

# 04 CONSENT

Learning about consent should begin before a young person becomes sexually active hence, we have targeted these activities to suit young people between the aged 11 – 15 years. The age of sexual consent is 16, although we recognise that some young people may be sexually active at an earlier age. The activities in this resource are devised to help young people develop an understanding about consent and to explore consent in real life.

“A person consents if s/he agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice”

Sexual Offences Order, Article 3

[http://www.psni.police.uk/index/advice-and-legislation/the\\_law\\_on\\_sex\\_in\\_ni.htm](http://www.psni.police.uk/index/advice-and-legislation/the_law_on_sex_in_ni.htm)

(guidance on Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008

## LESSON 1

Ask the group to come up with their own definition of sexual consent. Use the definition from the Sexual Offences Order for comparison emphasising **Freedom, Choice and Capacity**.

### ▶ GROUP DISCUSSION ON CONSENT

(Flipchart & markers required)

Divide the class into small groups and have each group nominate someone to feedback to the larger groups at the end of the exercise. Ask them to discuss with the following questions:

1. What can affect your choice/freedom or capacity to make decisions
2. Does someone always give verbal consent
3. Ask the students to come up with a list of ways to tell someone ‘no’.

Show the following videos and ask the young people to discuss their views on content. *(Please watch the video yourself before showing to the young people, so that you can prepare them for the content and make yourself available to them afterwards should anyone need to speak to you in private)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIXs40rANrk>  
(Without consent its rape - PSNI video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzDr18UY018>  
(Abuse in a relationship - would you stop? Home office)

## CONSENT continued

### LESSON 2

The purpose of the discussion is to examine whether the young people are able to use knowledge that they gained in lesson 1 into a real life situation and to look at ways to deal with the pressure that young people might be put under to do sexual things.

Pronouns such as “he/she” are deliberately not used in the following scenario. It is important not to identify the gender of the couple. It is for the young people to decide this for themselves.

#### ► SCENARIO + QUESTIONS

Pat and Chris have been going out together for two months. They have engaged in some sexual activity ie. kissing and cuddling each other. Chris is not ready to have sex with Pat yet, even though they really like each other, but wants to wait to be in a long term relationship. On Friday night the two of them went out to a friend’s birthday party where they both consumed alcohol. During the evening the conversation turned to sex and Pats’s friends made fun of the fact that their relationship had not progressed to the next level. Pat laughed it off. The next day Chris and Pat were discussing the party and Pat used the opportunity to talk about taking their relationship to the next stage. Pat told Chris that if they were a proper couple they would have had sex by now. Even their mates were laughing at them, so Pat wanted to know what was wrong with Chris - ‘Normal’ couples have sex with each other. Pat told Chris if the relationship did not move to the next level then Pat would be left with no alternative but to end the relationship. Pat said that Chris was putting the relationship in jeopardy. Chris felt under extreme pressure. Ending the relationship was not what Chris wanted. They did not discuss the matter further. The next weekend they were alone in Pats house having a few drinks. Pat slipped more alcohol than usual into Chris’s glass, as Chris seemed tense. They watched a movie and had a few more glasses of alcohol. They kissed and cuddled as usual but then Pat decided to ‘heat up’ the situation. Chris tried to push Pat hands away while keeping on kissing, hoping that Pat would get the message that kissing and cuddling was okay but no further. Pat decided that Chris was just playing hard to get so got more turned on. They ended up having sex.

#### ► DISCUSSION POINTS

- **What gender are Pat and Chris?**  
Does their gender influence your thoughts on the situation?
- **Was this consensual sex?**  
Agreement sought or given under coercion is not consent. Sometimes the loudest ‘no’ is silence. Consent should be enthusiastically given.
- **Coercion**  
Were both Pat and Chris being put under pressure? Who did Pat feel pressurised by? What pressure was Pat putting on Chris?
- **Capacity**  
What can affect someone’s capacity to give consent? Discuss how alcohol and drugs can impair your ability to give or seek consent. See link at beginning of this section to the Sexual Offence Order for the law on consent.
- **Assault within a relationship**  
Can sexual assault happen even if the couple have been seeing each other for a while and already have partaken in sexual activity? Does sexual assault occur within a same sex relationship? Does giving permission for one type of sexual activity (maybe kissing) automatically mean that a person has given consent to other sexual activity?
- Do films and pornography influence what we think should happen in a relationship? Do the scenarios depicted in these reflect reality? How do these videos/games portray women and what expectations are being put on young men watching these images? Is pornography an appropriate way to get sex education?  
[https://www.4ypbristol.co.uk/for-professionals/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2013/09/Media\\_Internet\\_Porn\\_Resource\\_Pack\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.4ypbristol.co.uk/for-professionals/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2013/09/Media_Internet_Porn_Resource_Pack_FINAL.pdf)  
(useful resource on the impact of porn on young people)
- Does what someone wears show whether they are more likely to have sex or not?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGnGPAZcsqE>  
(short video from Rape Crisis Scotland on women choosing an outfit for the evening)

## CONSENT continued

### ▶ GAME – SPACE INVADERS

This game is used to explore the participant's ability to recognise their own and other people's boundaries and understand body language.

Ask the students to get into pairs (preferably split buddies up). Ask them to stand two arms length apart from each other. One of the pair will be the instigator of the action, so have the pair decide who this is to be. The instigator will move closer and closer to his/her partner, all the while asking 'is this okay'. When the partner feels that they are close enough they should say stop. The other person must obey this demand.

#### Discussion:

- Did your body speak before you verbally gave the order to stop?
- Did you feel in control of the situation?
- What might you have done if the other person had not stopped?
- Did the instigator notice their partner's body language?
- How did the instigator feel having to ask over and over 'is this okay'?
- Would it have been acceptable for the instigator to assume that everything was okay up to a certain point?
- Whose responsibility is it to ask if it's okay?