

## **Guidance for medical staff when caring for a patient who discloses that they have been raped or sexually assaulted**

- Do not panic. Listen carefully and non-judgementally to what they tell you. Support them to feel in control of decisions about what happens next.
- Do not try to take a detailed account of what happened. Only ask questions that are relevant to their immediate medical care. For further guidance on note taking following disclosure of a rape or sexual assault see the separate pdf on our resources page.
- Ask if they want to report to the police – explain that they can take their time to make a decision about this. The Bridge can provide a forensic medical examination without the police being involved
- Take reasonable forensic precautions while examining the patient. This includes wearing two pairs of gloves and avoiding multiple people touching the patient in multiple places.
- Collect any items that may have forensic value including clothing that is removed, bed sheets, tissues, hair extensions and false nails. Clothing and other soft fabric should be stored in paper bags if possible. All other items should be stored in plastic bags.
- **Significant or life threatening injuries take absolute priority over forensic issues** and should be investigated and managed as per usual triage protocols.
- If the patient is unable to give consent due to a medical condition then public interest/best interests take precedence and a report to the police should be made (GMC Guidance).
- If in doubt **call The Bridge 24/7 on 0117 342 6999** for advice.