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Consent, Sexual Violence, Harassment, and Equality in Higher Education



Welcome to our first edition!

Welcome to the first edition of the COSHARE Network Newsletter.

The network is associated with a wider research partnership between Ulster University and the University of Galway. Our programme of work aims to produce an all-island approach to consent, sexual violence and harassment (C-SVH) research and practice in Higher Education and beyond.

The aim of the COSHARE network is to foster knowledge exchange through regular network meetings and discussions on current understanding of C-SVH and related issues in HE.

We were delighted to meet many of you during our first online meeting during June, especially hearing your thoughts and ideas on what you would like to get out of the network.

You said, and we listened! We have taken your aspirations and ideas and have begun to structure our correspondence and future meetings around this. The current (and future) newsletter will include updates of ongoing research and activities locally, nationally and internationally with regards to gender based and sexual violence that you might wish to engage with. For more information scroll further down!

October 9th, Belfast In-Person Network Meeting

We will host our first in person meeting **October 9th, 2023** in Belfast. Clarissa J. DiSantis, co-author of [Addressing Student Sexual Violence in Higher Education](#) and co-editor of [Stopping Gender-based violence in Higher Education](#), will be providing two workshops:

- **Morning:** An interactive workshop designed to support staff in championing gender-based violence prevention and response initiatives. Participants will build their knowledge and understanding of how to use a comprehensive institution-wide approach to address sexual violence and related forms of gender-based violence in a higher education setting.
- **Afternoon:** An interactive workshop which will allow participants to problem-solve around barriers they face in progressing prevention and response initiatives. Participants will identify types of resistance to gender-based violence prevention and response work and consider strategies to overcome resistance tactics.

To register, please click [here](#).

We hope you enjoy our first edition and look forward to seeing you soon.



Upcoming events

[Have your say: Contribute to new guidance on Sexual Violence Liaison Officers for universities \[UK, online\]](#)

Varying dates in August

[Ending Violence Against Women & Girls Consultation – Have your say \[Northern Ireland, online\]](#)

August 17th | 1000-1130

[25th Women Against Violence Europe \(WAVE\) Conference \[Madrid, Spain\]](#)

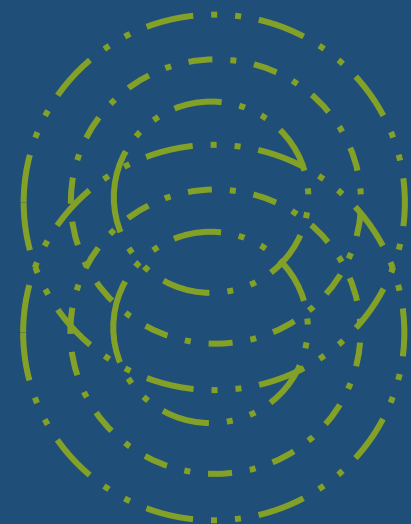
October 16-17th

Training opportunities

[Researching Gender-Based Violence: Methods and Meaning \[hybrid\]](#)

6-10th November

Fees: £1400



In the Spotlight: Higher Education After #MeToo

A recent report by Dr Anna Bull and Dr Erin Shannon seeks to examine any changes to the ways in which UK HEIs respond to gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH). Their report covers reporting and disciplinary processes at different institutions including perspectives of students and staff.

Results indicated that there is some support available for some students, support for staff appeared less readily available; handling of GBVH disclosures varied between the HEIs; and, generally, provision for staff to avail of these services was less developed.

The report concludes with several recommendations, such as the plea for HEIs to address structural issues (e.g., interinstitutional information-sharing) and be more proactive in addressing disclosures.

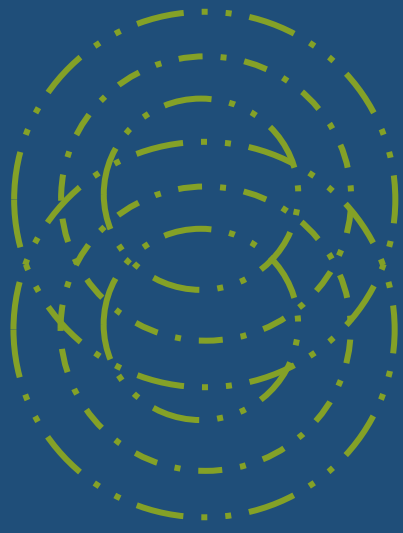
A copy of both the summary and full report can be found [here](#), alongside a presentation of the findings and panel discussion at the report launch event.

In the Spotlight: Sexual Violence Survey 2022 – Disclosure of Experiences

At the end of July, the Irish Central Statistics Office (CSO) published the results of their survey that sought to measure the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland. Key findings included:

- **Adult sexual violence:** 49% told no-one, rates for disclosure were similar between men (41%) and women (44%).
- **Reasons for non-disclosure:** 48% did not disclose because they did not think their experience was serious enough with older people less likely to disclose (27%); other reasons included under the influence during the incident (20%), self-blame (13%) and did not think they would be believed (9%).
- **Reasons for disclosure:** 29% did so to get help for themselves, were most likely to disclose in less than six months (67%) and would disclose to a friend (56%); only 5% disclosed to the police and those older were more likely to disclose (55-64, 11%).

A copy of all the results, including those examining childhood experiences, is available [here](#) and a video of the publication briefing can be found [here](#).



Meet our members: Dr Eithne Dowds

What do you do?

I am a Senior Lecturer at the School of Law, Queen's University Belfast. My research focuses on criminal justice responses to sexual violence, with a particular interest in legal constructions of the crime of rape and sexual consent.



Why do you do it?

I do this work because it is important. Unfortunately, we live in a world where there are high incidents of sexual violence and we, as a society, continue to struggle in our responses. Although, the criminal justice system is just one avenue that survivors can pursue, and a complex one at that, I focus on it within my research because I believe it is important to work towards creating a system that recognises the harm of sexual violence and that the narratives emerging from criminal trials move away from problematic myths and stereotypes. One way to change this narrative is to rethink our legal definitions and framings of this form of violence.

What are you currently working on?

At the minute I am working on developing the notion of 'communicative responsibility' in the context of legal reforms to sexual consent and formulations of the accused's mindset when attempting to establish criminal liability. Relatedly, I am exploring reforms to how the crime of rape is categorised, including debates around the creation of an offence of negligent rape. I am also working with colleagues on a paper exploring sexual violence in the digital age and the role of bystanders.

Meet our members: Prof. Louise Crowley

What do you do?

I am a Professor of Law in the School of Law UCC and Director of the Bystander Intervention programme, UCC.



Why do you do it?

I developed this programme in UCC in 2016, based on the UK Intervention initiative, initially to provide an educational, evidence-based platform for students to recognize all forms of sexual hostility, harassment and violence and to develop the awareness and skills to make proactive interventions to ensure a more safe and respectful learning and living experience for all on campus. The incredibly positive impact of the training resulted in our development of a dedicated staff/workplace online bystander training programme. Both programmes are now available through the UCC CPD learning platform and have been made available free gratis to third level institutions across the sector. The programme recognises the importance of empowering individuals with knowledge to ensure unacceptable social norms can be shattered and to allow for the vocalisation of the shared, often silent abhorrence of all forms of sexual harassment and violence.

What are you currently working on?

As educators we recognise the capacity for evidence-based training to effect meaningful cultural change across all of society, but in particularly recognising the importance of intervening at a young age, before behaviour becomes problematic. The scope and reach of the Bystander Intervention is extensive with training materials and bespoke workshops tailored for specific cohorts. We are currently working with second level schools and third level institutions, workplaces across the public and private sector and sporting organisations to deliver bespoke online and workshop-based training programmes.

