

# 16 days of action against gender-based violence

## 25 November – 10 December 2017

The student movement and the women's movement both have a long history of political campaigning. Campaigning during the 16 days of action against gender-based violence is a key time when students' associations and women's groups come out in force to take action.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence was a movement which began at the Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991. Since 1991, 5,167 groups in 187 countries have contributed to promoting and supporting these 16 Days. Large organisations such as the world-renowned Amnesty International and World Health Organisation support and celebrate the 16 Days, as well as far more local, grassroots projects. **Our focus for the 16 days of action this year is tackling gender based violence on campus.**

A report published by the National Union of Students (2013) found that **1 in 4 female students reported ED unwanted sexual behaviour during their studies** and **1 in 5 experiencing sexual harassment during their first week of term**. This followed on from research in 2010 which showed that **14 per cent of women students had experienced serious sexual violence**, the majority of which was **carried out by fellow students**. Of these only **4 per cent reported this to their institution**.

These statistics highlight the scale of the problem across colleges and universities and evidence the need for further action to be taken.

In spring 2018 a toolkit produced by the University of Strathclyde through their Government-funded Equally Safe in Higher

Education (ESHE) project will provide guidance and practical steps for universities in Scotland to tackle gender based violence on campus. Whilst we welcome the release of the toolkit we think that colleges and universities can take action now to tackle gender based violence on campus, and student groups have a role to play in pushing for their institution to do more.

The 16 days of action are a key time for you to start discussions with your institution about preventing and tackling gender-based violence, to raise awareness for students and staff about the support services available and to host events and activities to engage the student community in the issue.

Nationally we're also supporting the call for an increase to funding for colleges and universities to tackle gender based violence and for the work of ESHE to be extended to colleges.

**We've put together 5 things you can do during the 16 days of action to tackle gender-based violence on campus.**

**For help or more information please contact Shuwanna Aaron, NUS Scotland Women's Officer on [shuwanna.aaron@nus-scotland.org.uk](mailto:shuwanna.aaron@nus-scotland.org.uk)**

## 1. Raise awareness of support services available to victims of GBV

We've created some **posters, cards and social media graphics** highlighting where **victims of gender-based violence can seek support**. These detail national helplines that students can call.

We have a limited supply of materials that we can send out for you to use on campus. Contact [mail@nus-scotland.org.uk](mailto:mail@nus-scotland.org.uk) or download them at the link below to print yourself!

<https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/nus-scotland/campaigns/tackling-gender-based-violence>

Why not find out about **local support services** for victims of gender-based violence? You could also ask your institution to **put up posters** in halls and around campus highlighting support services. Go digital and **ask your institution to send out an all student and staff email** during the 16 days of action to highlight these services and get them to put the **information up on the virtual learning environment**.

## 2. Sign the national petition

We're supporting a **national petition calling for increased funding for colleges and universities to support students affected by gender-based violence**. This petition has been set up by Fiona Drouet, whose daughter Emily was subjected to abuse and violence from her boyfriend when she lived in university halls. Emily tried to get help but in March 2016 she took her own life.

Fiona shared with us: "We are tormented by the "what ifs" - we don't know if Emily would still be with us if university staff had received adequate training in recognising signs of abuse and had been taught the pathways to follow in such instances but the one thing we do know for certain is that this cannot happen to any other young girl, to any other family."

Fiona is now campaigning to raise awareness of gender-based violence to ensure that students and staff know where to get help. She has also developed the **#emilytest** which can be applied to any policy or procedures that are developed to tackle gender based violence. It asks the question **'Would this have helped someone in Emily's situation?'** to ensure that policies and procedures, when applied would help in real life situations.

You can **sign the petition** at the link below and **use your social media to promote it**:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/emilytest-support-students-affected-by-gender-based-violence-1>

## 3. Commitment from your institution to tackle gender based violence

Find out what your college or university is doing to tackle gender-based violence. Although the Equally Safe in Higher Education toolkit is coming out in spring 2018 there's still work that your institution can be doing now to tackle gender-based violence. They should be working towards the creation of a **strategy to tackle gender based violence** as well as a review of existing policies and procedures to put them to the **#emilytest**; ensuring to make sure that there is details of the **processes for investigating incidents and supporting survivors**. These policies might include the student and staff code of conduct and zero tolerance policies.

We're also pushing to ensure that **staff are trained** to be able to **recognise the signs** of gender based violence and are **equipped to support and signpost students**. Get in touch if you'd like to know more about training that other institutions have used and to find out more about bystander intervention training.

To ensure that students are properly supported we must have **student support services that are funded** to do so as often institutions have

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national union of **students**

long waiting lists for counsellors if they have counsellors at all. You could research the current counselling provision for students at your institution.

Institutions should be **gathering accurate data on the number of cases of gender based violence** and using this to inform their ongoing prevention and support work. This should consider where gender intersects with other protected characteristics. Without this data it's difficult to know the scale of the issue at your institution, or if work to prevent gender-based violence and support victims is having an effect. Ask your institution what data they have about the number of reported cases and how this has changed over the last 5 years? If they don't know, they should.

#### 4. Host an activity or event on campus

During the 16 days of action we often see students' associations and student groups hosting **Fight the Night marches, film screenings** and **panel discussions** on the impact of gender based violence. You could:

- Host a **Fight the Night march**, find out how to organise the march in our guide [here](#).
- **Invite a local women's service to campus** to speak with students about gender based violence and the support available.
- Host a **film screening**.
- Host a fundraising activity such as selling purple ribbons on campus and **give the proceeds to women's support services** in your local area.

This year NUS Scotland, AMINA and Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre is hosting a screening of Hotscotch, Just a bit of fun and Love Heat xxx followed by a discussion on Gender Based Violence in our communities. We will be discussing the ways in which gender based violence affects different communities and the platforms that exist to support survivors and

deliver preventative and interventionists strategies. These will be taking place in Glasgow and Aberdeen.

**29 November, Glasgow. Register at**  
[Bit.ly/NUS16DaysGlasgow](http://Bit.ly/NUS16DaysGlasgow)

**6 December, Aberdeen. Register at**  
[Bit.ly/NUS16DaysAberdeen](http://Bit.ly/NUS16DaysAberdeen)

#### 5. Educate, liberate

All of the activities that you do throughout the 16 days of action will help to raise awareness of the issue and support services available but you can encourage students to find out more.

##### Statistics: what we know about gender based violence on campus

In 2010, NUS (National Union of Students) revealed the results of [extensive research](#) into students' experiences of sexual harassment, assault and violence. The research found that:

- **One in three** women students **felt unsafe visiting their college and university in the evening**.
- **34 per cent** of women students **had been physically harassed**, while **68 per cent** had been verbally harassed.
- **14 per cent** of women students **had experienced serious sexual violence**, the majority of which was carried out by fellow students. And of these only **4 per cent reported this to their institution**.

[Further research](#) in 2014 found that **one in four students had been inappropriately touched or groped**, which disproportionately affected women.

In 2016 the [Scottish Government reported](#) that there had been an **8.9 per cent increase in incidents of domestic abuse of women up to the age of 30**. Scottish Women's Aid warned at the time that whilst these figures are significant, the recording of domestic abuse as

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an 'incident' does not take into account that domestic abuse is experienced by many women and children as a constant pattern of intimidation and control.

Here's some specific actions you could take to educate students about gender based violence:

- **Chalk the streets** or put up posters with statistics around gender based violence to raise awareness.
- You could **hand the cards with support services to your lecturers** so that if a student came to them they'd know where to signpost. This might encourage them to find out more about what support is available to students.
- Organise **consent workshops** to be offered to students and ask your institution to make it a compulsory part of student induction.
- ESHE has developed an **online module** that is free to take about Understanding Violence Against Women: Myths and Realities. Check it out [here](#).

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