

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

**Sexual Harms + Medical Encounters  
Research Hub**  
April 2020 | Rhea Sookdeosingh

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, CLASSICS AND  
ARCHAEOLOGY  
BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

---

# PREAMBLE

---

The Sexual Harms and Medical Encounters (SHaME) Research Hub is committed to ensuring that our research has a wide and meaningful impact beyond academia. Sexual violence is a topical, highly visible and pressing public health issue, meaning it is vital that our research is responsive and socially sensitive, and that it creates accessible and empowering outcomes.

The purpose of this plan is to:

1. **Frame** an ambitious and flexible Public Engagement Strategy for the Sexual Harms + Medical Encounters Research Hub
2. **Identify** key steps that will be taken towards implementing this Strategy, as well as the methods by which we will evaluate our Public Engagement Programme



This document will outline:

- Our Public Engagement **VISION**
- SHaME Research Hub: **WHO WE ARE**
- **DEFINING** Public Engagement
- **WHY** do Public Engagement
- **HOW** we will enact this strategy
- **STRATEGIC PLAN**: principles and priorities
- **EVALUATION** methods and approaches
- **ACTION PLAN**
- **RESOURCES**
- **LEGACY**

---

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT VISION

---



SHaME's *VISION* is to develop an ambitious and flexible programme of Public Engagement activity that:

1. Takes place *throughout* the lifespan of the project
2. Reflects the *rich expertise* of individual researchers, as well as the project as a whole
3. Engages with *relevant and diverse* professional and public audiences to make our research *responsive and empowering*
4. Enhances the *quality and credibility* of the project's research outcomes

---

## SHAME RESEARCH HUB AT A GLANCE

---

SHaME is an *interdisciplinary* research team funded by the Wellcome Trust (grant ID 205378/Z/16/Z). Our researchers explore various aspects of the relationship between sexual violence, medicine and psychiatry. In other words, the *multiple roles* the medical and psychiatric disciplines have played in defining, understanding, adjudicating and responding to sexual harms.

We are a growing team of historians, anthropologists, legal and feminist scholars:

---

### CORE TEAM

Principal Investigator  
*Professor Joanna Bourke*

Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
*Dr Ruth Beecher*

Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
*Dr Stephanie Wright*

Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
*Dr Rhian Keyse*

PhD Candidate  
*Adeline Moussion*

PhD Candidate  
*Emma Yapp*

Public Engagement Coordinator  
*Dr Rhea Sookdeosingh*

Filmmaker  
*James Gray*

---

---

### ASSOCIATE FELLOWS

Senior Associate Fellows  
*Dr Caitlin Cunningham*  
*Dr Louise Hide*

Associate Fellows  
*Dr Charlie Jeffries*  
*Dr Julia Laite*  
*Sarah Lasoye*  
*Winnie M Li*  
*Hatty Nestor*  
*Dr Silvia Posocco*  
*Dr Andrea Quinlan*  
*Dr Gethin Rees*  
*Dr Elizabeth Roberts-Pedersen*  
*Dr Tanya Serisier*  
*Dr Dimitra Vassiliadou*

---

Detailed information about our research themes and priorities, as well as our researchers and their individual projects, can be found on our website:

[shame.bbk.ac.uk](http://shame.bbk.ac.uk)

---

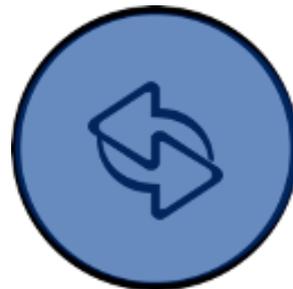
## DEFINING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

---

Public engagement describes research practices that include making academic research accessible to the public *and* working with publics to shape that research.

Public engagement is a broad umbrella that encompasses a range of approaches, including:

- co-production of research;
- collaborating with arts and cultural organisations;
- working with varied audiences and partners, including community groups, families, schools, and any key stakeholders related to your research area;
- using any of the above to inform policymaking



At its core, public engagement encourages moving beyond one-way dissemination of academic research towards cultivating research practices that include *learning from others* and *doing research together* in order to create academic research that is responsive to societal needs and creates meaningful outcomes for those affected by research.

---

## DEFINING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

---

Definitions vary across institutions and funders, but the shared underlying principle is to develop working processes based on *meaningful two-way engagement* in order to create benefits for both parties.

---

### BIRKBECK

*‘We believe public engagement is an essential part of a strong research culture that supports interdisciplinary study and acknowledges the importance of non-academic expertise.’*

*- Professor David Latchman, Vice-Chancellor of Birkbeck, University of London*

Birkbeck is a place where we connect, collaborate, challenge received wisdom and build on the expertise of life and work, as well as ‘official knowledge. We see public engagement as at the heart of our values and as a core part of our research, enabling us to interact with a wide and diverse range of people for the betterment of our research and our researchers.

---

---

### WELLCOME TRUST

We expect all our major research groups to inform, consult and collaborate with the wider public over the lifetime of their research projects.

Sharing your ideas with the public and getting new perspectives can enhance your research.

---

---

### UKRI

The UKRI vision is of a society in which research is created, used, challenged, valued, and shared by all. We aim to encourage, support, and value the leadership of high-quality engagement between the research community and wider society.

---

---

### NATIONAL CO-ORDINATING CENTRE FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.

---

---

# WHY DO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?

---

## 1. FUNDER REQUIREMENT

---

Funding bodies, including Wellcome Trust and UKRI, increasingly expect public engagement activity as part of the research they support. Wellcome Trust has a dedicated public engagement section within their grant applications as well as funding specifically for public engagement as part of their grant awards. UKRI also expects a *Pathways to Impact* statement for every research proposal and it is a condition of their funding. This means that it's not only a requirement for award holders, but that gaining experience in public engagement will enhance your chances of securing future research grants.

Funding bodies, as well as learned societies, offer dedicated pots of funding for public engagement, allowing researchers to strengthen their public engagement experience while also developing grant writing skills and building up a track record of successful funding applications.

---

## 2. REF - PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AS A PATHWAY TO IMPACT

---

The next Research Excellent Framework (REF) exercise will take place in 2021. One of the key areas measured by the REF is '*impact beyond academia*', and public engagement has been highlighted as a 'popular form of impact activity'. UKRI emphasises that 'for such activities to be as effective as possible, try to think of your research in the context of two-way engagement not just outreach'.

---

### 3. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

---

Incorporating public engagement into research practice has a number of benefits for researchers including:

- **Enhancing research and its impact**
- **New research perspectives**
- **Access to funding**
- **Skills development**
- **Raising research profile**
- **New collaborations and partnerships**
- **Rewarding and motivating**
- **Inspiring future generations of researchers**

Engagement research practices develop researchers who are:

- **Relevant**
  - **Responsive**
  - **Socially sensitive**
  - **Trusted**
  - **Robust**
  - **Influential**
  - **Impactful**
- 

More information about how public engagement can enhance professional research skills can be found in the [Public engagement lens on the Vitae Researcher Development Framework 2011](#), which was designed to focus on the knowledge, behaviours and attributes that researchers develop and how these can be acquired through or used in public engagement activities.

---

## HOW WE WILL ENACT THIS STRATEGY

---

The SHaME team has a dedicated Public Engagement Coordinator whose role is to *develop* and *support* public engagement activity across the project.

The Public Engagement Coordinator will work with the team as a whole, as well as individual researchers, to identify our:

- Research priorities
- Engagement interests
- Relevant audiences
- Desired outcomes

And turn this into a *cohesive* and *coordinated* public engagement strategy for the SHaME Research Hub.



The Public Engagement Coordinator will maintain connections to the broader public engagement community and regularly survey the public engagement landscape, feeding back to the team on best practices, training opportunities, new initiatives, existing platforms and activities, and sources of funding.

The Public Engagement Coordinator will also seek out relevant stakeholders and initiate new partnerships, as well as facilitate individual researchers' efforts in this respect.

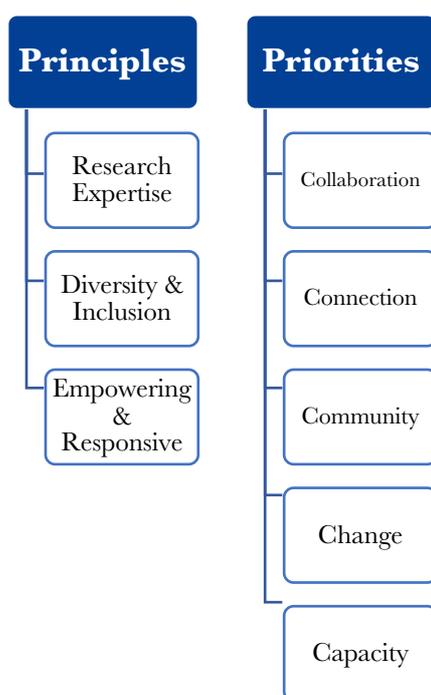
The Public Engagement Coordinator will manage and coordinate the public engagement programme for SHaME as a whole, as well as support individual researchers to establish and carry out their own public engagement initiatives.

---

# STRATEGIC PLAN: PRINCIPLES & PRIORITIES

---

SHaME's approach to public engagement is guided by a set of principles and priorities that reflect our values as researchers and activists.



## PRINCIPLES

### *Research Expertise*

SHaME is a growing research hub with a wealth of research expertise in examining the complex relationship between medicine, psychiatry and sexual violence.

Our researchers come from a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds including history, anthropology, law and feminist studies. Collectively our research spans the eighteenth century to the present and covers global contexts including the UK, US, Francoist Spain, Kenya, Ghana, France, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand.

As a group we have particular research expertise in:

- Highlighting the central role that the medical and psychiatric disciplines have played in shaping our understanding of what constitutes sexual violence
- Investigating the interface between sexual violence and medicine/psychiatry through analysis of representations and practices
- Interrogating the highly politicised, theoretical assumptions between historically-fluid ideologies, classification systems and practices

- Evaluating the shortcomings of medical jurisprudence and legal procedures in managing the duality of the body as a crime scene as well as a site of (usually female) trauma/healing
- Analysing how different political regimes shape medical, legal and societal attitudes towards sexual violence
- Assessing historical commonalities and contrasts across geo-political contexts
- Oral history methodologies • Ethnographic data analysis
- Archival documentary research • Literature reviews
- Close textual reading • ‘Reading against the grain’

Our approach to public engagement is research-led and we work to ensure that our public engagement activities are informed by our areas of research expertise, and built around a rigorous approach to conducting research.

### *Diversity & Inclusion*

Sexual violence is a global health crisis. It is pervasive and affects every sector of society.

In the UK it is estimated that 20% of women and 4% of men have experienced some level of sexual assault since the age of 16.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile global estimates suggest that 35% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partner at some point in their lives. In some national contexts this is as high as 70%.<sup>2</sup> Some groups are at an especially high risk including BAME, immigrants and refugees, poor, less-abled and trans-diverse people.

It is therefore *vital* that our public engagement activities are diverse and inclusive, reflecting and responding to the experiences and needs of *all people* affected by sexual violence.

### *Empowering & Responsive*

At its best, public engagement is a two-way exchange of knowledges, not a form of one-way information dissemination.

While it is important that our public engagement activities are informed by our own research, it is *equally important* that our engagement work is responsive to the needs of the communities of people, public and professional, that we work with. By working with community and professional stakeholders at the outset to shape our approaches and objectives, we will ensure that the ensuing activities are empowering and create positive actionable outcomes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Rape Crisis England and Wales, <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/about-sexual-violence/statistics-sexual-violence/>.

<sup>2</sup> UNWomen, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>.

## PRIORITIES

We have identified a set of priorities for our public engagement work, built around the cornerstone priority of *COLLABORATION*. At the heart of our engagement work is a commitment to establishing effective and egalitarian partnerships and collaborative working practices, that will in turn enable our other priorities and their myriad outputs.



### *Collaboration*

Our central priority is to develop and sustain effective and mutually beneficial working partnerships with practitioners, activists, survivors, and creative and cultural partners. This is crucial to ensuring that our research is beneficial to, and has an impact on, people whose professional or personal lives are affected by sexual violence.

Making collaboration the guiding priority of our public engagement strategy enables us to pursue a number of related priorities and activities.

### *Connection*

Through our public engagement work we aim to facilitate sustainable connections between communities, practitioners and survivors that will give rise to new and innovative events, publications and a range of other initiatives. We aspire to not only build partnerships ourselves, but to also act as brokers, bringing together disparate actors who might not otherwise meet or have the chance to work together, but who are all involved in working to end sexual violence.

One way we aim to do this is by developing a SHaME Community Network, creating a sense of imagined and real community between researchers, medical and psychiatric professional

bodies, survivor groups and community organisations. This online community hub will act as a directory, allowing members to learn about each other's work, identify potential partnerships and make contact to develop new project proposals.

### *Community*

The subject of our research – sexual violence, and its relationship to the medical and psychiatric professions – is a pressing, contemporary issue. One of our priorities, therefore, is to ensure that our research and engagement efforts make a real difference in communities. It is important that we focus our engagement efforts on projects that raise awareness, specifically around the medical and psychiatric aspects of sexual violence; that support empowerment at the individual and community level; and that deliver tangible resources and tools.

One way we aim to do this is through our website – [shame.bbk.ac.uk](http://shame.bbk.ac.uk). We host a Resources page that brings together open access academic publications with government reports, survivor tool-kits and a range of materials that support learning and recovery. We also run a 'Spotlight On' series on our Blog, highlighting the important work being done by charities, community organisations and individual activists. The SHaME Community Hub will also sit within our website.

### *Change*

One of our key priorities is to use our research findings to change societal attitudes towards sexual violence, and the coercion and control of vulnerable groups. This change won't happen unless we believe it's possible. SHaME researchers believe it is possible. Our overarching aim is to create a collective, transformative shift in societal-level attitudes to sexual violence by confronting and dismantling the shame surrounding sexual violence. We also aim to create change at the level of policy and practice – both nationally and within organisations – by working alongside practitioners as well as professional medical and psychiatric bodies to support changes to the way community and specialist practitioners identify and respond to sexual abuse and violence. At the community and individual level, we want our engagement work to result in tangible and concrete tools and knowledge for survivors to support their recovery.

### *Capacity*

Finally, we want our public engagement work to contribute to increasing public and community engagement capacity. Our particular focus on the medical and psychiatric aspects of sexual violence is an under-researched area of scholarship. Research in this area is growing, however, and we want to ensure that this important work is produced and shared with the communities who need it.

We will therefore develop a programme of sharing learning through hands-on workshops, matchmaking events and open access publications in order to support our academic and community peers to effectively use research and collaborative working practices to engage diverse publics.

---

## EVALUATION METHODS AND APPROACHES

---

We will adopt a flexible approach to evaluation, tailored to specific events and objectives. We will undertake qualitative and quantitative analyses of our activities and use a variety of evaluation methods including using logic models and baseline questionnaires to establish SMART objectives at the outset of any activity, followed by end-line questionnaires, mapping exercises, participant interviews and surveys, as well as interactive methods like postcards and graffiti walls to capture immediate responses.

SHaME's Public Engagement Coordinator will also develop templates for the team to aid event planning and encourage building in appropriate evaluation priorities and mechanisms at the outset. This will include prompts to ensure that any new initiative reflects our principles of foregrounding *research expertise*, strengthening *diversity & inclusion* and being *empowering & responsive*.

We will use a variety of methods to measure against our public engagement priorities:

---

### EVALUATION PLAN

---

<b>COLLABORATION</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>Building partnerships and developing collaborative working practices</i></p> <p><b>Methods:</b> Logic model • baseline &amp; end-line questionnaires • stakeholder mapping • new projects tracker and database</p>
<b>CONNECTION</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>Facilitating and building a wide network bringing together medical and psychiatric practitioners and professional bodies, professional bodies, survivors, broader community organisations, charities</i></p> <p><b>Methods:</b> Mapping exercises • stakeholder mapping • member surveys &amp; interview • project tracking system</p>
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>Making a difference within communities through raising awareness, supporting empowerment and developing tangible resources</i></p> <p><b>Methods:</b> Postcards • graffiti walls • surveys &amp; interviews • social media engagement analysis</p>
<b>CHANGE</b>	<p><b>Objective:</b> <i>Effecting transformative change in support practices and infrastructure at governmental and organisational levels</i></p>

---

**Methods:**

Baseline & end-line questionnaires • mapping exercises • partner interviews

---

**CAPACITY**

**Objective:**

*Effecting transformative change in support practices and infrastructure at governmental and organisational levels*

**Methods:**

Baseline & end-line questionnaires • mapping exercises • partner interviews

---

---

**ACTION PLAN**

---

## PHASE ONE: SCOPING

- Public Engagement Coordinator will meet with individual researchers to discuss their area of research expertise and establish their public engagement interests and goals
- Public Engagement Coordinator will develop public engagement templates and guidance resources
- Public Engagement Coordinator will develop and agree a public engagement strategy with the group

## PHASE TWO: DELIVERY

### Hallmark Activities

1. Shameless! Festival of Activism Against Sexual Violence, co-produced with The WOW Foundation
2. Documentary Film developed and produced by our filmmaker, James Gray
3. SHaME Community Network Hub
4. Research and policy project co-produced with a relevant community organisation

### Other Activities

- Standalone events including film screenings and podcast series
- Develop and source relevant and accessible content for our website
- Contribute to existing platforms and programmes, e.g. Being Human Festival, Bloomsbury Festival, History Acts
- Add a public engagement component to our academic events where possible and appropriate, e.g. including a Wiki-a-thon

## ONGOING:

1. Identify and pursue new funding streams
2. Research and contribute to new public engagement platforms and programmes
3. Identify relevant stakeholders and continue to build new partnerships

---

## LEGACY

---

The SHaME Research Hub is funded through a Wellcome Trust grant running from October 2018 to October 2023 (grant ID 205378/Z/16/Z).

Throughout the course of our grant we aim to use our research into the role medicine and psychiatry play in sexual violence to make a *meaningful impact* on societies, communities and individuals.

But we don't want our impact to end when our grant does.

Through on focus on developing partnerships and supporting collaborative working practices, we aim to lay the groundwork for a sustainable research centre that brings together academic researchers, community leaders and cultural partners to continue to produce important research that will help to end sexual violence.

In the medium term, we will work towards securing a [Wellcome Trust Hub Award](#) to establish a collaborative residency between our researchers and creative partners based at the Wellcome Trust.

In the longer term, we will research and secure longer-term funding to turn this residency into a sustainable research centre supporting academic research, teaching resources, community engagement, policy and advocacy work, and creative and cultural industry partnerships.

---

## RESOURCES

---

**National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement**

<https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/>

**Wellcome Trust**

<https://wellcome.ac.uk/what-we-do/our-work/public-engagement>

**UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)**

<https://www.ukri.org/public-engagement/>

**Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) (Research England, UKRI)**

<https://re.ukri.org/knowledge-exchange/knowledge-exchange-framework/>

**Birkbeck Public Engagement**

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/research/public-engagement>

Image credits:

Chalkboard planning: <https://pixabay.com/photos/board-chalk-business-job-work-3695073/>

Mountain landscape: <https://pixabay.com/photos/crete-fog-mountains-landscape-2880294/>

One-way arrow: <https://www.piqsels.com/en/public-domain-photo-jrhke>

Circular arrows: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Two-arrows-in-circular-outlined-interface-button.svg>

Together, we create: <https://unsplash.com/photos/bq31L0jQAjU>

---

## SHAME RESEARCH HUB

---



Prepared by:  
 Dr Rhea Sookdeosingh  
 SHaME Public Engagement Coordinator

*Many thanks for support from:*





## SHaME RESEARCH HUB

Sexual Harms and Medical Encounters (SHaME) is a Wellcome-Trust funded research hub exploring the role of medicine and psychiatry in sexual violence.

W: [shame.bbk.ac.uk](http://shame.bbk.ac.uk)

E: [shame@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:shame@bbk.ac.uk)

T: [@shme\\_bbk](https://twitter.com/shme_bbk)

F: [@shmebbk](https://facebook.com/shmebbk)