# Royal Holloway student criticises university’s inadequate support after sexual assault



Molly Hanning, a 22-year-old master's student at Royal Holloway, University of London, has spoken out about the inadequate support she received from the university after being raped during the Christmas holidays of her first year. Waiving her right to anonymity, Molly described her experience with the university's support services as frustrating and insufficient. She was given leaflets and referred to external services rather than receiving direct assistance from the university’s support teams. According to her account, Molly had to persistently visit in person to secure an appointment and felt that the issue was too overwhelming for the university to handle. She recalled being advised simply to “download an app and do meditation,” an approach she found dismissive. The lack of proper support took a severe toll on her mental health, culminating in a breakdown during her second year. Molly expressed surprise that wellbeing departments at universities might not be equipped to address trauma beyond exam stress.

In response, Dr Nick Barratt, who leads Royal Holloway’s executive team for student support, acknowledged the profound impact such experiences can have on students. He emphasised the university’s commitment to listening with care and acting with integrity. Dr Barratt highlighted that the university aims to provide compassionate support and does not wait for harm to occur before making meaningful changes to support services. He pointed out that while not all reported incidents happen on campus, the university’s responsibility to support students remains steadfast.

Royal Holloway’s official resources outline a multi-faceted approach to supporting students affected by sexual violence. The university intranet details immediate steps such as contacting campus security or local police, seeking medical assistance, and accessing the Solace Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Surrey, as well as the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC). Students can also reach out to the university’s Welfare and Counselling teams or external organisations like Rape Crisis and Survivors UK, which offer ongoing support.

Adding another layer of institutional support, the Royal Holloway Students' Union actively campaigns on sexual violence awareness through initiatives like the ‘One in Three’ campaign. This initiative provides emergency contact information and promotes access to both on-campus and external support services, including the Student Union’s Advice Centre and the RH BeHeard platform for reporting harassment. The union's commitment is reflected in its detailed Code of Practice on Personal Harassment, which prohibits abusive behaviour and outlines disciplinary measures, aiming to create a safer environment for all students.

Comparatively, other leading universities like Oxford provide extensive, coordinated support structures for students experiencing sexual violence. Oxford’s approach includes accessible university counselling services and links to specialist external organisations offering round-the-clock support. Similarly, institutions such as University College Birmingham highlight immediate responses—emphasising the importance of listening and belief without victim-blaming—as critical components in their support frameworks.

Nationally, the NHS provides a vital backdrop to university support systems. Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) serve as crucial points for medical, practical, and emotional assistance for survivors of sexual violence, complementing university provisions. NHS guidance underscores the importance of timely help, listing access points that include sexual health clinics, hospital emergency departments, and voluntary organisations such as Rape Crisis.

Molly Hanning’s testimony serves as a stark reminder of gaps that can exist between policy and practice within institutions. While Royal Holloway and similar universities have established resources and protocols, individual experiences highlight the ongoing need for responsiveness and compassionate, direct support. Institutional commitments to change and student advocacy campaigns play pivotal roles in shaping the support environment, aiming to ensure that no survivor feels they must navigate their trauma alone or unsupported.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cq65z20pde2o)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cq65z20pde2o)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/students/help-support/supporting-you-at-royal-holloway/support-for-sexual-violence.aspx), [[6]](https://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/voice/campaigns/oneinthree/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/support/advice/harassment/), [[6]](https://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/voice/campaigns/oneinthree/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/supportservice/further-support), [[5]](https://www.ucb.ac.uk/student-support/speak-out-and-support/sexual-violence/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[7]](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/help-after-rape-and-sexual-assault/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cq65z20pde2o), [[2]](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/students/help-support/supporting-you-at-royal-holloway/support-for-sexual-violence.aspx), [[6]](https://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/voice/campaigns/oneinthree/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cq65z20pde2o> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/students/help-support/supporting-you-at-royal-holloway/support-for-sexual-violence.aspx> - Royal Holloway University provides comprehensive support for students who have experienced sexual violence. The university's intranet page outlines emergency procedures, including contacting campus security and local police, and offers guidance on seeking medical assistance. It also details support services available on and off-campus, such as the Solace Centre, a Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Surrey, and the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC). Additionally, the page provides contact information for various support services, including the university's Welfare and Counselling teams, as well as external organisations like Rape Crisis and Survivors UK.
3. <https://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/support/advice/harassment/> - The Royal Holloway Students' Union offers support and advice for students experiencing harassment. Their webpage outlines the college's commitment to tackling all forms of harassment and provides information on reporting incidents through the RH BeHeard platform. The page also details the college's Code of Practice on Personal Harassment, which prohibits abusive behaviour and outlines potential disciplinary actions. Contact information for the Students' Union Advice Centre is provided for students seeking assistance.
4. <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/supportservice/further-support> - The University of Oxford offers a range of support services for students affected by sexual harassment or violence. Their webpage lists both university and external resources, including the University Counselling Service, which provides self-help resources and counselling for survivors. External organisations such as Solace Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Rape Crisis England and Wales, and Survivor Space are also listed, offering 24/7 support lines and specialised services for survivors of sexual assault.
5. <https://www.ucb.ac.uk/student-support/speak-out-and-support/sexual-violence/> - The University College Birmingham provides guidance for supporting individuals who have experienced sexual violence. Their webpage offers advice on immediate actions to take, such as contacting emergency services and seeking medical attention. It also provides information on supporting someone who has confided in you, emphasising the importance of listening, believing, and avoiding victim-blaming. Contact details for the university's Student Cases team are provided for those concerned about a fellow student.
6. <https://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/voice/campaigns/oneinthree/> - The Royal Holloway Students' Union's 'One in Three' campaign focuses on raising awareness about sexual violence and providing support for survivors. The campaign's webpage offers emergency contact information, including on-campus and off-campus police contacts, as well as details for contacting campus security. It also lists support services available on campus, such as the Welfare and Counselling teams, and external organisations like Rape Crisis and Survivors UK, providing 24/7 support for survivors of sexual violence.
7. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/help-after-rape-and-sexual-assault/> - The NHS provides comprehensive information on seeking help after rape and sexual assault. Their webpage outlines the role of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs), which offer medical, practical, and emotional support to survivors. It also lists other avenues for support, including contacting a GP, voluntary organisations like Rape Crisis, hospital A&E departments, and sexual health clinics. The page emphasises the importance of seeking help and provides contact details for various support services.