

Towards a Safer Shetland

#WisToo

It Happens Here

Last month, inspired by the #MeToo stories being shared on social media across the country, I decided I wanted to show that sexual harassment is as much of a problem in Shetland as it is anywhere else.

Just because we live in a peerie rural community does not mean that we are safe from these kinds of behaviour.

As a volunteer with **BEE (Bold, Equal & Empowered), Shetland Rape Crisis'** young activists group, I know that breaking the silence around sexual violence is an important part of preventing it and also helping victim-survivors to know they are not alone and that they can heal from it.

#Wistoo

Asking The Question

I used an anonymous social media app to ask the question: have you been affected by sexual harassment in Shetland? I made it clear that responses would be anonymous and used for a thread on my social media to show how much of a problem this is.

I expected a lot of responses, but I was shocked by the sheer amount that came in and the seriousness of the incidents described.

As well as stories of sexual harassment, I received stories of sexual coercion, assault, abuse and rape - a lot of which had occurred against children and young people.

I decided to share everything that was sent to me out of respect for the survivor's stories and recognition that sexual harassment is just one part of a set of a wider set of cultural values that enable behaviours like assault, abuse and rape. Shetland Rape Crisis helped me to further anonymise these stories before sharing.

#Wistoo

What Is Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence/violation is any form of sexual contact that you don't freely agree to.

Contact includes more than just physical touch, it also includes any sexualised interaction you don't want such as harassment, unwanted messages, stalking, inappropriate comments, sharing intimate images, and more.

It also includes physical contact such as groping, taking advantage of someone on alcohol or drugs, coercing or pressuring someone into sexual acts, removing condoms without agreement, sexual assault, and rape.

Sexual violence is common. Anyone can experience it, at any age. Many survivors never tell anyone and it is rarely reported to the police.

The victim is not to blame. Sexual violence doesn't 'just happen.' A person commits sexual violence because, at some level, they decide to do so.

#Wistoo

A Personal Note

I would like to thank everyone who shared their story with me. I am grateful for your bravery and your trust. I have done my best to make sure your words are reflected here, while keeping your identity as safe as possible.

Receiving these stories has been a very powerful but also very overwhelming experience for me. Although I am always happy to support friends and I feel passionate about creating an equal world free from sexual violence, I am still a young person myself and not a trained counsellor.

For this reason, I am asking that if you read this and want to share your story, instead of sending it to me please contact Shetland Rape Crisis or another appropriate organisation or person and they will help you with it.

Rhea

#Wistoo

TOWARDS A SAFER SHETLAND

CONTENT WARNING

The following screenshots include descriptions of sexual violence (including harassment, assault, abuse and rape) which have occurred in Shetland or happened to Shetlanders.

If you have been affected by this and need help, please contact:

Shetland Rape Crisis | Monday - Thursday 9am - 1.30pm

Telephone **01595 747 174** | Email **contact@shetlandrapecrisis.scot**

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline | 6pm-Midnight

Telephone **0800 01 02 03** | Email **support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk**

Txt **07537 410 027**

Childline | 9am-Midnight

Telephone **0800 1111**

#Wistoo

STORY
01
OF 66

One time a boy went further than I wanted him to. He wouldn't stop and I think about it every single day and I will never forget it.

#Wistoo

STORY
02
OF 66

**I was at work
and my boss
placed his hand
up my skirt.**

#Wistoo

STORY
03
OF 66

**In the middle of pub
in Lerwick a boy came up
from behind and grabbed
in between my legs and
felt my entire body.**

#Wistoo

STORY
04
OF 66

When I was 12, I was told by pupils my age and older that I dressed like a slut and was often called a whore. People also said very inappropriate things to me about my body, for example, that I had no breasts. Some teachers also made comments such as: 'that's a very short skirt you're wearing' and 'are you not cold in that strap top?'

#Wistoo

TOWARDS A SAFER SHETLAND

STORY
05
OF 66

I was 8 and I thought I could trust him. It happened in a well-known street in Lerwick. There were people walking past but I was too scared to do anything, so I did what I was told. I cried but his hand was over my mouth so it didn't make any noise. He made me do things and he did things to me. I was terrified but I couldn't do anything.

Later, my family found out and there was an investigation. I was so young that I didn't understand - it made me feel like it was my fault. He wasn't charged. He told lies about what happened.

I'm still scared to walk through the area alone because I'm terrified it's going to happen to me again. I still see him walking around and he's even tried to speak to me, like he hasn't ruined my childhood.

I still have nightmares about what he did. Every day I think about it. Every boy I am around I think they are going to do the same thing because he made me think that. I want to move on and try to be happy but seeing him walk around Shetland like he's not done anything wrong just puts me back to a bad state. I hate him for what's he's done to me.

#Wistoo

STORY
06
OF 66

Older men at my previous job would touch me inappropriately to “get past me” (e.g. on my bum or lower waist). I was 14.

#Wistoo

STORY
07
OF 66

**I passed out and
woke up to someone
touching me.**

#Wistoo

STORY
08
OF 66

**Some creepy men
tried to take advantage
of me and a few friends.
Luckily nothing too bad
happened but it was still
a very scary time.**

#Wistoo

STORY
09
OF 66

**I was pushed
into a corner.
I did not say yes
to anything but what
happened went further
than I wanted it. I never said
anything because I didn't
know what was going
on until it had
happened.**

#Wistoo

STORY
10
OF 66

**I was touched in a place
I didn't feel comfortable
with by an older man.
He was drunk and a
complete stranger.**

#Wistoo

STORY
11
OF 66

I was at a party and I was a bit stressed and upset because I couldn't find a way home. A boy tried to take advantage of me being drunk and emotional by pinning me against a wall and trying it on with me even though I said no.

#Wistoo

STORY
12
OF 66

I once went out with a boy who was two years older than me. I was 14 at the time and almost every time I was alone with him he used to make me do things I didn't want. He would touch me whether I wanted him to or not.

#Wistoo

STORY
13
OF 66

I was in a situation where a guy was in the position to get me very drunk. He got me so drunk I no longer had control over what was happening. I wish I had a say in it because it was my first time.

#Wistoo

STORY
14
OF 66

A man twice my age locked me in a room backstage at a hall and pinned me against the wall. He tried to kiss and undress me. He kept trying to stop me leaving but thankfully after some struggle I managed to get away.

#Wistoo

STORY
15
OF 66

I get groped
at gigs.

#Wistoo

STORY
16
OF 66

When I was 12, some boys took indecent videos of me without my knowledge or consent. They played the videos in classes nearly every day until I left school. I was so humiliated that I only felt able to speak up about it a few years later. A high-up school official that I reported to said that I needed to “pull myself up” and I was “creating ghosts” in my head. People continued to share and play these videos in classes until the end of school.

#Wistoo

STORY
17
OF 66

**I was 15, he was 17.
We kissed, which was
fine, but he tried to go
further and I said no
3 or 4 times.**

#Wistoo

STORY
18
OF 66

I was trying to sleep at a party and a boy was trying to come on to me. Everyone said I was lying. They said I “wanted it” because I “had shagged him before.”

#Wistoo

STORY
19
OF 66

Boys have touched my thighs and ass without my permission so many times that I've lost count. The most severe time, a boy tried to take off my bra when he thought I was asleep. I froze and felt like I couldn't do anything.

#Wistoo

STORY
20
OF 66

I was once so pressured by a boy that I ended up giving in and getting with him. I really didn't want to and said no multiple times but he wouldn't stop. I gave up.

#Wistoo

STORY
21
OF 66

**I was once forced
into a cupboard
at a party and
forcefully touched.**

#Wistoo

STORY
22
OF 66

I was drunk and this boy tried to take me away from a group of people. He put his arm around my neck and he took my phone and wouldn't give it back.

#Wistoo

STORY
23
OF 66

I feel pressured
into saying yes even
if I don't want to
do anything.

#Wistoo

STORY
24
OF 66

When I was 14 I was at a house party and a guy showed up. He was 50. He forced me to do sexual things to him and I was crying. He kept kissing me on the neck and chest.

#Wistoo

STORY
25
OF 66

At 14 I was sexually assaulted in a prominent place in Lerwick and later raped in every way behind a public toilet. People said that I “wanted it to happen” because I froze. They also said that, because he was a minor too, he therefore “must have been sexually abused” despite there being no evidence of this. Even though he was later charged for a similar crime, some people still make these comments about what happened to me.

#Wistoo

STORY
26
OF 66

**I constantly hear
boys speaking about
or pointing at girls
asses and saying
sexualised stuff.**

#Wistoo

STORY
27
OF 66

I was once in a sauna with my friend and some boys came in. My friend had to go to the toilet so I was in the sauna by myself with these boys. They kept trying to flirt with me and when I got up to leave they whistled and cat-called me about my ass.

#Wistoo

STORY
28
OF 66

I was sexually assaulted by a boy who would touch me up, pull my bra down and put his hands down my pants in broad daylight. He also tried to finger me. At the time I didn't realise that what he did was wrong because he always made a joke about it. When I did come forward to the police, he wasn't charged.

#Wistoo

STORY
29
OF 66

I'm continuously being groped by guys (including my boss and boys I thought were my friends). What's worse is that they see nothing wrong with it. I'm scared to go out by myself because I feel like no one cares about boundaries.

#Wistoo

STORY
30
OF 66

**My friend
tried to do
stuff to me without
consent and I had to
run out of the room.
I locked myself in
the bathroom
and cried.**

#Wistoo

STORY
31
OF 66

Someone
tried to do
stuff with me which
I said I didn't want,
but eventually I ended
up giving in because I
didn't want things to
be awkward
between us.

#Wistoo

STORY
32
OF 66

At a disco, a boy who I was kinda friends with kept grabbing my bum and putting his arms around me. He kept doing it so I told him to leave me alone. Later his friend said I had upset him because he liked me and I was being mean.

#Wistoo

STORY
33
OF 66

**My ex best friend
attempted to have
sex with me while I
was asleep.**

#Wistoo

STORY
34
OF 66

Every single UHA I
get touched by men.
It gets justified with:
“they’re just drunk,
they mean no harm.”

#Wistoo

STORY
35
OF 66

I had boys add me on social media when I was 13, telling me I looked older and sending me creepy messages. They were way older than me so I blocked them.

#Wistoo

STORY
36
OF 66

At an event an old man kept pulling me onto his lap and not letting me go. Everyone around me was old enough to know it wasn't right but they didn't say anything.

#Wistoo

STORY
37
OF 66

On nights out in Shetland, I feel that groping is considered normal behaviour. I feel that if this person is, for example, a teacher, it's particularly difficult to speak up about it because a lot of people assume that they must not be dangerous; that we must be 'asking for it' if we are drunk; and believe that sexual harassment just does not happen in Shetland.

#Wistoo

STORY
38
OF 66

He came up to me in the hall, took my hand and lead me into a cupboard and started kissing me. He pulled my shorts down and bent me over. He tried to get inside me but I didn't let him. He left the cupboard and rumours were quickly spread that we had sex. He went around telling everyone I was too tight for him.

#Wistoo

STORY
39
OF 66

I was once at a party and a guy who was a bit older than me and from a different place was all over me. He took my bag and tried to drag me outside but thankfully people stopped him.

#Wistoo

STORY
40
OF 66

At 14 I was sexually assaulted by someone over the age of 16 at three different public places in Lerwick. Although there were other victims and he pled guilty to this, people in Shetland still blamed me for what he did.

#Wistoo

STORY
41
OF 66

I was 15 at the time and working in Lerwick. A man was hired who would bring sweets into work for me because he knew I liked sweet stuff. I thought he was a good friend for bringing me sweets. He would call me pet names and once he asked me to go with him to buy alcohol. I helped him to clean the store room and while I was sorting stock he all of a sudden grabbed me from behind.

#Wistoo

STORY
42
OF 66

I was at an Up Helly Aa and there were lots of people around, but it was dark so nobody noticed. I was pressed between him and a railing, facing away from him as he felt me up. I froze for a bit because I was very scared. I called out to someone I knew who was nearby and I got away.

#Wistoo

STORY
43
OF 66

**A 45 year old
man touched my bum
and kept trying to come
on to me when I was 16.
My boyfriend was right
beside me.**

#Wistoo

STORY
44
OF 66

**When I was 14,
a boy in my year
inappropriately touched
me in the back of a car
when I told him
to stop.**

#Wistoo

STORY
45
OF 66

**Boys would
take pictures of
my ass.**

#Wistoo

TOWARDS A SAFER SHETLAND

STORY
46
OF 66

I was raped at Christmas.

#Wistoo

STORY
47
OF 66

When I'm out at the weekend, boys go past and slap my ass. It's happened on so many occasions.

#Wistoo

STORY
48
OF 66

**I was pressured into
having sex without my
consent and it went on
for several months.**

#Wistoo

STORY
49
OF 66

I was 14 and in a relationship with an older boy. He raped me and didn't stop until I was in tears. He would get mad at me if I didn't want to do anything with him to the point where he would threaten to hurt me or himself. I think about it everyday and I still think it's my fault.

#Wistoo

STORY
50
OF 66

When I was under the age of consent, there were men over 16 that tried to have sex with me. This seems to happen often in Shetland.

#Wistoo

STORY
51
OF 66

I was questioning if I was bisexual or not. I told a close friend who was also bisexual because I wanted to talk to someone about it without being judged. One day when I was with her she was hugging me a lot and she kept moving her hands low down onto my ass. I was so uncomfortable with it but I didn't see it as harassment because we were both girls.

#Wistoo

STORY
52
OF 66

**A boy touched my
private area when he
thought I was asleep on
a bus journey.**

#Wistoo

STORY
53
OF 66

When I was 12 I was staying with family on a run down south. Two guys drove past me and slowed down. They whistled at me and shouted things at me about my body.

#Wistoo

STORY
54
OF 66

At 16, a much older man from a sports club that I went to at Clickimin was very friendly towards me. He suggested that we could meet before the class started so that he could help me improve at this sport. He kept flirting with me and touched me inappropriately over my clothes. Due to past experiences, I felt like there was no point in speaking up about it. I decided to quit that sport, which I really enjoyed, and I haven't done it since then.

#Wistoo

STORY
55
OF 66

I was speaking to a boy, having a normal conversation. He asked me out of nowhere if I wanted a dick pic. I said no but he sent it anyway.

#Wistoo

STORY
56
OF 66

My boyfriend at the time wanted to meet up with me. I told him not at the moment. He kept asking and pressuring me, making me feel bad for not wanting to see him. I hadn't seen him in a while so I finally said I would meet him even though I was busy.

We were kissing and he put his hands under my clothes and tried to take my pants off. I told him no. He asked why not and I said I just don't want to. He tried again and I said no I don't want to. We kept kissing and he for some reason thought it would be fine to unzip his jeans and take his penis out and again he tried to take off my underwear. I told him no I don't want to.

He stopped for a moment and we went back to kissing, then he tried to take off my underwear again. I told him no and he got frustrated and in a mood with me. I told him I was ok with doing some sexual things but I didn't want to have sex.

He was cuddling me from behind and we were kissing and once again he took his penis out and was trying to penetrate me. He knew I didn't want this.

He kept trying over and over and over again to the point where I was feeling tired of it. At this point I didn't even care anymore because I felt bad for how much he wanted to do it and didn't want him being in an even worse mood with me because that would've made the situation so much more awkward than it already was.

He didn't use protection. This was the last time we met up.

#Wistoo

STORY
57
OF 66

He asked me to come back to his house after a party. I was sober when he asked and I clearly stated no. As the night went on I got drunker and he wouldn't stop pestering me. I eventually gave in and he took advantage of me.

#Wistoo

STORY
58
OF 66

I was 11 when
a 20 year old guy
catcalled me and
proceeded to try and do
stuff to me. Luckily I
was with friends.

#Wistoo

STORY
59
OF 66

Boys in their late teens and early 20s were all over me when I was 14. It seemed like nothing important at the time but I was young and naive and they knew that.

#Wistoo

STORY
60
OF 66

I dated a guy when I was 14, he was 18. He pressured me into sex and used to tell me he would kill himself if I left. I tried to tell people that he was bad and obsessed with the dark web. People fell out with me. Years later he got caught with child porn. "Friends" still defended him. I hate it here.

#Wistoo

STORY
61
OF 66

On a school trip when I was 13 I was sleeping and a boy put his hands down my trousers and up my top and felt me up. I was so scared I couldn't move. I think he thought I was still asleep.

#Wistoo

STORY
62
OF 66

I work in a pub and I've been followed home countless times by drunk men. One guy asked me a question and refused to leave me alone until I answered it. He pulled down his trousers and asked me to touch him. I ran away. Terrifying.

#Wistoo

STORY
63
OF 66

At 16, someone who I thought was my friend got me drunk and asked if I wanted to have sex with him. I kept saying no but he persisted. Eventually I said yes out of fear. I kept screaming at him to stop and tried to fight him off but he just changed position and continued. He also took the condom off during it, which I did not consent to. I didn't tell anyone for years because it wasn't as bad as things that had happened to me when I was younger so I thought that people definitely wouldn't take it seriously, and because I had said yes to start with, I believed it was my fault.

#Wistoo

STORY
64
OF 66

I was 13. I made friends with a boy and he claimed he was the same age as me (he was actually 17). He started forcing me to do things I didn't want to do with him and he would manipulate me into not telling anyone.

#Wistoo

STORY
65
OF 66

I don't feel comfortable sharing the exact details of my story, but there's a few times where I've been taken advantage of or I've been approached and touched up when I really didn't want to be.

#Wistoo

STORY
66
OF 66

I worked as a waitress and I kept getting touched by a worker. I was always too scared to tell anyone. Eventually I told one of the people who also worked there. She told me to brush it off because it was just his sense of humour.

#Wistoo