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BRISTOL EVENING POST

Now help offers roll in for rape victim

By QUITA MORGAN

Rape victim Karen Crocker was today offered help, advice and an invitation to attend a rally in London.

Karen, a 20-year-old mother of two, told in yesterday's Evening Post how the incident in April had changed her personality and almost wrecked her marriage.

Today a variety of organisations and individuals praised her courage in speaking out and criticised the fact that no official agency had tried to help her earlier.

THE OFFER of help came from Bristol Victims Support Scheme;

THE ADVICE was from Cheltenham MP Mr Charles Irving, who urged her to consult her own MP and find out if she can claim compensation from the Criminal Injuries Board; and the

INVITATION to speak at or listen to the London rally was issued by a group of Bristol women who are taking part.

'Others'

Karen's husband Clive (22) said they would consider all three offers.

"We are glad that all this has come out in the open

now," he said. "We hope it will help other victims as well as Karen."

The couple say they received no outside help until the situation drove Clive into hospital for treatment for depression.

No organisation is obliged to seek or offer help for rape victims.

Mr Irving, who is chairman of a pressure group called the National Victims Association, today urged the Government to place a statutory responsibility on somebody to let appropriate organisations know when a victim needs help.

'Scandal'

"The whole system nationally of dealing with victims of crime is a total scandal," he said.

"Hundreds of millions of pounds are spent every year on giving help, aid rehabilitation and so on to offenders. That money is spent quite properly.

But that does not mean society should turn its back on victims, who are

often left to struggle along without much care from anybody."

He also called on the Government to provide funds for organisations like the pioneering Bristol Victims Support scheme, who try to provide some of the help Karen needed.

"We are grateful to Bristol for having set a national lead in this," he said. "We are also grateful to Bristol police for their co-operation."

Mrs Catherine Hawkins, administrator of the Bristol scheme, said Karen's case had not been drawn to their attention — possible for geographical and financial reasons.

"At the moment we are not covering the whole of

Bristol, because of lack of funds," she said. "We would not normally hear about such a case unless it was in one of the areas we cover."

Emotional

She said that in 85 per cent of the cases dealt with by the scheme's volunteers, they had provided emotional support of the shoulder-to-cry-on variety.

In the other cases they had supplied information concerning insurance, crime prevention and other matters.

Suzie Fleming, of Bristol Wages for Housework Committee, offered to try to arrange transport for the Crockers if they

decide to join the London rally on Saturday.

The demonstration, organised by Women Against Rape, will take the form of a women's court in Trafalgar Square.

The victim in the controversial guardsman case is planning to take part.

'Insinuation'

Bristol Wages for Housework Committee today issued a statement expressing sympathy for Karen Crocker in the ordeal she had faced.

They also praised her courage in speaking to the press and said they were angered by "the insinuation that because she worked as a stripper the rape was not so serious."

They add: "We fully support the demands of Women Against Rape, in London, that the circumstances of a woman's life and work should not be brought up in rape trials, since they have no bearing on the subject of the trial — which is whether the woman was raped."

