



Sexual violence in Oxford: Is anyone listening?



“There was no one to turn to, With sexual violence common in Oxford, does the univ

We need better welfare provision, says Corpus JCR Pres **Patricia Stephenson**

Reading the Sexual Violence Survey one thing seems clear: the inconsistency in how sexual violence is handled across the University.

Some students were grateful for the way their college handled the situation, but they seem to be in the minority. Sexual violence has a profound effect on the survivor's life, so it is absurd that the University doesn't take the lead in ensuring that all colleges offer the same standard of support.

A decade ago, when the University realised harassment existed, they established harassment advisors, a senior member in each college to deal with harassment. On paper, I'm sure this ticks the “we support our students” box, but in reality these advisors can take the form of an obscure fellow without harassment training. This is just one example of how poor the support provisions are across the University.

It's not fair to say that all colleges don't provide support, but it is so poorly publicised that students don't know it exists. Many colleges provide a Welfare Room for students who don't feel comfortable going back to their own, or who are too drunk to get home, but no one knows about these things so their existence is redundant.

The nearest Solace Centre, which provides a forensic examination for survivors of sexual violence, is in Slough. Not all colleges will reimburse the taxi fare, a simple demonstration of support.

Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre, which provides support for survivors of sexual violence, is a wonderful service for students in Oxford. They are badly under-financed. Oxford University RAG has provided financial support for Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre, but why doesn't the University?

Just because someone doesn't want to go to the police, does not mean their college shouldn't support them. The vast majority of cases happen in college so you're likely to know to the perpetrator; for a college official to tell you it's not a big deal can be incredibly damaging for someone who has experienced sexual violence.

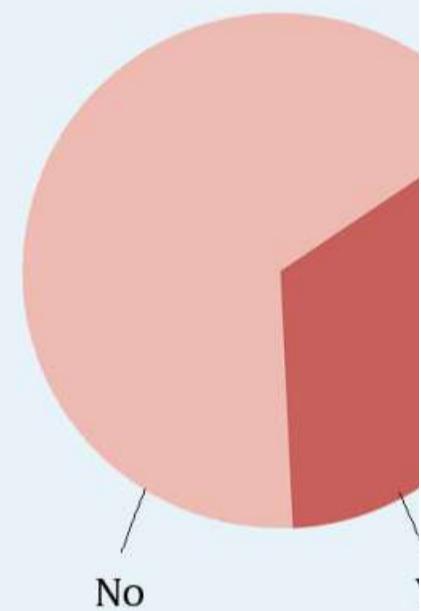
Oxford once led the way for student college welfare provisions across the UK, with Balliol being the first higher education institution to provide free contraceptives. However, it has always been student led and student driven. Colleges need to start realising that it really does happen here.

It's great that there are student led campaigns about sexual violence, from the OUSU Sexual Consent Workshops to Womcam Events, but this shouldn't have to be the case. It's the Colleges and University, those bodies who claim responsibility over us, that should be starting these initiatives and supporting them financially.

% of women students who have been seriously sexually assaulted that have reported it to their institution



Did you feel able to report the assault to the University?



Most students don't know about the help available for survivors of sexual violence, C+ can reveal.

Of 107 Oxford students asked, 83% stated that they were unsure or did not know about “any options at the University should you wish to report any kind of sexual assault.” Only 17% of people said they knew the support available for students who survive sexual assault.

The revelations come as part of an investigation into sexual violence across university. C+ asked 225 anonymous students about their experiences of sexual violence, across the majority of JCRs in the university.

The majority of those who said they knew about support available, 12 out of 16, listed resources offered in college. One person cited OUSU. Five people said they knew resources were available, but were unable to name any.

An Oxford University spokesperson commented, “The University of Oxford takes allegations of rape or sexual assault extremely seriously and the welfare teams, peer supporters and harassment advisors based in the colleges, would be on hand to offer immediate support to students involved in any cases of sexual harassment or violence.

“They would support students who report having been raped or sexually assaulted and would encourage them to report those allegations, which are a criminal matter, to the police.”

There are other resources provided for survivors of sexual consent, including OUSU's It Happens Here campaign, Oxford Rape Crisis Centre, and the university's counselling service.

Olayinka Oduwole, President of Oxford Women for Women International, noted that many are unaware of these services, commenting,

“Some students do not know about these procedures and some may not want to use these procedures due to public perception and negativity associated with being called a victim of such issue.”

She continued, “We must also encourage students to speak up about these issues and make sure they get positive treatment afterwards and try to reduce the negative perceptions associated with being called a victim.”

The University of Oxford does not have a separate policy on sexual violence: sexual assaults are included in the Harassment and Bullying Policy.

The policy states, “allegations of harassment or bullying which arise within the college environment will normally be dealt with under the appropriate college procedure.” It condemns “humiliating, intimidating, and/or demeaning criticism” of individuals and “unwanted physical contact, ranging from an invasion of space to a serious assault.”

The investigation, which defined sexual violence as “any form of non-consensual sexual act”, received 71 responses from people who had experienced assaults. Of these people, only eight (11%) “felt able to report the incident” to college.

Survivors who had told their college about their experiences had mixed feelings about how useful the response was. Six out of 10 people said their case was not taken seriously by college, with one more person “unsure.” Eight said they were unhappy with the outcome of the incident.

One student said, “I was eventually taken to our college Chaplain, after I had suffered severe after effects. He was fantastic, and is possibly the only reason I am still at Oxford.” Another student praised their college for ensuring the ag-

gressor moved out of their house.

Nevertheless, several respondents criticised the welfare provided. One student stated, “When I reported the incident, I was told that I was naive and “did not understand boys” as I had been to an all-girls school. I was also told that “things happen when heavy drinking is involved”.

Several criticised welfare officers, with one respondent saying that after a complaint, she “never heard from them again... Months later, I emailed one of them. Their response was that they didn't think I was actually making a report.” Another expressed anger that “nothing happened”, with the perpetrator only “being a bit told off.”

The main reason victims of sexual violence felt unable to report assaults was a fear of not being taken seriously. Although this was mostly a problem for people who had been groped in clubs, this concern also affected people who had been raped. One female respondent expressed fear, commenting, “I didn't want to get stuck for ‘playing the victim’ after ‘regretting a one night stand.’”

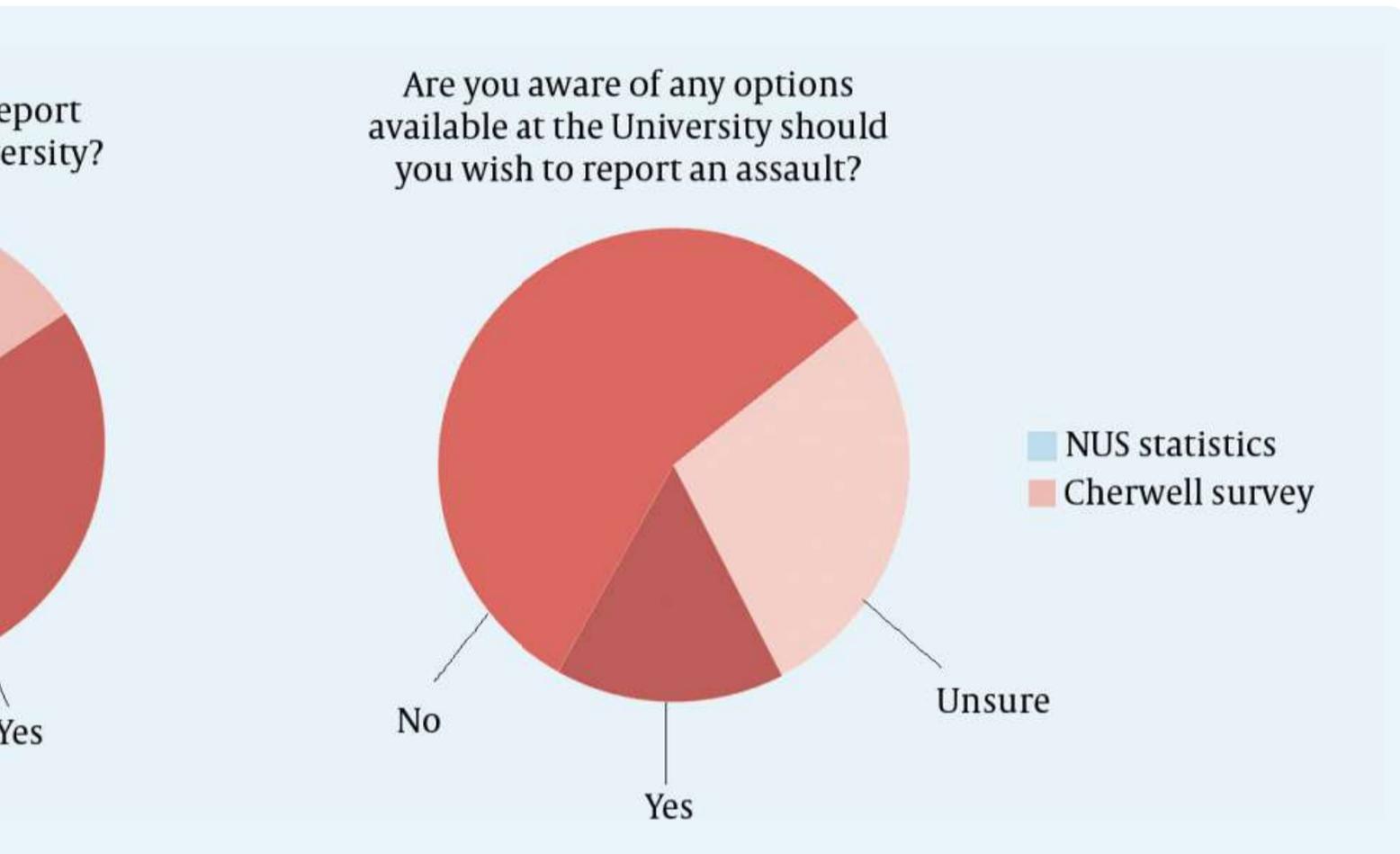
Another woman who had been raped said, “I felt that it would not have been taken seriously because I had taken part in sexual activity with the guy in question, but had told him I didn't want to have sex.”

One account said, “I was treated so poorly by the college, and made to feel like such an unwanted outsider, that I felt unable to trust anyone to help me. Plus I started to blame myself for what had happened; I felt so ashamed and traumatised and there was no one to turn to, so I decided it must have been my fault.”

Others said they “didn't want to be called a slut”, or that they “felt that it wouldn't be seen as abuse” having consented to other sexual acts.

Investigation: sexual violence

“so I decided it was my fault” University do enough to support survivors? C+ investigates



University policy must change, argues **Abigail Burman** of It Happens Here

One in four female undergraduates and three in 20 men nationally are survivors of sexual violence. For Oxford, this means that of the undergraduate women alone, almost 3,000 people have experienced sexual violence. Imagine what that number of survivors means. If you gathered them together in a single group, there would be people thronging the streets of Oxford, spilling out of buildings and filling quadrangles and courtyards. There are also the stories, so many stories of pain and struggle and resilience- enough stories to overflow libraries.

But in the face of these numbers, these stories and these people there's silence. When I came to Oxford the only mention of sexual violence was a short entry in the welfare guide. There are few policies at the college or university level addressing sexual violence. There is nothing guiding survivors through getting support. People who try to reach out face inadequate policies and people who don't have the experience needed to help them. Silence at an administrative level is matched by silence between people. So many of the stories submitted to It Happens Here are from people who have never told anyone else. Some people do tell others, but all too frequently the people they tell just silence them again by not believing them. Sexual violence is an epidemic in our community. It's an epidemic that we have an obligation to fix because we have an obligation to each other, but silence will not make the violence stop. It will not protect anyone. It will not make it easier for survivors to heal. Silence just buries the pain. It Happens Here was created to give people a chance to break the silence. We believe that if we join together to say that sexual violence happens here we can dedicate ourselves to creating an Oxford where it doesn't. We can make Oxford a place where survivors are able to share their experiences and can find support, and we can ingrain consent and respect for each other in our culture so that there are fewer attacks in years to come.

Our community is already taking the first steps in this direction. The OUSU Consent workshops are being instituted in more colleges each year and the university is working towards trainings on sexual violence for welfare staff. There are also incredible individuals across the university who advocate for survivors. But to create a community where sexual violence is understood we must go further.

We need to institute comprehensive policies on sexual violence across the university, policies that commit our university to acknowledging and standing against sexual violence. If we come together and make that commitment, we can begin make the university a place where everyone is safe to live and to learn.

Another major reason for choosing not to talk to college authorities was a sense that nothing could be done. Several students said that having been assaulted in clubs, their college could do little to discipline the perpetrator.

One student, assaulted by a fellow Oxford student in a different country, said she “didn't feel support from college was possible on my year abroad”.

Difficulties in reporting sexual assaults were exacerbated by the size of colleges - many victims knew their attackers well, or wanted to avoid drawing attention to themselves.

One student wrote, “It was someone that I know well and I don't think that they knew how uncomfortable it made me.” Another said, “The perpetrator was someone I've slept with in the past so I felt that it wouldn't be seen as abuse.”

In one account which happened in Freshers' Week, a student said she “felt it was necessary to keep a low profile as I did not want to be seen as “stirring up trouble”.

There was a gender split among people who experienced violence. Men were in a minority, with six men (8% of male respondents) telling Cherwell they had experienced sexual assault. None of these men reported the violence to college authorities. Many suggested this was because men are rarely heard when they complain about sexual assault. One man said that “males are never taken seriously in such situations.”

A second man echoed the sentiment, commenting, “I think there's a prevailing sense that when a guy sleeps with a woman without his consent it's less of an issue as in the opposite case. Especially if the guy is drunk - if a girl is raped when drunk it's unacceptable; if a guy is raped when drunk it isn't really even considered sexual abuse.”

The University's central Harassment Advisory

Service monitors incidents handled by harassment advisors. During the 18 months from March 2012 to October 2013, 11 incidents have been recorded.

These include five cases of stalking, two of sexual harassment, two of sexual assault, one of relationship abuse, and one of honour based violence.

For comment on the investigation from Wom-Cam leader *Rebekka Hammelsbeck* and OUSU VP Women candidate *Anna Bradshaw*, visit Cherwell.org

Quick facts

215 students were surveyed by C+

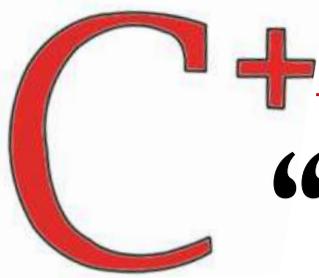
71 respondents had experienced sexual assault

six out of ten respondents felt their report “was not taken seriously” by authorities

11% of respondents “felt able to report the incident”

If you would like support having experienced sexual violence, several Oxford organisations are available.

- Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre (OSARCC) - 01865 726295. OSARCC was strongly recommended by survey respondents.
- University Harassment Advisors - 01865 270760.
- University Counselling Service - 01865 270300.



“They just think it’s funny”

Has ‘lad culture’ normalised sexual violence? C+ investigates

“There’s a girl who repeatedly tries to grope me, in public as well as in clubs... I’ve told her not to but she treats the touching as a joke”

“People don’t care - they just think its funny. It’s bad on the girl, not on the boy or boys who took advantage”

“It happened in Fresher’s Week. I felt it was necessary to keep a low profile as I did not want to be seen as ‘stirring up trouble’. I also worried about how the incident would reflect upon me”

“What frustrates me is that these types of incidents are seen as ‘misunderstandings’ or ‘miscommunications’”

“Someone I would consider an acquaintance - if not a friend - regularly dances with girls from my college, including myself, and feels their bums, laughing it off and doing it again if you say anything or move away...[It’s] not something that he even admits to whilst sober”

Good Lad Workshop on why we need positive masculinity

Sexual violence and harassment are everywhere. Whether we choose to see it or not, the statistics are pretty clear: 68% of UK university women reported some sort of harassment – from verbal harassment to sexual assault – during their tenure in higher education. We know the problem isn’t just strangers hiding in the bushes, or sloppy, unthinking drunkards. A key part of ending this epidemic of gender inequity is getting to grips with the culture and social norms that allow these sorts of behaviours to not only proliferate, but to be viewed as acceptable. But how do we address these expectations and perceptions? To end gender inequity, we need to look at how our behaviours – and the behaviours of our teammates, friends and colleagues – are influenced by, and influence, the social norms that allow it to occur.

It all starts with a conversation: about ourselves and our relations to others, including our relations to women. We must consider how our actions, thinking and unthinking, create inclusion or exclude others. We should stop to think about how to be more affirming, empowering people, not just for ourselves, but for our teams and our communities. And in taking this time to think, we can develop the sorts of skills that help us to transform potentially negative situations into opportunities for more fulfilling relationships, more productive teams, and more inclusive spaces. In short, men should involve themselves as part of the solution to these problems, and by doing so can produce positive outcomes for themselves, people they have relationships with, and the community as a whole. This is positive masculinity.

Our Good Lad workshops, which try to promote this positive masculinity with male groups and teams, have found the same problems time after time. Throughout our conversations with other men, we’ve found that university men feel constrained to act in ways that don’t necessarily stack up with their values. In fact, our own evaluations have shown that while many participants would personally prefer not to engage in the sorts of negative behaviours that our workshops bring to the table for discussion. Instead, many of them feel that their peer groups would be more likely to support the sorts of behaviours that foster gender inequity and that manifest it: objectification of women, sexual aggression, and verbal harassment amongst them.

So herein lies the critical insight: if most of the men we talk to feel these behaviours are wrong, then how can they develop the skills to intervene and to stand up and say something? Or to model themselves the affirming people they can be? Our several months of workshops have shown the potential for men to take part in creating a culture of inclusion—one where gender inequity, and sexual violence, will one day be history.

Changing our social norms towards equity of every sort is a long-term project, but one well worth the effort, and one that starts when all of us are partners in this project. To end gender inequity, we all need to join the conversation. Are you ready to join the Good Lad revolution?

To sign up for a Good Lad workshop, visit goodladworkshop.wordpress.com

The investigation also reveals the frequency of sexual assault in nightclubs across Oxford.

Of the 41 students who gave descriptions of their experiences of sexual violence, 17 happened in Oxford nightclubs or bops. None of the students who described these events reported the offenses.

One female student said that “most times” she went out in Oxford she was “groped or had [her] bum slapped by strangers when [she] didn’t want them to”.

Another was “groped at clubs on a fairly regular basis”, but claimed never to have reported anything “because, even though groping is sexual assault, the general consensus is that you should have to put up with it, given how often it happens”.

One student told of an incident when “a random guy in park end grabbed [her] hand and shoved it down his trousers”. Another described a time when a man she’d never met “squeezed her bum” in a nightclub queue: “he seemed to think that it was okay, because I said ‘Hi’ to him.”

Many students suggested that assaults in clubs were so common they had become the norm. As one woman argued, “at the time it didn’t seem important enough, and to be honest it happens so much there didn’t seem to be much point. Guys grabbing you in clubs etc. is just the norm, I didn’t even know who to tell.”

Two respondents described being groped at college bops. One woman said she remembered “being groped, kissed, felt up without my permission during bops. Not asked if I consent but too drunk to consent anyway.”

Another said she had “been groped in clubs more times than I care to remember, but one instance that stands out for sheer shock as opposed to gravity was when walking through Park End on my own to find my friends a man walking past me put both hands on my breasts to stop me.

“I was so shocked I couldn’t think to respond so just pushed past, but it was so out of the blue

- I hadn’t seen it coming - it seemed particularly uncomfortable.”

An NUS report on “students’ experiences of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault” carried out in 2009-2010, found that the majority of perpetrators were studying at the same institution as their victim. The only exception to this was the category of physical violence, where 48% of offenders were students. 68% of those who responded to the survey had experienced verbal or non-verbal harassment in and around their institution. They considered behaviour such as groping, flashing, and unwanted sexual comments to have become ‘everyday’. 16% had experienced unwanted kissing, touching or molesting during their time as a student, the majority of which was described as having taken place in public.

One St Hilda’s student commented, “One of the biggest problems is making people realise that their actions are sexual assault and in no way funny.”

Kerrie Thornhill, a D.Phil Candidate and a junior member of Oxford’s International Gender Studies Centre talked about incidents including the controversial email sent by Pembroke Rugby Club condemned as ‘misogynistic’ last week. “Some students feel that the ‘FREE PUSSY’ email was meant in jest, and therefore should not be taken seriously as an example of promoting rape. In fact, the link between men’s sense of entitlement towards women’s bodies, and their propensity to rape is well-established in research on college students. We’re talking hundreds of studies, including ‘banter’ as a means of enforcing harmful norms and behaviour.

“Does joking about rape, denigrating women, or blaming the victim, mean that you are actually a rapist? Well, it means you think like one, and that alone should be cause for concern. All freedom-loving women and women-loving men should condemn rape culture because it dehumanises all of us.”

One member of Women for Women Interna-

tional explained that this attitude is often seen on Facebook, and can have a far more damaging effect than some would assume.

She commented, “From the survivor’s perspective, the wide spread of misogynistic Facebook posts could make some survivors feel as if the entire world is like their abusers and they might feel even more unsafe and powerless.

“For me, the issue becomes less about whose views are right or wrong than about the society’s responsibility/sensitivity towards protecting survivors of hideous crimes.”

Quick facts

41 respondents described how they were assaulted

17 of these accounts happened in clubs or bops

0 respondents who were assaulted in clubs or bops reported the incident to authorities