

Tackling Sexual Harassment and Misconduct in Academia

Blizard Institute – March 2023

Trigger warning

In this session we'll be talking about sexual assault and sexual harassment.

1 in 5 women have been raped or sexually assaulted as an adult

1 in 6 children have been sexually abused

1 in 20 men have been raped or sexually assaulted as an adult

(Rape Crisis England & Wales, <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/>)

Make sure you look after yourself and seek support if needed.



<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-does-it-mean-to-be-triggered-4175432>

In this session we will cover...

1. What is sexual violence & sexual violence in numbers
2. Sexual violence in Academia
3. Rape myths and rape culture
4. Ways you can support survivors of sexual assault
5. Impact on survivors
6. Support Available at QMUL
7. Vicarious trauma and self-care

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is any incident of unwanted sexual contact. It includes rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual harassment.

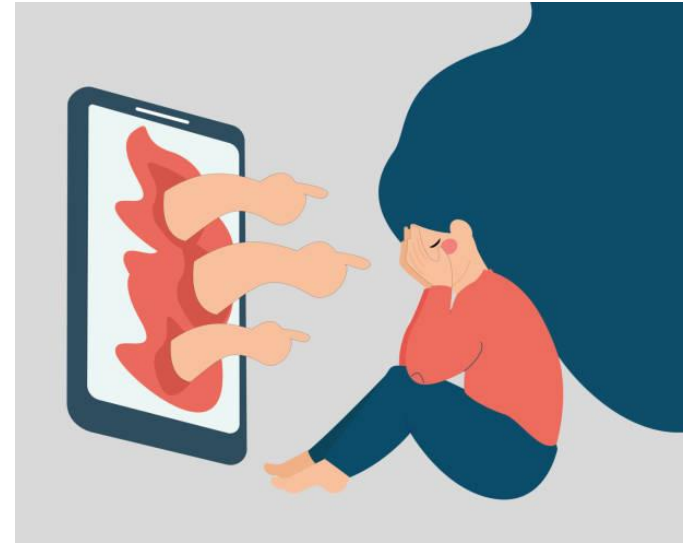
Below is a non-exhaustive list of types of behaviour that would constitute sexual violence:

- Rape
- Child sexual abuse
- Sexual assault – inappropriately touching someone without their consent, unwanted kissing, and/or making someone take part in a sexual activity with them without their consent
- FGM (female genital mutilation) – any procedure that intentionally alters or causes injury to the female genital organs without any medical reason



Sexual violence

- Spiking – adding drugs or alcohol to someone’s drink or body without their knowledge and/or consent
- ‘Flashing’ – intentionally exposing your genitals with the intention of someone else seeing them and causing distress
- Cyber flashing – sending someone pictures of one’s genitals (‘dick pics’) or exposing themselves over live video
- Revenge porn - sharing of private, sexual materials (photos or videos) of another person without their consent with the purpose of causing embarrassment or distress.



Sexual violence

- Sexual harassment – unwanted sexual behaviour that makes someone feel scared, upset, offended or humiliated. It includes a wide range of behaviours, such as:
 - catcalling or wolf-whistling
 - sexual gestures
 - leering, staring or suggestive looks
 - commenting on someone's body, appearance or what they're wearing
 - sexual 'jokes'
 - spreading sexual rumours
 - unwanted sexual advances or flirting
 - asking for sexual favours
 - taking a photo or video under another person's clothing ('upskirting')
 - stalking
 - sending e-mails or texts with sexual context and/or sexual posts or contact on social media



Sexual violence in numbers

67,125

Number of rapes recorded
by the police in 2021

5 in 6

women who are raped
don't report to the police

5 million

women in England and
Wales have been raped
since the age of 16

1.3%

of rape cases recorded by
police resulted in a charge
in the year to Sep 2021

56%

of students experienced
unwanted sexual
behaviours at university

<https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/>

<https://legacy.brook.org.uk/press-releases/sexual-violence-and-harassment-remains-rife-in-universities-according-to-ne>

Sexual violence in the workplace in numbers

29%

of those in employment
experienced sexual
harassment in their
workplace

15%

reported sexual
harassment

40%

of the victims saw their
job change as a result of
taking action

17%

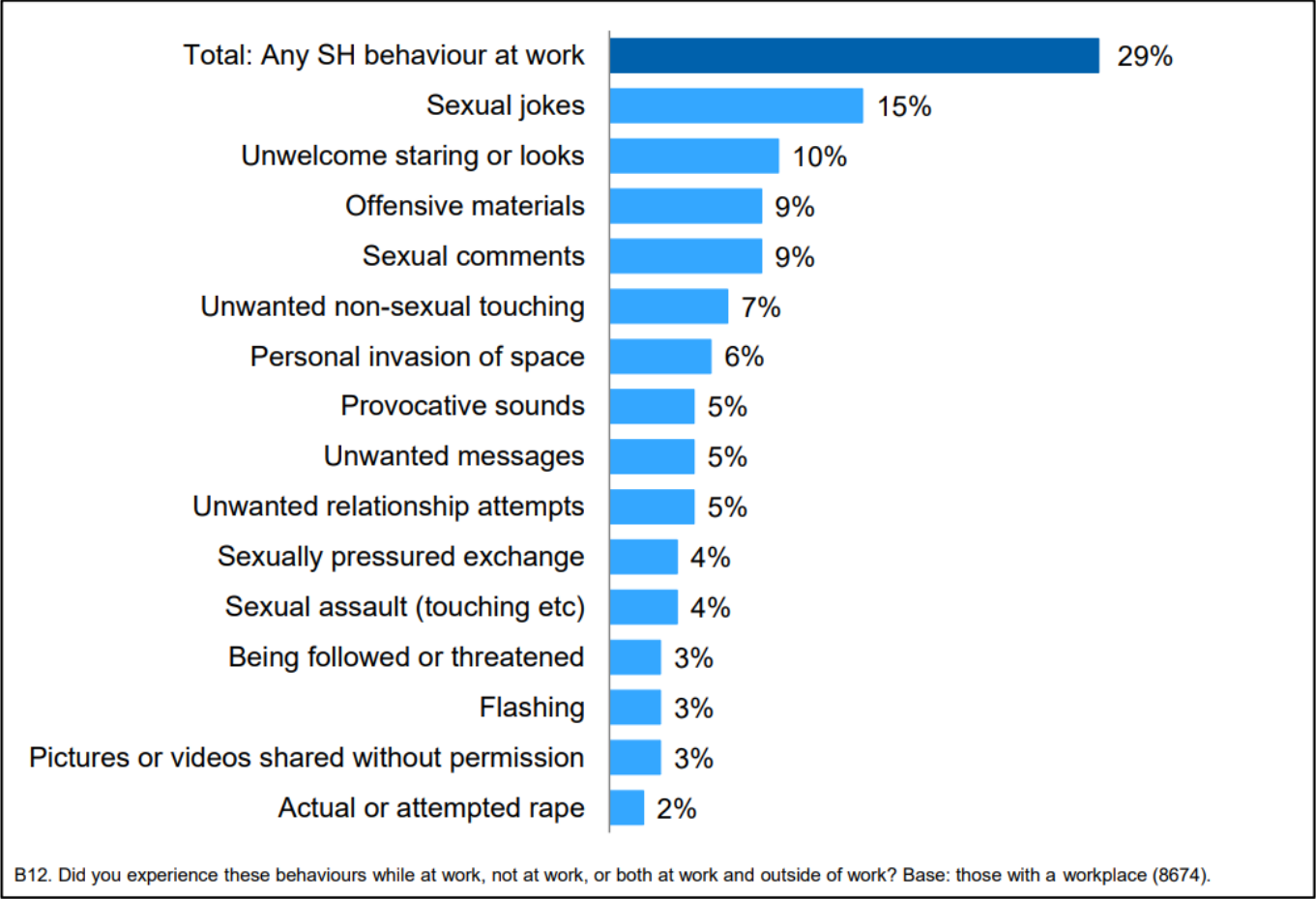
of victims said they had to
look for a new job

41%

said there were no
consequences for the
perpetrator

[2020 Sexual Harassment Survey](#)

Sexual violence in the workplace



Sexual violence in academia

- Individuals who are lower in a status hierarchy and those that are unrepresented are more likely to be the targets of sexual harassment
- In academia, this means that women in, or in contention for, junior faculty positions are disproportionately targeted when it comes to sexual harassment.
- From an intersectional lens, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ individuals in academia are particularly at risk of sexual harassment



Sexual violence in academia

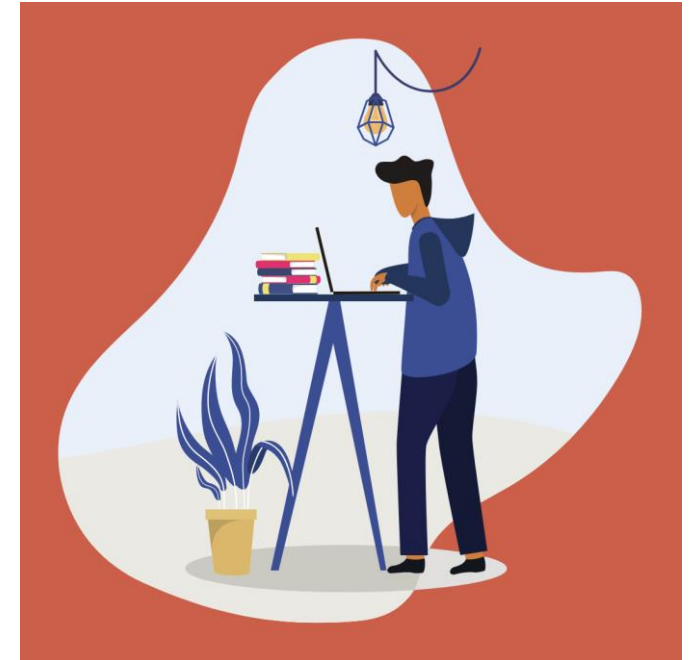
Why is sexual violence so prevalent in academia?

- Academia's gender imbalance and hierarchical power structure
- Sexual harassment is more likely to occur in male-dominated organizations (Hegewisch & O'Farrell, 2015; Medeiros & Griffith, 2019). Academia remains a male-dominated industry, especially in more senior faculty positions (Bacchi, 1993; Diamond et al., 2016; O'Connor, 2020; Zhuge et al., 2011)
- Sexual harassment may also serve as an equalizer against women in power, motivated more by control and domination than sexual desire (McLaughlin et al, 2012)



Sexual violence in academia

- Women's experiences of trying to report sexual harassment from staff found that the process was exhausting, drawn-out, retraumatizing and ineffectual
- Narratives of truth - the experience of violence and its relationship to the truth occupies a contentious and unstable space, determined at least in part by the institutional and legal management of violence, but is also informed by race and gender, and dominant narratives that can render, in particular, women of colour invisible (Cantalupo, 2009; Crenshaw 1989)
- Failures to take action against perpetrators in academia linked to wanting to maintain researchers due to their perceived value to the institution, their ability to bring in funding or after obtaining tenure – but also fear of legal action



Sexual violence in academia

- Women who reported sexual harassment were less likely to be recommended for promotion compared to women with identical qualifications (Hart, 2019)
- Survivors of sexual harassment are more likely to leave an organisation, with some leaving the field altogether (McLaughlin et al, 2017; Medeiros & Griffith, 2019)



[Sexual harassment in Academia - Elephant in the Lab](#)

Sexual violence in academia – what next?

Change the culture

Put clear policies in place to tackle sexual misconduct

Listen to survivors – and believe them

Hold perpetrators accountable

[Changing the culture: tackling staff-to-student sexual misconduct \(universitiesuk.ac.uk\)](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk)



Sexual violence: myth or fact?

- **Sexual assault or harassment is an act of lust and passion that can't be controlled.**

Fact: Sexual assault and abuse is about power and control.

- **If a victim of sexual assault or harassment does not fight back, they must have thought that it was not that bad or they wanted it.**

Fact: It's really common for people who experience rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse or other types of sexual violence to “freeze”. This is one of our bodies' automatic responses to fear and is designed to keep us safe.

- **Survivors lie about being raped or harassed because they want attention or revenge – or regret having had sex with someone.**

Fact: False allegations of rape are extremely rare. In fact, most people who are raped or experience another form of sexual violence never tell the police.

Sexual violence: myth or fact?

- **Wearing revealing clothing, behaving provocatively, or drinking a lot means the victim was “asking for it”.**

Fact: The victim’s behaviour or clothing choices do not mean that they are consenting to sexual activity. This is victim-blaming and onus should lie with perpetrators.

- **If they didn’t say ‘no’ then it wasn’t rape or assault**

Fact: Not saying ‘no’ is not the same as someone giving their consent. If someone seems unsure, stays quiet, is unconscious, moves away or doesn’t respond, they are not agreeing to sexual activity.

- **If they'd really been raped or harassed then it wouldn't have taken them so long to say something.**

Fact: For many people, experiencing rape or another form of sexual violence or abuse can be a very difficult thing to talk about – and it might be a long time before they feel able to. This can be for lots of different reasons, including fear of the perpetrator, of being judged, blamed or not believed in.

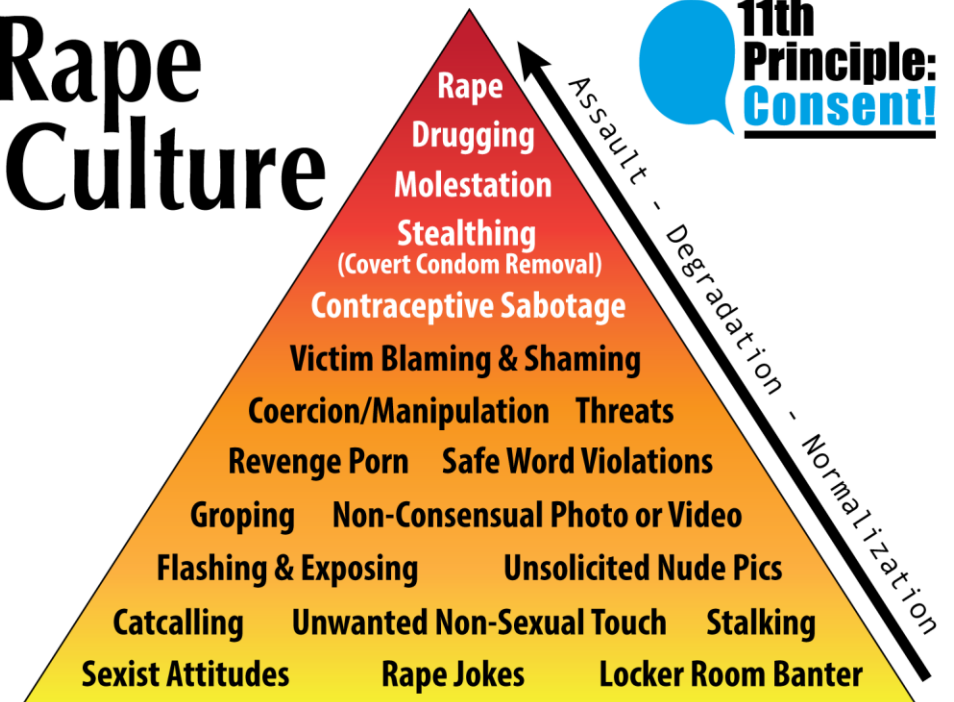
Rape myths are central to rape culture.

Rape culture is a culture where sexual violence and abuse is **normalised and played down**. Where it is accepted, excused, laughed off or not challenged enough by society as a whole.

Rape culture is also a culture where some people are making money, or benefitting in some other way, from this normalisation of sexual violence and abuse.

We live in a society where most positions of power are held by men – what is sometimes known as 'patriarchy'. Women and girls are more likely to experience sexual violence, especially in a male-dominated environment.

Rape Culture



Tolerance of the behaviors at the bottom supports or excuses those higher up. To change outcomes, we must change the culture.

If you see something, say something!
Start the conversation today.

www.11thPrincipleConsent.org

A note on reporting

- The highest ever number of rapes was recorded by police in the year ending March 2022: 70,330.
- In that same time period, charges were brought in just 2,223 rape cases (3.2% of cases)
- 1.3% of rapes recorded in England and Wales in the year ending December 2021 were assigned the outcome 'Charged/Summoned'
- The average case length (from the first hearing until sentencing) for sexual offences was 266 days, or about nine months, to go through the Crown Court
- This does not include the time a victim-survivor is waiting from the point they first report – currently can be around a 2 year wait

<https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-61061365>



A note on reporting

- Criminal justice process can be re-triggering and re-traumatising for victim survivors
- Victim survivors belonging to minoritised groups (e.g. BAME and LGBTQI+ survivors) will face additional barriers around reporting
- Cases like Sarah Everard's and David Carrick have also impacted negatively on women's trust in the police

<https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/>
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What are your worries around taking disclosures/dealing with sexual misconduct cases?



Ways you can support survivors of sexual assault and/or harassment

- Find a safe and private space to talk to them
- Listen and thank them
- Convey belief and show empathy and respect
- Validate their feelings
- Use inclusive language
- Don't make promises



Ways you can support survivors of sexual assault and/or harassment

- Be clear about your role, offer to signpost (with consent)
- Only share information with staff members who need to know
- Respect their decisions – including on whether they wish to report to the police
- Look after yourself

If emergency discuss with them whether they require the police, ambulance or access to urgent sexual violence support services – The Havens.



Supportive things to say to a survivor

- “I believe you” and “It took a lot of courage to tell me about this.”
- “It’s not your fault” and “You didn’t do anything to deserve this.”
- “You are not alone” and “I care about you and there is support available.”
- “I’m sorry this happened” and “This shouldn’t have happened to you.”
- “This must be really tough for you,” and “I’m glad you felt you could share this with me”



What not to do/not to say to a survivor

- “Snap out of it” or “You shouldn’t feel so bad”
- “Are you sure this is what happened?”
- “Are you sure you didn’t lead them on?”
- “What were you thinking, inviting them to your room?”
- “How much had you had to drink?”
- “Why didn’t you leave?”/”Why didn’t you ask them to leave?”
- “Why didn’t you call the police?”/”Why are you only reporting now?”
- “It must be hard for them too.”



What not to do/not to say to a survivor

- Avoid physical touch and be mindful of personal space
- Do not assume or direct them on what they should do next, offer to outline their options instead
- Do not take further action without their consent

Do not ask details about the assault

- This can be triggering and re-traumatising. However, if a survivor chooses to share these with you, try your best to listen in a supportive and non-judgemental way



Impact on survivors

Everyone is affected differently by sexual violence and abuse. There is no right or wrong way to be or to feel.

Below is a non-exhaustive list:

Physical impacts - injuries, STIs, pregnancy, sleep problems, eating disorders

Emotional impacts – depression, anger, fear, hypervigilance, lack of trust in others, numbness, guilt and shame, suicidality, feeling they are to blame

Psychological impacts – dissociation, flashbacks, PTSD

Behavioural impacts – isolation, under or over-achieving academically, self-harm, alcohol and/or drug use, difficulties coping with daily life, loss of income

<https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/about-sexual-violence/impacts-of-sexual-violence-and-abuse/>



Case scenario

Carmen has not been coming into the Blizzard for the past two weeks. When you invite her in for a chat, she tells you she was raped by another PhD student and doesn't feel comfortable being around them.

What are some of the things you might say/do in this situation?

Are there any questions that might be important to ask Carmen?

What advice can you give? What action might you take next?



Case scenario

You notice Ayush has become withdrawn and frequently seems to be hyper-vigilant in the lab. When you ask him if he's okay he breaks down and tells you he was sexually assaulted by a member of staff at the Blizzard.

What are some of the things you might say/do in this situation?

Are there any questions that might be important to ask Ayush?

What advice can you give? What action might you take next?



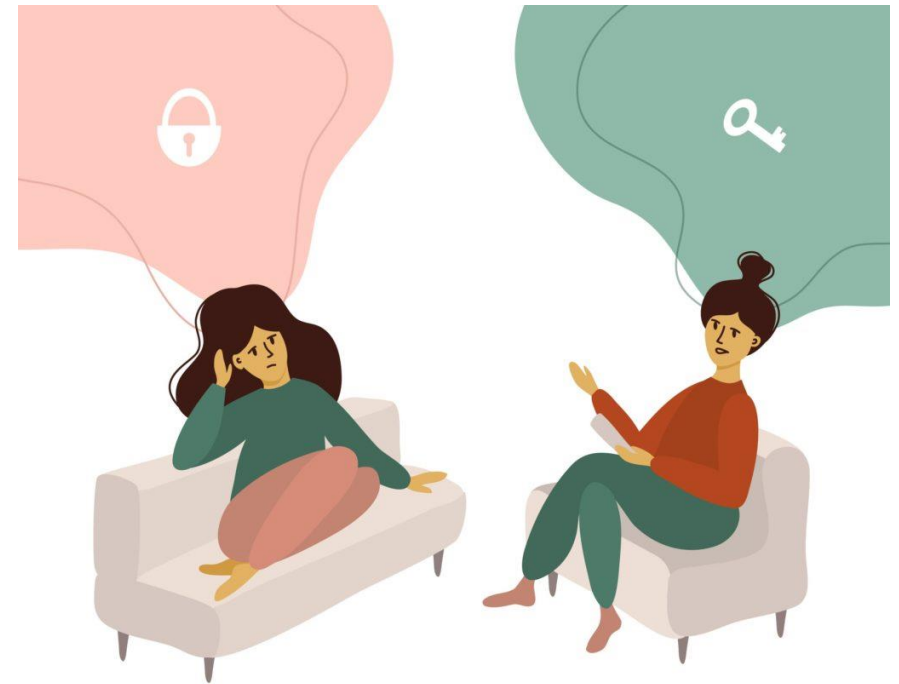
Support available

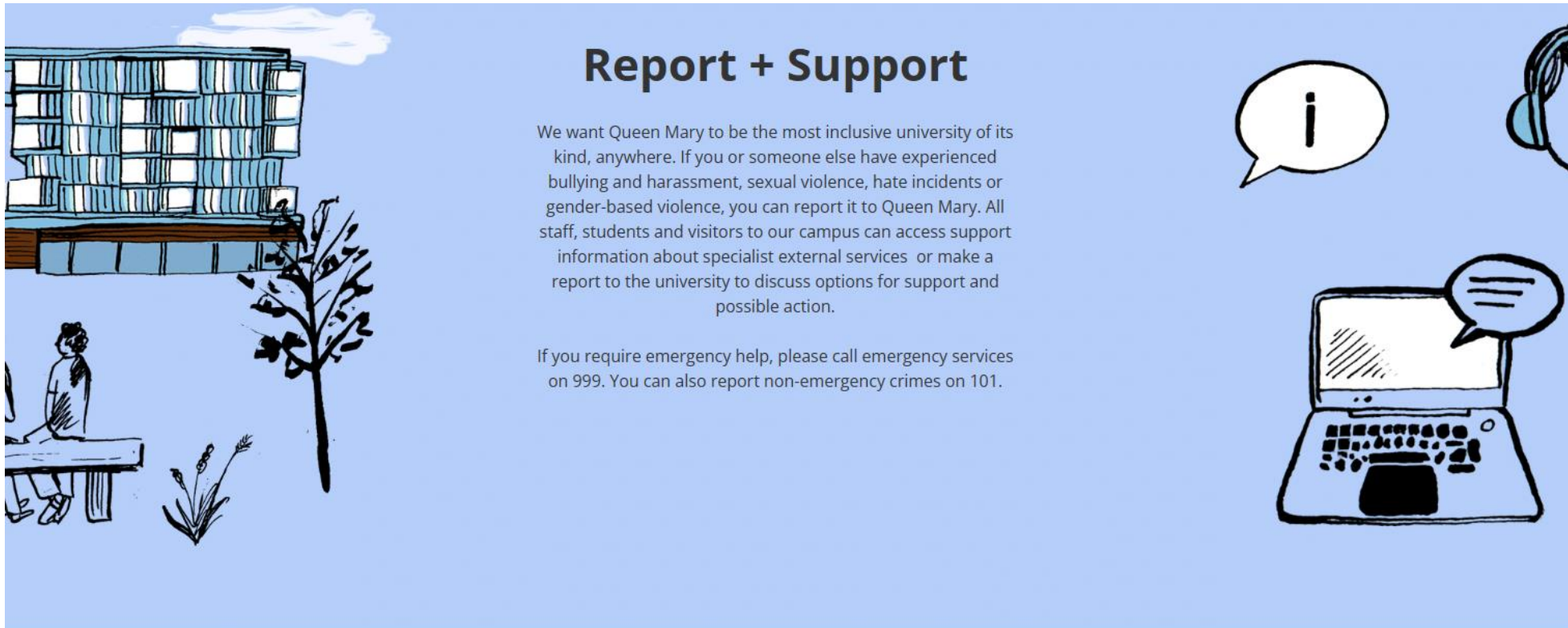
Support at QMUL:

- Report + Support - <https://reportandsupport.qmul.ac.uk/>
- ACS – welfare@qmul.ac.uk
- SAHA (Sexual Assault and Harassment Adviser) – a.floresreis@qmul.ac.uk

An extensive list of external support services can be found here:

<https://reportandsupport.qmul.ac.uk/support/what-support-is-available-for-sexual-violence>





Report + Support

We want Queen Mary to be the most inclusive university of its kind, anywhere. If you or someone else have experienced bullying and harassment, sexual violence, hate incidents or gender-based violence, you can report it to Queen Mary. All staff, students and visitors to our campus can access support information about specialist external services or make a report to the university to discuss options for support and possible action.

If you require emergency help, please call emergency services on 999. You can also report non-emergency crimes on 101.

There are two ways you can tell us what happened

Report anonymously

or

Report with contact details

Vicarious trauma and self-care



Vicarious trauma and self-care

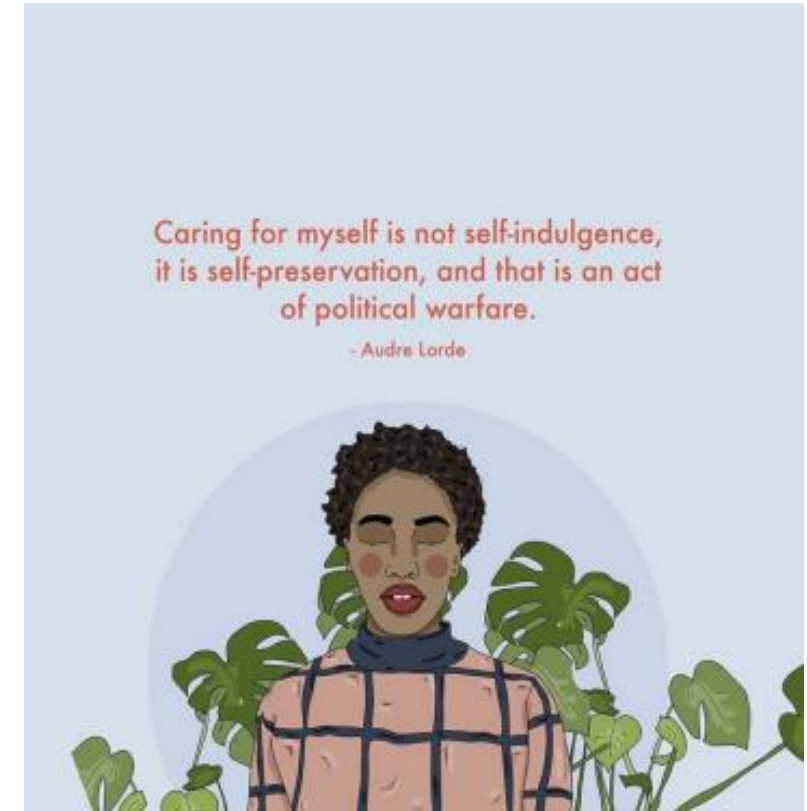
Most people think self-care is candles and bubble baths. However, self-care can also be:

Taking a step back

Asking for help

Setting boundaries

Contact the employee assistance programme
Workplace options on 0800 243 458
assistance@workplaceoptions.com





Questions?



Thank you



Queen Mary
University of London