Sexual assault and rape

You might be reading this because you have experienced a sexual assault, rape, sexual abuse or another form of sexual violence. If so, you may have mixed feelings about what happened, and whether you want to tell anyone, including the people closest to you. Some people are very certain that they want to report what has happened, while others may be less sure. Decisions can also change over time so confusion about reporting is not unusual.

How should I feel?

No two experiences are the same. It is not unusual to experience a delay in emotional response to what has happened, or for emotions to change, sometimes quite frequently. If you have been subjected to a sexual assault you may feel:

- numb
- confused
- afraid
- angry
- guilty
- ashamed
- depressed
- powerless
- lacking confidence

It can feel destabilising and any part of your life can be affected. Your eating and sleeping patterns can be disturbed; it can be hard for you to concentrate, affecting your ability to do your academic work. As sexual violence is inter-personal it is not unusual for it to have an effect on your relationships with others. Not everyone will experience all these feelings, or to the same degree, and there is no right or wrong to how you feel.
However guilty you may feel about what has happened to you, it can be important for you to know that if you have been subjected to rape or sexual assault it is not your fault.

**Some facts**

Many believe that there is a greater risk of sexual violence from a stranger but in fact the vast majority of sexual assaults are committed by someone the person knows.

Unwanted sexual attention amongst the student population is not uncommon. Sexual violence affects students from all backgrounds, sexualities and gender identities. A YouthSight survey (1) conducted in 2015 found that 1 in 3 female students had experienced some form of sexual assault or abuse, with 1 in 20 having experienced unwanted and inappropriate touching or groping, or feeling pressurised into sexual activity. Nor is it an issue that is just affecting women as 1 in 8 male students also reported groping or unwanted sexual advances.

Here at the University, there are different student-led campaigns regarding consent: CUSU runs workshops in colleges and CUSU’s women’s campaign, Cambridge for Consent, promotes sexual consent: www.womens.cusu.cam.ac.uk/consent/

**What to do after a rape or sexual assault**

The University has produced guidance for students who have been sexually assaulted or raped: www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/files/sexual_assault_disclosure_students.pdf

The document provides information on things you might want to consider to help you make an informed choice about what
to do. The information covers: being in a safe environment; time limits that apply for gathering forensic evidence, testing if drugs have been given, emergency contraception or anti-HIV medication; Police procedures; and where to find support, both within the university and the wider community.

**Reporting what has happened**

If you want to report an incident immediately, particularly if the incident has just taken place or you are in danger, call 999. Alternatively, you can call Cambridgeshire Constabulary on 101. It’s possible to ask to speak directly to the Rape Investigation Team, but it may take longer to speak with them. The operator will be able to advise you who is available at the time. The Police’s priority is safeguarding and this will determine what action they take.

Another option, particularly if you are unsure whether you want to report the incident to the Police but would like to retain this possibility, is to go to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Peterborough (details below). It may be possible to arrange for a taxi to be paid for you by your college. Staff at the SARC, known as The Oasis Centre, will be able to talk through different options with you and can store forensic evidence until you make up your mind about reporting. Should you choose to do so, they, or you, can make a report anonymously.

Whether you choose to report to the Police or attend the SARC, you might want to go with a friend or family member as it can be a lengthy and upsetting process.
Where to get help

You don’t need to be alone with your feelings and it is important for you to have support and understanding. There are a number of agencies that are able to help you, including:

- The University Counselling Service: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk
- Linkline: http://cambridge.nightline.ac.uk Tel: 01223 744 444 or 01223 367 575 (7.00 pm – 7.00 am during full term)
- Cambridge Rape Crisis: www.cambridgerapecrisis.co.uk Tel: 01223 313551 Helpline: 01223 245888, Wed 7.00 - 9.30 pm, Sat 3.00 - 5.30 pm, Sun 10.00 am - 12.30 pm (times may change) email: support@cambridgerapecrisis.co.uk
- Rape Crisis: http://rapecrisis.org.uk
- Survivors UK (for men): www.survivorsuk.org
- Cambridgeshire Sexual Assault Referral Centre (Peterborough): www.oasiscentre.org Tel: 0845 089 6262 (24 hour helpline)

(1) http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11343380/Sexually-assault-1-in-3-UK-female-students-victim-on-campus.html- 14 January 2015