

Your Vision: Support for Young Women in East Lothian

Understanding experiences of unhealthy relationships and sexual assault and how services can be more supportive.



edinburgh rape crisis centre
supporting survivors of sexual violence



Table of Contents

Foreword	1
1. Your Vision: Support for young women in East Lothian	2
Our Approach	3
2. What we found	4
3. Who took part	5
The survey	
Interviews and group discussions with young women	6
Local experts and staff	
Limitations	
4. Intimate partner abuse and sexual assault in East Lothian and barriers to accessing support	7
What stopped young women from accessing support?	
What workers think	11
Summary	12
5. Perceptions of Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre and Women’s Aid East and Midlothian	13
Summary	15
6. What kind of support do young women want?	16
Summary	18
7. What needs to change to better support young women in East Lothian	19
Awareness raising	
Prevention work in schools and community spaces	20
Adequate funding and resource	
Thank You!	21
Glossary of terms	22
Further support and reading	23

Foreword

I am very grateful to have taken part in this project, and to have had the opportunity to make a difference for young women in East Lothian. Knowing from my own experience how long abuse sticks with a person and how it can affect your everyday life. I am grateful to have taken part in a project that will hopefully remind the residents of East Lothian that our young women are not always safe and do need support.

East Lothian is a beautiful and a fairly safe place. It is easy to forget about all the trauma and violence when it is hidden behind closed doors, behind silenced mouths.

I was shocked to see the reasons why young women were not accessing support services, to see that they did not feel their pain was enough to warrant support. I was shocked to see how many people are unsure if they would even seek support from services if in need, suffering instead.

For the future, I hope that all young women will be aware of what an unhealthy relationship is, how to recognise if they are in one, where to find support if they need it and to feel comfortable in seeking it.

I want this research to help break the silence of abuse and reduce the stigma of getting support in East Lothian. I want the young women of East Lothian to thrive and feel safe. I learned how stretched the support services here are for resources. Women need to speak out and get the support they need, and the services must have the capacity to support them.

I hope that once the silence is broken and the great need for flexible, quality and accessible services is recognised that this will change.

**Devon Taylor – The Young Women’s Research Collective,
East Lothian**



1. Your Vision: Support for Young Women in East Lothian

This work was commissioned by Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre (ERCC) and Women's Aid East and Midlothian (WAEML) and funded by the East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership to understand how many young women and non-binary people in East Lothian have experienced abuse or harm in their own relationships, and how many have experienced sexual assault. To understand where they go for support currently, if there are barriers to getting support, and what kind of support is needed. With the findings from this project, services will evolve to better suit the needs of young people in the local community.

This project has been designed by a group of young women from East Lothian, The Young Women's Research Collective. The project is run by YWCA Scotland – The Young Women's Movement, for Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre and Women's Aid East and Mid Lothian.

This builds on the work of '[The Rise Report: Supporting young women in their intimate relationships](#)' which details the findings of a national research project that investigates young women's experiences and understanding of unhealthy relationships, domestic abuse and access to support.

Our Approach

This project was designed with The Young Women's Research Collective, a group of eight young women aged between 16-25 living in East Lothian. The group met six times in person, and online, between June and November 2022. They supported the creation of the survey; tested the questions; promoted the survey including flyering in their communities; supported the analysis of the data; and supported the design of the campaign to launch this project. They also took part in a group workshop to explore how to develop support services to better suit the needs of young women in East Lothian. The group received training about research design and methods and were compensated for their time. This project would not have been possible without them.

The survey ran from May – September 2022, and was promoted through social media, email campaigns and promotional materials in local spaces.

Survey responses were analysed through a thematic approach. The Young Women's Research Collective supported analysis and designed the structure of this report.



This research process has been incredibly insightful and inspiring for me to be a part of. Being able to take part in the structuring of the research project helped me to gain a better understanding of the methodological side of research through learning more about the intricacies of producing ethical and accessible research. The results have taught me more about the needs and the lived experiences of young women and non-binary people in my community. These are insights into conversations which seem to be rarely had in East Lothian. They really show the need for more promotion of services and resources and funding in East Lothian.

Finally, working with this group of brilliant young women on this research project was also a great and welcoming experience. Creating a comfortable enough environment to share ideas and experiences is so important in research. This project overall has invigorated me to be more involved in movements for the empowerment of young women and the improvement of their lived experiences. I hope that this research will lead to more resources being placed in East Lothian for women and young girls to receive the support that they deserve.

Abbie Adamson – Young Women’s Research Collective, East Lothian

2. What we found

- Just under a third (31%) of survey respondents had been in a relationship with someone who was abusive or harmed them physically or emotionally. Over a third (36%) of survey respondents had experienced sexual assault.
- Of the survey respondents who had experienced either abuse or sexual assault, 41% had not received support, and 12% had.
- Nearly three quarters of survey respondents (73%) knew someone who had experienced abuse or harm within their relationship, or sexual assault.
- There were many barriers to young women accessing the support they needed. Feeling shame, stigma and fear about getting support; living in a small community and fear of being judged or recognised; accessibility of support and transport difficulties; waiting times; having previous negative experiences of therapeutic supports; not being ready for support, as well as the perception that services only supported people who were currently dealing with a crisis or abusive situation, rather than getting support for an experience that happened in the past.
- Systemic barriers like lack of resources to provide support also prevent young women from accessing services
- Both Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre and Women's Aid East and Midlothian were not widely known among young women who engaged in this research. Of those who did know about these services, they would go if they needed support. This shows that with some focussed awareness raising activities, both services would be sought after for support.
- Offering support that meets the needs of each individual and having choice is incredibly important to young women. They want to feel understood by workers and to be supported by people they relate to; they want to understand what is on offer from different services and what to expect when they contact a service.
- Young women need validation that they are deserving of support before reaching out. Highlighting the need for better education about relationships and sexual assault in formal education settings.
- Improving support for young women in East Lothian relies on having adequate funding and resource for services to develop and evolve to meet the needs of young people in the local area.

3. Who took part

The Young Women's Research Collective advocated for the inclusion of all self-identifying young women, including trans women, and the inclusion of non-binary young people in this research. We refer to participants as young women throughout this report, while acknowledging that not all participants may identify as such. Quotes have remained anonymous throughout to protect participants.

The survey

A survey ran from May – September 2022 and collected a total of 110 complete responses. All respondents were located within the local authority area of East Lothian.

- Most respondents (44%) were aged 16-18. 14% were aged 19-21 and just over a quarter (26%) were aged 22-25.
- 50% identified as heterosexual or straight, 19% as bisexual, 8% as lesbian, 4% as asexual and the rest identified as queer (3%), pansexual (2%), gay (1%).^[1]
- 80% identified as a woman, 7% as non-binary, 3% as gender fluid.^[2]
- Just under a fifth (19%) had a disability or long-term condition.
- 90% of respondents identified as white Scottish, 2% as African, African Scottish or African British, 2% as any mixed or multiple ethnic groups. The rest identified as Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or Caribbean British (1%), Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British (1%), Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British (1%).^[3]

Interviews and group discussions with young women

- Two young women living in East Lothian took part in semi-structured interviews, one of whom had accessed multiple services and supports in relation to an abusive relationship.
- One co-design session with the Young Women's Research Collective about designing support services to meet the needs of young women in East Lothian.

[1] 11% preferred not to state their sexual orientation.

[2] 3% identified in another way, 8% preferred not to state their gender identity.

[3] 3% preferred not to state their ethnicity.

Local experts and staff

- Staff delivering management, prevention, outreach and support services took part in scoping discussions to share their perspectives about what the barriers are for young people accessing services in East Lothian.

Limitations

- This sample of survey respondents is not representative of the entire population of East Lothian.
- The original methodology included focus group discussions with groups from communities marginalised by society, such as young women not attending school, young disabled people and young mums. This methodology had to be adapted due to a lack of availability and support from community groups to facilitate the research team to carry out these discussions.

4. Intimate partner abuse and sexual assault in East Lothian and barriers to accessing support

Just under a third (31%) of survey respondents had been in a relationship with someone who was abusive or harmed them physically or emotionally.^[4]

Over a third (36%) of survey respondents had experienced sexual assault.^[5]

These statistics correlate with findings from The Rise Report, a national research project into prevalence of abuse in unhealthy relationships, in which a third (36%) of young women had been in a relationship with someone who was abusive or harmed them physically or emotionally.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) are Scotland's coordinated response to cases of domestic abuse in Scotland and operate in each local authority. If an incident is reported to the police, specialist support is provided which is coordinated by MARAC. East Lothian and Midlothian are joint coordinated MARAC support. MARAC's annual report from 2022, showed that 25%^[6] of victims^[7] were under age 26 in East Lothian compared with 15% in Midlothian, and overall, the number of cases in East Lothian had increased for the fourth year in a row. This shows that the prevalence of intimate partner abuse and sexual assault in East Lothian is in line with national averages and has increased within the last few years.

Of the survey respondents who had experienced either abuse or sexual assault, 41% had not received support, and 12% had.

Of the 12% who had accessed support, the support had come from a service that was specifically to support people with abuse or sexual assault, for example, Women's Aid, or the Rape Crisis Scotland helpline, or counselling or therapy that had been self-sought. Not one participant had been supported by the police.

What stopped young women from accessing support?

Young women reported various reasons why they did not access support, and barriers that prevented them from reaching out. They talked about feeling shame, stigma and fear about getting support, or feeling their experiences were not serious enough to constitute support as the main barrier to them accessing services.

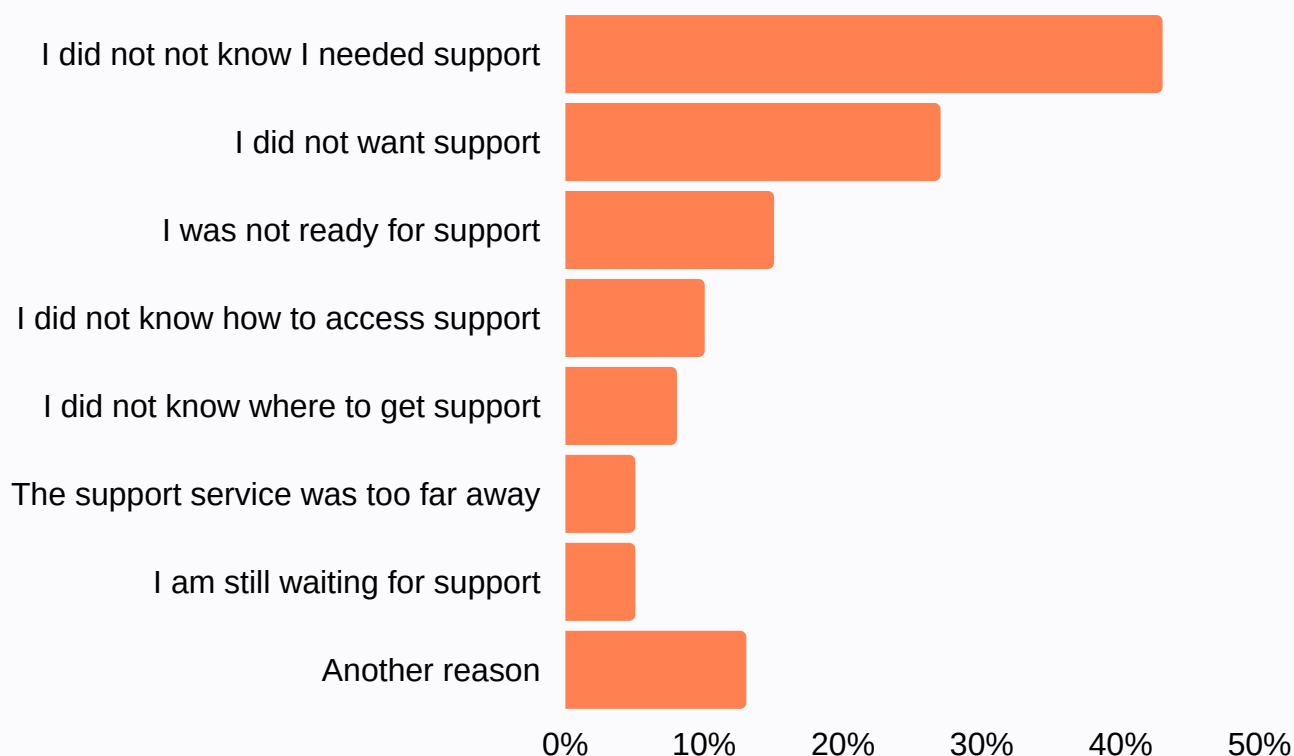
[4] 57% had not experienced abuse, 8% did not know. 4% preferred not say.

[5] 56% had not experienced sexual assault. 5% did not know, 4% preferred not to say,

[6] N =123

[7] MARAC uses the language of 'victims' in their reporting.

Barriers to accessing support



I didn't think it was important enough to get the help I needed.

I was scared of backlash from my friends and rejection from support organisations and confusion around if what I experienced was sexual assault.

I didn't want to make a fuss at all. So, I didn't go to get support. And I managed to get out of the situation on my own. I just wanted to move on with my life and work and go out with my friends that had I missed.

Some participants talked about how accessing support is particularly difficult if you live in a small community. The fear of being recognised can be a barrier, as well as the fear of being dismissed because of a perception that abuse and assault does not happen in these areas.



I feel often the fear of being assaulted or abused is dismissed even more in East Lothian because its a 'nice place' and it feels like people have the sense of it doesn't happen here when it absolutely does.



I would find it really hard to go to a building that had like, a big sign on the front that says 'Rape Crisis', or whatever, and worry that someone I know is going to see me walking in or, like, make an assumption about why I'm going there.

I was so nervous about being recognised. I don't really know what I would have done. It was a real possibility I'd have seen someone I knew.

I feel like there's a very small town syndrome in North Berwick. So I think there's really like a worry about other people finding out and it'd be a bit of gossip in the town.

As explored in The Rise Report, it seems that young people need validation that what they are experiencing is unhealthy or abusive, and that they are deserving of support before reaching out. ⁵³

Accessibility of support was a barrier that participants had either experienced themselves, or believed could be a barrier for many who may need support. East Lothian is a vast area that is not always well connected by public transport, which can make it difficult to travel. Young women talked about how travelling within East Lothian can often be more difficult or time consuming than travelling directly to Edinburgh. Additionally, travelling to an unfamiliar location can be daunting and did put some participants off from accessing support.



Services aren't local. Sometimes, like the actual public transport can be a bit dodgy in and out of the town. Especially like North Berwick. The trains, quite often to be an issue. They just get cancelled and they had problems with buses before, it can just be a hassle.

Some participants talked about previous negative experiences of accessing support, from counselling or therapeutic services, and how this affected their trust or willingness to receive further support.



I've been to counselling before, I didn't get any advice. It was all just me talking about what had happened and what was going on that week. It was useless. I've just not been bothered with counselling or help since that. I just stopped going to those. Because I thought I was not going to get better.

I felt like the counsellor didn't really believe me, and now I worry that others wouldn't.

Participants also talked about how accessing services on the phone or digitally could be a barrier. Phone signal and connectivity can be an issue in more rural parts of East Lothian.

Waiting for support is a barrier for some young women. Some had previous experiences of being on waiting lists for health care or mental health support, a few mentioned being aware that support services are stretched and feeling like they may take away a resource that someone more 'in need' might access.



Since moving to East Lothian I have found out there is far more support places and I found this out through my doctor at my local medical centre but the psychology list for the NHS was around a 49-week waiting list.

I've had trauma work through the NHS, but there were limited blocks that you could receive and long waiting lists. So, although it helped a bit, I still feel that I suffer because of what happened still.

I didn't think I was worthy of support when others might need it more.

Not being ready for support was a factor that some participants described, as well as the perception that services only supported people who were currently dealing with a crisis or abusive situation, rather than getting support for an experience that happened in the past.



It's not deep enough to seek any sort of help or support. I also don't feel like I need any. But I guess like that feeds into when we're thinking about, like advertising and like marketing, that, like, Edinburgh Rape Crisis and Women's Aid are not like, it's not just for stuff that's happening right there. Second, it can be, historic, because with hindsight, people realise, however many years down the line, Oh, that wasn't normal. And that shouldn't have happened to me. It takes time.

I didn't tell my mum or any my family members at the time because I didn't want to upset other people. You don't want to be like 'Oh look at me'. So yeah, so it's around like pride and not making a fuss. It's hard. That was my only barrier. But it was enough to not do anything for six years.

Nearly three quarters of survey respondents (73%) knew someone who had experienced abuse or harm within their relationship, or sexual assault.

Of those who knew someone who had experienced abuse or harm within their relationship, or sexual assault, one third 33% said the person had not received support, and 16% said they had, 27% did not know.

What workers think

Staff from **ELSAS (East Lothian Sexual Abuse Service)** offer support in East Lothian to women and all members of the trans community and non-binary people over the age of 18, who are currently experiencing or have experienced sexual violence. Some of the workers shared their hopes for the development of services and outreach and what needs to change systemically to better support young people in East Lothian.

Staff member 1: I don't think other services know about us, there is a lack of awareness that we are here. In Edinburgh it is easy to get around. If you are in the eastern part of East Lothian, bus services are almost non-existent.

Staff member 2: Some services are saying they had never heard of ELSAS and we've been here nearly 20 years. We're trying to have more visibility.

We need to be out in the community more to reach people with complex trauma, people who can't email or pick up a phone.

We're beginning to take a different approach, to do more community outreach with referrers who are likely to see those kinds of people, for example, midwives, who are seeing people deeply in distress.

Staff member 3: The difference I note is the young women we encounter in East Lothian have been through more complex trauma, there are areas of poverty, there is childhood abuse, sometimes it's multiple abusive relationships. The counselling approach, in East Lothian, we need a more case working and support working approach. I have worked with people who have fallen through the gaps, who I know need social work, there are many practical things, housing, homelessness, there are many things going on.

In East Lothian, my observation, is that young people are dealing with poverty, housing issues, they are vulnerable and have been through trauma, they are not going to college or school. There are not as many services as in Edinburgh.

Staff member 2: **We're trying to be more creative. outreach doesn't mean being in an actual building. It could be on a walk, meeting where someone is at, we are reconceptualising it and meeting people where they are at.** We need to move away from standard ways of outreach, so many young people don't fit that model, we don't want them to slip through our fingers. We need the time to build up the core conditions. We're also trying to approach things recognising all the different layers of discrimination people face; we are working with an anti-racist group to change the way we do things and we need to standardise childcare across ERCC.

Staff member 1: We want to have options to take different approaches and adopt a more person-centred approach, going for walks and doing our outreach services. Groups and peer support is difficult because coming into Edinburgh is not always an option and online sessions can be challenging.

Staff member 2: The problem is funding, which has been drastically cut. Every time you go and speak to health visitors or people who have contacts, then we start getting referrals, but we don't have capacity to meet the need. East Lothian is a massive area to provide support, for example, there's no good public transport or accessible services in East Linton.

How will a young person living there who doesn't drive have our service? How do you practically give them a service because there is nowhere for us to see people?

We need to prevent people falling through the cracks, we need that matched with adequate funding and a commitment of support from local government.

Summary

A troubling number of young women (31%) who responded to the survey had experienced an unhealthy relationship or domestic abuse in their own relationships, or sexual assault (36%). Nearly three quarters knew someone who had. Of those who had these experiences, only 12% had received support.

Barriers to accessing support were varied and many; from readiness, shame and stigma to lack of awareness about services, to travel and lack of public services, to systemic barriers like lack of resources to provide support.

5. Perceptions of Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre and Women's Aid East and Midlothian

This research investigated what young women knew about Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre (ERCC) and about Women's Aid East and Midlothian (WAEML), so that these services could evolve to better meet their needs.

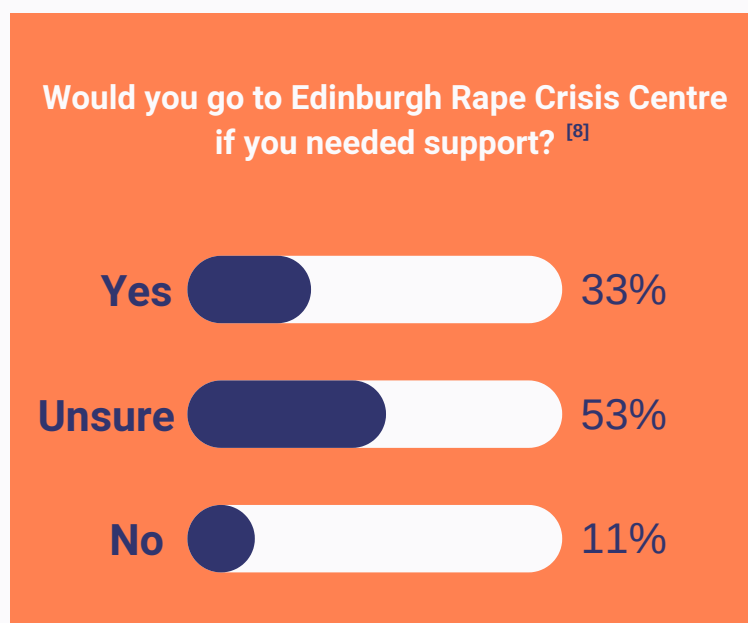
42% of survey respondents knew of Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre, 55% did not, the rest were unsure.

We asked respondents to tell us what they thought ERCC did, roughly 10% had a good understanding of the scope and breadth of ERCC's work, pointing to therapeutic support for all survivors of sexual assault, at any point in their journey, and the prevention work of ERCC. The majority of respondents had a vague understanding of what ERCC does, commenting that they help people who have experienced rape or sexual assault.



I think they support sexual assault victims, educate community, advocate for better services.

I'd say I'm representative of that normal citizen because I haven't had education about what services are out there, or you know, been involved with any of the services like that and until this (group discussion) and I don't know anything about it apart from what I've learnt here.



[8] 3% preferred not to say.

Of those who would go, they felt they would get the support they needed from ERCC, one respondent disclosed they had been supported previously and were really happy with the service they had received.



It seems to be a dedicated organisation committed to helping people who have been raped using emotional and physical support.

Of those who would not go, participants described barriers like fear and not being ready. Some explicitly mentioned that they would not travel to Edinburgh. There were a few comments suggesting that they felt their experience was not serious enough to get support from ERCC.

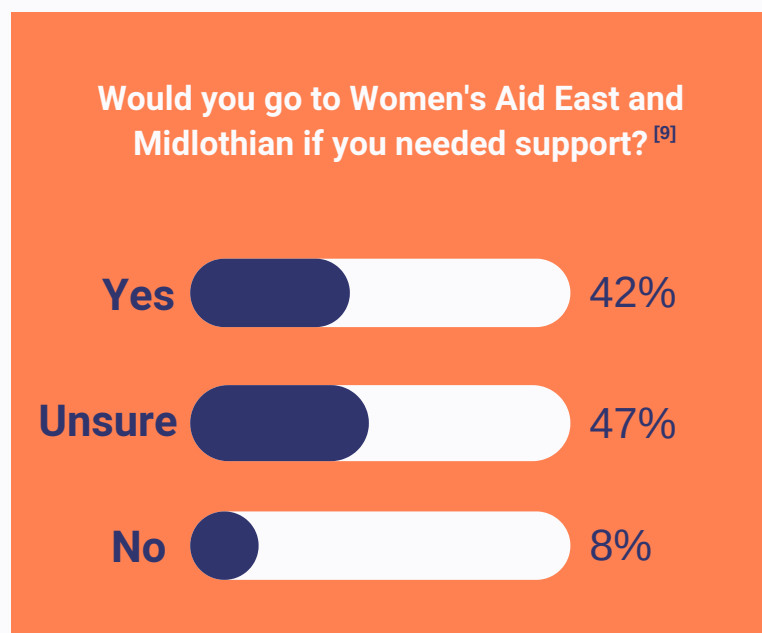


I don't want to waste their time on me when others need support

37% of survey respondents knew of Women's Aid East and Midlothian, 55% did not, the rest were unsure.

There were slightly less respondents who knew of WAEML compared with ERCC. Of those who did know a few commented about the range of support that WAEML provides. One interview participant had accessed support from WAEML.

The majority had a vague understanding of Women's Aid East and Midlothian. Comments like; 'they help women' were common.



[9] 3% preferred not to say.



I hadn't heard of women's aid before applying to be in this (The Young Women's Research Collective) and if I'm being 100% honest, I'm still not completely sure of the full services they have.

Of those who said they would go to WAEML if they needed to, a small number suggested they had used services before and had appreciated the support they had received. A few comments suggested that they would go to WAEML before going to ERCC because it was closer and more local to them. A few also perceived that it would be a 'safe and inclusive space'.



I've actually recommended Women's Aid to someone who's in like, a bad situation before. Would be like a really good place to recommend if I knew more about it.

Of those who would not go, similar to barriers to accessing ERCC's services, participants described barriers like a lack of trust and fear of opening up to new people, some reiterated that because they did not know what WAEML does, they would not go for support.

Summary

Both ERCC and WAEML were not widely known among young women who engaged in this research. Of those who did know about these services, they would go if they needed support. This shows that with some focussed awareness raising activities, both ERCC and WAEML would be sought after for support.

6. What kind of support do young women want?

We explored what kind of support young women in East Lothian would like to receive from a service if they needed support for an abusive or harmful relationship, or sexual assault.



I would like a safe and confidential service to speak to, perhaps a specific named person at a service to ensure continuity of care. I would want to know what resources are available in my local area, and how best to access them confidentially.

The suggestions and ideas for what kinds of support would be most helpful, resonated with the findings from the national project; The Rise Report, that choice is very important for young women, one kind of support will not fit every person or situation, and that services should be able to offer support for each individual's circumstances and needs.

Talking, emotional and therapeutic supports were most frequently discussed as the most important, with descriptions of how this support should feel, most commonly; calm, patient, empathetic and non-judgmental. When connecting with a service, having one point of contact, and the opportunity to have regular check-ins were important too so that there is no need to repeat stories or build support relationships with new workers. Handling, understanding and working through trauma within emotional and therapeutic supports was also important to participants.



I think just having somebody to talk to who could help me work through the weird emotions connected to it and help me understand.

If you're like 17 then, you know, it feels like too big a deal to actually be getting support. They need the support to validate their experience and say like, you deserve to be here. You have experienced this awful thing.

A few participants specifically suggested that speaking with someone who could relate to their experience through having been through similar themselves would be helpful, and this was not necessarily linked to the suggestion of group support. This also links to the need for workers who can relate to the experiences of younger people, as suggested by a few participants, for example, understanding the ways technology can factor into abuse and sexual assault.



Someone who has also had experience of this harm and could relate, also just be there to listen and not judge or push for any outcome.

Mental health support, and specifically **trauma support** were described as really important, and that these should be accessible in a timely way. Some described experiences of lengthy waiting lists for mental health services and how detrimental this had been for them.

Accessible and local support was also really important. Text services, web chats and anonymous phone lines were suggestions for accessible supports that would work for young people. These services would offer young people a chance to have their feelings validated and to talk about their experiences without necessarily committing to more involved support. However, some also talked about the barriers of these kinds of support in being able to engage fully.



I'd like to see a really accessible system that's in person as well as online, which can provide information and help out with taking next steps, like contacting police or seeking therapy.

My first few appointments were over the phone. I didn't say as much as probably what I should have. Right? Just because, obviously, I feel like personal things like you want to know who you're speaking to... I struggled a bit with that at the beginning. Then they were actually able to come and visit was that it was all right. It made me like understand what the things I experienced were, narcissistic behaviours and things and that, like, that it's not lawful.

A few participants talked about the complexity of having a visible service locally, some suggested that more visibility would be helpful so that young women know about the service and that it is there, others talked about how this could deter them from going because of the fear of being recognised.

Group support was suggested by some as a helpful support, as this would help them to feel less alone, and to feel validated in their experiences, also to support building relationships with others in their area. Anonymity and confidentiality would be important in group support, a few young people said that they would only agree to group support if they didn't know the other young people involved. One interviewee had experienced helpful group support and shared that the structured nature of the support; four group work sessions over a period of months, delivered in workshop styles with learning and activities built in, was beneficial for them.



The trainers, they're just like sharing their own experiences and how they overcame it and like sharing things that helped them in the past. And it's kind of, looking at proof - if they can do it, I can do it

Some young women explicitly discussed the importance of **advocacy and support with the justice system**, to support with understanding the process and what survivors' rights are.



I feel like something needs to be done to make girls feel more confident in taking their abuser to court. I had deleted what little evidence I had and didn't bother as I thought my mental health would decline more with stress of court case.

Signposting would be helpful to some young women, who want to understand pathways to different kinds of support and to have options.



I would want to know what resources are available in my local area, and how best to access them confidentially.

I think if anyone was on a waiting list like myself I think they should give out other resources local to you that could help if you are struggle while waiting. The only reason I found out about resources to use was my doctor. I think there should be more leaflets on the situation or even posters on the toilet doors from the inside with a list of organisations from phone numbers to emails to get the support and help you need.

Summary

Offering support that meets the needs of each individual and having choice is incredibly important to young women. They want to feel understood by workers and to be supported by people they relate to; they want to understand what is on offer from different services and what to expect when they contact a service. It seems that young women need validation that they are deserving of support before reaching out. This speaks to the need for better education about relationships and sexual assault in formal education settings.

7. What needs to change to better support young women in East Lothian

This project was commissioned because young women in East Lothian are not getting the support they need. This report provides substantial evidence that abuse within intimate partner relationships and instances of sexual assault are as prevalent in East Lothian as they are in the rest of Scotland, and perhaps even more so than in other local authority areas.^[10]

Improving support for young women in East Lothian relies on having adequate funding and resource for services to develop and evolve to meet the needs of young people in the local area. There are three main areas of focus for services; raising awareness of what supports are available and who they are for, widening education about abuse and sexual assault to reach those who are not able to attend school, and most importantly, for services to have adequate funding and resource to deliver supports in line with what young people need.

Awareness raising

It is clear that both ERCC and WAEML could be better known to young people in East Lothian. Raising awareness about services and supports would enable people to confidently approach the service that was best suited to their needs.

It is also clear that stigma, shame, and fear of not being believed are significant barriers to young women accessing support. Resources, campaigns, and the development of local services would encourage better understanding of what intimate partner abuse is and what sexual assault is, and that young people are deserving of and entitled to support from local services.

Some young women who took part in this research offered ideas that would promote understanding of healthy relationships, intimate partner abuse and sexual assault in East Lothian. These centred around more informational materials about services in spaces that are frequented by young people, such as; community spaces, health care settings, educational buildings, student accommodation, and local venues like pubs and cafes. There were also suggestions about local campaigns to highlight that abuse and sexual assault happens within young people's relationships.

[10] MARAC statistics 2022 – East Lothian compared with Midlothian.

Prevention work in schools and community spaces



It's not just about women getting support. It's about, stopping men from doing things, men and other people stopping them from doing the things that mean that women need support.

Prevention work does happen within schools in East Lothian, ERCC has a dedicated prevention worker, however this does not go far enough. Young people who do not go to school or who have missed formal education due to covid restrictions have missed out on important opportunities to learn about abuse, sexual assault and support services.

What workers think

ERCC Prevention Worker: "We are currently not able to reach young people who aren't in classes for a variety of reasons, whether that is because they are young mums, or because they might have a learning disability, or because they are not accessing mainstream education. There are a lot of young people that school isn't a positive environment for them and so they just aren't hearing this message."

Through engagement with community organisations to generate participation for this project, it was clear that they are also stretched and do not prioritise prevention or educational work around relationships, intimate partner abuse or consent and sexual assault.

East Lothian Council worker: "We need youth services to be gender aware, to be violence aware, and to be working on that in a way that's constructive. I think that's crucial. So I would say that all of those services that provide those kinds of outlets (youth work/education) need to be aware of this and do it in a creative way."

Adequate funding and resource

It is also clear through engaging with staff within ERCC and WAEML, that currently, services do not have the capacity or resource to meet the demand for support in East Lothian.

Staff suggested that services should be adequately funded and capacity increased to enable outreach work to reach young people who are currently not engaging with the services.

Thank you!

Thank you to every young person who took part in this research, and shared honestly and vulnerably, without you this work would not have been possible.

The Young Women's Research Collective: East Lothian

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YWCA Scotland – The Young Women's Movement

Who led this research and supported the participation of The Young Women's Research Collective: East Lothian.

Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre and Women's Aid East and Midlothian

Who partnered on this project and commissioned this work and whose staff contributed to the evidence used within this report.

MARAC East Lothian and Midlothian

Who provided data and guidance to support this project

East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership

Who funded this project

Glossary of terms

Abuse

We refer to abuse within a romantic or intimate relationship. Domestic abuse is a pattern of controlling, manipulating, threatening, emotional and verbal abuse, degrading and/or violent behaviour, including sexual violence, by a partner or ex-partner. It doesn't matter how old someone is, what race or ethnicity they are, what class they are, whether or not they are disabled, or whether they have children – anyone can experience abuse.

Intimate or romantic partner

A relationship involving both or either emotional and physical intimacy.

Sexual assault

Sexual assault is a broad term which applies to any form of sexual violence, ranging from unwanted touching or kissing to being forced to perform sexual acts.

Service or organisation

In the context of this survey, this would be a service or organisation that supports people who have experienced abuse, harm or sexual assault or violence. A relationship involving both or either emotional and physical intimacy Sexual assault is a broad term which applies to any form of sexual violence, ranging from unwanted touching or kissing to being forced to perform sexual acts. In the context of this survey, this would be a service or organisation that supports people who have experienced abuse, harm or sexual assault or violence.

Intersectional

Intersectionality is a way of thinking about power, privilege, and oppression that takes into account a person's combination of social identities (like gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, religion, and more) rather than considering each of them separately. For example, instead of isolating a woman's oppression based on sexism alone, or a Black person's oppression based on racism alone, or an LGBTQIA person's oppression based on homophobia or transphobia alone, intersectionality looks at how those identities intersect, as in how a bisexual, Latina woman is affected by the overlapping oppressive forces of sexism, racism, and homophobia/biphobia all at once rather than separately.

Intersectionality originates from the work of Black feminist scholars examining the dual forces of race and gender on the lives of Black women, and has since been used to better understand the intersections of many different identities.

To put it simply, intersectionality considers the ways that multiple identities together form a person's experiences of power, privilege, and oppression in any given situation. (<https://www.mykidisgay.com/blog/defining-intersectionality>).

Further support and reading

If you are a young person facing abuse or unhealthy behaviour in your own relationship, or if you are concerned about a friend, peer or loved one, please get in touch with Women's Aid's helpline at 0800 027 1234 or get in touch via the chat.

The helpline is here to support anyone experiencing abuse in their relationships, or forced marriage, as well as their family members, friends, colleagues and professionals who support them. We provide a confidential, sensitive service to anyone who calls us.

Here are some other contacts you might find useful

STAR Project - Support for young people

The STAR project offers confidential, emotional and practical support to young people aged 12 to 18 in Edinburgh and the Lothians, who have experienced rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual bullying or circulating an intimate picture without your consent.

Email: star@ercc.scot

Website: www.ercc.scot/star

East Lothian Sexual Abuse Service (ELSAS)

ELSAS offers support in East Lothian to women and all members of the trans community and non-binary people over the age of 18, who are currently experiencing or have experienced sexual violence.

Email: elsas@ercc.scot

Student Survivors Project

The Student Survivors project offers counselling support to university students of all ages and genders who have experienced sexual violence at any time in their lives.

Email: studentsurvivors@ercc.scot

Website: www.ercc.scot/student

Rape Crisis Scotland

Open every day from 5pm until midnight for anyone affected by sexual violence, no matter when or how it happened.

Helpline: 08088 010302 (freephone, 5pm – midnight every day)

Website: www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Further support and reading

Women's Aid East and Midlothian

Support line: 0131 561 5800 (mon- Fri, 9am – 4pm)

E: info@womensaideml.org

Website: www.womensaideml.org

Twitter: [@WomensAidEML](https://twitter.com/WomensAidEML)

Insta: [womensaideml](https://www.instagram.com/womensaideml)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/waeml

Scottish Women's Aid

Helpline: 0800 027 1234 (24/7)

Email: helpline@sdafmh.org.uk

webchat at sdafmh.org.uk

MYPAS

Phone: 0131 454 0757,

Email: enquiries@mypas.co.uk

Bridges Project

Phone: 0131 665 1621

Email: Mail@bridgesproject.org.uk

Here are some other contacts you might find useful

Crisis Support Breathing Space

0800 83 85 87 (6pm-2am Monday-Thursday, Friday-Monday 6pm-6am)

Edinburgh Crisis Centre freephone

0808 801 0414 (24 hours), Text 07974429075, crisis@edinburghcrisiscentre.org.uk

Samaritans

116 123 (24 hours) - jo@samaritans.org - www.samaritans.org

Saneline

0300 304 7000 everyday 4.30pm – 10.30pm

If you are concerned about a friend you think is experiencing an unhealthy relationship; here is a toolkit that might help you to have a conversation with them about it:

[Oor Fierce Girls Toolkit – Young People](#)

If you would like more information about the research, or to give feedback about this report, please contact rhianna@ywcascotland.org.