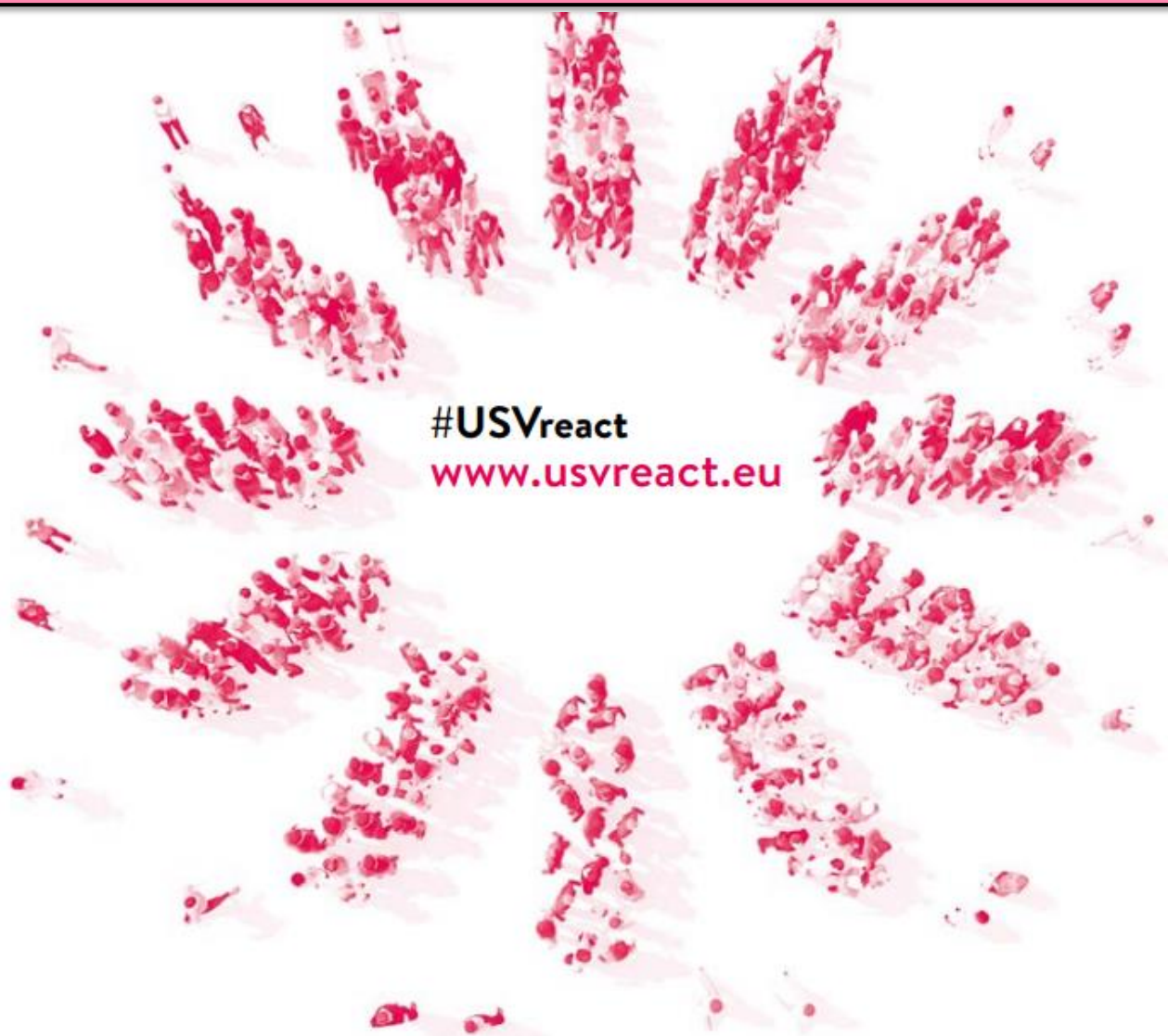


Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence: Brunel University London Evaluation Report

Anne Chappell and Charlotte Jones



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ISBN: 9781908549389

e-ISBN: 9781908549419

Printed by Brunel University London.

First printed edition 2018

Publisher: Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
www.brunel.ac.uk

Project website: www.usvreact.eu

Report available at: <http://usvreact.eu/resources/reports/>



Contents

Foreword	4
Introduction	6
Context: Sexual Violence in the UK.....	7
Context: Brunel University London	9
1. Current reports and statistics	10
2. Student support	10
3. Existing campaigns and awareness raising work	10
4. Relevant policies and procedures	11
i. Student Complaints Procedure	11
ii. Dignity at Study Policy	12
iii. Union of Brunel Students (UBS) Zero Tolerance Policy	12
iv. Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Groups Policy	12
v. Senate Regulation 6 (SR6) – Student Conduct.....	13
Context: Associate Partners	13
Programme	14
1. Programme principles and theory	14
2. Learning outcomes.....	15
3. Role of expert advisors	15
4. Programme structure and mode of delivery	16
5. Facilitation.....	17
6. Participants and recruitment strategy.....	18
Programme Evaluation.....	18
1. Programme evaluation	19
2. Strengths of the programme	19
3. Areas for development in the programme	21
4. Developing the Brunel Programme	22
Programme Evaluation – Associate Partners	24
1. Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	25
2. Keele University	25
Conclusions and Recommendations	26
Institutional recommendations	27
Acknowledgements	30
References	32

Foreword

Brunel University London has been delighted to lead on the European Commission co-funded 'Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence: Training for Sustainable Student Services' project (USVreact) (2016-2018). The project was implemented during a period of heightened international focus on challenging the issue of sexual violence and at a time when Universities UK were finalising their report entitled 'Changing the Culture: Report of the Universities UK Taskforce Examining Violence Against Women, Harassment and Hate Crime Affecting University Students' (UUK, 2016). The resulting public calls for action, underpinned by significant research and activism over time, have created a productive context for the implementation of the project.

At Brunel University London, a bespoke education programme for staff was designed to enable staff to respond appropriately to disclosures of sexual violence by raising awareness of sexual violence as a social issue, and supporting the development of knowledge and skills. The programme has already been undertaken and well-evaluated by a number of staff. The awareness-raising aspect of the programme has generated interesting discussion about the possibilities for culture change at the University and in society more broadly. These are important discussions which must be sustained now that the project is complete.

The relevance and significance of this project is reflected in the response that the team have received from staff across all parts of the University including the Union of Brunel Students. There has also been a great deal of interest from across UK Universities, other organisations and the media, reflected at the recent project conference held at Brunel University London on 7th February 2018.

This report makes valuable recommendations for the University on the basis of the research evaluation undertaken, as well as ones that are applicable in other Universities and organisations. The implementation of these recommendations has positive implications for everyone at Brunel University London, supporting both students and staff in their daily lives and creating a positive campus culture where all feel valued and safe.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the contributors for their time and input into the USVreact project and the associated report.

Professor William Leahy BA (Hons), MA, PhD, FRSA
Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs and Civic Engagement)
Brunel University London

The USVreact report is both timely and challenging for higher educational institutions. It builds on the work of the Universities UK (UUK) taskforce report (2016) 'Changing the Culture' and challenges institutions to take positive steps to change the way they deal with sexual violence and harassment. The timeliness is how the authors have kept this issue in the spotlight and linked it to developments out of the sector. The authors have explored this issue in considerable depth and I am impressed in how they have managed to produce a succinct set of recommendations covering procedural matters, the development of staff and engagement with external agencies. It is now for institutions to respond in a similarly positive manner. Adjustment and development of procedural processes can be readily adopted by institutions. It is accepted that staff development and the outcomes from other activities may require some time before the benefits are fully realised but the authors have given some very clear guidance on how this can be achieved. There is a role for University leaders to create an environment of support and care which minimises the possibility of sexual violence and harassment arising on our campuses and establishes effective processes for dealing with these issues when it does. It is hoped that the opportunity presented by the authors to deal with this issue is acted on by all those associated with our Universities.

Jim Benson
Secretary to Council and University Secretary
Brunel University London

Introduction

The Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence (USVreact) project is a European Union (EU)-funded initiative which has been led by Brunel University London (Brunel) throughout 2016-2018. Working across six European countries, the project aims to develop education models to help staff to respond more effectively to disclosures of sexual violence. These models have been embedded and evaluated within institutions and will be made freely available online.

A two-session programme comprised of a pair of four-hour workshops was developed at Brunel for a maximum of twelve staff members per session. The outline and structure for the programme was designed over a series of meetings and discussions by the Brunel steering group, who were formed at the outset of the project. The more detailed content and activities in the programme (including PowerPoint slides and a facilitator guidance handbook) were conceived by the first facilitator to deliver the sessions and developed continuously over the course of the programme delivery by the project coordination team in response to evaluation feedback. The intention of the evaluation in this report is to analyse the perceptions of Brunel staff before, during and after attending the programme, and collate suggestions about what was effective and how the programme might be improved. The programme materials were piloted by two Associate Partner institutions and their evaluations also contributed to its development. In order to understand the impact of the programme on staff within our particular institution, it was necessary to use methods that were participant-centred and could be responsive to complexity. The research design drew on the work of Parlett and Hamilton (1972) on illuminative evaluation which enables the intensive study of a programme, taking account of the context.

The Brunel programme was evaluated using a range of methods. Participants were asked to complete online surveys at the start and end of both sessions they attended. This provided insight into their previous experiences with disclosures and their level of understanding prior to attending the sessions, as well as an evaluation of their engagement, whether their expectations were met, and some indication of the ways the sessions may influence their practice and confidence in the future. The surveys were also used to collect demographic information about the staff members in attendance. Sessions were observed throughout by the Brunel Researcher (Jones), who made comprehensive field notes to report participants' responses to the activities and the information covered in the sessions, as well as the facilitators' approaches, and the atmosphere of the sessions. Jones led group interviews with the participants immediately after the sessions to gain more detailed, discursive feedback, and interviewed all facilitators following their first sessions to review their experiences of delivering the programme content. Research diaries written by Jones have also been integral to the design since the outset of the project in summer 2016.

Jones conducted follow-up interviews with the participants three months after they attended the programme to explore whether the programme had influenced their practice and approaches to sexual violence and potential disclosures.

These methods were chosen to enable the collation of 'rich' data to analyse the responses of staff to the new programme, and the impact on them and their practice, whilst taking account of their context both in terms of the institution and their own prior experiences (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972). Given the sensitive nature of the focus, alongside the issues that can arise for staff in considering their practice with students, there were also a number of ethical considerations. These went beyond those required for institutional approval to what Liamputtong (2007) refers to as 'ethics-in-practice' where there is an intentional awareness of ethical matters on an ongoing basis before, during and after the data collection with participants. The overall project aims and the Brunel research design has been guided by feminist principles and was approved by the Brunel Research Ethics Committee. All participants agreed to take part in the research and signed a consent form after reading an information document about the project.

Context: Sexual Violence in the UK

In a context of austerity, neoliberalism and the UK's recent vote to leave the European Union, existing support measures for victims/survivors of sexual violence have been cut back significantly, and social tensions and explicitly discriminative behaviour towards marginalised people have been strengthened. The closure of support services and refuges nationwide has meant that many victims/survivors are not able to access the support they require, and services are often over-stretched and under-staffed. This has been most detrimental to specialist services designed for African, Caribbean and Asian communities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people (LGBTQ). There are increasing concerns about outsourcing support services to private companies without expertise in sexual violence. In some instances, these companies also have a record of abuse (e.g. security contractors such as G4S). Sisters Uncut, a direct-action collective with members across the UK, formed in 2014 in response to the funding cuts affecting specialist domestic violence services.

In the last two years, there have been some prominent fictional domestic violence, rape and abuse scenarios in British television and radio (e.g. Radio 4's *The Archers*, BBC's *Broadchurch*) as well as coverage of high-profile new stories, such as the conviction and appeal of Sheffield United's Ched Evans and the six-month sentence given to Stanford athlete Brock Turner for the sexual assault of an unconscious and intoxicated woman in the USA. A UK government-funded campaign, 'Disrespect NoBody' (2016), was also broadcast on television and printed on posters and billboards. The campaign targeted 12 to 18 year olds and addressed issues of sexual

consent, sexting, and emotional and physical abuse within relationships. The ‘#MeToo’ movement, involving a viral social media campaign which was most visible in October and November 2017, demonstrated the widespread nature of sexual violence and harassment. Particular attention was paid to the film industry following public allegations against high profile members of the community.

Sexual violence in the HE context has also been discussed more widely in the national media in recent years. Since 2010, there has been much policy and media discussion of the phenomenon of ‘lad culture’ and how it links to sexual harassment and violence in universities. The NUS report ‘Hidden Marks’ (2010) revealed a high prevalence of sexual harassment and violence against women students, and a subsequent report, ‘That’s What She Said’ (2013), linked this behaviour to ‘lad culture’. ‘Lad culture’ involves heavy drinking, frequent sexual activity and competitive displays of sexism and misogyny (as well as racism, classism and homophobia) which, it has been argued, can create the conditions in which serious forms of sexual violence may occur (see Phipps and Smith 2012, Phipps and Young 2015). Following the publication of this report there was a great deal of media debate, which is ongoing.

The UK National Union of Students (NUS) has been at the forefront of campaigns to put ‘lad culture’ and sexual violence against students on the political and policy agenda. Within their ‘lad culture’ strategy, they developed a consent education programme (‘I Heart Consent’) which was piloted at students’ unions across the country, a policy audit of students’ unions and some institutions, and in 2015 launched a project called ‘Stand by Me’ which encouraged students’ unions to partner with local Rape Crisis centres to provide support to victims/survivors.

Some high-profile cases have led particular universities to be targeted as examples of especially ‘bad practice’. Professor Sara Ahmed has played a key role in furthering conversations on this topic on her blog (feministkilljoys.com) and twitter account. Wider discussions have also arisen around suspensions, ‘complaints’ procedures, non-disclosure agreements and university responsibilities to support student victims/survivors. Action groups and student-led campaigns have formed to raise awareness of the issue and affect change. For example, the 1752 Group was established in 2016 to respond to staff-to-student sexual misconduct. In 2016, national newspaper, The Guardian, also published an exposé on this issue, including a collection of accounts from students who had been assaulted by university staff.

There have also been other initiatives developed by students’ unions, academics and campaign organisations, such as the Intervention Initiative at the University of the West of England, which trains students of all genders in bystander intervention techniques, Good Night Out which is a campaign started by Hollaback! London to improve safety and reporting in nightclubs and other venues, ‘It Happens Here’, an

awareness-raising project involving victims/survivors telling their personal stories, and 'Ask for Angela', an initiative which provides a code-word ('Angela') for people who are feeling unsafe in a social situation to seek assistance from staff in participating venues.

The recent publication of the Universities UK (UUK) taskforce report (2016), 'Changing the Culture', received significant media attention, aiming to examine violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students. The report engages with a range of issues directly applicable to the USVreact project, especially the improvement of reporting procedures and staff 'training', which were repeatedly highlighted in the document. There was a case study from the USVreact project at Brunel included in the report. More effective reporting procedures were recognised as significant in the drive towards cultural change and awareness-raising. The report states that, 'increasing confidence and breaking down barriers to reporting is also linked to wider behaviour and cultures in and around the university - where campus cultures tacitly condone unacceptable behaviour, this in itself creates a significant barrier to reporting' (UUK, 2016: 37-38). The report was discussed on television and other news media, and in October 2016, Coordinator of the Brunel project, Dr Anne Chappell, was invited to respond to its publication and introduce the USVreact project on the BBC2 Victoria Derbyshire programme.

Context: Brunel University London

It was necessary to consider the national and local context when developing the programme at Brunel. Brunel is a single-site campus-based institution situated in Uxbridge, West London. It is research-intensive and internationally known for Science, Technology and Engineering. The Brunel campus consists of 34 halls of residence, a student facilities complex with a dining space, bars, a night club, the Union of Brunel Students (UBS), retail outlets and a weekly market. There is a sport and fitness centre and library building on site, which is open 24 hours a day. The campus is local to Uxbridge and well served by public transport from central London.

The current University Leadership team comprises of 25% female and 75% male staff, including a female Vice Chancellor and President, and a Pro-Vice-Chancellor responsible for Equality, Diversity and Staff Development. The staff population (2016/2017) is c.2500, with c.1300 of those in academic roles. The gender split is 51% female and 49% male, and 17% of professors at Brunel are female (22% nationally). The student population (2016/2017) is c.13,000, with women representing 45%. Brunel's BME student population is significantly higher than average: 35% of students are white (compared to 77% nationally, HESA 2016), 28% Asian (10% nationally) and 14% Black (7% nationally); 81% of students are under 24 years old on arrival at Brunel; and 10% have informed the University of a disability, chronic health problem, mental illness or learning difficulty.

1. Current reports and statistics

In November 2016, the Union of Brunel Students (UBS) conducted a campus-wide survey for current students which replicated the NUS 'Hidden Marks' research (2010) for local comparisons, and received 185 responses. Of the respondents who had experienced sexual harassment or violence, only 38% had told someone else about the incident(s) (including a friend or relative). Of the total survey respondents, 70% did not feel that there was an atmosphere or culture at Brunel that encourages people to come forward about experiences of sexual violence and/or harassment, and only 7% of respondents were aware of University/Union policies regarding sexual violence, intimidation and harassment.

Security Services at Brunel informed us that over two recent academic years (2014/2015 and 2015/2016), a total of nine cases of sexual assault have been reported by students to the University authorities at Brunel. In all instances, the survivor was female and the assault had been committed by a male student on campus. The nationwide 'Hidden Marks' survey (NUS, 2010) found that 68% of female respondents had been a victims/survivors of one or more kinds of sexual harassment on campus during their time as a student, so it seems likely that the low number of reports at Brunel is due to issues such as barriers to disclosure, lack of a clear reporting procedure, and the institutional culture at Brunel (and in the UK more broadly), rather than providing a representative figure of incidents.

2. Student support

Brunel campus has a range of support services for students and staff which are extensive and evaluated highly for the support they provide. These include the Counselling Service, Medical Centre, Security Services, Student Centre, Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS), UBS, Advice and Representation Centre (ARC) and the Chaplaincy. In recent months, student support at Brunel has been reviewed and reorganised by members of the project's steering group working in Student Welfare. In addition to the six Student Officer roles at the UBS, Brunel also has four voluntary Liberation Officers responsible for disabled, LGBTQ, women, and Black and ethnic minority students. A 'Very Helpful Poster' is displayed across the Campus which provides contact details for services for students both within and beyond the University. Students also have an allocated personal tutor who can provide both academic support and guidance to relevant services as appropriate.

3. Existing campaigns and awareness raising work

Brunel participates in the national Athena SWAN Charter, a scheme that was established to promote women's careers in STEMM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine) in Higher Education, and was awarded the Athena Swan Bronze award in April 2012. The charter has since expanded to include non-STEM subjects, and professional and support staff. The University also coordinates a gender mentoring scheme for staff.

In 2015/2016 the UBS Women's Officer led a series of short (5-10 minute-long) consent presentations for first-year students at the beginning of core lectures as part of the NUS 'I Heart Consent' campaign. The sports clubs participated in the Stonewall 'Rainbow Laces' campaign and supported the British Universities & College Sport (BOCS) 'This Girl Can' campaign. The UBS conducted a review of sports club and society governance to improve policies, and provided 'training' to club and society committees to update students on the changes and their implications. Part of this process also included hosting six well-attended workshops which were led by an external facilitator from the 'Good Lad Initiative' (goodladworkshop.com). Amongst other topics, the workshops included discussion of intimate relationships, team relations, and conduct in nightclubs and university halls.

Previously, a 'lad culture' working group, led by the Student Services, met to discuss changing the sexist culture amongst Brunel students. This has now been superseded by the UBS 2017 'tackling sexual harassment and gender bias' strategy, which includes a range of objectives for the academic year, including improving online information, signposting and guidance for people who have experienced sexual assault and establishing an online complaints/reporting route; implementing the 'Ask Angela' campaign; and revisions of UBS policies and disciplinary procedures.

Senior management at Brunel have informally acknowledged the recent UUK Taskforce report. They recently formed an implementation group, including members of Student Services and the UBS, to ensure the recommendations made in the report are taken forward at Brunel. In 2017 the group were awarded HEFCE catalyst funds for a project entitled 'Respect@Brunel', which will provide an excellence framework for licensed venues to promote safety, challenge sexism in student communities, support students' disclosures of sexual violence (through USVreact), and implement an online reporting tool for student disclosures.

4. Relevant policies and procedures

i. Student Complaints Procedure

The Brunel student complaints procedure offers students a way of expressing 'dissatisfaction ... about the University's action or lack of action or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University'. Their list of suggested concerns does not cover issues related to behaviour or experiences of

violence/harassment, but does include the violation of published policies (including those listed below). Guidelines state that anonymous complaints will not usually be considered. If a student initially raises a concern more than three months after the incident occurred (without 'good reason'), the complaints guidelines state that the case may be deemed to be 'out of time' and may not be upheld. If a student wants to pursue a complaint past stage 1, the stage 2 complaint must also be submitted within three months of the incident.

ii. Dignity at Study Policy

The 'Dignity at Study' (DaS) policy addresses bullying, harassment and discrimination experienced by current students on campus. The University recognises that this may arise from 'race, sex, sexual preference, age, appearance, political or religious views or ... other grounds'. This is understood to be a legal responsibility of the University arising from the Equality Acts (2006, 2010) and therefore required in order to meet the statutory requirements of a workplace. The University recognises that unacceptable behaviour in breach of this policy may occur as a single incident or may be ongoing, and it may manifest in a range of ways such as verbal, online and physical. Students are also permitted to complain as a witness to harassment. Where possible, complaints are dealt with informally. Much like the student complaints procedure, breaches of the DaS policy need to be 'submitted promptly'. In the result of a delay, the University may not deal with the issue.

iii. Union of Brunel Students (UBS) Zero Tolerance Policy

In 2014, the UBS implemented a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination, 'lad culture' and sexual harassment on campus. All members of the UBS (i.e. students at Brunel) are required to adhere to the policy. If the policy is breached, the Zero Tolerance Committee will decide on appropriate action. Members of the public are also entitled to report to the UBS if they believe the guidelines set out by the zero-tolerance policy have been breached by a Brunel student, club or society. In October 2016, the Student Assembly discussed the Sexual Harassment policy after the Vice President (VP) of Student Activities (a student role) suggested the policy was outdated and needed to be revised. Emphasis is now also being placed on preventative measures and awareness-raising.

iv. Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Groups Policy

The University has a responsibility to ensure 'reasonable steps' are taken to promote and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults who participate in University organised activities or services. All staff who are in contact with these groups are responsible for upholding these values, although a designated Safeguarding Committee that communicates regularly and meets on an as-needed basis also monitors, reviews and develops the work of the University in delivering its duty of care. Code of behaviour and good practice condemns any form of relationship, 'sexual or otherwise' with a young person; behaviour or games which

are sexual; sharing bedrooms with children; as well as inappropriate touching, suggestive comments and taking photographs/videos without consent. The policy statement recognises that University staff are not trained to recognise or deal with abuse but offers some brief advice on how to recognise it.

v. Senate Regulation 6 (SR6) – Student Conduct

The Senate Regulation 6 (SR6) Student Conduct (Academic and Non-Academic) sets out general definitions of academic and non-academic misconduct and the actions that may be taken. The list of potential misconduct specifies that actions can take place either on or off University premises, and includes incidents where a student ‘threatens, harasses, intimidates, abuses or constitutes an assault or attempted assault on another member or employee or student of the University or a visitor to the University’. In cases where there is a ‘potential or actual threat to the safety or security or good order of the University, its students, staff [...] or to members of the public’, this regulation permits the Vice-Chancellor to temporarily suspend a student from their studies or temporarily exclude a student from all or parts of the University. This can be done with immediate effect if deemed necessary. The student may also receive a formal warning or a monetary fine. After a hearing, a Misconduct Panel may also choose to permanently expel the student and to deprive them of any credits/award achieved.

Context: Associate Partners

We worked in partnership with two UK universities: Keele University and Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. They joined the project in June 2017 and March 2017 respectively. Keele University is a campus university in North Staffordshire with a student population of c.10,120, comprised of approximately 59% female and 41% male students (2015/2016). Keele recently developed and recruited to a new post of Serious Incident Case Officer. The officer is our key contact and the facilitator of the USVreact programme at Keele.

As a small specialist institution, Trinity Laban’s student population is c.985, comprised of approximately 62% female and 38% male students (2015/2016). The conservatoire is based across three different sites in South-East London, with its own Students’ Union, bars, cafes and halls of residence. Our key contact is the Head of Student Services and Accessibility.

We also received keen interest from St Mary’s University, the Institute of Education (IOE) at University College London (UCL) and Sheffield Hallam University, but unfortunately the infrastructures were not in place at these institutions to begin delivering the programme during the project timeframe. In some instances, the final decision from these potential partners took a long time which had significant implications for the recruitment of Keele University and Trinity Laban and directly

impacted upon the numbers of staff that could be recruited to attend the pilot programme within the timeframe for the project. We are also involved in ongoing discussions with Cardiff University and University of Exeter who were interested in getting involved in the project.

Programme

1. Programme principles and theory

The programme at Brunel has been designed with an understanding of various forms of sexual violence as complex, subjectively experienced, and thus difficult to categorise. Following Kelly (1988), we reject the notion of a hierarchy in which some forms of sexual violence are deemed to be more or less severe, whereby some abuse is consequently dismissed and trivialised. Kelly (1988, p. 49) argues that all forms of sexual violence are 'serious as they have serious effect'. The programme therefore includes, and takes seriously, all forms of sexual violence, harassment and harm, and reflects on the processes of normalisation which take place wherein some types of abuse are dismissed as expected or acceptable (and in some cases, less likely to be reported by the survivor and/or formally pursued by the institution). Whitley and Page (2015) observe how the prejudices of the institution and individual staff members influence the responses they give to disclosures or to witnessing an abusive incident. They argue that university staff's dismissal of - and silence around - sexual violence can lead some forms of abuse to become normalised, serving to condone and enable abusive behaviour. The improvement of reporting and disciplinary procedures needs to happen alongside a greater recognition of all forms of harassment as serious, thus taking responsibility to make the issue more visible (rather than concealing it).

The programme at Brunel recognises the diversity and differing positions of victims/survivors. British and Minority Ethnic (BME) (Hill Collins, 1990), LGBTQ (Everhart and Hunnicutt, 2013), working class (Phipps, 2009) and disabled people (Balderston, 2013) are affected disproportionately by sexual violence, and may also encounter further barriers to disclosure. Compared to national figures, Brunel has a relatively high number of BME students, so it is especially important to consider a context of racial discrimination and theories of power relations in our programme.

The Brunel programme is underpinned by principles of 'education' for staff rather than 'training'. Education and training are often referred to interchangeably but are not the same. Drawing on the ideas of Peters (1966), we understand education as a process where 'something worthwhile is being or has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner' (Peters, 1966, p. 25). Whilst training focusses on skills, competencies and an end-product, education is about understanding, judgement and processes:

Someone who is merely trained need have no comprehension of the purposes for which she is being trained and when successfully trained may well be incapable of exercising any judgement (moral or otherwise) about the value of that for which her training has prepared her; she is merely competent at such and such. (Marples, 2010, p. 41)

The Brunel programme not only provides practical advice on care pathways for staff to provide to students, but is also designed to contribute to changing the social and institutional cultures around sexual violence. The first session of the programme is dedicated to providing staff with a more complex understanding of sexual violence and the sexist cultures currently prevalent in universities which may not always be 'visible' due to societal norms. We hope this knowledge and open discussion will help to create an environment which becomes more accessible to victims/survivors, in which their concerns are heard, and support procedures are more publicly and clearly stated and planned. Talking about sexual violence, recognising its prevalence, and preparing staff to receive disclosures are important first steps towards this change.

2. Learning outcomes

- To become more aware of different kinds of sexual violence and their complexity, and the diversity of victims/survivors, their experiences and responses
- To recognise different types of disclosure and the contexts for these
- To bring awareness of the potential barriers preventing students from disclosing, and how to behave in ways which may break down some of those barriers
- To understand how to support students in the decision-making process for accessing support
- To learn strategies for responding to disclosures in an appropriate way to ensure students feel supported and believed at the point of disclosure
- To raise awareness of the care pathways which can be used to direct students to support both within and outside of the university in the short, medium and long term
- To consider ways that staff can also ensure their own wellbeing is protected and they are supported in their 'first responder' roles

Figure 1: Key learning outcomes

3. Role of expert advisors

The initial design and structure of the programme was led by the Brunel steering group, which was convened at the start of the project drawing together staff with a

range of relevant expertise including stakeholders from across the University academic units and professional services. This group enabled us to develop programme content that was context specific, and we also intended that their involvement would benefit the sustainability of the programme and facilitate further opportunities for institutional change. Steering group members from the student welfare and staff development teams were able to draw from their experiences of providing care to students and their understanding of the systems already in place. Pam Alldred, who researches and publishes in the field of gender, sexuality and inequalities, and Neil Levitan, who was employed as Research Officer for the first four months of the Project, were both able to draw from their previous work on the 'Gap Work Project: Tackling Gender Related Violence'. Anne Chappell, who coordinates the Brunel programme, has expertise in education, professional formation and staff development, and social justice. Charlotte Jones, who took over Levitan's role, has expertise and research experience of gender, sexuality and abuse, as well as feminist methods.

The first lead facilitator on the programme provided feedback on the draft layout of the programme and ideas for activities and associated resources, filled out the content of the sessions, and contributed new ideas before delivering them. She also used (anonymised) experiences with clients at Rape Crisis and Women's Aid to provide examples of her experiences in the sessions and to build the content of the programme. Other facilitators have since provided further feedback and suggestions for development and edits to the programme and facilitator guide.

4. Programme structure and mode of delivery

A two-session programme was developed at Brunel. Each group of participants attended two four-hour sessions, with the option to attend the sessions over two consecutive days or across two consecutive weeks. A maximum of twelve staff were able to register for each session, but groups ranged from four to eleven in size. Sessions were held in four large rooms in a central building on the university campus. The rooms provided space for participants and facilitators to sit on chairs in a horseshoe shape for discussions, with tables and chairs at the back of the room for breakout group work.

The first session in the programme focuses on ways of understanding and defining sexual violence and the associated harms, as well as challenging preconceptions about what abuse may look like. It explores the issue of sexual violence in a higher education context in particular, as well 'victim-blaming' and representations of sexual violence in the media. It considers the various forms disclosure may take, some of the potential barriers to disclosure, and the diversity of victims/survivors of sexual violence. This session also begins to explore the particular skills and knowledge which may be useful in different disclosure contexts.

The second session focuses more closely on the 'first responder' role and the skills needed. This includes a discussion of the responsibilities of someone responding to a disclosure, empathy and active listening skills, ways to calm down distressed students, the care/support pathways available and ways to assist students in making decisions about their next steps. Finally, the session addresses the potential impact of receiving disclosures and how staff can seek support and/or self-care to ensure their own wellbeing.

The sessions were interactive, consisting largely of pair work, small group exercises (3-4 people) and large group discussions (11 people). The activities in the sessions included working with extracts from the media and national press, looking at national and international sexual violence statistics and data from the National Union of Students' 'Hidden Marks' report (NUS, 2011), viewing short films from Rape Crisis Scotland's 'I Just Froze' public awareness campaign (Rape Crisis Scotland, 2017) and activities such as role play involving a range of vignettes based loosely on factual accounts of disclosures received by staff at Brunel.

5. Facilitation

The sessions have been facilitated through staff development by three psychotherapists, a counsellor and two members of staff from Student Welfare. The first lead facilitator also provides therapy to students and staff at another London university and is collaborating with staff there to start exploring and addressing issues of sexual violence. For several years she has worked as a counsellor at Rape Crisis and provided staff development sessions on the impact of sexual violence to external agencies. This facilitator wrote the detailed programme content for Brunel and led the initial sessions. Her co-facilitator for these groups has several years of counselling experience at Women's Aid, where she also facilitated group work with clients. The third facilitator is a highly-qualified family therapist and counsellor, who has worked in the areas of sexual violence, abuse, hate crime, discrimination and disability rights. She was joined by co-facilitators from Brunel in some of her sessions: a woman and a man based in Student Welfare, and a woman who was until recently Head of Counselling at Brunel and has provided other therapy externally, including with Childline. Later sessions were facilitated by a combination of staff from Student Welfare and Counselling at Brunel, who received support and guidance, including supervision from previous facilitators.

As the initial detailed programme was primarily developed by the first facilitator (with some assistance from her co-facilitator), it reflected her interests and style of facilitation. It has been insightful to observe other facilitators then stepping into this role with different styles and approaches to facilitation. Participants have responded differently to activities depending on how they have been introduced, concluded and

explained by the facilitators. This has underlined the need to continuously adapt the programme according to the needs of the facilitator, as well as the participants.

6. Participants and recruitment strategy

Groups attending the programme comprised a mixture of staff, and were organised around staff availability rather than their job roles. Recruitment was carried out in three stages: i) The Brunel steering group (institutional advisory group), who helped to design the programme, were the first cohort to attend the sessions. The steering group is comprised of staff from a range of areas, including managerial, welfare, union, academic and security posts. Following this, ii) the steering group recruited members of staff from their departments and services. In the final sessions of the programme, iii) staff development advertised the programme to all staff at the University.

Programme Evaluation

At the point that this report was being written, 85 members of Brunel staff have attended the programme over the course of eleven pairs of sessions. Group sizes varied from between 4 and 12 participants. Staff were most heavily represented in job roles which were administrative (32%, n=27), student welfare (17.6%, n=15) and within the Student Union (24%, n=20) (see Table 1). Many more women than men attended the programme (74%, n=57) (see Table 2). Whilst all sessions were open to anyone of any gender, in two of the seven groups all participants were women.

Job role	Number in attendance
Academic - Research only	0
Academic - Teaching and research	8 (9.5%)
Academic - Education	1 (1.2%)
Professional - Administrative	27 (32%)
Professional - Student Welfare	15 (17.6%)
Professional - Security	1 (1.2%)
Professional - Management	5 (6%)
Technician	6 (7%)
Student Union	20 (24%)
Other	2 (2.5%)
Total	85

Table 1: Job roles of Brunel programme participants

Gender	Number in attendance
Men	20 (23%)
Women	63 (74%)

Non-binary	1 (1.5%)
Other	0
(Skipped question)	1 (1.5%)
Total	85

Table 2: Gender of Brunel programme participants

NB. There are further programmes planned for the summer term. 10 members of staff have currently registered their interest.

Of the staff who attended the programme, 45.5% said they had received a disclosure of sexual violence from a Brunel student (68% of whom had received multiple disclosures). In addition, 57% of staff said they had experience of disclosures outside of the Brunel context (e.g. in their personal lives, voluntary work or previous job roles). Prior to attending the programme, 40% felt they knew how to respond to a disclosure of sexual violence and 86% said they had a clear understanding of what is meant by sexual violence. However, participants' comments and behaviour in the sessions illustrated that their experiences and knowledge about sexual violence was diverse.

1. Programme evaluation

Participants evaluated the programme positively overall. One participant commented that the 'content of the whole day [was] useful and informative', whilst others noted that the programme 'covered a wide range of relevant issues' and felt it was 'a difficult subject approached gently'. On average, the learning outcomes were understood by participants to have been met, and they stated they were happy with the material covered. As a result of attending the programme, participants indicated they felt more confident in their capacity to respond appropriately to a disclosure of sexual violence. Following the first session, using a sliding scale (where 1=low, 5=high), on average participants marked their understanding of knowledge and definitions (4.9) and understanding of barriers to disclosure of sexual violence (4.6) as 'high'. After the second session, participants also ranked their understanding of the importance of self-care when handling a disclosure as 'high' (4.7).

All facilitators spoke about the participants as engaged, interested and keen to learn and develop their skills. One facilitator said she was surprised at the high level of engagement and receptivity of the participants.

2. Strengths of the programme

The small group sizes and interactive breakout group exercises were commended in the survey feedback. This was noted as an unusual opportunity to openly discuss an important issue with colleagues. One participant felt that '[g]roup discussions are a

good way to share thoughts and best practice’ and another commented that ‘[g]roup work really gets people talking’. The ‘[f]reedom for discussion’ and ‘openness’ of the conversations during the sessions were also understood to be a strength of the programme, with many participants commenting on the ‘non-judgemental environment’ and others feeling it was a ‘safe space to air feelings, and anxieties’.

In group interviews and survey responses, many participants noted that they enjoyed the diversity of job roles within the groups, and some participants spoke of a preference for mixed gender and ethnicity groups where possible. In their interviews, one facilitator raised slight concern that some of the content might feel overly familiar to some participants, especially those in the counselling team and student support services. Some of these participants spoke confidently and frequently in the sessions and often contributed extra content/suggestions beyond the material in the programme. This was usually given in support and agreement of the programme content, and the facilitators spoke appreciatively about this input. Some participants who had received many disclosures from students discussed these disclosures confidentially in the sessions and provided relevant Brunel-specific examples. The facilitators commented that this had been especially helpful, and less experienced participants benefitted from these accounts. However, facilitators also noted that some participants were much quieter in the sessions than others, and the diversity of knowledge and experience within groups may have contributed to this. One facilitator also wondered whether participants who had not been behaving in the ways that the programme recommended in previous ‘first responder’ contexts may feel judged and defensive about their past actions. This was occasionally reflected in some of the behaviour and feedback from a few of the participants, who disputed the advice given by facilitators and then questioned the validity of the programme.

The facilitators’ approaches to the topics were highly praised in most instances. One participant noted that ‘the facilitators were fantastic’, and others spoke about their relief at the sensitive and compassionate manner in which the issues were addressed. The facilitators’ breadth of expertise was also discussed as a strength of the programme. One participant said that ‘[t]he facilitator was very knowledgeable’. Another highlighted the ‘[p]rofessionalism & expertise of facilitators’ and explained that ‘before the session I was somewhat concerned about this (based on previous experience of equality oriented trainings), but I’m really impressed with [Facilitator A] and [Facilitator B]’s expertise, compassion, and their resolute willingness to question harmful and misleading societal beliefs around sexual violence - well done!’.

Of the twenty-two sessions, there were two facilitators present during eighteen sessions, whilst four of the sessions were led by a single facilitator. Two of our groups experienced one session with a single facilitator, and one session with two facilitators. Co-facilitation received a more favourable response. One participant

commented that ‘co-delivery was much better’, and another noted that ‘[d]ual facilitated was really beneficial – uni[versity] and external perspectives’. Other participants also underlined the importance of the presence of a facilitator with familiarity of Brunel’s processes and policies.

In the first session, participants commented positively on our use of national and local statistics, which they found informative and useful for recognising the scale of sexual violence and its prevalence at Brunel. In the second session, participants highlighted the value of the practical skills they learnt. The final role play exercise was emphasised as especially helpful. One participant commented that this exercise was ‘highly effective and salient’, and another said ‘it was great being an observer, and it is essential to exercise being the receiver of the disclosure’. This was understood as an opportunity to ‘[apply] the theory to examples of real situations’. In this session, participants were provided with a guidance handout which follows the structure of the acronym ‘R.A.C.E.’ (Respond, Ask, Check, Explore) and gives an overview of issues to consider in a disclosure encounter. Some participants commented that this, too, would be an especially useful tool.

3. Areas for development in the programme

The Brunel programme was modified continuously over the course of the delivery of the sessions in response to participant feedback and the facilitators’ needs and views. However, the aims, learning outcomes, key foci and most of the content of the activities remained consistent throughout. We understand the development of the programme as a continuous process and it has improved over the course of the delivery. For example, participants in the first sessions indicated that the first responder role needed to be clarified from the beginning of the programme, so the discussion of the role was moved to the start of the programme and expanded. Initial groups also commented on the fast pace and felt that the number of activities meant that the sessions were rushed. Whilst we did not reduce the number of activities, the timing and format of some activities were altered where possible. Some participants in the early sessions said that the guidance from facilitators needed to be more ‘Brunel specific’. Therefore, for later sessions, we introduced co-facilitators who had a more detailed understanding of the student support mechanisms at Brunel.

Consideration was given to intersectionality and the diversity of victims/survivors in the programme, especially in the scenarios given to participants and the discussion of barriers to disclosure, and this was received positively and commented on by some participants. However, others also noted that race and ethnicity (amongst other categories) should have been more effectively emphasised and addressed throughout the programme. One participant commented that ‘[d]isability and race [were] mentioned but [no] examples used diversity beyond gender. Note, over 50

percent of our students were not included'. Another participant said that further information needed to be provided on 'dealing with issues in a multi-cultural setting like Brunel'.

The data has shown the contrasting experiences different staff have of aspects of the programme, and the ways in which they make meaning of these. For example, participants held diverse views about the length and pacing of the programme. Many felt it was rushed in places (see above) and needed more time, e.g. 'extend sessions so more can be covered at participants' pace', '[m]ore time for questions', '[a]s there is so much content to discuss in this area I feel more time would be required'. However, others commented that the sessions were too slow, e.g. 'lots of blank space time', 'slow paced', '[m]ore efficient facilitation [...] to ensure participants stay engaged', and 'it could be shorter and straight to the point'. These differing perspectives may be in part a result of different facilitation styles, but the feedback was used as the basis for later revisions of the programme, and especially in the facilitator guidance.

Some participants placed a greater value on the second session over the first, where the emphasis was on practical skills. One member of staff suggested that we could 'make the first session half a day long. Or maybe start to cover some of the practical parts in the first session', and another suggested the first session 'could potentially be condensed (or elements provided as pre-reading)'. Similarly, despite designing the Brunel programme as a form of 'education', rather than 'training', some participants expected, and requested, greater instruction throughout, which may be their usual experience of staff development sessions. One noted that a weakness of the programme was that '[t]here was more information sharing than there was information giving' and another commented that 'it felt like we did most of the work ourselves'.

4. Developing the Brunel Programme

Following the sessions, participants and facilitators raised concerns privately about particular participants' capacity to deal with disclosures as first responders. We felt unsure how/whether this could be addressed directly by the programme and its staff, and the ethical/legal implications of reporting participants or raising this issue with them directly. These concerns also illustrated the need for the institution, staff managers and participants themselves to be aware that the programme could not provide accreditation, and should not be treated as such.

In their interviews, some facilitators discussed the difficulty of managing the 'heaviness' of the subject matter. This was a concern because a) they were aware it was likely there would be victims/survivors of sexual violence in the room and they wanted to be sensitive to their needs, and b) the content was likely to feel

emotionally exhausting for everyone and it was therefore challenging to find the right pace and keep momentum, interest and energy in the room. In the feedback, a few participants confirmed these concerns, commenting that they found the sessions particularly challenging because they brought back memories of their own experiences of sexual violence which they rarely/never thought or spoke about. One participant noted in the feedback that attending the session had led them to realise that it would be a good idea for them to seek counselling to discuss their experience(s) of sexual violence. Another participant, who took some time out of the second session, spoke to us about her memories of receiving a disclosure from a close family member.

Consideration was given to the sensitive and distressing potential of the subject matter in the design of the programme, but feedback and observations have since provided further insight into offering adequate support to participants. A content note was added to the staff development page; and for future sessions a quiet room was reserved nearby to give participants a place to go if they needed a break; follow-up emails could also be sent out to remind participants of support options. The design and layout of the room was also more important than we had initially recognised. In one survey response, a participant commented that the seating was an issue as it '[w]asn't easy to leave the room when I felt as if I might become upset and that made me feel a bit panicky'. The size and temperature of the room and the comfort of the chairs were also mentioned and, after the initial sessions in a dark window-less room, larger, airier rooms were prioritised when booking.

Victims/survivors could also be centred more explicitly within the programme content. Some participants requested to hear survivor accounts. For example, one suggested 'video accounts from victims/survivors talking about disclosing', and another requested 'more about victim/survivor perspectives on sexual violence, what it was like to disclose, [what] was helpful or unhelpful'. One participant also asked for further content 'about the importance of empowering the student and letting them take control of what happens next'. In a future revision of the programme, the survivor testimonies and reflections could play a more prominent role.

One additional area for development arises from the way in which the discussions from participants led to questions about policy and practice at Brunel. There were a number of occasions during both the design of the programme and in sessions where it became apparent that clearer guidance needs to be available to the University community on reporting, recording (and storing information), confidentiality and Duty of Care. This was also demonstrated in survey feedback, in which a number of respondents showed concern about the 'gaps in Brunel's own policy and signposting'.

As mentioned previously, intersectionality and survivorship need to be further explored in the Brunel programme, and the social contexts of racism and Islamophobia also need to be more explicitly addressed in the programme in future revisions, as well as incorporated into the ‘first responder’ care pathways and broader approach. It is crucial for the Brunel programme to reflect the student population in its content and to incorporate the intersecting oppressions of victims/survivors disclosing to staff.

Programme Evaluation – Associate Partners

Our Associate Partners, Keele University and Trinity Laban, have both delivered sessions to members of staff at their institutions. Our Researcher, Jones, was not present for these sessions so our evaluations are based upon the evaluation surveys and feedback from the organisers at the partnering institutions. We did not receive completed surveys from all participants at Trinity Laban, but the existing data suggest that more women than men attended at both institutions (see Table 4), and that staff from student welfare, administration, and the Student Union were highest in attendance (see Table 3). This was in concord with Brunel data.

Job role	Number in attendance		
	Keele University	Trinity Laban	Total
Academic - Research only	0	0	0
Academic - Teaching and research	7 (13.2%)	0	7 (10.8%)
Academic - Education	1 (1.9%)	0	1 (1.5%)
Professional - Administrative	2 (3.8%)	2 (17%)	4 (6.15%)
Professional - Student welfare	5 (9.4%)	2 (17%)	7 (10.8%)
Professional - Security	0	0	0
Professional - Management	0	0	0
Technician	0	0	0
Student Union	16 (30.2%)	0	16 (24.6%)
Other	4 (7.5%)	0	4 (6.15%)
(Did not complete survey)	18 (34%)	8 (66%)	26 (40%)
Total	53	12	65

Table 3: Job roles of Associate Partner programme participants

Gender	Number in attendance		
	Keele University	Trinity Laban	Total
Men	28 (53%)	3 (25%)	31 (47.7%)
Women	24 (45%)	9 (75%)	33 (50.8%)
Non-binary	0	0	0
Other	1 (2%)	0	1 (1.5%)
(Did not complete survey)	0	0	0

Total	53	12	65
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Table 4: Gender of Associate Partner programme participants

NB. There are further programmes running at Keele University on 2nd March, 21st March, 28th March and 12th April. 40 members of staff are currently registered to attend.

1. Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

The Brunel programme (two 4-hour sessions) was delivered to a group of twelve staff members at Trinity Laban by one of the Brunel facilitators. Our data evaluating these sessions is limited due to the low response rate for the surveys (ranging between 40-60%).

Initial analysis suggests very mixed feedback. Respondents enjoyed the interactivity of the sessions, commenting that there ‘were plenty of exercises to engage participants’ and ‘the interactive tasks gave you the chance to think and digest some topics’. Respondents commented positively about a role-playing exercise in particular and suggested further time on this would be valuable. Participants felt their practice would change as a result of attending the programme and mentioned signposting and active listening as skills they would continue to use.

A significant proportion of the feedback from both sessions addressed the pace and organisation of the sessions. Some respondents requested better guidance from the facilitator, stating that ‘[o]ften discussions [were] led by participants, but then not sure of correct answer as not reaffirmed by Trainer’. Another respondent agreed, noting that ‘it was not clear [after group work] whether the group had come up with the ‘right’ answers or not. Clearer guidance from the facilitator would help’. Participants also highlighted the need for a facilitator with an awareness of HE issues in particular, and to draw on that in their discussion of the programme content. This feedback was used in revisions of the facilitator guidance and in later selection of facilitators.

Our key contact at Trinity, the Head of Student Services and Accessibility, participated in one of the Brunel programmes before it was delivered at his institution. He commented that attending the sessions had been personally beneficial, allowing him to deal with incidents which have arisen since with greater confidence. He also noted that Trinity’s involvement with the USVreact project has led to other improvements in the institution, including thorough reviews of relevant policies and processes and the development of a university webpage to offer guidance to student victims/survivors.

2. Keele University

The Serious Incident Case Officer at Keele reported that there is a commitment from university staff who are currently very keen to improve in this area, and the sessions have therefore been popular and well-received. She noted that the USVreact programme became available just as Keele were starting to consider designing their own. She appreciated that using the USVreact materials had therefore allowed her to deliver sessions at Keele sooner than expected, whilst retaining flexibility to tailor a bespoke package which resonated with their own staff.

The Case Officer at Keele participated in the programme at Brunel before facilitating a series of sessions at her institution. She initially arranged to co-facilitate a three-hour, one-session adaptation of the Brunel programme for seven staff members at Keele but has since delivered the programme to a further 46 participants. The truncated programme has been necessary in this instance due to the timeslots available at Keele. This was discussed and agreed with the Brunel project team. A further 40 participants have registered to attend sessions before the end of April 2018.

The officer reported that she was pleased with the response to the session and the survey evaluations also indicated a very positive experience overall. Participants pointed out that the opportunity for discussion was especially helpful, and that the facilitators were 'friendly'. As a result of attending the session, one participant believed they would behave '[m]ore compassionate[ly] rather than panicking' and another felt they would be able to more effectively 'calm down a distressed person'.

Some participants requested to be given more time for discussions (which may be provided by the full-length programme), and for further information on particular topics, especially local support services and the role of the dedicated Sexual Violence Liaison Officers at Keele. The response to the role play activity was diverse and echoed the feedback received at Brunel. One participant indicated that they were thankful to be given the option to opt out, and that they would recommend removing this activity from the programme 'as it's difficult'. However, another participant suggested that more time was needed for the role play, as 'it felt like the actual practicing of how to respond to a disclosure was rushed'.

Conclusions and Recommendations

At the time of writing this report, 85 members of staff at Brunel had participated in the programme, helping to raise awareness of sexual violence victims/survivors in HE and encourage reflection on the skills needed to respond to disclosures. Participants were enthusiastic about participating in the programme and, at the time of writing this report, there are already 10 members of staff on the waiting list to attend sessions scheduled to take place later this academic year. In addition to the content,

the importance of providing reassurance and building confidence in participants was prominent in field notes and survey data. One participant commented that after attending they felt 'positive about being able to provide support - you don't need to do it all and it's ok to refer people to those who can give appropriate help, advice and support'. Some participants were especially thankful for the implementation of the programme, and spoke of their excitement to see its development. Many said they hoped the sessions would continue after the project had finished and would be recommending them to colleagues. Some survey respondents highlighted a positive change in the way they felt about Brunel more generally. For example, in response to a question which asked participants what they had gained from attending the session, one wrote: 'A much more positive feeling about Brunel. This was an excellent training, the best I have been on here (14 years!)'.

Institutional recommendations

Complaints/reporting procedures and policies at Brunel enforce time limits which present significant issues with regards to sexual assault. Short time constraints may deter some students from reporting altogether, and assault may not always be recognised as such by the victim/survivor at the time of the incident which may therefore require time before a disclosure feels possible, comfortable or safe. Additionally, designated timeframes seem more suited to respond to single incidents/events, rather than ongoing or persistent issues. The processes involved can also be very time-consuming once initiated and, if the police are involved in the case, some procedures (e.g. SR6) need to be coordinated with the police response, which can be slow moving and therefore significantly delay university processes and support for victims/survivors. We would suggest that time constraints should not be implemented and survivor support needs to be provided from the earliest stage of the process.

The relevant policies and procedures at Brunel lack transparency and clarity. They tend to be long, complex documents which are – despite being available online – difficult to locate and not widely advertised to the students. We suggest a policy is needed which is dedicated to sexual violence in particular. This should be produced in a clear, simple format in a location easily viewable by students as well as staff. The support available for victims/survivors who report should also be detailed in this document. In this policy, we would also encourage the university to take an unequivocal position against sexual violence and victim-blaming, and in favour of belief and support for victims/survivors. Discussions around this have begun.

The purpose and remit of other relevant policies should be revised and clarified as staff attending the programme showed a) a lack of awareness of existing policies and procedures, and b) confusion about which were applicable for different situations. We have sought further details on some issues directly connected to the first

responder role, particularly Duty of Care and confidentiality. These matters need to be resolved and built into the programme content. All policies and processes regarding sexual violence should be promoted more clearly to the students and staff, alongside a promotion of external local services available. As part of this, it is important for Brunel to foster stronger relationships with local support services (including regular invitations to the Brunel campus and collaborative campaigns). It is worth noting that some links have been made with local services, particularly with staff at the local authority, but there is further work to do.

Some participants raised concerns that wider institutional cultures and policies placed restrictions on staff which would limit their ability to act in the ways encouraged by the USVreact programme (e.g. one member of academic staff said that – to his frustration – he had been advised not to provide *any* pastoral support to students, only guidance with work matters). Participants also showed a lack of confidence and trust in the support mechanisms at Brunel, and were therefore uncertain that referral would necessarily be valuable for the students in all cases. They spoke about how some services may need to be better supported and funded for staff to feel more confident about referral. Reporting processes at Brunel need to be reviewed and coordinated with the reporting procedures for other matters. A clear ‘care pathway’ flowchart for supporting sexual violence victims/survivors needs to be designed and circulated. These documents/processes need to be aggregated for ease of use by staff. We also welcome the implementation of an online reporting tool by the ‘Respect@Brunel’ HEFCE-funded group, and we would encourage anonymous reporting to be granted as an option within this. Brunel also needs to provide a dedicated webpage which provides clear, accessible resources and information about accessing support and reporting mechanisms. Again, work in these areas has begun.

Observing the delivery of the USVreact programme has drawn our attention to the significant impact that receiving disclosures can have upon some members of staff. We hope the programme will continue at Brunel and provide a space for staff to share their experiences. There are now a group of staff who have undertaken additional activities to support them in being facilitators for the programme in the future. In addition, we would also suggest quarterly informal meet-ups for staff who have attended the programme and would like to continue to discuss their experiences as first responders and provide peer support to others.

To conclude, a summary of our recommendations to Brunel are as follows:

The University’s policies and procedures for supporting both student and staff victims/survivors of sexual harassment and violence should be reviewed

University policies and procedures should be reviewed to ensure that they are clear and coherent, and embedded in the ‘life’ of Brunel. Policy and procedure

development should take account of the issues associated with recording and storing information related to disclosures and matters of confidentiality for victims/survivors of sexual violence, as well as vulnerable adults and ‘at risk’ children.

Development and publication of a specific policy dedicated to sexual violence

A sexual violence policy produced in a clear, simple format should be displayed in an online location easily accessible by students and staff. The support available for victims/survivors who report should be detailed in this document, and we would also encourage the University to take an unequivocal position against sexual violence and victim-blaming, and in favour of belief and support for victims/survivors.

The University should remove time constraints from reports of sexual violence and provide support mechanisms during police investigations

Time constraints should not be implemented for complaints/reporting procedures and policies regarding sexual assault. Survivor support at the University also needs to be provided from the earliest stage of the process, regardless of police involvement.

Adoption of a more coordinated and consistent approach to services for staff and students

Students and staff would benefit from clarity with regard to what services are available, both internal and external to Brunel, and the care pathways that are in place.

USVreact Programme attendance should be mandatory for staff

This programme has the capacity to influence the development of a more supportive and caring culture at the University, which will encourage victims/survivors to come forward. This culture shift will also positively influence other aspects of staff support for students beyond sexual violence. It is important that Brunel, as well as the HE sector, takes a position that is not simply dictated by issues of compliance. Programme attendance is necessary for all staff, particularly in relation to specific Brunel policy and procedures and the development of a care pathway. Whilst ‘frontline’ staff should be an urgent priority, the involvement of all staff should follow immediately regardless of their prior experiences in this area.

The University should provide support for staff who are supporting students or colleagues with disclosures

This pilot programme emphasised that staff should exercise self-care when supporting others. The University should enable this by signposting counselling services and other care pathways, making it clear that staff should be able to talk to their supervisors/managers for support, and have easily accessible self-care resources online.

The programme needs to be driven with empathy and sensitivity to participants' needs

A content note should be provided on advertising materials for the programme, a quiet room should be reserved near to the sessions for participants who need a break or some privacy, and follow-up emails should be sent out to remind participants of support options. Two facilitators are needed: at least one of whom needs significant experience of receiving disclosures and knowledge of sexual violence; and at least one needs knowledge of the University's processes and policies on sexual violence, misconduct and complaints, as well as student support. One or both facilitators should be experienced in facilitation. Further information about the delivery and format of the sessions can be found in the Introduction to the Brunel USVreact 'Facilitators' Guide'.

The University needs to actively promote the USVreact programme to staff, and advertise to students that it is happening

For the current programme to have maximum effect, we suggest that students need to be made aware that it is in process, and thus reassured that staff should be better equipped to respond to future disclosures. We advise that a campaign to advertise the programme around campus would be valuable.

The University needs to develop close connections with local sexual violence referral services

It is important for Brunel to foster stronger relationships with local support/referral services (including regular invitations to the Brunel campus and collaborative campaigns). Local services should also be promoted on the Brunel website, and in student support spaces and residences on campus.

We hope our Associate Partner universities find this report helpful and are able to use the information provided to develop their own responses to these issues.

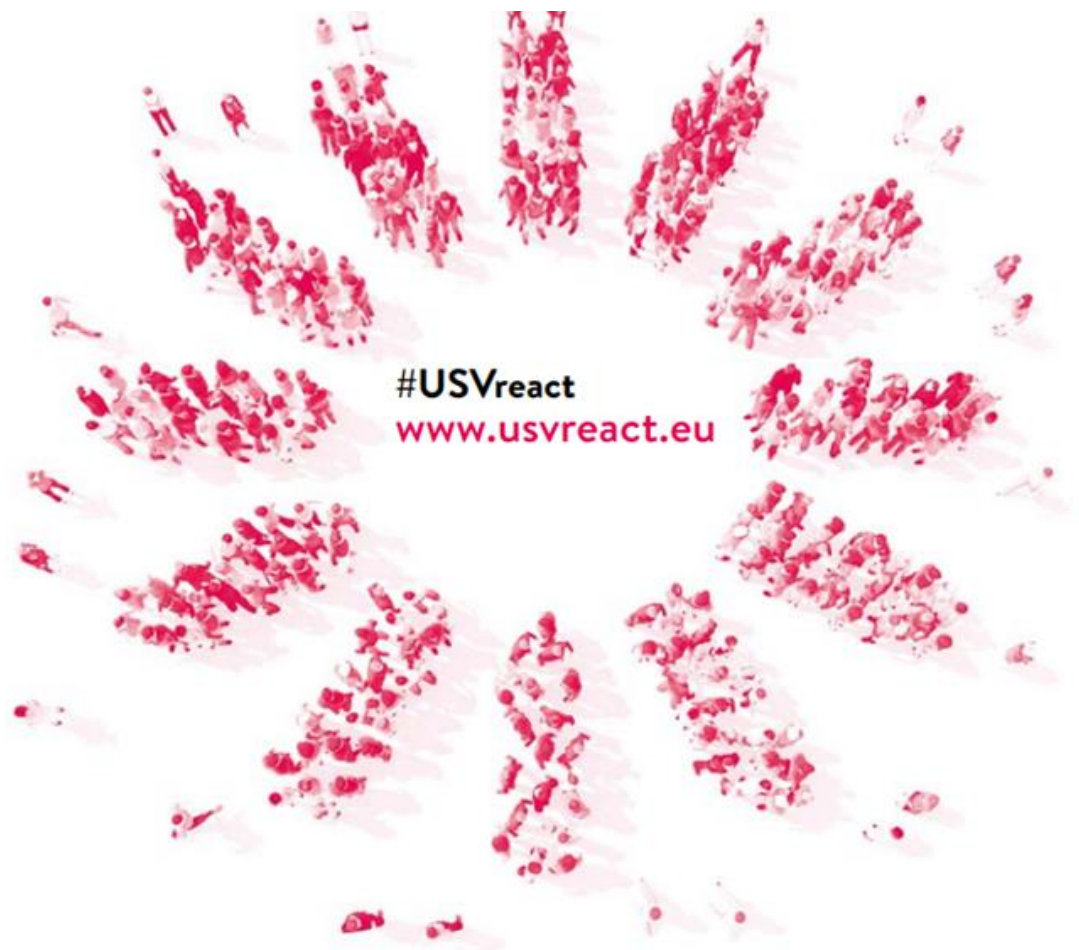
Acknowledgements

There has been a significant contribution from a number of people during this project and we would like to extend our thanks to them for their commitment and support. Particular thanks go to:

- Colleagues in the Brunel steering group.
- The BRICs team, particularly Emma Sigsworth and Anne Smith.
- The 85 members of Brunel staff who volunteered to participate in the pilot of the programme, and whose feedback has been fundamental to the programme's development and improvement.
- The Associate Partners, particularly James Hitchins and Kelly Prince.
- The facilitators of the Brunel USVreact programme, with particular thanks to Jessica Calvo, for her excellent work on the content of the programme, materials and facilitator guidance.
- Neil Levitan, for his work as the researcher at the start of the USVreact project at Brunel.

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ISBN: 9781908549389

e-ISBN: 9781908549419

