



**RAPE  
CRISIS  
SCOTLAND**

# **If you have been raped or sexually assaulted abroad**

**This leaflet is aimed at  
anyone who usually lives  
in Scotland and has been,  
or still is, travelling abroad.**

supported by the Scottish Government

## About rape and sexual assault

Anyone, female or male, can be raped or sexually assaulted. If you are raped/sexually assaulted while abroad, it may be even more difficult to deal with. Being attacked in a foreign country where you may not speak the language or have anyone to turn to can be frightening.

This leaflet gives you information so you can get help, whether you are still abroad or back in Scotland. It does not tell you how sexual offences are dealt with worldwide. But you can get more information about this from Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS) and by using the link to international support agencies on the RCS website, or from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). See *contact details on page 15*.

FCO staff can help you in many ways while you are abroad. This can include contacting family and friends for you, helping you get medical attention and accompanying you to any appointments. They will treat what you say sensitively and will do their best to make sure you can see your choice of male or female staff member.

You do not have to report what happened to the police. But, if you decide to do so, FCO staff can tell you what to expect and help you deal with the police and other authorities. They can give you local contact details, for example for lawyers and interpreters. If you do report the assault, the FCO may be able to keep you informed about your case. If the country you are in will not let them do so, they can help you find a local lawyer to look after your interests.

Your holiday representative/company may also be able to help. Also, travel insurance policies offer 24-hour helplines and may be able to help you get medical or other services.

## If you have recently been raped or sexually assaulted

Sexual violence is never your fault. No matter where you were, what you were doing, what you were wearing, whether you had taken drugs or alcohol, you did not deserve this. The person who assaulted you is responsible.



## **Safety**

If you think you are still in any danger, try to get to a safe place where there are people you trust. In an emergency, contact the police using the emergency number.

## **Try to speak to someone to get support**

If possible, try to find someone you know and trust to speak to. Being assaulted can make you feel very powerless so it is important to feel in control now and to make decisions that are right for you.

## **Medical attention**

If the assault was recent, you may need medical attention for any internal or external injuries. The local FCO staff can provide a list of local hospitals and English-speaking doctors. In the UK, you can get urgent medical attention any time at hospital A&E departments or contact your GP.

If you need medical treatment abroad, you may need to give details of your travel insurance policy and, in Europe, your European Health Insurance Card number.

Even if the assault was not recent, it is still worth getting a check up.

## **If you think you were drugged or your drink was 'spiked'**

You may have a feeling that something's not quite right. You may not remember anything but changes in your body may make you suspect that you have been raped or sexually assaulted. Trust your instincts. Think about getting medical attention, particularly if you are taking prescribed medication. If you decide to report the attack to the police, try to do this as soon as possible. The police can arrange for blood and urine to be tested. If possible, try to collect a urine sample to give to the police.

## **If there is a risk of pregnancy**

Women may be at risk of unwanted pregnancy. If the assault was recent, you can take the emergency contraceptive pill up to 72 hours/3 days (and in some cases up to 120 hours/5days) after the assault to prevent pregnancy. Or, you can have an IUD (intra-uterine device) fitted. It may be safe to use over five days after the assault. Contact a doctor or family planning clinic to arrange this. In the UK, you can get emergency contraception from your doctor, family planning or sexual health clinic. The emergency contraceptive pill is also available at pharmacies.

If you are pregnant and do not wish to continue with the pregnancy it may be possible to have the pregnancy terminated. In the UK, you should contact your doctor or family planning clinic.

### **If there is a risk of sexually transmitted infection (STI)**

If you think you may be at risk from an STI, contact a doctor for advice. When you return to the UK, you can go to your family doctor or family planning, sexual health or genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinic. They will know what infections are common in the area you were travelling and can test and treat you if necessary. In the UK, such services are free and confidential. You do not need to give your real name. Most STIs are easily treated.

### **If you are thinking of reporting what happened to the police**

It is up to you whether or not you report what happened to the police. You may want your attacker brought to justice. On the other hand, you may not feel that you can cope with the police and legal procedures which would follow and the added complexity because the assault took place abroad. This includes possible language difficulties, a different legal system, expense and other practicalities.

It is worth discussing the options with someone you trust. A few points to note:

- You can get medical help whether or not you report the assault
- Rape Crisis Scotland and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will help you whether or not you report the assault to the police
- Generally, for gathering evidence or claiming under travel insurance, it is better to report a crime in the country in which it happened
- Cultural differences can affect how a rape or sexual assault case is dealt with. For example, in some countries rape by a husband is not considered illegal
- For some countries, you must report the crime before returning to the UK if you want it to be investigated. They will not accept cases referred from overseas. You can check this with the local FCO
- Other countries do accept cases referred from overseas. So if you do not report to the police in the country where you were assaulted, you may still be able to report to the UK police on your return, even if some time has passed since the assault. However, the longer the time between the attack and reporting it, the more difficult it will be for the police to investigate

- If you do wish to report to the police, try to do so as soon as possible to ensure that any forensic evidence (such as your attacker's blood or semen) is gathered. If you delay reporting, or decide to report at a later date, it may be more difficult to prosecute the person who assaulted you if forensic evidence is lost. The Scottish police will take a statement and investigate the attack. For example, they may seek evidence from anyone who travelled with you to pass to the overseas police. If a prosecution does not proceed overseas, the police in Scotland will report their investigation to the Procurator Fiscal but it is unlikely that it will be taken further.
- If you think you might report to the police when you get back to the UK, keep the clothes you were wearing, don't wash them. If they are wet or damp and it is possible to do so, try to dry the clothes before sealing them in a bag
- Write down anything you can remember about what happened including, if possible, a description of the attacker. These details might be important if you ever decide to report the assault.

## Reporting to the police in Scotland

You can report in any police station. All police forces have officers who are specially trained to respond to crimes of sexual violence. You can ask to speak to a female or male officer. The police will take a report from you. Depending on how much time has elapsed, you may be offered a forensic examination in case any evidence can be collected such as pictures of bruising or swabs of body fluids. Give the police any clothing or any other evidence you have kept.

Police officers in Scotland can pass the information they gather to the overseas police force. The international police organisation (Interpol: [www.interpol.int](http://www.interpol.int)) can liaise between the UK police and the police in the country in which you were assaulted.

## Reporting to the police abroad

Try to tell the police as soon as you can. The FCO can help you with this. They will try to make sure that you see a female police officer if you prefer this. If you can, avoid washing, eating or drinking so that as much forensic evidence as possible can be collected.

If you change your clothes, put the clothes you were wearing into a bag and give them to the police. If possible, try to collect a urine sample to give to the police.

Insist on a police report as you may need a record for insurance or other purposes.

When you get back to Scotland, the police will provide any help required to assist the foreign investigation or prosecution.

The International Co-operation Unit in the Crown Office (see *contact details on page 15*) will handle any requests for evidence and pass these onto your local Procurator Fiscal or police.

All Scottish Police forces have international liaison officers.

## Investigating the crime

The police abroad are responsible for investigating a crime committed in their country. There are international procedures for allowing evidence to be collected in Scotland and sent abroad for use in any criminal investigation or trial.

You are very unlikely to have to go back overseas to give a statement to overseas police or prosecution service. There are provisions which usually avoid the need for this.

## If the case goes to court

Court procedures, how rape and sexual assault are prosecuted and how long these take vary worldwide.

You may have to give evidence in person to the court abroad. This would depend on your case and the legal process of the country concerned. It may be possible for you to give evidence by video link so you do not have to travel. Interpreters would be arranged. The Crown Office would make the necessary arrangements.

If you have to attend a trial abroad, the authorities in the country concerned should assist with travel and accommodation arrangements. They may also be able to provide emotional support depending on the services available in the courts in the country concerned.

The FCO may be able to help you by keeping you up to date with any developments. However, in some countries, judicial authorities will refuse to give out such information to local FCO offices. The FCO suggests that you could appoint a local lawyer (although you would have to pay for this yourself) to look after your interests in court and follow any trial for you.

## If the attacker is a UK national

Unless the victim is under 18, the Scottish courts would not have any jurisdiction over the case. However, the Scottish authorities would assist in any extradition process if this was requested by a country.

Also, the conduct of your attacker when in Scotland would be regulated by Scots law. For example, it may be a criminal offence if they threaten or harass you.

You may be able to get protection from your attacker using civil law, for example, an interim interdict to keep the offender away from you. You would need to ask a solicitor to apply to the court for you.

## Medical costs

If you receive medical treatment abroad, your travel insurance may cover you for any personal injuries resulting from a crime and any belongings you lost at the time of the assault. However, it is likely that, for the claim to be valid, the crime should be reported to police in the country where the assault took place. Check your policy or contact your insurance provider for details.

## Language

The local FCO office can tell you about the support it can offer in the country you are in. The FCO can provide you with details of interpreters, translation services and English-speaking lawyers. If you need to pay privately for any such services, keep the receipts in case of insurance or compensation claims.

## Compensation

You may be entitled to compensation for injuries or losses resulting from a violent crime such as rape and sexual assault. You usually need a police report to apply for compensation.

If you are a UK resident and are injured through a crime in another European Union (EU) country, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) can help you apply for compensation from that country. If the crime took place outside the EU, contact the FCO either in the UK or the nearest local office if you are still abroad. You may be able to apply to the country in which you were assaulted for compensation. (*see contact details on page 14*)

## Contacts

### Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline

Phone any day between 6pm and 12 midnight (GMT) on **08088 01 03 02**. Helpline staff can give you immediate support on the phone.

The RCS website has information about sexual violence as well as a list of international support contacts.  
[www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

If you are phoning from abroad dial **+44 (0)141 331 2715**. We will take a contact number for you and call you back. If you are worried about the cost of calling from overseas please email us: [support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](mailto:support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

### Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA)

Contact CICA on **0300 003 3601** or email [eucat@cica.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:eucat@cica.gsi.gov.uk).

EU compensation Schemes vary from country to country. The following links provide general information  
[www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk) (search Victims and Witnesses) and the European Atlas on Judicial in Civil Matters  
[www.ec.europa.eu](http://www.ec.europa.eu) (search Judicial Atlas) will allow you to further investigate the requirements of each member state.

### Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)

Responsible for prosecuting crime in Scotland. Based in Edinburgh, phone **0131 226 2626**. There are Procurator Fiscal offices in all local areas. COPFS has an International Co-operation Unit.  
[www.crownoffice.gov.uk](http://www.crownoffice.gov.uk)

### UK Government Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

FCO has offices all over the world. Phone **020 7008 1500** (24 hours) (**+44 20 7008 1500** from abroad) and ask for the Global Response Centre. They will give you details of the nearest office (British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate) where staff can help you.  
[www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

Find a list of all offices by country online at [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy) and information about rape and sexual assault overseas at [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/rape](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/rape) Each country's page has local information.

### Rape Crisis Europe

For contacts of Rape Crisis Centres in Europe please visit [www.rcne.com](http://www.rcne.com)



## Scottish Police forces

Dial **101** and you will be automatically directed to your nearest police force

## More information

On rape and sexual assault:

[www.victimsofcrimeinscotland.org.uk](http://www.victimsofcrimeinscotland.org.uk)

On international support and contacts:

[www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

For support and information please call Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline

Freephone

**08088 01 03 02**

if dialling from abroad

**+44 (0)141 331 2715**

**minicom 0141 353 3091**

open daily 6pm – 12 midnight

**[support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk](mailto:support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)**

Rape Crisis Scotland is a charitable company limited by guarantee.

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