



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

## **Guidance for Victims of Rape and Sexual Assault in Italy**

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British Embassy, Rome  
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[www.gov.uk/world/italy](http://www.gov.uk/world/italy)

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# First steps

Rape and sexual assault can happen to women and men of all ages and backgrounds. It can be a very traumatic experience whenever and wherever it happens, and it can be even more difficult to deal with if it happens to you whilst abroad.

It is your choice about what you do next, but this information may help you in coming to a decision. The most important thing is to make sure that you are as safe as you can be. You can:

- contact the emergency number in Italy which is 112 to receive immediate assistance from the relevant responders.
- contact the Italian AntiViolence free number 1522 to be signposted to the nearest AV centre. Available 24/7.
- contact your tour operator if you are travelling with one
- contact the British Embassy in Rome or the British Consulate General in Milan. We will help you where we can, and provide information on local police and medical procedures.

## Medical assistance and hospitals – what to expect

If you need medical assistance, you should immediately call 112 for emergency services, 118 for an ambulance or go direct to the nearest hospital. Access to Accident and Emergency services (A&E) is completely free.

All A&Es in major Italian hospitals should have the necessary facilities, equipment and staff prepared to receive victims of sexual assault. Smaller hospitals may lack specialised staffing, however, should this be the case, you will be directed to the local anti-violence organisation they cooperate with.

On arrival at an emergency ward, you will be immediately assessed by a nurse and given a ‘triage code’. Waiting time is determined by the colour of the code you are allocated however, the average waiting time

to be seen by a doctor under these circumstances would be approximately 10 minutes.

If a member of consular staff is available, they will be able to accompany you to the hospital if you so wish. Some hospital staff may speak English, but the majority will speak only Italian. We are able to help you understand what is going on if we are able to accompany you or we may ask the hospital staff to request the assistance of an English-speaking member of their staff.

You will be asked to provide details about yourself and detailed information on the aggression. This may be very personal and feel intrusive however, it is very important that this information is included in your medical file.

Doctors may take photographic evidence of any injuries, when deemed necessary and collect clothing items or any other objects containing relevant biological evidence. If you have already changed your clothing, please keep any evidence safe in a paper bag as plastic can alter the samples.

You will undergo some routine lab tests such as a blood test, pregnancy test, toxicological tests, HIV and sexually transmitted infections tests as well as collection of DNA and biological samples.

Antibiotics, vaccinations and the morning-after pill might be also prescribed (the latter has to be purchased at a local pharmacy).

Hospital doctors may provide this prescription. Should a doctor refuse to prescribe it, you will be signposted to the local Health Centre (Consultorio) where you can obtain a prescription.

In the pharmacist refuses to provide this drug, you can ask for the nearest pharmacy available or consult the following website:

[Obiezione respinta](#)

Once discharged, you will be given a copy of your medical report and hospital file. In accordance with Italian law, the hospital file must contain information relevant for the judicial case which might take place. This will constitute an important part of the police report, should you decide to report the assault to the police.

# If you want to report the incident to the police in Italy

If you have travelled with a tour operator, they should be able to arrange for someone to support you. If you do not have a tour operator and you contact the British Embassy we will try to send a consular officer to support you. Anything you tell us will be treated in the strictest confidence. If you want us to, we can contact your family or friends for you. We can also provide you with a list of local lawyers and interpreters.

Only you can decide whether or not to report the assault to the police. If you do not know what to do, we can talk you through what it would mean and what your options are.

We strongly recommend that you appoint a lawyer, should you wish to proceed with filing the report. A list of specialised English-speaking lawyers can be found [here](#)

It is also advisable that you report it as soon as possible. Essential evidence can be gathered and investigated by the police from the early stages without contamination.

It is advisable that you retain clothing items and objects related to the event (such as a glass, which can constitute evidence of a spiked drink) which will become relevant evidence in support of the police report. These should be stored in paper bags for better preservation. It is worth keeping a record of any other physical effects of the abuse, such as stress or psychological issues.

In Italy there are two different law enforcement forces that work at a national level: the Polizia and the Carabinieri. Depending on where you are in Italy, officers of anyone of these forces could attend to you. Therefore, in this information, please take “police” to mean law enforcement officers in general unless otherwise stated.

You can approach the police directly by calling the emergency telephone number 112, or in person at a police station. Should you

decide to seek medical assistance first, please check if there is a police station within the hospital.

In accordance with the Italian law, police forces are obliged to inform victims of violence about the existence of anti-violence centres and to put them in touch with them if necessary.

If you wish, you can ask the police to contact the British Embassy for you on +39 06 4220 0001 or the British Consulate-General in Milan on +39 02 723001.

In Italy, you have up to 1 year to file a report with the Police for a sexual assault crime. Your report can take two different forms: “Querela di parte”, or “Denuncia”.

“Querela di parte” implies that you have the intention of prosecuting the offender, even if he or she is unknown. It can only be filed by you and it cannot be withdrawn.

“Denuncia” is a notification of a crime. It can be filed by any person who is aware of a crime, it does not need to be the victim.

Please know that you have the right to:

- request the assistance of an interpreter in case the police officer does not speak your language;
- be accompanied by a trusted person;
- request that a female officer takes your report;
- avoid any contact with the accused;

In certain cases of sexual violence police authorities must proceed with an inquest automatically, with or without the Querela di parte. This might happen, for example, if the person is under 18 years of age, or if physical injuries require hospitalisation for more than 20 days.

When reporting to the police, the types of questions that will be asked include: the identity of the assailant; a description; where and when the incident happened; what happened; the circumstances and if there were any witnesses. Tell the police if you think you have been drugged. In the event that you are asked if your insurance covers compensation for the assault, please know that The Association of Travel Insurance Intermediaries (ATII) have confirmed that they are not aware of any UK

issued retail travel insurance that will include financial compensation for any travellers who have suffered as a victim of rape or serious sexual assault.

You will be asked to read your statement, or the interpreter will read it to you, to check that the information is correct and then you will have to sign it. A copy of this police report in Italian should be given to you so please insist you receive a copy. A copy of your statement will be sent immediately to the corresponding court on duty where a judge and prosecutor will examine the information you have provided.

The police will usually keep any clothes you were wearing and hand them to a forensic examiner to be used as evidence in court. They may also take you to the scene of the crime or where you think the attacker may be located.

## **Legal aspects**

Sexual assault and rape are considered crimes in Italy, classified as a crime against the person.

In July 2019, the Italian legislation “Codice Rosso” modified the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure by including new elements in relation to domestic and gender violence with the aim of providing immediate protection to women reporting cases of violence and stalking from partners of family members

It is now law enforcement duty to immediately respond to reports and to make sure cases are immediately followed up, so that perpetrators are quickly investigated and apprehended.

A series of new crimes, including dissemination of private videos and photos with the intent of harming, and coercion to marriage (which has become an issue within some foreign communities in Italy), have been added.

Trials usually last an average of 2 years, after which sentence is passed. The defendant has an automatic right of appeal (appello). This means it can be followed by a second trial, unless the defendant settles for a plea-agreement. In certain cases it can extend to a third

trial at the Supreme Court (Cassazione), whose sentence is enforceable and final.

We strongly recommend you appoint a lawyer. Your lawyer will provide you with an address (elezione di domicilio) which is required in order to receive legal notifications, particularly if you do not reside in Italy. Having a lawyer can be particularly helpful in putting in place all legal protections for you available in Italy.

Your lawyer will represent you in Italy so that you are not required to be present at every court session, but you will be asked to appear in court for the first hearing (udienza di deposizione) or pre-trial hearing (incidente probatorio).

In Italy, victims of rape and sexual assault are entitled to free legal aid. In some cases, lawyers will charge the client for services supplied before the case goes to court. This is something you must clarify directly with your appointed lawyer. We strongly advise that you appoint a lawyer who is specialised in this field.

## **If you want to report the incident to the police in the UK**

If you decide not to report the crime to the Italian police, but wish to report it to the UK police, you must be aware of the following:

- UK police cannot prosecute in the case of serious sexual offences committed overseas, unless the victim (any nationality) is under 16 and the suspect is a British national or resident in the UK
- UK police cannot investigate a case abroad

UK police advise that it is best to report such matters in the country where the incident happened, and as soon as possible.

We are also aware that the transfer of a crime report from the UK to Italy can take a considerable length of time and by the time the report reaches Italy, the evidence may have been lost.

Reporting locally and promptly ensures that:

- forensic evidence can be gathered immediately before it is too late
- the offender could possibly be identified promptly
- scepticism about the allegation is avoided

However, if you appoint a lawyer before leaving Italy, it is possible to file a “Querela di parte” from the UK. Italian police can accept a Querela by proxy from your Italian legal representative. This must be written in Italian. The Italian lawyer can then attend a local police station with your agreed Querela.

## **Support organisations and useful contacts in Italy**

YOUPOL APP, active since 2017 to report bullying and drug dealing. The app allows a direct request for assistance to the Police Headquarters Operations Centres for episodes of gender-based violence, and is therefore an alternative communication channel to the traditional, indispensable emergency numbers.

The YOUPOL APP can be activated on smartphones, tablets and computers and allows messages (including multimedia messages) to be transmitted to the operators of the Police Headquarters Operations Centres. Reports are automatically geo-referenced. Moreover, for those who do not wish to register and provide their data, there is the possibility of making notifications anonymously.

1522 is the Italian anti-violence toll free number you can dial in Italy where you can be signposted to the nearest centre.

If you prefer, you can use the "App1522", downloadable through the most popular IOS and Android systems. It facilitates chat communication and interaction with the operators. The App also features emergency lighting and sound signals, as well as the possibility of making a quick call to 1522.

Further organisations are:



**Differenza Donna:**

<https://www.differenzadonna.org/en/home-en/>

**D.i.Re:**

<https://www.direcontrolaviolenza.it/>

## **When you return home to the UK: support organisations and useful contacts**

People react to sexual assault in different ways. You might feel angry, ashamed, frightened or guilty. You may have different feelings at different times. You may have some of these feelings soon after the attack and some may develop later on. This is normal and you should consider getting help and advice from a counsellor or support group whenever you feel you need to.

Women and men who have been sexually assaulted can get confidential help, treatment and support at a Sexual Assault Referral Centre in the UK. You can find details of your nearest Centre by accessing the link below:

[www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Rape-and-sexual-assault-referral-centres/LocationSearch/364](http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Rape-and-sexual-assault-referral-centres/LocationSearch/364)

Alternatively, you can call the National free phone Helpline 0808 802 9999 available from 12:00 – 14:30 and 19:00 – 21:30 daily

Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) offer medical, practical and emotional support. They have specially trained doctors, nurses and support workers. If you have not reported the assault to the police, you can still refer yourself to a SARC for assessment and medical treatment to prevent some STIs and pregnancy.

Many specialist support agencies offer an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service to victims of rape and sexual assault. An Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) is trained to look after your needs, and to ensure that you receive care and understanding. An ISVA will provide you with information and you are not expected to report any offence to the police. Some information may not be applicable to you, as any criminal proceedings will be taking place in Italy, however they can provide useful support.

There are many organisations offering help in the UK, a few of those are mentioned below however, an Internet search will help you determine what suits you best.

## **Glasgow & Clyde Rape Crisis (GCRC)**

Helpline & free phone: +44(0)8088 00 00 14

[Glasgow & Clyde Rape Crisis Centre](#) is a support service for women and girls aged 13 and over who have been raped, sexually assaulted or sexually abused at some point in their lifetime. Live Online Support is an online service that gives British survivors of sexual violence access to UK-based real time support from anywhere in the world, via Skype, FaceTime, Instant Messenger and email.

### **Skype**

Skype offers free calls worldwide between Skype accounts. Survivors can call GCRC using the Skype app by searching for Glasgow Clyde Rape Crisis Centre using the above helpline. Support via Skype can be by message, voice only call or video call. You can decide which method of communication you feel most comfortable with. For a video call you can sign into your Skype account, search the GCRC Skype name then click the video icon and it will put you through to them. Skype requires an internet connection so it is worthwhile checking with the internet provider, when using a mobile phone whilst travelling abroad, as roaming charges may apply.

### **Facetime**

Facetime works between Apple devices. It is free to use but requires internet access so users may pay for data usage depending on how they are connected and may incur roaming charges.

If someone wants to contact GCRC they can open the Facetime app on their apple device and enter the following email address:

[itunes@glasgowclyderapecrisis.org](mailto:itunes@glasgowclyderapecrisis.org).

They can then click on the video icon to video call.

## Instant messenger

You can make initial contact with GCRC through the Instant Messaging facility which is on their website at [www.rapecrisiscentre-glasgow.co.uk](http://www.rapecrisiscentre-glasgow.co.uk).

## Email

You can email GCRC at [support@rapecrisiscentre-glasgow.co.uk](mailto:support@rapecrisiscentre-glasgow.co.uk) to make your first contact and start an email conversation.

All the above services can be accessed at the following times:

Every day: 11am to 2pm UK time. Mon – Thurs also: 5.30pm to 7.30pm UK time.

A support session generally lasts one hour however, you can stop the session at any time.

Skype can be downloaded at [www.skype.com/en/what-is-skype/](http://www.skype.com/en/what-is-skype/). Where possible, British Consulates will make their facilities available to you to make contact. Try to contact them in a comfortable, safe, confidential space. You can use Skype for a voice call, video call or instant message support.

You can also contact them on Facebook at @GlasgowRapeCrisis and Twitter at @RCCGlasgow.

## **Rape Crisis England and Wales and Rape Crisis Scotland**

Local rape crisis centres provide crisis and long-term specialised counselling, support and independent advocacy for all women and girls

of all ages who have experienced any form of sexual violence; centres are community-based, and independent of government and the criminal justice system.

Rape Crisis England & Wales and Rape Crisis Scotland are the national umbrella organisations for rape crisis centres in Great Britain.

### [Rape Crisis England and Wales](#)

Free phone: +44(0)808 802 9999 (daily midday to 2.30pm and 7pm to 9.30pm)

### [Rape Crisis Scotland](#)

Free phone: +44(0)141331 4180 (daily 6pm to midnight)

## **Nexus Northern Ireland**

Nexus NI offer counselling and support to survivors of sexual abuse, victims of sexual violence, including those who have experienced rape and sexual assault. Counselling is available for anyone aged 16+ in 25 centres across Northern Ireland.

### [Nexus Northern Ireland](#)

Belfast +44(0)28 9032 6803

Londonderry +44(0)28 7126 0566

Enniskillen +44(0)28 6632 0046

## **The Survivors Trust**

[The Survivors Trust](#) is a UK-wide national umbrella agency for 130 specialist organisations for support for the impact of rape, sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse throughout the UK and Ireland. Tel: +44(0)808 801 0818.

## **Women's Aid**

[Women's Aid](#) are available 24/7 on +44(0)808 2000 247.

## **Victim Support**

[Victim support](#) is an independent charity dedicated to supporting victims of crime and traumatic incidents in England and Wales. Their purpose is to provide specialist help to support people to cope and

recover to the point where they feel they are back on track with their lives. Call them on +44(0)808 168 911.

## **Survivors UK**

[Survivors UK](#) have a national webchat service for men and their families, partners and friends. They open seven days a week and can be accessed through their website. Alternatively, you can Whatsapp them on +44(0)74 91816064 or contact their office on +44(0)203 5983898.

## **Lifecentre**

[Lifecentre](#) is a telephone counselling service for under-18s survivors of sexual abuse and those supporting survivors. Contact them on +44(0)1243 786349.

## **Mankind**

[Mankind](#) provides one-to-one counselling, therapeutic groups and couple counselling to male victims of sexual assault (age 18+). Contact them on +44(0)1823 334244.

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