

POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL REPORT

Meeting Date	1 st May 2025
Report Title	Update on the new Victims' Centre, Acer House

Information should be accessible for all. If you require this information in a different language or format, please contact the Police, Fire and Crime Team at info@northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk.

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief progress update on the new Victims' Centre, Acer House since it fully opened on 10th March 2025, and provide assurance that the centre is supporting the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's strategic aims.

Background

Acer House, Victims' Centre provides –

- dedicated, modern facilities for the **Adult Sexual Assault Referral Centre ("SARC")** and **Child Sexual Assault Assessment Services ("CSAAS")** for victims of rape and sexual assault to receive immediate healthcare and a forensic medical examination to collect and document evidence; and
- two **Video-Recorded Interview ("VRI") suites** for North Yorkshire Police to record statements from vulnerable victims and witnesses, including children and young people.

Acer House, Victims' Centre aims to -

- ensure our SARC/CSAAS will be able to achieve **UKAS Accreditation**;
- ensure continued delivery of these **services for victims of rape and sexual assault** to support them to recover, heal and rebuild their lives;
- provide **accessible facilities** for those with mobility needs;
- **improve the overall experience** of all victims and witnesses using these facilities;
- support officers in **achieving best evidence** when interviewing victims and witnesses by helping them feel more assured and comfortable; and
- assist North Yorkshire Police in effectively meeting the **requirements of Sections 27 and 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999**.

A single Regional Adult SARC Service for the whole of Yorkshire and the Humber is currently jointly commissioned with NHS England, Humberside Police and Crime Commissioner and West and South Yorkshire Combined Authorities.

The CSAAS in York and North Yorkshire is currently jointly commissioned with NHS England and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Mountain Healthcare Ltd are currently commissioned to provide both the Regional Adult SARC Service and joint North and West Yorkshire CSAAS.

PFCC/OPFCC Activity Update

Open Days were held on Friday 24th January 2025 for the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chief Officers, Senior Leaders, members of the PFC Panel and the press to have a guided tour of the Centre and facilities. This was followed by an Open Day for Partners' and Stakeholders on Monday 27th January 2025 and operational tours for NYP officers and staff on Monday 10th, Wednesday 12th and Thursday 13th February 2025.

CQC Registration and UKAS Accreditation

The CQC completed an assessment of the new premises and facilities, successfully resulting in CQC Registration of the new premises being approved on 6th March 2025.

Environmental monitoring (swabbing and testing for DNA) of the adult SARC forensic suite was completed prior to opening Acer House with a 'Pass' result ensuring forensic integrity of the facilities.

Mountain Healthcare Ltd have commenced the UKAS Accreditation application process with an inspection due to take place in September 2025, ahead of the October 2025 deadline for accreditation.

Support services for victims of rape and sexual assault

Acer House, Victims' Centre fully opened on Monday 10th March 2025 to offer SARC examinations for victims aged 16 years and over between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. For urgent examinations required outside these times, victims are offered an appointment at either Hackenthorpe Lodge in Sheffield or the Hazelhurst Centre in Leeds through our Regional contract arrangements.

Weekly CSAAS clinics for child victims aged 0-15 years resumed from Tuesday 11th March 2025, 10am to 6pm at Acer House. Child victims requiring an Acute (Forensic) examination outside these times are offered an appointment at the Hazelhurst Centre, Leeds. Young victims aged 13 to 15 years old will be offered an appointment within the adult (16 years +) SARC service if clinically appropriate.

In the first four weeks since opening:

- 12 victims (aged 16 years +) and 1 young victim (aged 13 to 15 years) have had forensic medical examinations at Acer House
 - 4 victims and 1 young victim had forensic medical examinations at another SARC site in the Yorkshire and Humber region
- 2 child victims (aged 12yrs or under) have had a non-recent examination at Acer House
 - 4 child victims have had non-recent examinations at West Yorkshire

Accessible facilities

Acer House is accessible for those with mobility needs, with a lift and accessible toilet and showering facilities. The previous premises were not suitable for wheelchair users or others with mobility difficulties as the forensic suite was located on the 1st floor and accessible only by stairs.

Improve the overall experience of victims and witnesses

There are four separate family waiting rooms for family members or friends accompanying victims and witnesses, each with their own facilities to ensure privacy. Consultation was completed with victims and survivors, including young people, and support workers and intermediaries on the colour schemes, furniture and other items to help make them feel more comfortable and safe.

A dedicated area on the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority – Policing, Fire and Crime website - [Acer House Victims' Centre - York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority – Policing, Fire and Crime Team](#) - has been created which provides information on Acer House and the facilities available, along with drone footage, 360° panoramic photos and short videos to explain what will happen at the SARC/CSAAS and during a VRI. These videos can be shown to victims and witnesses prior to attending Acer House to alleviate any worries they may have.

Feedback received to date from those using the SARC and CSAAS facilities at Acer House include –
“Very good experience. Staff very understanding, helpful and comforting & caring”
“Very professional, appropriate & caring child friendly & focused”
“Positive experience of the service - professional, and caring approach”

Achieving Best Evidence and meeting the requirements of Sections 27 and 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999

Both VRI Suites became operational from Monday 24th February 2025.

In the first six weeks since becoming operational, 42 VRIs have been booked at Acer House.