FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
INFORMATION LETTER

Dear Participant,

My name is Susan Leahy and I am a professor and researcher at the School of Law at the University of Limerick. I have researched in the area of sexual offences for 20 years. I am currently working with Dr Rong Bao on a project which investigates victim-survivors' experiences of sexual offence trials in Ireland. This research is funded by the Research Ireland COALESCE funding scheme.

I am writing to you in the hope that you might be interested in participating in this research. Below are further details of the project, what is required of participants and how your confidentiality and anonymity will be protected if you take part.

Project Overview

This research project is entitled **'Lived Realities: Victim-Survivors' Experiences of Irish Sexual Offence Trials'**. A full overview of the project is available on our webpage (***ul.ie/lived-realities***). This project seeks the views of victim-survivors about their lived experiences of the trial process. Informed by the participants' views, proposals for further law and policy reforms will then be designed which directly respond to the concerns raised by the research participants. ***We hope to interview victim-survivors who have had experience of a sexual offence trial from 1st of January 2019 onwards.***

What does participation involve?

Interviews will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes and will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The audio-recording will be securely stored on the researcher's OneDrive account and will be deleted once it is transcribed. Interviews may take place in person where a suitable location is available or will otherwise take place online via Microsoft Teams. Participants who wish to do so may bring a support person to be present at the interview. Participants will be provided with a list of the proposed questions in advance of the interview. Participants are free to refuse to answer any question they are not comfortable with and may do so prior to or during the interview itself. Participants may also take a break at any stage during the interview and/or ask that the recording be stopped. After the interview, participants will be provided with a copy of their transcript and offered an opportunity to provide any feedback on the interview process.

The information gathered in the project will be used in a report which will highlight the lived experiences of victim-survivors and offer voice to their views on the trial process and associated laws and procedures. This report will be publicly available and will also be used to

inform a subsequent report which will outline proposals for reform of the trial process which are informed by the perspective of the research participants. The research gathered from the interviews will also be published in other academic outputs associated with the project, such as papers in academic journals.

The benefit for participants is to offer them an opportunity to share their experiences and inform future development and reform of the trial process. Participation is entirely anonymous. A list of available support services will be made available to all participants to ensure that help is available as we appreciate that discussion of the trial process will be difficult.

Anonymity

All participants in this project are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. Any potentially identifying information will be removed from the intreview transcript and will not be referred to in any of the project outputs.

All data collected will be securely stored and will only be accessed by the researchers. We have also included a 'Research Privacy Notice' at the end of this letter, which details how any information provided as part of the research will be stored.

Withdrawal from the Project:
Participants may withdraw your participation in the project without having to explain or give a reason up to a period of two weeks after the interview is completed.

Support
We are aware that participation in this survey, or reading this letter, may be distressing for you. If you have been impacted in any way, support is available via the National 24-hour Rape Crisis Helpline at 1800 77 888.
You may also find a full list of available support services on our project webpage, which may be found at ***ul.ie/lived-realities***.

Further Information:
Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Should you have any further questions in relation to the project, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at susan.leahy@ul.ie OR realities@ul.ie
This research study has received Ethics approval from the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Approval Ref: 2026_04_02_AHSS(Y)_REV1). If you have any concerns about this study or your participation and wish to contact an independent authority, you may contact: Chairperson Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, AHSS Faculty Office, University of Limerick; Tel: +353 61 202286; Email: FAHSSEthics@ul.ie

Yours sincerely,

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Professor Susan Leahy, School of Law, University of Limerick

RESEARCH PRIVACY NOTICE

Introduction

This Research Privacy Notice governs the use and storage of your personal data by the University of Limerick (the "University"). The processing of this data is carried out in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) / Data Protection Acts 1988-2018 ("Data Protection Law") and in accordance with this Research Privacy Notice.

Any personal data which you provide to the University as part of this research project will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality, in accordance with Irish and European Data Protection Law. This Notice sets out details of the information that we collect, how we process it and who we share it with. It also explains your rights under data protection law in relation to our processing of your data.

1. Title and Purpose of the research project

1.1 Title of the research project: Lived Realities: Victim-Survivors' Experiences of Irish Sexual Offence Trials

1.2 Purpose of the research project: The aim of this project is to investigate victim-survivors' experiences of sexual offence trials in Ireland. Recent years have seen significant efforts to raise awareness about sexual violence and to improve legislative and policy responses to sexual offences. However, there remains a paucity of empirical research which interrogates the impact of these changes on the practical operation of the criminal justice system. The effect of this knowledge gap is that we cannot assess the effectiveness of recent reforms or plan authoritatively for future developments. This study aims to address this by conducting research with victim-survivors of sexual offences to learn about their experiences of the trial process, and the extent to which this is positively or negatively impacted by current laws and policies in this area.

2. Research Ethics Committee

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Limerick Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee on [insert approval date once available]. The research ethics approval number is XXX

3. Identity of the Data Controller(s)

The Data Controller is University of Limerick, Plassey, Limerick.

4. Identity and Contact Details of the Data Protection Officer of the Data Controller(s)/

You can contact the University of Limerick's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ul.ie or by writing to Data Protection Officer, Room A1-073, University of Limerick, Limerick.

5. The Identity of the Principal Investigator

The Principal Investigator for this Research Project is Susan Leahy, School of Law, University of Limerick

6. How we will use your personal data

6.1 The University must process your personal data in order to undertake research relating to this project. Please refer to the Participant Information Sheet for more details.

6.2 For how we collect and use your personal data in this project, please refer to the Participant Information Sheet.

6.3 You provide us with your personal data to enable us to undertake the research project. Participation in this research project is voluntary and participants may withdraw without giving any reason. Should you wish to withdraw, you may do so by contacting the Principal Investigator at Susan.Leahy@ul.ie.

7. Lawful Basis for University Processing Personal Data

7.1 Data Protection Law requires that the University must have a valid legal reason to process and use your personal data. This is often called a 'lawful basis'. GDPR requires us to be explicit with you about the lawful basis upon which we rely in order to process information about you.

7.2 The University is carrying out this research in the public interest and for scientific, historical or statistical purposes. In doing so, we are relying on Article 6(1)(e) of the GDPR. Where we are processing special category or sensitive personal data, we are relying on Article 9(2)(j) of GDPR. As required under Data Protection Law, we have appropriate safeguards in place in order to protect your personal data; these are set out in the next section.

8. Protecting Your Personal Data

8.1 We have the following measures in place to help ensure we keep your personal data safe:

- *All researchers at the University must adhere to University policies and procedures that inform our staff and students on how to collect and use your information safely;*
- *Training is made available to all researchers to ensure our staff and students understand the importance of data protection and how to protect your personal data;*
- *The University has security arrangements and technical measures in place that ensure your information is stored safely and securely;*
- *All research projects involving personal data are reviewed and approved by a research ethics committee in line with University policies and procedures;*
- *Where a research project may involve a high risk to participant's privacy, we first carry out a data protection impact assessment to assess risks and ensure adequate safeguards are in place;*
- *Where your personal data is processed for health research, we will always obtain your explicit consent in advance (in line with the Health Research Regulations 2018).*

8.2 Personal data collected for this research project will be pseudonymised within two weeks after collection and will be fully anonymised within 12 months. Truly anonymised data is not Personal Data. Once data is anonymised for the purposes of this research project, the terms of this Privacy Notice will no longer apply.

9. Sharing Your Personal Data with Third Parties within the European Union

The University will not disclose your personal data to third parties.

10. How Long Will We Keep Your Data

We will only keep your personal data for as long as is necessary for the purposes of this research. All personal data will be securely deleted in line with the UL Data Protection Policy once it is no longer needed.

11. Your Rights

11.1 Depending on the lawful basis which we rely on to process your Personal Data, you may have the right to request that we:

- *provide you with information as to whether we process your data and details relating to our processing, and with a copy of your personal data;*
- *rectify any inaccurate data we might have about your without undue delay;*
- *complete any incomplete information about you;*
- *under certain circumstances, erase your Personal Data without undue delay;*
- *under certain circumstances, be restricted from processing your data;*
- *under certain circumstances, furnish you with the Personal Data which you provided us within a structured, commonly used and machine readable format;*

11.2 Requests for any of the above should be addressed by email to the Principal Investigator at Susan.Leahy@ul.ie AND the Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ul.ie. Your request will be processed within 30 days of receipt. Please note, however, it may not be possible to facilitate all requests, for example, where the University is required by law to collect and process certain personal data including that personal information that is required of any research participant.

11.3 It is your responsibility to let the Principal Investigator know if your contact details change.

12. Queries, Contacts, Right of Complaint

12.1 Further information on Data Protection at the University of Limerick may be viewed at www.ul.ie/dataprotection. You can contact the Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ul.ie or by writing to Data Protection Officer, Room A1-073, University of Limerick, Limerick.

12.2 You have a right to lodge a complaint with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (Supervisory Authority). While we recommend that you raise any concerns or queries with us first at the following email address Susan.Leahy@ul.ie, you may contact that Office at info@dataprotection.ie or by writing to the Data Protection Commission, 21 Fitzwilliam Square South, Dublin 2, D02 RD28.