

SLSA



THE SENATOR
GEORGE J. MITCHELL
INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL PEACE,
SECURITY AND JUSTICE



QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST

SCHOOL
OF LAW

Reforming Legal and Policy Responses to Investigating and Prosecuting Sexual Violence

19th and 20th June 2025

Queen's University Belfast

Conference overview

Criminal justice and legal responses to sexual violence have long featured in academic and policy debates. Yet, despite a raft of substantive and procedural reforms, there continues to be evidence of steep attrition in sexual offences cases, as well as secondary victimisation experienced by complainants. Indeed, recent consultations and reviews conducted across a number of jurisdictions, including England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, have highlighted the complexity of prosecuting crimes of sexual violence and the further widespread reforms that may be required. It is thus time to critically reflect on the myriad of reforms and recommendations that have been discussed in the context of contemporary legal and policy responses to investigating and prosecuting sexual violence, at both the level of theory and praxis.

This two-day conference is dedicated to an in-depth multi-jurisdictional discussion of the ongoing complexities surrounding reform in this area. It will bring together scholars and practitioners engaged in cutting edge research to reflect upon recent progress, share their expertise, and discuss best practice.

Conference organisers: Dr Elizabeth Agnew (Queen's University Belfast), Dr Eithne Dowds (Queen's University Belfast), Dr Susan Leahy (University of Limerick), Dr Siobhan Weare (Lancaster University)

We are grateful to the Socio-Legal Studies Association (SLSA) and the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, Queen's University Belfast, for funding this conference, and to the School of Law, Queen's University Belfast, for significant administrative assistance. For information on the SLSA and how to join see [here](#)

Confirmed Conference Speakers

- Her Honour Judge Patrica Smyth (Recorder of Belfast)
- Professor Julia Quilter (University of Wollongong Australia)

- Professor Clare McGlynn (Durham University)
- Professor Vanessa Munro (University of Warwick)
- Professor Penney Lewis (Law Commissioner for Criminal Law England and Wales)
- Dr Dominic Willmott (University of Loughborough)

Call for papers: deadline 31st March 2025

We welcome papers from a range of socio-legal, theoretical, doctrinal, empirical, comparative, and interdisciplinary perspectives, from individuals at all career stages (including PGR/ECRs), and from jurisdictions within and outside of the UK.

Relevant themes/topics include reforms around, but are not limited to:

- Defining sexual offences
- Special measures
- Police and prosecution responses to sexual violence
- The trial process
- The role of the jury
- Sentencing sexual violence
- The use of technology in sexual crimes/investigation

We are very pleased to be able to offer four PGR/ECR bursaries, funded by the SLSA, to reimburse a value of up to £250 towards travel and overnight accommodation. Please register your interest in applying for one of these when submitting your abstract.

If there is sufficient interest, we plan to publish a Special Issue following the conference. More details in due course.

Please submit abstracts via our online form: <https://forms.office.com/e/YFma3HB1xB>

Key dates

31 st March 2025	Deadline for abstract submission
Mid-April 2025	Decision to applicants
Mid-April 2025	Registration opens
19 & 20 June 2025	Conference takes place