

# All Ireland Network on Sexual Violence Research

Connecting sexual violence researchers across the island of Ireland

## Introduction

We are delighted to welcome you to the All-Ireland Network on Sexual Violence Research (AINSVR), a Network that aims to connect scholars, practitioners and policy makers working on issues related to sexual violence across the island of Ireland.

In our first newsletter, we want to use this space to reflect on AINSVR activities and share information about member's research and other relevant initiatives. Our newsletters will be published quarterly (January, April, July, November) with the next call for items in June 2024.

At the launch of the Network in January 2024 in the School of Law, Queen's University Belfast, we were warmed by the enthusiasm of Network members who, following a speech from Jodie Kelly, Gillen Review Implementation Team And Registered Intermediaries (Northern Ireland Department of Justice), came together to get to know one another,



share their current research and discuss ideas for future Network activities/events.

On 18 April 2024 University of Limerick hosted a webinar on behalf of the Network with Ms Ellen O'Malley Dunlop, Vice-President, GREVIO entitled "10 Years of the Istanbul Convention". Ellen provided an overview of the Convention and the Grevio inspection process. The webinar was attended by over 40 members of the Network and was chaired by Network founders, Dr Eithne Dowds (Queen's University Belfast) and Dr Susan Leahy (University of Limerick).

We plan to host an online 'three minute thesis' event for our PhD and postdoctoral members in June 2024. The event will be judged by three Network members. More details and exact date to follow.



## Publications

Eithne Dowds, Affirmative consent campaign calls for sexual assault law change in England and Wales – but this approach has pitfalls, too. *The Conversation*. 13 March 2024.

Eithne Dowds, Reforming the law on ‘Reasonable Belief’ in Consent: Lessons from Rape Reform in Northern Ireland. *JLS Blog* 2023.

- Daniel Kane, Kieran M. Kennedy, Karen Flood, Maeve Eogan,
- ▶ Male patient attendances at Sexual Assault Treatment Units in Ireland: An analysis of 381 cases and a comparison with female patients, *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, Jan 2024.
  - ▶ General practice trainees’ understanding of post-sexual assault care: the impact of a specialist educational intervention. *IJMS*, December 2023
  - ▶ The prevalence of genital injuries in post-pubertal females presenting for forensic examination after reported sexual violence: a systematic review. *International Journal of Legal Medicine*, Nov 2023.

- Daniel Kane, Maeve Eogan,
- ▶ Female perpetrated sexual assault: a review of attendances to the national sexual assault treatment units in the Republic of Ireland. *International Journal of Legal Medicine*, Dec 2023.
  - ▶ Female adolescent sexual assault; a national review of 1014 consecutive cases. *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, Nov 2023.

Daniel Kane, Andrea Holmes, Maeve Eogan, Post-exposure prophylaxis, STI testing and factors associated with follow-up attendance: a review of 4159 cases of acute post-sexual assault medical care. *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, Nov 2023

Maria Lohan and Alejandra López, Comprehensive sexuality education: an overview of the international systematic review evidence. UNESCO and UNFPA commissioned report.

Meghan Reynolds, Ngozi Anyadike-Danes, Susan Lagdon, Áine Aventin & Cherie Armour, (2023). Prevalence of unwanted sexual experiences and their associations on university students in the United States, United Kingdom, and Ireland: a systematic review. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 1-32.

podcast is meant to be: hope that positive change can be made.

The podcast will delve into the lives of survivors, activists, policy makers, journalists, and change-makers who play pivotal roles in enhancing our community. The podcast can be accessed through this [link](#).

Professor Maeve Eogan (SATU Clinical Lead) and Dr Daniel Kane (Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland) are carrying out ongoing work on demographics of attendances at Irish Sexual Assault Treatment Unit Network, also undertaking ongoing analysis of how best to record injuries at Sexual Assault Treatment Unit attendance.

PhD researcher Chloe Templeton, School of Law, Queen’s University Belfast, is completing a study entitled ‘A Critical Analysis of the Admission of Previous Sexual History Evidence (PSH) in Sexual Offence Trials in Northern Ireland (NI): Prevalence, Impact and Reform’ in collaboration with the Gillen Review Implementation Team, NI Department of Justice (DOJ). Following the recommendation in the 2019 Gillen Review concerning the need to prevent this improper PSH cross-examination, this study focuses on prevalence (how common PSH is and if procedures are followed), nature (what type of PSH is utilised most), impact (the effect on complainants’), and possibilities for reform. As part of the study 32 one-to-one semi-structured interviews have been conducted with key stakeholders, including judges, prosecutors, defence barristers, victim support organisations and victim/survivors. It is anticipated findings will inform DOJ recommendations to improve the trial process, by securing best evidence to prevent victim re-traumatisation and ensure victims’ justice interests are met. Importantly, the study is grounded in feminist sociology and feminist legal scholarship, with an aim promote positive change in the criminal justice process. The project is supervised by Dr Eithne Dowds and Professor Anne-Marie McAlinden.

PhD researcher Chloe Hanna, School of Law, Queen’s University Belfast, is considering defendant anonymity in the context of sexual offences in Northern Ireland. The study is set against the backdrop of the recent 2019 Gillen Review in Northern Ireland and the subsequent introduction of pre-charge anonymity within the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (NI) 2022. This research situates the *complex and recurring debate* around defendant anonymity in the *unique context of Northern Ireland*. As part of this study, Chloe has conducted qualitative interviews to explore the themes of stigmatisation and shame in the context of sexual offence allegations. A comparative analysis is also made with the Republic of Ireland, as a jurisdiction which offers anonymity until the point of conviction for some sexual offences. Chloe’s

project is funded by the Department for the Economy and is supervised by Dr Eithne Dowds and Professor Anne-Marie McAlinden.

Professor Maria Lohan, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen’s University Belfast, reports that Queen’s is leading a scoping review of research on VAW during the Covid-19 pandemic with the World Health Organization (WHO) to help WHO future pandemic preparedness treaty. Ain QU, Ozkaya C, Amin A, et al. Violence against women during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Scoping review of the literature in collaboration with the World Health Organization protocol. *International Journal of Educational Research* Open 2023; 5: 100267.

The Gillen Review implementation Team, Northern Ireland Department of Justice, has reported that a Project Group, led by the Department of Justice with membership from Police Service of Northern Ireland, Public Prosecution Service, NI Courts & Tribunal Service and departmental statisticians is taking forward research into attrition rates in relation to sexual offences and domestic abuse. The Group has commenced a review of all serious sexual offences reported to police between 1 October 2018 and 31 March 2019 (1,642 in total) to establish a baseline figure for attrition i.e. how many cases ‘fell out’ of the system before completion. The Group will also report on when and why victims withdrew from the criminal justice system and make recommendations on what improvements might encourage them to remain. Domestic abuse is much wider in terms of the types of offence and overall numbers but work to establish the parameters for this strand of the research is ongoing. The group hopes to report its findings and recommendations by March 2025.

Professor Anne-Marie McAlinden, School of Law, Queen’s University Belfast, is leading a cross-border empirical project on Transforming Justice Responses to Non-Recent Institutional Abuses with Dr Marie Keenan (UCD) and Dr James Gallen (DCU). The project is an interdisciplinary study comprising extensive empirical work including 74 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders such as victim/survivors and their advocates, lawyers, and church and state actors. It is funded by the Higher Education Authority’s North-South Research Programme [Grant Ref: TJHIA-NSRP] and was also supported by The British Academy [Grant Ref: SRG21\210319] and the Arts and Humanities Research Council [Grant Ref: AH/W011077/1]. The research will be published as a monograph under contract with Oxford University Press as part of their Clarendon Studies in Criminology Series. For further details of the project and outputs see: <https://transformingjusticeproject.org/>

## Projects

Dr Meg Ryan, School of Psychology, Trinity College Dublin, is Principal Investigator for an IRC New Foundations funded project in collaboration with Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) which aims to develop a stakeholder informed understanding of the relationship between reproductive coercion (RC) and intimate partner violence (IPV) in an Irish context. The project is in its beginning stages and will seek to interview participants consisting of stakeholders including SRH and GBV service providers, policy makers, researchers, and people with lived experience (PWLE). Enhanced delineation of these concepts will inform the improvement of screening tools for identification both of RC as a unique form of abuse and as an abuse tactic that occurs within the context of IPV. The current study aims to advance the knowledge base and provide conceptual clarity which will not only lead to higher quality future research but will facilitate the creation of better tools, interventions, and policies to improve GBV programming in Ireland, and internationally.

Dr Susan Leahy, School of Law at the University of Limerick, is currently completing research on print media reporting on sexual violence in Ireland. Her project is entitled ‘Words Matter: Developing

Guidelines for Media Reporting on Sexual Violence in Ireland’. The objective of this research is to draft guidelines for print media reporting on sexual violence in Ireland. This research is funded by the Irish Research Council New Foundations Scheme and is conducted in partnership with the Sexual Violence Centre Cork, who run the #FixedItIreland campaign. As part of this research, Susan is conducting online surveys with media professionals and representatives from victim support organisations to obtain their views on current media practices in the area, and the need for guidelines to support media reporting. The project findings will be presented at a conference featuring other researchers who work in this area, which will be held at the University of Limerick in the autumn. For further details on the project, please contact Susan at [susan.leahy@ul.ie](mailto:susan.leahy@ul.ie)

PhD researcher Carmel Nolan, Dublin City University, is creating a podcast named ‘ASHA: Crossing Borders, Breaking Silences’ as part of her Pathway Project ‘They Are Here Too: Gendered Violence in the South Asian Immigrant Community in Post-COVID Ireland’ funded by the Irish Research Council and the Science Foundation Ireland. ASHA means “hope” in many South Asian languages, and is a reflection of what the

## Call for study participants

PhD researcher Lorrie Hayman, University of Galway, is seeking participants for a study exploring the experiences of people who identify as women in Ireland concerning Cyber-Located Sexual Violence (CLSV). CLSV occurs online and via Internet-connected devices, so is non-physical, but can span National/geographic boundaries. For this research, Lorrie is seeking women in Ireland (aged 18 or over and currently living in Ireland) for in-person interview conversations. The interview conversations will last for around an hour, will ideally occur between now and July 2024 (but this is flexible), and can take place wherever participants are in Ireland. For further details, please email [L.hayman1@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:L.hayman1@universityofgalway.ie).

Dr Megan Reynolds, Anti-Bullying Centre at Dublin City University, is recruiting participants for a

research study examining ethical challenges that researchers face when conducting sensitive research with children. Researchers must conduct research with children and submit ethics applications to research ethics committees to be eligible to take part. Researchers in Ireland (including PhD researchers) are invited to take part. To find out more about the study and take part if you wish please follow this link: [https://dcueducation.fra1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9BtW2SxyXL1MLI](https://dcueducation.fra1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9BtW2SxyXL1MLI)

Dr Eric Spikol, School of Psychology, Queen's University Belfast, is recruiting participants for a research study on Male Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence: The ME-IPV Study, see attached call and contact [meipvni@qub.ac.uk](mailto:meipvni@qub.ac.uk) if interested.

## Events/Conferences

**SAVE THE DATE:** The Annual Sexual Assault Treatment Unit Study Day will take place at the Department of Justice, St Stephens Green, Dublin on 4/10/24 - further details to follow.

Dr Susan Leahy and Dr Eithne Dowds convened the sexual offences and offending stream at the Socio-Legal Studies Association *Annual Conference* in March 2024 with a number of impressive papers from members including:

- ▶ Chloe Templeton (Queen's University Belfast), A Critical Evaluation of the Admission of Previous Sexual History (PSH) Evidence in Northern Ireland: Prevalence, Impact, Reform.

- ▶ Chloe Hanna (Queen's University Belfast), Defendant Anonymity in Northern Ireland: The Ripple Effects on Complainants in Sexual Offence Cases (see also attached poster on Chloe's broader thesis).

- ▶ Eithne Dowds (Queen's University Belfast), Stereotypes, Offence Differentiation and Defendant Culpability in Rape Reform: Reflections on a Negligent Rape Offence.

- ▶ Susan Leahy (University of Limerick), 'Words Matter: Developing Guidelines for Media Reporting on Sexual Violence in Ireland'.

## Other information

### Dignity for patients

If you are interested in our area of work with victims and survivors of sexual abuse, we have Board Openings at the moment please find these at <https://www.dignity4patients.org/vacancies>.

**If you have an idea for an event or want to collaborate in some way please do get in touch with us at [ainsvr2023@gmail.com](mailto:ainsvr2023@gmail.com)**

**Remember to check out our website: [ainsvr.org](http://ainsvr.org) and follow us on X @ainsvr2023.**