

Perpetrator Contact Group

As written in our letter, we would like to establish a perpetrator contact group for X in England to hand over the responsibilities we have taken over in the past months. This text is meant to clarify some of our ideas and we hope it makes the task seem more manageable rather than overburdening. If you don't understand or disagree with any of what we write, please don't hesitate to contact us. We appreciate any open dialogue on this topic!

Aims & Principles

The aim of the contact group is to hold X accountable for his acts of sexualised violence and check if he is taking responsibility for it. In the open letter we spelled out what „taking responsibility“ entails from our point of view; (i) reflect on this behaviour (ii) inform his close surrounding about his acts of violence and the process and (iii) stay accountable. For us these demands have the function to prevent future abuse and ensure a reflection process on his part.

Another aim of establishing a contact group is to learn as political communities to take responsibility in reaction to (sexualised) violence in a collective way. However, it is important to us that this responsibility is not one towards the perpetrator, but towards the victim, potential future victims and other people affected by sexualised violence. We think this aim is particularly important as the perpetrator has moved to a new surrounding where only few people know about his acts of violence and the process.

The guiding principle of the work should be the solidarity with the victim, so the contact group should consist of people who believe the victim and feel committed to her. With committed we mean that the stance towards the victim should be one of empathy and support. This seems especially important in a situation where there is little contact with the victim and regular contact with the perpetrator. For example, this stance encompasses respect towards the decision of the victim whom to tell about the rape and abuse, as explained in the semi-open letter. It also entails that when you talk to X, always consider that what you hear is only his perspective and that you respect the privacy of the person he raped by not allowing him to shift the focus from his actions to her. It however doesn't mean that we want you to give up your own responsibility to act and think. We trust you to take your own decisions and only consider it important that you always make them transparent, so to be accountable yourself for what you do. If something occurs during your work, where you feel you have to question your stance of commitment towards the victim, please don't hesitate to inform us about this so we can discuss it.

The Contact Group

As the role of the contact group is mainly one of confrontation that requires a critical distance, we also think that ideally there should be no close friends of the perpetrator in the contact group. As we said, for us it is crucial that people in this group side with the victim, which might produce loyalty conflicts if they are also friends with the perpetrator.

In the beginning we think it would be good, if you have a couple of constituting meetings (without the perpetrator) to talk things through, identify and delegate responsibilities and to get to know each other. This could involve talking about your knowledge and involvement in the process thus far, your relationship to the victim and perpetrator as well as exchanging your ideas for the process. Furthermore, discussing this letter and especially the tasks proposed by us could be useful in making sure we have a similar perspective on what this group should, can and cannot do. One important aspect you should talk about is your time capacities and for how long you think you can commit to be in the contact group (we think one year at least would be good). If people leave the group this should be communicated and a replacement found. We would also like to talk to you about for how long you think it is realistic that this group will exist (2 years, 5 years, forever?).

Tasks

In general, we think it is important that we do not place too high expectations on the work of the contact group but be realistic and pragmatic about its possibilities and boundaries. So we think it is very important that everyone who is part of the contact group talks through these tasks and that you together set out clearly the boundaries of your own capacities. Our idea for the tasks of this group would be:

1. To stay in touch with the perpetrator

We think it is important that X moving to London does not allow him to escape confrontation with his actions or responsibility from the process. This is why we think it is important that there is a regular communication between him and the contact group (e.g. at least every 3 months).

Part of this communication could be to

- ask what progress he has made regarding therapy, perpetrator work or any other steps he thought of himself.
- asking about his political involvement and whether and whom he has informed about his acts of sexualised violence and the process. Here we think it is important you ask explicitly what he has told people, whether he provided them with the letter or the victim's perspective in any other way, so that it is not only his perspective that is propagated.
- communicate demands, from the victim (and her support group) or decisions that come out of the Birmingham process, to the perpetrator

What form this communication takes on (email, skype, physical meetings), we leave up to you.

2. Involve the perpetrator's close surrounding

It can be very important to also involve the perpetrator's surrounding into the accountability process. Even though you might not get every one of his closest friends on board with what you do, it can be important that they are at least informed about any demands towards the perpetrator. In

cases of disagreements, it can also be important that they are able to discuss things with you directly, rather than being informed only by the perpetrator himself about the process. We also think it is important to at least try and convince also his friends that they, too have a responsibility in holding him to account and making sure he takes steps on changing his behaviour.

3. Take consequences

The probably most difficult task of the group will be to find an adequate response if the perpetrator does not cooperate. This could range from taking a long time to reply to emails, refusing to meet, to refusing to do perpetrator work or engaging in politics without informing his surroundings. For all of these scenarios you should find a collective response. From our point of view, it is the perpetrator's own responsibility to stay accountable and inform you about his plans of action. However, if he doesn't and ignores your requests, you could think about taking steps such as contacting his surrounding to ask about his whereabouts or inform them about his behaviour.

Furthermore, we also think it is his own responsibility to inform his surroundings, especially any political organisation that he joins. We do not see your role as becoming private detectives. However, if you find out that he is engaging with politics and has not informed his political surrounding, we would like you to confront him with this and demand that he informs them. Informing people yourself with the open letter can, but should only be your last threat and consequence taken.

We know that having political friends, attending political events and being organised in a political group creates somewhat a grey area of when it is necessary to tell people and whom exactly. Two criteria we see important in this decision are whether people are building up a level of trust to him (personally or politically) and/or if he is gaining social or political power through his involvement (e.g. by creating a feeling of admiration and dependency around his person). As this will have to be decided on a case to case basis, we think it is important you make your decisions explicit and transparent so others can understand or question the reasons for your decision (not) to inform people.

4. Be accountable and approachable yourself

Being in a perpetrator contact group can be a very conflictual and contradictory tasks as you are confronted so much with the perpetrator's (and his friends') perspective. From experience it is very important to pay attention to not become the perpetrator's advocate or get disconnected from the rest of process. For this reason, we believe it is very useful to establish some sort of supervision group, to which you make your work transparent and accountable. The idea is to get from time to time, or in/after difficult situations a feedback from people who are less involved with the perpetrator. As there is very little experience of dealing with perpetrators of sexualised violence, we think it is very likely that mistakes will be made and that reflecting on them is a very important part of any learning process. This is why it is important for the contact group to be open about their actions and for the supervising group to be critical but also show solidarity in the discussions instead of working with accusations. With respect to our group, we would appreciate if you would send us a report/update

every 3 months or so, although we might not respond to it and do not see our role to be the supervising group.

Finally, we think it would be good if you were approachable for people with an interest in the current situation of the accountability process. Of course, you would need to carefully assess which information you give out and which ones are more sensible/confidential. In any case (also for our communication), it would be good if you had an email address that people could reach you on and which you check regularly.

And just to make explicit what we **do not** expect of you;

- to work through the past of the perpetrator with him. For this we want him to do perpetrator work (not just therapy!).
- to feel responsible for his well-being or his rehabilitation into any political group
- to do work for him and take over his tasks. We think this can be counterproductive because it is a way to delegate responsibility away from himself.

Again, none of what we write is mandatory and we encourage you to have your own thoughts and opinions on this, as well as establish your own boundaries of what you can and cannot do. So please contact us with any feedback or questions. We are looking forward to hearing from you!

The victim & her support group