 Years of RCTN

A Defining Moment

In 2028, RCTN will mark 50 years of specialist support for survivors of sexual violence.

This milestone is not only an opportunity to celebrate our history, but to:

- Honour survivor courage and activism.
- Recognise the feminist roots of our movement and the activism that created specialist support services for survivors.
- Demonstrate our impact and expertise.
- Strengthen our sustainability for the next 50 years.
- Position RCTN as a leading voice in the region and nationally.

The 50th anniversary year will be strategically used to:

Celebrate and amplify survivor impact

- Publish a 50-year impact narrative.
- Highlight survivor voices and outcomes.
- Mark progress while acknowledging ongoing challenges.

Strengthen influence and public awareness

- Host a regional conference or flagship event.
- Engage MPs, commissioners and partners.
- Contribute to national VAWG discourse.

Drive financial sustainability

- Launch a 50th anniversary fundraising campaign.
- Build corporate and philanthropic partnerships.
- Grow unrestricted income.

Invest in organisational legacy

- Reflect on identity, brand and future direction.
- Strengthen governance and quality assurance.
- Capture institutional memory and history.

The anniversary will act as a strategic midpoint review, ensuring that the second half of this five-year strategy is shaped by reflection, ambition and renewed momentum.

Delivery & Accountability

This strategy will be delivered through:

- Annual operational delivery plans.
- Board-level KPI dashboards.
- Quarterly performance monitoring.
- Ongoing consultation with survivors and staff.
- Annual strategy review and adaptation.

Detailed delivery plans and performance indicators will sit within annual operational plans.

Alignment & External Context

Our priorities align strongly with the Government's VAWG Strategy, particularly in relation to survivor-centred support and prevention activity. This alignment positions RCTN to influence and contribute meaningfully to national objectives while remaining grounded in local need.

Key Terms

The language used in this strategy reflects the values and practice of specialist sexual violence services. The following definitions explain how these terms are used within Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland (RCTN).

Intersectional Feminism

Intersectional feminism recognises that inequality is experienced differently depending on factors such as gender, gender identity, race, disability, sexuality, class, immigration status and other forms of marginalisation. At RCTN this means ensuring support is accessible to all survivors and challenging the overlapping inequalities that allow sexual violence to persist.

Survivor-led

Being survivor-led means that the voices, experiences and expertise of people who have experienced sexual violence shape how services are designed, delivered and improved. Survivors inform our priorities, influence decision making and help guide the direction of our work.

Trauma-informed Practice

Trauma-informed practice recognises the widespread impact of trauma and aims to create services that prioritise safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment. This approach shapes how services are delivered, how staff work with survivors and how organisations design safe environments.

Survivor Voice

Survivor voice refers to the meaningful involvement of people with lived experience of sexual violence in shaping services, policy and public understanding. This can include consultation, participation opportunities and survivor-informed service development.

Prevention

Prevention refers to work that aims to stop sexual violence from happening in the first place by challenging harmful attitudes, addressing inequality and promoting safer cultures and communities. This includes education, awareness and influencing wider social change.

Systems Change

Systems change refers to work that seeks to improve the policies, institutions and practices that shape how survivors are treated. This can include influencing criminal justice processes, professional practice, public policy and wider cultural attitudes.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Violence Against Women and Girls refers to violence that disproportionately affects women and girls and is rooted in gender inequality. It includes sexual violence, domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and exploitation.

Easy Read Version

Our Mission

We're here to help end sexual violence (when someone is made to do or experience something sexual that they don't want). We listen to survivors, believe them and help them heal and move forward. We also work to change the way people think and the way services help, so sexual violence becomes less common and everyone is treated with kindness and respect.

What is a Mission?

A mission is why we exist. It explains what we're here to do every day.

What is Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence means any unwanted sexual behaviour. It can happen to anyone, whatever their age or background. It is never the survivor's fault.

What is a Survivor?

A survivor is someone who has experienced sexual violence. Some people choose different words, but we use "survivor" because it recognises people's strength.

Our Values

What are Values?

Values are the things that matter most to us. They help us make decisions, work together and treat everyone with kindness and respect. Ours are:

Belief

Belief means trusting and listening.

We believe survivors and treat everyone with kindness and respect.

Inclusion

Inclusion means everyone belongs.

We make sure everyone feels welcome and can get the support they need.

Courage

Courage means doing what's right.

We speak up against sexual violence and unfairness.

Collaboration

Collaboration means working together.

Together we can make a bigger difference.

Our Strategy for the Next 5 Years

What is a Strategy?

A strategy is a way of saying, "This is where we want to go and how we'll get there."

What are Our Priorities?

Our priorities are the six most important things we'll work on over the next five years to make life better for survivors.

Ours are:

1. Getting Support

Everyone who needs our help should be able to get the right support from us at the right time.

2. Prevention, Learning and Helping Sooner

We'll teach people about sexual violence and show them how to get help and support as early as possible.

3. Creating Change

We'll work with other people and services and share what survivors tell us to help make support better.

4. Supporting Our People

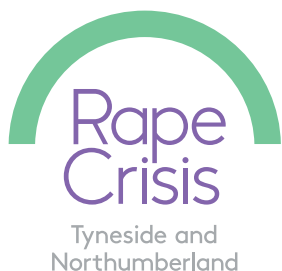
We'll make sure our staff and volunteers have everything they need to provide the best possible services.

5. Everyone Matters

We'll make sure our services are welcoming, fair and easy for everyone who needs them to access them.

6. Building for the Future

We want RCTN to stay strong, keep getting better and be here for everyone who needs us for many years to come.



50 Years of Standing with Survivors

#WeBelieveYou

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Helpline & Email Support

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@ Rape_Crisis_Tn

f RCTN

Support Us

A donation today helps provide counselling, advocacy, and life-changing emotional support for women and girls affected by sexual violence.

Together, we can make sure no survivor has to face this alone.

rctn.org.uk/get-involved

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