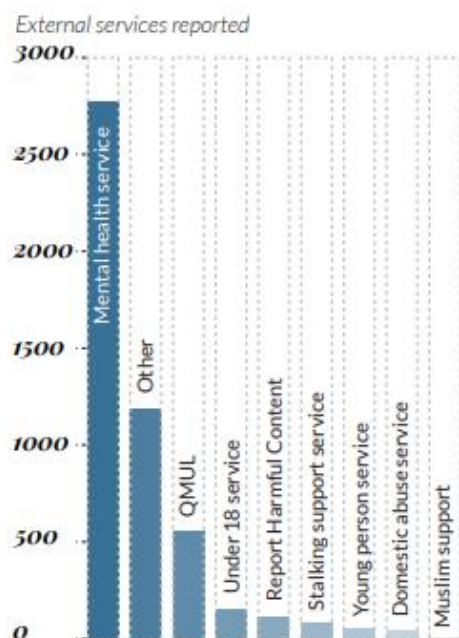


RPH report 2021: the rise of sextortion

Presented by Zara Ward

Getting support beyond RPH



RPH is not an emotional support service; we can only provide practical support in reporting intimate image abuse and associated content. However, we understand that these crimes have an immense long-lasting impact on victims and so we always signpost to services that are more resources to provide emotional support. That is why in 2021 the commonly signposted service was mental health services. RPH has used this year to continue our reciprocal training, reaching out to services that support victims so we can provide the best signposting advice. With that, we still build strong working relationships with services such as “QMUL” – the SPITE project run by Queen Mary University in London” – and a legal advice helpline Rights of Women, which offer free legal support to women who need it.

Throughout 2021 responses from police forces remains mainly negative. It’s all too common to have victims outline that they have not been taken seriously, victim-blamed for sharing the content, or giving perpetrators time to facilitate deleting the content prior to seizing devices. Just a single testimonial from a client showcases the issues we find in police responses:



“I reported it to the police and they started an investigation...Despite finding he has sent them, they’ve closed the case 7 months after starting the investigation as there’s no proof this has caused me distress. I fled his home because he was abusive, there have been several reports made to the police, all of which they won’t do anything about. the police have also said, they didn’t force my ex or this other person to delete these photos, just suggested to do so, but I know what they’re like and they’ll keep them to cause further problems down the line.”

These crimes may happen online but they have real-world impacts on victims; they deserve to be better supported in criminal cases and treated with care. At the RPH this is something we can work on improving in the next year, working collaboratively with police forces nationally.