**Minutes from ‘Addressing GBV and Sexual Harassment Strategy Group Meeting’**

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| *Subject*: GBV and Sexual Harassment | *Date:* 5/12/2023 |
| *Location:* Microsoft Teams | *Time:* 10:30 – 12:30 |

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| *Chair:* Nick Edwards *- NGE* | *Clerk:* Lisa Kilgour - *LK* | *Minute Taker:* Iona Rae - *IR* |

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| *Attendees* | *Apologies* |
| Jemma Murdoch *(JM)* | Vice President for Welfare (Sai) |
| Janine Chalmers *(JC)* | Fiona Smith |
| Lindsey Hamilton *(LH)* | Isla Callander  |
| Laura Benvie *(LB)* |  |
| Owen Cox *(OC)* |  |
| Anna Shea *(AS)* |  |
| Ruin Carroll – Four Pillars *(RC)* |  |
| Ellie Dick *(ED)* |  |
| Keith Campbell *(KC*) |  |
| Melanie McCan (MM) |  |

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| *Speaker* | *Agenda Item* | *Points* | *Action* |
| *NGE* | **1** *Welcome*  | * Last strategy group meeting of 2023.
* Introductions to *Ruin Carroll* (Four Pillars) from the group.
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| *RC* | **2***Guest Slot: Ruin Carroll (LGBT+ Outreach Co-ordinator, Four Pillars)* | * Grampian charity that supports LGBT+ people in Aberdeen, the Shire and Moray
* Staff provide 1:1 support as well as training for workplaces, schools and individuals.

What is the LGBT community?* LGBT+ community includes Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities. The ‘+’ refers to all the other groups that come under the umbrella term and recognises that everyone is different.
* It is an accepted and inclusive term to identify the community.

What does accessing support look like?* Historically it can be hard for the community to access support due to barriers both personally and systematically.
* This can be due to several things:
* Lack of leaflets and resources around issues that impact the community.
* Lack of established partnerships, referral pathways and communications between organisations.
* Hesitancies due to internal and external biases.

What could the University do to encourage the LGBT+ community to access support?* Inclusive and welcoming space to make the community feel comfortable.
* Gender neutral bathrooms and pronouns in email signatures. As this will encourage trust that the institution will take things seriously.
* Intersectionality of their protected characteristics, this will encourage then to report to the police.
* Honesty about what the reporting process will look like if they contact the police and that it might not be linear, or easy.

What information would be helpful to include in student comms to encourage students to report sexual violence?* Consistency of reiterating support resources.
* Letting the community know about events and societies for the LGBT+ community.
* Anonymous safe quotes from students who have previously engaged with the services.

**Questions*****(All answered by RC)****NGE* – What does it look like to be in the LGBT+ community in Aberdeen?* Multiple facets of community that depend on age, gender identity and political activity etc. Four Pillars offers a space for all and has a very diverse community. NESCOL, RGU and UoA students all access the service. There is clear solidarity in the community within Aberdeen.

*NGE* – What are the issues beyond GBV within the LGBT+ community in Aberdeen that UoA could do more to help with?* Increase in anti-trans rhetoric which anecdotally increases Trans harassment and violence within the city.
* 90% of Four Pillars 1:1 sessions are accessed by young transgender people who are experiencing identity-based hatred.
* It is important to reassure them that they are being heard and have a safe space to discuss what they are experiencing.

*LK* – How many university students typically engage with the service?* University is brought up in the initial interactions but tails off after that.
* Increase in exam stress being mentioned in recent weeks.
* Isolation and unfamiliarity with the new city and how students can access their new community and support system.

*AS* and *ED* both reiterate that their services are open and willing to ensure partnership working continues with Four Pillars and the institution. *OC* – There is also the staff community that might need/want to access the service, so Four Pillars also needs to be aware of the escalation routes from that perspective.*LK* – is there any specific language that can be used in the instance of misgendering someone?* LGBT+ people are typically pretty sensitive as to whether something is said accidently, versus on purpose.
* Reiterate that it was an accident, apologise, and state that you will do your best to endeavour that it doesn’t happen again. Be accountable for your actions.
* Don’t beat yourself up about making a mistake as that will compound the anxiety and make it worse as it will increase the likelihood of that mistake happening again.

*LK* – Would there be any benefit in letting students know that there are staff members who are part of the community so that they can speak with them directly?* It must be at the staff members discretion so that they can make that choice themselves. It might help to encourage students to come forward as they can speak to someone who identifies similarly to them.
* *AS* raises concerns that it might appear to students that some departments, who don’t have a staff member that is willing to disclose their identity publicly, might have no one for the LGBT+ community to speak with.

*LB* mentions that for the neurodiverse community sometimes pronouns can feel overwhelming, if this is the case, the persons name can always be used in place of specific pronouns. *RC* is impressed by UoA’s commitment to equality and diversity. They reiterate that they can always be reached by email and are willing to answer any questions no matter how big or small. | *LK* to send resources to *RC* about support services at UoA. |
| *NGE* | **3***Convener’s Update*  | * Currently in the midst of the 16 Days of Actions campaign. Thanks to *LK* and *Karen Scaife* for their work on the communication and activities plan.
* *LK* and *IR* wrote to local nightlife venues in the city to encourage partnership working and to ask if they take part in the Ask Angela initiative. *NGE* has had some responses and aims to update the group in due course and set up a corresponding meeting.
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| *NGE* | **4***Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 25/09/2023* | * No comments or concerns.
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| *LB* | **5***Neurodiversity and GBV* | * *LB* shares her PowerPoint ‘Neurodiversity and Personal Safety’ and reiterates the statistic that 90% of autistic women will be a victim of Sexual Assault in their lifetime.

LB raised the issues of support for disabled students who have experienced/are experiencing GBV:* Digital safety (i.e., how can we make sure neurodiverse students know what is safe to share online and what is not).
* Sharing of personal details (i.e., when to share bank details, phone number etc, make sure not to share your PIN with anyone).
* Burnout and the impact of this on personal safety.
* Consent awareness.
* Support networks (i.e., who is around to support neurodiverse students who have experienced GBV).
* Preventative approaches to GBV in education (i.e., how can we improve education).
* Communication and empowerment (i.e., how can we help neurodiverse students feel empowered to communicate what their needs are).

*OC* – these thoughts are fully supported by UNISON. It is important to remember that everyone and their needs will be different. It is important to remain fluid and inclusive in our approaches. *KC* – how are the police dealing with reports of GBV from the Autistic community? *LB* advises that some people might find it hard to communicate what has happened and understand what is being said/asked by the police. Things like who they are meeting, where, and what the surroundings look like, how they are getting there etc. can be incredibly overwhelming and might be a barrier for someone to access support. *NGE* states that small changes can be made to streamline this process and make things within our internal processes easier. *LK* advises that the police are typically receptive to these things and that people can feel empowered to ask questions and make requests to make the reporting process easier for them. *JC* – advises that there can be some ‘quick wins’ in terms of updating University training, recruitment, and communications to be more inclusive and supportive of the neurodiverse community. *LH* reiterates that this is something that can be discussed within their own team meeting and taken forward. *KC* advises that there could be some work done regarding First Aid rooms and their accessibility for the neurodiverse community to make them more welcoming and appealing. *NGE* – the work from *LB* can be taken forward to the Student Experience committee so that the relevant points can be discussed further. | LB to share the PowerPoint slides with the group.  |
| *NGE* | **6***EmilyTest Update*  | * LISTEN train the trainer is ready for progression in January 2024 with 5 members of staff from the University community partaking in it.

*LK* updates about the EmilyTest conference:* EmilyTest have just launched a member only area to make charter progress easier for institutions.
* Med2Lab is an AI company that is now working with EmilyTest to give them active LISTEN practice through technology. It uses a role play like structure, but virtually.
* *JM* advised about the benefits of engaging with other institutions about the work that they are doing in this area.
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| *NGE* | **7***Review of Reporting Tool Statistics*  | * Standing item on the agenda at 4 Strategy Group meetings a year.
* On a quarterly basis, the high-level statistics will be published.
* The free text box responses will never be published due to the sensitive nature of the disclosures.
* Going forward, the aim of this initiative is to see patterns and trends that can be addressed at an institutional level.
 | *LB* to send a copy of recent UNISON guidance and information.  |
| *NGE* | **8***Action Plan* | * Looking at updating our current Action Plan to mirror the 5 principles in the EmilyTest charter.
 | *NGE* to bring further thoughts about this at the next meeting.  |
| *NGE* | **9***AOCB* | *OC* brings forward the information from the EDI conference and thanks LK for the information she provided for his specific presentation. The increase of Third-Party Reports from students was also highlighted.  | *LK* to add Third Party Reporting to the next meeting’s agenda.  |

**Breakdown of Action Points**

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| *Action Point(s)* | *Person(s) Responsible* | *Deadline* |
| Send resources to *Four Pillars* about support services at UoA. | *LK* | N/A |
| Share the PowerPoint *‘Neurodiversity and Personal Safety’* slides with the group. | *LB* | N/A |
| Share copy of recent UNISON guidance and information. | *LB* | N/A |
| Look at changing the Strategy Groups Action Plan structure to mirror the 5 principles in the EmilyTest Charter. | *NGE* | N/A |
| Add Third Party Reporting to the next meeting’s agenda. | *LK* | N/A |