



## Extended Research Article

# Exploring voluntary sector specialist services for victim-survivors of sexual violence in England: the PROSPER co-production study

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**Disclaimer:** This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

Published April 2025

DOI: 10.3310/WWKT3077

## Plain language summary

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Health and Social Care Delivery Research 2025; Vol. 13: No. 10

DOI: 10.3310/WWKT3077

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## Plain language summary

Sexual violence is a sexual act against a person, or attempted act, that has not been agreed to. This may or may not include physical violence. In England and Wales, over half a million people experience sexual violence each year. More females than males experience sexual violence. The impacts for all people who experience sexual violence can be long-lasting and life changing. Often, people need a range of support services to help them recover. Many services, although now with paid staff, were started by and still use volunteers. These staff and volunteers understand a lot about sexual violence and they help many people. However, we do not know enough about where they are or what they do. We do not know how well they run their services or where their money comes from. We also do not know enough about what people using the services think about them. This research tried to answer these questions by speaking with people who provide the funding, people who work in the services and people who use the services. Some people who had experienced sexual violence were employed to help with the research. We found many differences in funding. Often, there is not enough money and organisations are trying to take the same 'pot' of money. Sometimes, those in control of the money do not know how best to spend it. Staff are sometimes unsure how to work with other services and are regularly stressed by a lot of people needing help. Those using sexual violence services had mixed experiences. How to access a service could be confusing and there were often long waiting lists. Many liked the special understanding that staff have about sexual violence. The research has helped us to make suggestions for improvements and will be widely shared to bring about change.

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ISSN 2755-0079 (Online)

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Editorial contact: [journals.library@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:journals.library@nihr.ac.uk)

This journal was previously published as *Health Services and Delivery Research* (Volumes 1–9); ISSN 2050-4349 (print), ISSN 2050-4357 (online)

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The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HSDR programme or one of its preceding programmes as award number 18/02/27. The contractual start date was in October 2019. The draft manuscript began editorial review in January 2023 and was accepted for publication in October 2023. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HSDR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' manuscript and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this article.

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