

## Disclosures of Sexual Violence – Staff Guidance

Any member of staff at the University could receive a disclosure. We want to make sure that staff feel prepared, know what to do and know how they will be supported, and that students receive a consistent experience whoever they disclose to.

First and foremost, it is important to be aware that you are not expected to give detailed or expert advice and support; rather, your job as a first responder is to;

1. Offer a safe and non-judgemental approach;
2. Provide accurate information on signposting; and
3. Make a referral to specialist advice and support.

This guidance contains information on;

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If you require any advice or support on managing disclosures or issues relating to sexual violence and harassment or would like to arrange a disclosure training session for your team please contact the University’s Sexual Violence and Harassment Response Manager;

Melissa Reilly | [melissa.reilly@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:melissa.reilly@manchester.ac.uk) | 0161 275 5780

## Types of Disclosure

We take a stepped care model approach to disclosures as the response required from staff will vary depending on the nature of the disclosure. The different types of disclosure you may receive and what they mean are defined below.

### 1. Immediate Disclosures

This is when a student presents in distress following a **very recent** reported incident of sexual violence, **and requires immediate emergency service intervention**, for example, if the alleged assailant were still in the vicinity, or if the student had injuries, which required immediate medical attention.

### 2. Recent disclosures

This is when a student discloses that they have been assaulted and the incident has taken place **within the last seven days**. We make the distinction of seven days as within this timeframe, it is possible that forensic evidence may still be present on the body. It is therefore extremely important that the student gets access to appropriate and specialist advice on the preservation of forensic evidence and their reporting options so that they can make an informed decision on how they want to proceed and what happens next.

### 3. UoM disclosures

This is when a student discloses that the alleged perpetrator is a University of Manchester student or staff member. It is important that the Advice and Response team are aware of these cases so that we can manage any risks associated with the alleged perpetrator being a member of the University community. This is particularly important when the police may already be involved as we may need to conduct a risk assessment to establish whether the University should implement any precautionary measures.

### 4. External disclosures

This is when a student discloses they have experienced sexual violence whilst at University, but the alleged perpetrator is external to the University.

### 5. Pre-university disclosures

This is when a student discloses an experience of sexual violence that happened before they became a student here.

## Confidentiality

It's important to remember that somebody, who has experienced sexual violence, needs to be given every opportunity to reclaim power and control over their situation and this includes, who they want to share the details of their assault with. All disclosures should normally be treated as confidential, meaning that you should not discuss the incident with colleagues or any other persons (such as parents) other than those outlined in this guidance.

### Reporting to the police

As a matter of course, staff should not go against the student's wishes and report the incident to the police without their consent. Only in cases of immediate disclosure where there is a **clear and immediate risk to the safety of others** (i.e. the assailant is still in the vicinity) should the police be informed before discussing this with the student and obtaining their consent. In any other scenario, decisions to share information with the police without the student's consent would be taken by the Head of Campus Life in consultation with necessary partners and not by staff who receive the initial disclosure.

### Reporting to the Advice and Response team

For all types of disclosure, the reporting student should be informed of the University's Advice and Response team, who are experienced in supporting students in these circumstances. The team take a student-led approach and can offer practical and emotional support to students depending on their individual needs and the circumstances of their case. You should always seek the student's consent before referring to Advice and Response.

In terms of when to report, the Advice and Response team should be informed **as soon as possible** after the disclosure in the following circumstances;

1. **Immediate disclosures:** So that we can support coordination of practical steps to ensure the student's safety as well as access to appropriate support in the immediate aftermath of an assault.
2. **Recent disclosures:** So that we can provide specialist advice and support on options including reporting and preservation of forensic evidence within the seven day window.
3. **UoM disclosures:** So that we can provide specialist support on options including reporting formally to the University as well as coordinate risk management, when the alleged is also a member of the University community.

### What if the student does not consent to a referral?

In the above circumstances, where the student does not consent to their information being shared, it is vital that you still seek advice from the Advice and Response team so that a member of staff experienced in dealing with these cases can guide you in supporting the student. You can do this without sharing the student's details and explain clearly to the student what you will be doing.

## How to Respond

### 1. Immediate Disclosures (requiring emergency services)

- Identify if there is an immediate risk, which requires immediate emergency service intervention, for example, the alleged assailant is in the vicinity or the student requires immediate medical attention
- Call 999 and ask for appropriate emergency service
- Once you have contacted 999, contact University Security on 69966 to inform them of the situation
- Stay with the student until support arrives
- Inform Advice and Response team as soon as possible following the incident by submitting Disclosure Reporting Form

### 2. Recent Disclosures (within last seven days)

### 3. UoM Disclosures (alleged is member of UoM)

- Offer safe and non-judgmental approach
- Signpost student to appropriate external support, including the police and St Marys
- Refer to Advice and Response team as soon as possible after disclosure with student's consent by submitting Disclosure Reporting Form
- If student does not consent, you should still inform the Advice and Response team without sharing student details. The team will then guide you in supporting the student dependent on the circumstances

### 4. External Disclosures (alleged is external to UoM)

### 5. Pre-University Disclosures (before they were a student)

- Offer safe and non-judgmental approach
- Signpost student to appropriate external support, including the police and St Marys
- Signpost to Advice and Response or make a referral with their consent if the student prefers by submitting Disclosure Reporting Form

## Offering a safe and non-judgmental approach

With all types of disclosure, what students need most of all is an empathetic and non-judgmental response from staff. We understand that receiving disclosures can be distressing and challenging for staff but it's important to bear in mind that the student has made an active choice to disclose to you and you should feel reassured by the fact that they have chosen to speak to you about this.

You are not expected to give detailed or expert advice but to actively listen in a non-judgmental and empathetic way. You can offer this by doing the following;

- Ensure you are in an appropriate space i.e. somewhere quiet and away from a shared office space or reception. If you are alone with a student who is distressed and possibly feeling vulnerable, it is best to inform a colleague what you are doing.
- If the student is accompanied, check that this person's presence is welcomed and if not, tactfully explain that you think it best that they leave to allow the student time to regain some privacy.
- If the student is not accompanied, check whether they would like to contact someone to accompany them and provide support.
- Be patient and reassure the student that they can take their time
- Focus on what is being said and being present in the conversation rather than thinking about what you need to say or do
- Be mindful of your body language and facial expressions
- Do not lead the conversation by questioning their account; you are not investigating or gathering evidence
- Avoid interrupting the student mid-sentence
- Ask factual questions only where appropriate (see below for guidance on this)
- Do not make assumptions about what the student wants or feels
- Acknowledge the student's feelings and reassure them they have done the right the thing by telling you
- Check your understanding of what they have told you by summarising back to them

### Helpful Phrases

- "I'm so sorry to hear that this has happened"
- "Thank you for sharing this with me, I understand how difficult it must be but you've absolutely done the right thing."
- "I'd like to refer you to our Advice and Response team so that you have access to specialist support, if that would be okay?"
- "I have some details for specialist services outside of the University that I'd like to pass on to you."

### Relevant Questions

When receiving a disclosure, as a matter of course, you should not need to ask any detailed questions of the student beyond clarifying basic facts to ensure you can appropriately refer or signpost.

You should reflect carefully on how you frame any questions you ask to ensure that they are sensitive and appropriate. For example, starting questions with, "Can I ask, ....?" is a helpful technique in framing questions sensitively and demonstrating that you respect the student's

boundaries. It's also best to try and avoid "why" questions as, even if well-intentioned, these type of questions can imply judgement, especially to someone in a vulnerable state.

### **Examples of relevant questions**

- "Can I just ask a couple of questions to ensure I understand correctly?"
- "Can I ask when this happened?"
- "Do you know if the person who did this is also a student here?"
- "Have you reported anything to the police?"
- "Have you got support from anyone else?"

## Providing Accurate Information on Signposting

With all types of disclosure the student should be given information on the three following services:

### The police

It's important to explain to the student that they can report the incident to the police if they want to. You should ensure that the student is not pressured or coerced into reporting to the police if they are unsure or can't make up their mind right away. If they do not wish to report to the police, this is absolutely fine and their choice, and you should not contact the police to make a report on their behalf without the student's consent.

If the student does want to make a report, the police advise that they are called as soon as possible after this decision is made. To report a crime in non-emergency situation, the student would simply need to dial 101.

### St Marys (Sexual Assault Referral Centre)

St Marys, is the local sexual assault referral centre (SARC), and all students, who disclose, should be informed of this service. They offer specialist and confidential advice and support, no matter when the assault occurred.

Their services include;

- Immediate Crisis Support
- Forensic Medical Examination
- Access to Emergency Contraception
- Sexual Health Screening for Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Access to counselling
- Access to an ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor, who provides support through police and court action)

**If the assault has occurred recently (within the past seven days) and the student undergoes a forensic medical exam, St Marys offer the option of preserving any gathered forensic evidence for up to two years, if possible, without having to report to the police.**

<https://www.stmaryscentre.org/>

Students can self-refer by calling 0161 276 6515 (24 hours)

### University of Manchester Advice and Response Team

For all types of disclosure, the student should be informed of the University's Advice and Response team, who are experienced in supporting students in these circumstances. The team take a student-led approach and can offer practical and emotional support to students depending on their individual needs and the circumstances of their case. You should always seek the student's consent before referring to Advice and Response.

## Other relevant services

### Manchester Rape Crisis

This is a service for female survivors of sexual violence and offers;

- Access to counselling
- Access to an ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor, who provides support through police and court action)
- A listening helpline

<https://www.manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk>

### Survivors Manchester

This is a service for male survivors of sexual violence and offers;

- Access to counselling
- Access to an ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor, who provides support through police and court action)
- A listening helpline

<https://www.survivorsmanchester.org.uk/>

### Galop

This is a service for LGBTQ+ survivors of sexual violence and offers;

- Access to counselling
- Access to an ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor, who provides support through police and court action)

<http://www.galop.org.uk/sexualviolence/>

### University Counselling Service

This a service for all students offering brief and focussed counselling support with any personal issues affecting work, self-esteem, relationships, sexuality, mental health and general well-being.

<https://www.counsellingservice.manchester.ac.uk/>

### Manchester Students' Union Advice Service

This is a service for all students, which provides independent and confidential advice on a range of issues including academic, wellbeing and housing.

<https://manchesterstudentsunion.com/advice/contact-us#>



## Recording Disclosures

Any notes taken by a “first responder” are known as a “first report” and can be used by the police or in court should the student decide to report to the police. This means that if you write anything down, it must be brief and factual without recording opinions. The disclosure referral form should be used to record the disclosure and this will guide you in terms of the brief, factual information that should be recorded.

If the student does not consent to being referred, a basic report with no identifying details should still be made so that the Advice and Response team can collate information on reporting figures.

## Disclosure of Sexual Violence – Referral form

The member of staff who received the disclosure should complete this form with the student. Once complete, submit by email to: [melissa.reilly@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:melissa.reilly@manchester.ac.uk)

### Staff Details

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Role</b>	
<b>Date of disclosure</b>	

### Reporting Student Details

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Student ID</b>	
<b>Contact Number</b>	
<b>Email Address</b>	
<b>Term Time Address</b>	

### Disclosure Details

<b>When did this happen?</b>	
<b>Is alleged perpetrator also a member of University of Manchester i.e. staff or student?</b>	
<b>Has this been reported to the police?</b>	
<b>Is there any support in place from other services?</b>	

## Third Party Disclosures

You may receive a disclosure from a student telling you that their friend has experienced sexual violence.

In this instance it is important to provide them with the same levels of reassurance and to offer signposting information as appropriate. You can explain the reporting options so that the student understands what their friend might do next.

It's important to also bear in mind that supporting someone else will likely be having a big impact on the student so you should ensure that you signpost them to their relevant department support office for wellbeing support or the Counselling Service.

St Marys have some useful advice for how to support someone who has experienced an assault and friends can also contact their helpline for more information on how they can support someone.

<https://www.stmaryscentre.org/how-we-can-help-you/how-you-can-support-friend>

Manchester Rape Crisis also have information available for friends and family that you can signpost the student to;

<https://www.manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk/information/for-family-and-friends/>

## Disclosures from alleged students

You may receive a disclosure from a student, who has had an allegation made against them. In this instance, you can seek advice from the Advice and Response team, who will be able to advise on appropriate services or action to take dependent on the circumstances. You should also signpost the student to Manchester Students' Union Advice Service for independent advice and support and any other appropriate University services, e.g. Counselling.

## Support for you

Receiving a disclosure can be very distressing and it is important that you are supported. You can seek support from your line manager in the first instance and the Advice and Response team are also here to support you in managing the response to the student.

If you are distressed by what has been disclosed to you, you can seek support through the University's Counselling Service. This is a confidential service available to assist you with personal or work-related problems that may be affecting your health, wellbeing or performance.

If you would like to talk through your feelings anonymously, you can contact the Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, by phone on 116 123 from any phone, or by email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org).