

Strategic Plan

2021 – 2024

Contents

Summary	3
Background – Male Sexual Violence	4
Survivors West Yorkshire – Strategic Aims	6
The picture nationally	7
The picture locally	9
Current organisational position	10
Current SWY service provision	11
Future SWY service provision	12
Funding & income projections	13
References	14



“Boots and all...”

Ben's Place – working in collaboration with:



Summary

West Yorkshire is unique – a large area (over 2000 km²) 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: Bens Place, Breaking the Silence (BAM) and KRASSAC which works with males but does not employ them directly.

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.

- 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 will continue to develop a suite of services to meet the stated needs, including online counselling, phone support, web chat and client advisory groups - 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

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 unrecognized. 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 unrecognized 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 recognized 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 behaviors (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 behaviors, 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 behaviors 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 (SWY) has been providing information and support for survivors of rape and sexual violence in the Bradford/ West Yorkshire area, with a particular focus on male survivors, since 2000. Our charitable object is: the relief of the physical and mental distress of persons in need by reason of suffering from child sexual abuse/adult rape and by the provision of counselling and support for such persons. SWY was founded by our current CEO Robert Balfour, who is himself a survivor, and who has commissioned and co-authored academic research looking at the service needs of sexual violence victim-survivors.

- 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 is evidenced by its diplomatic openness to 18 years of discussions with female rape crisis services in West Yorkshire through the West Yorkshire Sexual Violence Action Partnership (WYSVAP) forum around a non-competitive partnership

The Picture Nationally

Male sexual violence reporting is increasing within England and Wales, with current statistics (of reported rape, no other forms of sexual violence included) estimated to be around 12,000 (ONS, 2018); this compares with 1,135 in 2005. 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 (ONS, *Bulletin Tables - Focus on violent crime and sexual offences (year ending March 2016)*, Feb 2017). Sexual violence crimes – and particularly male sexual violence crimes – are known to be drastically underreported. It is likely that the true number of male rape occurrences is much higher than the reported statistic.

The effects of sexual abuse and rape are pervasive and long-lasting. 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 “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, ‘*Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their association with health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population*’, 2016). Men who have been exposed to ACEs report higher levels of all health harming behaviours than women who have been exposed to the same ACEs, and present with 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 (O’Leary, P. & Gould, N. ‘*Men Who Were Sexually Abused in Childhood and Subsequent Suicidal Ideation: Community Comparison, Explanations & Practice Implications*’, 2008).

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 several 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 behavioral 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.

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 [unpublished stats from West Yorkshire Police]

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):

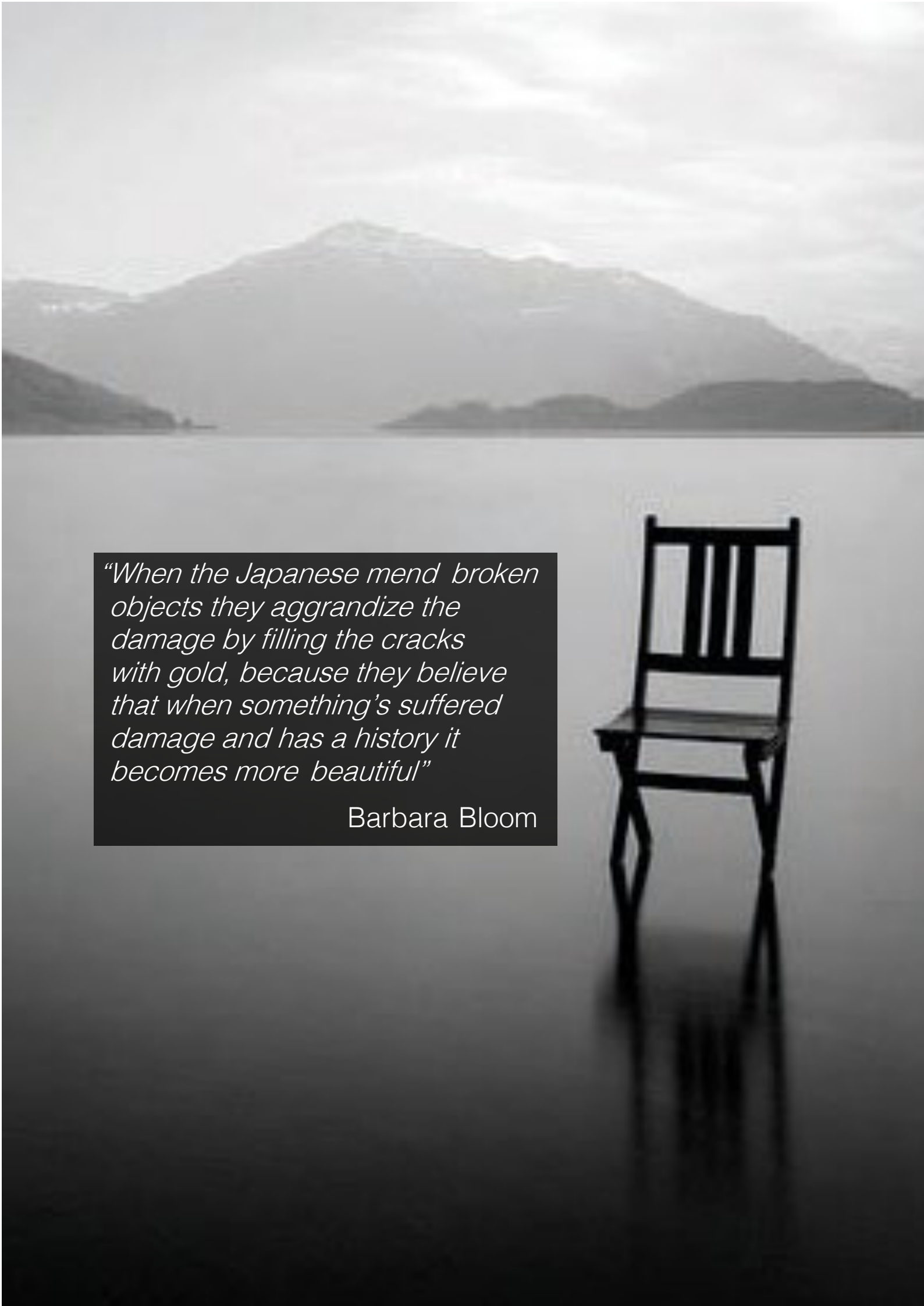
- The need to reduce gaps in services, better meet demand, and offer diverse & creative therapeutic, support and advocacy services
- The need to preserve diversity of third-sector organisations offering a range of services based on different models of support
- The need to grow awareness with other professional 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 5 years, focusing on supporting male victims via its Ben's Place project.

Current Organisational Position

Ben's Place 2021-2024 will have a real impact for survivors who access support via the project. This individual impact objectives aims to meet a range of funders objectives. A new series of virtual group therapy will be increasingly piloting and promises to bring people together & build strong relationships for peer support and mutual acknowledgement. We know from evaluation of our existing work that our virtual counselling service enables more people to fulfil their potential by working to address issues at the earliest possible stage; 67% of the men supported via the 2018/19 pilot project sought out/took up opportunities which they previously felt unable to do as a result of the intervention – fulfilling their potential. This figure rose to 80% for those clients with more sustained engagement (average 13 sessions) with the counselling. While the survivors we work with are all adults, for some, the sexual violence and abuse they have experienced may be years, or even decades in the past. But contacting SWY nonetheless is 'the earliest possible stage' at which they can begin to address these issues – indeed, some men tell us that contacting SWY is the very first time they have felt able to talk to anyone about what happened to them.

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

A black and white photograph of a wooden chair on a beach. The chair is in the foreground, slightly to the right, and its reflection is visible in the wet sand. In the background, there is a calm body of water and a range of mountains under a cloudy sky.

"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
- Video counselling
- Telephone support: real-time, personal emotional support
- Online self-help resources: for male survivors and those around them
- ISVA services emotional support advice and mentoring

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 offline support interventions via a hybrid model. New additions to the suite of services available via the SWY website will be:

- Offline 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/Vlog: 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.
- Recovery resilience retreats

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 continue to drive collaborative impact working with other organizations to empower additional discrete projects that will enrich the support offer it is able to provide e.g., a Male film/photo project, adventure therapy, co-production, and survivor leadership

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.

Our model is developed in line with the Male Survivors Partnership Quality Standards for Services Supporting Male Victims/Survivors of Sexual Violence. These standards were devised collaboratively via a national consultation process involving providers and stakeholders, and using the existing evidence base for what works in supporting male survivors.

SWY's 2021 - 2024 plan incorporates the recommendations from the seminal systematic review of research into what works in supporting adult male survivors (Carswell, S. et al, 2019. *What is known about effective recovery services for men who have been sexually abused? An evidence review*. Wellington: NZ Ministry of Social Development). That study concludes that key elements of effective services are:

- male-oriented services that specialize in working with men
- tailored advertising to reflect diverse groups of men affected
- a mix of individual and group programmes
- outreach and site-based provision
- multi-channel (online and offline) services
- increasing availability of services (opening times, range of communication media, physical location/outreach services, immediate access)
- online information resources
- professionally facilitated peer support groups
- trauma-informed, life course approach which recognizes men require sustainable strategies to support them over their lifetime
- advocacy and effective referral mechanisms to navigate services – critically including justice services - particularly with men who have complex needs such as mental health issues, addictions, or homelessness.

We will drive the development of Bens Place and other projects via engaging with

- West Yorkshire Mayors Office for Crime and Victims
- NHS commissioning via WYICP
- Trusts & Foundations
- Lottery funding
- Donations: public and corporate
- Income generation

A core operational strategy 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.

References

- i Carswell, S. et al, 2019. *What is known about effective recovery services for men who have been sexually abused? An evidence review*. Wellington: NZ Ministry of Social Development
- ii Thomas, M. & Speyer, E. (2016) I Never Spoke About It. Barnardo's
- ii Seager, M.J., Barry, J.A. & Sullivan, L. (2016) Challenging male gender blindness: why psychologists should be leading the way. *Clinical Psychology Forum* 285
- iv Bellis & Ashton (2016) Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their association with health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population
- v ONS (Feb 2017) Bulletin Tables - Focus on violent crime and sexual offences (year ending March 2016)
- vi Scurlock-Evans, L. and Mahoney, B. (2016) A View from Inside the Box IV: Connecting the Boxes: Coming Home. Survivors West Yorkshire
- vii Bellis et al (2013) Adverse childhood experiences: retrospective study to determine their impact on adult health behaviours and health outcomes in a UK population
- viii Nelson & Hampson (2016) Yes You Can! Working with Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse. Scottish Executive
- ix O'Leary, P. & Gould, N. (2008) Men Who Were Sexually Abused in Childhood and Subsequent Suicidal Ideation: Community Comparison, Explanations & Practice Implications. University of Bath
- x Unpublished statistics from West Yorkshire Police
- xi Fraser, C. (2005) A View from Inside the Box: Exploring Service Provision for Survivors of Sexual Abuse/Violence in the Bradford District. Survivors West Yorkshire
- xii Moor, A. & Farchi, M. (2011) Is rape-related self blame distinct from other post traumatic attributions of



ben's place

SPECIALIST SUPPORT
FOR MALE SEXUAL ABUSE SURVIVORS



WEST YORKSHIRE
SURVIVORS

survivorswestyorkshire.org.uk

Case Suport | published March 2017 | Charity No: 1168928



"Boots and all..."