

consent is...
mutual active
respecting boundaries
comfortable
retractable
checking
willingly
given


Consent Workshop Facilitator Guide

I ♥ CONSENT

nuS women

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Welcome to the **I Heart Consent** Workshop Facilitator Guide. The **I Heart Consent** campaign is a joint initiative by NUS Women's Campaign and Sexpression UK. It aims to facilitate positive, informed and inclusive conversations and campaigns about sexual consent in universities and colleges across the UK.

In the UK, sexual consent is not currently a core aspect of mainstream sex and relationship education. One of the consequences of this is that consent is often not communicated as an essential part of all sexual interactions. Therefore, everyday conversations can be a way of engaging people who have not previously had access to inclusive and educational discussions about consent.

This toolkit has been created to enable activists to deliver workshops on campus and empower students to take action towards creating a positive culture of sexual consent. As well as an easy-to-follow workshop outline, which can be altered to suit different institutions, audiences and timescales, this guide also includes campaign ideas that you can use to extend the message throughout the year.

Susuana Antubam
NUS Women's Officer

Consent 101

What is consent?

Sexual consent refers to the agreement to participate in sexual activity.

*"The word 'consent' in the context of the offence of rape is now defined in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. A person consents if she or he agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. **The essence of this definition is the agreement by choice...** Sexual assault is an act of physical, psychological and emotional violation, in the form of a sexual act, which is inflicted on someone without consent."*

Rape Crisis England & Wales

Consent while in a relationship is just as important as consent outside of a relationship. Non-consensual sexual activity is against the law.

Why is consent education important?

Consent is necessary in all sexual activity. Teaching people to acknowledge and respect other people's personal boundaries can help create a society where no one feels ashamed to willingly engage in, or to reject, sexual activity. Consent education also important in building healthy and respectful relationships and preventing sexual violence.

Ending rape culture and victim blaming

Learning about consent is also vital to combatting 'rape culture' (defined below) and supporting survivors of sexual assault, by helping people to understand that sexual activity without consent is a crime, where only the perpetrator can be blamed.

Rape culture is a term used to define a culture in which sexual abuse is condoned and normalised through societal attitudes, images and practices. Common examples include casual references to rape or attempted rape in song lyrics, 'jokes' and 'banter' about rape, and 'victim blaming'. Victim blaming occurs when responsibility and blame is placed on the victim instead of the perpetrator. These attitudes and myths can be seen in views such as "women provoke sexual assault by the way they dress and act" and "if the victim didn't scream, it wasn't rape." This can have a negative impact on victims who want to seek help, due to fears of being judged and blamed for their experience.

Facilitating safer spaces

A vital aspect of this workshop is creating and facilitating a safer space where people feel comfortable to explore topics, definitions and myths. As a consent workshop facilitator, your role includes:

- facilitating inclusive and informative discussions
- challenging myths and rectifying problematic perspectives of consent
- encouraging a healthy view of consent

Inclusive behaviour

Your behaviour as a facilitator is very important to the space and the discussions within it. Things that you should think about are:

- **Your tone of voice** — Make sure that your tone is calm and welcoming, and that your voice is loud enough for people to hear, without being too loud. Regularly check that all participants can hear you and others.
- **Your language** — Not everyone in the workshop is going to be familiar with some of the terminology that will be used, so try to use accessible language and share definitions of less familiar words. Avoid using any offensive language.
- **Body language** — Make sure you look comfortable, not confrontational, and try and relax and look ready to engage in discussion.
- **Try and take answers from people who have not spoken yet** — Try and equal the field when facilitating open discussions to prevent a section of people from dominating conversations, but avoid randomly picking people to speak.
- **Notice when people are being interrupted** — When people are interrupted many times it can put them off speaking. Be prepared to intervene in order to allow others to contribute to the discussion.

Accessibility

You need to make your workshop as accessible as it can be to enable as many people as possible to participate in discussions. Make sure you have:

- **Accessible space** — Ensure that the workshop is held in a location that is wheelchair-accessible and spacious.
- **Accessible conversations** — Take into account the number of people in the workshop and, in large groups, ask participants to raise their hands before speaking.
- **Accessible material** — Some people may have various disabilities or general difficulties in following presentations and may require printed (perhaps large font) workshop material.

Trigger warnings

Considering the nature of discussions involving consent, there are likely to be topics within the workshop that may make some participants uncomfortable. You should explain this at the beginning of the workshop and also explain that you will use trigger warnings to help people avoid potentially upsetting content if they wish.

Use trigger warnings to inform people about potentially upsetting content, such as: descriptions of sexual violence, self-harm or rape. If you know that something that you are about to discuss is potentially upsetting, give a trigger warning before talking about the subject and allow time for participants who want to leave momentarily to do so.

Here is an example of how to give a trigger warning:

"This is a trigger warning for the next section of this workshop, where we will be talking about rape myths for 20 minutes. If, right now or at any time, you feel uncomfortable or upset by what we are about to discuss, please feel free to momentarily leave the space."

It is sensible to avoid talking about bad personal experiences or role-playing bad experiences to prevent upsetting workshop participants.

Ground rules

Having ground rules is useful for making sure that your workshop discussions are as accessible as possible. You should aim to:

1. Create ground rules with your workshop participants. This gives people the opportunity to also say what they might find upsetting or inaccessible.
2. Highlight the importance of respecting the rules you have created as a group.
3. Write these ground rules in a place where everyone can see (such as a poster).
4. Make sure you stick to the ground rules and explain the consequences of breaking them.

If someone is really disrupting the space, unapologetically upsetting people or showing a complete disregard for the ground rules, be prepared to ask them to leave so that the workshop can take place in a safer environment. While group discussion and reflection is important and helpful, you should ensure that no single person dominates the session or prevents you from moving on to other aspects of the workshop.

Challenging perceptions

One aim of the workshop is to rectify problematic perspectives of consent. In order to do this, we need to challenge common myths about consent and rape culture. It is important to talk about and challenge misconceptions to enhance participants' understanding.

Here are some ways to challenge perceptions:

- **Say again?** — Ask open questions to allow the person to fully explain their opinion and why they hold that view.
- **Inform** — Counter problematic perceptions by providing factual information.
- **Open the discussion** — Deconstruct myths by exploring a problematic viewpoint with the group as a whole by asking questions such as "How does everyone feel about x?"
- **Confrontation** — Occasionally, when a participant firmly holds a highly problematic view, you may have to talk to the individual outside the space or during the break to confront their views.

Myth busting

The myth busting section of the workshop creates opportunities to challenge common myths with facts, as well as open up discussions about the implications of these misconceptions.

The myths quoted here are based on information provided by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) website, on the page titled: Rape and Sexual Offences: Chapter 21: Societal Myths:

www.cps.gov.uk/legal/p_to_r/rape_and_sexual_offences/societal_myths/

Campus action

The aim of **I Heart Consent** involves encouraging positive discussions and behaviour. In order to do this, we need to think about what happens after the workshop and encourage students to think about how they going to challenge misconceptions of consent on campus and in wider society. The focus for the last part of your workshop should be on what students are going take away from the experience.

Here are some example post-workshop commitments and activities:

Pledges

Students could create and sign personal or group pledges. They could keep these to themselves or display them somewhere on campus or in student media. For example:

"I promise to respect the choices people make about their bodies and not shame them."

"I pledge to tell more people that clothing is not linked to consent."

"I promise to call out victim blaming whenever I can."

Activities and events

There are plenty of things you can do on campus to spread the message. Here are just a few:

- Get sports teams and societies on campus involved with campaigns on consent.
- Perform a piece about consent.
- Get students' union officers and staff involved in raising awareness around sexual consent.
- Organise events around recent issues.
- Link to other events on campus, campaigns such as Everyday Sexism and social media discussions on the topic.
- Make sure that other officers and staff are aware of issues around sexual consent — get them on board!
- Start producing material to advertise the campaign, why not make T-shirt.
- Organise a Reclaim the Night march.
- Strengthen links with your institution's feminist society, women's group or external groups with an interest in the issue to conduct joint activities or reinforce core messages.
- Photo and poster campaigns: You can get students and student officers involved with a photo campaign about consent, perhaps focusing on why they heart consent or displaying their consent culture pledge. The photos could be used on posters or shared online. Lots of ideas may have come up during your workshop. Displaying things that you have talked about around campus is a great way to show team effort.

The workshop

The Agenda

Below is an agenda for a 1hour and 40 minute Workshop. Feel free to edit sessions and time scales to what you think will work best for the group that you are working with.

Opening

- 1) Introduction (5 minutes)
- 2) Ice breaker (10 minutes)
- 3) Ground Rules (5 minutes)
- 4) What is Consent? (10 minutes)
- 5) R.E.S.P.E.C.T. (15 minutes)
- 6) Rape Culture and Victim-blaming (10 minutes)
- 7) Myth Busters (20 minutes)
- 8) Questions (10 minutes)
- 9) Take Action (15 minutes)

Close

Quick Tips:

Hand out agendas at the beginning. Talking through the agenda enables participants to see the structure of the day including topics of discussion.

People rarely arrive at the exact same time so you might want to leave five or ten minutes at the start of the workshop with in the set agenda. This time could be used to talk to people or distributing workshop assessment sheets if you have prepared some.

Materials:

You should try and make you workshop as interactive as possible to and provide different ways to engage in activities. So you may want to bring along.

- A flip chart and board marker
- Pens and different coloured paper
- Sticky notes
- Large paper for things like pledges or group activities

Workshop Outline

1) Introduction (5 minutes)

At the beginning of the workshop, you should **introduce yourself**, the **aims of the workshop** and the **agenda**. Make sure that the room is set up in a way everyone can hear you. It's good practice to state what time the workshop is expected to finish as well as provide printed agendas for people. Explain what **Trigger Warnings** are and how they will be used.

2) Ice-breaker (10 minutes)

A good way to start conversation between people who may not know each other is to introduce a relaxing and interactive atmosphere. This can be done through a quick ice-breaker game, activity or questions.

Bear in mind the size of the group when choosing an ice-breaker and remember that some people may have specific learning difficulties which might make some ice-breaker activities more difficult for them to engage in. If you have a room of around 30 people, you might want to stay away from a memory game.

- Who is your favourite super hero and why?
- What was the last album you bought and what is your favourite single on it?
- If you were being banished to a desert island which one song, one book and animal would you take with you?

3) Ground Rules (5 minutes)

Create a list of ground rules for the work shop with the group to contribute to a set of ground rules for the workshop then display it in a visible space in the room. Make sure there is clarity about what will happen if someone breaches the rule.

Some examples of things that could be on your ground rules are:

- Use and respect people's preferred pronouns
- No offensive language
- Raise your hand when you want to talk
- Don't judge people on their opinions
- Don't make assumptions about other peoples' past experiences
- Don't discuss bad personal experiences or role play bad experience

4) What is Consent? (10 minutes)

- a) Everyone is given a piece of A4 paper and asked to write on one side their own definition of '**consent is**' and on the other side write what they believe what '**consent is not**'. Compare and discuss what consent is. Come up with a group definition.

Examples of words that can go in your definition:

- Comfortable
- Active
- On-going conversation
- Respecting choices/boundaries
- Retractable
- Agreement by choice

- b) Compare and discuss what consent is not. Come up with a group definition.

Examples: of words that can go in your definition:

- Under the influence
- Pressured
- Assumed
- Being in a relationship
- Previous consent
- Being single

- b) Ask the group what are the benefits of asking for consent. Examples:

- Clarity
- Defined boundaries
- Consensual sexual activity

TIP: One way you could do this is by providing sticky notes for people to write on to create a display and discuss what people wrote afterwards.

5) R.E.P.E.C.T. (15 Minutes)

As well as making your own choices, consent is about respecting other people's personal choices. This means highlighting and challenging slut shaming and prude shaming attitudes.

- a) Ask the group how they would define slut shaming and prude shaming.

Slut Shaming

The word "slut" refers to a woman who has many casual sexual partners. It is a sexist slur and it often used to degrade women who have had many sexual partners or dress "promiscuously". "Slut" is also sometimes used as insult to get back at a woman who has rejected sexual advances, whether previous statements are true or not. The fact that this phrase is used as an attack on women outlines the double standard sexist attitudes towards the ideas of women's sexual freedom to agree to consensual sexual activity.

Prude Shaming

The word "prude" refers to someone concerned with being modest and "proper". It is often use to describe someone who chooses not to engage in sexual activity. It's also sometimes used as insult to get back at someone who has rejected sexual advances, weather previous statements are true or not.

- b) Ask the group what they think the implications of "slut-shaming" and "prude shaming"
- c) Ask the group what they think are the implications of slut shaming and prude shaming.

Respecting Sexuality

Asking for consent first also prevents situations where someone makes a move on another person with false assumptions about the other person's sexuality. It's also important to remember to respect people's sexual orientations and sexual life choices.

Abstinence & Celibacy

Some people choose to be sexually abstinent, which means that they refrain from engaging in sexual activity. Some are sexually abstinent for a period for a certain period of time, for example until marriage for individual or religious reasons and some people are celibate which means that they have voluntarily chosen to be single and sexually abstinent for an indefinite period, possibly although not necessarily for religious reasons.

Asexuality

It's a common misconception that sexual activity is something that all people naturally enjoy. In reality, there are people who enjoy lots of sexual activity, there are some people who enjoy none at all and there are some people in between. Some people are asexual, which means that they do not experience sexual attraction. Some people identify as grey-ace or grey-asexual which means that they are somewhere in between sexual and asexual. Within the grey-ace spectrum, there are some people who identify as demi-asexual, meaning that they don't experience sexual attraction unless they form a strong emotional connection with someone over a period of time.

6) Rape Culture and Victim-blaming (10 minutes)

Rape culture is a term used to define a culture which sexual abuse is condoned and normalised through societal attitudes, images and practices.

Ask the group:

a) What things contribute to rape culture?

- "jokes" and "banter" about rape
- casual references to rape or attempted rape in song lyrics
- Victim blaming
- Slut Shaming

b) What are the implications of rape culture?

- Sexual abuse becomes something which is normalised, glorified and acceptable rather than something that should be challenged and condemned.
- Victim blaming

c) What is victim-blaming?

Victim blaming occurs when the responsibility and blame is placed on the victim of rape instead of the perpetrator.

d) What are the implications of victim-blaming?

It has a negative impact on victims who want to seek help, due to the fear of being judged and blamed for the crime committed against them.

7) Myth Busters (20 minutes)

Before you begin this section of the workshop you may want to state that we use the information on rape myths provided by the Crown Prosecution Service as the basis for this work. This may help contextualise the information and reassure any doubters they come from a reliable source. You might also want to state that some myths are more likely to be used in reference to women, and the discussion may reflect this – but that rape myths are damaging to all victims of sexual assault and rape.

There are many ways you can discuss the rape myths depending on how many people are in your workshop and the amount of time you've allocated for this section. You could discuss all these myths or select a few to concentrate on. In terms of structuring how you discuss them one use way is to:

1. Read out the myth
2. Ask the group about the implications of the myth, or why the myth may exist
3. Reveal the facts
4. Leave some time for further comments.

You could also split the room into smaller discussion groups

Myth 1: Rape only occurs between strangers in dark alleys.

Implications:

- Implies that the home is safe
- Implies that rape can be prevented by avoiding certain places and therefore blames the victim.
- Assumes a particular victim profile and therefore stigmatises the victim
- Entrenches racial and class prejudices

Facts:

- The majority of rapes are committed by those known to the victim
- Date or acquaintance rape is very common
- Victims are often raped in their homes

Myth 2: Women provoke sexual assault by the way they dress or act.

Implications:

- Attempts to excuse rape and "blame the victim"
- Assumes that a woman who draws attention is looking for sex or "deserves what she gets"
- Re-victimises and stigmatises the victim

Facts:

- People may dress attractively and flirt, this may be for attention and/or admiration, this is not an invitation for rape
- Rape can happen to anyone, regardless of what they are wearing
- Only the rapist is responsible for the rape!

Myth 3: Women who drink alcohol or use drugs are asking to be sexually assaulted.

Implications:

- Attempts to excuse rape and 'blame the victim'
- Re-victimises and stigmatises the victim

Facts:

- Women have the same right to consume alcohol as men
- Being vulnerable does not imply consent
- If a woman is unable to give consent because she is drunk, drugged or unconscious - it's still rape
- Only the rapist is responsible for the rape!

Myth 4: Rape is a Crime of Passion

Implications:

- Assumes that rape is impulsive and unplanned
- Assumes men to be incapable of delaying gratification or controlling sexual urges
- Assumes that rape is about uncontrollable lust
- Attempts to excuse, minimise and romanticise rape
- Assumes that only 'attractive' women are raped
- Disregards elements of power, aggression, violence, control and humiliation in rape
- Attempts to remove the responsibility for the rape from the rapist

Facts:

- Research and evidence from rapists themselves suggests that most rapes are premeditated and planned
- Many rapists fail to get an erection or ejaculate
- Interviews with rapists reveal that they rape to feel powerful and in control, not for sexual pleasure
- There is no "typical victim" of rape
- Anyone of any gender and of all ages can be a victim
- Many rapists are involved in sexually satisfying relationships with their partners at the time of the rape

Myth 5: If the victim didn't scream, fight or get injured, it wasn't rape.

Implications:

- Disbelieves and re-traumatises the victim
- Invalidates the experience of the victim
- Discourages the victim from seeking help
- Suggests that there is a "correct" response to sexual assault and this is to fight and shout etc.

Facts:

- Victims in rape situations are often legitimately afraid of being killed or seriously injured and so co-operate with the rapist to save their lives

- The victim's perception of threat influences their behaviour
- Rapists use many manipulative techniques to intimidate and coerce their victims
- Victims in a rape situations often become physically paralysed with terror or shock and are unable to move or fight
- Non-consensual intercourse doesn't always leave visible signs on the body or the genitals

Myth 6: Women cry rape when they regret having sex or want revenge.

Implications:

- Reinforces stereotypes of the 'vindictive woman'
- Reinforces stereotypes of women as untruthful
- Re-victimises and stigmatises the victim
- Undermines her support for seeking justice

Facts:

Between January 2011 and May 2012, the Director of Public Prosecutions required Crown Prosecution Service areas to refer to him all cases involving an allegedly false allegation of rape and/or domestic violence. During that time, there were 5,651 prosecutions for rape but only 35 for making false allegations of rape. That is 0.01%.

Myth 7: Only gay men get raped/only gay men rape men.

Implications:

- Reinforces homophobic fears and prejudices
- Creates the illusion of the safety for straight men
- Re-traumatises and stigmatises male survivors
- Results in very few reported rapes on men

Facts:

- Men of all sexual orientations get raped
- Men who rape other men are often heterosexual - they usually have a relationship with a woman
- Rapists rape other men as part of their violence and need for power, dominance and control

Myth 8: Sex Workers cannot be raped.

Implications:

- Further disempowers sex workers
- Provides an excuse for abuse

Facts:

- Sex workers have the same rights with regards to consent as anyone else
- The transactions they negotiate with clients are for consensual activities, not rape

Myth 9: If the victim didn't complain immediately, it wasn't rape.

Implications:

- Disbelieves and re-traumatizes the victim
- Invalidates the experience of the victim
- Discourages the victim from seeking help

Facts:

The trauma of rape can cause feelings of shame and guilt which might inhibit a victim from making a complaint. This fact was recognised by the Court of Appeal in *R v D (JA)* October 24 2008, where it was held that judges are entitled to direct juries that due to shame and shock, victims of rape might not complain for some time, and that a late complaint does not necessarily mean that it's a false complaint.

8) Questions (10 Minutes)

Ask the group:

- a) How did you feel about that exercise?
- b) What is consent culture?

Open the floor to general questions and discussion about consent and the workshop.

9) Take Action (15 Minutes)

Small groups are asked to come up with an activity or 'stunt' that could be used to challenge misconceptions of consent and encourage positive healthier views of consent on campus and within society. This could be a poster, video, song, flash mob, acting, or freebie giveaways - whatever! Groups are allowed 5 minutes to discuss ideas. Then each group has to do a short presentation of their ideas.

OPTIONAL: You could assign groups challenges – such as having only £10 to spend or having only 2 volunteers.

Examples of activities they could work on are:

- **Pledge Making** - You could also use this time to work with students to write up consent pledge either individually or in groups.
- **Photo shoot** – Students could pose with their pledges or other signs.
- **Poster Ideas** – Students could note why they think consent education is important for a future poster campaign.
- **Awareness Campaign Ideas** – Ask them for ideas of how to raise awareness of the campaign on campus and set up meetings later on for people who want to be involved.
- **I really like the idea of encouraging people to be vigilant.** If you see a drunk person being led out of a club by someone else, check that they're okay, tell the person that someone can't consent if they're drunk etc

Close - Thank everyone for attending the workshop, and if you have any feedback forms you can distribute these now.

Useful Links

- Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) — www.asexuality.org
- AVA Project (against violence and abuse) — www.avaproject.org.uk
- Broken Rainbow — www.brokenrainbow.org.uk
- Brook — www.brook.org.uk
- Crown Prosecution Service — Rape and Sexual Offences: Chapter 21: Societal Myths — www.cps.gov.uk/legal/p_to_r/rape_and_sexual_offences/societal_myths/
- End Violence Against Women Coalition — www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk
- Rape Crisis — www.rapecrisis.org.uk
- Sexpression UK — sexpression.org.uk
- Survivors UK — www.survivorsuk.org
- The Havens — www.thehavens.org.uk
- This is abuse — www.thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk

For more information on **I Heart Consent**, visit:

- Facebook — www.facebook.com/iheartconsent
- Twitter — www.twitter.com/IHeartConsent
- Tumblr — www.iheartconsent.tumblr.com
- NUS Women's Campaign — www.nusconnect.org.uk/campaigns/womens/