Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence
Disclosure training at Sussex and Brighton Universities
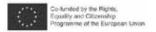
Learning objectives:
- To understand what sexual violence is and how it might affect students
- To support students disclosing sexual violence with empathy
- To understand barriers to disclosure and the wider context of 'rape culture'
- To learn what support is available to students at Sussex and to signpost students appropriately
- To understand staff roles and responsibilities better and foster confidence when responding to students

Model:
Two-tier system of 1.5 sessions with non-frontline staff (e.g. faculty, library workers, and general professional services workers), and longer 3.5 hour sessions with frontline staff (e.g. counsellors, residential advisors and student advisors)

Key messages:
- Sexual violence is an **umbrella term** which refers to any (contact or non-contact) activity of a sexual nature that is unwanted
- Sexual violence is a crime of **power and control** where 'violence' refers to violation (including verbal as well as physical harassment) as well as physical force
- Sexual violence can happen to anyone, but is a **gendered** phenomenon and also reflects other **intersecting inequalities** such as race, class and sexual orientation
- Sexual violence is part of a **continuum**: one act rarely occurs in isolation
- Sexual violence is part of a wider **university context** involving issues such as lad culture and neoliberal/managerialist rationalities
- It is also part of a **social context** characterised by gendered and intersecting inequalities and related attitudes
- There is a relationship between sexual violence and other forms of **hate crime** such as racism, homophobia and transphobia

- **Rape myths** play a key role in preventing disclosure, and must be counteracted
- Trauma has **varying effects**: there is no one 'typical' response
- When dealing with survivors, we must be sensitive to **cultural differences**
- **Empathy** is key: our response must be centred on the survivor
- It is important to create a **safe space** (physically and emotionally) for the survivor and allow them time to share
- **Empowerment** is also crucial: survivors are the experts on their own experiences and situations, and must not have choices taken away from them
- It is imperative to **know and signpost** survivors to the most appropriate support services whether on campus or off as appropriate
- It is also important to consider **self-care** and maintaining boundaries, particularly for staff who do not take disclosures as a principal part of their role