

# Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service Annual Report 2023/24

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Service Overview

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“Having access to expertise in a specialist service gives me confidence in my ability to support students and underlines the university’s commitment to important welfare-related issues. It is always a pleasure to work with members of SHVSS staff: it is one of the most professional and knowledgeable services I interact with in our community.”

*College welfare lead*

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The Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service provides confidential practical and emotional support to students impacted by sexual violence, sexual harassment, relationship/domestic abuse, coercive control and stalking, regardless of when or where the incident(s) occurred. The service is available to all current Oxford University students, including suspended students, and operates independently from colleges and departments.

Support is delivered by Specialist Caseworkers or the University Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) who is employed by the local rape crisis centre, Survivor Space, using an empowerment model and validating students’ decisions.

Support is tailored to the student, and may cover reporting options, academic guidance, therapeutic support options, psychoeducation, safety planning and risk assessment. Students are directed to further specialist support where appropriate, and caseworkers may liaise with other services to provide joined-up support.

We strive to be an inclusive and accessible service, recognising certain groups, such as women, individuals with disabilities and LGBTQ+ individuals, are disproportionately impacted by sexual violence and face additional barriers to accessing support. We draw on expertise from colleagues and services to inform our work and improve our accessibility.

A parallel but separate stream of the service provides support to students who have been accused of, or reported for, sexual misconduct. Using a similar framework, students receive emotional and practical support, with a particular focus on understanding disciplinary processes.

In addition to student casework, we equip and empower staff through training and guidance with the knowledge, confidence and skills to respond effectively to students seeking support.

We strive to create a culture of consent across the collegiate university and a community in which all students have a strong understanding of consent, show respect to others, and engage in healthy and positive relationships.

## 1.2 Executive Summary

This report covers 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024, providing an overview of the Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service (also referred to as SHVSS, ‘the Service’ or ‘the Support Service’) and considers data for the Support Service, ISVA Service, reported student support, and preventative initiatives.

We refer to service users as the 'reporting student' or 'reporter', and the 'reported student' or 'reported party'.

Service demand remained steady in 2023/24, with a small increase in students accessing the service, and greater interest in specialist training from students and staff. 179 students referred into the service, and 147 of these individuals received support. This is an increase in referrals of 5%, up from 170 referrals in 2022/23, of which 130 students received support.

Cases involving domestic abuse, stalking, childhood sexual abuse, and spiking increased. Many of these students require ongoing support due to significant risk factors and the impact of these issues. It is likely we will see these areas of the service continue to grow, as we undertake further training and increase awareness amongst students and staff of unhealthy or concerning behaviours and relationships. This year we piloted a new psychoeducational support group for students who have experienced domestic abuse, and ran domestic abuse awareness training for staff.

Students were seen within an average of nine working days from the point of referral, with an increase in wait times mid-term, consistent with previous years. Most reported parties were male and known to the reporting student. Just over half of students did not wish or intend to make a formal report to college, the University, or the police.

The ISVA service supported 37 students, down from 54 students in 2022/23 (a 31% decrease). There continue to be significant delays in the Criminal Justice System, though the service did observe an increase in the number of people reporting to the police. The decrease in referrals may also be due to staff changes in recent years. The ISVA service is actively building relationships with colleges, departments, and external services, to raise awareness of the service and referral pathways.

Nearly 40% of students accessing the Support Service had experienced an incident within the past 6 months. There was an increase in cases where the incident was ongoing, indicating an ongoing risk of abuse or harm to an individual.

Last year, three broad service aims were identified – to maximise impact, improve culture, and increase visibility and inclusivity of our service. To help meet these aims, there has been a significant increase in the development and delivery of new training, equipping staff with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to respond effectively to student disclosures, whilst increasing visibility and improving culture across the University.

Staffing reached its highest level, with the addition of a full-time Specialist Caseworker working with reporting parties and a new dedicated caseworker for the reported student service, working solely with students who have been reported for, or accused of, sexual misconduct.

In response to student and staff feedback, a new online consent training module was launched, reaching 3,307 students, more than in any previous academic year. The healthy relationships and consent education programme will continue to develop and grow, with the aim to meet the needs of all colleges who wish to participate.

Demand is expected to continue to rise due to expanded education, training and awareness, and a new sector regulation for tackling sexual misconduct. Preventing burnout and vicarious trauma amongst the staff team remains a priority as we continue to be proactive and responsive to student need, working with colleagues across the collegiate university and external services to provide robust and

collaborative person-centred and trauma-informed support to students impacted by any form of sexual violence, harassment, domestic abuse, and stalking.

## 2. Core Service – Student Casework

### 2.1 Support for Reporting Students

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“I couldn't have asked for better support, I feel very lucky.”

*Student feedback*

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#### 2.1.1 Referrals

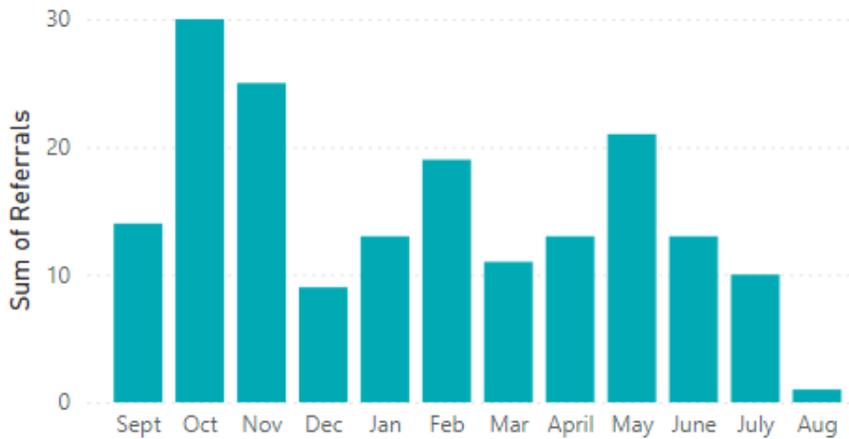
There was a slight increase in referrals this year, with 179 students referring into the service. 147 of these students received an appointment. This is compared to 170 referrals and 130 students supported in 2022/23. This data is for the Support Service only, and does not include referrals to the University ISVA or reported student service, which can be found later in this report.

82% of students referring into the Support Service met with a caseworker. The main reason for not attending an appointment was student choice (13.4%), but unsuitable referrals (e.g. from staff, alumni, or relating to harassment or violence of a non-sexual nature) made up 4.5% of referrals; these individuals were signposted to the appropriate service for their needs.

Referral outcomes (Reporting Students)	
Appointment offered	82.1%
No appt – student choice	13.4%
No appt – unsuitable referral	4.5%

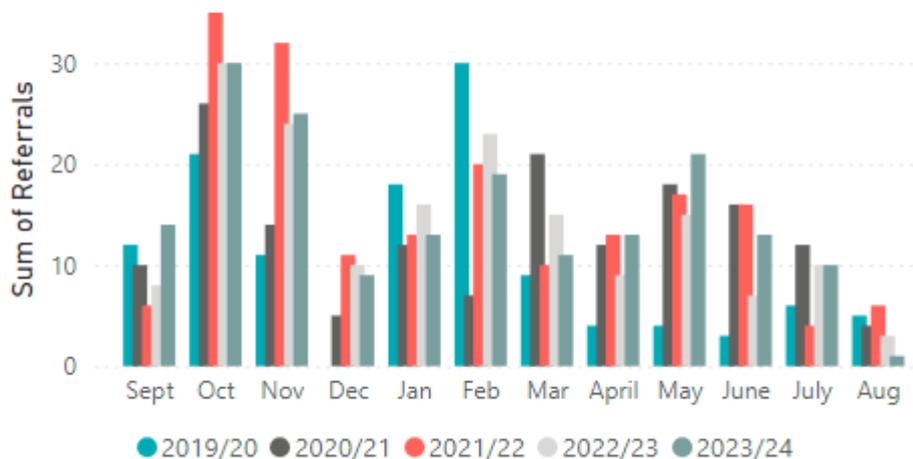
Most appointments took place in-person (79%), with 27% taking place online and 3% audio only. Attendance at appointments was high, with 84% of appointments going ahead as scheduled. The majority of the remaining appointments were rescheduled following student or staff cancellation. In the case of staff cancellation, this is due to staff sickness.

### Referrals by Month



The highest number of referrals into the Support Service coincides with Michaelmas Term (October/November), which includes Freshers' Week. There are also spikes in referrals mid Hilary and Trinity term, as seen in previous years.

### Referrals by Month and Academic Year



100% of students who completed our feedback survey reported finding it easy to access and complete the referral form.

Student referrals came from various channels, the majority being college welfare teams (26%). 19% of referrals came from Student Welfare and Support Service colleagues (e.g., the Counselling Service and Disability Advisory Service). Referral routes were known in 88% of cases.

In the majority of cases, students directly initiated contact with the Service to access emotional support. Students were also interested in information on support available, general advice, information on reporting, safety planning and academic guidance. Most reporting students attend a single appointment with the service (72%), receiving detailed follow up and the option to return for further support. 28% of students attended more than one appointment.

16 students were seen in previous academic year/s and contacted the service again for support. In most cases, these students were in complex situations, requiring multi-agency approaches to manage risk and mitigate safety concerns, or were students with an ongoing report/complaint.

### 2.1.2 Waiting times

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“The referral was easy and I was glad I was given the freedom to say as much or as little as I felt comfortable. The wait for the appointment wasn't long and I was greeted with warmth and kindness.”

*Student feedback*

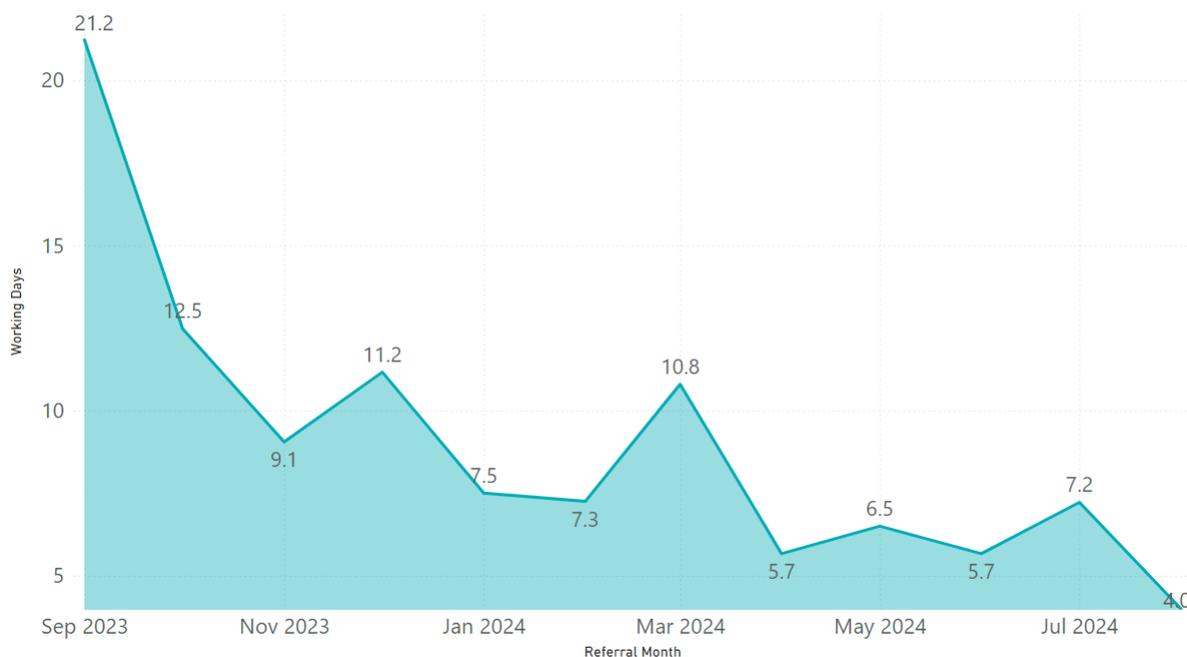
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Students are encouraged to self-refer into the service using a short referral form, providing their availability in the process. Caseworkers aim to respond within two working days (we met this target in 92% of cases, and in 5% of cases, students were responded to within three working days). 100% of students found the referral process easy, felt responded to promptly, and found the wait manageable or easy to manage.

The average wait time was skewed at the start of September due to students in touch earlier in the long vacation contacting to schedule an appointment for the start of term. The average wait time (from the date of initial contact from the student to the date of the appointment) was nine working days. This varies due to student availability and preference, and staff capacity.

There are peaks in the middle of each term, often due to an increase in the number of referrals at the start of term. Appointment offers are made based on assessed need and risk, and appointments are prioritised where a student identifies being or feeling unsafe, or the incident has occurred recently.

Average Wait Time by Month

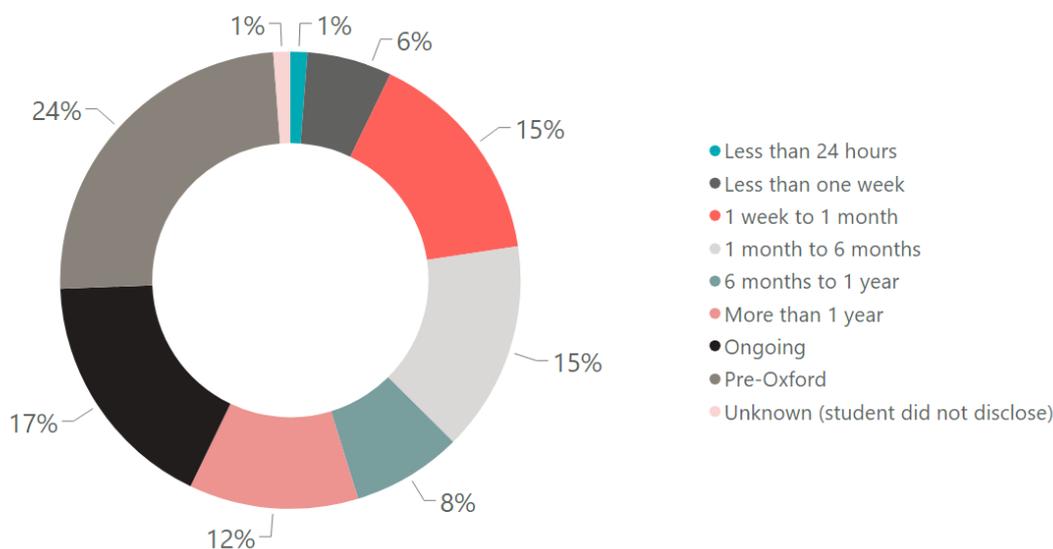


### 2.1.3 Timescales for seeking support

There can be many barriers to accessing specialist support or services for individuals who have experienced sexual violence or domestic abuse, such as a fear of not being believed and not feeling what happened to them warrants specialist support. In 2023/24 there was an increase between the time an incident occurred and the point of contacting our service compared to previous years, with 37% of students accessing support within six months of an incident, compared to 46% in the 2022/23 year and 65% in 2021/22. In nearly a quarter of cases, the incident took place prior to the student starting at Oxford. It can take time for an individual to process their experience and feel ready to reach out for support, particularly when balancing this with focusing on their studies.

In 17% of cases, the incident was ongoing, indicating an ongoing risk of abuse or harm to an individual, such as the person being in an abusive relationship or experiencing stalking or harassment. This is a significant increase from the previous year (7% of cases). In just under half (45%) of the 31 ongoing cases, this involved a University student (35.5%), College staff member (6.5%) or alumna (3.2%), and 51.6% of cases involved someone external to the University context. The reported party was not disclosed in 3.2% of cases.

Timescales for Seeking Support



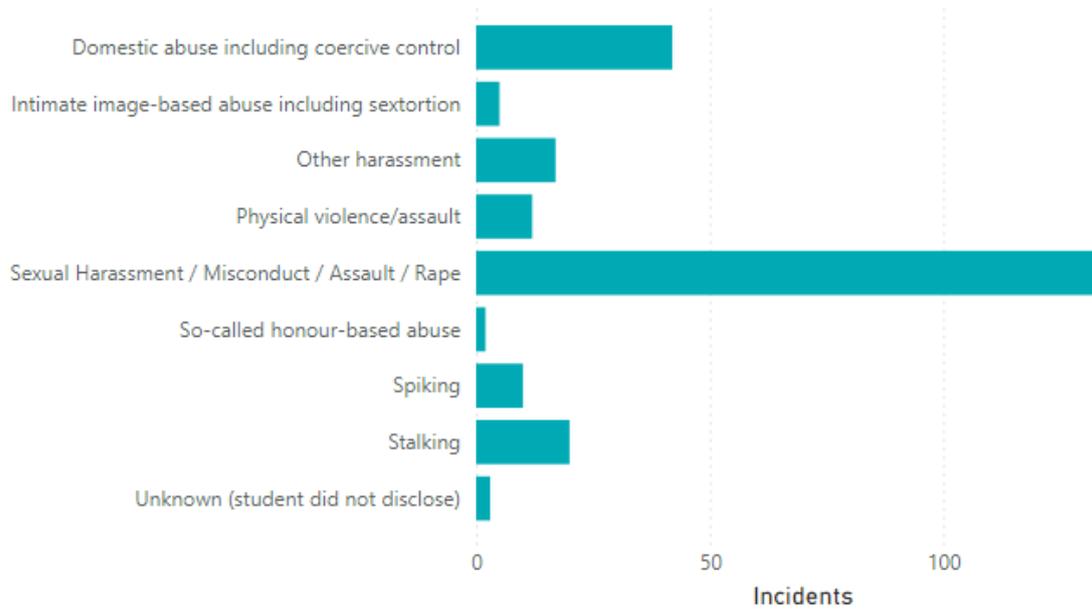
### 2.1.4 Reported behaviour and context

The Service uses an empowerment approach and mirrors the language which students use during appointments to record what they have experienced. 134 incidents of sexual harassment (19 incidents), sexual misconduct (1 incident), assault (48 incidents), rape (28 incidents) childhood sexual abuse (15) or other sexual violence (23 incidents) were reported to the Service. This accounted for 55% of the overall casework, and there was an increase in the number of incidents of rape reported compared to last year, similar to figures in 2020/21, and 2021/22. This year, 42 students reported experiencing domestic/relationship abuse including coercive control, compared to 25 last year, an increase of 68%. We also saw an increase in students accessing support for stalking (an increase of 43% from last

year), childhood sexual abuse, and spiking, and we have captured honour-based abuse and physical violence/assault in our data this year.

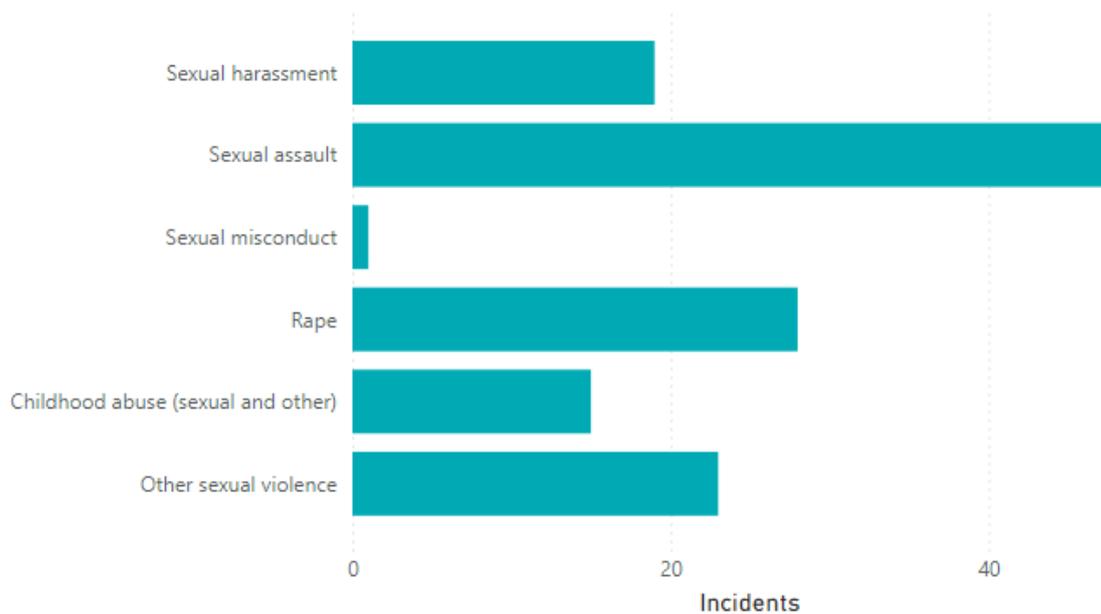
During an appointment, a student may disclose multiple behaviours which have occurred during a single encounter, or on separate occasions. Each of the incidents disclosed are captured in the below tables.

### Reported Behaviour



### Breakdown of sexual violence incidents:

#### Reported Behaviour

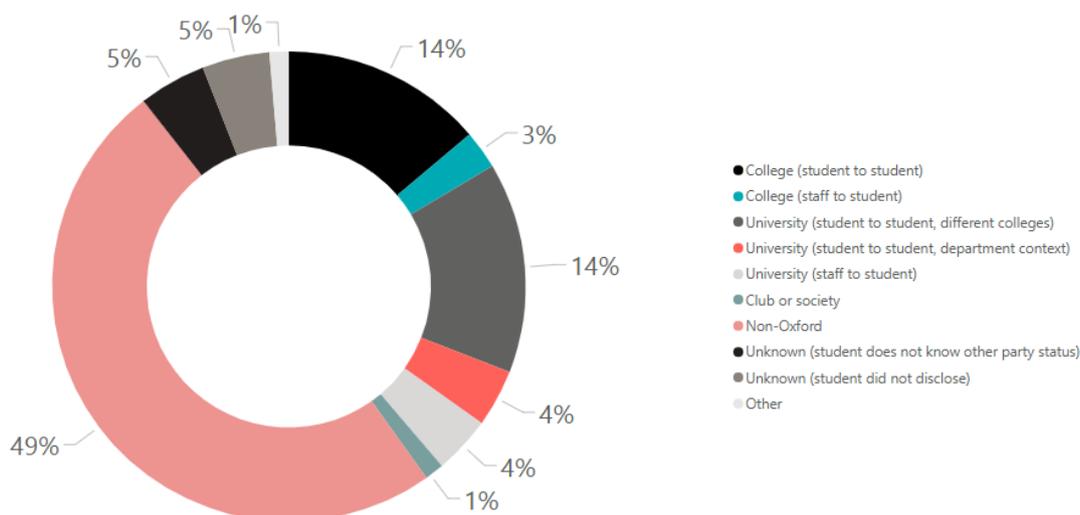


Context of behaviour highlights who was involved in an incident, where it took place, and the relationship with the collegiate University.

In line with the previous year, 49% of incidents disclosed to the Service in 2023/24 took place outside of the University context. This includes incidents which occurred prior to the student starting at Oxford such as at school, a previous university or during childhood, and incidents involving non-University members, either taking place in Oxford or elsewhere. Individuals involved with these incidents included members of the public, friends/partners outside of the University and family members. Cases linked to the University or College context, including clubs/societies, accounted for 40% of cases. Nearly 7% of cases involved a member of either University or College staff.

In 30% of cases seen by the Service, the reported party was a partner (13%) or ex-partner (17%). Friends and acquaintances accounted for 31% of cases. In 10% of cases, the reported party was not known to the student.

### Context of Behaviour



In line with national statistics, in the majority of cases the reported party was male (86%). The reported party was identified as female in 8% of cases, and 6% of students did not disclose this during an appointment. In nearly 10% of appointments, students shared that there were multiple incidents they had experienced in addition to the primary reason they were accessing the Service.

### 2.1.5 Case outcomes – University and College cases

Case outcome data is captured based on what a student shares with the Service during an appointment, and may not reflect what they then go on to do (as our support is often short-term and captures a moment in time, and students may not return to the service to share their decision or an outcome). This year, only 16% of students were considering making a University or college complaint. 52% of students did not intend to make any formal report. 6% of students had an active police report, and 3% had an active college complaint. No students had an active or concluded complaint with the University’s Proctors’ Office. The Service provides detailed advice

on complaints procedures and reporting options, and will empower a student to make the decision that is right for them.

## 2.1.6 Student demographics

### *Gender*

Students can self-describe their gender during the referral process or choose not to answer.

The number of male students accessing the service nearly doubled, accounting for 13% of casework compared to 7% last year. This is a significant increase and may be due to increased promotional efforts and a commitment to improving the accessibility and inclusivity of the Service.

The majority (69%) of students accessing the service were female. Non-binary students accounted for 2% of cases, 1% of students self-described their gender, and 15% of students did not share their gender as part of completing the form.

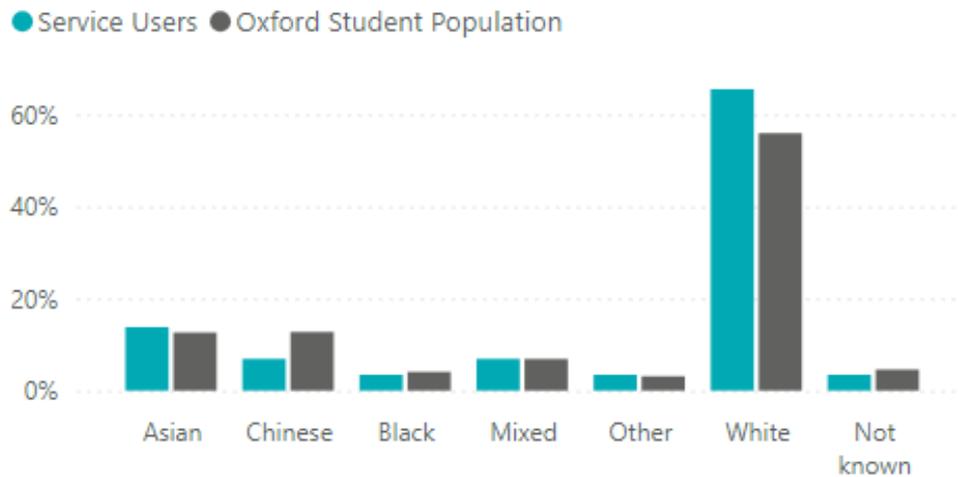
We know that LGBTQIA+ individuals are disproportionately affected by sexual harassment and violence, and domestic abuse) and we are striving to increase the accessibility of the Service for this community, acknowledging barriers to accessing support and looking to address these through training for the staff team, and collaboration with LGBTQIA+ services. We are changing the way we collect data on gender, as well as adding an option for students to share their sexuality during the referral process, to better understand the demographic of students accessing our service.

### *Ethnicity*

Similar to last year, 66% of students accessing the service were white, which is higher than the general student population.

There was an increase in Asian and Chinese students accessing the service this year (14% and 7% respectively, compared to 8% and 4% last year), more in line with the general student population, however this is still not representative of the Chinese student population. 3% of students were black and 7% mixed ethnicity. We aim to improve awareness and accessibility of our service through targeted work and reviewing our training materials to tailor content to students from a diverse range of backgrounds.

## Ethnicity

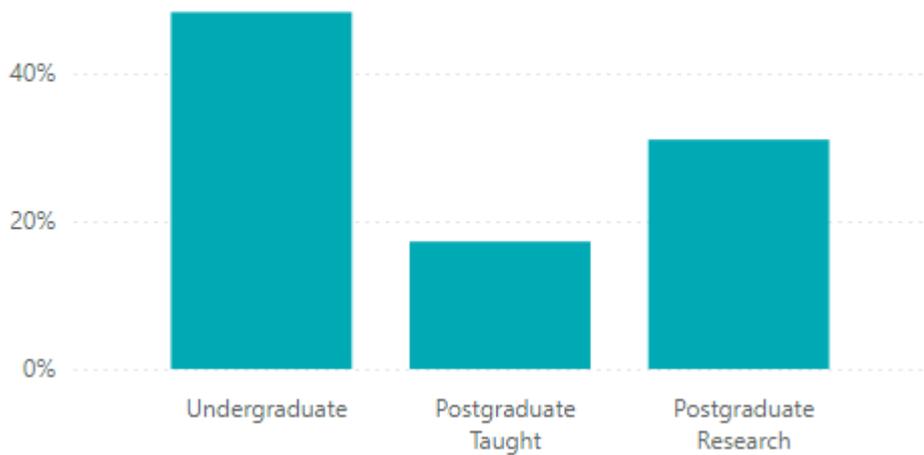


Ethnicity	Service Users	Student Population
Asian	14%	13%
Black	3%	4%
Chinese	7%	13%
Mixed	7%	7%
Other	3%	3%
White	66%	56%
Unknown	3%	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### *Level of Study and Division*

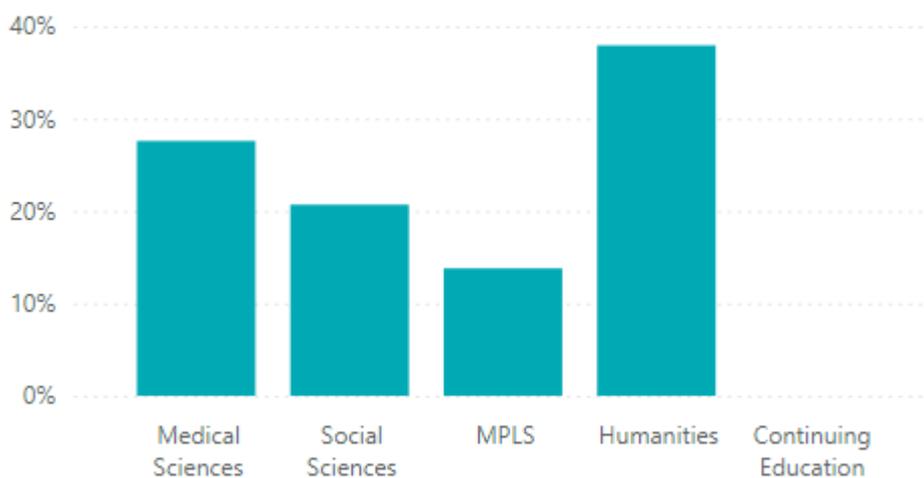
The number of undergraduates (48%) and postgraduates (taught – 17% and research – 31%) who accessed the service in 2023/24 were similar to the previous year.

## Level of Study



As in previous years, a high proportion (38%) of students who engaged with the service were from Humanities. In Medical Sciences there was a 13% increase (from 15% in 2022/23 to 28% in 2023/24) in students accessing the Service, and a small decrease in students from MPLS.

## Academic Division



### 2.1.7 Student feedback

Feedback for the Service remains overwhelmingly positive. Following an appointment, students are invited to provide feedback on their experience through an anonymous form. 14 students (10% of student's who had an appointment) completed the form following an appointment. This year, 93% of students rated the service excellent, and 7% rated it good. Low uptake of completing the feedback form may be down to the nature of the support offered, and students wishing to contain their experiences to the appointment without any follow up.

100% of respondents:

- Felt confident accessing further support and empowered to make decisions about their future;
- Felt less isolated and alone, and experienced their caseworker as sensitive and understanding to their needs and situation;
- Felt listened to without judgement, understood and believed;
- Felt safer overall;
- Got what they wanted from the service.

Qualitative feedback from students on the support they received and what they valued most included:

- “I was made to feel really comfortable the whole way through, in every way!!”
- “The caseworker I met was very experienced and professional. She was also empathetic and quickly grasped my issue without needing extensive details... The information she provided was very constructive, making me regret not contacting this service sooner.”
- “(Caseworker) was an absolutely phenomenal support... Throughout she was validating of my experiences and helped me reinforce to myself that I am a survivor of sexual violence, and the struggles I have had throughout the year are valid.”
- “The caseworker was very knowledgeable and provided a comprehensive information on my options without making me feel overwhelmed.”
- “Talking to the advisor was different from talking to a friend, even though they were empathetic and compassionate on a similar level. This has not only helped me to cope with the past better and look into the future – but also to be a better friend and support-giver myself.”
- “It was incredible”
- The appointment was incredibly helpful and it felt like a safe space to express thoughts and emotions, and I found it really helpful to receive a bit of neuroscience background and new perspectives on the situation which finally eased the self-blame.”

A follow-up feedback form is sent at the end of each term, to students who attended an appointment in the previous term. 10 students completed this form. 38% of respondents had received a follow-up appointment, whilst 25% had engaged in email support, with students providing similar positive feedback on their experience.

## **2.2 University Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) Support**

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“The service made me feel believed and validated during a period when no one else did. This support was essential during this period of my life and helped me to cope with understanding what had happened.”

*Student feedback*

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A key component of the SHVSS is the University Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA). The ISVA is employed by the local specialist rape crisis centre, Survivor Space, formerly known as Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre (OSARCC) and works solely with Oxford University students.

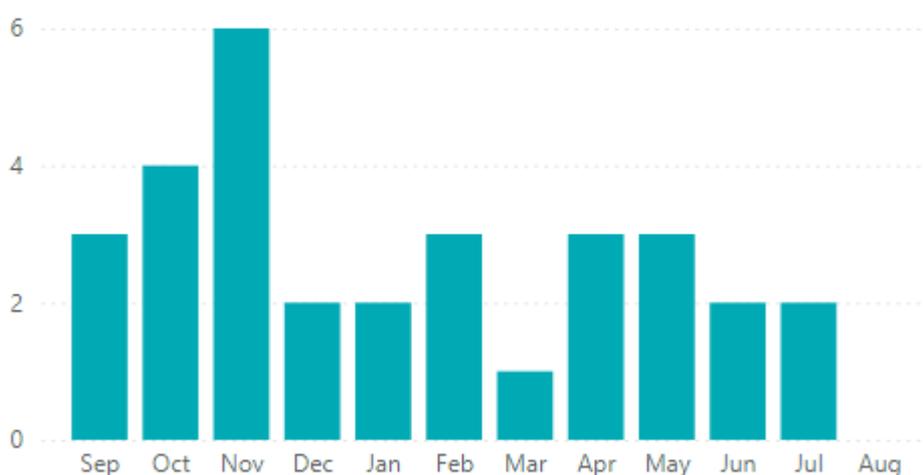
The ISVA is an expert on the criminal justice system and police processes and can also provide support to students with University or college reporting policies and procedures. Their specialism allows them to support students who are considering, or are in the process of, making a report to the police. Alongside reporting guidance and advice, they can act as an advocate, providing emotional and practical support and assistance.

### 2.2.1 Referrals

There was a slight decrease in referrals in 2023/2024, compared to the previous year. 37 students received support from the ISVA service, which included 31 new students and six students from a previous reporting period. This is a decrease from 54 students supported by the service in 2022/23, 35 of which were new referrals. The decrease is likely due to several factors, including increased complexity of service user circumstances and needs, and delays in the Criminal Justice System. There have also been multiple staff changes over recent years, which may be contributing to decreased awareness and visibility of the service. The ISVA is continuing to build relationships with colleges and departments, ensuring staff are familiar with the service and referral pathways.

Referrals this year follow a similar pattern to previous years, though there was an increased number of students making referrals over the summer. Most referrals (81%) come from individuals self-referring, while the remaining 19% are from professionals and the University. Individuals who self-refer tend to feel more empowered and are more likely to engage with the service. However, the low proportion of referrals from professionals highlights the need for improved outreach and stronger partnerships with both the University and the wider community.

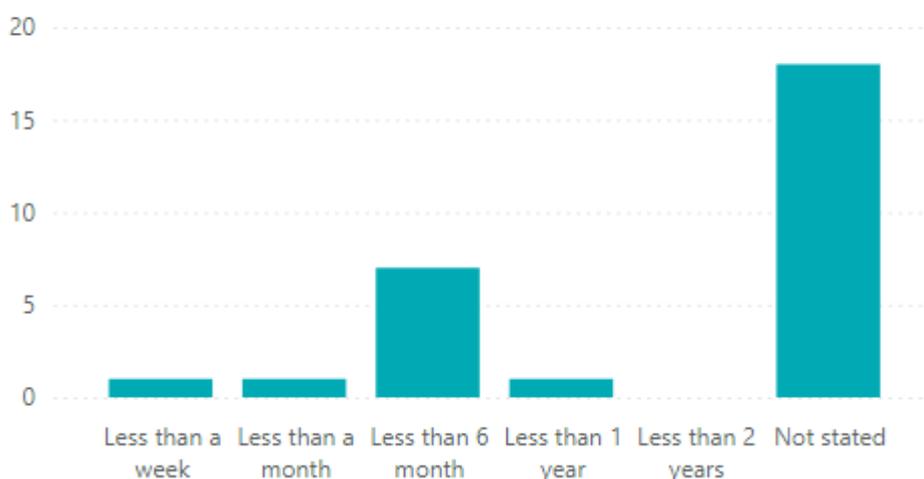
Referrals by Month



## 2.2.2 Timescales for seeking support

In cases where the service user disclosed when the incident occurred, the majority had experienced a recent incident within the last 6 months.

### Timescales for Seeking Support



## 2.2.3 Reported behaviour, context, and relationship with reported party

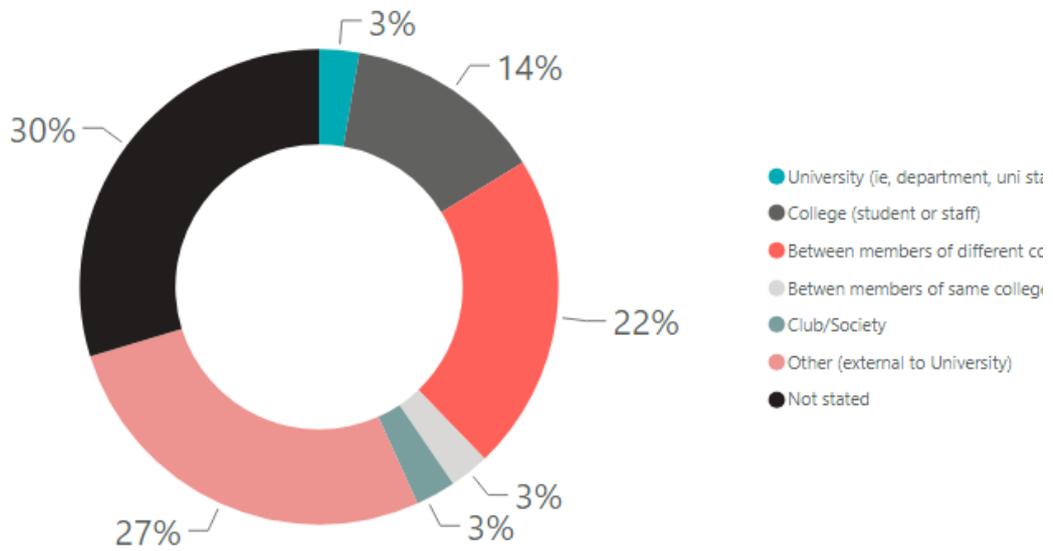
Similar to the Support Service, Survivor Space records students' experiences based on how they label and define what happened to them. Most of these incidents were rape (27%) or sexual violence or assault (38%), followed by stalking and harassment. This is comparable to previous years.

### Reported Behaviour



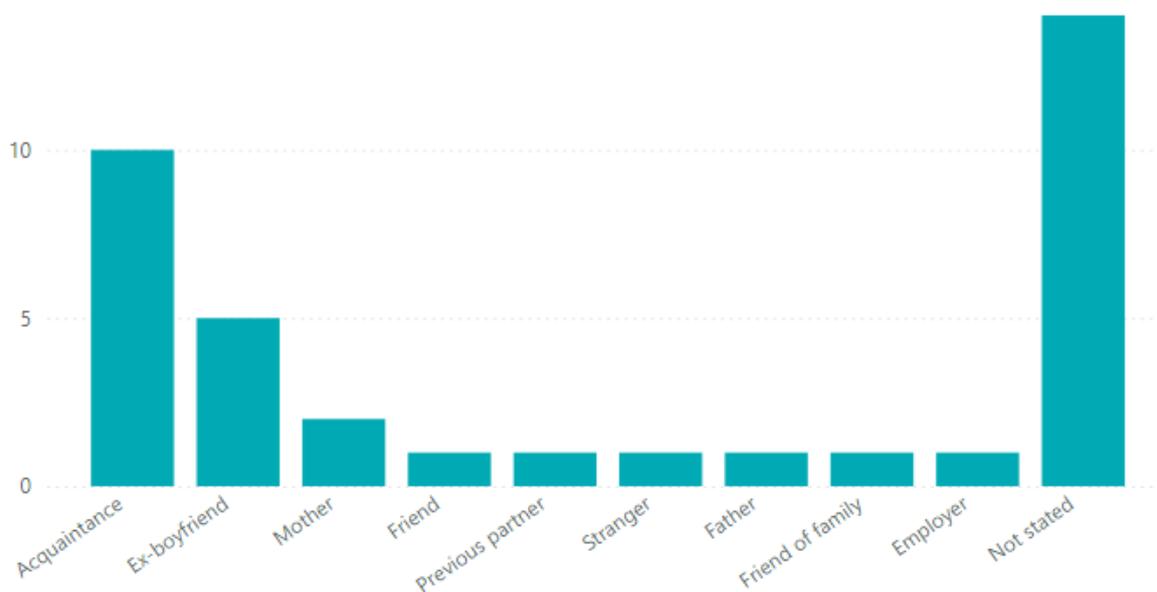
More incidents of sexual violence (including rape and sexual assault) occurred within the University/College setting, than externally to the University.

## Context of Behaviour



In 97% of cases, the reported party was known to the student. This aligns with the picture nationally, where the majority of people who have experienced sexual violence are harmed by someone known to them. Most people reported within the University context are peers (41%), with 30% of cases involving non-university members.

## Relationship with Reported Party



## 2.2.4 Reporting status

For the second year in a row, Survivor Space observed an increase in the number of people reporting incidents to the police (50% of students reported to the police, compared to 43% in 2022/23), and an increase in active cases with the Criminal Justice System (CJS) (30% compared to 28%). There has been an increase in active CJS cases year-on-year since 2018/19. These increases may be linked to the support provided by the ISVA, and more awareness of what the ISVA service does, resulting in receiving more appropriate referrals. Given a distrust of the CJS, low conviction rates and impact of an investigation on a survivor, including the potential to continue overlapping with the reported party at Oxford, the proportion of students who chose not to report to the police remains high.

16% of students reported to the University's Proctors' Office and 11% reported to their College. Many students choose not to report the incident due to concerns about a negative outcome or no action being taken, and concerns that the University may not investigate reports of serious sexual misconduct which could constitute a serious criminal offence unless the matter has been reported to the police and they have investigated. This can deter students from reporting to the University if they do not wish to report to the police, and students may also feel unsupported for this decision.

## 2.2.5 Student demographics

### *Gender*

Most service users were cis-women (86%). The number of cis-men accessing the service increased to 11%, whilst there was a decrease in non-binary services users to 3%. Survivor Space are prioritising outreach to non-binary, trans people, and gender non-conforming people, who are disproportionately affected by sexual violence.

### *Age and level of study*

73% of service users were aged between 18 and 24, and the majority (78%) of people were undergraduate students.

### *Ethnicity*

The majority of students accessing the service were white (77%), with 6% from a Chinese background, 3% from Asian or Asian British, and 3% from Black or Black British ethnicity. 11% were from mixed, dual or another ethnic background. Survivor Space will be prioritising outreach work to raise awareness of the service to people of the global majority, who are underrepresented at present.

## 2.2.6 Student feedback

55% of service users provided feedback at the point of their support coming to an end. Of those, 67% said the ISVA service was excellent, and 33% rated it good. 100% of service users reported they were taking better care of their physical health, felt able to better manage self-harm, had enough information about what to do, felt heard, believed and empowered and felt able to understand the legal system and procedures and were able to go through legal proceedings if they chose/were required to.

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“It made a difficult situation a bit easier and this is invaluable. Thank you.”

*Student feedback*

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## **2.3 Support for Reported Students**

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“I thought my advisor found the perfect balance between relevant advice tailored to my situation alongside emotional support.”

*Student feedback*

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A developing aspect of SHVSS is the support offered to students who have been accused of, or reported for, sexual misconduct. Individuals facing a report or allegations can often face increased isolation and the Specialist Caseworker for this service offers practical and emotional support. This guidance is particularly focused around understanding complex disciplinary processes and what happens following a formal report, irrespective of whether the complaint is upheld. Students receive tailored support helping them to continue to engage with their studies, alongside emotional support, safety planning and linking with further specialist services.

A dedicated Specialist Caseworker for the service has developed several resources for reported students and staff supporting them and is working closely with colleges to provide joined up support for students, ensuring increased clarity and guidance around disciplinary processes.

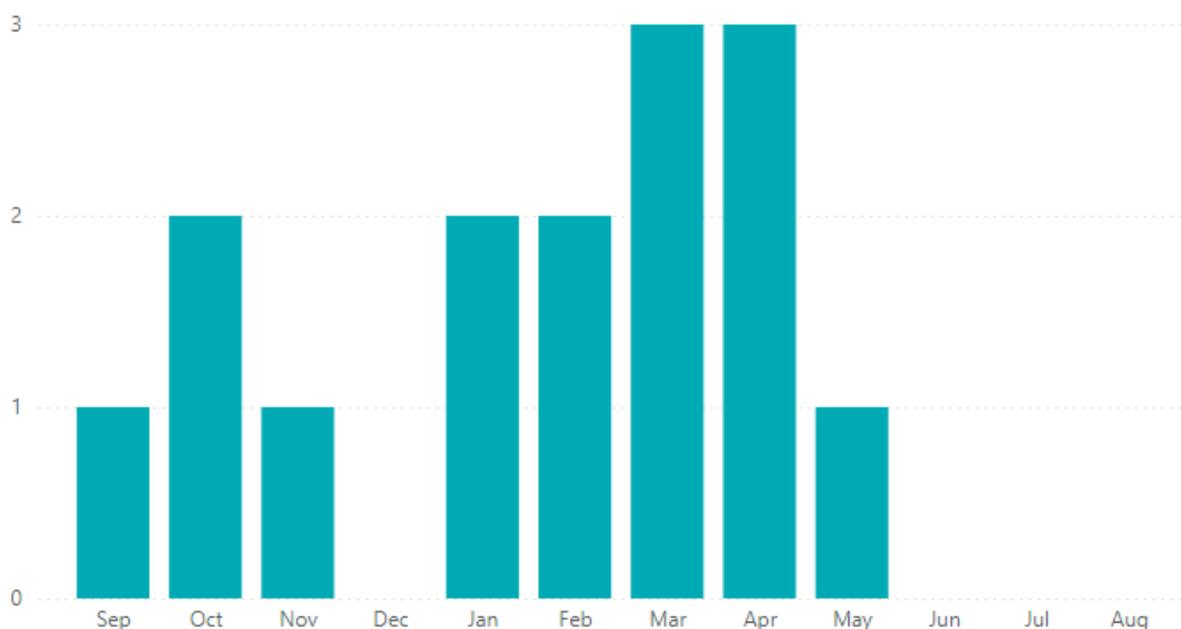
### **2.3.1 Referrals**

16 students referred into the service this year, compared with 15 students last academic year, 14 the year before, and 23 in 2020-21. 13 students received support. two students decided not to go ahead with an appointment but received email support, and one student was signposted to a more appropriate service. Three students had been seen in a previous academic year and are included in the above data.

In most cases (nine), students were referred by a member of the college welfare team.

The average waiting time from the date of the referral to the appointment was 11 days.

### Month of Referral



### 2.3.2 Demographics

Due to the small number of students seeking support from the service this year, the following data should not be interpreted to reflect experiences amongst the wider University student population.

This year, 92% of students accessing the service were male. 54% were Undergraduates, 23% Postgraduate Taught and 15% Postgraduate Research. 8% were Visiting Students.

There was a slightly higher number of students from MPLS (38%) compared to Social Sciences (23%), Medical Sciences (15%) and Humanities, Continuing Education and unknown (all 8%).

### 2.3.3 Student feedback

A short feedback form was shared with students who accessed the reported student service. Students shared the main reason they contacted the Service was for emotional support, information on disciplinary processes, information on support available and general advice.

100% of students agreed they got the information and support they wanted, felt listened to and understood, felt the caseworker was sensitive to their needs and situation and helped them understand the relevant pathways and policies. Students also reported feeling less isolated and alone.

100% of students rated the service they received as excellent. We will continue to share the feedback form with all students accessing the service to gather further feedback to inform the service.

## 3. Other areas of service delivery

### 3.1 Healthy Relationships and Consent Training

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“It was a professional, productive and insightful workshop that reassuringly helps make Oxford a safer space for everyone.”

*Workshop attendee*

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The University of Oxford is committed to preventing sexual misconduct and developing a culture of consent through education and training. In Michaelmas term 2023, a new online consent training was launched, and all students were strongly encouraged to complete this. “Consent for Students” was developed by the sexual health charity, Brook, and is available to all new and returning students. 3,307 students completed the training throughout the year, of which around 68% were new starters, and 68% of these students were undergraduates. This is the highest completion rate of online training since online consent training was made available in 2020. This is compared to 1,778 students who completed the previously available “Consent Matters” online training in 2022/23.

Students were asked for feedback after completing this training, and a follow-up feedback form was sent in February 2024, aiming to look at longer-term impact. Following the training, 94% of respondents reported a strong level of knowledge and understanding of consent, up from 66% reporting a strong level of knowledge prior to the training.

The Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service also expanded the in-person Healthy Relationships and Consent Workshop programme in 2023/24, which ran in eight colleges, up from two colleges last academic year. 45 students attended a full day of training with SHVSS, equipping them to deliver the peer-led workshops in their colleges. Facilitators also attended a supervision session with SHVSS following delivery of the workshops.

Feedback from both facilitators and workshop attendees was highly positive. Over 600 student workshop participants’ provided feedback on these workshops. Participants reported a better understanding of healthy relationships (72%) and sexual consent (70%), and 81% reported feeling more confident signposting someone who has experienced sexual violence, stalking or relationship abuse to further support.

81% felt the workshop was a safe space to express their thoughts and suggestions, and 88% felt the workshop was inclusive and accessible. 90% of respondents felt the student Peer Facilitators were knowledgeable and engaging, and the workshop being peer-led was frequently cited as being useful.

### 3.2 Staff and Student Training and Consultation

This year, a variety of training has been developed and delivered to staff, contributing to a whole-university approach to understanding sexual violence and better supporting students. This is a key component of increasing and improving preventative and educational work, and topics include domestic abuse, stalking and sexual violence. Focusing on a more tailored approach, SHVSS has rolled out specialist training to college welfare staff, college Porter’s, Sports Welfare Reps,

student-facing staff in non-welfare roles, and Student Welfare and Support Services colleagues.

Over 272 individuals attended training through the service, increasing participant's knowledge, confidence, and skills. Feedback has been hugely positive with the majority of attendees rating the training excellent or very good.

In addition to training, the service offers confidential no-names advice to staff across the collegiate university. 48 individuals accessed this provision last year.

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"I find being able to speak to members of the SHVSS team on a no-names basis invaluable. I have spoken to the team about complex issues. Their advice has enabled me to provide the best support to the students involved and given me confidence."

*College Welfare Lead*

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### 3.3 Groups

This year, the Support Service has worked collaboratively with the University Counselling Service to run two supportive groups for students.

"Tea and Talk" has been running since Hilary Term 2023, providing a safe space for students who have experienced sexual violence and domestic abuse to share the impact of their experiences, discuss ways to support their wellbeing and build a community of support through what can be a lonely and isolating time. Four students have regularly attended this year.

A new group, "Courage to Connect", was piloted in Hilary Term 2024 and offers a safe, confidential, and structured 8-week group for students who have previously experienced any form of coercive control, relationship abuse or domestic abuse. The group is also suitable for students who have grown up in a household where they have witnessed, or been affected by, domestic abuse. 11 students attended across two groups. 100% of students found the group useful and would recommend it to peers.

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"The workshop was really helpful in reminding me about the healthy things I could do to take care of myself and set boundaries to look after myself."

*Group participant*

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### 3.4 Other Service Developments

- New resources have been created and distributed to staff, providing guidance on managing disclosures well and signposting students to appropriate services.
- We have also developed a range of resources for students to draw on following an appointment with a caseworker, which provide guidance and information on topics such as flashbacks, keeping safe and grounding techniques.

- We supported the roll-out of the [OUR SPACE 2 survey](#), a University-wide study into the prevalence of sexual violence and harassment at the University of Oxford, and continue to collaborate with researchers on this, along with exploring additional relevant projects.

## 4. Conclusions and looking ahead

The Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service continues to play a vital role in supporting students impacted by sexual violence, harassment, domestic abuse, coercive control, and stalking. The service has grown and evolved to successfully meet growing demand and provided timely, effective support for students. Our commitment to balancing student casework alongside preventative and educational initiatives has been validated through our excellent response times, and exceptional feedback from service users and staff across the collegiate university.

We have launched several new initiatives, including specialised training, groups, and resources, in response to increasing demand and the emerging needs of the student community and staff working with them. In the coming year, we will continue to work closely with colleagues and partners to foster a safer, more inclusive university environment.

Looking ahead, we are set to build on our successes from last year, and work to address some of the challenges identified in this report, such as increasingly complex casework, student confidence in reporting to the university, college or police, and barriers to accessing support for various student groups.

Building on last year's aims – maximising impact, improving culture and increasing visibility and inclusivity of the service – we are hoping to focus on the following:

### Maximising impact:

We remain committed to meeting emerging challenges and opportunities. The new [Office for Students Condition \(E6\) regulation for how universities prevent and tackle harassment and sexual misconduct](#) will guide aspects of further service development and growth, and we will be working closely with colleagues across the collegiate University to meet these requirements.

We will undertake a review of our training, to ensure it is relevant, effective, and informed by sector guidance. We will work closely with experts, including researchers from the OUR SPACE studies, to guide our content and delivery methods.

We will continue to work collaboratively with staff across Student Welfare and Support Services to provide joined-up support to students, share expertise and co-deliver projects to reach an increased number of students.

We will also continue to prioritise timely, high quality and effective support to students who need us, ensuring our practitioners are reflective and receive individual and group supervision, as well as training and professional development opportunities, to mitigate against burnout, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma.

### Improving Culture:

We will continue to develop and promote our consent training options, whilst exploring future developments that will optimise impact. We will remain responsive to the training needs of staff, listening to feedback and delivering training to equip university and college staff with the confidence and skills to effectively provide safe,

compassionate, and informed responses to students seeking support, whilst signposting them to specialist provisions.

Increasing visibility and inclusivity:

We will continue to explore existing and new avenues allowing us to increase the visibility and profile of the service, ensuring every member of the University community is aware of the services we offer. We will do this through structured communications, training, no-names consultations, publication of guidance to staff, and increased partnership working.

The team will also continue to upskill in key areas we are seeing an increase in cases related to, such as honour-based abuse, trauma-informed practices and supporting LGBTQ+ students impacted by sexual violence and domestic abuse. Through data collection, targeted outreach, and partnerships with University and community organisations, we aim to demonstrate our commitment to better understanding the unique challenges and risks facing these individuals and provide comprehensive and informed support. Continued efforts to ensure the service is accessible to all students, particularly those in currently underrepresented groups, remains a top priority for the Department.