Gender Based Violence Action Network for Students: GBVANS

RNCM
ROYAL NORTHERN COLLEGE of MUSIC

GBVANS Statement of Concern
Self-Swab 'Rape Kits'
September 2026

Statement of Concern Regarding Self-Swab 'Rape Kits' by Greater Manchester Universities and the Gender Based Violence Action Network for Students*

We stand with partners across the sexual violence sector in raising concerns about self-swab 'rape kits'. We are particularly concerned with how organisations are targeting their promotion towards students. Manchester Metropolitan University, The University of Manchester and the University of Salford, as providers of Sexual Violence Liaison Officer support to students across the city, want to promote choice and ensure that students are fully informed on their options. We understand why, following an incident of sexual violence, students may seek alternative options, and we remain committed to ensuring that students, staff and the wider community have access to clear, accurate and evidence-based information and support.

Drawing on from knowledge shared within the sector, we do not feel that self-swab kits are a replacement for specialist support, whether that be from a university service, external charity, or local NHS Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), who can safely collect forensic evidence. ***Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester Metropolitan University, The University of Manchester and the University of Salford do not endorse these kits, and we have no partnership or affiliation with the companies behind them.***

Specialist organisations across the UK who provide support to victims of sexual violence have raised their concerns about these kits. The Faculty of Forensic & Legal Medicine at the Royal College of Physicians have recommended that these kits are not used, which was supported by Rape Crisis England and Wales, and more recently, the National Police Chiefs Council / National Centre for tackling Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection issued a clear statement regarding these kits.

Universities aim to create safe and supportive environments where students' wellbeing is our main priority. University students can work with specialist staff, who are trained to provide support and information following rape or sexual assault. Your university has a dedicated team that you can contact via an online disclosure platform called Report and Support, empowering you to make your own choices, when you're ready and ensuring you have access to specialist help (Report and Support Manchester; Report and Support MMU; Report-it University of Salford; RNCM Raise IT). This may include signposting to the local SARC, which does not require you to make a Police report to access their services.

We offer support to all survivors, regardless of gender, sexuality, or background. We can also offer support to those who are supporting a survivor. Whether an incident happened recently or some time ago, help is available and you do not have to face it alone.

**The Gender Based Violence Action Network for Students is an action group of Greater Manchester Universities, Students' Unions and student groups, and statutory and voluntary organisations. GBVANS members endorse this statement of concern:*

Current Signatories

1. Manchester Metropolitan University: www.mmu.ac.uk
2. University of Manchester: www.manchester.ac.uk
3. University of Salford: www.salford.ac.uk
4. University Academy 92: https://reportit.ua92.ac.uk/ [reportit.ua92.ac.uk]
5. Royal Northern College of Music: www.rncm.ac.uk
6. Students' Union, University of Manchester: www.manchesterstudentsunion.com
7. Action Together: www.actiontogether.org.uk
8. Bolton Council: www.bolton.gov.uk
9. Fortalice: www.fortalice.org.uk
10. George House Trust: www.ght.org.uk
11. Greater Manchester Police: www.gmp.police.uk
12. Greater Manchester Public Health Network: www.gmphn.com
13. Greater Manchester Rape Crisis: www.manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk
14. Greater Manchester VCFSE Safer and Stronger Communities Leadership Group: www.vcfseleadershipgm.org.uk/work/safer-stronger-communities
15. Greater Manchester Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Leadership Group: www.vcfseleadershipgm.org.uk
16. Independent Choices: www.domesticabusehelpline.co.uk
17. Institute for Addressing Strangulation (IFAS): www.ifas.org.uk
18. LGBT Foundation: www.lgbt.foundation
19. Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH): www.mash.org.uk
20. Manchester City Council: www.manchester.gov.uk
21. Manchester Community Central: www.manchestercommunitycentral.org
22. Manchester Women's Aid: www.manchesterwomensaid.org
23. Mandem Meetup: www.mandemmeetup.org
24. Oldham Council: www.oldham.gov.uk
25. Rochdale Borough Council: www.rochdale.gov.uk
26. Salford City Council: www.salford.gov.uk
27. Salford CVS (Community and Voluntary Services): www.salfordcvs.co.uk
28. Sara: www.talktosara.org
29. Sector 3: www.sector3sk.org
30. St Marys Sexual Assault Referral Centre: www.stmaryscentre.org
31. Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council: www.stockport.gov.uk
32. Tameside Council: www.tameside.gov.uk
33. Trafford Community Collective: www.traffordcollective.org.uk
34. Trafford Council: www.trafford.gov.uk
35. Trafford Domestic Abuse Service (TDAS): www.tdas.org.uk
36. Voluntary Sector North West: www.vsnw.org.uk
37. We Are Survivors: www.wearesurvivors.org.uk
38. Wigan Borough Community First: www.wbcf.co.uk

Gender Based Violence Action Network (GBVAN)

In 2021, the University of Manchester established the Gender Based Violence Action Network (GBVAN) for Students in partnership with the other Manchester Universities, Students' Unions, Greater Manchester Police, Local Authority and Local Services.

The network is committed to providing an effective partnership response to sexual violence and harassment for Manchester's significant student population.

The network aims to;

1. Improve our understanding of trends and patterns in sexual violence against students;
2. Increase students' confidence, trust, and awareness in reporting incidents to both GMP and the University;
3. Facilitate holistic multi-agency support for student victim/survivors of sexual violence
4. Share relevant campaigns and communications across partners to raise awareness of these issues amongst students;
5. Identify and share good practice in Manchester, nationally and internationally.
6. To highlight issues of sexual violence against students to wider bodies such as local and national government

The network recognises and understands the importance of these issues within different student communities. The individual universities in partnership with Students' Unions will consult with relevant student groups for feedback on the work of the network and to set priorities and the direction of the group. Particularly important is the student/survivor voice and the network is committed to capturing and enhancing this.

If you would like any more information about the network, please contact co-Chair of the Network, **Spencer Davies**, Head of Advice and Response (Safeguarding, Gender-Based Violence and Hate). Email:**spencer.davies@manchester.ac.uk**

Greater Manchester Sexual Harms Sector

The following specialist services work across Greater Manchester in supporting those directly affected by sexual abuse, rape, sexual exploitation and sexual harms; and their loved ones:

Women and Girls

- **Greater Manchester Rape Crisis** support women and girls affected by rape and sexual abuse in Greater Manchester – **0161 273 4500**
- **SARA** support women and girls affected by rape and sexual abuse in Greater Manchester – **0161 968 2820**
- **MASH** support women who sex work to experience good health, safety and emotional wellbeing **- 0800 183 0499**
- **Manchester Women's Aid (Renew Service)** providing additional support for women who have experienced sexual assault in Manchester - **0161 660 7999**
- **LGBT Foundation (ISVA Service)** providing ISVA support for gay/bi/trans women who have experienced sexual assault in Manchester – **0345 3 30 30 30**

- **Saint Marys Sexual Assault Referral Centre** proving forensic medical examinations to all adults and children in Greater Manchester - **0161 276 6515**

Men and Boys

- **We Are Survivors** support male victims/survivors of sexual harms in Greater Manchester and beyond, including those in the Northwest Prison estate – **0161 236 2182**
- **LGBT Foundation (ISVA Service)** providing ISVA support for gay/bi/trans men who have experienced sexual assault in Manchester – **0345 3 30 30 30**
- **Saint Marys Sexual Assault Referral Centre** proving forensic medical examinations to all adults and children in Greater Manchester - **0161 276 6515**

Loved Ones of Victims/Survivors

- **Nightingale @ We Are Survivors** supporting the loved ones (all genders) of male victims/survivors of sexual harms in Greater Manchester – **0161 236 2182**
- **Nightingale @ The Pankhurst Centre** supporting the adult loved ones (all genders) of female victims/survivors of sexual harms in Greater Manchester – **0161 660 7999**
- **Greater Manchester Rape Crisis** support the loved ones (all genders) of women affected by rape and sexual abuse in Greater Manchester – **0161 273 4500**