



Ms Jennie Smith

President

**The UK Association of Forensic Nurses and
Paramedics**

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Tuesday, 8th August 2023

The Guardian - Editor

guardian.readers@theguardian.com

To the Editor,

Re: Guardian Article dated 6th August 2023 – "Two-thirds of sexual assault support centres in England branded inadequate"

We are writing to address several inaccuracies and misconceptions presented in the aforementioned article about Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) in England.

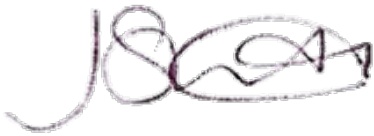
1. **Inaccurate Headline Representation:** The article's headline is not only misleading but also patently incorrect. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) does not use the same rating system for SARCs as it does for other health settings. As such, it is factually incorrect and a gross misrepresentation to state that "two-thirds are branded inadequate". Such misrepresentations can have serious consequences, leading to unjustified doubts about the credibility of SARCs and potentially deterring those in need from seeking crucial support. We strongly urge The Guardian to rectify this error and ensure the portrayal of SARCs is in line with the CQC's actual findings.
2. **Beyond a Checklist:** SARCs are committed to offering comprehensive care and support to survivors of sexual assault and abuse. The essence of their work, rooted in compassion, dedication, and a deep understanding of the trauma survivors undergo, cannot always be distilled into a rules-based compliance checklist. The hard work, the heart, and the invaluable service SARCs provide goes well beyond what can be ticked off on a list. We hope the public understands that these centres are staffed by teams of professionals dedicated to making a genuine difference in the lives of survivors.
3. **Potential Barriers to Reporting:** We are deeply concerned that misleading articles such as these could inadvertently create additional barriers for survivors of sexual assault and rape, crimes which are already vastly underreported. Ensuring that

survivors feel confident, safe, and supported when accessing services is paramount. Misrepresentations can gravely undermine this confidence.

4. **Accreditation and Inspection:** For clarity, SARCs are not only inspected by the CQC but are also working diligently towards achieving accreditation in alignment with the Home Office Forensic Regulator. This continuous process ensures adherence to high standards and the implementation of any necessary improvements.
5. **Variety of Providers:** SARCs are managed and delivered by various providers across England. It is crucial to note that while G4S Health Services and Mountain Healthcare are among these providers, they represent only a fraction of the entire network.
6. **Request for Raw Data:** We are perplexed by the percentages presented in the article. Such figures, without the context of the raw data from which they were derived, can be misleading. We call upon The Guardian to share the raw data used to arrive at these percentages to provide a transparent and comprehensive understanding of the situation.

We trust that this letter will be given due consideration, and we hope to see corrective measures taken to ensure the public is provided with accurate and balanced information.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Jennie Smith', with a stylized, flowing script.

Ms Jennie Smith
President