

Status: Public

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Sexual Misconduct & Violence Annual Trend Monitoring Paper for the 2024/25 Academic Year**Proposed Resolution**

University Executive Committee is asked to **note** the case trends in sexual misconduct and violence impacting students and employees during the 2024/25 academic year and how the Student Conduct Office is responding to these issues in accordance with current sector guidance.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Disclosures and Reports of Sexual Misconduct and Violence: Data and Discussion

Appendix B – References and New Sector Guidance

Appendix C – For Students: SMV Prevention and Response Training Programme

Appendix D – For Staff: SMV Prevention and Response Training Programme

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This paper provides a summary of the trends identified through the central recording of disclosed and reported incidents of sexual misconduct and violence (SMV) and related policy breaches as defined under the Sexual Misconduct and Violence Policy (SMV Policy) and related procedures. It will highlight key themes and issues arising from the reported data¹ during the 2024/25 academic year. A statistical analysis and raw data that is frequently requested through Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests is included in **Appendix A**. This paper and appendices remain Open each year so the University community, public and those seeking data for FOIs can freely access this information and to demonstrate transparency in how the University engages in prevention and response initiatives in this area.
- 1.2 This paper is produced annually for assurance purposes in accordance with best practice identified in sector guidance and regulatory requirements set out by the Office for Students [OfS] (2025; DiSantis & Towl, 2025). University Executive Committee, Audit and Risk Committee, Senate and Council receive this paper in full as it is imperative that leaders at the highest level of the institution are informed of the impact

¹ It is only through the voices of victim-survivors willing to come forward and talk about what has happened that the University is able to access this information. We thank each individual who was able to speak out whether through named or anonymous disclosures or reports. We hope this work will continue to break down barriers for individuals to come forward and that the University response will help prevent future incidents whilst helping victim-survivors access support. We also thank the employees who received disclosures and then provided *SMV Disclosure Recording Forms* to the SMV case managers within the Student Conduct Office, so this data can be collated and analysed.

SMV has on students and employees and to provide assurance that at an operational level this issue is being addressed in line with sector guidance and best practice whilst remaining a strategic priority.

2. Key Issues and Analysis

- 2.1 In 2024/25, students and employees had the following ways they could disclose SMV, either through disclosing to staff in their College, their Department, Human Resources, the Counselling and Mental Health Service (CMHS), the Student Conduct Office (SCO), or online through the Report + Support (R+S) platform. Having this range of options available to students and employees is purposeful to reduce barriers to disclosures so more victim-survivors can access support as it is recognised that there are many internal and external reasons² a victim-survivor may feel unable to disclose SMV. However, having multiple ways to disclose, means that collating data on a centralised database is a challenge because it relies on staff who receive a disclosure to ensure they submit a *SMV Disclosure Recording Form*³. This is expected for anyone who receives a named or anonymous disclosure as 1) this is used for trend monitoring purposes, 2) a specialist SMV case manager can provide advice and guidance to the individual who received the disclosure and 3) to allow a specialist SMV case manager to check risk and safeguarding needs. If an *SMV Disclosure Recording Form* was not submitted, there is not a central record of the disclosure, so it would not be included in this data set.
- 2.2 This paper includes a discussion of data recorded on the centralised database and the R+S platform. It highlights actions taken or to be taken in response to these trends. Analysis of the data from the 2024/25 academic year revealed the following trends:
- 2.3 **The number of disclosures and incidents of SMV recorded increased from the previous year from 243 to 259 disclosures and 291 to 320 incidents (See Appendix A, Figures 1 and 7).** These numbers include 31 anonymous reports made on the R+S platform, a slight increase from the year before (n=27). After a sharp increase in 2022/23, followed by a dip in 2023/24, the number of disclosures now appear to be stabilising, with a steady upwards trajectory showing over time. It is notable that at the University only a minority of cases are reported anonymously which means that the majority of those who disclose are speaking with a member of staff and being signposted to the specialist SMV case managers and relevant specialist support.
- 2.4 **The type of SMV disclosed increased in the majority of SMV behaviours and most notably in disclosures of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking. There has been a notable decrease in the number of incidents relating to grooming/boundary blurring (See Appendix A, Figure 7 and Table 3).** Disclosures of domestic abuse have been consistently increasing over recent academic years and now account for 13% of all disclosed SMV behaviours. As required learning for all staff in student support roles, or those operating on an out of hours duty rota, the *SMV: Domestic Abuse and Stalking Awareness and Disclosure Training*, equips staff to recognise and respond appropriately when disclosures of domestic abuse are made.

² See DiSantis & Towl, 2025, pp 172-180 for a list of barriers to disclosures and solutions to address these.

³ The *SMV Disclosure Recording Form* is available on the [SMV Prevention & Response webpages](#). It is important to note this form can be submitted by keeping the Reporting and/or Responding Party anonymous. All staff have access to *SMV: Awareness and Disclosure Training (Level 1)* where how to respond to a disclosure and how to use the form is taught.

- 2.5 **Named reports made to the University increased from the previous year from 66 to 78 reports, of which 37 were confirmed and proceeded to investigation or alternative resolution (See Appendix A, Table 5 and Figures 10, 11, 12).** November (n=12), followed by December (n=9) and February (n=9), saw the highest number of reports. The reports that did not proceed to investigation were because 1) the Responding Party could not be identified, 2) the Reporting Party chose not to proceed with the investigation, or 3) the Responding Party's status at the time of the incident was not affiliated to the University.
- 2.6 **The gap between disclosing and reporting to the University has decreased from the previous year (See Appendix A, Figure 10 and Table 5).** During the 2024/25 academic year, 43% of those who disclosed SMV involving a Responding Party affiliated with the University (n=150) also made a report to the University under the SMV Policy (n=64), compared to 38% in 2023/24. Of these disclosures (n=150), 25% proceeded to investigation or alternative resolution in 2024/25, compared to 29% in 2023/24.
- Reporting Parties have the right to choose how to take forward a disclosure as part of our trauma-informed and survivor-led approach. They can report to the University, to the Police, to both organisations, or seek support only. Some make initial reports and then choose not to proceed with an investigation (n=9) and in other instances initial reports are made, but the university cannot proceed with an investigation for the reasons shown in Table 5 (n=32). Some do not feel able to report for the reasons highlighted in **Figure 9** – common reasons being **'I am worried the perpetrator would retaliate'** and **'I am worried that I won't be believed'**.
- 2.7 **Disclosures related to staff sexual misconduct have decreased, representing only 3% of the disclosures received (n=9), compared to 9% in the previous year (See Appendix A, Table 1).** Of these, 56% of disclosures regarding staff sexual misconduct were made by student Reporting Parties. The staff procedure⁴ notes this type of misconduct raises issues of unequal relationships, consent, and the prevention of equal access to education, opportunities and career progression. Along with non-consensual sexual conduct, staff and student close personal relationships are prohibited in the majority of cases⁵.
- 2.8 **High risk markers were present in 39% of the disclosures recorded on the database (n=228) (See Appendix A, Figure 8).** In the previous year, 48% of disclosures featured high risk markers. For anonymous reports (n=31), we are unable to assess risk. The most common high risk markers recorded were that the Responding Party was a stranger (18%) or a serial perpetrator (15%), or that the incident involved physical violence (16%), non-fatal strangulation (13%) or caused physical injury (11%). These cases highlight the importance of ensuring all SMV disclosures are shared with the specialist SMV case managers⁶ who are skilled and experienced in conducting risk assessments to ensure appropriate safeguarding and referral pathways are followed and that trauma-informed investigators conduct SMV investigations.

⁴ See 1.4 of the [Procedure for managing disclosures or reports involving allegations of staff sexual violence and misconduct \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

⁵ See 1.3, 2.2 and 2.5 of the [Close Personal Relationships between Staff & Students \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

⁶ See Prince and Franklin-Corben (2023) for a detailed discussion of the importance of specialist case managers for SMV cases.

2.9 The timescale for completing investigations into reports against students under the SMV Policy during the 2024/25 academic year was 126 calendar days, which is similar to the 127 days taken in the previous year (See Appendix A, Table 5). There are a number of factors which can impact upon the investigation timeline including:

- a) Reporting/Responding Party delays in participating in investigations due to physical/mental health reasons;
- b) Legal challenges to University procedures;
- c) Pausing an investigation when a police investigation has started;
- d) Having to delay an investigation due to a student's status changing before or during the investigation;
- e) Complexity of investigations, notably with increasing reports of incidents of domestic abuse.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education recommend that investigations, "Are concluded as quickly as possible, and normally within 90 calendar days of the start of the investigation⁷".

2.10 The intersection of alcohol/drugs and sexual violence has long been discussed, with links made between alcohol/drugs and the perpetration of sexual violence and the use of incapacitation as a perpetrator tactic (Burke et al, 2003). Data captured from disclosures made to the University in 2024/25 shows that alcohol was referenced in 31% of all disclosures made to a member of staff (n=228)⁸. This offers an anecdotal insight only. Disclosures do not routinely capture information relating to alcohol consumption of any involved party and data comes only from disclosures that have included reference to alcohol. The SMV Policy acknowledges the influence that alcohol can have on the ability of a person to provide consent⁹, and disciplinary procedures¹⁰ acknowledge that a perpetrator's use of alcohol may be considered as an aggravating factor.

University Action in Response to these trends

2.11 The trends identified throughout this paper relate to the academic year 2024/25. The University has already taken steps during 2025/26 to address the trends observed and work continues as described below.

2.12 The revised Sexual Misconduct and Violence Policy came into effect on 1 August 2025. It introduces strengthened definitions of consent and sexual misconduct and sets clear expectations for the conduct of staff, students, and visitors. The policy was implemented alongside a revised Non-Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Procedure, which now provides a single procedure for investigating all forms of student misconduct. Under the new procedure, misconduct is no longer categorised; instead, investigators determine if the allegations are upheld and breaches of policy may be found and sanctioned by an Authorised University Officer (AUO) or Senate Discipline Committee (SDC) as appropriate. Reports of sexual misconduct made to the University

⁷ See OIAHE (2018) [Good Practice Framework: Disciplinary procedures](#)

⁸ Anonymous reports submitted on the Report & Support platform do not allow free text to provide such information and have not been included.

⁹ See 4.5.3 [Sexual Misconduct & Violence Policy](#)

¹⁰ See 11.4 [Non Academic Misconduct Procedure](#).

since August 2025 were investigated under the revised procedure, and Appendix A, Table 5 reflects investigation outcomes from cases considered under both the previous and revised procedure.

- 2.13 **In response to the increasing number of disclosures and reports of domestic abuse, a separate Domestic Abuse Policy will be developed to operate alongside the SMV Policy.** While sexual misconduct and domestic abuse can be interconnected, they involve distinct behaviours, risk factors, and safeguarding considerations. Establishing two standalone policies will enable the University to articulate clearer definitions and provide tailored support pathways that reflect the specific dynamics of each form of harm. This approach is intended to improve clarity and enhance confidence amongst students, staff, and visitors seeking information or making disclosures.

- 2.14 **The Sexual Misconduct and Violence Management Group (SMVMG) is Chaired by the Director of Student Experience and reports to the University Executive Committee (UEC). The SMVMG committed to delivering a University wide campaign aimed at increasing awareness of sexual misconduct and encouraging students to disclose and/or report incidents.**

The campaign, 'it's never just'¹¹ was developed in collaboration with the Students' Union and shaped through consultation with students and staff who directly informed the campaign design, messaging and delivery. This is the first University wide sexual misconduct focussed campaign since 2016 and is intended to increase awareness and directly promote disclosures and reports of sexual misconduct.

The first phase of the campaign launched in February 2026, with messaging displayed around campus via posters, digital displays and student and staff led pop up campaign stands. The physical materials were complimented by a strong social media presence, generating over 54,000 views in the initial three weeks from launch.

The campaign is designed as a long term, phased campaign, delivered throughout the academic year. Planning for the next phase is underway and scheduled to take place post exam period, in June.

- 2.15 **In 2024/25 the in-person training offerings on the SMV: Prevention and Response Training Programme for staff (see Appendix D) became required learning for all staff members in a dedicated student support role.** This requires staff in those roles to attend *Awareness & Disclosure Training (Level 1)*, *Disclosure & Support Training (Level 2)* and *Domestic Abuse and Stalking Awareness & Disclosure Training*, every 3 years. Additionally, during 2025/26, *Awareness & Disclosure Training (Level 1)* became required learning for Residential Services Assistants (RSAs). The 'Level 1' training and *Domestic Abuse and Stalking Awareness & Disclosure Training* is now also required for those operating on the out of hours duty rota. Staff training is a key principle in responding appropriately to disclosures of sexual violence and the full training programme remains open to all members of staff, regardless of their role.

- 2.16 **Strategic Context.** The strategic vision set by the Sexual Violence Task Force remains unchanged – for Durham to be “*a University community where survivors are supported while we strive to eliminate sexual violence.*” The Sexual Misconduct and Violence

¹¹ See 'it's never just' [campaign webpages](#).

Management Group is responsible for reviewing and monitoring the University's approach to issues of SMV, including evaluation and review of policy, procedures, and training, and assurance reporting. Preventing and responding to SMV helps ensure that staff and students are treated equally, fairly and with respect and aims to provide students with a wider student experience that is as good as any in the world by ensuring students can access their studies free from harassment, discrimination and violence.

- 2.17 **The Office for Students (2025) conducted a Sexual Misconduct Survey with final year undergraduate students in England.** Open to those who had completed the National Student Survey (NSS), it represents one of the largest sector-wide attempts to gather prevalence data on the scale of sexual misconduct in higher education, where limited data had previously existed. The findings indicated that almost 25% of students had experienced sexual harassment since starting university, and over 14% had been sexually assaulted. Most incidents were not reported.

While the survey is a welcome step towards understanding the higher education landscape, both the overall dataset and institutional level results have limitations. The overall response rate was 12.1%, and the dataset for Durham comprised fewer than 1000 responses, making it difficult to treat as fully representative of the student population. Institutional demographics can also vary considerably, and without suitable contextual or comparative data, meaningful analysis is constrained. Repeating the survey in future years would support the development of comparative datasets and enable more reliable conclusions to be drawn.

- 2.18 **Financial & Resource Implications:** Based on the identified trends it is recommended that the University continues to prioritise and invest in prevention focused initiatives. SMV and other forms of gender-based violence are costly to our community in impact on the individual (emotional, psychological, physical and practical effects), the wider University community, and staff resource and time. It is a much better investment to focus on prevention to prevent harm from being caused than to focus primarily on response. It is noted that resource for responding to SMV and engaging in culture change have been prioritised despite the current financial challenges. Investigations into reports of potential breaches of the SMV Policy require staff time and expertise for specialist case management, risk assessment, support for Reporting and Responding Parties, and trauma-informed investigations and disciplinary proceedings.
- 2.19 **Risk:** SMV is currently identified as a risk factor on the Strategic Risk Register under SR08 Student Wellbeing, although it is important to note this is not a student only issue. The University has dedicated resource to prevention and response initiatives since the findings of the Sexual Violence Task Force in 2015/16. There is still much to be done to address SMV within the University community. There is always risk of resistance to prevention and response initiatives for SMV (e.g. denial, inaction, repression, appeasement) at the individual and organisational level.
- 2.20 **Legal, Regulatory, Policy or OfS Compliance:** The Office for Students [OfS] *Condition E6: Harassment & Sexual Misconduct* took effect from 1 August 2025 and requires providers to protect students from harassment and sexual misconduct. The condition covers a number of core areas including:

- Providing clear and accessible information on reporting routes, policies and procedures, and to raise awareness of these within the University community.
- Acting upon and communicating the steps the University is taking to make a significant and credible difference in this area.
- Using clear definitions in relation to harassment and sexual misconduct.
- Ensuring sufficient capacity and resource to meet the condition.
- Providing appropriate training to students and staff.
- Ensuring support is available to those subjected to behaviours.
- Protecting students from conflicts of interest and abuse of power.
- Banning the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements.
- Considerations of freedom of speech.

A working group was tasked to ensure compliance ahead of the condition taking effect in August. Changes were implemented and information was collated into a single comprehensive source of information¹². As an ongoing condition of registration, internal policies, procedures and working practices will remain under regular review to ensure ongoing compliance.

2.21 The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework outlines core principles and operational guidance for higher education providers in handling and considering complaints. During the 2025/26 academic year, the OIA consulted on a draft new section of the framework: *Handling reports of harassment and sexual misconduct*. The development of sector wide guidance specifically addressing sexual misconduct is welcomed, and the University made a comprehensive response to the draft in February 2026. The final version of the guidance is expected to be published later this year.

3. Consultation

3.1 The data for this paper was gathered from the following areas of the University: the Student Conduct Office (primary source), the Counselling and Mental Health Service, and the Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 The reported data of disclosures and reports made by students and employees of any form of SMV will continue to be collected, monitored and analysed on an annual basis to inform university-wide prevention and response initiatives.
- 4.2 This report in full will be shared with Audit and Risk Committee, Senate, and Council for assurance purposes in line with guidance set by the Office for Students (2025).

¹² Information relating to harassment and sexual misconduct can be found on the publicly accessible [Student Conduct Office webpages](#).

Appendix A

Disclosures and Reports of Sexual Misconduct and Violence: Data and Discussion

This appendix provides data on disclosures and reports of sexual misconduct and violence (SMV) and related policy breaches as defined in section 4 of the *Sexual Misconduct and Violence Policy*¹³ (SMV Policy) received during the 2024/25 academic year.¹⁴ Data from previous academic years will be included for comparison purposes. This appendix is organised to consider data regarding 1) disclosures and anonymous reports, 2) formal reports, and 3) support. This information will continue to be made publicly available to respond to Freedom of Information requests and for transparency purposes for the University community as agreed by the UEC in December 2019.

This is 'reported' data in comparison to 'prevalence' data as it has been recorded through disclosures and reports, rather than gathered through a survey. Therefore, it may not represent the prevalence of SMV impacting the University community. At a national level sexual violence continues to be underreported based on expected rates of SMV within higher education from statistical prevalence studies conducted in the UK and internationally.

The Office for Students has published the findings of a Sexual Misconduct Survey undertaken in England to measure the extent of SMV in higher education (OfS, 2025)¹⁵. The survey found that almost 25% of respondents had experienced at least one type of sexual harassment since being a university student, with 14% being subjected to unwanted sexual contact. Reporting and support seeking amongst survivors was low.

1. Disclosures & Anonymous Reports

- 1.1. This section presents information on disclosures and anonymous reports made by students and employees regarding incidents that occurred whilst they were members of the University community regardless of location and includes incidents that have occurred during and outside of University business.
- 1.2. Disclosures and reports are separate actions under the SMV Policy. A disclosure involves an individual choosing to tell anyone who is part of the University community about their experience of SMV. Anonymous reports are similar in that action cannot be taken from an anonymous report. A named or formal report is the sharing of information with a staff member of the University regarding an incident of SMV experienced by that individual for the purposes of initiating the investigation process by the University and/or Police.
- 1.3. Staff who receive a disclosure of SMV that occurred whilst the Reporting Party was a student or employee are required to record the disclosure on the *SMV Disclosure Recording Form* and submit this to the SMV Prevention and Response Manager for trend monitoring purposes either as a named or anonymous disclosure as directed by the Reporting Party. If this was not completed; the disclosure data will not be included in this paper as centrally it was not recorded. Disclosures can be received by any member of staff. Anonymous reports are submitted on the Report + Support (R+S) platform.

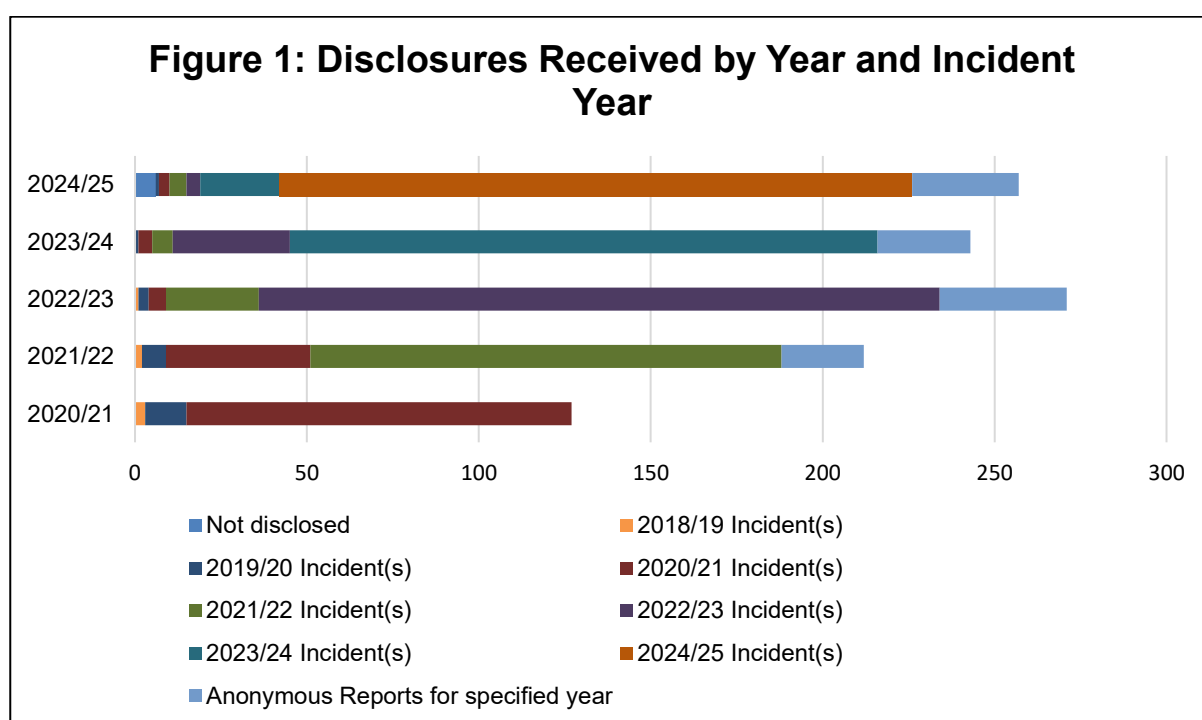
¹³ To access the *Sexual Misconduct and Violence Policy* and related procedures, please see: www.dur.ac.uk/sexualviolence/policies

¹⁴ Under section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (personal data) the University cannot release information that may identify individuals. Therefore, figures which total fewer than five will be stated as '<5' / less than 5.

¹⁵ The Sexual Misconduct Survey results can be found in full at [Sexual misconduct survey 2025 - analysis of results - Office for Students](#).

- 1.4. **Number of Disclosures:** The Student Conduct Office recorded **259 disclosures** during the 2024/25 academic year, including 31 anonymous reports made on the R+S platform. This has increased from the previous year of 243 disclosures (including 27 anonymous reports).
- 1.5. There continues to be some delay in disclosures with some incidents being disclosed years later. From a trauma-informed approach, it is acknowledged that delayed reporting is expected due to trauma responses and internal and external barriers to disclosure (Humphreys and Towl, 2020).

Figure 1 illustrates when the disclosure was received compared to when the incident occurred. Anonymous reports are also included in this figure.



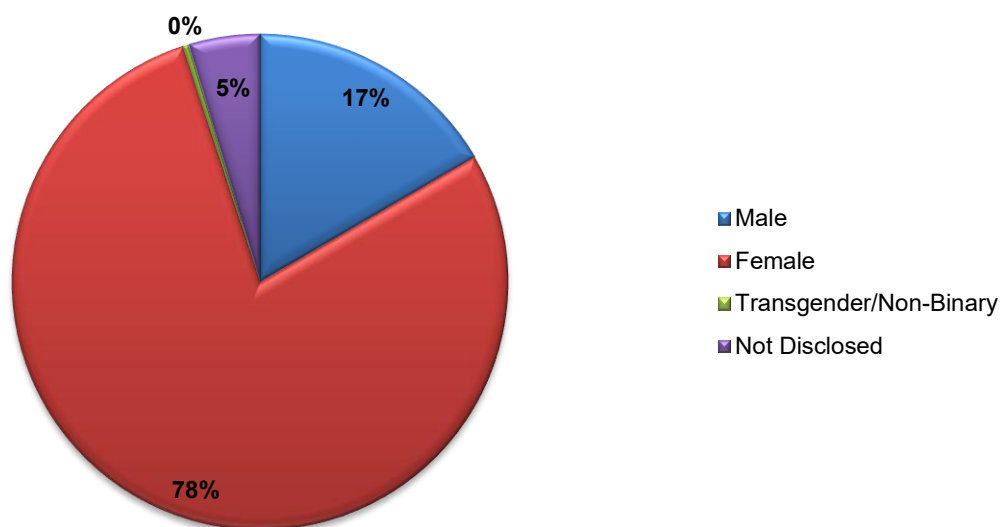
- 1.6. **Demographics:** During the 2024/25 academic year, the disclosures received were most often from undergraduate women Reporting Parties. The Responding Parties were most often undergraduate men. This trend has been observed annually. **Table 1** and **2** provide details of the relationship to the University for individuals involved in disclosures and anonymous reports and their identified gender.

Table 1. Affiliation of Reporting Parties and Responding Parties to the University for incidents disclosed or anonymously reported during the 2024/25 Academic Year				
Affiliation to Durham University	Reporting Party		Responding Party	
Undergraduate	206	80%	123	48%
Year 1	73		34	
Year 2	41		17	
Year 3	56		29	
Year 4	10		5	
Year Unknown	26		38	
Postgraduate	26	10%	18	7%
PG Taught	14		15	
PG Research	9		<5	
Group of Students*	0	0%	<5	0%
Staff or Contracted Employee	12	5%	9	3%
Not Affiliated with Durham University	<5	1%	43	17%
Anonymous/Unknown	11	4%	65	25%
Total	259		259	
*Number of individuals in groups is unknown.				

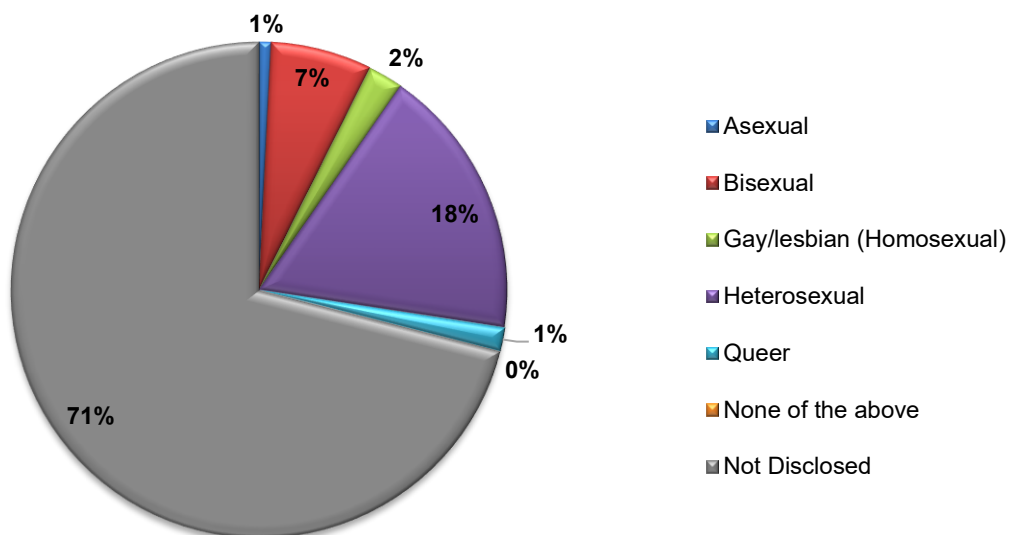
Table 2. Gender of Reporting Parties and Responding Parties in incidents disclosed or anonymously reported during the 2024/25 Academic Year				
Gender	Reporting Party		Responding Party	
Woman	203	78%	24	9%
Man	43	17%	170	66%
Non-Binary/Transgender	<5	0%	<5	0%
Anonymous/Unknown*	12	5%	64	25%
Total	259		259	
*Anonymous or unknown includes Groups in the Responding Party category; exact number of individuals unknown.				

- 1.7. **Additional demographics about the Reporting Party** are currently recorded for anonymous reports and formal reports only. The following information displayed in **Figures 2 to 6** refers to the gender, sexual identity, race/ethnicity, disability status, and faith/belief of the Reporting Parties identified. For race/ethnicity and faith/belief, only those recorded are shown in the below charts (e.g., Buddhist is not listed as no one identified as Buddhist).
- 1.8. Please note the demographic questions are optional and not available for disclosures. Therefore, in the below data for many questions 'Not Disclosed' is the highest percentage of the known data. Where the information was disclosed, 78% of Reporting Parties identified as women, 18% identified as heterosexual, 20% identified as White British, 25% reported they did not have a disability, and 16% reported having no religion, which were the next highest percentage after not disclosed.

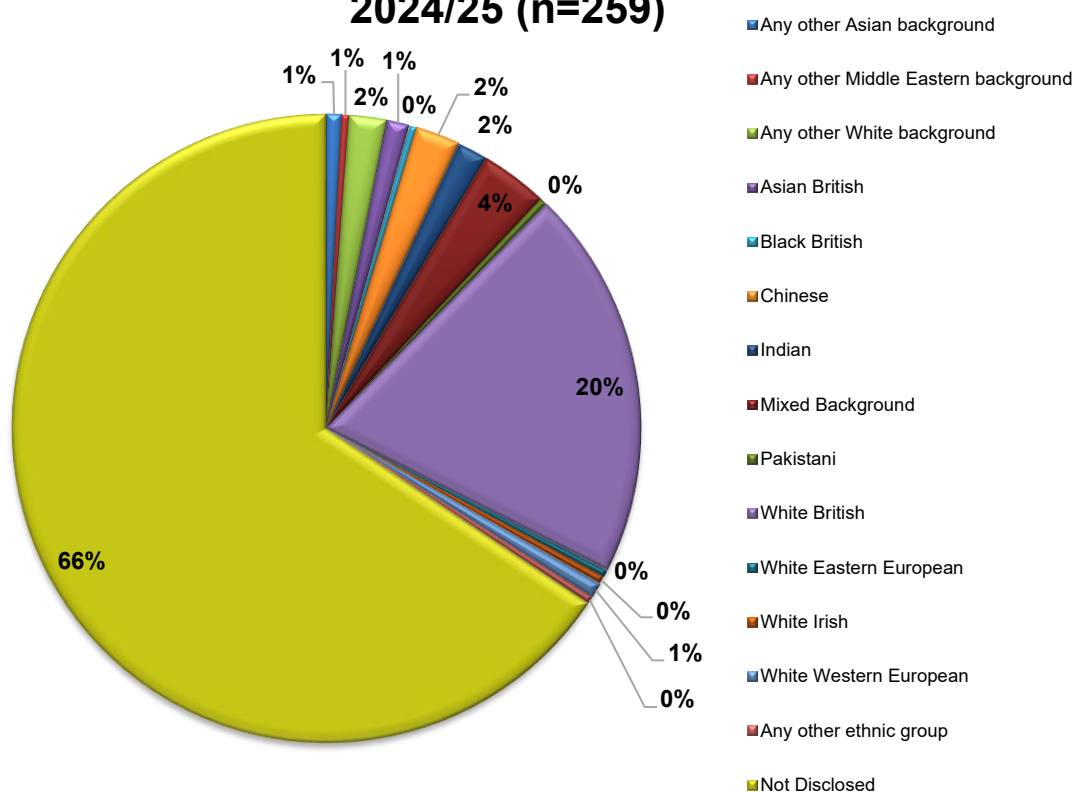
**Figure 2: Gender of Reporting Party 2024/25
(n=259)**



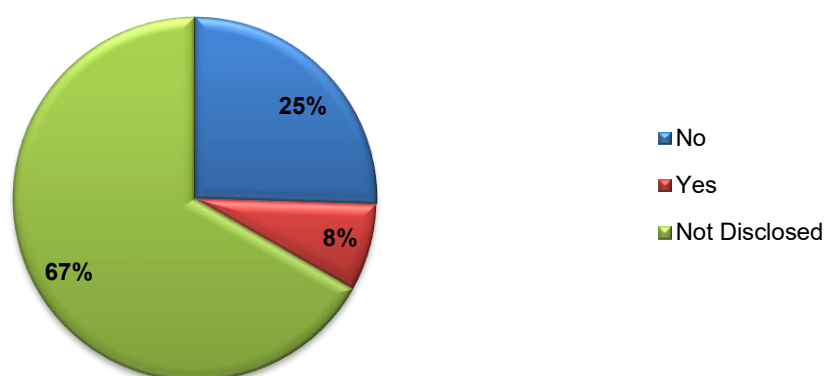
**Figure 3: Sexual Identity of Reporting Party
2024/25 (n=259)**



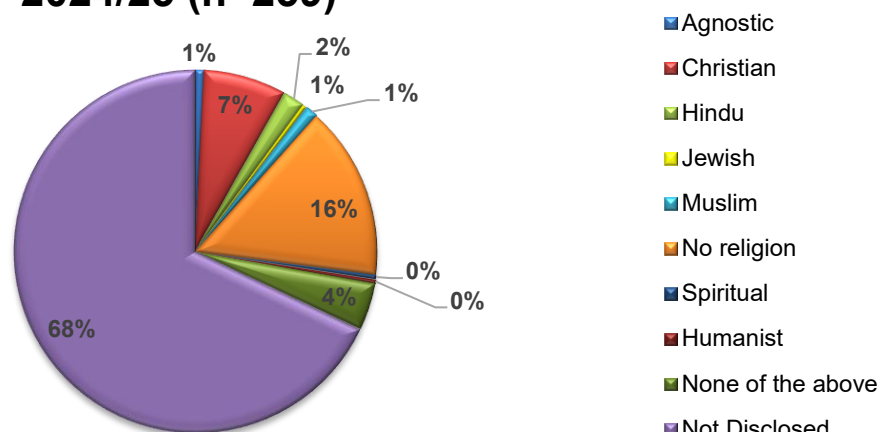
**Figure 4: Race/Ethnicity of Reporting Party
2024/25 (n=259)**



**Figure 5: Disability Status of Reporting Party
2024/25 (n=259)**



**Figure 6: Faith/Belief of Reporting Party
2024/25 (n=259)**



- 1.9. **Type of Misconduct and Number of Incidents:** 'Sexual misconduct and violence' is an umbrella term covering a broad range of non-consensual conduct of a sexual nature and forms of gender-based violence impacting the University community. Since 2014/15, the incidents disclosed have most often been behaviours which might also constitute a criminal offence. Disclosures often include information on multiple incidents including more than one type of SMV (e.g., sexual assault and stalking). During the 2024/25 academic year, **320 incidents of SMV were recorded from the 259 disclosures made to the University**. Since the University started centrally recording SMV disclosures during the 2014/15 academic year, there have been 1,509 disclosures which included 1,830 incidents of SMV. **Figure 7** and **Table 3** show the types of SMV disclosed to the University. Table 3 also shows the numerical difference in types of SMV disclosed compared to the 2023/24 academic year.
- 1.10. It is important to note that we record disclosures of incidents that have occurred whilst the individual is a current student or employee at the University; however, the incident itself may be unrelated to the University if the perpetrator is not affiliated to the University. Where the identity of the Responding Party has been shared with the University, 43 or 17% were not affiliated to the University. We choose to record these incidents too to understand how SMV is impacting our students and employees which can help direct what support mechanisms the University can provide as we provide support to victim-survivors regardless of the status of the Responding Party.

**Figure 7: Type of SMV Disclosed 2024/25
(n=320)**

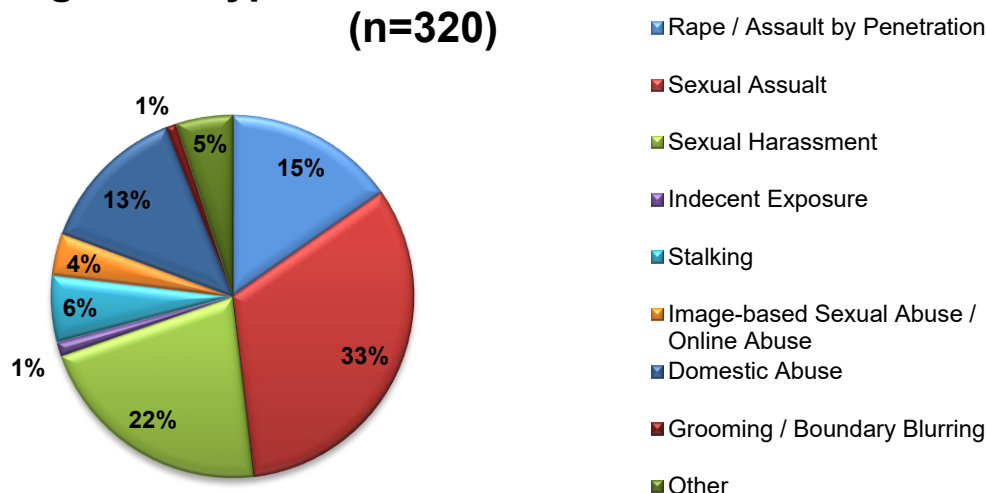
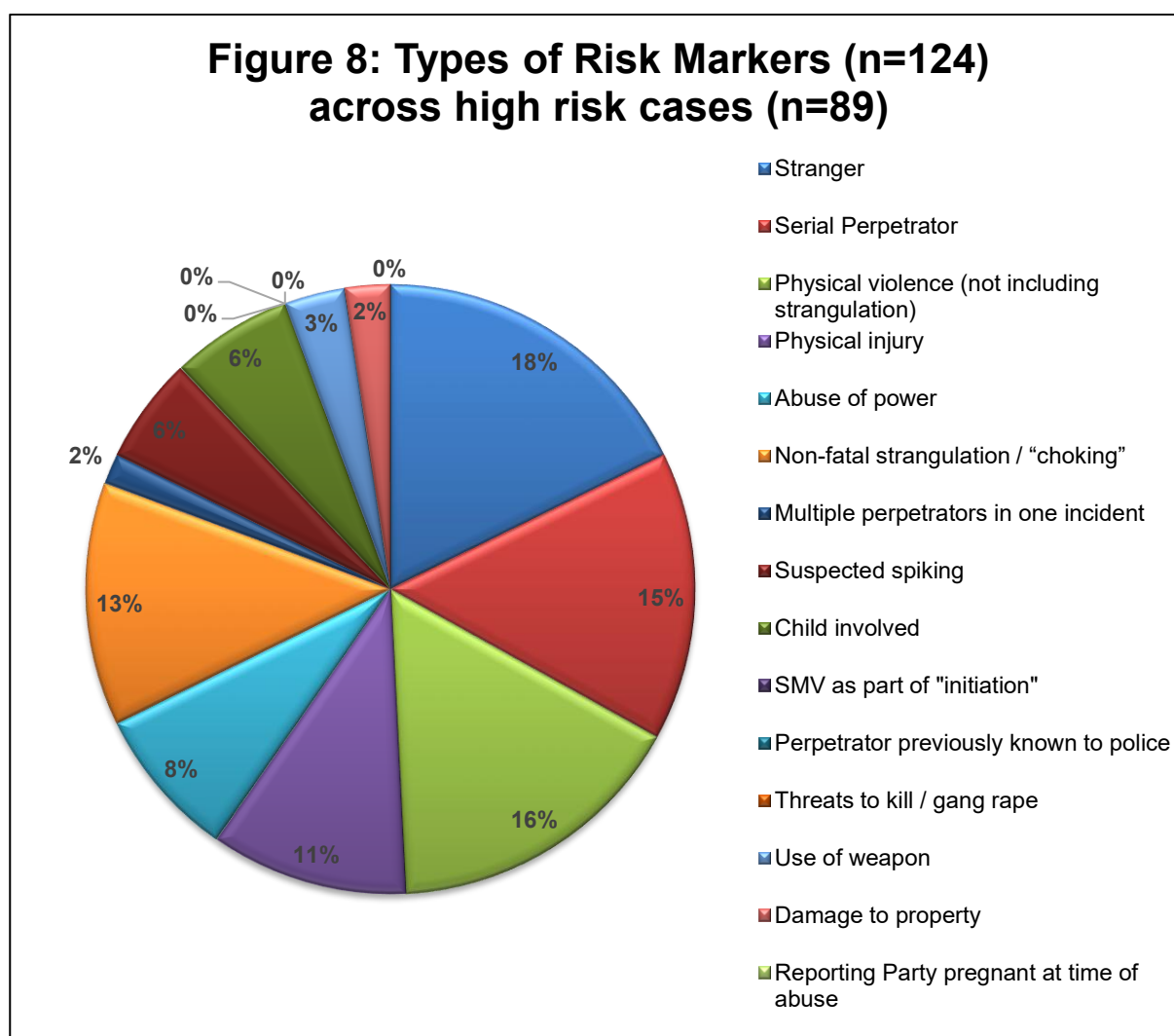


Table 3. Type of SMV disclosed or anonymously reported to the University as defined* under the SMV Policy during the 2024/25 Academic Year† compared to the previous year (+/-/~)

SMV Category / Description	TOTAL
Rape / Assault by Penetration / (Attempts) / <i>Engaging, or attempting to engage in a sexual act with another individual without consent</i>	49 (-2)
Sexual Assault / <i>Sexually touching another person without their consent</i>	105 (+13)
Sexual Harassment / <i>Conduct of a sexual nature which creates (or could create) an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for others including making unwanted remarks of a sexual nature</i>	69 (+4)
Indecent Exposure / <i>Inappropriately showing sexual organs to another person</i>	4 (+2)
Stalking / <i>Repeatedly following another person without good reason (including all forms, e.g., Cyberstalking)</i>	19 (+7)
Image-based Sexual Abuse† / <i>Recording and/or sharing intimate images or recordings of another person without their consent</i>	12 (+4)
Domestic Abuse / <i>Domestic abuse and coercive or controlling behaviour is defined as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can include, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and/or emotional abuse.</i>	43 (+15)
Grooming / Boundary Blurring / <i>misuses of power, grooming, sexual invitations, comments and non-verbal communication with sexual content or overtones, creation of inappropriate sexual atmosphere, and promised resources in exchange for sexual interaction.</i>	3 (-11)
Other / <i>e.g., Spiking, hazing/initiations, sexually motivated burglary</i>	16 (-3)
Total	320 (+29)

*Examples of criminal offence labels are used as in some cases the incidents were reported to the Police.
†This category includes other related forms on technology facilitated SMV, e.g., online sexual misconduct.

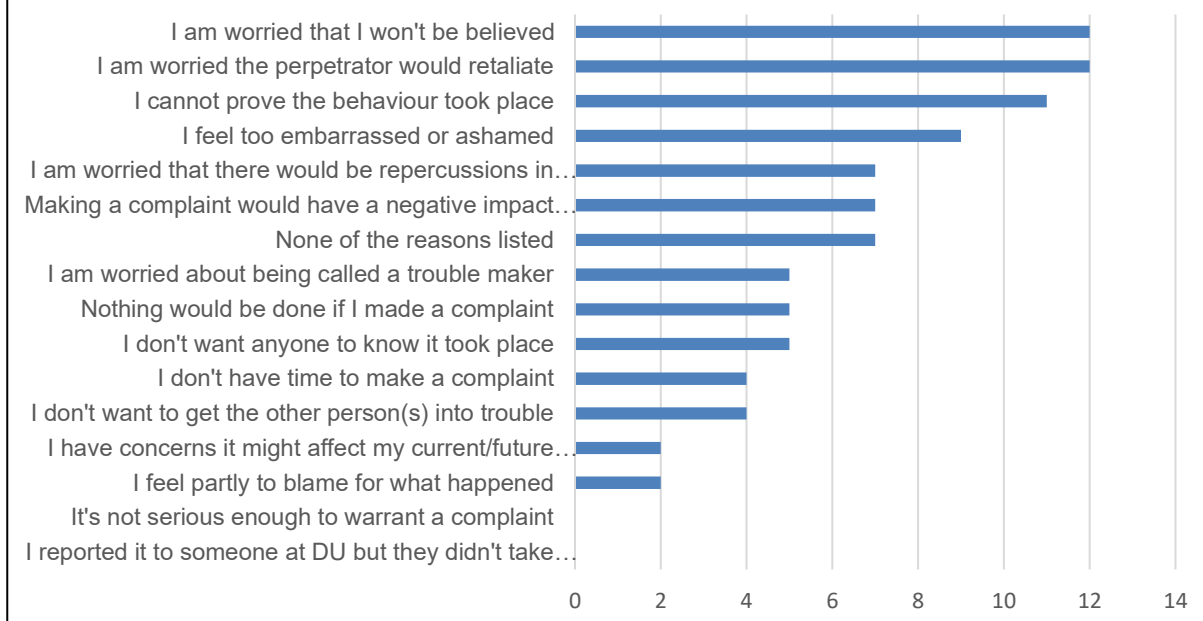
- 1.11. In the 2019/20 academic year, we began to record high risk markers identified in disclosures and/or through risk assessments conducted with Reporting Parties. During the 2024/25 academic year, we identified 89 cases that included high risk markers which represents 39% of the disclosures (n=228) or 34% of all known incidents (disclosures and anonymous reports, n=259). For anonymous reports, we are unable to identify any risk markers as there are no questions within the anonymous reporting form that would identify this. Of the 89 cases where risk markers were identified, there were 124 different risk markers recorded as shown in **Figure 8**. These cases highlight the importance of having specialist trauma-informed case managers and investigators responding to these cases.



- 1.12. **Figure 9** showing data from the R+S platform presents reasons why a victim-survivor chose only to make an anonymous report. It should be noted that anonymous reports have no free-text option¹⁶, so there is no information that can be gathered about the incident, Responding Party, potential risk, or any other information that the University may be able to use to mitigate risk within the community. Reporting Parties can choose multiple reasons why they have made an anonymous report.

¹⁶ Most Higher Education Institutions offer a free-text section in their anonymous reporting form on the Report + Support tool, e.g. see the University of York's experience of using free-text boxes (Maher, 2023).

Figure 9: Reasons (n=92) for Anonymous Reports (n=31) 2024/25

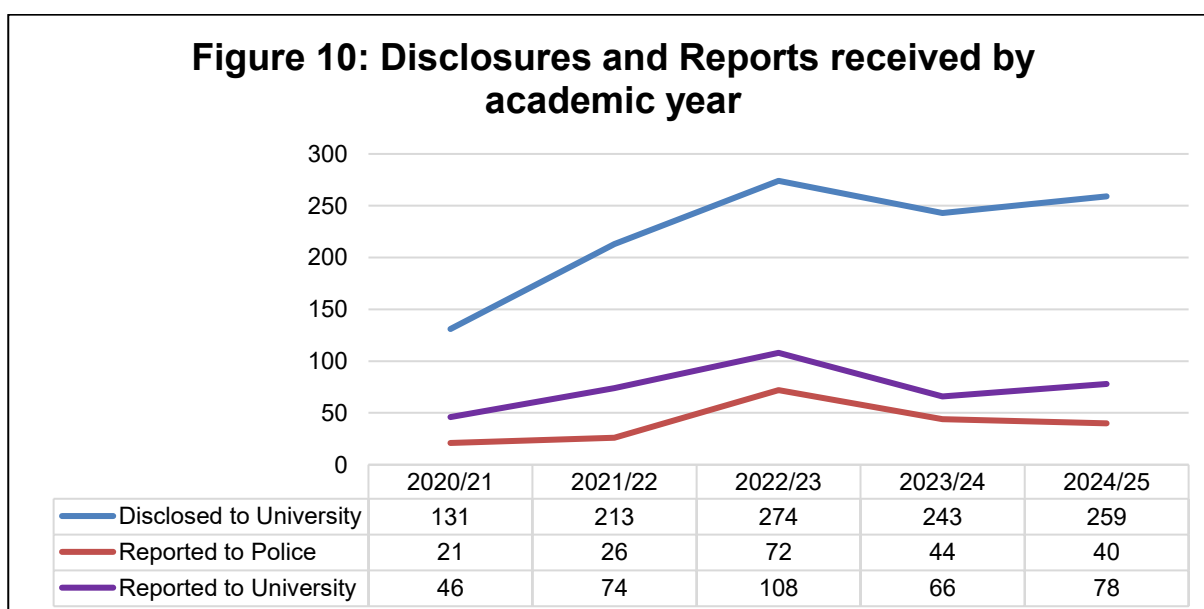


- 1.13. For the second consecutive academic year, **'I am worried that I won't be believed'** is one of the two most common reason victim-survivors chose to make an anonymous report. The fear of not being believed is a common barrier to disclosing an incident of sexual misconduct. The *SMV: Prevention & Response Training Programmes* teach responders to B-L-O-G (Believe, Listen, Offer Options and resources and Get support for yourself). The University wide SMV awareness campaign, 'it's never just', directly addressed the fear of not being believed in the core campaign messaging which was launched in February 2026. By creating a culture where victim-survivors are believed, barriers to disclosing and reduced, victim-survivors are more likely to come forward and seek support and reporting options and perpetrators may fear getting caught. Believing a victim-survivor can also have a positive impact upon their recovery and help seeking behaviours¹⁷.
- 1.14. During the 2024/25 academic year, **'I am worried the perpetrator would retaliate'** joined the top of the reasons for not making a named report which in the previous year (23/24) was listed 3rd. Section 4.5 of the SMV Policy highlights that retaliation is not tolerated, and Responding Parties are informed of this at the time they are notified of an investigation. However, because the University can only warn Responding Parties not to retaliate and respond if they do, this may not be enough to mitigate Reporting Parties' fear of retaliation.
- 1.15. The University has a clear principle in the SMV Policy that we will respect the right of the individual disclosing an experience to choose how to take forward a Disclosure (2.1.4). However, it is very important to understand why students and staff choose not to report as this may help understand barriers to disclosing as well. In the SMV: Awareness and Disclosure Training (Level 1) and SMV: Disclosure and Awareness Training (Level 2) for staff, learners identify barriers to disclosures and consider ways to remove barriers in their local areas of the university for our diverse community of students and staff.

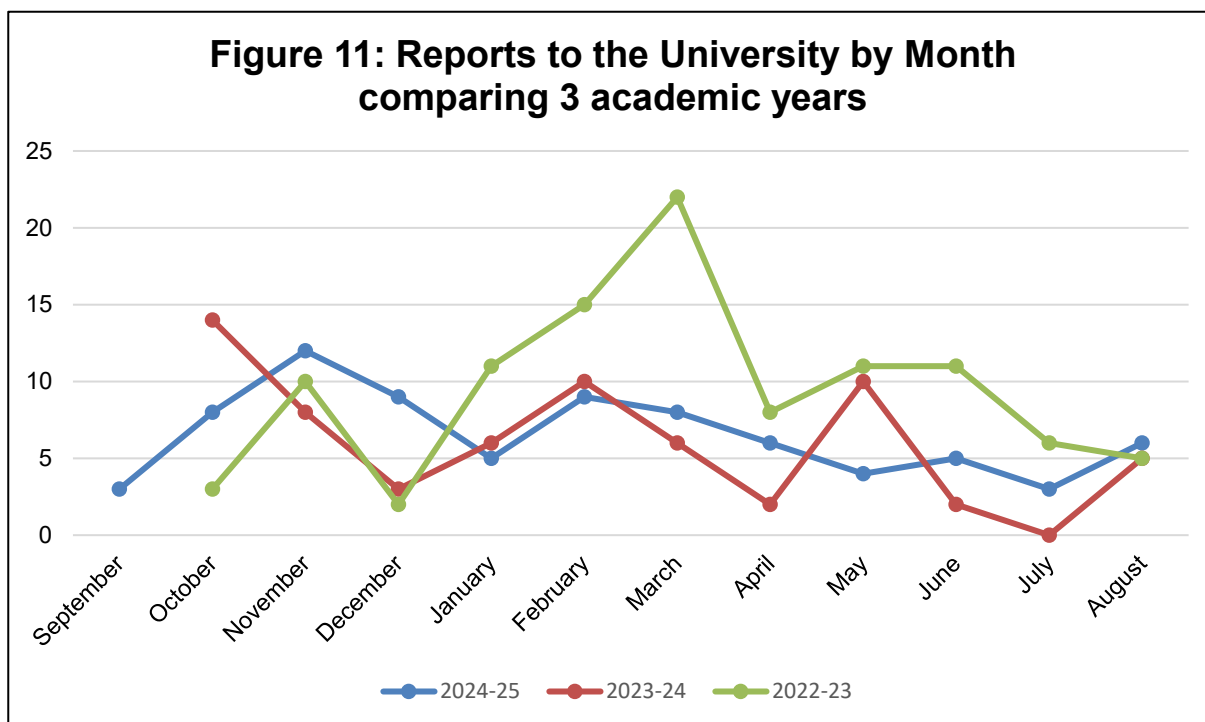
¹⁷ DiSantis & Towl, 2025, pp 183-185.

2. Formal Reports

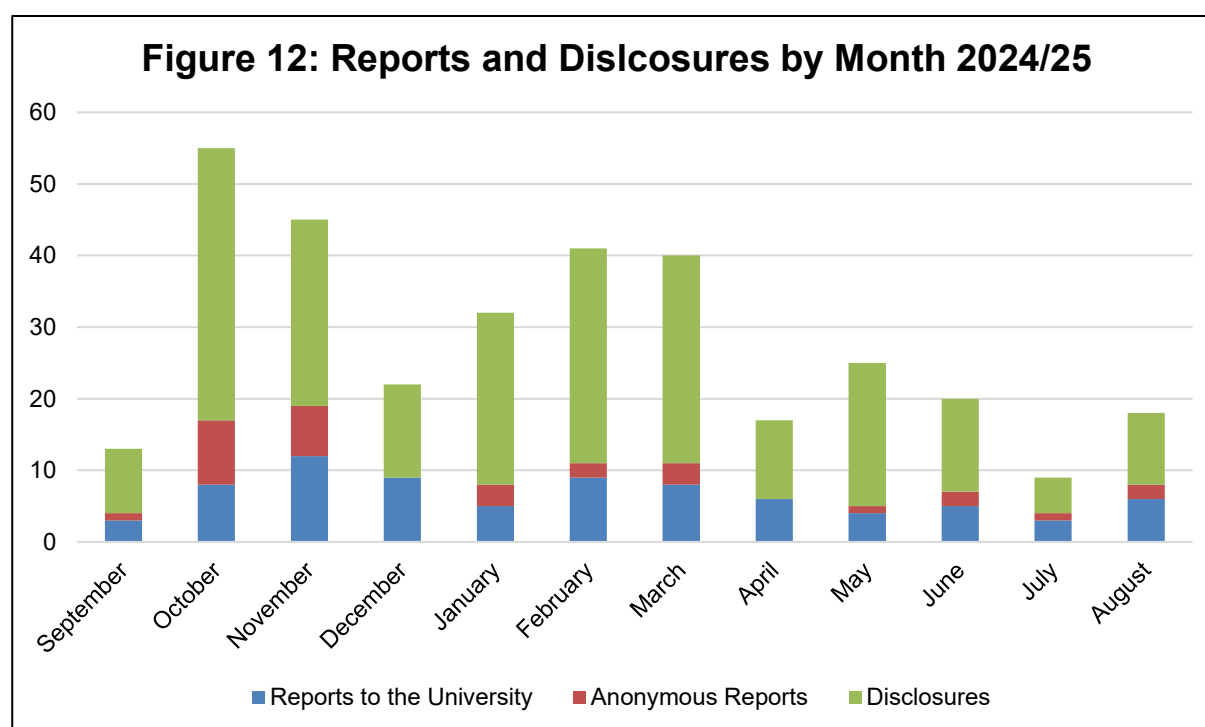
- 2.1. This section provides information on formal **reports** made to the University and/or Police and the actions the University took. A report is the sharing of information with a staff member of the University regarding an incident experienced by that individual for the purposes of initiating the investigation process by the University, as set out in the SMV Policy (different from Disclosure and anonymous reports).
- 2.2. From 2024/25, disclosures and reports for the academic year were recorded from 1 September until 31 August. This better reflects the schedule of students arriving at, or returning to University in September, in preparation for the Welcome and Orientation period. Data for 2023/24 is therefore only presented until August.
- 2.3. **Figure 10** illustrates how many disclosures and reports are made annually comparing the last 5 years. Broadly, there has been a sustained increase in the number of disclosures and reports made to the University over the five-year period. A sharp rise in 2022/23, followed by a dip in 2023/24, appears to have stabilised into a renewed upward trajectory in 2024/25



- 2.4. As shown in **Figure 10**, there continues to be a significant gap between disclosures and reports made to the Police and/or University. During the 2024/25 academic year, 43% of those who disclosed SMV involving a Responding Party affiliated with the University (n=150) also made a report to the University under the SMV Policy (n=64), compared to 38% in 2023/24. Of these disclosures (n=150), 25% proceed to investigation or alternative resolution in 2024/25, compared to 29% in 2023/24.
- 2.5. **Figure 11** illustrates formal reports made to the University by month comparing the last three years. The aim of tracking this data is to try to predict when reports may be received. During the 2024/25 academic year, November (n=12) followed by December and February (n=9) saw the highest number of reports. The data illustrates clear termly patterns, with consistent reporting peaks in November and February, and lower reporting from July – September during the vacation period.



2.6. **Figure 12** shows how many disclosures, anonymous reports, and named reports the University received during the 2024/25 academic year by month. This is information the Student Conduct Office is tracking as it helps understand busy periods for the team to respond to disclosures and reports. Unfortunately, the data for the month of incidents of SMV is not as easily tracked as disclosures may include multiple incidents spanning long periods of time or the date may not be disclosed at all.



2.7. **Table 4** shows that most incidents reported involve students only.

Table 4. Reports made to the University under the SMV Policy during the 2024/25 Academic Year*.													
Academic Year	Reporting Party	Student			Student			Staff			Staff		
	Responding Party	Student			Staff			Student			Staff		
2024-2025	Gender	M	W	NB	M	W	NB	M	W	NB	M	W	NB
	RP	13	40	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	0
	RSP	45	8	0	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	0	0
TOTAL		53			<5			<5			<5		
Total reports to the University = 78													
*Table includes reports where both parties are identified as members of the University community.													
<u>Key</u> RP – Reporting Party, individual reporting they were subjected to SMV RSP – Responding Party, individual reported to have committed the SMV M – Man W – Woman NB – Non-binary/Trans													

2.8. **Table 5** provides the specific data on the University action following a report to the University and/or Police.

Table 5. University Action Following Formal Reports made during the 2024/25 Academic Year	
Formal Reports*	
Reports made to the University	78
Confirmed Reports Investigated by the Student Conduct Office/Human Resources under the SMV Policy, includes cases in progress	32
Confirmed Reports Investigated by the Student Conduct Office/Human Resources under a different University Policy	<5
Unconfirmed reports that did not proceed to investigation	9
Alternative measures to investigation, e.g., No Contact Arrangement	<5
Reports that could not proceed to investigation, e.g., the Responding Party could not be identified, the Responding Party was not affiliated to the University, or the investigation is on hold pending the criminal justice outcome	32
Reports made to the Police	40
Responding Party was affiliated with Durham University	24
Responding Party was not affiliated with Durham University or not identified	16
Precautionary Measures[†] Imposed during a Police and/or University Investigation (n=70)	
Full Suspension	9
Partial Suspension	31
No Contact Arrangement ^{††}	11
Staff Suspension	0
No Precautionary Measure Required	19
Other	0
Investigation Outcomes following reports made under the SMV Policy	
No Further Action	10
Non-major breach of SMV Policy = Category 1 Discipline Offence	6

Major breach of SMV Policy referred to Senate Discipline Committee as a potential Category 2 Discipline Offence	9
Referred to HR for Investigation	0
Allegations upheld and further action required [#]	<5
Student Conduct Office Investigation Ongoing	0
Responding Party withdrew prior to completion of investigation/disciplinary procedure	<5
Reporting Party withdrew report	<5
Student Conduct Office [§] Average Length of Time in Calendar Days from Confirmed Report to Investigation Outcome	126 days
Discipline Outcomes and Sanctions for Students	
Expulsion	<5
Exclusion for 1 year	0
Other Sanction (e.g., No Contact Order, Formal Reprimand, Requirement to Change College Membership, etc.)	15
Investigation found a major breach of the SMV Policy, Discipline hearing dismissed the case	0
Responding Party withdrew prior to Discipline hearing	<5
Pending	0
*Reporting Parties have the option to report incidents to the University, Police, both or to seek support only. Where incidents are reported to the Police, the University will normally suspend any internal investigation whilst the criminal justice process is conducted. †The numbers represent actions taken per report. However, in cases where multiple reports are made against one Responding Party, the actual number may be lower, e.g., in 23 cases partial suspensions were used; however, only 20 partial suspensions were issued. †† No Contact Arrangements are normally the minimum precautionary measure used for all investigations under the SMV Policy. Therefore, it is only noted here if it was used on its own and not with a further precautionary measure(s), e.g. partial suspension, as normal practice. §The Student Conduct Office does not hold record of the length of time for investigations conducted by Human Resources. # Reports made after 1 August 2025 were investigated under the Non-Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Procedures, which determines whether the allegations are upheld. The NAMDP no longer categorises misconduct offences.	

3. Support

The Rape & Sexual Abuse Counselling Service (RSACC) is available for students and staff of all genders who are Reporting Parties only. During the 2024/25 academic year, RSACC provided specialist counselling to 49 University clients. This is a decrease from the previous year when RSACC provided specialist counselling to 73 University clients. On average, clients who engaged in the service received 12 sessions of the 20 sessions available to them. This data does not include students who may engage in the service by accessing it directly through RSACC externally rather than using the internal RSACC provision, or staff members who self-refer to the service. At this time there are 6 University clients on the waiting list for the RSACC service delivered within the CMHS.

- 3.1. **The Counselling and Mental Health Service (CMHS)** is available to support Reporting and Responding Parties during an investigation. A representative from CMHS participates in each student Initial Review Meeting to ensure that support for the mental health of each party involved in a formal report to the Police and/or University is considered. In addition, any student in a formal case may request an optional 30-minute counselling appointment following an investigation/discipline outcome notification, to process the outcome.

- 3.2. **College Student Support Offices** provide general support for students involved in internal and/or external investigations. A dedicated support contact within the College is assigned to support the student through the investigation and support is always separated, meaning one employee would not support the Reporting and Responding Parties in the same case. Most often, support is provided by an Assistant Principal or Assistant Student Support Officer, however, depending on the support needs of a case, the Vice-Principal or Principal may also be assigned to support a student in their College. In some cases where both parties are members of the same College, the support may be provided by staff in another College as appropriate.
- 3.3. **Student Support Officers and Managers** within the academic departments are also trained to respond to disclosures of SMV and to work with College Student Support Offices and the Student Conduct Office to ensure students are supported following disclosures and/or reports and during investigations.
- 3.4. The figures above represent the numbers of cases centrally recorded by the Student Conduct Office. The numbers alone do not represent the complexity of the individual cases and the amount of resource required to support Reporting Parties, Responding Parties and witnesses through internal and/or external investigation proceedings and beyond or in lieu of formal processes.
- 3.5. This data only reflects disclosures related to SMV which occurred while students/employees were members of the University community regardless of the location of the incident. This data does not reflect students and staff dealing with historic sexual violence and abuse and other forms of gender-based violence who also require/seek support whilst they are students or employees of Durham University.

Appendix B

References and New Sector Guidance

Along with references made in the paper, this is a list of key publications that focus on best practice in addressing SMV in the sector that are **new** since the last SMV Annual Trend Monitoring Paper was written in 2025.

- Burke, L., Dawson, K., Flack, W. F., O'Higgins, S., McIvor, C., & MacNeela, P. (2023). Alcohol, drug use and experiences of sexual violence victimisation among first-year college students in Ireland. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 31(1), 67–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2023.2216221>
- Cowan S, Munro VE, Bull A, DiSantis CJ, Prince K. Data, disclosure and duties: balancing privacy and safeguarding in the context of UK university student sexual misconduct complaints. *Legal Studies*. 2024;44(3):478-497. doi:10.1017/lst.2024.9
- Humphreys, C. J. & Towl, G. J. (2020). Addressing Student Sexual Violence in Higher Education: A Good Practice Guide. Emerald Group Publishing.
- DiSantis, C. J. & Towl, G. J. (2025). Addressing Student Sexual Violence in Higher Education: A Good Practice Guide. Second Edition. Emerald Group Publishing.
- Humphreys, C. J. & Towl, G. J. (Eds.). (2023b). Stopping gender-based violence in higher education: Policy, practice, and partnerships. Routledge.
- Maher, C. (2023). University of York on how to handle anonymous reports. Culture Shift.
- Office for Students. (2021). OfS statement of expectations for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct
- Office for Students. (2025). Condition E6: Harassment and sexual misconduct
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. (2014) <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/>
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. (2018). The good practice framework: Disciplinary procedures.
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. (2025) OIA publishes a casework note and case summaries relating to harassment and sexual misconduct - OIAHE
- Prince, K. & Franklin-Corben, P. (2023). Case management as a dedicated role responding to gender-based violence in Higher Education. In C.J. Humphreys & G.J. Towl (Eds.) Stopping gender-based violence in higher education: Policy, practice, and partnerships. Routledge.

APPENDIX C

Sexual Misconduct & Violence:
Prevention & Response



STUDENT TRAINING

2025/26 Academic Year



A. Core Training for Students

Courses	Participants	Objectives	Facilitation	Time
1. SMV: <u>Consent Matters:</u> <u>Boundaries,</u> <u>Respect,</u> and <u>Positive Intervention</u>	Compulsory for all new students (UGs & PGs) All staff can access.	This course looks at sexual consent, healthy relationships, positive bystander intervention and support available related to sexual misconduct and violence (SMV). • Raise awareness and knowledge of sexual consent, including exploring common misconceptions about consent • Build skills for healthy relationships, including communication and boundary setting • Develop positive interventions to look out for others in difficult situations • Build safer communities by encouraging consent culture and positive intervention	Self-paced 3 module online course available on Blackboard	1 hour Pre-arrival/ Induction Week
2. SMV Awareness Talks - Core Messages for WOW	Compulsory for all new students (UGs & PGs)	• Raise awareness that SMV is not tolerated within the University community per the Sexual Misconduct and Violence Policy • Raise awareness and knowledge of sexual consent • Signpost to key areas of support available for all students	Delivered during induction by College staff and student leaders	Minimum of 20 min.
3. Active Bystander Course Durham	Recommended for all student leaders; Freshers' Reps (Freps) are required to attend by most Colleges; All students welcome	To empower and equip students to be Active Bystanders with regards to SMV – specifically on identifying consent, coercion and control. • To <u>educate</u> students with regards to: ◦ The definition of SMV and prevalence at university ◦ The concept of Bystander Intervention and how it applies to SMV • To help students to <u>empathise</u> with others with regards to: ◦ The impact of SMV on an individual ◦ The difficulties faced by an individual when disclosing/reporting SMV • To <u>equip</u> students to be able to: ◦ Identify situations which require appropriate Bystander Intervention ◦ Intervene appropriately and safely as an Active Bystander • To <u>empower</u> students by: ◦ Encouraging them to think about their role in forming the society that they live in ◦ Guiding students to other resources which can aid future learning	Facilitated in-person by trained paid SU peer facilitators	2 hours Available to book throughout the year through the Students' Union webpage

B. Optional Enhancement Courses

4.	Consent Workshop	1 st year UGs	- Learn about the importance of sexual consent - Challenge rape culture and victim-blaming - Learn how to create a positive consent culture Note: This course can be delivered during a consent campaign week or WOW.	Facilitated in-person by trained volunteer peer facilitators	1 hour
5.	Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence as a Student Leader	Recommended for Student Leaders, Welfare Reps, All students welcome	- Review definitions of consent and SMV - Develop practical skills to respond appropriately to peer disclosures of SMV - Understand appropriate referral pathways and reporting options to offer to victim-survivors - Understand the importance of self-care Note: A modified version is delivered at every Nightline Training weekend.	Facilitated in person/via Zoom	90 min.
6.	<u>SMV: Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence</u>	Available for all staff and students	- Demonstrate an awareness of the issues and initiatives around sexual violence. - Define what constitutes consent and identify the legal definitions of sexual offences. - Dispel common myths and misconceptions around sexual violence. - React and respond to survivors appropriately, demonstrating empathy and establishing boundaries. - Explain the different support and reporting options available to survivors. - Demonstrate best practices for responding to a disclosure. - Recognise when they (the responder) may need support in dealing with a disclosure. Note: Not Durham University specific.	Self-paced online module on Oracle Learn	1 hour
C. Other					
7.	Consent Workshop Train the Trainer	Volunteer facilitators	Train volunteer peer facilitators to facilitate engaging and informative discussions that encourage a healthy view of sexual consent and challenge harmful misconceptions. Note: Participants are encouraged to attend the <i>Active Bystander Course Durham</i> and the <i>Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence as a Student Leader</i> courses.	Facilitated in person	3 hours minimum
8.	Active Bystander Train the Trainer	Recruited Facilitators	Train recruited peer facilitators to facilitate engaging and informative discussions that empower and equip students to be Active Bystanders with regards to SMV – specifically on identifying consent, coercion and control. Note: Participants are encouraged to attend the <i>Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence as a Student Leader</i> course.	Facilitated in person	Full Day Course
9.	Bespoke training available upon request	By Request	Examples of bespoke training include campaign support, domestic abuse awareness training, training for sports teams, discussion group facilitation, e.g. The Hunting Ground / Know her Name. Options for training courses delivered by external training providers are also available.	Facilitated in-person	TBD

For More Information or to Book a Course

SMV training can be booked via Oracle Learn. Log on, click on 'Learning' and then search 'SMV' in the search box to find enrol on a course.

Any questions? Please contact the Student Conduct Office at student.cases@durham.ac.uk.

To book the *Active Bystander Course Durham*, please book on to a session available here: <https://www.durhamsu.com/events> or contact the Students' Union directly.

APPENDIX D

Sexual Misconduct & Violence:
Prevention & Response



STAFF TRAINING

2025/26 Academic Year



A. DURHAM SPECIFIC INSTRUCTOR LED TRAINING					
	Courses	Participants	Objectives	Facilitation	Length
1.	SMV: <u>Policy Briefing</u>	Recommended for all staff	- Raise awareness of the responsibilities of all staff under the Sexual Misconduct and Violence Policy - Define 'sexual misconduct and violence' (SMV) which are behaviours not tolerated within the University community - Demonstrate the procedure followed from disclosure to discipline for incidents of SMV involving students and/or staff Note: Can be arranged to be delivered during team/departmental meetings	Facilitated in-person or via Zoom with Q&A	30 minutes
2.	SMV: <u>Awareness and Disclosure Training (Level 1)</u>	Required for student support staff, RSAs, Duty Officers; Recommended for all staff;	- Understand the definition, prevalence, impact and risks of SMV in higher education - Challenge the societal myths that surround SMV - Develop skills to appropriately respond to disclosures of SMV in line with the Sexual Misconduct and Violence Policy and related procedures. - Be able to signpost to support in the University and community	Facilitated in-person or via Zoom	2 hours
3.	SMV: <u>Disclosure and Support Training (Level 2)</u>	Required for student support staff; All staff welcome	The aim is to prepare staff in support roles by increasing their confidence and enhancing their skills to respond appropriately to disclosures of SMV and support students/staff during investigations and disciplinary procedures, as appropriate, in line with the Sexual Misconduct & Violence Policy building from the Level 1 course. Note: Attendees must complete Level 1 as a prerequisite to be eligible to attend this course.	Co-facilitated in-person or via Zoom	Half-day / 3.5 hours
4.	SMV: <u>Domestic Abuse and Stalking Awareness & Disclosure Training</u>	Required for student support staff & Duty Officers; All staff welcome	- Understand the definition, prevalence, impact and risks of domestic abuse and stalking in higher education impacting students and staff. - Challenge the societal myths that surround domestic abuse and stalking - Develop skills to appropriately respond to disclosures of this specific form of SMV in line with the Sexual Misconduct and Violence Policy and related procedures. - Be able to signpost to support in the University and community Note: It is recommended that staff attend the Level 1 course first.	Co-facilitated in-person or via Zoom	Half-day / 3.5 hours
B. SELF-PACED ONLINE TRAINING					
5.	SMV: <u>Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence</u>	Available for all staff and students	- Demonstrate an awareness of the issues and initiatives around sexual violence. - Define what constitutes consent and identify the legal definitions of sexual offences. - Dispel common myths and misconceptions around sexual violence.	Self-paced online module on Oracle	1 hour

			• React and respond to survivors appropriately • Explain the different support and reporting options available to survivors. • Demonstrate best practices for responding to a disclosure. • Recognise when they (the responder) may need support in dealing with a disclosure. Note: Not Durham University specific. This course may also be used as reference or a refresh from the Durham-specific training offered above.	Learn	
6.	SkillBoosters: <u>Understanding and confronting sexual harassment</u>	All staff Recommended for managers	This course will give a better understanding of: • the causes and dynamics of sexual harassment • how it impacts at an individual and organisational level • effective intervention strategies for victims and bystanders • how to respond to sexual harassment if you're on the receiving end. Note: Not Durham University specific. This course may also be used as reference or a refresh from the Durham-specific training offered above.	Self-paced online module on Oracle Learn	20 – 30 minutes
7.	SkillBoosters: <u>Domestic Abuse - Supporting Employees in the Workplace</u>	All staff Recommended for managers	• This course will look at the forms that domestic abuse can take, its prevalence and impact, how to spot the warning signs, and what organisations can do to ensure they are providing appropriate support for survivors among their employees. Note: Not Durham University specific. This course may also be used as reference or a refresh from the Durham-specific training offered above.	Self-paced online module on Oracle Learn	30 – 45 minutes

For More Information or to Book a Course

SMV training can be booked via [Oracle Learn](#). Log on, click on 'Learning' and then search 'SMV' in the search box to enrol on a course.
Any questions? Please contact the Student Conduct Office at student.cases@durham.ac.uk.