

# CUSU Women's Campaign to End Violence against Women

## Our campaign to end sexual violence against women

Before my election as CUSU Women's Officer last year CUSU Women's Campaign voted to putting an end to sexual violence and domestic violence against women as one of its priority campaigns. Since then, CUSU Women's Campaign won the bid through the City Council to install lighting on Parker's Piece after 10 years of campaigning and has put on events such as the Vigil for the Montreal Massacre and the Reclaim the Night March. Furthermore, we have been worked tirelessly with Women's Officers in colleges to both prevent and raise awareness of gendered violence. We have empowered networks of women to make change in their college, by providing Women's Officers with Action Packs to campaign for the implementation of compulsory consent workshops and zero tolerance to sexual harassment policies in their colleges.

However, during my time attending university meetings on potential preventative policies, it came to my attention that a more specific piece of research was needed to provide evidence that supported our beliefs that sexual violence happens in Cambridge. A piece of research that would provide an insight into experiences of sexual harassment, sexual contact, serious sexual assault, stalking and physical violence against all genders and highlight existing cultures which silence women.

## Cambridge Speaks Out Survey

### Methodology

CUSU Women's Campaign created the Cambridge Speaks Out survey which Varsity newspaper publicised. The structure and methodology reflect the NUS Hidden Marks Survey (2010) and Report published in May 2012, a national study into the prevalence of violence against women students. While this survey was open to all genders, there were decisions made due to practicality and credibility that is likely to have limited the data. Careful wording of the survey questions was crucial due to the sensitive nature of the subject as well as potential confusion over definitions of certain terms (such as 'rape'). To reduce the risk, we used two different approaches. The first was to use language to describe various types of victimisation drawn from legal definitions. The second was to use graphic language which described behaviour so as to avoid misunderstanding, as seen in the sexual harassment question.

The legal definitions used to define assault by penetration (including the definition of rape) limited answers due to the potential exclusion of the experiences of LGBT+ respondents. The reason we chose to use this definition is to provide information to the University that's consistent with the mainstream definition so that the University can respond accordingly while benchmarking these statistics in this report to national studies of this kind. However, it must be recognised that CUSU Women's Campaign's values and beliefs are not wholly in line with the legal definitions of rape, represented by the newly improved inclusive consent workshop CUSU Women's Campaign have run this year. If you would like more information about educational resources, the improved consent

workshop or CUSU Women's Campaigns beliefs surrounding what consent is and how we approach definitions of 'sexual act', 'sexual assault', 'assault by penetration' or 'rape', please do get in touch.

CUSU Women's Campaign would like to apologise to those who felt silenced or limited by the nature of the questions. We are also very aware that filling in the survey may have been extremely triggering for some of you and that more warnings and descriptions of questions would have much better supported those taking part in the survey. This will be taken into account for any future research or campaigns carried out in the future.

### The next step forward for the campaign

The Cambridge Speaks Out survey has now provided us with the data of over 2100 students revealing the prevalence of harassment and violence, factors that influence the reporting of incidents and the impact of such incidents on students.

The report ultimately concludes that the CUSU Women's Campaign cannot end violence against Cambridge students alone. The CUSU Women's Campaign needs the support of the University and individual colleges to break the silence surrounding violence against all students.

Based on the key findings the CUSU Women's Campaign will recommend several actions to the University to address some very worrying statistics from the survey. They include:

1. To implement compulsory consent workshops for freshers
2. To implement and clarify zero tolerance to sexual harassment policy in the University and in the colleges
3. Tackle drinking cultures to ensure safe social environments
4. Make information about procedures and policies more readily available to students
5. Reform procedure to ensure any student could report any of the above and feel that they will be supported, their information kept confidential, and the process is oriented around them, while ensuring that all staff are trained to handle such procedures.

\*Please take a look at the full list of recommendations at the end of the Report.

These recommendations, along with others, and the data from the full report will be presented by the CUSU Women's Officer at the next Health and Wellbeing Committee in May to prompt discussions around a long-term plan to work towards preventing and ending violence against women at Cambridge University.

Not only this, but Women's Officers now have supporting evidence to back up their wishes for compulsory consent workshops and zero tolerance to sexual harassment policies to their JCR or their college. Future Women's Officers have data to continue working with the University and individual colleges on this issue and campaign to change silencing cultures in Cambridge. Comments made highlight the lack of understanding around consent and the need for more education and awareness raising around this issue. Furthermore, trends revealed a widespread concern around lighting both around the Cambridge city area but within colleges themselves, providing us with direct feedback from hundreds of students that we can listen to; Lighting in Parker's Piece does not have to be the end of the Right to Light Campaign. Finally, it is clear that violence is a very real issue facing students,

the data could be used to support a campaign to increase funding for Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre and Cambridge Women's Aid after their funds were cut in 2011 by the City Council.

This survey provides YOU with the power to make the change you want to see to end violence against women.

Please share this and let people know what CUSU Women's Campaign have been doing.