Responding to sexual violence – guidance for staff
Responding to incidents of sexual violence – guidance for staff

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Introduction to the guidance

We are committed to providing a safe environment for students, staff and visitors to the University of Sussex campus and in responding appropriately to any incidents. Reported incidents of violence, including sexual violence are rare and this guidance has been produced in particular for front line ('first responder') staff to whom incidents may be reported. It provides guidance on how to provide a safe space for the student and the opportunity for a student to make an informed choice about what action they may choose to take. The emphasis is on student choice and consent.

Only in cases where there is a perceived risk to the student or the safety of others on campus, will action, such as informing the police, be taken before discussing this with the student and obtaining his/her consent.

Confidential and sensitive information will be recorded and shared between campus services and external services, only with the knowledge and, in most cases, the agreement of the student involved in the incident.

A checklist of actions and information to aid decision making is provided for all first responders. It provides guidance in the form of a simple care pathway and in a more comprehensive written version. This ensures a consistent service response in all such circumstances.

The training is to raise the awareness and knowledge of front line staff of the services that a student can access.
Sexual violence incident: guidance for “first responder” staff

All members of University staff are legally obliged to provide a ‘duty of care’ to students. Accordingly they should follow the care pathway attached and also read the detailed guidance points below. This will be the basis for providing a consistent and professional response to any student who asks for your help. You are expected to listen to the student’s account, before making any assumptions about the type of incident that is being reported. The student may not refer to an incident as ‘rape’ or ‘sexual assault’, and words/language may not be coherent if s/he is experiencing symptoms of trauma or shock, or if English is not their first language. This is not the time or place for in-depth advice or guidance, but you must do the following:

1. Is the student or others still at risk from the alleged assailant?

If a student presents in distress following a very recent, reported incident of sexual violence, it is important to immediately assess whether the alleged assailant is still in the vicinity and an imminent risk to either the student or to others or whether the student has any serious injury serious enough to require immediate medical attention. If so, and you consider the situation to be an emergency, dial 3333 (01273 873333) on campus to ask Security to call the police/ambulance, or dial 999 if off campus. You do not need the student’s consent in these circumstances.

2. Create a safe environment

If the situation is not an emergency requiring the immediate attention of either the police or an ambulance, invite the student to a warm, quiet area where you will not be overheard or interrupted.

If you are alone with a student who is distressed and possibly feeling vulnerable, it is best to inform a colleague what you are doing.

Check if the student would prefer to talk to someone of a different gender:

- Out of hours, if s/he would like to talk to a female staff member, you could contact one of the Residential Support team through Security or through one of the Residential Advisors.
- During weekdays 9am – 5pm, the student can be given a priority appointment with a Student Advisor from the Student Life Centre(see page 11 for contact details).
• Alternatively, s/he may prefer to see a Counsellor in the University Counselling Service, but it is usually more appropriate for a student to be referred for counselling at a later stage.

If the student is accompanied, check that this person’s presence is welcomed and if not, tactfully explain that you think it best s/he leaves to allow the student time to regain some privacy.

If the student is not accompanied, check whether they’d like a friend to be contacted for support.

Remember – at all times - ask the student what they want to do – do not make assumptions and do not act without their consent.

Allow time to talk. Do not anticipate what this incident is about. Each person’s experience of sexual harassment or sexual violence will differ as will the effect that it has. Some individuals may appear calm despite a serious assault. Your role is to provide immediate, non-judgmental, safety and support.

3. Advise student about the preservation of forensic evidence

This is only relevant if the assault has only just happened or has occurred within the previous 7 days (for bodily evidence). Physical evidence such as used condoms, clothing, photographs, mobile phone and emails) can be preserved for much longer.

To obtain forensic evidence, swabs are taken from any part of the body or place that the assailant came into contact with. Forensic evidence may be collected for up to 7 days after the incident (vaginal swab or used condom only), so it is important that the student observes the following (if relevant) if s/he wants to inform the Police now or at a later date and DOES NOT:

• Wash any part of the body including the hair
• Brush teeth
• Smoke
• Eat or drink – including any non-essential medication
• Go to the toilet or discard any tampons or sanitary towels.
• Remove or wash any clothing worn at the time of the incident or afterwards
• Tidy up, remove any items that the assailant touched or clean the area where the assault occurred.
The student should be advised to preserve any possible evidence such as: mobile phone lists, texts and voicemails; photos; and emails.

A SOLO - Sexual Offences Liaison police officer (see glossary at the end) can collect mouth and urine evidence on site so that the student does not have to avoid eating/drinking/going to the toilet for any longer than they need to. The student should be advised not to change clothes, but if they already have, the clothes they were wearing at the time of the incident, should be collected and placed in a clean plastic bag with the time, date and location where they were taken off, recorded and attached to the bag. Any bedding or a used condom if relevant should be placed in separate bags.

If there are signs of a disturbance at the scene, it would be useful for photographs to be taken – especially if the student is unsure at this stage whether or not to report the incident to the police.

However difficult it may be for the student, s/he needs to be aware of all this, as it will help them decide what action they want to take.

If the student thinks they may have been drugged they should produce a urine sample as soon as possible. This can be collected by the SOLO, at the SARC or at the hospital (A & E). Without these options, a clean cup could be used and handed on to the police. Some drugs remain in the body for only a short amount of time.

4. Allow the individual time to talk, but make only a brief record of the student’s account and ask the student to confirm that they agree with what is written

Focus on what is being said not on what you are going to say or do. Do not lead the conversation by asking questions: you are not investigating or gathering evidence.

Do not make assumptions about what the student wants feels or felt. If you allow your own feelings and reactions to surface, this might discourage the student from feeling that it is acceptable to speak about how s/he actually feels about the experience. You should always accept what the student says regardless of any private reservations you may have.

Save your reactions and feelings for a debriefing session.

Make a note of the student’s name, alleged assailant’s name if known, time and date of incident only. In addition, you may want to record what help/support you
offered the student as part of your duty of care. If you write anything down, it must be brief and factual without recording opinions e.g. “The student appeared to be intoxicated......” “I think that the student thought/felt/appeared to know” etc. Any notes taken by a “first responder” are known as a “first report” and can be used by the police or in court. Memories of an incident may be fragmented at this stage and you may unwittingly reinterpret what is said to you.

Show the student anything you write down and ask them to confirm what you have written by signing it.

_The police advise that any questioning should stop as soon as a student says that they wish to report the incident to the police. It is important that they are called as soon as possible after this decision is made._

5. **Ask the student what s/he wants to do next re: making a report to the police or seeking further help and support**

The student will need to consider whether they wish to report the assault to the police either immediately or possibly in the future. It is the right of each individual to define their own needs and to choose what to do. You may feel the police ‘should’ be called, particularly if you feel the student has been harmed: _this is not your choice, unless there is cause to be concerned for the safety of the student or for others in the vicinity._

The student also seriously needs to consider seeking medical help as they could be injured or be at risk of pregnancy or contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI). However, it is not appropriate to call an ambulance against the student’s will if there is no evidence to suggest that the student requires urgent medical attention. You can offer to do this or to arrange for the student to go to Accident and Emergency at the Royal Sussex Hospital, but you should not enforce it. You could also suggest that the student could call the 111 service for advice on an injury or to make contact with an “Out of hours” GP service.

Make a note of any help that you have offered to provide in your brief report.

6. **Give the student a copy of the options sheet and allow them time to read it or read it with them to ensure they have enough information to make a decision.**

[www.sussex.ac.uk/wellbeing/safety/sexualassault](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/wellbeing/safety/sexualassault)
This sheet also contains details of local support for later consideration. In addition to immediate emotional support, they may need practical support to understand their choices or rights or psychological support through counselling later on.

A leaflet for the Sexual Assault Referral Centre - The Saturn Centre (SARC) can also be given. These are available online or on paper from the Student Life Centre. www.saturncentre.org/downloads/SARC_lft.pdf

Options for reporting incident to the police:

a) Student wishes to disclose incident to police

In these circumstances it is preferable for the student to make the initial call to the police themselves. Taking control of what happens next is important in helping them process and deal with the trauma. If they don’t feel able to do this confirm you have her/his permission to do this for them.

If on campus, phone Security on 3333 (01273 873333) and ask them to contact the non-emergency police number 101. This needs to be done through the 24hr Security at York House because they need to guide police to the correct location on campus.

If off campus – phone the police directly on 101.

The police should be accompanied by a SOLO – Sexual Offence Liaison Officer who is trained to give specialist support (see glossary on pg 15 for full definition). A SOLO will be able to take immediate mouth and urine samples on site without the student having to wait to reach the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) – see glossary.

The police aim to take a “victim focused” approach to allegations of sexual assault and will always commence an investigation on this basis.

The police will take a statement first – either on site or at the police station. They will then decide whether to take the student to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). Our nearest SARC is The Saturn Centre in Crawley Hospital www.saturncentre.org to which the police have 24 hour access.

Students may want to take a friend for support and will need a change of clothes for after the examination if they haven’t already changed. They should take any other potential evidence such as changed clothes, bedding and used condoms in clean plastic bags – if relevant.

At the SARC, the student will be supported by a Crisis Support Worker and Forensic Nurse Examiner (pg 16 Glossary). If the student consents, an
Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) will contact them within a few days of the incident. Any referral to counselling will be done by the ISVA. (see glossary pg 15 for full definition). Our University Counselling Service is one of the options available to which students can be referred. Other options include Survivors’ Network, The Women’s Centre and Mankind Counselling.

*You should make the student aware that they can opt out of the Police reporting process at any point without losing any sources of support.*

**b) Student does not wish to contact the police at this point, but would like to preserve forensic evidence so that they can retain this option for the future.**

Ideally the student should visit the nearest Sexual Assault Referral Centre without delay. This is the Saturn Centre which is located in Crawley Hospital, West Green Drive, Crawley, West Sussex RH11 7DH [www.saturncentre.org/](http://www.saturncentre.org/)

For self-referrals to the SARC between 9am and 5pm, Monday – Friday, it is necessary to make an appointment in advance by phoning 01293 600469.

For out-of-hour self-referrals to the SARC, the student (or their representative if s/he prefers) will need to phone 0330 223 0058 for advice from the on-call team. Alternatively this advice can sought on the student’s behalf if this is what they prefer. If a self-referral is made, then the student will need to be transported to Crawley Hospital by taxi, preferably supported by a friend of choice or a member of university staff. This fare will be paid for by the university using a voucher from Streamline taxis (20 20 20). The Residential Support Team and Student Life Team has access to these.

As outlined earlier, forensic evidence (depending on the part of the body), can be preserved up to 7 days (168 hours) after the incident. Mouth tests need to be done within 48 hours and ideally before eating and drinking. Urine tests need to be done quickly before any substance passes through the body, but can be done up to five days after the assault. Anal forensic evidence lasts up to 3 days, vaginal up to 7 days and digital up to 12 hours. Students should be aware of this when deciding whether to wait or not. Washing will of course affect the length of preservation of such forensic evidence.

From some point in the near future, the **Claude Nicol Centre** in the outpatients’ department of the Royal Sussex Hospital, Brighton is hoping to hold “early evidence kits” for collecting forensics. However, Police approval is still awaited and we do not yet know the full implications of this possible development for our guidance.

The student can contact an Independent Sexual Assault Advisor (ISVA) in Brighton at any time in the process for independent advice. They can be reached
on 01273 203380 ext 103 Monday-Friday 9am-5pm or on referrals@survivorsnetwork.org.uk. For full details of their role see Appendix I pg. 15.

c) Student is completely sure that they do **not** want to report the assault to the police at any time.

If the student is sure that s/he does not want to report the incident to the police at any time, then the SARC will not be able to provide any services that cannot be obtained nearer to home.

The student can get 24 hr access to the Accident and Emergency department at the Royal Sussex Hospital, Eastern Road, Brighton for the treatment of any injuries. (Severe injuries would of course warrant calling an ambulance with or without the consent of the student.) Access to “out of hours” medical advice and GP Service can be accessed through the 111 service.

In general, doctors respect the confidences of their patients, but occasionally e.g. if it is in the public interest, or if the patient is without the mental capacity to make a decision, they may contact the police. Students should be aware that this does not mean that they need make a statement or co-operate with any investigation if they do not wish to.

During office hours in the week, s/he can get expert help from the Claude Nicol Centre in the Out patients' department at the Royal Sussex Hospital, Brighton. Specialist staff can test for STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections), give out emergency contraception and provide emotional support. For a priority appointment – the student can ask to speak to a Health Advisor urgently – 01273 664721. They can be met outside in Out Patients if s/he is uneasy about walking into the public reception area.

In addition to all of this, students can contact an Independent Sexual Assault Advisor (ISVA) in Brighton. They can be reached on 01273 203380 ext 103 Monday-Friday 9am-5pm or on referrals@survivorsnetwork.org.uk. For full details of their role see Appendix I pg 15.

**7. Check whether alternative accommodation is required – for immediate safety/risk and/or to alleviate shock and trauma.**

Plans for this can be made while the student is seeking further expert advice off campus. This could be relevant regardless of where the student lives – on campus, off campus or in private accommodation. Seek advice from the Residential Support team.
8. Historical incidents of Sexual Violence
There is no time limit for investigating and prosecuting incidents of sexual violence. If a student discloses details of an assault which happened previous to 7 days earlier or even years before, they can still be referred to an ISVA or Claude Nicol for expert guidance and support. The only difference is that forensic evidence does not need to be considered. They may wish to make a report to the Police either before or after this guidance is accessed. A full list of support for students both on campus and off is given in Appendix I.

9. Third party reports of sexual violence
If the student does not want to contact the police, but wants them to be aware of the incident of sexual violence, s/he can ask a third party to report it. This could be a member of University staff or someone from a support organisation. A third party report does not have to reveal the identity of the student and can give as little or as much detail about the incident as they choose.

If you make a third party report on behalf of student, the police officer you speak to should:

- Take a detailed report of the incident using a 3rd party report form.
- Give you details of a nominated Investigating Officer so that you can contact them again to provide any additional information. Alternatively, this can be done anonymously by the student.

Third party reports are confidential, but occasionally the police may need to contact the student. For example if the information given allows them to connect the case to others or to identify the person responsible. In this case, the police would contact the person in the university who made the initial report and ask them to contact the student.

Local and national services providing information and support for students:

The Saturn Centre
www.saturncentre.org
Our nearest Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) provides a range of services to men and women aged 14 and above who have been raped or sexually assaulted in Sussex. The Saturn Centre services are available, whether or not the assault has been reported to the police, but a prior appointment will always be required. Between 9am-5pm Monday to Friday call 01293 600469, but to obtain advice outside these hours, speak to the on-call team on 0330 2230058.
Survivors’ Network:  
www.survivorsnetwork.org.uk  
This is a local charity based in Brighton & Hove. It provides a range of support services for both female (aged 14 and above) and male (aged 14 -18 years) survivors of sexual abuse. This includes the Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA), a telephone helpline, a confidential drop-in for female survivors and counselling services:

Helpline: 01273 720110 7pm - 9pm on Wednesdays and Fridays or text 07717 999 989 or email help@survivorsnetwork.org.uk

Drop-ins: 7pm-9pm Mondays and Thursdays at 6a Pavilion Buildings, Brighton BN1 1EE. Call 01273 203380 or email dropin@survivorsnetwork.org.uk

For access to an ISVA: call 01273 203380 ext 103 or email referrals@survivorsnetwork.org.uk

To access counselling: call 01273 203380 or email counselling@survivorsnetwork.org.uk

Survivors’ Network is the local representative of Rape Crisis UK.

Rape Crisis:  
www.rapecrisis.org.uk  
National Helpline: 0808 802 9999 12pm-2.30pm, 7pm-9.30pm weekdays.

Brighton Women’s Centre  
www.brightonwomenscentre.org.uk  
Telephone: 01273 698036.  
This is charity based in Brighton and Hove offering a range of services for all women in a safe women-only space including counselling and open-access drop-ins,

Mankind:  
www.mankindcounselling.org.uk/  
This is a charity based in Brighton providing support and counselling for male victims of sexual abuse.  
Tel: 01273 510447  
email admin@mankindcounselling.org.uk

Samaritans:  
www.samaritans.org  
www.samaritans.org/branches/samaritans-brighton-hove-and-district  
08457 9090 or email jo@samaritans.org .  
Currently, the Samaritans are the only 24 hour helpline available for those who may have experienced sexual violence. They provide confidential emotional support 24/7 to those experiencing despair, distress or suicidal feelings.
Victim Support:
www.victimsupport.org.uk/
Victim Support provides assistance to victims of crime, whether the crime has been reported or not. It may be useful to contact their confidential helpline if help is required in either discussing or reporting an incident.

The WiSE Project:
www.hoveymca.org.uk/information_advice_support/_wise_project
The WiSE Project has been set up specifically to work with young women and young men aged 13 to 25 yrs around sexual exploitation and relationships. For concerns about grooming or sexual exploitation, the WiSE Project may be contacted either on 07841 067418, or by a text, to the same number.

RISE
www.riseuk.org.uk/
Rise is a domestic abuse charity working in Brighton & Hove and West Sussex. Rise stands for Refuge, Information, Support and Education. Rise supports women, children, young people and LGBT people affected by domestic abuse. Sexual violence and domestic violence are often linked. Call Rise on 01273 622 822 National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247

Childline
www.childline.org.uk
National free phone line 0800 1111. Get help and advice about a wide range of issues, talk to a counsellor online, send Childline an email or post a message.

From Report to Court – a handbook for adult survivors of sexual violence
www.rightofwomen.org.uk/pdfs/report%20to%20court%204%20web.pdf

Hidden Marks
This website is for women students who have experienced (or who know someone who has experienced) rape and sexual assault, domestic violence/abuse from an intimate partner, physical violence (where the perpetrator is not an intimate partner), stalking and/or sexual harassment.
www.hiddenmarks.org.uk

Campus services: referring students to other university services

Some staff who are on duty in the evenings, nights and weekends when other services are not available, will be expected to offer the student a consistent and professional response, which will be largely guided by the Care Pathway (see attached) and the more detailed guidance above. However, during weekdays 9am – 5pm there are some campus based services with staff who can offer an enhanced response, based on their professional roles.
in counselling and/or advice giving. First responders should refer the student to these services as appropriate – providing their contact details below. However, if the student prefers to disclose only to a staff member outside these services then this is their right.

Support Services within the University.

- **The Student Life Centre** offers information and advice to all Sussex students. Students can call in or make an appointment to see an advisor.

  Website: [www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre)
  E-mail address: studentlifecentre@sussex.ac.uk
  Phone number: 01273 876767

- **The Students’ Union Support and Advocacy Team** offers independent advice and support on a range of issues. This team can also represent students through the University’s student discipline and complaints procedures.

  Website: [www.sussexstudent.com/support/](http://www.sussexstudent.com/support/)
  E-mail address: advice@sussexstudent.com
  Phone number: 01273 877038

- **The University Counselling Service (UCS)**
  Free counselling is provided to all Sussex students by UCS and can either self-refer or be referred there by their GP, SLC or the SARC.

  Website: [www.sussex.ac.uk/counselling](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/counselling)
  E-mail address: counsellingreception@sussex.ac.uk
  Phone number: 01273 678156

Appendices

I. Glossary of terms and definitions used in this document

- **Sexual violence**

  ‘Sexual violence’ is a non-legal term, used in this document as an all-encompassing term, to cover incidents of: rape, sexual (indecent) assault, sexual
exploitation, being coerced into sexual acts or being witness to ‘live’ sexual acts, or pornography, and it includes incidents within ‘domestic’ relationships (see below), also incidents where the perpetrator is known but had no relationship with the person reporting the incident, as well as incidents involving 'strangers'.

- **Rape**

The legal definition that follows is based on the current legislation, which is the *Sexual Offences Act 2003*. Rape occurs when an offender has intentionally penetrated the vagina, anus or mouth of another person with his penis. Rape occurs where there is an absence of consent, and the perpetrator does not reasonably believe that consent is given.

- **Assault by penetration**

The *Sexual Offences Act 2003* defines this as intentional penetration of the vagina or anus of another person with a part of the body or anything else, and where the penetration is sexual, no consent is given, nor does the offender reasonably believe that the other person consents.

- **Consent**

Investigation of an alleged rape or assault by penetration tends to focus on the issues of ‘consent’. A person consents if s/he agrees by choice, and can be said to have exercised that choice freely and with a capacity to do so. In legal terms, if someone was drunk or drugged, at the time of the penetrative act, they cannot be said to have consented. There is no need to prove any physical resistance to the act, for it to be argued that there was a lack of consent, but these are cases which are subject to the decision of a jury, and the issue of consent is always one for careful consideration by the Crown Prosecution Service. (Further guidance at [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk))

- **Sexual assault**

This is a criminal offence and occurs when a perpetrator touches another person intentionally; it is sexual touching, with no consent given and the perpetrator has no reason to believe that consent is given. (*Sexual Offences Act, 2003*)

- **(Sexual) harassment**

Harassment can take many forms, but essentially consists of behaviour which is unwanted and unacceptable to the recipient. Harassment can be verbal and/or
physical, and may involve single, sporadic or continuing acts which violate a person's dignity, or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. If the harassment includes physical threats or touching these are criminal offences.

- **Domestic violence**

The definition of domestic violence has been broadened in recent years to include the subtle and damaging forms of psychological coercive abuse, as in the definition below:

"Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality."

Domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth, and geography. The figures show, however, that it consists *mainly of violence by men against women*. The abuse may take many, subtle forms and includes situations where the abuser controls the victim and conceals this abuse of power to the outside world, so that in extreme forms it is tantamount to a kidnap scenario. ([www.domesticviolencelondon.nhs](http://www.domesticviolencelondon.nhs))

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**Terminology used to describe support workers helping victims or survivors of sexual violence.**

**Sexual Offence Liaison Officer (SOLO)**

A SOLO is a specially trained police officer who has completed specific training relating to Rape Trauma Syndrome (RTS) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Forensic Medical Examinations, Interviewing and Special Court Measures. SOLO’s are committed to providing the best service possible to victims and to investigate each crime to the best of their ability. They recognise the need to seek improvements to the way in which the police respond to victims of serious sexual violence.

A SOLO may carry out the initial collection of mouth and urine forensic evidence.

**Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs)**

ISVAs are commissioned by the Local authority to provide support for the victims of sexual violence.
ISVA support is available to anyone who has been sexually assaulted or raped. An ISVA is associated with many agencies and services, but is independent of all of these. They can offer impartial advice from a variety of sources. The ISVA service can offer you emotional support as well as accurate and practical advice when you most need it.

The following are some of the ways in which the ISVA service can help;

- By providing support through the legal process and beyond.
- By helping to understand and uphold an individual’s rights with regard to other services required (including health services, housing, Criminal Injuries Compensation)
- By helping to liaise with the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- By helping to develop an individual’s support network
- By helping to access specialist counselling.
- By helping to access specialist sexual health treatment and advice.
- By helping to negotiate with employers, school or college.

A full list of ISVAs in the country can be found on the Survivors’ Trust website: www.thesurvivorstrust.org/isva/

(Crisis) Support Worker
The Sexual Assault Referral Centre employs trained support workers who are completely independent of the Police. They are able to

- Explain the various options that may be available to the client and then support them in whatever decisions they make
- Provide emotional and practical support and attend meetings with the client if they wish.
- Help the client get the best service according to their needs and will work with them to help achieve this, whether or not they want to take legal action.

Forensic Nurse Examiner

This is the nurse who would carry out forensic examinations at the Sexual Assault Referral Centre with or without Police involvement.

II. Sexual violence in a university context: background information

- An incident of sexual violence can emerge in any group or community. The student population, led by the NUS Women’s’ Campaign, is advocating a ‘zero tolerance’ to behaviour by fellow students that damages any individual’s health and wellbeing.
• Whilst it was once a commonly held view that rape occurred between strangers, the research shows that most incidents of rape are carried out by someone known to the victim. Whilst it is sensible to warn students about looking after each other in the pubs and clubs, staff must be alert to the reality of domestic abuse between students who know one another, and who may be in a close relationship. Staff must be trained to take seriously any reported incidents of violent behaviour and to know what to do.

• Living in shared accommodation, experiencing life without the restrictions and safety net of familiar relationships, and cultural norms, can produce behaviour amongst some students that is unacceptable, but may go largely unchallenged, until an incident/crime is reported. The 2009-10 British Crime Survey found that people aged 16 to 19 were more likely to suffer partner abuse than any other age range. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-16175167](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-16175167)

• There are misconceptions about how rape and domestic violence affects LGBTQ people and men. ‘Domestic’ abusive relationships may be experienced in all relationships: these issues can affect males, transgender, lesbian, gay and bisexual students. Statistically, however, it is women who are most likely to be raped.

• Reporting such matters is always difficult but some students may face additional barriers. Family and cultural norms may make disclosures difficult, and some international students may fear political/legal repercussions if further investigation into an incident in the UK reveals information about a student’s sexuality that would threaten his/her safety in the country of origin.

• All front-line staff, in security, housing, Student life Centre and other advisory student facing services, must attend training to ensure they are sensitive to their own preconceptions about sexuality, and the cultural ‘norms’ of gendered behaviour, when a student reports an incident. Training will also cover related issues, e.g. confidentiality when dealing with sensitive information, and consideration of the potential for tensions between groups of students, emanating from incidents related to sexual violence. Personal issues may be perceived in a wider, more political framework, in some circumstances.

**Care Pathway – A3 version giving all alternatives**

**Out-of-hours Care Pathway – A4 version**
Options/information sheet for students

All documents above are available online at
www.sussex.ac.uk/wellbeing/safety/sexualassault