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Student expectations of university responses to sexual misconduct disclosures

University of Liverpool

Student expectations of university responses to sexual misconduct disclosures: a qualitative study in three UK universities

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1 Executive summary

This project explored UK students' views on sexual misconduct at universities. The project engaged over 500 students from the University of Liverpool, the University of Chester and Edge Hill University in a series of focus groups, interviews, and one survey.

The decision of whether or not to report sexual misconduct at university

The research uncovered that sexual misconduct is prevalent in UK universities, with females being more likely than males to have such an experience. A number of barriers prevent students from making disclosures to their institutions. They are:

- Ignorance of reporting procedures within universities.
- Embarrassment and 'shame' they fear they would accrue as a result.
- 'Normalisation' in society of particularly 'low level' acts of sexual misconduct, meaning disclosures will not be taken seriously. This seemed to be a barrier particularly for female students.
- A misunderstanding that acts of sexual misconduct are not under a university's purview to investigate and punish.
- Previous experiences of reporting resulting in 'inadequate' support (judgemental, 'victim-blaming', etc.).

How participants would like to report sexual misconduct at university

- There is no one preferred way that students would like to report sexual misconduct at their university. Rather, how to report misconduct is seen to be a subjective decision based on the individual needs of each student.
- The way of reporting least appealing to students was telephone, with only 7 and 5 percent of University of Liverpool and Chester students stating they would use this service to report an incident of sexual misconduct. As suggested in the report, this may be connected to the preferences of a 'digital generation' of young people that use technology only to communicate textually. As explained by one participant in one of the interviews undertaken, 'no one talks on the phone anymore'.
- Students feel most comfortable reporting their sexual misconduct experiences to student support services, the counselling service, and 'other students'.

Immediate expectations upon reporting sexual misconduct

Face-to-face reporting

- Staff to support in a way that is professional but not 'clinical'.
- Signposts to be made to support services.
- A detailed account of the reporting protocol at their university.
- What options are available for the reporting student to take their complaint further (either within the university or externally).

Online reporting

- A quick response.
- The option to make a face-to-face appointment with a member of staff to disclose their situation more fully.
- The option to receive support solely using the medium through which they have reported their experience.
- A detailed account of the reporting protocol at their university.
- What options are available for the reporting student to take their complaint further (either within the university or externally).

Anonymous reporting

- An investigation into the allegation (despite not knowing the identity of the reporting student and/or other details about the incident).
- The disclosure to be kept on file until numerous allegations have been made against the same individual. Following this, an investigation into the allegations.

Ongoing support

- The main intervention asked for by students was counselling and support group sessions. Many across the research asked that such sessions be facilitated by a professional trained in sexual misconduct support, and that they not be limited to a particular number.
- Spatial separation of student and perpetrator was also given as a desired intervention following an experience of sexual misconduct.
- Reintegration into university life is also seen as important for students who have experienced sexual misconduct. Respondents asked that universities encourage students to become active in the social aspects of university life.
- Tighter security measures on campuses and in halls of residences in order to prevent reoffending.
- The option of extensions on work/the option to have their experience considered as extenuating circumstances.

Precautionary measures during an investigation

- Both the reporting and accused should be supported during an investigation into an allegation of sexual misconduct. Staff investigating the allegation must take steps to make sure they approach the investigation without bias.
- Anonymity for both parties until the allegation has been proven true.
- No contact between parties during an investigation.

Sanctions

- Students endorse sanctions for all types of sexual misconduct at university.
- Students feel it always appropriate to provide the offender with education on sexual misconduct.

- Offenders should receive psychological support in order to reform their desire to enact deviant behaviour.
- 'More serious' cases of sexual misconduct are viewed as punishable by terminating studies/employment and by referring the case to the police.
- A 'warning' should follow 'less serious' acts of sexual misconduct for both staff and student perpetrators.

Other

- Students believe universities must take steps to break the 'culture of silence' surrounding sexual misconduct on campuses.

Key recommendations:

1. Universities should create clear and accessible reporting routes for students to disclose and/or report sexual misconduct, ensuring that both face to face and email routes are publicised.
2. Universities should ensure that they communicate information about sexual misconduct reporting routes to students, both during induction and throughout the year. This should be backed up by information and campaigns about what constitutes sexual misconduct and what behaviour is unacceptable.
3. Universities should facilitate students to make anonymous disclosures, for example through an online form, but must also be very clear about how they will respond to anonymous disclosures or allegations against a named individual. This must be communicated to students seeking to use the anonymous disclosure facility.
4. Universities should ensure a prompt response to disclosures made online or by email, offering face to face support and clearly setting out students' options for reporting and/or seeking support.
5. Universities should ensure that staff across the university are given sufficient information to be able to signpost students to appropriate support and reporting routes, particularly staff undertaking the role of personal tutor/academic adviser.
6. Universities should ensure that staff receiving disclosures are trained specifically in how to respond to survivors of sexual violence and are able to demonstrate an effective and empathetic response.
7. Universities should offer students disclosing sexual misconduct ongoing specialist mental health support, ensuring that it is delivered by a professional trained specifically in supporting survivors of sexual violence.
8. Universities should have policies and procedures in place to impose appropriate precautionary measures whilst an investigation is ongoing, particularly to ensure the separation of the reporting and reported student or member of staff. These measures must be proportionate and fair to both parties.

9. Universities should ensure that they offer support to both the reporting and the reported students whilst an investigation is ongoing.
10. Universities should actively support students' re-integration into university life following experiencing sexual misconduct, or following the imposition of any precautionary measures and/or sanctions for example, by offering peer support systems, encouraging the student to join societies or play sport, providing ongoing pastoral support and advice).
11. Universities should consider introducing educative and reflective sanctions for all sexual misconduct offences, alongside more punitive sanctions for cases deemed to be "more serious" in nature.
12. The sector should commission further research into:
 - a. The intersectional experiences of BAME, LGBTQ and disabled students regarding sexual misconduct disclosures.
 - b. The prevalence of student-student, staff-student and staff-staff sexual misconduct across the sector and the consistency of universities' responses.
 - c. Students' perceptions of what constitutes "serious" and "less serious" incidences of sexual misconduct and the reasons for this.

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3 Introduction

In recent years the issue of sexual harassment has arguably become more public, with many campaigns raising awareness of its prevalence and nature in contemporary Western society. The most well-known of these are perhaps the #metoo and 'Time's Up' movements that were begun by grassroots activists¹ and gained momentum in 2017 (Jaffe, 2018). These movements saw individuals on social media vocalise their sexual violence experiences that occurred in their workplaces and beyond, and involved practical support of survivors (for example, Time's Up encouraged donations to subsidise legal costs for anyone attempting to take action against their abuser; Timesup, 2018). It is unknown just how many individuals participated in these campaigns, but the count is thought to be in the millions (CBS News, 2017; The Guardian, 2017; The Guardian, 2018).

Closer to home, in October 2017 a series of sexual harassment allegations made against members of UK parliament further placed issues of sexual harassment into the national spotlight (Krook, 2018). Following accusations against high profile figures in Westminster (such as Bob Stewart, Mark Garnier, Sir Michael Fallon and Kelvin Hopkins; Krook, 2018), Leader of the House of Commons Andrea Leadsom chaired a working group tasked with reviewing the complaints and grievances policies in UK parliament (Leadsom, 2018). This working group conducted a survey of harassment and bullying amongst the Westminster workforce, finding that 1 in 5 staff (out of 1,377) reported that they had experienced sexual misconduct (BBC, 2018). Much like the campaigns discussed above, such dire findings induced a new 'behaviour code' for workers as well as the opportunity for individuals to report their experiences to an independent investigation system (Leadsom, 2018).

It is thus unsurprising that we now find ourselves beginning to construct dialogue with students about sexual misconduct in universities. It is true that sexual misconduct on campuses had been emphasised by scholars long before the rise of campaigns like '#metoo'. The idea of 'lad culture'² at universities, of unwanted sexualised treatment of students within 'societies', 'fraternities', and sexual harassment within socialising and educational spaces are present in a large body of work spanning decades (Bastiani, 2018; Phipps and Young, 2012; Schnider, 1987; Sawyer and Schulken). However, perhaps influenced by the recent surge in 'speaking out' about sexual misconduct, further explorations have been made into this issue on UK campuses and it has been concluded that further action to prevent it needs to be taken.

In 2016, the Universities UK Taskforce published a report on gender-based violence, harassment and hate crime at university. The report assessed the scale of sexual misconduct within UK universities, explored intervention and support strategies already in place to deal with such issues, and provided recommendations about what more could be done to prevent this problem (UUK Taskforce, 2016). Notably, although research shows students generally feel positive about their university experience, sexual misconduct is prevalent on UK university campuses (UUK Taskforce, 2016). Particularly, the report drew upon government and National Union of Students statistics to show that 'younger' females (aged 18 to around 25) are most likely to experience verbal and physical sexual misconduct at university (UUK Taskforce, 2016).

¹ (in the case of #metoo, Tarana Burke, and in the case of 'Time's Up', a small number of Hollywood actors; Jaffe, 2018; Timesup, 2018)

² a set of values and norms related to toxic masculinity that are considered to be connected to sexual violence (Phipps and Young, 2012; Phipps et al, 2018)

The report made a number of recommendations for improvement in these areas. Some of these are as follows:

- Take an institution-wide approach to tackling violence against women, harassment and hate crime.
- Conduct a thorough assessment of which staff members need to be trained and what training needs to be provided. A clear, multi-tiered training strategy covering different types of incident can then be developed.
- Embed a zero-tolerance approach across all institutional activities, including outreach activities with schools and further education colleges, engagement with local bars and nightclubs, student inductions (including international student inductions), and student information.
- Provide governing bodies with regular progress reports summarising what progress has been made towards adopting a cross-institution approach. This should include reporting on the resource made available and used to support an effective cross-institution approach, including any recommendations for additional resource.

(UUK Taskforce, 2016)

As part of the University of Liverpool's response to this report, funding was obtained from AMOSSHE to conduct this research into how students would like to report sexual misconduct on their campuses, how they would feel most supported by their institution following an experience of misconduct, and their views on appropriate sanctions for perpetrators.

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4 Methods

This study sought an in-depth account of students' opinions about issues surrounding sexual misconduct on UK campuses. The research questions were as follows:

- What are students' preferred method of reporting sexual misconduct to their universities?
- Why might students not report their experiences of sexual misconduct?
- How do students expect members of staff to support them immediately after they disclose sexual misconduct?
- What type of ongoing support do students expect following their disclosure of sexual misconduct?
- What provisions could the university put in place in order to protect the well-being and rights of the reporting student and the accused individual during an investigation?
- What sanctions do students think are appropriate for different types of sexual misconduct?

Following ethical approval from the University of Liverpool Research Ethics Committee, a series of in-depth interviews were first attempted at the University of Liverpool, Edge Hill University, Chester University, Manchester Metropolitan University and Liverpool John Moores University during the summer of 2018. Interviews arguably permit participants space and opportunity to delve deeply into their experiences, opinions and feelings (Wengraf, 2001; Bryman, 2012). They were therefore thought particularly appropriate for this study that seeks to ascertain a holistic insight into students' views on sexual misconduct within universities. Students were sampled at each university via an 'open call' for participants displayed on each university's 'announcements' page. Unfortunately, contact was not able to be made with students from the Manchester Metropolitan University or Liverpool John Moores University.

4.1 Interview and focus group participants

In total, 6 students were interviewed for the study from the University of Liverpool. The first 5 were females undertaking some form of postgraduate study at the university. The first, who we will call participant A, identified her ethnicity as 'white' and her sexuality as 'bisexual'. She expressed that she was an outspoken Feminist and her interest in the research was to improve how sexual misconduct is handled by institutions. The second participant, participant B for our purposes, also identified as 'white' and bisexual. She too spoke of being an avid Feminist, with a particular interest in the culture of sexual harassment in UK universities (upon which she was conducting her PhD).

Participant C began our meeting by stating that her interest in the study came from her ignorance about the topic as a whole. She was currently in her 4th year of a PhD related to the Biological Sciences and was 27 years old. In terms of ethnicity, she identified as 'black – British Caribbean', offered herself as of a heterosexual sexuality and did not consider herself to be living with a disability. This participant also identified herself as 'working class'. Participant D and E's interviews resulted from focus groups where no other participants showed up. Participant D was a student of continuing education at the University of Liverpool reading Forensic Psychology. She was the oldest participant in this research, aged 34, identified herself to be heterosexual, of 'white' ethnicity and did not consider herself as having a

disability. Participant E studied Veterinary Science at the University of Liverpool (currently in her 4th year) and was 22 years old. In terms of sociodemographics, this participant stated that she was of 'white' ethnicity, identified with a heterosexual sexuality and was 'middle class'. She did not consider herself to have a disability. Both of these participants were disappointed that they could not take part in a focus group.

Participant F was male and 21 years old. He was interested in the topic of sexual misconduct at university and this is what drew him to the study. This participant was an undergraduate at the University of Liverpool reading mathematics. He did not consider himself to be living with any sort of disability, and identified himself to be both 'white' and heterosexual. No students from the other universities offered themselves for interview. However, an interview was carried out at the University of Chester with a male participant who again expected to be part of a focus group of students who did not show. This participant was affiliated with the LGBT community, identifying himself as 'gay', and had really useful insights to offer about how an identification with a sexuality or gender in this community shaped the reception of sexual misconduct at university. He stated his age as 18 years old, identified as 'middle class' and of 'white' ethnicity, and did not have a disability. He was currently on a Psychology and English Literature course at the University of Chester in his first year.

Interviews typically lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. In order to facilitate participants bringing their *own* meanings and understanding of sexual misconduct and its reporting at universities to the encounters, a semi-structured interview schedule was developed. This structure permitted satisfaction of the research questions that yet enabled topics/issues particularly significant to participants to be acknowledged in the research (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002). Often, I would let participants go 'off topic', finding that it produced insights into sexual misconduct on campuses that could not have been pre-empted before our encounters. Where necessary, I tried to tease out the discourses informing participants' opinions by using prompts such as: 'can you say a bit more about that?', 'why do you think that is?' and 'where do your feelings about that come from?'

Participants were additionally recruited for focus groups, which again unfortunately had quite a low response rate. In total, 3 focus groups were conducted at Edge Hill University only. They comprised a mixed sex focus group, a female and a male group. Focus groups were considered appropriate for this study because they facilitate insight into the processes of meaning making individuals undertake when forming opinions (Kitzinger, 1994). Using this method thus hopefully meant that a deeper understanding of students' views on the reporting processes available for sexual misconduct at universities would be gained. The mixed sex focus group was made up of four individuals who were all friends on the same course and who lived together on campus. As they informed me beforehand, they were all reading Primary Education with Qualified Teaching Status in their first year.

As Kitzinger (1994) notes, participants of focus groups who are also friends can add another dimension to the data produced. The already established bonds between respondents arguably aid the flow of discussion and add to the depth of the data produced. This focus group comprised one female and three males, all of whom identified as 'white' and as not living with a disability. Female G, who was aged 19, also affiliated herself with a heterosexual sexuality, and proclaimed to be 'middle class'. Male participant H, 19 years old, offered that he was bisexual and did not affiliate himself with any particular social 'class'. Male participants I and J, who were both 18 years old, put forth that they were both 'working class'. While participant I stated that he identified his sexuality as heterosexual, participant J was 'unsure'. Despite producing rich data important for this research, participants told me jovially at the

beginning of the focus group that they were attracted to the study because of the incentive: a free Subway lunch provided by Edge Hill University.

The all-male focus group was again made up of 4 respondents, most of whom did not know each other prior to our encounter. Participant K was aged 21 and currently a student at the university studying Film and Television Production in his 3rd year. Offering himself as associated with a 'middle' social class, he additionally stated that he did have a disability, identified himself as of 'white' ethnicity, and was heterosexual. He expressed that his attraction to the research was simply that he likes where possible to contribute to research findings, noting how difficult it can be to find participants willing to take part in studies. Participant L arrived later than the rest as he had a seminar. Chatty and friendly, he inserted himself well into the group dynamic and stated that he had an interest in issues of sexual misconduct within universities. This participant was 22 years old, studying Biology in his 1st year at Edge Hill University. In terms of socio-demographics, he did not consider himself as having a disability, identified himself as 'working/middle class', and was heterosexual. Having travelled frequently with his family, he offered his ethnicity as 'white/Italian/Hispanic'. Participants M and N were friends together from a society at Edge Hill. At times quieter than the others, they provided some really insightful views on the reporting processes for sexual misconduct at universities. Participant M was 18 years old studying creative writing in his 1st year. He identified himself as living with a disability and was of bisexual sexual identity. Offering his ethnicity as 'white', this participant also affiliated himself with a 'working' social class. Participant N was aged 20 years old and studied Business Management in his 3rd year at the university. He did not consider himself to be living with a disability, nor did he associate himself with a particular social class. He additionally offered his ethnicity as 'white' and affiliated himself with a heterosexual sexuality.

The final focus group comprised two females. Participant O enjoyed a dual identity at the university, having just finished her PhD in youth studies and acting at the time as a lecturer. She identified herself to be heterosexual and 'white' in her ethnicity. Participant P, the final participant, was an undergraduate studying a humanities-based subject at the university in her 2nd year. She identified herself as of 'black' ethnicity and offered that she was heterosexual. Neither participant considered themselves to be living with a disability.

The focus groups lasted around 2 hours each, and involved me as the moderator sitting back and allowing conversation to flow between participants, only intervening in order to move the conversation in a different direction or to adjust unhelpful group dynamics (Barbour, 2007).

Transcription of the data was conducted in verbatim to ensure participants were accurately represented in the finished report (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002). Further, techniques of thematic analysts were adopted when coding/analysing the data. Thematic techniques were chosen for their ability to facilitate insight into interrelations between themes within and across datasets in a systematic, and thus *coherent*, way that yet does not obscure the context needed for an in-depth and *verstehen*-style understanding of patterns within the data (Ayres, 2008). Coding was conducted inductively *and* deductively (Brill, 2008). It was conducted in part deductively in order to satisfy this study's particular research questions (Brill, 2008). However, it was also conducted inductively in that I immersed myself in the data in a way discursively 'open' to other potentially important themes/issues that were not pre-empted by my research questions.

Brill (2008) recommends that for studies seeking to answer particular research questions, a preliminary coding framework must be created comprising of codes that relate in some broad way to the study's research questions. Some examples of my preliminary codes that were

applied to the data, therefore, are: 'perspective', 'feeling' and 'action'. Thereafter, analysis developed in a cyclical manner. Data were compared against and with codes, and codes were developed and managed where necessary until prominent themes within the data became evident (Charmaz, 2014).

4.2 Survey

Insight into students' views on the issues surrounding sexual misconduct within universities were also gained through use of a survey. Overall, 529 students took part in the questionnaire distributed during autumn 2017 as part of this research. Questions were formed under sections that related to each research question and were often presented in a Likert-style form (David and Sutton, 2012). Unfortunately, no students engaged from Manchester Metropolitan University and Liverpool John Moores University. Out of the 529 respondents who identified their institution, 52% reported being from the University of Chester, 47% from the University of Liverpool, and 2 participants from Edge Hill University. In terms of level of study, most participants identified themselves as undergraduates, with this group comprising 80% of the overall 526 students who responded to this question. Taught postgraduates comprised 10% of the sample, Postgraduate research students 8%, and 2% of students identified as being on a 'foundation/access course'.

With regards to socio-demographics, the survey was completed mainly by females. These students made up 75% of the overall 528 students who stated their 'gender', in contrast to just 22% of males. Given the contested nature of 'gender' as a concept with which one identifies, the survey included the option to state your gender as you experience it. Out of those that chose to do this, one participant identified as 'gender neutral' and one as 'gender fluid'.

Although the research aimed to be sensitive in creating a diverse sample, many of the students who took part in the survey were heterosexual (77% out of a 527 total count). Following this, identification with bisexuality was the sexuality next most reported by students, with 69 (13%) students reporting this. Students who were 'gay or lesbian' then made up 18 (3%) of the 527 students who answered this question. Other sexualities identified were 'pansexual' (4 students), 'asexual' (5 students), and 2 students stated that they were unsure or were questioning of their sexuality.

Again in what perhaps shows the need to work on engagement with a diverse population of students, individuals of a 'white' ethnicity made up most of the sample (82% of a 529 total). This was followed then by students identifying as Asian, Black and Mixed, who made up 7%, 4% and 4% of the sample respectively. In addition, one participant reported their ethnicity as 'British Arab'.

Some important caveats must be made before analysis is considered. The samples taken of students from each university were not 'random'. Rather, they were samples of 'convenience' in that students responded to an open call for participants and some were engaged simply because of their willingness and availability to take part. The samples upon which this research is based are therefore not representative of the population parameters of students at each university. This must be taken into account by readers when drawing conclusions based on the data.

When undertaking the interviews and focus groups I did not prescribe to students what was meant by 'more serious' or 'less serious' sexual misconduct. Rather, I followed their lead with

regards to what each type constituted. It is important to note when reading the analysis that unless otherwise stated, responses and analyses relate to *all* 'types' of sexual misconduct. 'More' and 'less' serious types of sexual misconduct were additionally not defined in the survey.

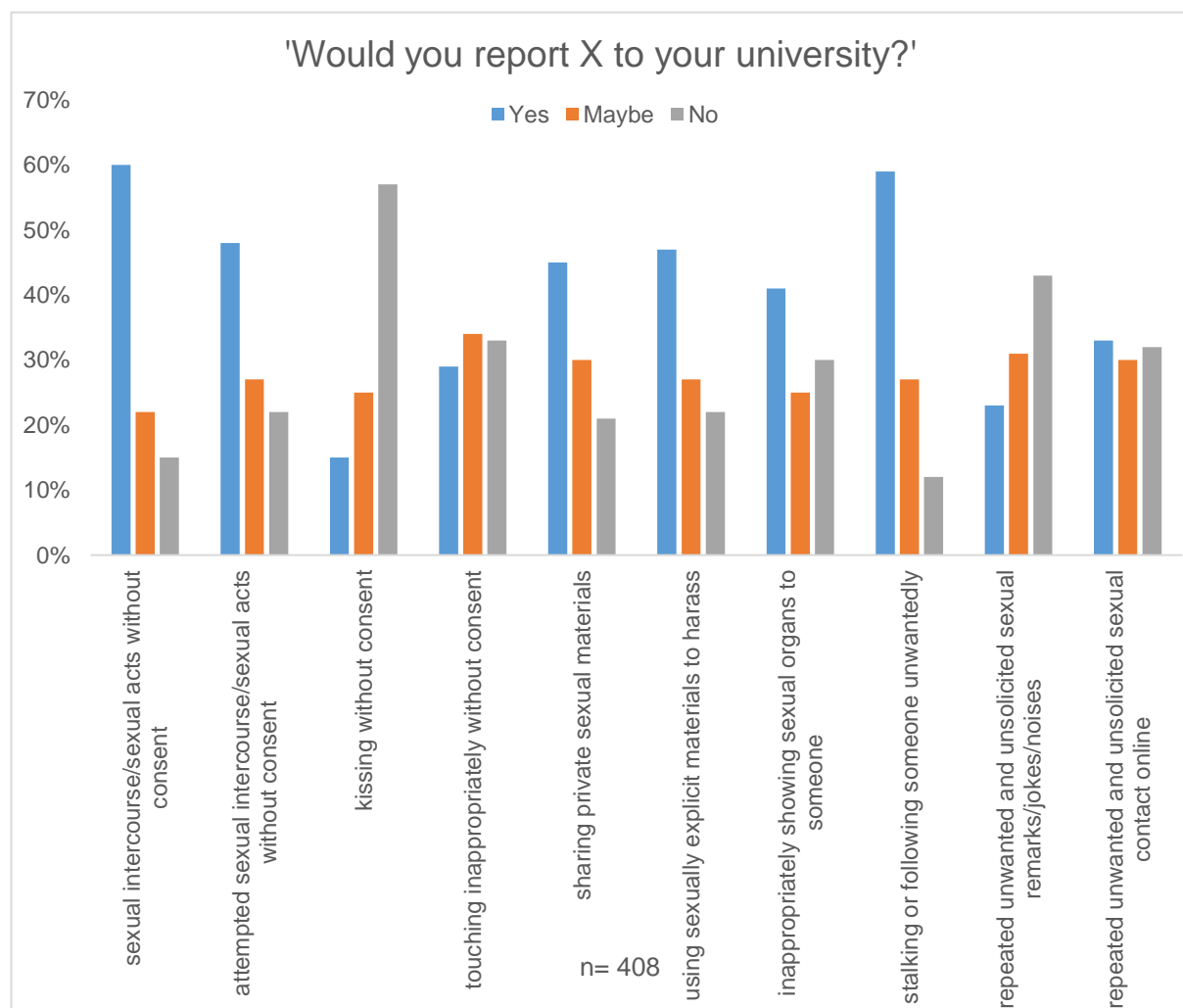
Further, the responses from the qualitative section of the survey are made with reference to the 'gender', sexuality, ethnicity and university affiliation of each student who responded. It must be made clear that this is not an indication that these aspects of an individual are their most important or defining features. Instead, this information was given for the reader to discern patterns of responses made by individuals of particular intersectional positionalities, which will likely be useful when thinking about provision of support for sexual misconduct survivors at university.

5 The decision to report sexual misconduct at university

5.1 Quantitative section of the survey

Out of the 408 students who responded to this question, stalking someone unwantedly and sexual intercourse or acts without consent were the types of misconduct students most stated they would report (60% or 245 and 240 students, respectively; Graph A). Mirroring findings from the focus groups, interviews, and the qualitative section of the questionnaire, 'kissing without consent' and comments of a sexual nature were those least likely to be reported by students (233 and 173, respectively). Interestingly, the general breakdown by conventional 'gender' (i.e. males and females) revealed only one divergence in these responses. Perhaps indicative of consensus amongst student populations, both males and females in the survey cited that they are most likely to report stalking someone unwantedly and sexual intercourse or acts without consent (60% or 187, and 59% or 185 out of a total of 314 female participants, and 67% or 54, and 59% 47 out of a total of 80 male respondents, respectively). However, male students also indicated they would additionally be most likely to report 'using sexually explicit materials to harass another', with 58% of the 80 respondents stating that they would disclose this to their university.

Graph A



5.2 Qualitative section of the survey

The qualitative section of the survey revealed the main reason for sexual misconduct going unreported on campuses was because of 'embarrassment'. This finding was present amongst both male and female students at the University of Chester and Liverpool, and amongst participants possessive of a range of intersectional positionalities:

It's embarrassing in a sense to speak to others about being in such a vulnerable position

(Female, bisexual, Asian participant from the University of Chester)

Having been in a position where I have been abused but never been able to speak out about it, I understand how other people would keep it to themselves through shame and embarrassment

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

I would feel embarrassed for the first 2 [sexual intercourse or sexual acts without consent and attempted sexual intercourse or sexual acts without consent]

(Male, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

Shame would stop me reporting things

(Male, bisexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

Fear, shame, embarrassment

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

Embarrassment

(Female, heterosexual, black participant from the University of Liverpool)

Revenge porn is much more embarrassing so I would feel less comfortable going to the uni for help

(Male, gay, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

A simple but important finding, this highlights the need for universities to tackle the shame and stigma surrounding sexual misconduct in order to encourage students to disclose.

Many students additionally believed reporting their experiences would not bring about a satisfactory resolution and this is why they were reluctant to disclose their assault. Disconcertingly, students cited a fear that their experience would not be 'taken seriously' by the university, resulting in no action being taken against the alleged perpetrator:

I would feel like it would be considered irrelevant to the uni and that nothing would be done.

(Female, white participant from Chester University)

Some things might not be taken seriously so wouldn't feel able to report it.

(Female, bisexual, white participant from Chester University)

Don't think they would be taken seriously

(Female, white, heterosexual participant from the University of Liverpool)

Scared I wouldn't be taken seriously

(Male, white, heterosexual participant from the University of Liverpool)

This fear was evident particularly in relation to those acts of sexual misconduct that female students (only) perceived as being considered 'less serious', such as sexualised jokes/comments and some incidences of groping/exposure:

For the categories I said I would report are all serious cases but for the ones where I said maybe or no I wouldn't report it as I don't think it would be taken seriously or anything would come from it.

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

I'd be hesitant about something such as inappropriately showing sex organs as it has almost become... normal to brush it off and as a young female is probably something you have been put through for years due to sex being 'liberated'

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant from the University of Chester)

Some of the things become normalised like when you go out to clubs, men often try to touch you inappropriately and often won't leave you alone, but it happens almost every night out, seems pointless reporting because it's so repetitive and if you do say something situations can turn aggressive which isn't worth the risk. Just have to hide away or get your friends to pull you away. Some things are definitely worth reporting I just feel like some are taken more seriously than others obviously but can cause people to think the issue they are facing isn't worth reporting

(Female participant from the University of Chester)

I feel that some of the less serious actions wouldn't be taken seriously.

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

I wouldn't the last two [*unwanted sexual comments and contact online*] for the fear of being scrutinized as prudish

(Female, bisexual, Asian participant at the University of Chester)

Of particular note, these latter findings arguably lend weight to the possibility that the non-reporting of 'less serious' sexual misconduct has gendered roots, with females particularly choosing not to disclose their experiences.

Interestingly, while solely females cited a fear of sexual misconduct not being taken seriously as their reason for not reporting, a fear of *not being believed* was offered by both females and males across the study:

[I have] A fear that the university wouldn't believe me

(Male, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Liverpool)

[I would not report] For fear of not being believed

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

[The university] might not believe me

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Worryingly, some participants expressed that they would not report experiences of sexual misconduct because of known empirical experiences of disclosures that were 'unsuccessful'. One participant in particular from the University of Liverpool lacked confidence in reporting systems on UK campuses because of examples of (presumably) incompetent responses to incidents of sexual misconduct in academics in the United States:

News from the States about how campuses have attempted to deal with sexual harassment, assault, or rape 'in-house' has left me less than confident about university protocol.

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

More distressing, however, are those participants who cited a lack of confidence in the reporting systems for sexual misconduct on UK campuses based upon empirical examples of 'unsuccessful' reporting *on their own university campus*:

There was a girl in the flat below me who was raped by another flatmate in fresher's, and she reported it to the uni. The uni moved his halls but he is still attending the uni doing his TEACHING course and nothing else has been done about it. I feel like after this I know that the uni won't take matters of this nature seriously.

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Because from what I know certain people have not been supportive in terms of when people come forward but also have made people feel as though it is their fault it happened

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

The issue I have is that I don't know how the university will approach this matter. Will they not protect their university rather than protect an individual. In my case the harassment happened when I went abroad for my research. After having returned from my research trip, I informed the university. I just signed a document.

(Female, bisexual, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

This dissatisfaction with not 'enough' or inadequate support from universities following a sexual misconduct disclosure tied in with a wider feeling amongst students that academics, concerned only with maintaining an untarnished reputation, would intercept a student's attempt to make known their experience and seek justice:

Because I'd be scared, and why would the university care? All they'd do is follow procedures, not do anything to help us

(White participant from the University of Liverpool)

The uni is more concerned with its reputation than the students' wellbeing

(Female, bisexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

Why would you report it to the university in case they don't believe you and try to cover it up?

(Female, white participant from the University of Chester)

Similar to that which was found in the interview/focus groups aspect of this study (albeit in a lot fewer cases), respondents in the survey cited that they would likely not report sexual misconduct at universities due to an ignorance of actually *how* to report and the options available. While both male and female students (of a range of different intersectional positionalities) across both Chester and Liverpool simply stated that they are ignorant about 'who can help me' (*Male, bisexual, white participant from the University of Liverpool*), one participant from the University of Chester confirmed that ignorance of reporting procedures comes from their lack of advertisement at university:

I'm not sure who I would actually report it to, no information given about situations like that.

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Another major theme that arose from the survey data was that acts of sexual misconduct deemed more 'serious' (i.e. those physical in nature, such as non-consensual sexual activity, stalking etc.) should not be reported to the university due to it not being the most appropriate institution to deal with these kinds of allegations. For some, incidents of sexual misconduct - despite happening to students *on campuses* - are simply not 'issues' (*Female, heterosexual, white participant from University of Chester*) that are under a university's purview:

It's not a university issue

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

I don't feel like it's the university's business

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Many participants instead recommended reporting such incidents to the police. Likely informed by links made between criminal offences and law enforcement, these recommendations were made based on that these acts are *illegal*:

My first port of call would be the police for anything which is illegal

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

If it is a legal issue report it to the police. The university is not part of the legal system. It has no duty of care.

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

The university is not an appropriate institution to report these matters to, if I believed they constituted a criminal act then I would report them to the police. That the university should see fit to position itself as an intercessory in these matters is, in my opinion, morally and legally irresponsible

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Perhaps suggesting a lack of confidence in the university to adequately deal with the situation, participants across the study additionally emphasised that where the act of misconduct experienced could be considered particularly 'serious', they would go to the police or another external agency to make a disclosure rather than their university:

If it bothered me enough, I would more likely go to the police than the university.

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

I would report serious incident to the police and if not, I would discuss it with friends.

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Because if the sexual misconduct was serious enough to report, you would go to the police, therapists, bouncers etc. and not a university.

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Aside from the police or 'therapists, bouncers, etc.', students in particular cited that they would prefer to report their misconduct to 'family and friends', people 'who know me personally' *(Female participant at the University of Chester)*, or would resolve the situation informally by themselves. Reporting to the university was thus considered not necessary or desirable:

Because it's a personal matter that I would like to deal with on my own.

(Female, bisexual, Asian participant from the University of Chester)

I would view myself as having enough power to deal with the situation myself

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Personal issues are not something I would feel comfortable discussing with a random university staff member

(Male, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

As shown here, the decision some students make to confide in close family and friends or 'deal with the situation [themselves]' is rooted in the matter being seen to be a particularly intimate one that they would therefore not like to share with individuals with whom they do not have a close affinity. It is also rooted in a belief in the strength of their own character to resolve the situation using only their own efforts.

Rather than citing the advantages of reporting to agencies other than their university, or simply expressing disdain for reporting sexual misconduct to academics more generally, some students feel that there are acts of misconduct they would consider not 'worth' disclosing to their university. This was seemingly because they do not induce enough mental or physical harm to warrant going to the university for resolution:

The jokes would just be annoying so I don't think that they really need to be reported. The others I said no to would just be too embarrassing to report for such a low level incident.

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Shame or feeling like this not serious enough

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

I wouldn't report the attempted intercourse or non-consensual kissing as I feel those are relatively minor and I would rather the university had the time and resources to investigate more serious assaults such as rape, revenge porn and stalking.

(Female, asexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

Repeated sexual remarks - I have never seen this happen but if this happened to me I would respond back with a simple fuck off or I'd ignore them because these are just words from a stupid person

(Male, heterosexual, black participant from the University of Chester)

It can be a lot of hassle and effort to report small things that aren't very serious. There are definitely things on this list that would go unreported, as people don't want the hassle or view them as less serious as other inappropriate actions they may experience.

(Female, lesbian, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

In a similar vein, some students expressed they would not disclose if they felt the intention of the offending student (and it was always students that were spoken of in relation to this issue) was not to be abusive. As can be seen from the below examples, this applied mainly to instances of 'kissing' or 'touching' that students felt could be the result of 'misread signals', and to those acts that did not reoccur after the offended student expressed that they were unwanted:

I'm not sure about kissing so much as I feel it is context dependent and many people kiss people on the cheek without consent

(Female, bisexual, mixed participant from the University of Chester)

It would depend on the circumstances, some people might just not be doing anything purposefully malicious

(Male, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

I think the response for kissing someone inappropriately depends entirely on circumstance. If someone gives you a quick kiss drunkenly it might have been a mistake; this has happened to me on occasion - and the person apologized immediately after. I wasn't traumatized by the experience, merely a little embarrassed but also embarrassed for the other person because it was clearly a mistake. However, if someone physically forces you to kiss them and you made it quite clear that you didn't want to kiss them, that's a different story

(Female, heterosexual, white, University of Liverpool)

The penultimate finding of why students do not report sexual misconduct at universities is related to a fear of 'backlash' following their report, usually from the perpetrator:

Would be worried about the perpetrator finding out and possibly retaliating or making me out to be a liar in any way

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

I'd be scared of backlash as they [*the perpetrator*] might not be punished.

(Female, lesbian, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

Finally, a small proportion of students who completed the survey explained that 'time' would factor into their decision to not report their experience of sexual misconduct. For one student, the presumably lengthy process of reporting misconduct was seen as potentially complicating their already busy university life, thus rendering it unattractive. For another, the time elapsed between the actual act of misconduct committed against her and her knowledge of it meant that the 'worst' of it had 'blown over', leading her to decide to forget about it rather than reporting it.

A strong sense of morality was present amongst the respondents who stated they *would* report sexual misconduct, offering in many cases that sexual misconduct is 'wrong' and 'dehumanising' and that they would disclose to avoid the offender repeating the assault on another student. There were some caveats mentioned to reporting, however. Some students stated that they would only report if they felt the incident 'was serious', or if they felt particularly traumatised by the experience. Others expressed in relation to acts of 'less serious' sexual misconduct that these acts would need to be recurrent to warrant making a disclosure to their university:

You would want to because it would be something that likely deeply affected you, and the best way to deal with the trauma associated with that is, for me personally, to try and understand what has gone on and seek both support and try to prevent it happening.

(White participant at the University of Liverpool)

If they were continuous forms of less serious (e.g. less serious than rape but still serious) then I might report it so it'd stop but if it happened once I'd likely try to sort it out myself first.

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

I feel it's important to report any form of sexual harassment due the potential psychological and physical effects of sexual harassment, by reporting incidents people can be given the support they need

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Being in possession of evidence of sexual misconduct that could not be refuted was also cited as influencing decisions to report. Participants explained that acts of physical sexual assault would therefore be more likely to result in a disclosure, as well as those that occur online and leave a digital footprint:

I would report unwanted sexual acts as there is likely more evidence to support a claim

(Female, pansexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Most serious aspects of sexual misconduct I would consider reporting, or where there is objective evidence such as revenge porn or online harassment. If the conduct is hard to prove and less serious (not to say it's ok, it categorically is not ok) then I wouldn't

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Finally, incidents in which members of staff acted as the perpetrator were seen as making a student more likely to report.

Another aspect of the survey explored what the barriers are to students reporting incidents of sexual misconduct on campuses. On the whole, participants gave the same answers as they did for why they *themselves* would choose not to report their experiences of sexual misconduct at university. In light of this, those findings that mirror that of the previous section will be presented briefly here, with any caveats being discussed thereafter.

Firstly, students highlighted a range of barriers external to themselves that would likely hinder the reporting of sexual misconduct on campuses. The survey results show that participants believe students would fear an unsatisfactory outcome if they were to report their experience. In part, this was again due to a perceived fear of being 'judged' or 'blamed' by those to whom they reported, and a fear of not being believed. In addition, participants cited that students would likely think their university 'tolerates' a certain level of sexual misconduct (specifically

that considered widely to be 'lower level', including sexist remarks and 'jokes'), and so would be discouraged from reporting such misconduct in case it is not treated seriously.³

Participants also highlighted a concern amongst students that the university would try to 'cover up' allegations of sexual misconduct to preserve its reputation as a safe place. This was expressed particularly in relation to incidents where the perpetrator is a member of staff, and was discussed often as a reason why students would not disclose their assault experiences. In a similar vein - although with no detail provided on what informed such a contention - students frequently cited that a barrier to reporting sexual misconduct at university would be that the affected student would simply feel 'nothing would be done' about their allegation, and so would refrain from disclosing it to anyone. Finally, many students cited that affected individuals likely do not know who to turn to at their university about sexual misconduct, and that they are not aware of the channels a student can take to report such an experience.

In addition to these 'external' factors, participants expressed that students might not report sexual misconduct due to personal feelings that render it 'unnecessary' or not desirable to do so. For some, aspects of non-consensual touching or sexist jokes are seen by students as a normal part of university life. Therefore, these acts are viewed as either merely 'annoying' or 'funny' and are able to be 'brushed off' or 'laughed about', rather than being seen as constituting assault that must be reported to the university. Finally, many participants noted that disclosing sexual misconduct in any capacity is an extremely difficult feat that can cause further psychological distress to the affected individual and that can induce secondary trauma. In light of this, participants offered that students would likely try to mitigate these additional negative feelings by keeping their experiences to themselves.

Caveats for this section of the research centred on particular intersectional positionalities possessed by students. Mentioned by respondents, for example, was that a student's 'gender' could prevent them from disclosing misconduct. For males experiencing sexual violence, reporting was considered as potentially undesirable for fear of being 'laughed at' (*Female, heterosexual, black participant from the University of Chester*) or 'humiliated for allowing themselves to be a victim' (*Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester*). Although not explicitly stated, the fact that these fears were linked to males in particular suggests that participants believe there is a kind of toxic masculinity (i.e. the idea that men should not show weakness and that they should be sexual predators rather than sexual victims) present in universities that is hindering some male students from reporting sexual misconduct. Being a 'woman' was also highlighted by some as a complicating factor to reporting sexual misconduct. Participants cited an existing culture of 'shaming' female victims of sexual violence, and of normalisation of such violence towards women, that would likely make female students not report to their university.

Though only mentioned by one participant in the survey, an important contextual factor highlighted as discouraging students from reporting was 'language' (*Male, heterosexual, Asian participant from the University of Chester*). Unfortunately, no further explanation was given other than this one phrase. However, it may be assumed from similar findings from the interview and focus group section of this research that the student is referring to the difficulty of expression that some non-English speakers anticipate when discussing a sensitive matter with native English speakers.

³ These findings also applied in relation to other students and peers of the affected individual. Participants highlighted that being treated 'as if they were making a big deal out of nothing' by friends, or shame and judgement from peers, would mean that students are less likely to report sexual misconduct.

A further recurrent caveat to this section of the survey was that students would perhaps be deterred from reporting sexual misconduct at university because of a fear that the university would suspend *their* studies or ask *them* to leave:

Student will generally be scared to report sexual occurrence as their university progression may be at stake if they report it

(Male, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Liverpool)

The thought that they maybe will ask you to stop your course due to the incidences.

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Why participants believe students may worry about suspension of their studies following an allegation of misconduct that *they* have made is unfortunately unclear.

Finally, some participants expressed that there is no 'personalisation' to the reporting system at universities, and that often students do not report sexual misconduct because they do not have familiarity/strong bonds with university staff members that make them feel comfortable to discuss a sensitive situation:

No bonds really in the uni to have them feel comfortable telling someone

(Male, heterosexual, black participant from the University of Chester)

5.3 Interviews and focus groups

Students have a significant lack of awareness of the procedures their university has in place for reporting incidents of sexual misconduct that happen on campuses and this prevents them from reporting their experiences. What was intended to be a simple 'ice-breaker' question asking the students how much they knew about how to report sexual misconduct to their respective universities actually concluded in revealing their lack of knowledge about what to do following an assault. In some cases, students expressed their ignorance outright:

R: Ok. So how much or how little do you know about how you can report sexual misconduct on *this* campus?

PN: don't have a clue

PL: no idea...

PK: I'd say you'd talk to lecturers and security

PL: I wouldn't have any idea what the official channels are-

PN: yep, no idea. Don't even know if there is one, to be honest.

(Male focus group, Edge Hill)

R: In terms of reporting, then, with reference to our university, how aware are you of how one would go about reporting sexual misconduct at the university//

PE: //I have no idea

R: No?

PE: Not a clue what you would do or who you would talk to

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

Other expressions of ignorance were revealed more subtly. A male interviewee at the University of Liverpool responded to how much or little he knew of how a student could report sexual misconduct on campus with the following:

PF: I'd say you would just contact the mental health service [*at the university*], if it's not that serious. If it's proper serious, yeah, you can get the police in. If you were properly violated.

(Male interviewee, University of Liverpool)

Here, the fact that the respondent replied with what he would *advise* a student to do ('I'd say'...), rather than with any definitive information on reporting processes, is arguably indicative of his lack of knowledge on the already established routes of reporting the University of Liverpool has in place. As it is known that the University of Liverpool has in place formalised routes of reporting sexual misconduct, which include not only the affected student receiving welfare support, but also sanctions for the perpetrator and resolutions for the victims, this example again illustrates students' lack of knowledge of how to report sexual misconduct on campuses.

Finally, uncertainty about how to report sexual misconduct was revealed inadvertently in participants' anecdotes. During a conversation with a University of Liverpool Feminist Society member about the university's response to reporting sexual misconduct, it was expressed that the Feminist Society receives messages from students telling them of their misconduct experience and asking what to do next. Disconcertingly, not only is this lack of awareness on how to report unpleasant for the victimised student, but it also is seemingly burdensome to the Feminist Society members who have to field such questions:

PA: There's been a couple of times that people have contacted Fem Soc in the past couple of years when stuff like that has happened and that sometimes puts us in a difficult position because they should know where to go – not that it's their fault – erm, and then it makes me feel really uncomfortable because I somehow feel really responsible and I don't know what to do with the information.

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

When asked why participants felt they were not aware of how to report sexual misconduct to their respective universities, answers seemed to centre on a perceived failing of their universities to make such information appropriately available, visible, and accessible. For example, at the male and mixed-sex focus groups at Edge Hill, participants spoke of having a brief workshop on 'consent' in Fresher's Week in a way that suggested such a workshop lacked useful content on what steps to take following a sexual assault at university:

PG: It was useful, but then it was more of like an eye opener as to this is actually what happens, but they didn't really go into: 'and if this happens to you, this is what you do'. It was more of an: 'if this happens, then you need to report it'. It was a bit more like that I think than: 'go here and talk to them'

PI: I see that. It didn't really tell you what to do

PH: it just told you what happens...

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill)

PN: one of the SU reps showed us this video and then gave us this whole talk on, erm, consent, erm, it was mostly related to this video and incidences of what to do in case of sexual misconduct, but I'll be honest I can't remember them for the life of me

PL: mmm, I just remember the cups of tea thing [referring to the video widely circulated a few years ago likening consent to asking an individual if they would like a cup of tea]

PM: *[laughing]* exactly if- because-you need something similar to remind us what to do in the *case* of sexual misconduct

PL: coz I don't think generally, since I've been here, I don't think the concept of consent and such has been actually raised by the university *once*

R: ok, that's interesting...

PN: either I missed it, or- I know there was that consent workshop but apart from that there's been no mention to the first year or any other year as a whole, which I think is a big issue

(Male focus group, Edge Hill)

As can be seen in the latter excerpt, an important finding is that some students feel they do not have much information about how to report sexual misconduct, and about sexual misconduct in general, because it is not something that is reiterated during a student's time at university. This was corroborated by the participants from the mixed-sex Edge Hill focus group, who additionally believed that it was not something the university presents to students on a consistent basis as they do not want to damage their 'reputation' as being a safe university. Contrary to this, these students expressed that they would actually be *especially* attracted to a university that took an explicit stance against sexual misconduct as it would make them feel it was a particularly safe university to come to.

Further to conveying that they found the information on how to report sexual misconduct both lacking and inconsistent, some students offered that they did not know how to report sexual

misconduct to their respective universities because such information did not seem to be offered *at all*:

PE: [*Talking again of a talk given by the university in Fresher's Week*] Erm (.) yeah, so, yeah, I've never heard it talked about as a thing, erm, there's all these sort of vague references to like support and-and mental health stuff, but not like official channels through which you could report something like that

[...]

PE: So in terms of the first week of freshers, or whatever, where they throw different things out //

R: //yeah

PE: they talk about the counselling services and, um, that, you know I think there's something else but I can't remember - that makes it seem like it wasn't very stressed to me at the time – urm, like a like a pastoral service or something? Where you can go and like get help with problems that you have, but I don't think-they never sortov, they never told us where we should go if something like that [*sexual misconduct*] happened. Like it was sortov implied like if you're having problems with like your finances like here's someone you might talk to or with [*clears throat*], like if you're ill and you can't attend and things like that, you know

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

PO: yeah, like I heard on the radio this morning that schools in London were giving their children training in what to do in a terror attack. Obviously, it's happened in both cities this year, which is obviously really important, I completely agree with that. But that's something that happens like very rarely in the grand scheme of things, where sexual misconduct it can be something that, well... it is something that happens daily on campus and it's kind of like you're not told how to look out for it or deal with it, how to report it. So I think that there needs to be put into an induction because as you said [*to PP*] we get a tour of the bloody library, but not sort of things like...

(Female focus group, Edge Hill)

Given that the student in the last example attended Edge Hill, it is likely, based on the reports from other participants who attended this university, that she received the university's support workshop during Fresher's Week on consent and sexual misconduct. However, the fact that she does not seem to recall this at all is perhaps suggestive of the university's need to develop a more engaging and substantive workshop related to sexual misconduct.

The possibility of obtaining a 'stigma' was also suggested as a reason why sexual misconduct is not reported at university. Feminist literature on sexual violence highlights that individuals who have incurred sexual harassment experience psychological distress that in part results from *societal* reactions to their assault (Brownmiller, 1976). Paradoxically, these Feminists note that rather than the perpetrator receiving stigmatisation for their actions, it is often the *victim* who is viewed with disdain by society (Brownmiller, 1976). Whether this is because of their public association with sex (a perceived 'crude' act that has both classed and gendered

connotations of uncivility and promiscuousness, amongst others; Skeggs, 1997), or because of the 'damaged' and 'sullied' way they are viewed after a sexual assault, it has been widely illustrated that victims of sexual misconduct experience feelings of shame and humiliation (for more, see Kelly, 1988). Mirroring this, then, and in what was representative of a vast majority of participants in the study who spoke on this issue, an interviewee from the University of Liverpool highlighted that students may be fearful of 'embarrassment' caused by obtaining the label of 'victim of a sexualised crime' that would thus prevent them from reporting their experience to their university.

The potential application of a stigma as discouraging students' disclosures of sexual misconduct was also further offered by the mixed-sexed group at Edge Hill, although in more vague terms:

PH: it should be made acceptable. Like there's nothing wrong with you for reporting it. Because I think there's too much of a stigma attached to, like, reporting things, that it's gonna look bad on you and you're gonna be judged

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

Unlike the master label of 'sexual assault victim' that the University of Liverpool participant believes hinders reporting, it is unclear what specific 'type' of stigma the Edge Hill participant is referring to here. All that is clear is that there exists a known stigma that may be attached to a student following a disclosure, causing them to 'look bad' and thus that may prevent them from disclosing, initially.

In what could be considered as particularly *gendered* in origin, the female participants at the University of Liverpool and Edge Hill expressed that they would likely not report sexual misconduct for a fear of not being believed by professionals to whom they reported. One respondent from the University of Liverpool had this to say about why she did not report an incident that happened to her at the university a few years ago:

PA: I'd say either I didn't really realise it was wrong at the time, and then I'd realise and I'd be like yeah that's definitely not right that should be something that that guy is like in prison for or something. And so at by that point I'd be like 'oh, it's too late'. It's all like the court trials in the news and it's like no one's gonna believe me now or I don't have any evidence at all.

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

This respondent's comment has been chosen for a particular additional point it raises in relation to reporting sexual misconduct. This statement highlights that 'time' is potentially a factor in a student's decision to report their experience. As shown, the waning validation of their experience that students believe comes with not disclosing sexual misconduct immediately, as well as the practical difficulties associated with 'proving' historical sexual misconduct, conjoin to potentially hinder a student's decision to disclose their assault.

Similarly, and in what is perhaps a reflection of the Feminist contention that more 'minor', everyday incidences of sexual misconduct towards women are normalised and disregarded

in society (Kelly, 1988), female interviewees across these same universities expressed that they would not report particularly verbal sexual misconduct for a fear that it would be not taken seriously:

PC: You know in my head I just - I probably wouldn't even report it just in the sense of not thinking it would be-would go further?

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

PE: [*Speaking about why she would not report it to a lecturer*] Like if I went and said this guy grabbed my bum when I was like walking out of the lecture, then I think they would take that seriously, but I think if I said they wolf whistled at me or he said 'nice tits' or something like that then they probably wouldn't

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

Finally, one particular female interviewee from the University of Liverpool suggested that sexual misconduct goes unreported at university because the initiatives and campaigns that are put in place by the university to encourage reporting are inadequate for purpose:

PB: I dunno, it's hard. I don't think that all these campaigns that The Guild do-I think they're rubbish, they just don't work.

R: Do you mean the 'Call It Out' stuff? [*Referring to a campaign that has been run at the University of Liverpool. This campaign has seen both posters put up around the university and entries on The Guild website with the slogan 'call it out' and a reference to ending sexual harassment towards students by calling it out when you see/experience it*]

PB: Yeah, in terms of reporting incidents I just don't think that does anything

R: Why not?

PB: Just like the whole 'call it out' I just don't think... I don't think it's right, it's not offering students support. Even the terms of it it's like putting the earnest on the individual student to call out behaviour that's not their fault.

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

As can be seen, this student understands initiatives within her university like 'Call it Out' to be misplacing responsibility for intervening in sexual misconduct on campuses. By advocating that students 'Call it Out' when they see it, she claims that the university both 'pass the buck' with regards to providing students with support following sexual assault and bypass opportunities for conducting campaigns that aim to encourage the reporting of incidents.

In 2008, scholar Patricia Hill-Collins conducted an investigation into sexual violence towards black women by black men. Amongst other important findings, she discovered that the majority of women that had experienced such violence did not report it to the police. After many hours of ethnographic work, Hill-Collins (2008) concluded that this was because individuals of law enforcement made up part of the oppressive and increasingly hostile 'white society' that

degraded and discriminated against black people and other individuals 'of colour'. Black women thus cultivated a culture of silence around such white 'officials' in order to prevent any further stigmatisation and harassment of the black community ('black' individuals, for example, already were – and still are – portrayed as animalistic and hypersexualised in popular culture).

Identification with a non-heterosexual sexuality was finally highlighted as a factor that would actively prevent students from reporting sexual misconduct. Analogous to Hill-Collins' (2008) work, a participant in Chester University told of both a culture within the LGBT community of suspicion towards mainstream heterosexual culture and notions of 'loyalty' that meant they were less likely to report experiences of sexual misconduct perpetrated by another LGBT-identified individual. According to this student, such reporting is read as a kind of 'betrayal' to the community because it is seen as confiding in those of the dominant heterosexual culture who vilify LGBT people, and is additionally thought to contribute to the stigmatisation of LGBT individuals as 'oversexed'. Consequently, he told, incidents of sexual misconduct experienced by individuals of the LGBT community on campus are likely to go unrecorded.

5.4 How to encourage reporting at university

Many participants believe there could be additional tools to disclose sexual misconduct introduced within academies that are more attractive to students and that therefore result in more disclosures of sexual misconduct. For example, a route of reporting that provides individuals with a way of concealing their identity:

Set up a place to report anonymously or get anonymous support

(Female, white, heterosexual participant at the University of Chester)

Make an anonymous reporting system

(Male, white, heterosexual participant at the University of Chester)

Students should have clear access to a place where they can report incidents anonymously, such as online.

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Set up an anonymous reporting system online

(Female, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Liverpool)

Some form of online reporting/advice, with the option to discuss support needs anonymously

(Male, gay, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

I think that there should be a locked box in toilet cubicles for people to write a note of what has happened to them and then they could put it in the box without anybody knowing you have done it and without anybody knowing it's you

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

As can be seen, some participants interestingly offer that online would be a specifically suitable place within which to set up an anonymous reporting system. Although the reasons

for this are not stated, participants did express that constructing routes of reporting that did not include the victim's identity would be attractive to students as its 'faceless' aspect would allow them to 'open up' about their experience.

An online system for reporting sexual misconduct seemed to be popular amongst students of the survey, with some participants advocating for this channel for reporting even without the aforementioned aspect of anonymity:

I know there are some posters around in the bathrooms at Chester, but there could be a section on the portal which allows students to report such things, if there already is one I think it should be publicised more as I don't know about it. I think people are more likely to report something if it is online as most people are online a lot anyway, and it would mean they could report such occurrences at any time of day, not just during office hours.

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

I am unaware of any online platform where this kind of behaviour could be reported. That could definitely be made much more apparent.

(Female, white, heterosexual participant at the University of Chester)

Highlighted by these examples, online reporting systems are believed to be particularly relevant to the student population and therefore make disclosures more likely. Additionally, they are also thought (because of the internet's ubiquitous qualities) to facilitate more reports that happen outside of the standard nine to five university working day.

Perhaps acknowledging that communication via cyberspace is not suitable for all, few participants offered that a way to encourage disclosures of sexual misconduct would be to provide tools for reporting in actual physical places around the university where affected students could either talk or write about their experience:

Leave boxes maybe where people can leave notes

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Create a safe known place where people could drop in

(Female, white, heterosexual participant at the University of Chester)

In a suggestion that was unfortunately the only one of its kind, one participant from the University of Chester finally suggested encouraging students to report sexual misconduct by introducing a reporting channel already in use by another university that she views as particularly successful:

These emergency blue light phones that some campuses have are great because they encourage immediate communication if something is happening in public

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

As can be discerned from this example, the existence of specific phones for the instruments for reporting sexual misconduct in 'real-time' is considered as attractive because it prompts students to report sexual misconduct *as it happens* on campuses, and perhaps thus means interventions and support to the student can be delivered quickly.

Moving onto emotional interventions that the university could make to encourage students to report sexual misconduct, generally put forth by the participants in the qualitative section of the survey were ideas to induce an entire *culture change* on campuses in relation to sexual violence. Predominantly, students advocated that if talking about sexual misconduct was 'normalised', and efforts were made to eradicate its 'taboo' status, students would feel much more comfortable with disclosing incidents of sexual violence to academics:

Be more open about it to show that it's not embarrassing to talk about it and you should feel comfortable in reporting it

(Female, white, heterosexual participant at the University of Chester)

It needs to be about appearing *and* being open and welcoming and sensitive to the students

(Female, heterosexual, black participant from the University of Chester)

To have victims that want to share story to come in and do workshops

(Male, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

It would be better to talk about this topic often organising public events, small focus groups.

(Female, white, heterosexual participant at the University of Liverpool)

Stop being taboo about the subject. It should be plastered everywhere. Everyone should be told this at their first day of every term.

(Female, Asian, heterosexual participant at the University of Liverpool)

There should be a campaign to destigmatise sexual assault against men and encourage them to come forward for support

(Male, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

Although the finding that beginning a public conversation about sexual misconduct will encourage more disclosures from students is undoubtedly important on its own, of particular note here is the last comment from the male student at the University of Liverpool. In asking that universities open conversations about male victims of sexual violence in particular to make speaking out about it more 'common' and easier to do for these individuals, arguably illustrated that male victims of sexual violence at university are particularly deterred from reporting by notions that men 'cannot be victims of sexual violence'.

In addition to making talking about sexual misconduct on campuses more typical, participants emphasised that the university needs to both publicly condemn *all* acts of sexual violence that are experienced by students, and ensure that students know they will not be judged/will be believed upon their disclosure:

Highlight that it isn't just sexual acts e.g. without consent intercourse or attempted without consent intercourse but also acts such as sexual harassment; catcalling, following someone and harassing them online that are also sexual misconduct and are just as important to report and provide support for.

(Female, white, heterosexual participant at the University of Chester)

Find ways in proving to students that the university acknowledge sexual violence etc such as through campaigning. It may allow people to come forward.

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

Have visible repercussions for those who are found to be confirmed abusers, so victims feel that there will actually be consequences for the perpetrator, and potential abusers will know that they will actually be punished if they are reported

(Female, white, heterosexual participant at the University of Chester)

Awareness made that this type of behaviour is unacceptable

(Female, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

Constant reference to the fact that such behaviour is not 'normal' and should not be tolerated. Discussions on high profile cases to emphasise that this behaviour is unacceptable

(Female, white, heterosexual participant at the University of Liverpool)

Show that there will be a no judgement policy of victim, that they will be believed and taken seriously

(Female, Heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

Even though it is the most reiterated message that 'it isn't their fault', it should be spoken more and that message needs to be put across so that a victim tries their utmost to feel that as they're always going to blame themselves so a sense of feeling it isn't their fault and that there is always someone there for them will help

(Male, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

The creation of a culture that strongly condemns sexual violence on university campuses as a way to encourage students to disclose their experiences was additionally believed to be achievable via pedagogies on (in)appropriate behaviour in universities:

We need to teach people *not* to rape rather than teaching them to *not get* raped

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

Teach men not to rape, not women to cover up

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

Offer compulsory consent training

(Male, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Liverpool)

Additional training for all university staff and lecturers to spot the sign of sexual harassment and for staff members to be supported in whistle blowing against a colleague

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

I think it would be worthwhile to spend time, energy and money on educating the types of people who commit such misconduct. This is often men and therefore it would be great if there was an imperative for men and others who commit such misconduct to change their behaviour as well as on women and victims to change their response to such behaviour

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Work with the clubs and bars in Chester especially with the bouncers. It's so common for people to touch you or to do something sexual to you when you are in the queue waiting to get in a club or a bar. I wouldn't tell the bouncers as I don't think they would do anything-this needs to change

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

As shown, whether through mandatory workshops or training delivered at universities, or through pedagogical engagement with staff who may witness student-on-student misconduct off-campus, students believe that the encouragement of students' disclosures of sexual misconduct experiences partially depends on an education (or re-education) on acceptable behavioural practices towards other individuals.

Finally, and most prominently, students who participated in the survey expressed that the university could acquire more reports of students' sexual misconduct experiences by simply making the *channels through which misconduct can be reported* pertinent and visible across campus:

The channels that they can go down to report it

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

It should be advertised (posters, an email etc.) so that students are made fully aware of what they can do, where they need to go to etc. should they need to.

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

More publicity encouraging people to report and explaining how to do so

(Female, asexual, heterosexual participant at the University of Chester)

There can be a short movies about encouraging student what needs be done in such cases

(Male, gay, white participant at the University of Chester)

If I did want to report a sexual misconduct, I would have no idea who to approach in my uni. The guidance for these things is hard to find

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

The main thing is the same as in parliament: clearly advertise specific, clear channels of support. At the moment if something happened to me, I wouldn't have a clue where to report

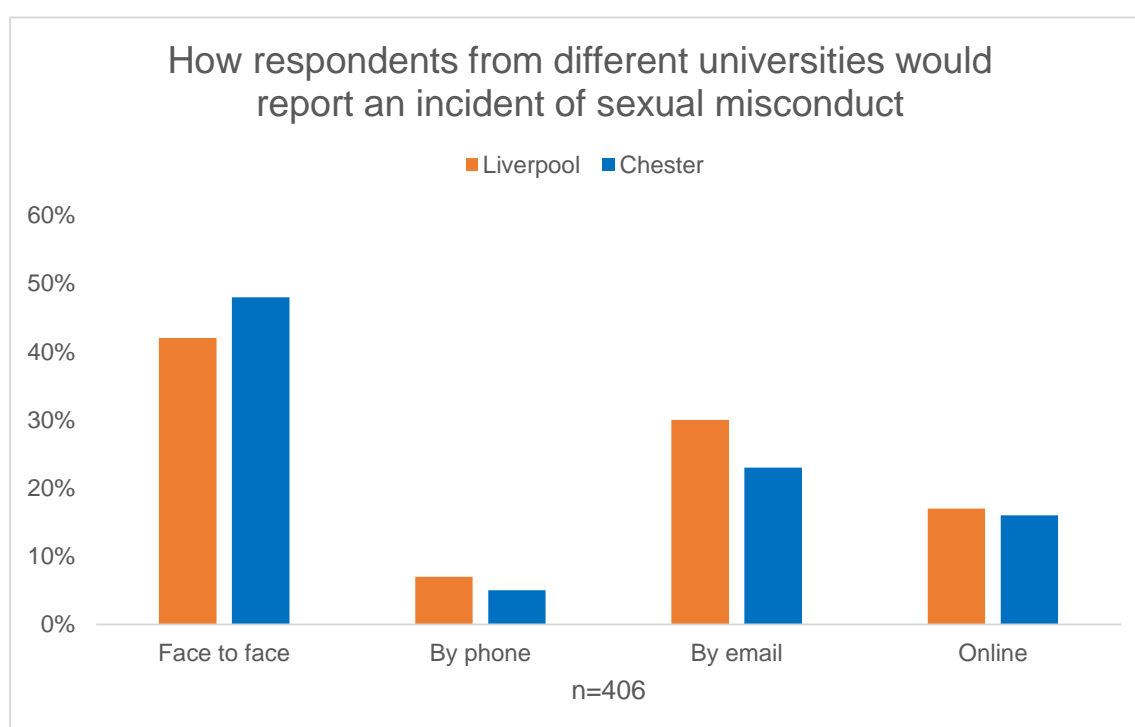
(Male, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

6 Preferences for reporting sexual misconduct

6.1 Quantitative section of the survey

As can be seen from Graph B below, respondents stated overwhelmingly a preference for reporting sexual misconduct face-to-face with a member of staff. Out of 190 students that responded to this question from the University of Liverpool, 80 students (42%) stated that they would most like to make their disclosure this way and 48% (102) stated they would out of students from the University of Chester. The way least appealing to students at the University of Liverpool and Chester was telephone, with only 7 and 5 percent of University of Liverpool and Chester students stating they would use this service to report an incident of sexual misconduct.

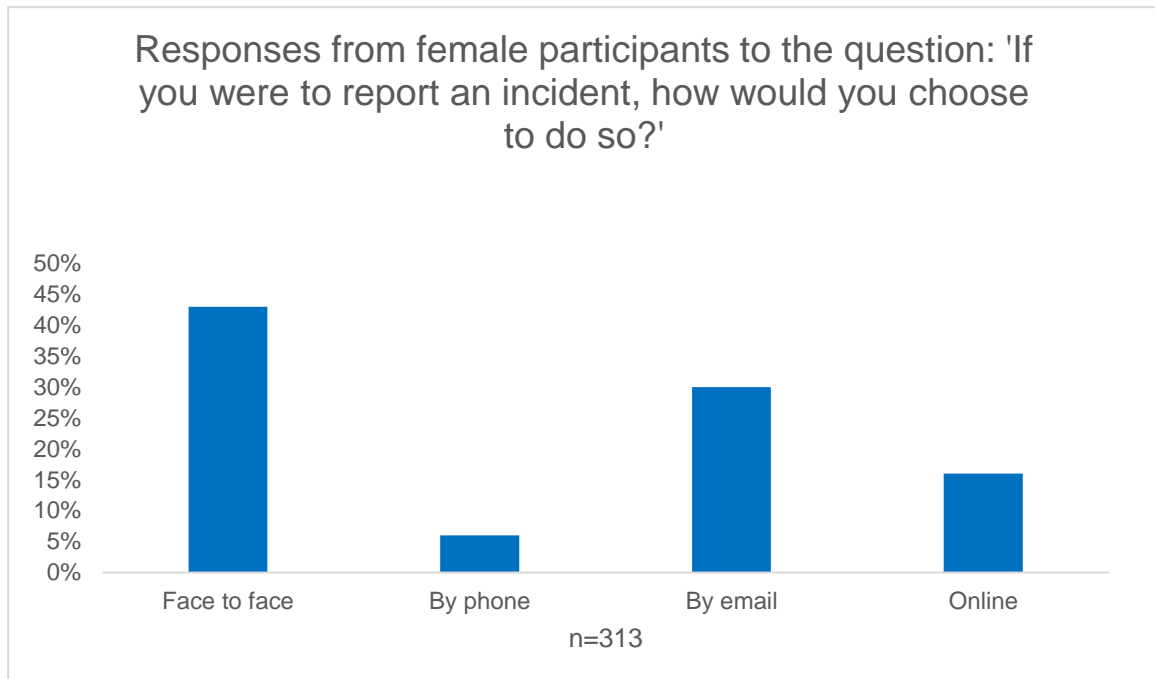
Graph B



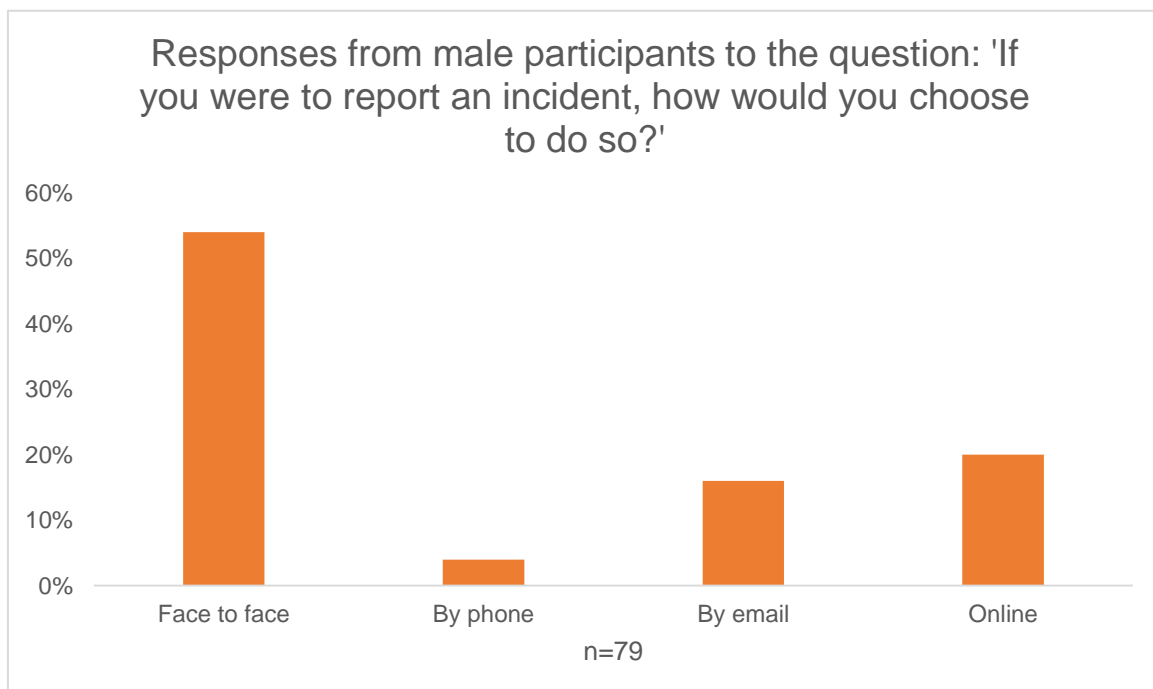
Broken down again by conventional 'gender' strata, both female and male students stated that they would most likely utilise face-to-face disclosure services following an experience of sexual assault. Out of the 313 female participants that answered this question, 43% (134) identified face-to-face reporting as the one they were most likely to undertake (Graph C). Similarly, out of the 79 male participants who completed this question, 54% (43) of respondents reported an attraction to co-presence reporting (Graph D). As will have been noted, there is an additional slight difference in male and female students stating that they would particularly use *email* to make their disclosure. Out of the female students of this survey, 30% (93) suggested they may use email to report sexual misconduct. Of the male students, on the other hand, only 16% (13) of those who answered this question cited that they would use email. Making conclusions based upon possible 'gendered' patterns in this data is of course difficult given that there are over three times as many female as male respondents. However, the notion that 30% of a total of 313 female respondents stated a preference of email for reporting sexual misconduct in contrast to 16% of a total of 79 male respondents perhaps indicates that

there is a particular reluctance on male students' part to use email to disclose their experiences.

Graph C



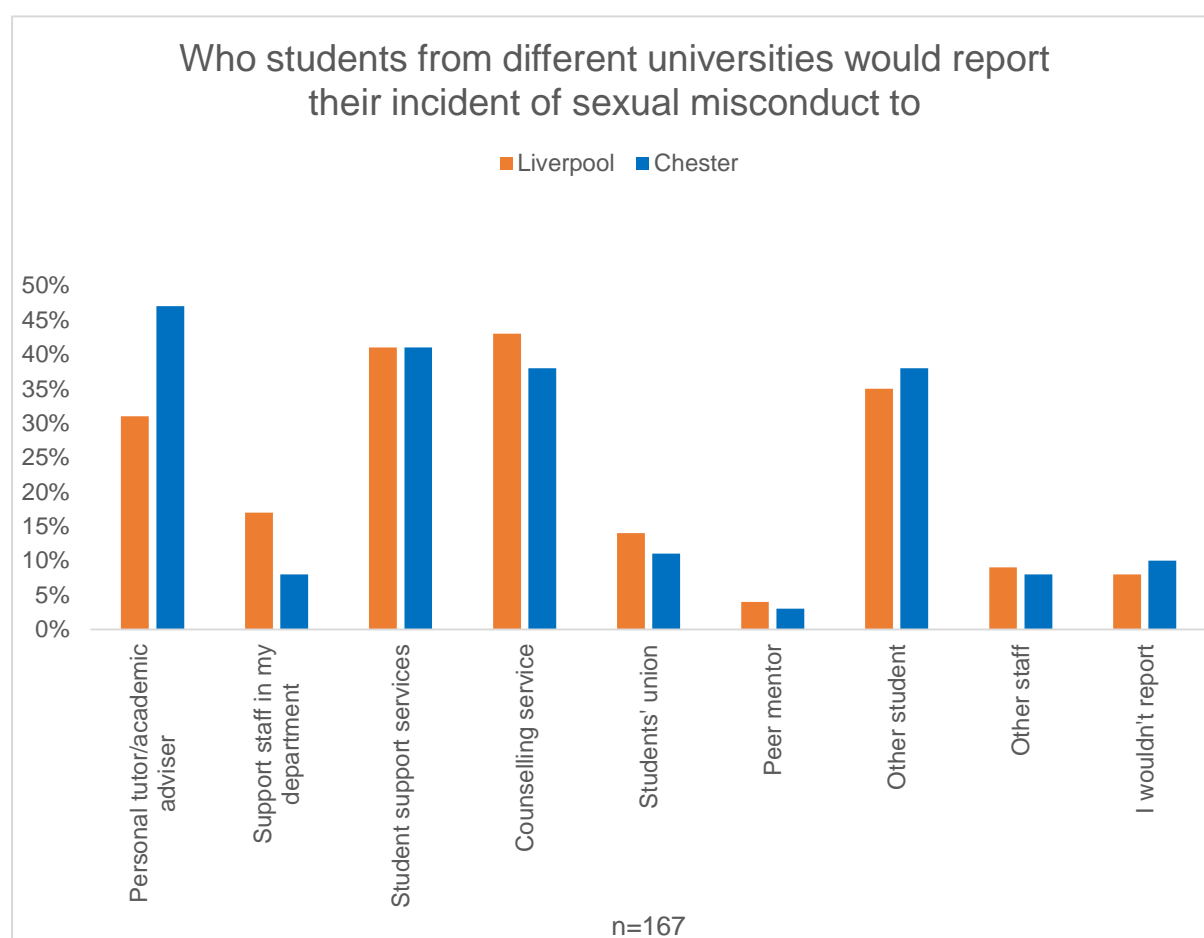
Graph D



The findings on whom students would report their sexual misconduct experiences to are mixed, with no person at the institution or elsewhere being revealed as the definitive person

students would most like to receive their disclosure. As shown in Graph E, students seem to feel comfortable on the whole in confiding in student support services, the counselling service, and 'other students' about their sexual misconduct experiences. From the University of Liverpool 43% or 83 respondents stated that they would report to the counselling service, 41% (79) the student support services and 35% (67) said they would report to another student (Graph E for all). Similarly, of students from the University of Chester, 41% (88) stated that they would report to the student support services, and 38% (82) said that they would report to the counselling service or 'another student'.

Graph E



However, a discrepancy within the responses from these two universities comes in the form of 47% of students from the University of Chester who stated that they would report to their academic advisor, over 31% of students who said they would do the same from the University of Liverpool. Again, the unrepresentativeness of the sample means that firm comparisons cannot be made from this data. However, this potential trend is perhaps an important one for further exploration by universities seeking to improve support services for students who have experienced sexual misconduct.

Reporting to departmental support staff was one of the less popular choices for reporting sexual misconduct across the survey, with disclosing to peer mentors being the least appealing to students (4% and 3%, in Liverpool and Chester respectively). Finally, in terms of

gender, both female and male students seemed to favour making disclosures to student support services, the counselling services, other students and academic advisors.

6.2 Interviews and focus groups

How students would like to report both 'minor' and more 'serious' incidents of sexual misconduct elicited a multitude of complex answers. While acknowledging that preferred routes of reporting sexual misconduct at universities are subjective, many respondents felt that reporting face-to-face would be most preferable. When talking about incidents officially classified by universities as on the more 'serious' side of the sexual misconduct spectrum (i.e. those that involve physical sexualised touching without consent, for example), as well as those considered more serious only by the offended student *themselves*, some respondents suggested that co-present reporting is most appropriate. This is because of a sense that students have upon face-to-face reporting of being able to have something be done immediately about the complaint, either in terms of action that moves the complaint forward to a resolution or pastoral support for the student. An exchange with a male interviewee at the University of Liverpool illustrates this clearly:

R: What do you like about face to face reporting or what would be most preferable to you?

PF: Face to face seems like you're getting it done. If you email someone you're waiting to hear back and there's probably a massive queue but if you see someone face to face then you're like yeah it's sorted.

(Male interviewee, University of Liverpool)

One of the female interviewees of this same university additionally put her preference forward for face-to-face reporting in the following similar way:

PB: I think you can just talk about it properly I suppose, gauge their reaction. If you're worried about it they would probably reassure you. Also like if you needed extra help like go the doctors or whatever then they can just sit there with you and be like this is this and be more reassuring rather than like a one sided interaction.

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

In addition to helping the student feel as if their complaint is progressing towards resolution, some students clearly value the interpersonal interactions they believe could be present during a face to face exchange for what they could help achieve with regards to students' overall well-being following an assault. According to the latter respondent (and many others across the research), this channel of reporting has the potential to help validate a student's experience of sexual misconduct (and, hence, go some way to removing the fear of not being believed that deters many students from reporting their experiences) and can allay any 'worries' a student has about aspects related to their experience.

Further, one respondent during one of the focus groups undertaken at Edge Hill interestingly expressed a preference for face-to-face reporting of more 'serious' incidents of sexual misconduct (again, those that are physical in nature) due to what appeared to be a mistrust in reports made through online forms or email. When asked why she would prefer to talk to someone in person about her experience as opposed to writing it down and sending it in an email or online form, she said:

There's no denying interpretation around that [*being touched in a sexual way without consent*]. Like, with a comment I think maybe I could've interpreted it wrong, but when someone like physically touches you somewhere where they shouldn't or where you don't want them to then there's like no denying that's inappropriate, and I would want my exact recounting of what happened to be documented

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

This comment highlights that in cases where the respondent feels she has a legitimate claim of sexual misconduct - one that she additionally considers to be 'serious' - reporting it to another person face-to-face is the only appropriate route to take to achieve resolution.⁴ However, one can only assume that if the respondent decided to report a 'serious' incident of sexual misconduct using a *non*-personal channel, her exact recounting of her experience would still be 'documented' in the same way as if she made the disclosure to someone face-to-face. It is highly likely, even without knowing the procedures for reporting misconduct at Edge Hill, that a students' disclosure captured by *any* means would be preserved in its original form in order to assist any investigations made into the allegation. The desire for an 'exact' documentation of the experience as the reason the respondent would choose face-to-face reporting over an online form/email is arguably thus indicative of a mistrust that these routes of reporting will lead to what she considers to be a satisfactory conclusion.

Some respondents also championed a route for reporting 'serious' cases of sexual misconduct that involved the affected student reporting their experience initially via the internet, through either email or some sort of online form dedicated to this purpose. This preference was explained by respondents to be in part because of the advantage that reporting sexual misconduct *textually* has over face-to-face reporting for preventing further psychological distress to a student following an assault:

If it's something that's really upset you and that's really traumatic sometimes those things are easier to talk about not verbally, like, if you're writing things down? So if you were to write an email it might be easier

⁴ Of course, it cannot be definitively discerned what kind of resolution she has in mind when referring to her decision to report her 'serious' experience of sexual misconduct to another person in a co-present context. However, her differentiation between incidents of sexual misconduct that may not be recognised by the university as sexual misconduct and therefore would not be reported by her, and those that presumably cannot be seen as anything *but* sexual misconduct and thus that *will*, suggests that she does envision some sort of resolution following relaying her account to someone in person (even if such resolution is simply having her 'exact recounting of what happened documented').

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

Researcher: thinking about preferred ways of reporting...

Respondent G: if it was me I'd prefer an online system. Like an anonymous system just so I wouldn't feel like I had to sit face to face and explain to someone at the university. Coz I feel like if it was a traumatic event I wouldn't want to, it's gonna bring it all back for you. So I'd like to be able to report it online before I spoke to someone

Respondent H: I think online is a good way and you can have an option like would you like us to call you or like come in for a meeting maybe

Respondent G: yeah. Like even if it's you'll obviously have to go for a meeting after you report something, it's easier to inform someone of everything that's happened and then you don't have to go in and explain yourself to them like they already know why you're there. It just takes the pressure off a little bit.

(Mixed focus group, Edge Hill)

As evidenced here, the non-verbal aspect of reporting using digital means is seen as having the potential to alleviate further trauma that could be brought about by the affected student trying to put their experience into a coherent narrative in a face-to-face situation. Interestingly, although the internet's textuality was cited as being able to make a student more 'comfortable' in disclosing their assault, only two of the participants across the whole research advocated students textually reporting their experience via a hand written form.

Reporting using online means was additionally thought to be the best way to report both 'less' and 'more' serious incidents of sexual misconduct because of the opportunity the internet provides for archiving data:

PI: I like the idea of having the online system and also if you can keep a track of something that's happening to you or someone else or a repeat offender who's doing it to someone else then when it gets to a certain extent you can go through all the evidence of what they've been doing

PJ: yeah it like keeps it logged

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill)

PK: mm. I'd say for myself face to face but a lot of students would probably prefer something they can message on?

PL: I'd rather do it face to face because it's a very emotional topic but I can see a lot of people who er y'know they're more introverted, a bit shy wanting to have a connection via text and I don't mean like phone texting I mean like via written communication rather than a face to face conversation, or at least the first step of it being that way, through emails [*others saying mm and yeah throughout*]

PN: if you do have the text based system then anything you do say will have down on paper in a way

PM: yeah

PN: you don't have to worry about repeating it to other people

(Male focus group, Edge Hill)

As shown here, respondents recognised the benefits of reporting sexual misconduct using online means for what they believe it can achieve through its ability to log the complaint for later 'use'. Not only does this way of reporting presumably again prevent the affected student from incurring secondary trauma (by providing the member of staff receiving the disclosure with an account of the event and thus rendering the victim's verbal retelling unnecessary), but it also permits the textual storing of accounts of sexual misconduct that can later assist with any investigations into the allegation.

It is important to note, however, that while these respondents seemed to be attracted to online ways of reporting 'serious' acts of sexual misconduct, this was stressed as an *initial* part of the reporting process that would then be followed by an optional face-to-face meeting with a member of relevant staff. While in the mixed-sex focus groups, for example, respondents advocated a drop down menu to be added to an online form for reporting sexual misconduct that asked the student if they would like a follow up face-to-face meeting, a respondent in the all-female focus group at Edge Hill expressed that the option to report via email should be set up only as a pre-cursor to a face-to-face encounter:

R: If you were to report it by email, what do you think would be an appropriate amount of time to wait for a response?

PP: [*quickly*] two seconds.

R: OK [*laughs*] just there and then?

PP: it should be like where are you? I'm coming to meet you, ok.

R: so it would end up in a face to face...

PP: yeah, a face-to-face

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

In addition to email and some sort of online-based system set up particularly for reporting misconduct, the mixed sex focus group at Edge Hill expressed interest in a telephone service for reporting instances of 'serious' sexual misconduct. Spoken of again here as physical sexual assaults that include groping or unwanted caressing/stroking, this group acknowledged the value of having someone available 24 hours a day for a student to call following their experience of misconduct:

R: When you say an online form might be good, is this true for all types of sexual misconduct? Including those that are less serious?

Respondent I: I would say an online form would be good for less serious types of SM but maybe higher more important ones need a bit more urgency behind them so for

urgent ones there should be a number you can call or someone you can instantly go to and be dealt with in that moment in that time just coz it's a very urgent thing to be dealt with

Respondent J: maybe like an interactive, not like a forum, but y'know like how they have those Samaritans that you can call at night or whatever if you feel like you're struggling, maybe something like that which is just limited to a campus. Like if you need to talk to someone for whatever reason day or night if you feel like you need to. Coz that's a bit more like straight away and you know someone will pick up the phone. Because people call like security a couple of times and it's gone like straight to voicemail, and they have other calls, but it's a bit like I *need* to talk to someone and you've got to call through 3 or 4 times just to get them to answer

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

As can be seen, the attraction of reporting 'serious' experiences of sexual misconduct via telephone is based on a notion of 'urgency' that such misconduct is thought to induce. There is a question, of course, about *why* respondents believe experiences of 'serious' sexual misconduct need to be dealt with in haste, leading them to advocate for 24 hour telephone lines for students. This cannot be discerned with any definitiveness. However, Respondent D asks that someone be available on the telephone for students 'day or night' because calling security following an experience of sexual misconduct will likely prove fruitless ('you've got to call through 3-4 times just to get through'). In positioning this telephone service as an alternative to calling *security* (who are typically contacted when a student is in immediate danger), it may be argued that the respondent envisages the aforementioned service as a precursor to providing instant, practical, and possibly preventative support to students following an incident of 'serious' sexual misconduct. In this way, 'serious' sexual misconduct to these participants is 'urgent' in the sense that it demands immediate action in order to prevent further or perhaps increasingly dangerous sexual misconduct towards an affected student, and is something which they believe is best provided by a 24 hour misconduct 'hotline'.

Generally, however, reporting incidents of 'serious' sexual misconduct via telephone was met with mixed responses from participants across all the focus groups and interviews undertaken. While some felt that reporting by telephone would be as preferable as doing so with someone face-to-face due to the feeling of 'getting things done' (*Male participant, University of Liverpool*) that talking to another person seems to evoke, others were much more sceptical. A female participant in a University of Liverpool interview, for example, stated that 'no one talks on the phone anymore' because it is disliked. In this comment, the participant's 'no one' was made with reference to students/young people, evidencing the trend illustrated in critical digital literatures of young people using digital devices for textual communication *only*, and thus highlighting that reporting sexual misconduct via telephone calls may not be attractive to students at university.

In general, participants were reluctant to report what they considered to be 'less serious' incidents of sexual misconduct (incidents involving sexualised/sexist comments and 'jokes'). This was prevalent amongst all four female interviewees at the University of Liverpool as well as the all-male focus group at Edge Hill. As discussed earlier, this was because of a belief that such acts are so normalised and accepted in society that nothing would be done about their complaint.

Of those who stated they *would* report these incidents of misconduct, opinions about the most preferable way to disclose were again mixed. Contrary to the earlier finding that students would like to report sexual misconduct face-to-face to feel they were creating momentum in resolving their situation, one female and one male interviewee at the University of Liverpool, as well as some participants in the male focus group at Edge Hill, highlighted that it would be acceptable for students to report 'less serious' incidents of sexual misconduct in a face-to-face setting. As exemplified by the below comment, this view is in part linked to the idea that experiences of sexual misconduct considered to be more 'minor' cause minimal amounts of emotional distress, rendering their verbalisation easier and meaning a perceived emotionally dissociative form of reporting (such as via online form or email) is unnecessary⁵:

PE: I suppose if some guy's catcalled you on campus that's still that's not acceptable behaviour, but you're hopefully not traumatised by that and wouldn't be able to talk about it.

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

Respondent K: I'd imagine, just in my opinion, the less serious would be more comfortable face to face, possibly?

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

However, not all participants felt that reporting 'less serious' sexual misconduct would be best done face-to-face. Indeed, as many participants across the study opted for a textual route for reporting this type of misconduct. Specifically championed by those who believed reporting face-to-face would be most appropriate when pursuing some sort of 'resolution', some respondents cited a lack of urgency to have something 'done' about their more 'minor' complaint as the reason they would find an online-based/textual disclosure acceptable:

PO: I think like something like the builders saying that to me which y'know I wasn't really sure how to take it but I would be happy to report that not like on an email but an online query form to say like I don't really want you to, I don't want to get involved in any of this personally but I just want to make you aware that this has happened just in case it happens to someone else or just in case you want to keep an eye on it

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

PI: I would say an online form would be good for less serious types of SM but maybe higher more important ones need a bit more urgency behind them so for urgent ones there should be a number you can call or someone you can instantly go to and be dealt with in that moment in that time just coz it's a very urgent thing to be dealt with

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

⁵ It is important to note that participants did not deem 'less' serious sexual misconduct to be particularly more *preferable* to report face-to-face. Rather, a face-to-face disclosure of this type of assault was simply seen as an *acceptable* way to do things. There was no advantage to reporting more minor incidences of sexual misconduct face-to-face; reporting any other way – due to associations these participants forged between non-verbal reporting of sexual misconduct and mitigation of psychological upset - was just seen as not needed.

Again, as mentioned previously, it must be noted that the textual reporting of 'less serious' sexual misconduct was not spoken of by students as having a specific advantage over in-person disclosures. Rather, this type of misconduct was deemed by some as significantly less psychologically distressing/physically dangerous to students, rendering a face-to-face meeting with a member of staff unnecessary and meaning an online-based textual system was offered as an agreeable alternative.

7 Immediate expectations upon reporting sexual misconduct

The most prominent finding to come out of this section of the research was that immediate expectations upon reporting sexual misconduct are individual to each student, and that how members of staff support a student upon disclosure should be predominantly student-led. However, there was an overwhelming consensus amongst all participants that 'reactions' to disclosures needed to tread a fine line between 'compassionate' and 'professional'. Again, immediate expectations were discussed according to face-to-face means of reporting, as well as reporting over the telephone and using 'textual' means (i.e. text messaging, online forms, and email).

7.1 Face-to-face disclosures

7.1.1 Qualitative section of the survey

Students gave detailed answers about how they would expect staff to react following a face-to-face disclosure of sexual misconduct. However, it seems this question of 'expectation' was interpreted differently. While some participants read the question as how they would *desire* someone to react following their disclosure of misconduct, a small portion answered based on what they *imagine* would happen in a face-to-face reporting situation.

Beginning then with those participants who discussed a face-to-face disclosure in terms of how they would *imagine* it to play out, findings showed that some students forecast a degree of sympathy from the person to whom they have made a disclosure:

I think they would be sympathetic and would probably send me to student support and welfare

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

I'd expect an amount of shock and deep sympathy even though that isn't what a victim would want I don't think. I think they would rather want to know how to fix it rather than dwell on all the details

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

As illustrated by this last comment, while 'sympathy' might be expected during a disclosure, it is not always wanted by the affected student. Rather, this participant helps to show that some students may desire a meeting with a member of staff that focuses around more practical aspects of support.

Finally, and showing the unfortunately unhelpful way she believes a member of staff receiving a disclosure would react to a student, one participant expressed that she would imagine the following behaviour in face-to-face reporting situations:

Slightly shocked, cold behaviour, give default questions asking if I'm OK

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

The expectation of 'cold behaviour' is distressing enough. However, the prediction that staff would ask 'default' questions is more worrying, suggesting that staff would react only according to established protocol (paying 'lip service' to the idea of ensuring student well-being) rather than providing tailored and genuine support.

In terms of how students *desired* staff to support them following a face-to-face disclosure of sexual misconduct, many responses centred on particular types of affect they felt should be exhibited. Such affections were those that make students feel comfortable and safe enough to share their story:

I would expect a lot of sympathy

(Female, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

Considerate - perhaps refer me to a counselling service if that is needed. *Talk things through, be reassuring*

(Female, lesbian, white participant at the University of Chester; emphasis added)

Encouragement that I've done the right thing

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

I honestly would like a policy where all staff were trained to respond empathetically, listen and then encourage the student/support the student to access a counsellor to discuss what has happened.

(Female, bisexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

I would expect mostly for someone to *listen* and *understand* that even the smallest form of harassment could have serious detrimental effects

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

This person should be putting him/her self into the shoes of the student, since the person is already upset, feeling stressed and scared, so the support should be in a way to calm the person and explain them that is gonna be resolved by the university

(Male, gay, white participant at the University of Chester)

Be patient, listen, show sympathy

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Be understanding and caring and friendly. Most likely whatever happened might have been traumatic and the person would still have it fresh in their mind.

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

Expect them to be understanding

(Male, heterosexual, black participant from the University of Liverpool)

However, similar to the findings discovered during the interviews and focus groups, participants expressed that the person listening to their disclosure should not be too emotional or informal:

I would expect the person to be sympathetic and have helpful suggestion on hand such as support group information, counselling options and suggestions as how to handle the situation. I would not want the person to feel sorry for me as this would put me off accepting help from them

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Sympathy, but not to the point of becoming patronising

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

Shocked but level headed

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Empathy but not pity

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Liverpool)

I'd like them to act with concern but also impartial

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

I wouldn't want them to be falsely sympathetic and try to be a counsellor. I would want them to be empathetic and then help me to report the matter further and reassure me something will be done about it

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Professionally, but with human heart

(Male, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

As can be seen, there is a fine line between showing compassion during disclosures and displaying a kind of hyper-emotionality that students view with disdain. Through these examples, we perhaps come to understand that students want to be shown care but without 'pity' (or in some cases, sympathy) as this leaves them feeling condescended to and reluctant to engage with further support. In addition, they show that throughout the disclosure, no matter how 'shocking' the staff member might perceive the incident, staff must retain a level of objectivity that allows them to perform their 'professional' role safeguarding the affected student.

The final emotional responses students expect following their disclosures of sexual misconduct face-to-face are confidence in that they are telling the truth, and validation of their experiences:

Reassurance and for someone to take me for my word

(Female, lesbian, white participant at Edge Hill University)

I would like them to take any matter seriously because no matter how small something may seem if it is upsetting a student then it should be dealt with to the best of the university's ability

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

To not ask questions like 'What were you wearing?/How much did you drink?'. For the person to listen to what I had to say without passing judgement on me

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

I would expect them to be receptive and non-judgemental

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

I would want the person to believe me to build up trust so I can tell the entire story of the incident

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

I would expect that the matter is taken seriously

(Male, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

As these statements make evident, whether by simply showing in some way that the student is 'believed', whether by showing an acceptance of a student's definition of their experience as sexual misconduct, or by avoiding those questions typically associated with victim-blaming narratives (how much had you had to drink?), students strongly desire a reaction to their disclosure in a co-present context that makes them feel valid in their distress and decision to report.

Just as there are behaviours that actively *should* be displayed in face-to-face disclosures, there is one additional behaviour that is seemingly inappropriate, and that therefore should not. This behaviour was the asking of probing and 'excessive' questions to students as they are making their disclosure:

Ask questions, again *gently*, so you can discern the nature and severity of the assault and whether legal action should be pursued. But make it *absolutely clear why* you are asking these questions. A person has to revisit their assault to comment on it which is traumatizing enough without thinking that they are being grilled for 'juicy details' by the person who is supposedly helping them

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

They shouldn't ask lots of invasive questions, but they shouldn't change the subject and making them feel like it doesn't matter, either

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

They should be calm, compassionate, kind, not pushy

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Finally, participants across this section of the survey asked for practical support in face-to-face disclosures of their sexual misconduct experiences. Such support centred in part on discussing with the student the typical process of reporting an act of misconduct at university, so that they are aware of their options going forward:

I feel that the person should give me personal support such as their opinion and *possible routes to go through*

(Male, heterosexual, Asian participant from Edge Hill University; emphasis added)

Be non-judgemental, calm, professional, reassuring and clear on what can/will happen next

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

Information on how the University will deal with the incident. E.g a formal procedure

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Clearly advise of the options available, both for support, and escalation

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

React calmly, give advice - further options i.e. police / what support is available on campus

(Male, Gay, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

I would hope they'd advise me on the best course of action

(Female, bisexual, mixed participant at the University of Liverpool)

I'd like advice on who to tell

(Female, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Liverpool)

Practical support during a face-to-face disclosure was also asked for in terms of signposts to different agencies that can further support the student in either seeking disciplinary or judicial action, or in helping to mitigate the psychological distress caused by the incident. Students across the survey cited that they would like to be made aware of: counselling or 'emotional support' services that their university has to offer; support groups (online or offline) for sexual misconduct victims; helplines for students affected by sexual violence; and, where appropriate, the police. Points of contention were raised in relation to referring the student to the police, however. While some students suggested that it would be appropriate for the affected individual to be actively *encouraged* to tell the police about their sexual misconduct experience, others argued for a more victim-led approach that would see the member of staff reported to suggesting the police be informed of the misconduct in a neutral way, with the student's wishes respected if they reject such referral:

I would expect them to be calm, and gain a full understanding of the situation. Emotional support, but also support with information *should I wish* to pursue things with police

(Male, gay, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

I would expect them to tell me to go to the police - because if the incident is serious enough realistically the university don't have the power to punish individuals.

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

I would want the person to tell me to go to the police

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant from the University of Liverpool)

7.1.2 Focus groups and interviews

Before participants and I discussed their immediate expectations of disclosing face-to-face, I thought it may be useful to broach the topic of the type of *environment* in which the student would like to report their experience of misconduct. On this note, participants across the study felt it necessary that students are able to disclose in a setting that is 'comfortable', where they can feel 'relaxed', and which is central to university life, in order to ensure easy accessibility. Their ideas of what constitutes such a setting includes places for reporting with particularly 'informal' decor:

PI: A quiet space with comfortable seats

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

PF: The counselling rooms are always, they're a friendly environment. Quite relaxed.

R: What's that look like?

PF: It's just really comfy chairs. Almost like living room-ish

(Male interviewee, University of Liverpool)

Other times, participants highlighted what they considered to constitute a 'comforting' and 'relaxed' setting by describing its opposite:

PQ: I think like ideally not an overall clinical environment.

(Male interviewee, University of Chester)

PJ: The environment is important, too. Like you don't want to be in a room that is imprisoning to you like with just a table and a camera and a person. You want it to be comfortable

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

Informality seemed to be the key to creating spaces where students would feel comfortable reporting sexual misconduct face-to-face. However, two caveats were offered by the participants of the mixed-sex focus group in Edge Hill. Firstly, they explained that there are

some environments that can be considered *too casual*, and thus inappropriate, for a student to make a face-to-face disclosure about sexual misconduct:

PH: I mean, I don't think it should be in someone's flat or in their room or anything

All: No

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

Additionally, following one participant stating that a non-clinical setting would be most preferable for reporting sexual misconduct, another countered this with a suggestion that some students would prefer a more 'formal' space for what it may symbolise in terms of their complaint being taken 'seriously':

PJ: Although some people might find that more formal setting is preferable to that [*a more informal setting*], because then they feel like it will be treated as a formal incident. So I think there should be a choice for the person where it's gonna be discussed

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

In terms of the support expected following a face-to-face disclosure, there were some types of assistance that all participants seemed to agree should be provided by staff to students. Firstly, on a personal level (and presumably to counter the distressed state of the affected student) staff are expected to remain 'calm' and 'collected' during a disclosure. Additionally, and perhaps unsurprisingly, all participants mentioned that they would expect a non-judgemental reaction to recounting their experience and would appreciate validation that 'this is something' (*Female focus group, Edge Hill*) and 'they have done the right thing' (*Female interviewee, University of Liverpool*) by speaking out.

Further, all participants stated that they would like to receive information on the 'usual protocol' (*Female interviewee, University of Liverpool*) of what happens following a disclosure of sexual misconduct, and would like to be presented with 'all the options' (*Male focus group, Edge Hill*) that are available to them regarding taking their complaint forward within the university. As explained by respondents in the male focus group at Edge Hill, this is so the best route going forward may be chosen according to the affected student's individual needs/wants:

PM: it's important to know what options you have available to you to do something erm I think if you just leave it around to fester then it ends up you just not doing what you need to do to take care of yourself

PL: and you want to make sure you've been given the whole picture as well you don't want to go down the one route and then see something that would have probably have been better for you

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

The participants of the female focus group also highlighted that it would be important to be well informed of the complaint process at the initial disclosure, because it would perhaps mitigate the student's anxiety when moving forward with their allegation:

PO: I think that when you first go in there and say look I need to tell someone this and they should say like right like this is what's gonna happen if you're reporting it. We're gonna have a chat we're gonna find out exactly what happened. There are maybe support services or if you want to access any counselling services you can and we'll give you a case number or you know something like that so you know exactly what the steps are when you go in there rather than getting to the end and telling them well right we'll get the other person to come in next week then and have a chat about it and you're like that's definitely not what I wanted to happen. So I think you should know, be really well informed about the process

PP: yeah that's what I was gonna say. I think if you have information about the person by the time you go there you know exactly what's going to happen.

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

The staff member to whom the student reports their complaint should additionally show compassion and care for the student's well-being, participants expressed. Throughout all the interviews and focus groups, there was a real sense that respondents wanted to feel as if the person hearing their complaint had a genuine interest in their situation and ongoing welfare. In what is arguably reminiscent of an informal situation between friends or loved ones following an unpleasant experience, the idea of offering the affected student a cup of tea before they disclosed was advocated by participants in both the female and mixed-sex focus groups and in two of the female interviews at the University of Liverpool. In addition, sympathy and frequent questions 'checking' on how the student is feeling throughout the disclosure was also thought to be something students expect upon reporting.

However, there apparently exists a fine line between showing compassion and being inappropriately personal, which respondents stated they would not expect nor want following a face-to-face disclosure. Some respondents, particularly those in the female focus group at Edge Hill and the female interviewees at University of Liverpool, suggested that they would not appreciate a flurry of hyper-emotional energy from staff following a disclosure:

PE: if you say like I've been sexually assaulted and somebody's like uuuuh my godddd I'm so sorry - gives you a hug and that would be like I don't need all this like - I've not come to you because I need you emotionally because that's what like all my friends are for I've just come to you like to report this?

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

PD: Try be calm about the situation

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

PD: I definitely think that's [*that there needs to be boundaries on how informal reporting staff are with students*] true because especially if it's someone you've never met for the first time having someone sort of just rush in [*laughs*] especially in that sort of

environment or not even knowing what sort of experience you're reporting might not be quite appropriate at the time.

(Female interviewee at University of Liverpool)

PC: In terms of reaction I don't know. I think it just depends on the individual person, like if someone doesn't perceive themselves as a victim, I wouldn't want someone to be overly sympathetic towards me or I dunno like a-I'd need a little bit of sympathy but also a productive like fair person who's like right we'll do this we'll do this we'll do this. Rather than 'oooooooooh!'

(Female interviewee at University of Liverpool)

As can be discerned, too much emotion from a staff member is seen as both misplaced and as constituting a deviation from their 'professional' role at the university where they are assumed to act with the authority to formally receive, and perhaps help pursue, an allegation of sexual misconduct.

Additionally, and finally, highlighted by the last comment from the female interviewee at University of Liverpool is that too much condolence from a staff member could be rejected by students for potentially conflicting with their conception of themselves as not a 'victim' but a 'survivor'. This point is particularly interesting as from it we learn that staff receiving disclosures within universities must remain cautious not to (possibly further) disempower students who have experienced sexual misconduct by positioning them as 'weak' or lacking in emotional strength by their reactions.

7.2 Disclosures made non-verbally

7.2.1 Qualitative section of the survey

The survey also sought to investigate what support students would expect if they were to fill out a form or report their experience through an online portal. Overwhelmingly, participants expressed that they would expect to receive an email reply that invited the student to come in and speak face-to-face with a member of staff about their experience:

To receive an email requesting a face-to-face discussion to get more details of the incidents

(Male, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

To be asked in for a face-to-face chat with support staff

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

I would expect the university to schedule a face-to-face meeting

(Female, bisexual, mixed participant at the University of Liverpool)

A one-to-one session discussing this as I personally believe that sending an email/filling a form would not be able to demonstrate how much fear I'm feeling when experiencing this

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

I would expect a fast follow up email to arrange a meeting with an appropriate member of staff to further discuss the occurrence/s

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

As evident from some of the above examples, a follow up meeting in a co-present context is desired by many students after an online/form-type disclosure as presumably 'face-to-face' is the only way that 'more details' (both factual and emotional) can be provided about the incident. In the same vein, although expressed by a much smaller proportion, some students stated that they would expect a phone call in response that invited them to a face-to-face meeting.

Somewhat vaguely, many students simply stated that they would expect 'a response' by email following a disclosure of sexual misconduct through an online portal or form. Out of those who made such a comment, a small portion usefully indicated that they would appreciate a swift response from a staff member once their disclosure has been submitted:

[in reply to expectations following reporting or via a form]

A very fast response

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

To receive a reply within 1 working day outlining my options for further support

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Swift contact back with some important suggestion

(Male, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

Reply from someone within a few days with where to get support from and further steps

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Quick response acknowledging you and your incident

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

To be *immediately* contacted

(Female, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

I would expect prompt response

(Male, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

Such comments helpfully show that if a student chooses to report their experience using the internet or by filling in a form, a timely response is necessary for them to feel heard and supported. As is also evident from these comments, some students feel comfortable with receiving aspects of support via email and expect such support to constitute suggestions and information on 'next steps' in the reporting process, and signposts to internal/external support

services students can use⁶. These findings mirror those presented in the section detailing students' expectations following face-to-face disclosures, and are also representative of participants' opinions across the survey.

Another expectation of responses following an online or form-based disclosure of sexual misconduct was that the incident be 'investigated'. This response was offered quite frequently in this section of the survey, but unfortunately without explanation:

[*I would expect an*] Investigation and offers of support

(*Female, asexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool*)

I would expect an initial investigation to take place as well as providing links to related information

(*Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester*)

7.2.2 Focus groups and interviews

Participants also discussed their immediate expectations upon reporting their sexual misconduct experiences digitally, using email or through an online form. Likely linked to other responses they have received when emailing the university (or other large institutions whose communication is predominantly digital), participants spoke with mixed feelings about receiving an automated response to their disclosure. Most participants actively raised the idea of an automated response in order to confirm its inappropriateness, likening it to talking to a 'robot' (*Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill*), and explaining that it would make them feel as if someone has not actually acknowledged their complaint (*female interviewee, University of Liverpool*). This was countered rather interestingly, however, by the participants in the male focus group at Edge Hill. These participants stated that, providing that another tailored email response was given at a later date, they would advocate:

PK: Some kind of like fixed email they'd send out first saying like your email has been sent it will be dealt with within a time

(*Male focus group, Edge Hill University*)

Contrary to the majority, these participants expressed that such a response would satisfy their need to be assured that their complaint has been received and logged.

Nevertheless, on the whole participants stated that they would expect an email following a disclosure online that provided an overview of the current reporting process at their university, but that then either encouraged or gave the student the option of coming in to university to disclose their situation *face-to-face*. For some, this preference was given without explanation.

⁶ For clarity, participants asked that support services and agencies be signposted to students such as counselling, the police, and support groups on sexual misconduct.

For others, particularly those whose preference was reporting sexual misconduct face-to-face, an email response suggesting a chat in person was thought most appropriate due to some perceived disadvantages in receiving support through digital means. Shortly after expressing that they would prefer to physically talk to someone to report sexual misconduct (as they would feel more like something was 'being done' about their situation) the participants of the female focus group in Edge Hill had this to say:

PP: I'd expect someone to send me like a personal email because from an online form I'm sure I'd put all my details there. So the person in charge of the online form should email me or call me or send me a text and ask for the fully story in order to make a judgement. So I think that's what should happen next. And anything intimate they should ask me, like, come in can we discuss this?

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

Similarly, a member of the male focus group at Edge Hill stated that a digital response should be a stepping stone to face-to-face disclosure because:

PL: I think being able to talk to a person is a very important thing coz there's a big difference in how you can talk to somebody face to face versus over text. It just doesn't have the same feeling to it, there's just more you can get across in person face to face than you can over text

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

Although not shown explicitly, these comments illustrate that some students believe staff should always try for face-to-face disclosures of sexual misconduct. Reports using technological means, it seems, cannot facilitate quick 'resolutions' to a student's distress, and instead can actually *prevent* the type of comprehensive and accessible communication necessary for students to disclose and be supported effectively following their experience of sexual misconduct.

Though significantly fewer in number, some respondents did express a preference for a response to their online disclosure of sexual misconduct in which *all* support was provided online. However, 'support' here took on a particular meaning for these respondents, denoting solely information about how to navigate their university's reporting process as opposed to emotional or pastoral support:

[After asking what response they'd expect after they have reported their experience digitally]

PE: just sort of an email that says we've received this and it's logged or whatever and the next step is. I don't sort of know what the university does with reports of sexual misconduct but like to say that whatever's going to be done is going to be done and urm with like whatever resources that they have to go forward

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

PF: An email just stating the procedure and whatever's gonna happen next

(Male interviewee, University of Liverpool)

Further, when pressed on why they would not expect to receive emotional support via email following an online disclosure, participants stated simply that if they were choosing to report an assault digitally, it would be because they were not distressed enough to need emotional support. This suggests that for some students who have experienced perceivably traumatic sexual misconduct, digital communication of support relating to their psychological welfare is inappropriate. This provides an interesting counterbalance to the previous finding that students who experienced 'more serious' incidents of sexual misconduct may prefer to report online to avoid additional trauma through re-telling their experience.

7.3 Expectations after reporting anonymously

7.3.1 Qualitative section of the survey

Expectations following anonymous reporting at universities proved to be a difficult topic for participants in this research. Many participants across the survey simply stated that they 'don't know' what they could expect if they reported an incident of sexual misconduct anonymously because they are aware that without offering their identity, students possibly cannot receive 'adequate' aftercare and the alleged perpetrator cannot be investigated effectively.

For those who thought that something *could* be done even with anonymous reports, most stated that an investigation should follow a disclosure (just as it would if the affected student had reported sexual misconduct with their identity not hidden). Indicating a belief that just one anonymous allegation is enough to warrant exploration into a 'perpetrator', a significant proportion of participants offered that upon receiving an anonymous report of misconduct, the university should:

Conduct an investigation

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

I would expect an initial investigation to take place

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Investigate

(Male, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

They should get the individual involved and questioned him or her

(Female, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

To be pro-active and take reasonable action to investigate the report

(Male, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

I would want the university to look into the accusations made

(Female, lesbian, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Use it to question the people named

(Male, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Liverpool)

Not all participants agreed with this, however. Suggesting that one standalone anonymous allegation is not enough to see an 'accused' student investigated, many students offered that anonymous allegations should be stored and quantified, only reaching the investigation or sanctioning stage when numerous reports have been made about the same individual:

[I think they should] Record it and monitor the situation. First to build a picture of the extent of the problem at the university but also, second, to launch its own investigation if lots of anonymous complaints come in about the same sort of thing or same person

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

[I think they should] Act as best they could without any testimony. It could be that multiple accounts of a type of behaviour at a certain site is recorded anonymously, this would at least point to an issue.

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Use it in relation to other offences that are thought to have been committed by the same person.

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Analyse it for patterns. If there are a disproportionate number of complaints against a particular staff member for example, or in a particular area of the campus.

(Female, bisexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

It's a bit more complicated, as a victim I would expect actions to be taken, for example I would expect the university to 'investigate' in order to support my claim (i.e. previous records, anyone who could testify of the inappropriate behaviour).

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Liverpool)

They should keep a record of the academic that is mentioned more often than not and investigate with the intention to resolve the tension that exists among students and possible colleagues.

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

It is not always clear here what type of action a student believes should follow the collation of reports about the same 'perpetrator' (i.e. some clearly suggest 'investigation' whereas others more vaguely state that the university should simply 'use' the information or 'act' upon it). However, evident is that in relation to anonymous allegations, some students believe no action should be taken against an accused individual until there is a *documented pattern* of this behaviour that is attributable to them.

The idea of collating anonymous reports seemed to be popular amongst students across the survey, and not just in order to build up a case for investigation/sanction against alleged perpetrators. Participants also expressed that the university could keep record of the anonymous reports they received about sexual misconduct in order to publish them in the form of statistics. For some, such statistics would be used internally by academics to discern patterns of sexual misconduct on their campuses and aid intervention strategies:

Store it and use it to see where assault is most common, what sort of things happen regularly and how they could change things to prevent it

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Use it to make noticeable and reasonable structural improvement to prevent future incidents

(Male, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

1/ Add it to their statistics. 2/ Use the details to inform university policy on safeguarding of students and their wellbeing, and strategies for prevention and handling of such incidents.

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Store all information so that trends in happenings throughout the university can be seen in hope of preventing, or at least limiting, incidents of sexual misconduct

(Gender fluid, pansexual, mixed participant at the University of Liverpool)

Look at it statistically to see what could be done if it was something that was happening more often than not

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

For others, a statistical record of anonymous reports of sexual misconduct should be used by universities specifically as a base for initiatives that spread awareness of this issue on campus:

I would expect them to collect data and use it to prevent the same incidents from happening again, such as taking extra measures or using statistics to provide information

(Female, bisexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

Use the statistics for campaigning to raise awareness on campus

(Male, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

Keep it anonymous at all times, except in the case of multiple attacks/acts by the same offender - that information could be collated and shared with other victims (but not with the names of the other victims attached without permission)

(Female, asexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

They could use them [*anonymous reports*] to raise awareness

(Male, gay, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

Use them to have public talks in all departments and halls

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant from the University of Liverpool)

Further, similarly to the responses expected following reporting misconduct face-to-face, by telephone, or via an online network or form, reports made anonymously were considered as needing to be followed by a list of support services affected students may want to access, and options they can take to escalate their allegation:

Email them back with their options

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

I would expect support to be offered or advice on what to do next even if it means getting help from resources outside of the university

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

Provide information about professional support an individual could gain, as well as their options with regards to the law should they wish to pursue the matter

(Male, gay, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

8 Ongoing support

8.1 Qualitative section of the survey

In addition to the provision of support groups for survivors of sexual violence, participants overwhelmingly advocated for affected students to be offered counselling as the main form of ongoing support provided by their university following sexual misconduct:

Offer 1 to 1 counselling

(Male, heterosexual, Asian, participant from Edge Hill University)

A good, experienced, and understanding mental health support team including counsellors, etc. to provide ongoing support for the individual

(Female, lesbian, white participant from the University of Chester)

Access to specialist counsellors who are trained to deal with these situations and best provide support the victim for as long as they need it

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

Counselling and rehabilitation in a judgement-free, confidential environment

(Female, heterosexual, black participant from the University of Chester)

Counselling if they need it

(Male, heterosexual, black participant from the University of Chester)

Psychological help

(Male, gay, white participant from the University of Liverpool)

Good counselling services, have people to be there for them who don't treat them like an experiment like most counsellors do, but who listen and give advice. Most counsellors I've been to in the past with problems treat me like a victim, and I feel like a victim whenever I speak to them. Which just brings the experience back and makes it harder to move on. It also makes me hate going to see them because I feel so weak with them. But the university should give some support and someone to listen and give advice who is supportive, not a person who makes you feel weak and brings the experiences back

(White participant from the University of Liverpool)

I have worked through my incident and had three appointments with the counselling service. I think I was lucky that I am a strong person, who does her own research on topics that are addressed during a meeting. However, the university needs to ask themselves why there is a limit to meetings I can have, which is only 3

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant from the University of Liverpool)

As can be seen, although counselling and psychological support sessions are popular choices for ongoing support for students affected by sexual misconduct, they do not come without caveats. Students view counselling sessions to be fruitless if they are limited to a particular number, if the counsellor is not specifically trained in sexual misconduct support, and if the sessions do not focus on empowerment and moving forwards (as opposed to treating the student like a victim stuck in a stagnant, negative situation).

Interventions put in place that allow the student to continue to flourish at university both socially and academically were also advocated by participants as a necessary method of support. Academically, participants asked that leniency and extra help is offered to a student who has been victim of sexual assault:

Show how to apply for extenuating circumstances. Make sure their studies are able to continue as much as they wish

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Extenuating circumstances

(Female, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Liverpool)

Discuss options with the student regarding their studies and any adjustments that need to be made to ensure their studies are not wrecked as a result

(Male, gay, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Study break

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Participants further championed for spatial separation of perpetrator and victim as a form of ongoing support for students following sexual assault. In some cases, this involved the affected student being offered the opportunity to move accommodation if it is the same hall or flat the perpetrator resides in:

Alternative accommodation should be provided if the incident happened in their [the affected student's] place of living

(Male, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Possibility of change of university accommodation or support with change of non-university housing / offer of sheltered university flat if necessary

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Perhaps temporary accommodation?

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

In other cases, participants expressed that it is desirable for victimised students to be offered the chance to swap modules or courses at their university in order to not have to come into

contact with the perpetrator. Also advocated was the chance for victimised students to be able to study from home:

Students should be given the chance to continue the course at home

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

The student should be allowed to change their course

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Like participants from the interview and focus group section of this research, many countered the idea that it should be the *victimised* student that is made to move to away from the perpetrator, in order to mitigate any further psychological distress to themselves. Such respondents offered that it should instead be the student who has *committed* the sexual misconduct offence who is made to spatially segregate themselves from the victim, as it is their behaviour that has caused the need for separation. Those who advocated this type of support for victimised students expressed that perpetrators should not only be disallowed to live in the same accommodation or learn on the same module/course as their 'victims', in some cases they should be excluded from the university altogether.

Participants who answered this question additionally expressed desire for victimised students of sexual misconduct to be offered ongoing support in the form of legal advice and advocacy in interactions with the criminal justice system:

Counselling and legal advice

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Students to be given legal advice

(Female, bisexual, Asian participant at the University of Chester)

Act as an advocate during legal process

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Advocacy in terms of having someone with them e.g. at police interviews

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Police service advice

(Female, bisexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

As well as regular follow-up communication with the affected student to enquire about their welfare and needs, participants thought that students should be encouraged by university staff (those they have been in contact with regarding their experience) to re-engage in university life in a fun, positive way. Many respondents suggested encouraging students to begin or continue with an extra-curricular activity to make university life easier following an experience of sexual assault:

The university should encourage them to join a society

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Remind them that they have nothing to fear and that activities will allow the student to meet new and kinder people

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Ask them who they trust and get a friend to encourage them to do different things and to get out and enjoy themselves

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

By having a group activities once a week, bringing them out of the university to see around and explore, this is because usually this kind of student after the incident they tend to shut themselves out

(Female, bisexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

Support with finding a new uni society to join or something similar to facilitate rebuilding of social life

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Illustrating the importance that students give to social aspects of university life, respondents here provide ideas for two avenues – direct contact or through a peer – through which staff can encourage students affected by sexual misconduct to reintegrate themselves into university life.

Reintegration into university life was also thought to be facilitated through the introduction of a peer mentor or ‘buddy’. Across the survey, participants explained this would constitute someone that the affected student knows and trusts to accompany them around the university campus and provide a ‘base’ to be touched upon when the student is feeling distress related to their experience:

Peer mentoring would be good

(Female, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Liverpool)

Establish a network of trained advocates amongst current cohort, or graduates, with some compensation who could mentor those who had experienced serious sexual misconduct, to the extent they could co-participate in activities is feasible / appropriate

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Counselling and mental health support, maybe offer them a student buddy who they can either go to lectures with, if they’re on the same course, or just as a person who makes sure the student is coping, is getting the support they need, and feels that they can carry on with uni

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Structured opportunities for peer support would be great

(Female, bisexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

Assign a peer/ partner to stick with them through lectures and their time at university

(Female, bisexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

Offer of someone to walk with them if they don't want to go places alone

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

As a form of ongoing support, participants suggested mitigating further damage to students' physical and mental well-being caused by issues surrounding sexual misconduct. Across the survey, many advocated the introduction of 'preventative measures'. Whilst some called in fairly general terms for the university to prevent sexual misconduct ('Take steps in ensuring they are protected from it happening again'; *Male, heterosexual, Asian participant from the University of Liverpool*), others specifically asked for a 'culture change' at university that denounces sexual misconduct and promotes that there is no 'stigma' attached to reporting an assault:

To talk about these issues in Flat Chats, Fresher's Week, SU campaigns, work with bars and clubs in Chester. People need to know that it's an offence and not part of university life

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Make it an unacceptable behaviour with exclusion of attackers from the university

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Liverpool)

Very clearly advertise over campus that sexual misconduct is serious and unacceptable

(Male, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Make sure that all know that sexual misconduct is not tolerated, so it can be prevented in future

(Female, lesbian, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Instead of making sexual misconduct such a taboo topic, attempt to make it something that is easier to talk about so that those affected don't feel like they are doing the wrong thing by speaking out

(Gender fluid, pansexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

Remove the stigma from reporting

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Arguably privileging protection of students' corporeal body, other respondents instead spoke more specifically of practical preventative measures of sexual misconduct acts:

More security around accommodation

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Ensuring security is adequate (e.g. security guards on campus at night, offering free transport to and from university events or between campuses, especially at night

(Female, asexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Help them to feel safe around campus and in university halls for example, by providing them with some sort of welfare officer that they can visit on campus when extra support is needed. Offer a get home safe service for example through working with local taxi companies or offering a shuttle bus service back to halls from university events such as AU night so that students know that they can always get home safely

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

They should also let them know who to call, which people are there in different parts of the uni that will help them e.g. who in the guild, in their department, halls etc.

(Male, gay, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Get someone to the student trusts (such as another student they know well) to help them feel more comfortable (such as walking with them between lectures)

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Offer counselling, *bodyguards, self-defence training*

(Male, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Liverpool; emphasis added)

Major sort out on the drugs used to spike drinks

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

Finally, participants raised that a form of ongoing support needed is 'identity work' to assist students to successfully ease back into university life following an incident of sexual misconduct. Such 'identity work' is thought to involve the use of interception strategies that prevent students from adopting the master label of 'victim'. Across the survey, participants offered that these strategies could include:

When people go through experiences like this it changes them and while they need help to get past it, things in their life, ie: university need to remain consistent. So instead of making them feel different, expect from them what you would have before the incident unless they say otherwise

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

I think just treat them normally and not judge them based on the experience. Show them that you care and that they are still free to enjoy their university life

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

To encourage them that it is not the end of the world and that they need to move on. That they need to get on with it and continue to do great things for the society

(Male, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

To be treated like any other student is the best way. The misconduct does not define me or my work

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

8.2 Focus groups and interviews

Highlighting the emotional trauma students believe would follow sexual misconduct, participants across all focus groups and interviews believed that students should be offered support from the counselling service following an incident of sexual misconduct. However, two interesting additional ideas were raised with regards to receiving such support. Firstly, and particularly from the mixed-sex focus group participants at Edge Hill and one female interviewee at University of Liverpool, it was suggested that students should not have a limit on how many counselling sessions they receive. All of these participants spoke with dismay of there being roughly only 6 sessions available to a student from the counselling service, arguing that this might not be enough to help an affected student feel a sense of well-being following their experience of sexual assault:

PA: At the moment the normal counsellors you're allowed like 6 sessions and then you have to reapply and get on the waiting list again [...] But I think that's an issue that there should be more funding over the whole counselling service so that no one has to be on the waiting list on the first place and you could have counselling the whole time at university if that's what you wanted

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

This same participant additionally raised the idea that university counselling services are not providing enough specialised support for students affected by sexual misconduct, and are instead offering alternatives that are logistically problematic. In describing the situation at the University of Liverpool, particularly, the respondent told of how a student affected by sexual misconduct can perhaps have *one* session with a counsellor that specifically works through their experience of sexual misconduct. Generally, however, since she believes that at this university counsellors have not received any focused training in how to support a student following sexual misconduct, the respondent described how students are often signposted to Rape and Sexual Assault Merseyside if they need further emotional support:

PA: RASA is really far away. You have to get a train from central station and if you live on Smithdown [*an area in Liverpool that is popular for students to live*] it's like double the journey [*as students would have to arrange travel to Central Station and then get the train from there to RASA's location*]

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

For this respondent, the perceived lack of trained counsellors in sexual violence at her university in combination with their decision to 'outsource' such support was seen as an active failure on the university's behalf to provide ongoing support to students following sexual misconduct. RASA was described as an excessive journey for a student to make who is already 'shaken up' by having been victim of sexual violence and the participant strongly advocated that this be rectified within the university through hiring counsellors trained in sexual trauma.

The contention raised here was in made relation to the University of Liverpool alone. However it is arguably important that institutions who too do not provide training for counsellors in sexual misconduct support are mindful that this same disdain may be present amongst their student population.

In an interesting alternative to traditional counselling sessions, participants of the mixed-sex focus group at Edge Hill highlighted that a useful way for students to be supported after their sexual misconduct experience would be to have the option to attend an on-campus support group for students who have experienced sexual misconduct:

PH: I think they could have the option of like a support group, like we're all sat here now. Like some people might be ok with that they might not want one on one support because they might feel it's too personal and not comfortable. If like everyone's there and they've all got similar experiences and when this has happened to someone else you meet someone erm who understands what you've gone through. You don't even need to know anyone's name

PI: so like a support group within the university

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

As shown, respondents offered this type of support as an option for students who perhaps feel a one-on-one session discussing their experience would be too intense. Additionally, it was discussed as likely useful for those who would be put at ease by talking about their situation with others who have experienced similar incidents.

As the discussion went on, however, it was thought that a support group dealing with sexual misconduct that spanned from 'less' to 'more' serious incidents could result in those who had experienced 'less serious' sexual misconduct doubting the legitimacy of their experience. This was countered then helpfully by the idea of creating a support group that ran according to different 'themes' of misconduct each week:

PG: it could even be that you don't have to have separate groups if that's like not possible but having different weeks with different things to talk about. So people are aware of what week is what and they can decide for themselves like I feel more comfortable going to this session so then they have the option to go and they're still part of that community rather than being like I'm this group because I'm less affected. They can all then talk together if they can

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

Having regular check-ins with the staff member who received the disclosure also seemed to be important to respondents in terms of ongoing support. In particular, students expected this contact to involve a mix of practical and emotional support. For example:

PK: I suppose it depends on the severity of the situation. if it's something that both the person bringing the issue up and the other party [*inaudible*] it probably doesn't need too much follow up. Maybe just an email a few weeks a few days after saying y'know just checking email. But if it is something very serious I'd expect quite regular contact

PL: it really does depend on the person because some people don't handle these things as well as others and that's just how life is people handle things better than others, in different ways um I'm trying to think of like you were saying, the severity of the situation, if it's really severe you obviously want to have more available to you, more contact available to you er whereas if it's something smaller, still important but smaller then at least every month or every maybe so often checking up to make sure you're still alright

PK: and then also it depends on the kind of communication you have with the person involved. If it was just a message one fair enough, if you met face to face you'd want that sort of relationship, you've got an ongoing relationship you start to know each other well you'd expect there to be something more personal to it 'hey fancy meeting up and talking over this? Fancy a chat?'

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

PO: I think like when you have your (.) initial face to face like you wouldn't want to be inundated like right we're gonna meet every week for six months because at that time you're probably just thinking about like that particular moment in time but if they say like do you want to schedule another meeting for like 2 weeks or something or like right you know where we are now erm we're gonna send you like a text or like a letter by your preferred like communication but if you want more you can like refer them to the counselling service

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

PD: I think having a set time might be appropriate for some but not others

R: So you need to be constantly in communication with the student asking what they need?

PD: No it should be led by the student, how much they want and what they say

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

Although embedded within discussions of different topics, the fact that the contact students stated they would like to receive following sexual misconduct came in part in the form of 'y'know just checking', 'mak[ing] sure you're still alright', and as contact that could see the student requiring 'more' in the form of 'counselling' (*Female focus group interviewee, Edge*

Hill University), arguably highlighted that students envisage something akin to follow up 'listening-ear' sessions following sexual misconduct victimisation.

Indeed, the participants of the male focus group made this point explicit, explaining to me when I prompted for clarification of exactly what they expected these continued support check-ins to include:

R: so what I want to pick up on is you all seem to be saying a few weeks or a few months you can drop us an email and say you can come for a coffee with me we'll have a chat... what kind of support are you expecting in that meeting? Is it therapy sessions? More information?

PK: it'd be more like an informal chat, how the person is, it doesn't have to be psychological

PL: it's case by case

PN: it's also important to stay away from therapy sessions because that's something I know from my experience and my friends' that people don't like having therapy, people like having a conversation with people who understand them they don't want someone to make it all better they want someone they can let it all out at. I think that's the most important thing, staying away from therapy-

PL: a lot of people are able to self reflect and fix their issues as long as they're able to get them out somewhere um therapy from my experience has always been a much stronger thing you're actively seeking for a very different view of what's going on or you feel as if you're being studied because it's a very odd feeling to feel studied. So it really does depend on how far the person is seeking help if they want to be studied in some way and have everything they're doing questioned or if they just want to have a chat, get it all out so they can start feeling better on their own

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

The second aspect of continued support recommended for students affected by sexual misconduct across most of the interviews and focus groups was centred on ways to ensure the student could still academically flourish at university following victimisation. For most, this took the forms of the provision of academic extensions or the application of extenuating circumstances to coursework or exams:

PJ: if the tutor is aware of it [*a student's experience of sexual misconduct*] like make sure it's [*their lecture*] recorded

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

PE: I think it should be treated, it should be like an um an extenuating circumstance? Like if somebody's been raped a week before their exams that's gonna impact their performance and it should be recognised in the same way as if they'd been hit by a car in the week before exams or if a relative had died like that sort of level of impact on you

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

PA: The disability support service should be widened to include students that have faced these issues [*of sexual misconduct*] as well so that these students will then have access to things like extended deadlines that they wouldn't have to apply for just through mitigating circumstances. They would have support plans already in place.

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

Within these examples, students implicitly link the idea of good mental health with the ability to successfully navigate the academic side of university life. This is shown by positioning the psychological distress caused by sexual misconduct as akin to a student's physical disability or devastating life event that is already established by the academy as having the potential to negatively impact studying.

Suggesting that experiences of sexual misconduct cause emotional distress thus leads to students requesting that extensions or consideration be given to assist an affected student in completing their assignments. Of particular additional note is the idea that the psychological upset caused by sexual assault may be so severe for students that it is necessary to include it within the purview of disability support. Such a view illustrates the truly insidious and debilitating consequences some students believe sexual misconduct to induce and is thus of great importance to universities concerned about student welfare.

Being provided with learning resources (such as recorded lectures and PowerPoints) to study at home was also offered as a form of ongoing support for victims following an experience of sexual misconduct, especially when both victim and perpetrator reside in close proximity. In order not to detract from the affected student's learning by inducing further upset, some participants, such as those from the female and mixed-sex focus group at Edge Hill, argued that it is the *perpetrator* who should be made to learn from home. As explained by the students of this latter group, the perpetrator must take 'responsibility for their actions' by adhering to whatever spatial separation the survivor requires to feel comfortable in their learning environment:

PH: well a lot of lectures are actually audio recorded and a PowerPoint will be put up to the system. So if there is someone who is on the same course the perp I believe should not be in the same lecture because they should only be able to learn from that lecture on their own

PI: yeah coz they did the action that caused that so they should be the ones suffering the consequences

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

Additionally, while some participants (such as those focus groups of both sexes undertaken at the University of Liverpool and the mixed-sex focus group at Edge Hill) contrastingly advocated for the affected student to be able to learn from home if on the same course as the perpetrator, not everyone was convinced this constituted effective ongoing support. Particularly, one of the female respondents from the female focus group at Edge Hill

suggested that universities can be home to a culture of rumour-spreading and gossiping that would cause further distress to a survivor of sexual misconduct if he or she were to refrain from education sessions where the perpetrator was in attendance. In response to another participant that suggested giving the affected student one-to-one tuition, she had this to say:

PP: do you think if they did that everyone would be wondering why she's getting that different treatment, like why is she having a one to one why can't we all have a one to one? Erm I just think it depends on a lot. Because definitely I think I want to know why she having a one to one and why am I not having a one to one coz rumours would be spread around and she'd be very uncomfortable and she'd start thinking oh these guys already know that I've been raped or sexually assaulted (.) yeah it's a good idea to do but I just think it's needs a lot of thinking

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

For another male student in the mixed-sex focus group, offering the victimised student the opportunity to learn at home would additionally be problematic due to the current learning set up of some university courses:

PH: My lectures aren't actually recorded so it would have to be they're either there or they're kicked off. We have to sign into all of our lectures. So they'd have to be there. And we get power points but they're quite vague without the tutor description so they wouldn't be able to catch up

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

As can be seen here, participants agreed that for student-on-student misconduct it is necessary to provide support that encourages an affected student to engage successfully in academic life post-assault, with this being achieved most effectively through an enforced suspension from educational spaces. However, opinions were generally divided on how this could be achieved, on which student was to be given the opportunity to learn from home, making conclusions from this issue in the research difficult.

With participants acknowledging that most members of staff on campus can be avoided by students (i.e. administrative staff, who students may only need to see sporadically, or catering teams that may be avoided by eating elsewhere), talk quickly turned within the focus groups and interviews to support when the perpetrator was the student's lecturer or seminar leader. Unsurprisingly, most participants expressed that whether the act of misconduct was sexist comments or physical sexual assault, the only appropriate course of support for a student would be suspension of the accused staff member. Participants explained this with reference to the inherent unequal power dynamics perceived as present in staff-student relationships:

PB: I just think with a lecturer, even if it's on the more minor end of sexual misconduct it just becomes so much more serious. I dunno, because that power dynamic is so different, isn't it? you get somebody who's marking your work and in the department you speak to people all the time and, I dunno that's obviously a really problematic

situation. I think discipline for staff should be harsher for the same incident as a student just because the power dynamic is really different there I think

R: So what would you advocate in that situation?

PB: I'm quite hard lined [*laughs*] there just needs to be zero tolerance policy. It just needs suspension for a period of time and to allow the student to progress through their studies, as well, without interaction with that member of staff

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

The example given above, additionally representative of other participants' views, exemplifies a concern students have that their full academic participation would be hindered by the established (and esteemed) position their perpetrator holds within their department.

Overall, appropriate ongoing support for students affected by sexual misconduct was not considered to be shaped by any intersectional positionalities a student may hold. However, some participants did highlight that the psychological distress caused by misconduct may be heightened for particularly younger students who have just joined the university, as it may compound an anxiety already felt at their arrival in a new and alien environment. For these participants, it is thus essential that such students be monitored for their well-being 'more' than other groups of students who have experienced sexual misconduct, and that they are provided with 'intervention'-style social activities to 'take their minds off' (*Female focus group, Edge Hill University*) their assault (although no examples of these activities were given). The second 'group' of students considered to need qualitatively different ongoing support were those that suffered from some sort of mental 'impairment', like a type of learning disability or a mental health issue:

PO: Before we mentioned people with mental illnesses but people who are suicidal or like might have been known to attempt to take their life or erm I think like they would need like very sort of close monitoring

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

PJ: maybe people with special educational needs maybe need a bit more support because it can depending on the person it can take a while to feel an effect from that support for people with that kind of disability

PI: people can't always [*inaudible*] their emotions or erm like don't understand sarcasm, like loads of people with special needs so sometimes they maybe know something wrong has happened but they need it explained to them and you probably would need someone-

PJ: you'd need someone to talk about it that they trust

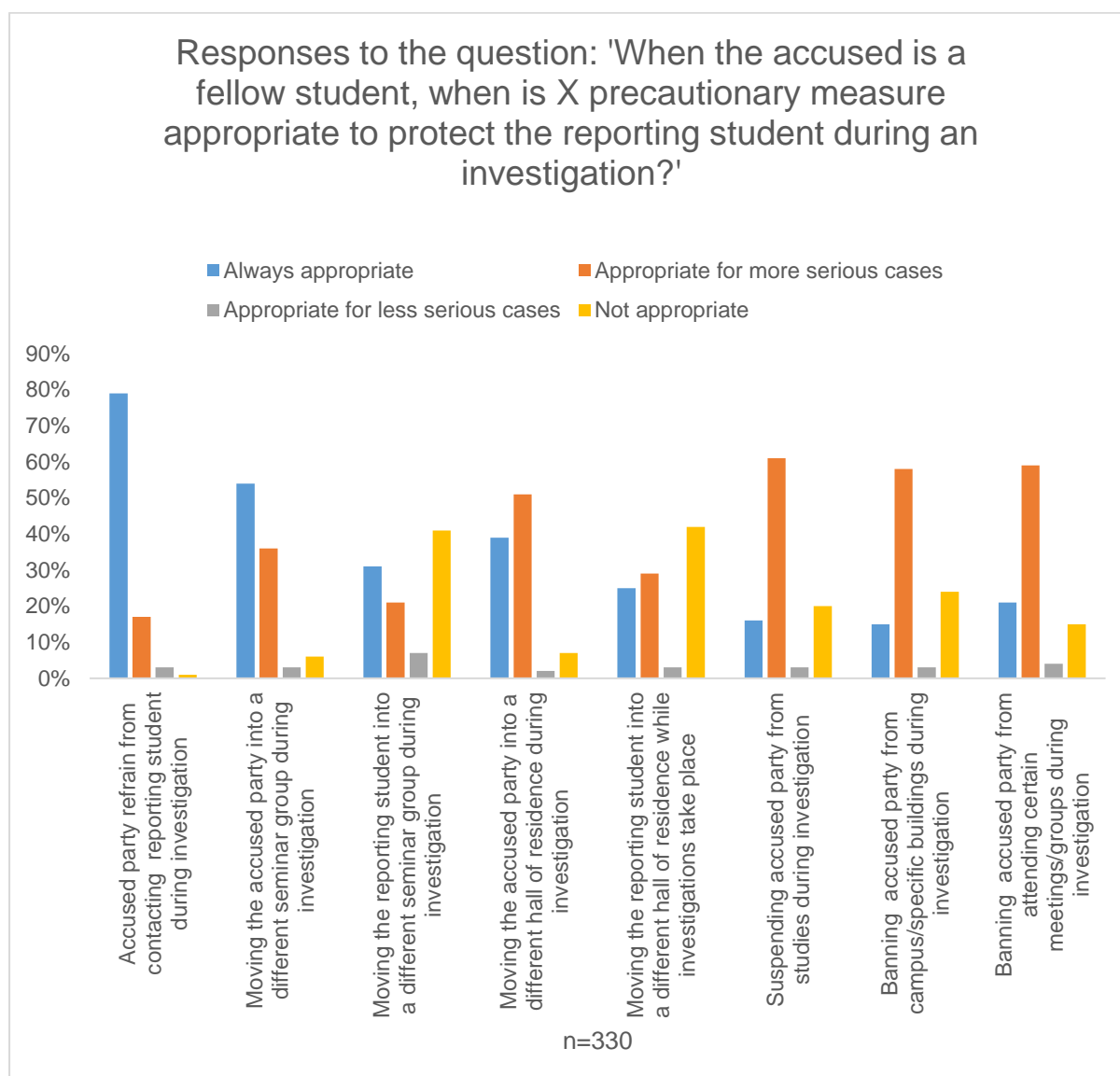
(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

9 Precautionary measures to protect the reporting and accused during an investigation

9.1 Quantitative responses

Graph F displays the total responses to whether particular precautionary measures are ever 'appropriate' during an investigation into sexual misconduct, committed by a fellow student, in order to protect the reporting student.

Graph F



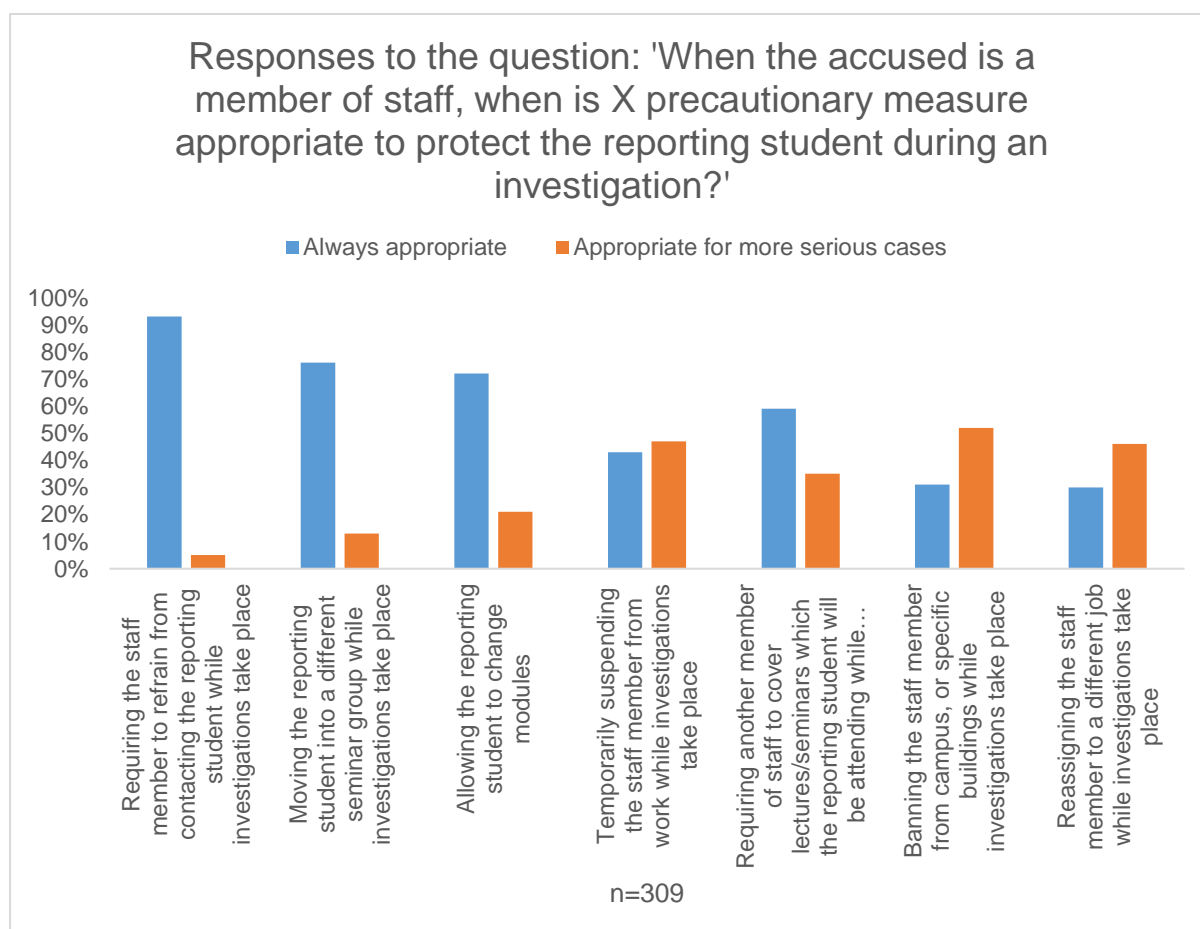
As shown, students indicate that for investigations into all types of sexual misconduct, the accused should be made to refrain from contacting the reporting student until an outcome has been reached (257 respondents or 79% out of 330 total). However, in all but one instance

(that of moving a student from a seminar group where the reporting student is in attendance), students advocated that exclusion in some form of the accused party is only appropriate in 'more serious cases'. For example, 58% of respondents were in favour of accused students being banned from campus or a specific building during an investigation of a 'serious' nature, in contrast to only 3% of respondents who favoured this measure when the allegation is 'less serious'. Further, 61% of students deemed it acceptable for an accused student of a 'serious' sexual offence to be banned from their studies whilst under investigation, while only 3% agreed the same in 'less serious' allegations of sexual misconduct. Such findings suggest that students endorse the idea that disruption to a student's university life before they have been proven guilty can be both distressing and unfair, and they thus advocate it only in perceivably 'more severe' cases.

Interestingly, respondents did not deem appropriate any of the measures proposed in the survey that related to 'less serious' sexual misconduct. With regards to this 'type' of misconduct, responses stating that the proposed sanctions would be appropriate never reached more than 7% of the total sample (330 respondents). This is perhaps thus a further avenue for exploration by universities looking to more successfully intercept, and deal with, sexual misconduct on campuses. Suggesting a harmony amongst students of conventional 'genders', and across both the University of Liverpool and Chester on this topic, breakdowns of responses by 'gender' and 'university' mirrored these aforementioned trends.

Graph G shows the total number of respondents that answered the question giving their opinion on how appropriate certain precautionary measures were during an investigation when the accused is a member of staff.

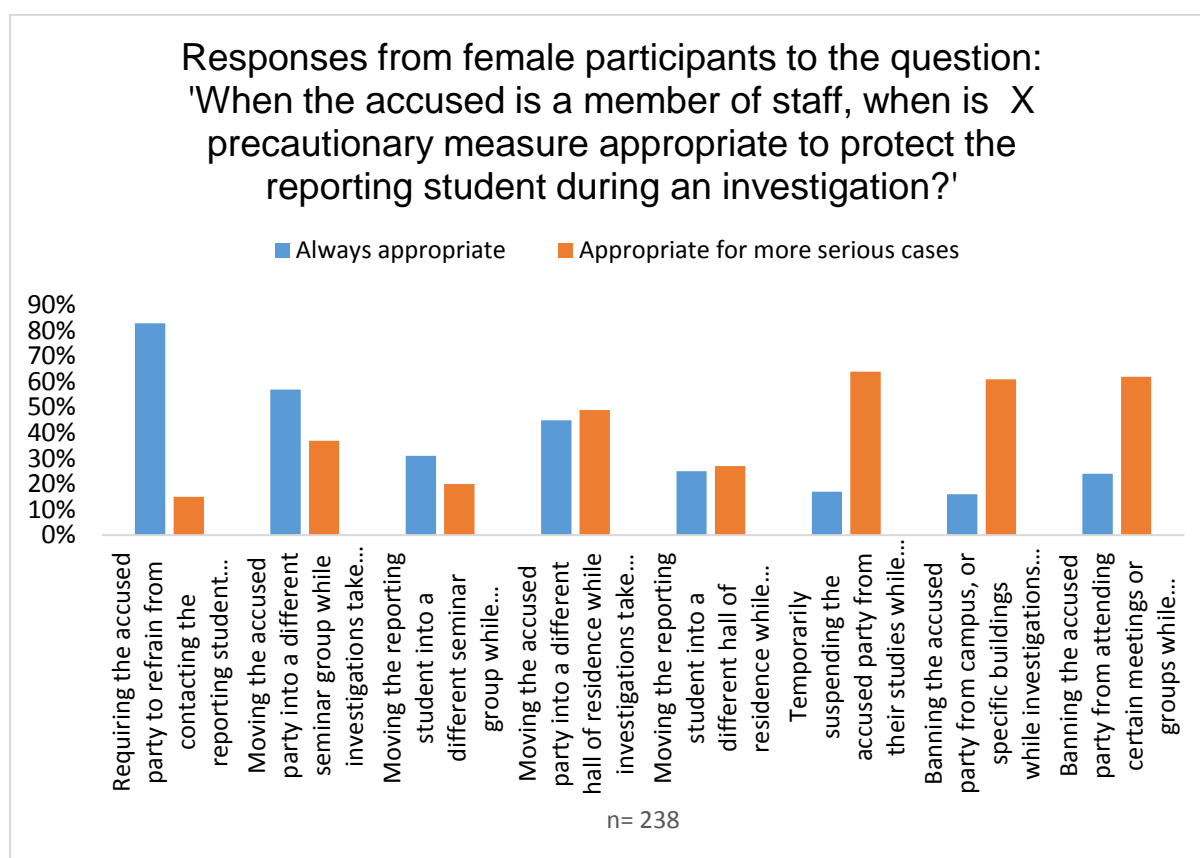
Graph G



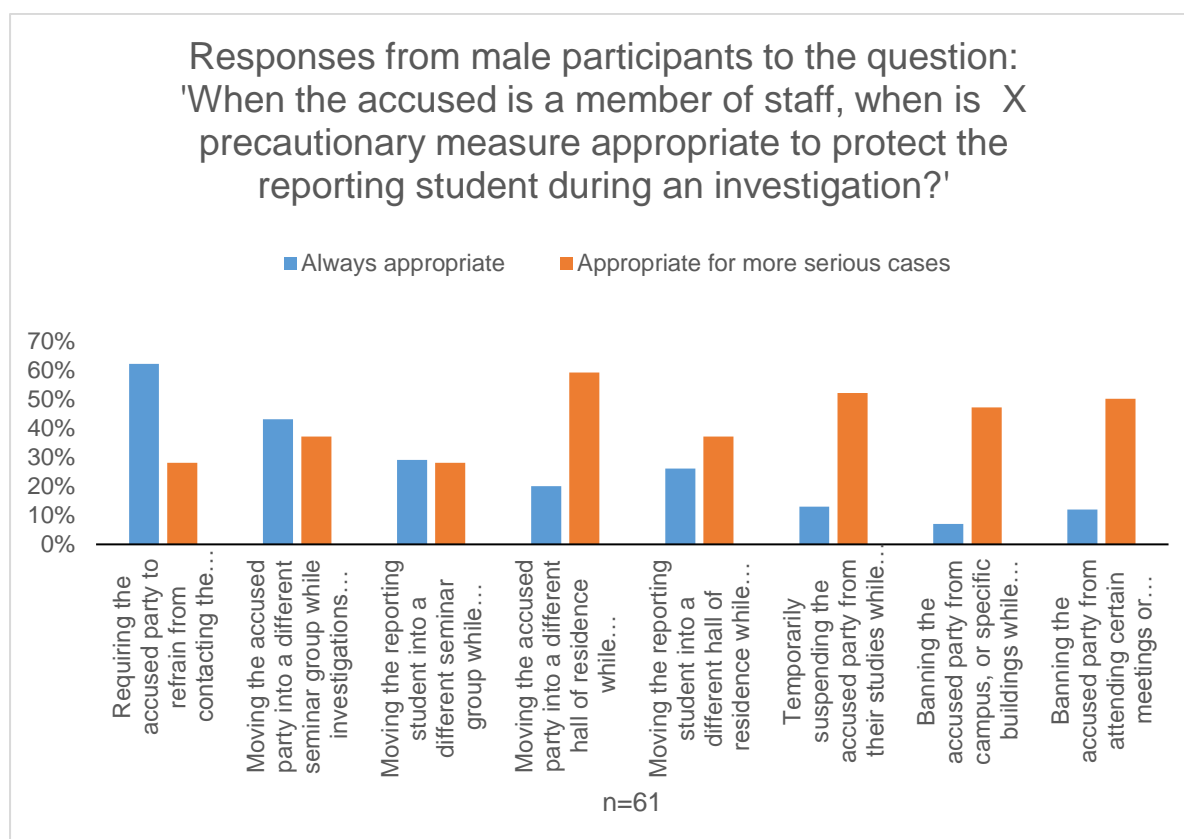
As can be seen, out of the 309 respondents that completed this aspect of the questionnaire, the majority of respondents advocated that – like in the case of student-on-student misconduct – the accused staff member should always be prevented from contacting the reporting student (93% or 287 respondents). In terms of precautionary measures deemed suitable for ‘more serious’ acts of sexual misconduct, students offered that excluding the staff member from some aspects of university life during the investigation would be appropriate to protect the reporting student. For example, 52% advocated that staff should be banned from campus until a resolution has been reached, and 48% asked that staff be suspended from work during an investigation. Participants were less invested in the idea that it would be suitable for students or staff to move seminar groups following an incident of ‘serious’ sexual misconduct. While 35% of respondents felt that staff should be asked to move seminar groups during investigation, just 13% thought that the reporting student should be given the option to move into another seminar group. The breakdown of responses by university additionally mirrored these trends.

In terms of breakdown by ‘gender’, students seemed to believe that it is most appropriate for the accused member of staff to not contact the reporting student during the investigation, no matter how ‘serious’ the allegation. For example, out of 238 female respondents and 61 male respondents that answered this question, 97% and 79% respectively cited that it is ‘always appropriate’ for the accused staff member to have no contact with the reporting student (Graph H & I). Further, 50% of the male respondents and 47% of the female respondents who answered this question thought that it was ‘appropriate in more serious cases’ for a staff member to be suspended during an ongoing investigation. The reader will notice that neither of the graphs presenting this data offer information on responses stating that certain precautionary measures were appropriate only for ‘less serious’ cases of sexual misconduct. This is because, as before, few participants deemed these measures to be appropriate for such cases of misconduct.

Graph H



Graph I



9.2 Qualitative section of the survey

Participants were asked to comment on possible precautionary measures a university could put in place to protect a reporting student's well-being while an investigation is being carried out into an allegation of sexual misconduct. Despite the reporting student being the focus of this question, many participants instead answered with suggested precautionary measures to protect the rights and well-being of the *alleged perpetrator*. Signalling the extreme caution that they believe the university should take when deciding how to behave towards an accused individual, participants advocated in many cases that accused students and reporting parties should be treated entirely equally. This involves both sides of the story being heard, and by an unbiased member of staff:

Always consider both sides of the story not just the story of the reporting student in order to ensure that what they're reporting is true

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Both sides of the story, solid evidence which can be proven, try not to get personal feelings involved with it as it may lead to biased judgement

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Listen to both parties with equal attention

(Female, bisexual, Asian participant at the University of Chester)

A face to face meeting with a third party too. Both sides heard out.

(Male, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

It also involves anonymity for *both* parties. As arguably suggested from the below comments, this is in part in order to ensure the non-stigmatisation of the reporting student as a 'victim of sexual assault' (if the allegation is true). It is further in order to prevent possible false allegations from wrongly demonising accused individuals:

Anonymity of both parties until a conclusion has been reached

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Offering *confidentiality* and help services for both parties

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Complete confidentiality for both parties

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Endeavour, in every way possible, to keep matters confidential, and not to take actions towards either party which make it obvious to their peers, students or lecturers, that something untoward is going on

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Students additionally championed the protection of rights for both the accused and the reporting student by expressing that neither one should be (in/)formally asked to spatially separate themselves from the university:

If you are suspending one it would be a good idea to suggest to the other to stay home during that time as then both parties can be equally treated as the investigation process is carried out

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

The accused party shouldn't be penalized financially or in terms of future prospects, unless/until found guilty

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Finally, participants suggested that both the reporting and accused party be treated equally through staff simply approaching the investigation mindful that the accusation has not yet been proven true:

Remember that accusation do not mean guilt so let's be fair to both sides until the conclusion is reached

(Male, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

Take the reporting party seriously but also protect the rights of the accused. Innocent until proven guilty

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Taking into account that, however serious the accusation, the system can be abused by students against certain individuals, causing them to lose their education/jobs due to a wrong accusation, is something that should never be forgotten

(Gender fluid, pansexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

The university just need to be very sure the accused is really guilty, in order not to destroy a life

(Female, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

As shown, students feel very strongly that alleged perpetrators should be treated with the same respect and consideration as a reporting student during an investigation into an allegation. Also of particular note is that respondents often liken the idea of an accused individual having to adhere to precautionary measures to protect the reporting student as treating said student as if they are 'guilty'. Respondents thus suggest that without proof that an allegation is true, any measures put in place that disrupt an accused individual's access to university life is a form of sanction, which they do not endorse.

Of course, not all made such strong arguments for imposing precautionary measures upon both the alleged perpetrator and reporting student:

[Suggesting that alleged perpetrators should be suspended from studies temporarily, this student asks the university to remember]

That it is the reporting student who has been traumatised, not the accused party - there are repercussions for being a sexual assaulter and having your studies compromised is one of them

(Male, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

I feel considerations need to be done on a case by case basis for example if it's going to massively jeopardise the accused student's studies if they are suspended then serious thought needs to be given to whether this is fair depending on the severity of the case but if having the student remain on campus is going to cause the reporting student extreme anxiety then suspension should definitely be considered

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Don't think the victim should be moved from seminar groups, halls etc to different ones as it may make them feel like they are at fault or may feel uncomfortable if they'd are being treated differently, the accused should be the one who has to swap seminars, halls, jobs etc

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

As shown here, not only is it important that the reporting student and alleged perpetrator are not in contact during an investigation, it is the 'perpetrator' who should be excluded from spaces where the reporting student is in attendance. In what is again informed by discourses of initially 'believing the survivor' upon disclosure, consideration must be taken of disrupting a student's university experience when they have not been proven 'guilty', but ultimate priority must be given to the reporting student's needs and well-being. As these participants seem to suggest, the reverse precautionary measure of the *reporting* student being asked to move around campus to avoid the alleged perpetrator would constitute a gross injustice and a form of secondary victimisation.

Finally, it seemed rather important to respondents that the university remember during an ongoing investigation the mental toll that reporting an incident of sexual misconduct can take on an individual. To this end, participants asked that university staff support students by assuring them the university takes their allegation seriously and, in some cases, to take action if the reporting student receives allegations of fabrication from their peers:

It is important to be fair to both parties but it should be understood that coming forward about an incident of sexual misconduct is extremely difficult and often ends badly for the complainant as well as the accused. If a complainant is not believed during the initial report then it could make them not want to continue with the investigation

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Yes, universities should be informed by academic research in the area of sexual misconduct, intersectional feminism, social justice and psychology. Legal processes are currently biased in favour of perpetrators of sexual misconduct. Universities should socially lead the way and demonstrate how reporting individuals should be treated well, with respect and believed rather than blamed or shamed

(Female, bisexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

It is important to not make the victim feel like they are doubted or that it is somehow their fault, care should be taken to protect and support them should such accusations rise from others

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

The mental health and stress that is inflicted upon the victim when this happens. In many cases this isn't considered, and as a result, the victim ends up with mental health problems, smoking or using drugs, in a worse situation because they can't cope with what went on. So to make sure that the university offers support to the victim and gives them guidance to make sure they're ok

(White participant at the University of Liverpool)

Understand the vulnerability of the student's position

(Male, heterosexual participant at the University of Liverpool)

9.3 Focus groups and interviews

When discussing provisions that should be put in place during an investigation of sexual misconduct to support both the accusing student and the alleged perpetrator, participants spoke on the whole in terms of 'spatial separation' as being either the most or least appropriate action that the university could offer. Interestingly, with regards to allegations made of student-on-student misconduct, participants mostly advocated *against* suspension of the alleged perpetrator during an ongoing investigation. Although it was considered that their suspension may protect the accusing student against any secondary emotional or physical trauma, respondents remained concerned about the 'established' culture of rumour-spreading within universities that could tarnish the reputation of a student that is not yet proven 'guilty':

[when asked why the alleged perpetrator should not be suspended pending investigation]

PO: unfortunately it could be a false allegation and it might ruin the student's sort of journey through university

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

PL: It's not fair to punish someone until it's known that it actually happened I think that's a reasonable approach to the situation [...] because even if it comes out that they haven't done it they'll always be remembered for that. They just will.

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

Arguably mirroring the 'believe sexual assault victims' discourse present in our society following campaigns such as #metoo (Krook, 2018), the overall consensus within this part of the research was rather that the 'victim' be given full autonomy over whether or not to

physically separate themselves from the alleged perpetrator. Participants described how the affected student should be offered the opportunity to suspend studies while an investigation is ongoing, or provided with the option of a halls of residence move, in order to prevent further emotional distress caused by being around the alleged perpetrator during an investigation:

PE: I think that they should have the right to not be in the same space like somebody shouldn't be penalised for having low attendance because they're not going to lectures because they don't wanna be in this same room as this other person involved in this allegation

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

PA: I think maybe the victim could be offered a room elsewhere but making it clear that that wasn't expected and that's just an option if they wanted it and then if they say no that they want to stay then the perp would be offered somewhere else.

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

However, in what proved a controversial opinion amongst his peers, one participant in the male focus group at Edge Hill suggested that in the case of university-based leisure activities specifically, the accusing student should be *made* to withdraw while an investigation is ongoing:

PL: I think, it's a fair thing to say this, when someone makes an accusation and they're in a society with someone, they should stay away from the society until the accusation is confirmed and then the other person can be removed. Because if it happened then you wouldn't wanna stay there anyway so leave it alone for now [...] a society is at the end of the day things you wanna do for fun, it's extra, it's not academic. It's not very important at university, it's a social fun activity and so if you're making this accusation it's best that you remove yourself from that situation

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

The participant does not explicitly advocate a ban on alleged sexual assault victims from social spaces where their accused is in attendance. However, the fact that in discussing the provisions for protecting the rights of the alleged victim and perpetrator during an investigation the participant suggests that the 'victim' 'should' stay away from these spaces, arguably reveals his investment in the idea of some kind of policy on forced withdrawal from social activities for students accusing another student of sexual misconduct.

There are some important additional points that arise from this statement in relation to the ideas that potentially inform the participant's thinking on this topic. Firstly, the statement is made by the participant who previously emphasised a concern about false accusations and who subsequently opposed that alleged perpetrators should be suspended from university during investigations. It logically follows that advocating the accusing student 'stay away from the [a] society' until the alleged perpetrator is proven 'guilty' is likely informed by a desire for

a perceived 'fairness' towards the accused party by preventing (what the participant expects will be) reputational damage caused by false allegations.

This idea of 'fairness' supposedly achieved by the accusing student staying away from their society is further illustrated by the participant's positioning of society activities as 'extra', 'not very important', and perhaps as antithetical to the 'true' purpose of university ('it's not academic'). By discussing them in this way, the participant implicitly suggests that the cost of falsely accusing someone publicly is greater than an accusing student missing out on activities that are a 'luxury' extra to university life, anyway.

Many participants who advocated separation of the accusing student and alleged perpetrator during an ongoing investigation into sexual misconduct actually offered ways that *both* students could continue to participate in university life 'safely'⁷. Recognising the importance of engagement in all aspects of university life for students, this was thought achievable due to the sheer quantity of students typically present at any one time in academic/social spaces, and the logistical opportunities for movement participants believed university life offers. For example, one of the most popular suggestions made when discussing separation during an ongoing investigation was students being made to sit apart from each other in lectures, as lectures are usually 'big and filled with lots of people' (*male interviewee, University of Liverpool*). For participants who advocated this provision, this meant that both students can still continue with their learning without potentially distressing direct contact with the other. Similarly, the existence of multiple seminar classes and society meetings were considered to allow continued participation for both the 'victim' and 'perpetrator', as each could:

PD: be like you get to go to this meeting and you get to go to this one

(*Female interviewee, University of Liverpool*)

Finally with regards to student-on-student sexual misconduct, the mixed-sex focus group at Edge Hill highlighted that for the student who has made a claim of misconduct, tighter security measures are needed on campus to ensure the alleged perpetrator cannot get access to the 'victim'. Presuming that the 'perpetrator' will have been suspended pending investigation, these participants spoke worryingly of lapses in security measures they had witnessed at their *own* university that they believed could allow potential perpetrators to inflict further damage on students who have made an allegation of sexual misconduct:

PJ: I go home on a weekend and I come back at about half 9 at night and the barriers are up. Anyone could wander on

PI: yeah

PG: like we've come back once and the barrier has been down and my dad has literally gone I'm just here to drop my daughter off and they're like ok and lifted it straight up. They've never actually gone what's your student number or anything like that they've just lifted the barrier up. So they don't know proof of that my dad even had me in the car coz there's no camera there

⁷ 'Safely' here meaning without incurring damage to their physical or mental health

PJ: my mum just dropped me off and we drive straight and we're just like we're just dropping off can you let me in and they're like oh yeah sure they don't ask to see your student card or if you have a student number.

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

As shown here, there is a justifiable concern amongst some students that a 'victim' may be vulnerable to further assaults during an ongoing investigation, due to what can only be described as lax security measures present on some campuses. These respondents highlight that a combination of presumably *only* vocal means to identify members of the public coming onto campus ('they don't know proof of that my Dad even had me in the car coz there's no camera there') and the face-value with which some security guards treat identifications from the public (and the reasons given for why they are there) induce situations where a student is possibly left open to secondary victimisation by the accused.

Participants and I additionally discussed what provisions should be in place for support when the accused is a member of staff and the 'victim' is a student. Again, provisions were spoken of in terms of exclusions and separation, with the overall determination that the member of staff should be protected from suspension during the investigation. As with the discussion of student-on-student sexual misconduct, the reason participants opposed suspension of a member of staff was informed by presumed knowledge of the devastation false allegations can cause to an individual's life:

PI: I think everyone should be innocent until-like there are people out there who pipe up and say this person's done this because they have a grudge against them or something like that or they got a bad grade but I think if that happens the story should be heard from both people

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

This has happened before people accusing of lecturers and lecturers haven't done anything wrong and it's ruined a lecturer's life

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

10 Sanctions

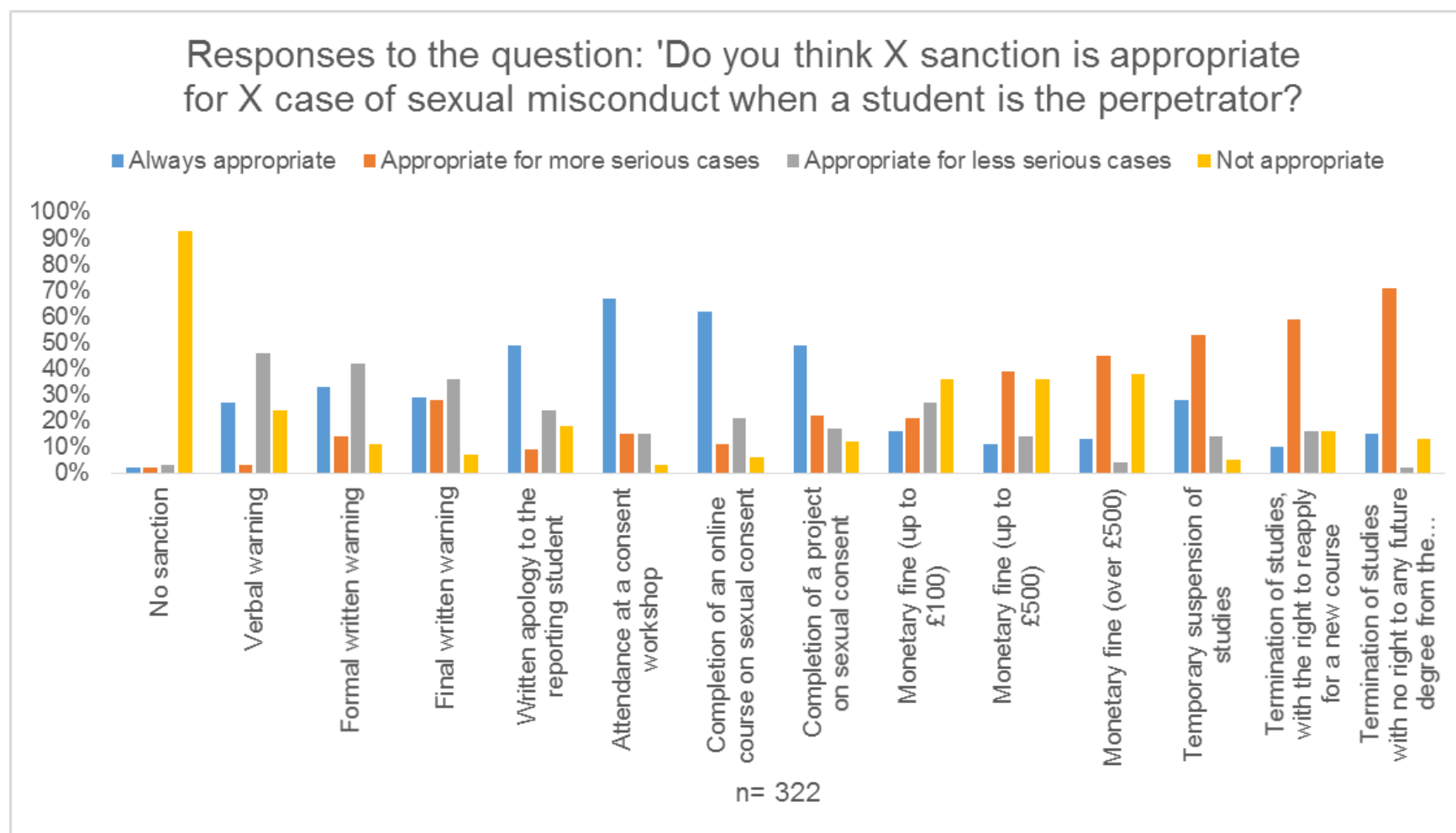
10.1 Quantitative responses

With regards to sanctions for students, respondents reported overwhelmingly that there was never any case of sexual misconduct for which no sanction at all would be appropriate (94% of 322 respondents stated that 'no sanction' was never appropriate; Graph J). However, there are some incidents that seem to warrant specific sanctions over others. For example, respondents felt it always appropriate to provide the offending student with education on sexual misconduct (67% of respondents advocated the appropriateness of consent workshops, and 62% of online project on sexual consent). 'More serious' cases of sexual misconduct, on the other hand, are viewed by participants as needing to be met by a termination of studies with no right to obtain a degree from the university in the future (71%). Finally, mirroring the findings from the other aspects of this research, participants reported mostly that a 'warning' should follow 'less serious' acts of sexual misconduct (46% advocated a formal written warning, while 42% championed a final written warning).

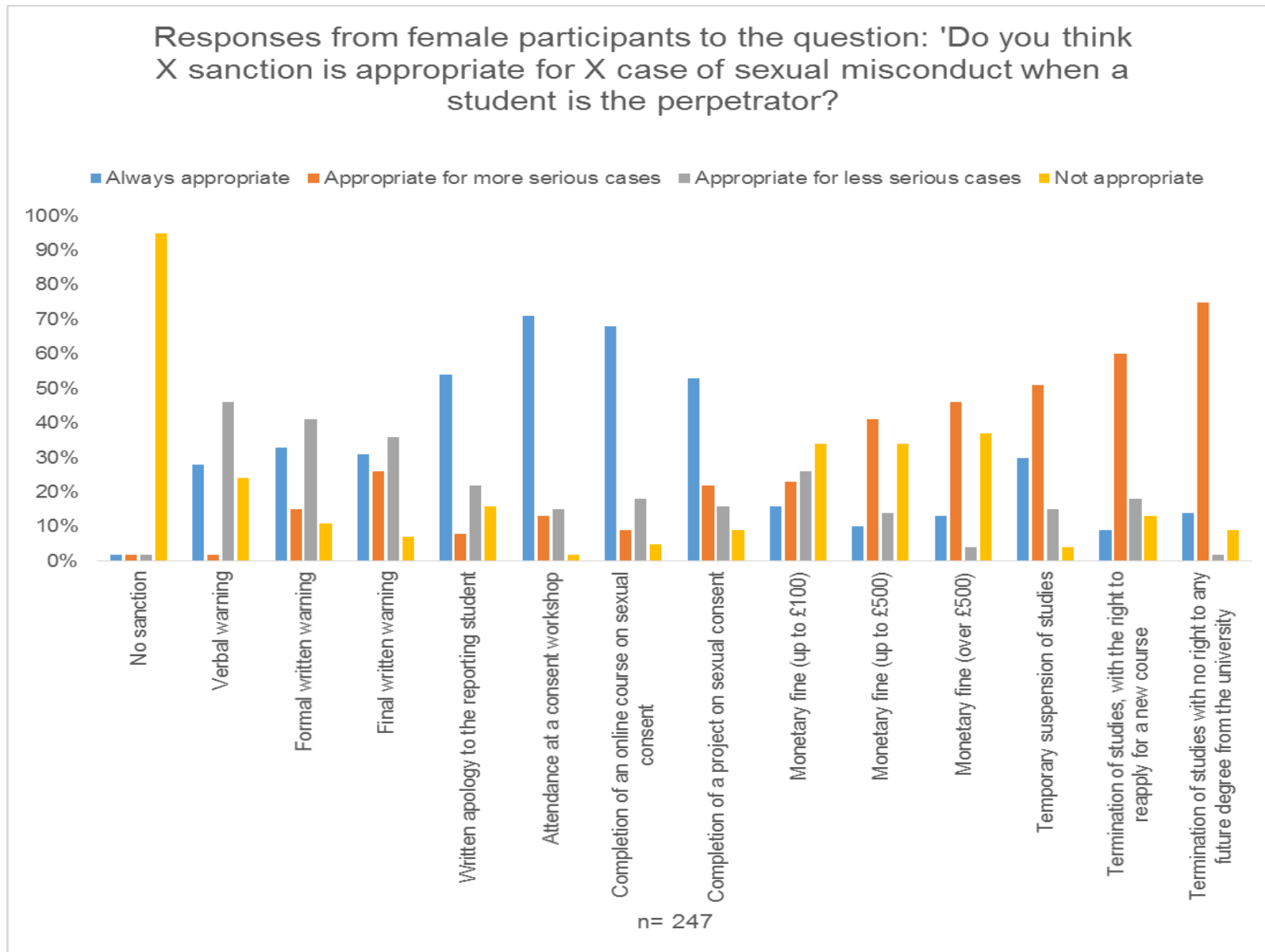
On the whole, male and female students felt that no sanction was not appropriate following an incident of sexual misconduct committed by a student (Female students: 95% out of 247 respondents, Graph K; Male students 87% out of 64 respondents, Graph L), similar to that displayed in Graph J. The pattern showing that the majority of respondents who believe it is 'always appropriate' to provide the offending student with education on sexual misconduct still held true with regards to female respondents (71% of participants out of 247 stated that it is always appropriate to send the perpetrator to a consent workshop and 68% of respondents advocated for the completion of an online course on sexual consent). However, it did not hold true for males. Out of the 64 male participants who responded to this question, 44% stated that a consent workshop would be always appropriate with 41% stating the same about an online workshop on sexual consent.

Similarly to the findings displayed in Graph J, a high percentage of both male and female respondents advocated that termination of studies or suspension from an aspect of university life was appropriate for 'more serious cases' (for example, 61% of male participants and 51% of female participants suggested temporary suspension from studies was an appropriate sanction for 'serious' offences, in addition to 60% of males and 54% of females in their respective samples that championed termination of studies with no right to a further degree at the university). A breakdown of responses by university shows that the data as ordered by institution provided similar trends to Graph J, which shows the responses of all participants to the question of appropriate sanctions for students.

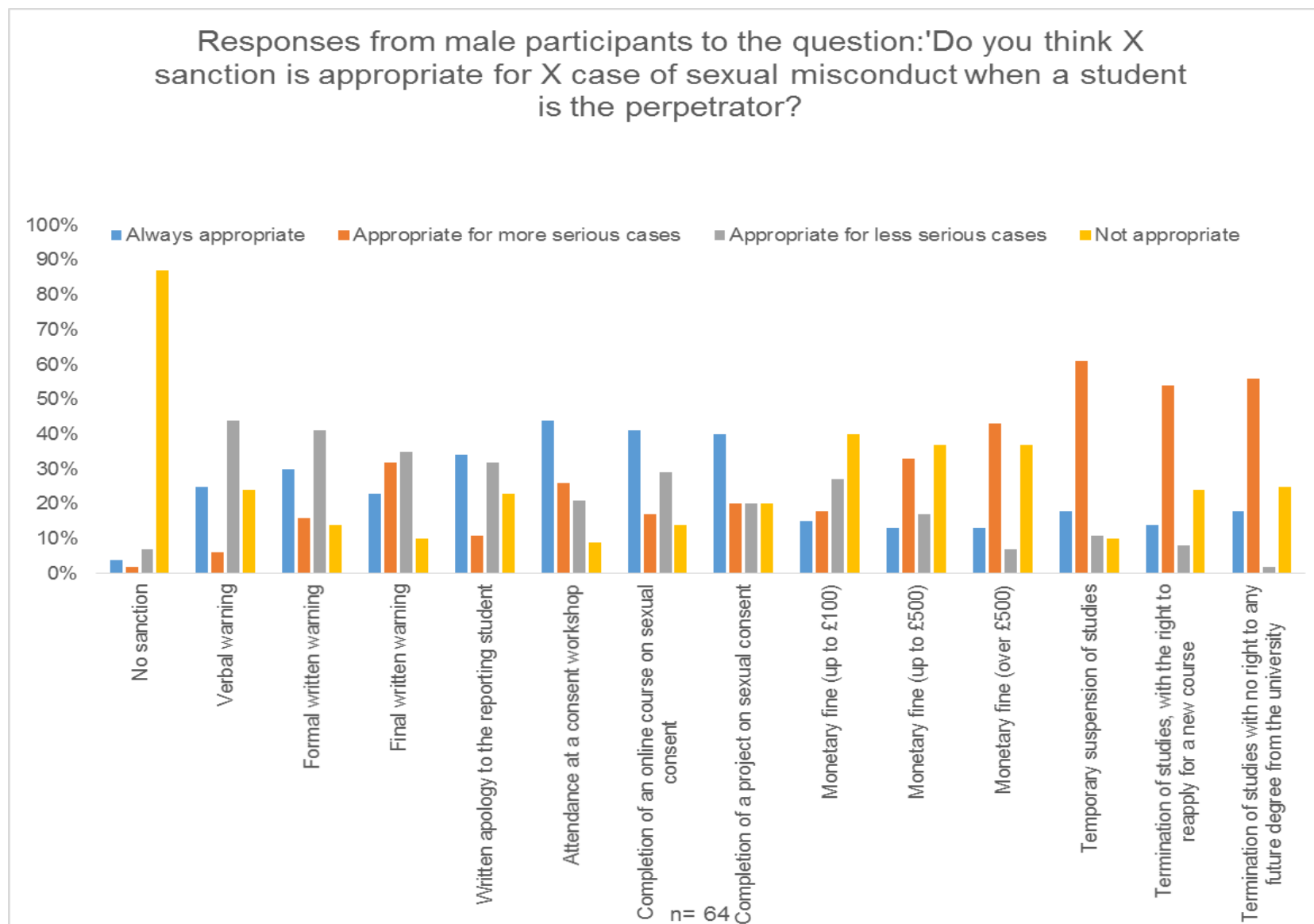
Graph J



Graph K



Graph L

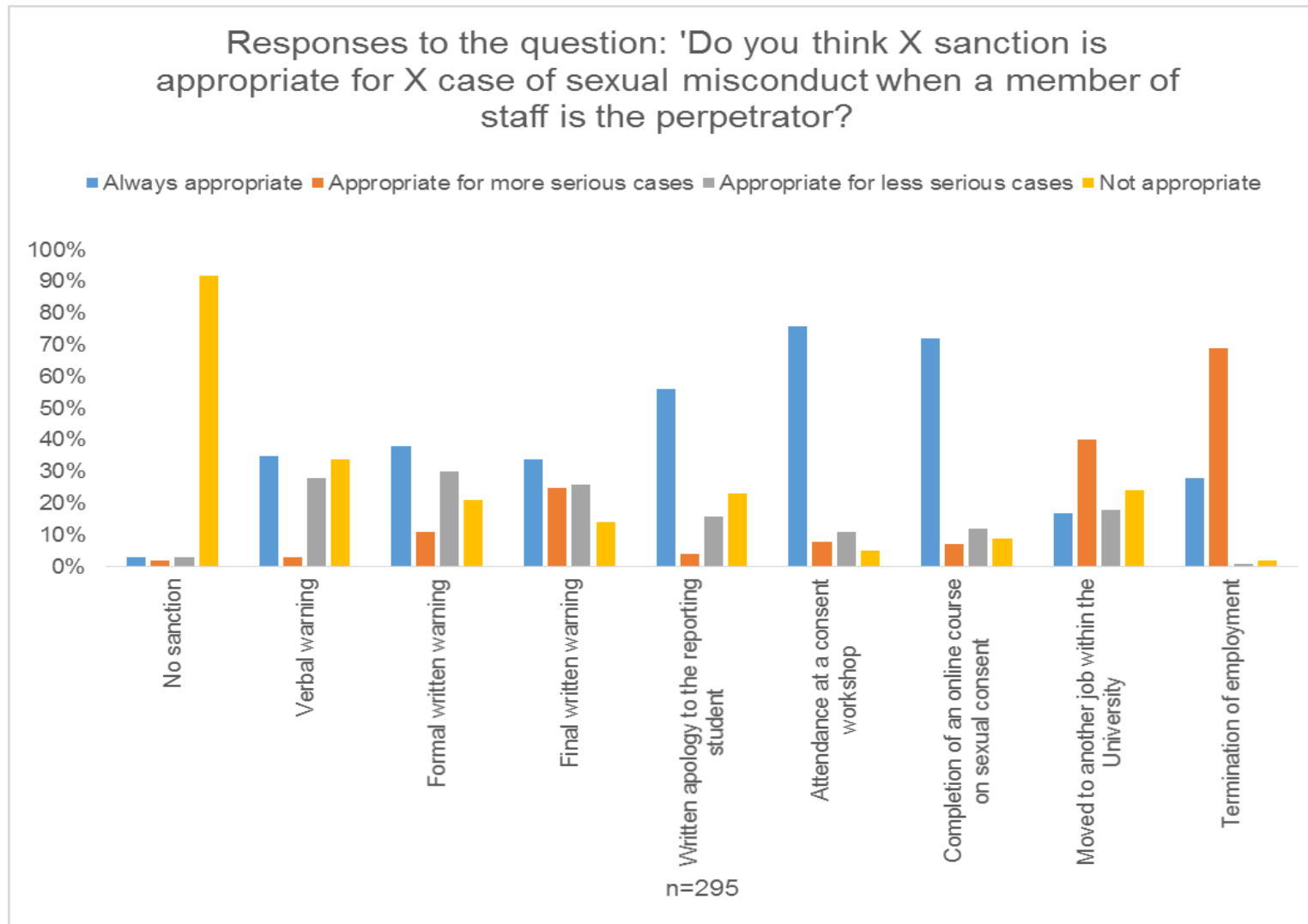


On the whole, participants seemed to suggest that those sanctions appropriate for students who have committed certain acts of sexual misconduct were also appropriate for staff who had committed such offences. As can be seen in Graph M, while 'no sanction' was reported the most as inappropriate following an offence of sexual misconduct (92% out of a total of 295 respondents), 'termination' was overwhelmingly reported as the sanction most appropriate for staff who have committed 'serious' offences (69% or 205 respondents). Further, reflective sanctions again proved popular amongst participants, with 76% and 72% of all respondents suggesting that a consent workshop (both in-person and online) is always appropriate.

With regards to 'gender', while female participants' responses to the appropriateness of sanctions were largely the same as those displayed in Graph M, slightly fewer male participants that responded to this question felt that a written apology to the student from a member of staff was always appropriate (44% of respondents felt this way in contrast to 56% of total respondents shown in Graph M). Additionally, while 4% of all respondents felt that a written apology was appropriate in 'serious' cases of sexual misconduct, a breakdown by 'gender' reveals that male students in particular view this as *slightly* more acceptable, with 11% of 57 total male respondents stating that they thought this sanction was suitable in this case. It further seems that male students are less invested in the idea that consent workshops are appropriate for staff who have committed acts of sexual misconduct. As shown in comparison with Graph M, around 20% fewer male respondents thought that attendance at a consent workshop (online or offline) would be either always appropriate or appropriate in more serious cases (55% to 21%, respectively). Finally, in contrast to the trends in responses given by all participants and those given by female participants, male students who answered this question deemed that moving the offending staff member to another job at the university was not particularly suitable for 'less serious' cases (only 9% of these respondents stated this was an appropriate sanction in comparison to 18% of respondents who did overall, and 21% of females who additionally felt this way).

Finally, a breakdown by institution reveals some discrepancies with regards to appropriate sanctions for staff members who have committed sexual misconduct towards a student. For example, attendance at a consent workshop as a sanction for less serious cases proved to be a source of contention. Out of the 145 respondents who completed this part of the survey from the University of Liverpool, 13% felt that this was an appropriate response to this type of sexual misconduct, whereas out of the 148 respondents who responded from the University of Chester, only 7% felt this sanction was suitable. Further, ideas of whether termination of employment was an appropriate sanction 'always' following sexual misconduct by a staff member, or in 'serious' cases, also differed by institution. Whereas 23% of the total respondents from the University of Liverpool felt this was always appropriate, students from the University of Chester seemed more strongly in favour of this, with 32% of 148 respondents reporting that this was a suitable punishment. Reversing this trend, University of Liverpool students who responded to this question seemed to invest more in the idea that termination of employment, or having the staff member move jobs within the university, was applicable for more 'serious' cases of sexual misconduct. Out of the total respondents, 45% and 74% University of Liverpool participants thought these sanctions were most appropriate for serious incidents of misconduct, in contrast to the 35% and 66% of the respondents from the University of Chester who did.

Graph M



10.2 Qualitative section of the survey

Respondents were asked if they had any further comments on sanctions for individuals who have been found to have committed a sexual misconduct offence. One of the most cited answers was said individual being excluded from some aspect of university life:

If proven guilty to assault or rape the accused should be given termination from the university

(Female, bisexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

No warnings. Zero tolerance. If you're guilty of sexual misconduct, out you go, never to return

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Suspension from any groups or teams

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Banned from campus, studies terminated then evicted from halls if a serious case

(Male, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

Unfortunately, not all participants specified whether their endorsement of the offending individual being excluded was based on cases of 'more serious' sexual misconduct, of 'less serious', or both. It is thus difficult to know for definite when students advocate suspension/exclusion as an appropriate sanction. This is subsequently a further area for exploration in future research on this topic.

For other respondents, the only acceptable sanction following a proven allegation of sexual misconduct is legal action against the perpetrator:

The reporting of serious cases such as rape to the authorities

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Referral to the criminal justice system in the most severe cases

(Male, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Reporting to the police to allow jail time to be considered

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

Pressing criminal charges if the case is serious enough

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Chester)

By not reporting this to the police and letting the courts decide, this would be aiding and abetting

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Restraining order to keep away from victim and ensure they cannot contact them at all

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

As can be seen, with regards to *legal* sanctions, many participants offered that they are most appropriate for those 'more serious' cases of sexual misconduct, defined by one participant in particular as 'rape'. However, again there is little detail of what participants believe constitutes 'severe' cases of sexual violence. We cannot know if 'severe' cases are those subjectively defined by participants as such or whether they refer to illegal acts that warrant police involvement. This is therefore again another area for exploration for future research on students' views of sexual misconduct on university campuses.

Reflective sanctions that perhaps allow the perpetrator a chance at reintegration into university life were also popular among participants:

Compulsory 1-1 with a counsellor or person who is able to help for the accused party in hope of understanding why said incident happened and to explore what is appropriate for the accused party to do in the future

(Gender fluid, pansexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

Counselling for the perpetrator - they may require support to make a change

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Meet with a psychologist

(Male, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

With less serious case, the accused to be trained and educated of the negative impact of their actions

(Male, heterosexual, black participant at the University of Liverpool)

Such examples show that students invest in the idea that offenders of sexual misconduct can be re-socialised into accepting that their behaviour has been unacceptable and therefore that offenders can be rehabilitated. Only in one case does such resocialisation seem only appropriate for 'less serious' cases of sexual misconduct. This potentially indicates that for some students, education on consensual sexual interaction would be ineffective on individuals who have made the choice, and have the capacity, to enact 'severe' sexual assaults on others.

Of the very few students that spoke of financial sanctions, the consensus was that they are inappropriate for incidents of sexual misconduct. Indeed, only one participant out of the entire sample endorsed such sanctions, and a reason for this was not given. Of those who rejected the idea of fining students following a sexual assault, one expressed that monetary compensation would not be the desired resolution of the affected student, while another acknowledged that financial sanctions are not enough of a deterrent for sexual violence:

They shouldn't consider fines, it's not appropriate at all. People experiencing sexual misconduct won't want money

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)

Fines are never appropriate - it essentially says, sexual misconduct is OK, it only costs £xxx

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

Finally, there were some comments about sanctions that despite only appearing once nevertheless offered some innovative and considered sanctions for sexual misconduct offenders. Firstly, alike to the 'broken window theory' put forth by Wilson and Kelling in 1982, wherein they noted that deviant activities are more likely to continue (and escalate) if there is not quick intervention, one participant advocated 'harsh' sanctions for initial and 'less serious' incidents of sexual misconduct:

I think some people start at less serious things. If they aren't put in their place they could do worse. So be harsh on them from the beginning

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Liverpool)

Secondly, one participant interestingly volunteered that for 'some cases' (although unfortunately no detail was given with regards to what types of cases these may be) sexual misconduct offences could be linked with the grading system of university assessments, with offenders limited in the classification they are able to achieve that year:

If studies continue, for some cases perhaps the option of 40% as the highest achievement for the year, depending on situation

(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

In the section of the survey that asked participants if they had any further statements they would like to make about sanctions, two themes arose quite pertinently. The first concerned members of staff who had committed offences of sexual misconduct towards a student at university. Despite one participant who suggested that 'the staff member shouldn't be allowed to contact the student again' *(Male, bisexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)* participants overwhelmingly deemed that staff in this position should be given 'harsher' sanctions than students. They offered that:

Members of staff should be under no illusion that using their position of authority unduly is wrong and that it could result in termination of employment and criminal prosecution

(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Liverpool)

The teacher should also pay money *[if they have been proven to have committed a sexual misconduct offence]*

(Female, heterosexual, white participant from the University of Chester)

The member of staff should not be allowed to continue their employment at the university and it should be made aware to future employers the reason why

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Chester)

If found a guilty a staff should 100% lose their job

(Female, bisexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

As possibly recognised from the above, participants based their endorsement of harsher sentences for staff on the fact that they hold a position of power at the university, which they are seen as abusing by sexually assaulting a student. Some participants presented this view in more detail:

They knew not to, having been specifically trained not to, so they knew it was wrong. Allowing them to stay on premises compromises students' safety and more victims' ability to come out

(Female, bisexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

They abused a position of trust and made the conscious decision to endanger their career

(Female, heterosexual, Asian participant at the University of Chester)

Assumptions are made (possibly correctly) that staff are provided with training on unacceptable behaviours in relation to sexual contact with students, and are made aware of the consequences. The perceived active choice to then commit an act of sexual assault towards a student anyway is seen as a breach of the duty of care they are endowed with at the university and as endangering the student population as a whole.

The second recurrent theme from this section of the survey concerned archival of an offender's behaviour. As presented in one of the participant's comments above in relation to members of staff, keeping a record of individuals who have been proven to have committed sexual assault at university is considered important by students. As one participant put it, this is necessary for 'future reference' *(Female, heterosexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)*. For what purpose is unclear, however based on previous answers given in both the survey and the interview/focus groups, it is likely that participants believe a record of past behaviour will aid universities in safeguarding students from any further behaviour of this nature by the offending member of staff.

Finally, and again highlighting an area of major concern, one participant felt the need to emphasise that universities take appropriate action against a university staff member who has committed a sexual misconduct offence and not 'cover it up' *(Female, heterosexual, white participant at the University of Liverpool)*. While a comment such as this was made only once in response to this question, the idea of universities insidiously concealing sexual misconduct on their campuses in order to prevent their reputation being tarnished is one that has recurred in many sections of the survey. This suggests that universities urgently need to ensure that they present to their students as accountable and transparent regarding incidents of misconduct that happen among staff and students.

10.3 Focus groups and interviews

Participants across the research offered a range of punitive and restorative sanctions for perpetrators of both 'less' and 'more' serious sexual misconduct. With regards to 'restorative' sanctions for student-on-student sexual misconduct, participants' views were informed by an identification of this behaviour as part of a larger social problem concerning the disregarding of 'consent' and invasion of sexual boundaries. The 'sanction' and 'resolution' for this was thus education. One of the participants in the Edge Hill focus group, for example, explained her preference for restorative justice as follows:

PO: I think it's education that we need to be doing. I definitely would highlight the fact that education needs to be put in place. Especially in the case of like academic members of staff like it is a generational thing like boys knowing *now* what is acceptable.

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

As shown, the participant argues for some sort of education that re-socialises individuals into recognising unacceptable sexual behaviours. However, we can see that her statement does not simply advocate for educative sanctions for just *any* or *all* individuals. Rather, it emphasises a likely need for these sanctions particularly for an *older* group of *men* who assume the position of *staff* at the university. Of course, it cannot be suggested that this indicates a belief that educative 'justice' would not be useful for non-males, younger males or male students. To say this would be a gross reach and a misrepresentation of the participant's views. However, the fact that in discussing suggestions for restorative justice, this specific group is the one that comes to mind for the participant to make an additional comment on, arguably illustrates that for some students these individuals are particularly problematic with regards to sexual misconduct at universities.

In a helpful addition to how restorative sanctions should be performed, those participants in favour of this type of justice generally advocated that education about 'consent' and acceptable sexual behaviours be delivered through oral means, particularly. Mirroring the contention offered in two other interviews with female students at University of Liverpool, one participant of the female focus group at Edge Hill explained this preference as:

PO: *[workshops are preferable]* because you can get that oral feedback. It's not just writing something down *[when talking about a reflective essay alternative]*. I think at academic level you've got quite a few people who are good writers and you can get away with writing stuff without being emotionally attached to it.

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

The participant's campaign here for face-to-face seminars on sexual misconduct is clearly rooted in a disdain for its alternative: a reflective essay or apology. For her, university students or staff members by nature of their profession are equipped with a particularly high skill set in selecting and presenting information in written form from an 'objective' standpoint (or at least without subjective feelings penetrating the research/writing process). By delivering messages about sexual misconduct in workshops where 'feedback' from the individual is required, the

participant suggests that how much the message has been absorbed by the offender can be checked - rendering this a particularly useful sanction.

Participants generally spoke against suspension for student-on-student sexual misconduct where the offence can be considered 'less serious', although no reasons behind this were presented during the research. Somewhat frustratingly, avocations not to suspend students for sexual comments or jokes were made in passing during the conversations, with participants moving quickly onto other topics. This could reflect that participants viewed these acts of misconduct as not serious enough (as, indeed, some actively suggested in other areas of the research) to warrant a lengthy discussion as to why they would not champion suspension.

Incidents of this type that *did* seem to warrant suspension, however, were those that involved repetition. A conversation by the respondents of the mixed-sex and male focus groups at Edge Hill provided confirmation of when 'less serious' acts of sexual misconduct became 'too much':

PJ: maybe in what's considered the less serious cases, if they're not on the same course and they just live together, maybe it should just be put in front of them like one of you has to move. And it should be the one who's done whatever they have to the victim

PI: it's the person who's done something that has to move

PH: yeah, definitely

R: so what would you consider to be those less serious things?

PJ: verbal assault maybe

PI: if it's like a one time thing [...] but if it happens more than once then they should be suspended. Definitely

PJ: even if it's with different people

PH: even if it's with different people they're still proving that they will do it

(Mixed-sex focus group, Edge Hill University)

PK: for more mild stuff it's more a case of saying we won't accept this kind of stuff and after a certain amount of time//you'll be suspended

RL: //yeah, you'll be done. It's not exactly difficult to be like hey don't go around hurting people

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

While one incident can presumably pass without the perpetrator being excluded from university for a period of time, those acts on the more 'minor' end of the sexual misconduct scale that are recurrent are seen as deserving of a sanction of suspension. Particularly, the latter comment from the participant in the male focus group arguably highlights that this is because a warning ('it's more a case of saying we won't accept this kind of stuff') has clearly not proven an effective deterrent to the perpetrator.

With regards to sanctions for members of staff in relation to 'less serious' sexual misconduct, the majority of respondents advocated for a warning to be issued to the offender. Where this differed from the views of warnings in relation to *student* offenders, however, was that the staff member would be threatened with a loss of their job as opposed to a period of suspension. The reasons for this were not expanded upon. However, earlier contentions that staff members committing *any* type of sexual misconduct should be considered as committing more of an indiscretion than when a student is the perpetrator, because staff are abusing their 'position of trust', perhaps also explains why students believe staff should be offered fewer chances of redemption at university. Further, surveillance within the institution was also offered by one respondent:

PL: now because of what happened you're gonna be put under some sort of probation within the university and we're gonna have someone sit in on all your classes every time and we're gonna monitor you and too bad if you don't like it coz it's gonna happen

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

Warnings, for participants, seemed to precede additional 'reflective' sanctions for members of staff that had committed 'less serious' acts of sexual misconduct against a student. In a way that mirrored an idea put forth by an earlier respondent on student-on-student misconduct, respondents from Edge Hill and the University of Liverpool advocated for the offending staff member to be educated on inappropriate behaviour:

PK: There needs to be classes. Like look you clearly don't get it [*that you should not commit acts of sexual misconduct*] so we're gonna send you to this talk that the students are going to

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

PE: I suppose if it was like less serious like sexual comments or whatever then have training

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

Sanctions for staff came in the form of forced separation from the victim. In discussing such sanctions, respondents made reference specifically to academic members of staff (presumably as these staff are those with whom students mostly come into contact). Although respondents did not seem entirely sure how this kind of sanction would work in practice, suggestions were made for academic staff to have their job roles changed to prevent them from coming into contact with the affected student again. Representative of views expressed additionally in the male and mixed-sex focus groups at Edge Hill, a respondent from Edge Hill's female group suggested that:

PP: I think the lecturer should not be allowed to be with the victim - I don't think they should be allowed to have that contact with them

This participant, however, went on to further explain that:

The lecturer should not be in contact with that person and either should be removed or put on another job description altogether

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

Unfortunately, it is slightly unclear what is exactly meant by the proposal that the lecturer would have their 'job description' changed. It could mean that the lecturer is forced to take another academic-related position within the university to ensure separation from the affected student, or that the lecturer is made to refrain from teaching on that specific module where the student is in attendance. However, what is clear, and indeed important to note, is that respondents view separation from the student to be a desired sanction for less serious acts of sexual misconduct enacted by staff.

Discussions were also had across the research concerning appropriate sanctions for staff when they have committed acts of 'serious' sexual misconduct. In short, and again due to this idea that staff hold a position of power in the university that should not be misused, every student across each interview and focus group expressed that they would expect a staff to be fired from their position at the university if they had committed such an offence. Additionally of note was a comment made by a respondent from the female focus group at Edge Hill, asking that when a staff member had been excluded on this basis, the university enact a kind of whistleblowing to other universities:

PP: It should be recorded and they should have to tell all the other universities because he [*sic*] could go to another one and do the same thing and no one has told them

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

For this respondent, the university that previously employed an offending staff member has a moral obligation to safeguard students by informing other universities about the actions of the excluded staff member.

Finally, financial sanctions were discussed with respondents in relation to all 'types' of sexual misconduct carried out by both students and staff at universities. On the whole, respondents seemed to dislike the idea of 'fining' individuals for committing an inappropriate sexual act at university. Some suggested their distaste for this type of sanction came from its perceived dehumanisation of the individual affected:

PA: But then I'm like women [...] you can't put a price on them. It just doesn't sit right.

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

PN: it's like if you break a lamp, you pay £15 pounds coz that's how much a lamp is, but you can't put a value on someone.

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

In a similar way, others expressed rejection of these kinds of sanctions because they seemingly involve acts of sexual misconduct being assigned an entirely arbitrary monetary value:

PC: you can't put a price like 500 pound fine on someone's like emotional well being like the only thing I think might work is a staff member if it was serious but not serious enough to sack them [...] I would be annoyed if I found out that someone who did something to me got a fine. I'd feel like, I'd be happy that they had to spend their money on something, but I feel like it'd reduce what they did to me to like an amount

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

PL: how do you say oh they did that we're gonna value that at 2500 or this one did that that's only a 700 dollar one it doesn't make a lot of sense like how do you know how much to put?

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

PM: I think it could be damaging for the victims as well, how they perceive it. Oh all he's had to do is pay 20 quid I went through all this

(Male focus group, Edge Hill University)

From this, we see that 'putting a price' on inappropriate sexual behaviours is considered by students as fundamentally not possible and not desirable. Participants' flippancy with which they discuss how much an offender could be fined for an act of misconduct ('like 500 pound fine on like someone's emotional well-being') arguably illustrates that such practice is thought to be incompatible with the *actual human experience* of suffering sexual assault. Mental and physical well-being, participants seem to explain, is priceless, and the hierarchy of sexual misconduct the university would likely construct when fining offenders is thought to prevent the victim defining and experiencing their assault in a way that is subjective to them.

Some respondents also expressed that financial sanctions would not be appropriate for sexual misconduct due to the differing socioeconomic situations of individuals at university. Staff, for example, were seen as occupying a pay grade that would allow them to pay the fine without feeling any hardship as a result. In this case, the financial sanction was not seen as enough of a deterrent:

PP: I don't think it's a good idea coz I mean if you look at the tutor, he can afford it. Like 300-500 pounds ok I can afford that like 3 months down the line if I did something and they fine me I can afford that 500 pounds so I don't think it's good to just fine them coz if you fine people and they can afford it then they wouldn't mind they'd be like oh I'll just have a fine that'll be alright, I'm gonna do it to her as well. So I don't think it'd make them feel sorry about what they did

(Female focus group, Edge Hill University)

Other respondents discussing financial sanctions for *student*-perpetrated sexual misconduct recognised the variations in the economic backgrounds of students that mean some could pay a fine more easily than others. Financial sanctions in these instances were seen as undesirable as they would construct and perpetuate inequalities between students within the university:

PE: I don't like that idea. Because I think it would impact students so differently. Like a student that has lots of money like it would have no impact on them. And then a poorer student it would have a massive impact on them and that's not fair-like, not that they are a good person [*laughs*] but you know, it doesn't seem right

(Female interviewee, University of Liverpool)

11 Any other comments

The last section of the qualitative part of the survey asked students if they had any comments they would like to make about the issue of sexual misconduct on campuses more generally. The most cited response was made in relation to 'education' about sexual misconduct. Many participants asked for more information to be provided at university about sexual misconduct as a whole on campuses (i.e. what it constitutes and what support the university has in place for students who have been affected):

There is hardly any help or information for people who have been/are being sexually assaulted, there needs to be so much more done. I'm sure there must be somewhere on campus for someone to speak to about this, but I have no idea where or who that would be - I have never once been given this information. Approximately 85,000 women and 12,000 men are raped in England and Wales alone every year; that's roughly 11 rapes (of adults alone) every hour. It is happening, and we need to do something about it

(Female, bisexual, white participant at the University of Chester)

I would appreciate a better communication of what sexual misconduct actually entails to the student and staff population. I do not think that there is a great enough emphasis placed on 'lesser' misconduct like attempting to kiss someone, or non-consensual touching, especially on social nights (Wednesdays), and events like SU Fridays

(Female, white, heterosexual participant at the University of Chester)

At induction week we never got given advice on therapy or sexual health advice

(Female, bisexual, black participant at the University of Chester)

In addition, participants displayed desire for more workshops concerning sexual consent and appropriate behaviour at university:

Please provide consent education and education on how not to engage in sexual misconduct to all tutors and students. It is the people who engage in such behaviour that need to change, not the people who report it

(Female, bisexual, mixed participant at the University of Chester)

I think it is important to widely educate about consent, and more widely what less serious offences (e.g. sexual jokes) are considered to be sexual harassment so as individuals can ensure they do not, without intent, harass another student

(Male, white, gay participant at the University of Liverpool)

12 Conclusions and recommendations

12.1 Why students aren't reporting sexual misconduct at university

Students clearly do not feel they know very much about how to report sexual misconduct to their respective universities. From this research, it was uncovered that even those who stated that they *do* know how to report sexual misconduct only have vague ideas of what this process entails. In line with the UUK Taskforce's suggestion to UK universities, this report thus calls for reporting procedures for sexual misconduct to be made explicit on campus and other university spaces. Visibility and detail are key in this instance. Information on reporting procedures should be reiterated to students consistently throughout their time at university (either relationally or through posters and signs around campuses and university spaces), and this information should have a permanent place on universities' 'homepages' for students logging onto their university IT system.

For reasons not known, many participants in this study also highlighted that they would not report their experience of sexual misconduct in case *they* got into trouble with their university and were asked to suspend their studies. Setting out what students can expect from reporting sexual misconduct at university in a way that is clear and consistent will go some way to alleviating such fears (as ambiguity about the situation will be removed).

Students acknowledged that information on how to report sexual misconduct is likely available at their university. However, they state that this is not readily accessible. They note that students will likely be in a distressed state after experiencing sexual misconduct at university and thus would not be capable of actively seeking information about how to report this to their institution. This report recommends that steps are taken by academics to make knowledge about how to report sexual misconduct as easily accessible to students as possible. This may include limiting jargon when providing details on reporting processes to students, or reducing the amount of text on the medium through which this information is offered. If online, the university could additionally perhaps ensure that the student does not have to surf various web pages trying to find this information.

Throughout this investigation, there seemed to be a lot of confusion about what incidents of sexual misconduct are under the university's purview to investigate and punish. Quite often students stated that if something was 'serious' enough, they would likely report it straight to the police as opposed to the university. In order for holistic support to be provided to students, universities must make explicit their role in relation to investigating and sanctioning acts of sexual misconduct that are both 'legal' and illegal (for e.g. a university's investigation 'stops' during court proceedings - this needs to be overtly stated to students).

In a similar vein, universities must condemn all acts of sexual misconduct as experienced by students. Quite often what are sometimes referred to in Feminist literature as the 'dripping tap' aspects of sexual harassment (i.e. those acts not conventionally considered as 'severe' or significantly distressful, like sexist comments or catcalls; Kelly, 1988) go unreported by students because they feel that the university (like wider society) sees this behaviour as 'normal' and not problematic. This report recommends that universities take reasonable measures to ensure that students understand what the university defines as 'sexual misconduct' and that it does not tolerate even those acts on the perceivably more 'minor' end of the spectrum.

Students also expressed a lack of bonds with staff at their universities, making a disclosure of sexual misconduct unappealing. In response, this report recommends that those individuals whose job it is to support disclosures make themselves known to students either through advertisements around campus or providing brief introductions of themselves at popular student events throughout the academic year. The most important thing is that these staff take active steps to engage with the student population, showing they are *personable* and *approachable*.

This report discovered some intersectional factors that hinder students from reporting sexual misconduct at university. One of these factors was a potential language barrier for students whose first language is not English. Some felt it would be difficult to disclose their experience when highly distressed and using a language not native to them. This report thus recommends that, as far as is reasonable, universities employ and train bilingual support staff to receive sexual misconduct disclosures, and that their existence is explicitly made known to the student population. Another factor is the sexuality that individuals identify with, particularly those who identify with a non-heterosexual sexuality. As one participant who identified as homosexual highlighted, reporting deviant behaviour enacted by members of the 'gay community' is discouraged within this community in order to prevent further vilification by heteronormative individuals. This report recommends that universities engage specifically with marginalised groups in their institutions in order to uncover what additional barriers hold them back from disclosing their sexual misconduct experience. It also recommends that steps are taken to create a culture on campus that both celebrates and normalises diversity, and that goes some way to dispel stereotypes associated with particular social groups that exist within the university.

12.2 Preferred routes for reporting sexual misconduct

There was no single route for reporting either 'less' or 'more' serious sexual misconduct that was favoured by students. Rather, ways of reporting were deemed subjective to each individual student. The routes for reporting discussed in this manner were as follows: face-to-face reporting, reporting through online means (such as the medium of online forms or messaging services and email), and via telephone (either talking to someone on the phone or texting). This report thus recommends that *all* of the above ways of reporting sexual misconduct are made easily accessible to students. Doing so will ensure that students are provided with a range of options to disclose their experiences that they feel suits their individual situation and needs.

Concerns were revealed about certain ways to report sexual misconduct that must be addressed by universities. In a discussion about how she would report physical sexual misconduct, one respondent suggested that if she felt it were 'serious' she would disclose face-to-face only. This was because of a distrust that disclosures made through another medium (such as email, text, etc.) would lead to a satisfactory resolution. This report recommends that universities must reassure students that all ways of reporting sexual misconduct follow the same protocol and will proceed towards a resolution in the same way. Universities must reiterate that all allegations will be taken seriously and investigated where appropriate, regardless of what medium the student has disclosed it through.

Further, participants felt there was no way to report sexual misconduct that involved the student being in immediate danger. Each university will of course have campus security that students may contact 24 hours a day in order to receive immediate support. However, the

finding that this is not something students are actively aware of suggests that universities must make information about emergency contacts on campus and halls of residence more visible. This is another recommendation of this report.

12.3 Immediate expectations upon reporting – face-to-face

Students stressed within the research the importance of being able to disclose in an environment that made them feel comfortable and at ease. Informality (in terms of décor and general atmosphere) seemed to be the key to creating such spaces for students. This report thus recommends that universities make efforts to create ‘relaxed’ and ‘non-clinical’ spaces where students can make face-to-face reports of sexual misconduct.

Participants also emphasised that the environment to which students go to report misconduct should be situated centrally on campus for ease of access. This report suggests that universities take on board this idea and consider putting such a place perhaps in their students’ union or central administration building.

We saw in the report that students expect a response from staff during a face-to-face disclosure that is balanced between being ‘professional’ and ‘informal’. Staff are expected to remain ‘calm’ and ‘collected’ during a disclosure in addition to distributing information on the university’s protocol for dealing with allegations. They are also expected to remain non-judgemental throughout. However, it was further said that staff should show compassion and care for the reporting student’s well-being. Throughout all of the interviews, focus groups and the survey, there was a real sense that respondents wanted to feel as if the person hearing their complaint had a genuine interest in their situation and ongoing welfare. Acknowledging that training for support staff on this type of conduct has likely been provided already, this report recommends that universities consider refresher training to ensure all are delivering the best service possible to students.

Further, and in what emphasises the power of language chosen by staff during a student’s disclosure, participants expressed that it is important that staff do not inadvertently relate to affected students as if they are ‘victims’. Noting that some would instead view themselves as a ‘survivor’, one participant cautioned against staff using any lexis that could be construed as ‘pitying’ the student. This report thus recommends that support staff are educated through training about the pejorative mental and physical consequences that can ensue from constructing a survivor of sexual trauma as a ‘victim’, especially when this goes against their own definition of themselves.

Finally, students simply desired a non-judgemental attitude from staff receiving their disclosure, and reassurance that their report legitimately constitutes sexual misconduct. Again, this can and should be achieved through regular training for support staff that highlights how sexual misconduct exists on a spectrum, and that educates about the act of ‘victim-blaming’.

12.4 Expectations following a report made online

Expectations following reports made by digital means depended on the individual’s overall view of the appropriateness of disclosing their experience in this way. For those who felt that

reporting 'serious' misconduct was not suitable to do through technological means, their expectations of a response from staff included an email back that provided information of the reporting process at their university, but that then either encouraged or gave the student the option of coming in to university to disclose their situation *face-to-face*. This was because of a feeling that disclosing in person has more chance of the complaint being dealt with effectively. For those who felt comfortable with receiving all support textually, without speaking at any time with a member of staff face-to-face, an email exchange detailing the university's protocol on dealing with sexual misconduct allegations, and with options for how the student could proceed with their complaint, was deemed suitable.

As views on this issue are conflicting, this report suggests that universities would do best to provide a response to disclosures made using technological means using this same medium, but with a number of elements included as standard. Firstly, the response back should provide students with the option of making a further disclosure face-to-face with a member of support staff. Secondly, responses should always include a detailed account of the university's protocol for dealing with harassment/misconduct allegations, and the options available for the complainant to take it forwards. Thirdly, students should be assured within the response that whatever medium they choose to receive support through, the university will treat the allegation seriously and the student will receive ample support.

12.5 Ongoing support

Counselling for students who have experienced sexual misconduct was the service participants thought most appropriate in terms of ongoing support. Additionally, concerns were raised about how counselling is delivered currently to students affected by sexual misconduct within their institutions. Firstly, students are often given a limited number of sessions they can have with a counsellor at their university. This was thought to be inadequate as the time taken to process and heal following sexual misconduct is subjective, meaning that students risk being discharged from counselling prematurely if they are only permitted a certain number of sessions. Although the current limitation on counselling sessions available at universities is likely due to its high demand in relation to the amount of counsellors employed at these institutions, something must still be done to address students' concerns. This report recommends that universities consider employing additional staff to provide counselling sessions at their institutions in order for students to be allowed a higher number of sessions than they are currently offered. Should this not be feasible, universities should be open and honest with students about the provision they are entitled to and the reasons for this. Communication is particularly key on this issue.

Another critique of how counselling is currently provided to students who have experienced sexual misconduct is related to the perception that some universities do not have any counsellors that specialise in sexual misconduct. According to the participants of this research, this is unacceptable as it means that students are not receiving the particular support they need. One respondent even mentioned that after their sexual assault they were allotted one session to specifically work through their experience before going on to discuss other issues. She stated that this was not helpful and did not help with what she attended these sessions to achieve. This report recommends that universities consider not only employing more counsellors in their institutions, but a fair number who particularly specialise in sexual harassment/violence. As has been shown from the UUK Taskforce's report, sexual misconduct is highly prevalent within universities and it thus follows that an adequate number

of specialised support staff must be on hand to help students who have been victims of such assaults.

Students noted that face-to-face counselling or support sessions are sometimes too intense for students who have been affected by sexual misconduct. Instead, they offered that (depending on what the student states they would prefer) universities should construct peer-led support groups on sexual misconduct for students to go to and be supported by others who have experienced similar acts of misconduct to them. Other participants offered that sometimes people do not want the kind of psychological engagement of counselling sessions, and so asked instead that universities begin to set up more informal 'listening ear' emotional support sessions for students. This report recommends that universities take steps to construct creative support alternatives for students who find one-on-one sessions with counsellors to be unsuitable.

Within the research, students linked the idea of good mental health with the ability to successfully navigate the academic side of university life. In speaking about ongoing support to ensure a student can still engage with their studies, participants suggested that extensions or consideration be given to assist an affected student in completing their assignments, along with their experience being considered grounds for extenuating circumstances (if appropriate). More importantly, students requested that the psychological and physical trauma caused by sexual misconduct be recognised by the university in the same way as they do a 'disability' or bereavement. This report recommends that institutions take into consideration these requests from students and take reasonable action in response.

Spatial segregation of the reporting student and perpetrator was championed overwhelmingly as a form of ongoing support by participants within the research. In the main, students believed that the offender should be made to permanently move away from the affected student, whether this meant a halls of residence move, a move into a different module/seminar group, being given resources to learn at home as part of a suspension, or exclusion from the university altogether (depending on the severity of the offence). Only in some cases did participants feel that reporting students should be given the opportunity to move away from the perpetrator. For most, this was seen to be giving the wrong message to the affected student that they should in some way be 'ashamed' or 'embarrassed' at what has happened to them. This report recommends that universities consider the most appropriate way to ensure the spatial separation of reporting and accused students, both during and following an investigation, ensuring fairness and proportionality to both parties.

With regards to when the perpetrator is a member of staff, students predominantly felt that most staff could be 'avoided' in the university by affected students (i.e. administrative staff, who students may only need to see sporadically, or catering teams that may be avoided by eating elsewhere). When the perpetrator was a student's lecturer or seminar leader, most expressed that whether the act of misconduct was sexist comments or physical sexual assault, the only appropriate course of support for a student would be suspension or exclusion of the accused staff member. This report recommends that universities have clear policies and procedures for investigating staff members accused of committing sexual misconduct, including provision for the imposition of appropriate precautionary measures and sanctions.

It was thought that younger students who have just joined the university would be perhaps more likely to be affected by sexual misconduct and would thus likely need more and qualitatively different ongoing support services than those who have been at the university for a number of years. Participants believed such students would incur heightened distress at having been a victim of sexual misconduct as they are in a new and alien environment. Some participants suggested that universities put on more extra-curricular activities and make efforts

to encourage students to participate fully again in all aspects of university life. The idea of a 'buddy system' was also offered in the qualitative section of the survey for all individuals affected by sexual assault at university. This would involve an older peer accompanying the student around campus to lectures and other events in order to bolster their feeling of safety. This report recommends that universities take on board these suggestions and contemplate innovative ways to encourage students who have been victims of sexual misconduct to continue to thrive at university.

12.6 Precautionary measures

With regards to student-on-student sexual misconduct, some participants asked that tighter security measures be put in place on campuses and within halls of residences to ensure the alleged perpetrator – if under suspension - cannot get access to the 'victim' during an ongoing investigation. This was informed by very concerning anecdotal stories of security staff on campuses not checking the identification of individuals coming onto campus/halls of residence. Universities are thus urged as a recommendation of this report to assess current security measures on campuses as a matter of urgency.

For the most part, students advocated against alleged perpetrators being suspended from university during an ongoing investigation. This is because of the perceived 'gossip culture' existent within universities that can tarnish a student's reputation before they have been proven 'guilty', thereby inducing conflict between them and the wider student population. Rather, students stated that both should be permitted the chance to study from home during an investigation if they chose to do so. This report recommends that both students be given the choice without penalisation to study from home while an investigation into an allegation is carried out.

Additionally, participants offered that in order to avoid the possibility of a stigma being attached to either the reporting student or the alleged perpetrator, universities should take measures to ensure that the investigation into the allegation is not made public knowledge on campus until the allegation has been proven. A recommendation is thus made that universities take steps during an investigation to ensure the anonymity of both the reporting student and the accused student, and to ensure that details of the allegation are provided to individuals within the institution on a need-to-know basis only.

Participants did not feel that staff members accused of sexual misconduct should still be allowed to continue working at the university while they are investigated. The potential abuse of power they may have undertaken through committing a sexual misconduct offence is seen to override any notion that their reputation may be tarnished if they are suspended and eventually proven to be innocent. This report recommends that universities' policies and procedures for investigating staff accused of committing sexual misconduct reflect the profoundly unequal power dynamic between students and staff, in both their approach and when considering appropriate precautionary measures and sanctions.

12.7 Sanctions

Informed by an identification of sexual misconduct behaviour as part of a larger social problem concerning the disregarding of 'consent' and invasion of sexual boundaries, students deemed that education about consent and appropriate sexual behaviour is appropriate for both 'less' and 'more' serious acts of misconduct (where either a student or staff member was the perpetrator). This report thus recommends that, whether in conjunction with other sanctions or as a sole punishment, sanctions that re-socialise perpetrators to view their actions as unacceptable should be enforced by universities.

Suspension was unsurprisingly given as an appropriate sanction for sexual misconduct offences, predominantly those seen to be 'serious' in nature and committed by students. However, participants highlighted that some incidents of sexual misconduct that are 'less serious' may also warrant this punishment, particularly those that are *recurring*. This is because an offender's choice to enact misconduct repeatedly purportedly shows that whatever sanction they have been subjected to previously has not had the desired deterrent effect. This report recommends that universities recognise recurrent 'lower level' sexual misconduct offences as more serious than single incidents, particularly where a warning or minor sanction has already been given.

Sanctions for staff came in the form of forced separation from the victim. In discussing such sanctions, respondents made reference specifically to academic members of staff (presumably as these staff are those with whom students mostly come into contact). Although respondents did not seem entirely sure how this kind of sanction would work in practice, suggestions were made for academic staff to have their job roles changed to prevent them from coming into contact with the affected student again. Others, however, believed that for 'serious' acts that have been proven true, staff should be dismissed from their post at the university with immediate effect. For 'less serious' incidents of sexual misconduct committed by staff, students felt that only a warning would be suitable. The warning would be that if the individual was to reoffend he or she would lose their job at the university. The recommendation this report makes in light of this is that universities ensure that their policies and procedures regarding staff sexual misconduct are robust, fit for purpose and clearly set out appropriate sanctions linked to the 'seriousness' of the behaviour exhibited.

Financial sanctions were spoken of by students mostly with disdain. This is because of the perceived dehumanisation of the affected individual they felt this sanction induces. Additionally, some participants felt that this sanction would not affect all offending students equally, noting that a fine may not be much of a deterrent to a student with a wealthy socioeconomic background or a member of staff with a 'stable' salary. Universities are thus urged to reconsider the idea of using financial sanctions against students and staff who have committed sexual misconduct.

12.8 Other

Revealed within the report was that a culture of sexual harassment *is* in existence on university campuses. When discussing that they would not report 'lower level' sexual misconduct (like groping, catcalling, sexist remarks/jokes, sexual comments etc.) because their university would view it as 'normal', students inadvertently provided insight that such acts *are* happening currently at UK universities. This report recommends that universities urgently take steps to disassemble this culture. This could be achieved by running consent and non-appropriate sexual behaviour workshops or campaigns constructed to target the behaviours of perpetrators of sexual misconduct.

Changes must be made to university cultures in regards to sexual misconduct. Students feel that their universities are choosing to remain silent on issues of sexual harassment and assault, and this makes disclosures difficult. They simply want the university to begin (and maintain) a dialogue on the topic in order to remove the stigma around 'speaking out'. Universities are thus encouraged by this report to normalise the articulation of sexual misconduct experiences to bolster disclosures by students.

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Appendix A

Survey schedule

Survey title: Supporting students who report their experience of sexual misconduct

Introduction

The University of X and X Students' Union would like to invite any student to participate in this survey, which will explore the following:

1. Students' preferred routes for reporting alleged sexual misconduct to the university
2. Students' immediate expectations upon reporting alleged sexual misconduct to the university.
3. Students' expectations of ongoing support from their university.
4. Students' perceptions of how the university should protect the rights of both the accused and the reporting student.
5. Students' expectations and views around sanctions for different types of offence.

The survey forms part of a collaborative study, funded by the national student services organisation AMOSSHE and run by five North West universities: the University of Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores, Manchester Metropolitan, Edge Hill and Chester. The study will use focus group data, interviews and survey data to draw conclusions about students' views on how universities should respond to disclosures of sexual misconduct, and how these students can be supported. The study aims to report and make recommendations in July 2018.

You will not be asked to reflect on any personal experiences and all contributions will be anonymised. If any of the questions make you feel uncomfortable, you don't have to answer them. If you feel you need support after completing this survey, we will provide details of the support available to you at the bottom of each page.

Defining sexual misconduct

For the purposes of this study we are defining sexual misconduct as any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any gender, and it can occur between people of the same or different gender. ([University of Iowa](#))

Within the university context, sexual misconduct is classed as a disciplinary offence rather than a criminal offence. Some forms of sexual misconduct may also constitute criminal offences, such as rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment. As we are only considering disciplinary offences that are in breach of the University's regulations, we do not refer to criminal offences within this survey.

Examples of behaviour which would be categorised as sexual misconduct against a student include the following:

- sexual intercourse or sexual acts without consent
- attempted sexual intercourse or sexual acts without consent
- kissing without consent
- touching inappropriately without consent

- sharing private sexual materials (e.g. “revenge porn”)
- using sexually explicit materials to harass another
- inappropriately showing sexual organs to someone
- stalking or following someone unwantedly
- repeated unwanted and unsolicited sexual remarks, jokes or sexual noises
- repeated unwanted and unsolicited sexual contact online

As universities, we are committed to providing a safe and welcoming campus environment for all our students. This means in this particular area that we wish to support any student who reports that they have experienced an incident of sexual misconduct, and promote a culture which is clear that there is no place for sexual misconduct in our community.

About you

We are asking for limited information about you, in order to provide a commentary on the representativeness of the sample, and to compare differences between variables. You do not have to disclose any information, but if you are comfortable doing so this will enhance the value of the data.

1. Which university do you attend? (drop down list of 5)
2. What is your level of study? (UG, PGT, PGR, don't want to say)
3. What is your gender? (male, female, other [free text], don't want to say)
4. How would you define your sexual orientation? (heterosexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, other [free text], don't want to say)
5. Have you experienced an incident of sexual misconduct during your time as a student? (yes, no, don't want to say)
6. Have you experienced an incident of sexual misconduct at another time in your life? (yes, no, don't want to say)
7. Do you know anyone who has experienced sexual misconduct as a student at your university? (yes, no, don't want to say)

Reporting sexual misconduct

We would like to encourage students who experience sexual misconduct either on or off-campus to report the incident to the university so that we can better support them.

1. Put yourself in the position of someone that has experienced an incident of sexual misconduct. Do you think you would report the incident to your university? (Yes/no/don't know) (please note this will be a matrix-style question, with participants asked to consider whether they would report each of the offences outlined above under “defining sexual misconduct”).
2. Could you give the reasons why you would or wouldn't report the occurrences of sexual misconduct outlined above? (free text)
3. What do you think the barriers are to students telling the university about such experiences? (free text)
4. If you were to report the incident, how would you choose to do so? (face to face, by phone, by email, online)
5. Would you be more likely to report an incident if you could do so anonymously? (yes/no)
6. If you were to approach someone at the university to report your experience, who would it be? (personal tutor/academic adviser, support staff in department, student services, counselling, students' union, peer mentor, other student, other staff, I wouldn't)

7. Do you have any further comments on how we can best encourage and support students to report their experiences? (free text)

Initial disclosure

Previous questions focused on your likelihood to report an incident, and ways in which we could encourage more students to share their experiences with us. This section will address your expectations from the university immediately after you have reported an incident of sexual misconduct.

1. If you spoke to someone face to face, how would you expect them to react? What information or support do you think this person should give you at this stage? (free text)
2. If you sent an email or filled in a form, what would you expect to happen next? (free text)
3. If you reported anonymously, what would you expect the university to do with the information you have shared? (free text)

Ongoing support

Where the incident of sexual misconduct is serious, students are likely to need ongoing support from the university in order to fully participate in university life.

1. What support do you think the university should offer to students who have experienced an incident of serious sexual misconduct? (free text)
2. How do you think the university could make it easier for a student who has experienced serious sexual misconduct to fully participate in university life? (free text)

Precautionary measures

Universities have duties and responsibilities towards all our students. We need to ensure that the reporting student and any others are safe and able to continue with their studies, and we also need to have regard to the rights of the accused party. Where the alleged offence is committed by a member of the university (a student or member of staff), the university has the ability to impose some precautionary measures in order to ensure the safety of all the university community.

1. In a situation where an incident of sexual misconduct by a **fellow student** has been reported, but not yet investigated, what measures do you think are potentially appropriate to protect the safety and wellbeing of the reporting student?

Offence / precautionary measure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual intercourse or sexual acts without consent • attempted sexual intercourse or sexual acts without consent • kissing without consent • touching inappropriately without consent • sharing private sexual materials (e.g. "revenge porn") • using sexually explicit materials to harass another • inappropriately showing sexual organs to someone • stalking or following someone unwantedly • repeated unwanted and unsolicited sexual remarks, jokes or sexual noises • repeated unwanted and unsolicited sexual contact online <p>(allow a choice for each)</p>
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Requiring the accused party to refrain from contacting the reporting student while investigations take place	
Moving the accused party into a different seminar group while investigations take place	
Moving the reporting student into a different seminar group while investigations take place	
Moving the accused party into a different hall of residence while investigations take place	
Moving the reporting student into a different hall of residence while investigations take place	
Temporarily suspending the accused party from their studies while investigations take place	
Banning the accused party from campus, or specific buildings while investigations take place	
Banning the accused party from attending certain meetings or groups while investigations take place	

Other (please state)

2. In a situation where an incident of sexual misconduct by a **member of staff** has been reported, but not yet investigated, what measures do you think are potentially appropriate to protect the safety and wellbeing of the reporting student?

Offence / precautionary measure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual intercourse or sexual acts without consent • attempted sexual intercourse or sexual acts without consent • kissing without consent • touching inappropriately without consent • sharing private sexual materials (e.g. "revenge porn") • using sexually explicit materials to harass another • inappropriately showing sexual organs to someone • stalking or following someone unwantedly • repeated unwanted and unsolicited sexual remarks, jokes or sexual noises • repeated unwanted and unsolicited sexual contact online <p>(allow a choice for each)</p>
Requiring the staff member to	

refrain from contacting the reporting student while investigations take place	
Moving the reporting student into a different seminar group while investigations take place	
Allowing the reporting student to change modules	
Temporarily suspending the staff member from work while investigations take place	
Requiring another member of staff to cover lectures/seminars which the reporting student will be attending while investigations take place	
Banning the staff member from campus, or specific buildings while investigations take place	
Reassigning the staff member to a different job while investigations take place	

Other (please state)

3. Do you have any comments about universities imposing precautionary measures whilst an investigation is under way? (free text)
4. Is there anything universities should consider as part of the investigation process, in order to be fair to both the reporting student and the accused party? (free text)

Sanctions

At the end of the disciplinary process, if the accused party is found, on the balance of probabilities, to have committed an act of sexual misconduct, the university has the discretion to impose sanctions on that individual. We are interested in students' views on the appropriateness of different sanctions for different categories of misconduct offence.

1. Matrix question: Where a **student** has been found to have committed a sexual misconduct offence, for each type of offence, please indicate which, if any, potential sanctions you deem appropriate. (offences same as in previous table)
 - a. No sanction
 - b. Warning
 - c. Formal reprimand
 - d. Written apology to the reporting student
 - e. Attendance at a consent workshop
 - f. Completion of an online course on sexual consent
 - g. Completion of a project on sexual consent
 - h. Monetary fine (up to £100)
 - i. Monetary fine (up to £500)
 - j. Monetary fine (over £500)
 - k. Temporary suspension of studies
 - l. Termination of studies, with the right to reapply for a new course
 - m. Termination of studies with no right to any future degree from the university
2. Are there any other sanctions that you think could be considered by the university? (free text)
3. Matrix question: Where a **member of staff** has been found to have committed a sexual misconduct offence, for each type of offence, please indicate which, if any, potential sanctions you deem appropriate. (offences same as in previous table)
 - a. No sanction
 - b. Warning
 - c. Formal reprimand
 - d. Written apology to the reporting student
 - e. Attendance at a consent workshop
 - f. Completion of an online course on sexual consent
 - g. Monetary fine (up to £100)
 - h. Monetary fine (up to £500)
 - i. Monetary fine (over £500)
 - j. Suspension for less than 1 year (without pay)
 - k. Suspension for less than 1 year (with pay)
 - l. Suspension for more than 1 year (without pay)
 - m. Suspension for more than 1 year (with pay)
 - n. Moved to another job within the University
 - o. Termination of employment
- 4.
5. Do you have any further comments on sanctions? (free text)

Final questions

1. Do you have any further comments you would like to share?
2. If you would like to be sent a copy of the final report, please provide an email address. (Please note that this email address will be used solely to send you a copy of the report: email addresses will be removed from the survey data before we analyse it so that your anonymity remains protected).

Appendix B

Focus group and interview schedule

First comments –

- Explanation of the nature of focus groups/interviews
- Confidentiality disclosure

Topic Guide

Opening Questions:

What are some of your general thoughts about sexual misconduct on university campuses?

- What do you know about it?
- How do you feel about it?
- Where does your information come from?
- How aware of it are you on your own university campus?

Students' preferred routes for reporting alleged sexual misconduct

We are interested in finding out the ways students feel would be best to report sexual misconduct to their university that has happened at their university.

How much or how little would you say you already knew of the ways someone can report to the university an experience of sexual misconduct?

- How do you know this? Where did that information come from?
- Why don't you think you know a lot about it?

Thinking about some of the already established methods of reporting sexual misconduct to your university that you know of, could you say a little bit about why you believe they are effective/not effective?

- Why do you think this?
- Are there any anonymised instances you could tell us about an effective/ineffective instance of reporting?

What do you think would be the most preferable way for a student to report sexual misconduct to their university?

- Does this differ according on the *type* of sexual misconduct experienced? (prompt with list of sexual misconduct classifications)
- Does this differ according to the specific person who is making the claim? (i.e. first years, and so on, individuals of different races, sexualities, with disabilities)

Often, sexual misconduct goes unreported in universities. Are there incidents of sexual misconduct that you think are more likely than others to go unreported?

- By whom?
- Why?

What would you say the university could do to encourage allegations to be reported? Again, your suggestions can differ based on contextual factors, like type of sexual misconduct experienced or the characteristics of the individual reporting it.

Students' Immediate Expectations upon Reporting

Now we want to think a little bit about what students would like to happen in the immediate aftermath of them reporting an incident of sexual misconduct.

So, if you imagine you've just reported an incident of sexual misconduct to a person face to face, what would you expect to happen in that moment?

- How would you want them to react?
- Is there specific language or body languages you'd like them to use to make you feel a certain way (i.e. comforted, heard, believed)?
- Do you feel you should be provided with certain information or support straight away?
- Does this hold true for the person you have reported to regardless of their status in the university (i.e. whether it's someone from counselling or student support or your academic advisor)? Or does it change?

What would you desire to happen in the immediate aftermath of reporting sexual misconduct via a form that you submitted online or an email to someone?

- Should there be some support given right away in the form of an automatic sign posting of support services while you are awaiting a response?
- What length of time would you feel it is acceptable to wait for a response?
- What kind of language would you like the response to have to make you feel a certain way (i.e. comforted, heard, believed)?

What about over the telephone?

If you decided to report anonymously, what would you like to happen next?

- Support for anonymous reporters?
- Should anonymous reporters be kept in the loop about what happens to their report? How?

Can you describe some examples of bad reactions to allegations of sexual misconduct in university that you have heard about or could imagine? (anonymous only)

Ongoing Support

We'd now like you to think about what kind of ongoing support an individual who has reported sexual misconduct would need from the university in order to remain an active citizen of the institution.

Thinking about incidents of **serious** sexual misconduct, what continued support do you think the university should offer a student so they remain able to fully participate in university life?

- Does this differ based upon the characteristics of a person? (intersectional positionalities...) And what type of misconduct was committed?
- Is there a minimum/maximum length of time that a student who has reported an incident of serious sexual misconduct should receive support?
- Does it matter if the support comes from multiple individuals who are qualified to provide a particular support service, or would it be preferable to deal with the same person each time?

- What kind of continued support could the university offer when the victim and perpetrator have to be in close proximity (i.e. on the same course/club)?

What about for an incident of less serious sexual misconduct?

Protection of Rights

The university needs to ensure both that the reporting student is safe and able to continue with university life and that the accused party's rights and safety are respected.

We want to now ask: what precautionary measures do you think the university could put in place to protect the reporting student following an incident that has not yet been investigated and that was perpetrated by one of their fellow students?

- Do any contextual factors make this different?
- Is there anything you can imagine or have heard of that has been particularly effective/ineffective? (anonymous only)
- Exclusions/moving of the accused party from studies/campus/societies/seminars/halls of residence, etc.?

What about if the accused was a member of academic staff?

- Same as above with appropriate changes

Sanctions

Finally, we wanted to explore what you would expect the sanctions to be for different sexual misconduct offences at university.

What do you think is an appropriate punishment for more serious offences of sexual misconduct (suggest what is meant by more serious offences but also allow this to be defined by the group)?

- Financial sanction?
- Reflexive sanction (i.e. attending consent workshops/writing an apology/reflexive piece)?
- Exclusion?
- Does it differ again depending on the type of serious offence committed?
- Does it differ based on the accused's position at the university?
- 'Why'? for all