



Briefing Paper for Working Group on tackling and preventing sexual violence and misconduct at Edinburgh's universities

Friday 2 February 2018

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 Established in 1978 Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre (ERCC) is a specialist support, advocacy and information service for women, non-binary people and members of the trans community and young people aged 12 and over in Edinburgh, East and Midlothian who have experienced sexual violence both recently and in the past, including rape, sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation.
- 1.2 Sexual violence is traumatising and life-changing for individuals affected. Its impacts can often be complex and, without effective support, lifelong- impacting on the health, well-being, relationship, safety, education and employment outcomes of individuals affected. Many survivors experience significant post-traumatic stress symptoms (including symptoms such as panic attacks, flashbacks, night terrors, sleep disorders, extreme fearfulness, anxiety, dissociation), and mental health problems including depression. As a result many experience disruption to their education and/or employment, family life and friendships, loss of confidence and self-worth, and may resort to substance misuse, self-harm and suicidal thoughts/attempts to cope with what they have experienced. Many feel acutely ashamed of what has happened to them, and, as witnessed by the recent #me too movement, may sometimes for years feel unable to disclose and seek help. The trauma they have experienced remains unaddressed and can impact on their longer-term health, education, employment, housing, income/ poverty and relationship outcomes. Justice outcomes for survivors of sexual violence are also difficult to attain.
- 1.3 In 2016-17, recorded sexual crime in Scotland increased by 5% since 2015-16, and has increased by 65% since 2007-8. 1,285 sexual offences were recorded across Edinburgh (968), East Lothian (160) and Midlothian (157) in 2016-17. However, it is well-documented that many crimes of sexual violence and abuse go unreported. Prevalence research indicates that: one in ten women in Scotland has experienced rape & one in five women in Scotland has had someone try to make them have sex against their will (Natsal-3, 2015); 20-25% of women have experienced sexual abuse in childhood (Scottish Government, 2005); a third of young women in the UK had experienced an unwanted sexual act in an intimate teenage relationship (NSPCC, 2009); 16,500 young people are at risk of sexual exploitation (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2012). Specific populations are at increased risk of sexual violence and abuse because of additional vulnerabilities, including women with disabilities, who use psychiatric services, with substance misuse problems, who are involved in the criminal justice system and were looked-after as children (Scottish Government, 2005).

1.4 ERCC's charitable objectives are to reduce the distress and suffering of people affected by sexual violence through the provision of support and information, and to increase awareness of sexual violence and its impacts within the wider community. To deliver these objectives, we provide a holistic range of trauma-informed support services, including:

- Telephone and email support
- Introductory assessments
- Immediate crisis sessions (up to 6 sessions) for survivors who have recently been raped and/or sexually assaulted
- Longer-term individual support and counselling (up to 16 sessions)
- Advocacy- to support survivors to report to the police, where they elect to do so, and through the justice process.
- Group support (12 sessions)- we aim to deliver two 12 week groups each year
- Support for partners, family members and friends of those affected by sexual violence (6 sessions)
- Specialist counselling for survivors with addiction issues in partnership with a local alcohol counselling service, ELCA
- Specialist support, counselling and art psychotherapy for young survivors aged 12-18- our STAR project
- Outreach services in East and Midlothian
- High quality information, including a range of information leaflets/ packs about sexual violence and its impacts (including information resources about rape and sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, anxiety, panic attacks, flashbacks, self-harm, sex and intimacy, reporting to the police and the legal process), and our 'Little Green Book'- a bespoke trauma- informed information resource developed by ERCC, including suggestions and self-help exercises for self-management of trauma related impacts of sexual violence (<http://www.ercc.scot/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Little-Green-Book.pdf>).

1.3 In addition ERCC delivers awareness-raising training events and workshops for a broad range of stakeholders, including the local authority, police, NHS, voluntary sector services and community organisations and work in schools and with young people, and strategically with multi-agency partners, towards preventing sexual violence.

1.4 Over the past year we have supported 660 survivors of sexual violence across Edinburgh, East and Midlothian, via 5871 episodes of support (including 1-1 support, and support by telephone, email and text). 48% of these survivors were aged 16-19 or 20-24, correlating with relevant student age populations (this is based on a sample of 305 survivors in this period who

completed equalities and diversity monitoring forms). Anecdotally, we have seen a considerable increase in referrals from or regarding students in the past year.

- 1.5 ERCC has referral protocols in place with the Rape Crisis Scotland National Helpline, Police Scotland, and also receive referrals directly from survivors or third party referrals from a broad range of agencies including the NHS, including GPs, mental health and psychological services, local authorities, schools and universities, voluntary sector organisations including community health, homelessness, substance misuse, domestic abuse and young people's services.
- 1.6 ERCC works to the National Rape Crisis Service Standards, which adhere to the Rape Crisis Best Practice Model. This model outlines the gender-based, human rights and equalities, and trauma-informed approaches which underpin rape crisis service provision, and aligns to the key principles set out in the Scottish Government's Equally Safe strategy on gender-based violence.
- 1.7 Consistently a minimum of 80% of survivors supported through our services across Edinburgh, East and Midlothian report that they:
- Feel safer and more in control of their options and choices;
 - Feel more able to cope with the impacts of sexual violation and trauma;
 - Develop improved well-being and resilience;
 - Are empowered and supported to engage with the criminal justice system, when they elect to do so.

'Alison', aged 18

Alison contacted ERCC's young people's service when she felt no one around her understood what she was going through. She had gone from feeling bright and positive about her future, to feeling isolated, lacking motivation and unable to keep up with University work. Alison used the initial sessions to share what had happened to her and within the safe setting allowed herself the space to feel the shock, anger and unfairness of what she had been through. Upon learning the common impacts of trauma Alison began to feel more at ease with her reactions, realising this is how she has coped and even survived her experience. Alison's confidence and self-esteem began to grow and with time and encouragement Alison gradually realised she was not to blame for what happened to her and this seemed like a real turning point. With encouragement, she spoke to her University to discuss her difficulties and an agreement was reached to postpone some of her exams. Alison then used the sessions to explore her relationships with friends and family and reflected on how it has been difficult to connect with others when she was carrying so much anger and had felt so isolated. Alison slowly started to connect with those around her again. Alison felt ready for the support to finish by the end of 16 sessions, feeling she has grown in confidence, has support around her and knows the service is here if she feels she needs support again in the future.

2. ERCC's work with students and universities

2.1 Whilst ERCC does not record per se whether a service user is a student, 48% of the survivors ERCC has supported over the past year were aged 16-19 or 20-24, correlating with relevant student age populations (this figure is based on a sample of 305 survivors in this period who completed equalities and diversity monitoring forms). Anecdotally, we have seen a considerable increase in referrals from or regarding students over the past two years.

2.2 Students from each of Edinburgh's universities have accessed/are accessing ERCC's specialist trauma-informed support services, which include emotional support, counselling, advocacy and information. Depending on their age, students can access our young people's service or adult services.

2.3 Students have fed back the following to us about the particular issues arising for them as students who have experienced sexual violence:

- Where students have been raped or sexually assaulted by fellow students/staff members, they feel unclear on options about reporting this or feel unsupported within their universities around reporting.
- Students have described that the current reporting processes within universities are inadequate as sexual violence complaints don't quite fit into current complaints forms, or the forms/process do not meet seriousness of issues.
- Students have fed back that universities have unclear protocols on what they can or cannot do depending on whether police complaint is made, or that staff are unclear on protocols. Some students have felt pressured to report to police.
- Students have reported a lack of knowledge or training across generic university staff who might not routinely hear disclosures as part of their job but might have to deal with them anyway (for instance one student confiding in tutor who didn't know what to do next, or another student assaulted by staff member who felt that the faculty head was friends with staff member and did not treat complaint appropriately, etc)
- Unfortunately feedback from students about the ways their university has handled these issues has predominantly been negative.
- Where some students had received support from university support/welfare services, they felt the support was not particularly in line with their needs and only 6 sessions were available.

2.4 In addition, ERCC receives and responds to regular requests from university services and staff members, and student services and organisations for information and training regarding, in short summary, the following issues:

- How to respond to disclosures
- How to support survivors
- How to signpost and refer survivors to ERCC's services
- Reporting to the police
- ERCC's awareness-raising resources, such as ERCC's short films which aim to reduce and prevent sexual violence.

2.5 For example, in the past year alone, ERCC:

- Has been contacted on a number of occasions by university staff who are unsure about how to deal with disclosures of sexual violence and issues arising from these, and are looking for advice.
- Hosted an agency visit in September for Unite Students, which provides accommodation and support for University Students. ERCC staff met with the Welfare Lead, Kerry Watson, and provided information, including resources to take away, about our services for young people and adults. Kerry intended to place these resources in the hallways of accommodations so people know there is support and can take one discreetly without having to disclose.
- Provided training to 4 Queen Margaret University Residential Assistants in November 2017, on: What is Sexual Violence; Being an Active Bystander; Impacts of Sexual Violence; How to Support Survivors.
- Provided a training input in December 2017 for 15 support staff at Edinburgh Napier University on supporting survivors of rape and sexual assault on campus.
- Has also recently provided training and information for staff at the Advice Place at University of Edinburgh.
- Will be providing a talk on 7 February on sexual violence and support for survivors to 15 students who are accessing the Sexual and Reproductive Health programme at Edinburgh Napier University. Students from this programme have also previously visited ERCC for further information about our work.
- Has met on two occasions with art therapy students from Queen Margaret University to discuss our service and art therapy/ support we provide to young people. This has included giving information/ discussing a trauma based approach.
- In addition, Edinburgh University Students Association has purchased copies of ERCC's bespoke trauma-informed resource for survivors of sexual violence, the Little Green Book, to provide to students accessing its welfare services, and NUS Scotland organised a number of events in partnership with ERCC over the 16 days of Action to End Gender-Based Violence in November 2017, showcasing ERCC's awareness-raising short films on sexual harassment and abuse 'Young Voices' and 'Hopscotch' to student groups across Scotland.

3 Key priorities recommended by ERCC for consideration in the universities strategy on sexual violence and misconduct

Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment at senior strategic level to tackling sexual violence experienced by students, including appropriate resources, and underpinned by following key principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An institution- wide strategic approach to addressing sexual violence. - Alignment with key principles of <i>Equally Safe</i>, particularly regarding a gender-based analysis of sexual violence, which locates sexual violence within a broader context of gender inequality. - Engagement with students as active participants via participation of student associations and organisations in development of strategy - Partnership approach, including representation from Police, NHS and local specialist services such as Rape Crisis. • Institution-wide sexual violence policy/gender-based violence policy for university staff. • Institution-wide sexual violence policy for students.
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide programmes of sexual violence prevention training, including training on consent and bystander training, for staff and students • Ensure that student code of conducts/ agreements with the universities/induction processes clearly identify a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and disciplinary sanctions • Undertake campaigns to increase awareness and understanding about consent (as defined under the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009)
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop clear institutional, survivor-centred disclosure response for incidents of rape and sexual violence. • Build in appropriate resource for survivor-centred, trauma-informed support for survivors on campus. • Develop clear referral pathways with local specialist services such as Rape Crisis, Police, NHS. • Ensure that information resources about sexual violence and trauma, and specialist support agencies, are available in student support and welfare services, and online.
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement an institution-wide training strategy which addresses the training needs of staff employed by universities, to ensure a consistent and informed response to disclosures of sexual violence.