

‘Consent is an unequivocal, engaged, excited “Yes!” to an offer of sexual activity. ... Enthusiastic consent requires communication, either verbal or physical, or both.’
(Sexual Health Week 2019 FPA)

Consent Facts

- Any sort of sexual contact without consent is illegal whatever the age of the people involved.
- The principles of sexual consent are the same regardless of someone’s sexuality or whether or not they are in a relationship.
- The age of consent for any sexual activity is 16.
- The law is there to protect people who might be being abused or taken advantage of by someone older; it isn’t there to punish people of the same age who both agree to sex (consensual sex). There are special laws to protect someone under 13.
- Any sexual activity with someone under 13 is illegal and viewed as rape or sexual assault. There is no defence in someone saying they thought the person was older.
- It is also illegal for an adult who is in a position of trust e.g. teacher, coach or carer to have sex with a young person under 18.

Consent Myths Busted

- All forms of sexual assault are serious. The word assault refers to all sexual violence that is not just physical. It can be psychological or emotional assault/violence e.g. manipulation, humiliation and an attempt to exert power over another person.
- **Non-consensual** sexting such as sending nude images, messages that are intended to be sexual, or sexual online content is illegal at any age. It is a criminal offence because someone might use this kind of message to make another person feel humiliated or upset. This is one of the many reasons why sexual images are illegal to send or receive under the age of 18 in the UK.
- However, if someone felt pressured to send a nude image or video, or had this shared further by someone without their consent, then they should seek help as this law does not intend to punish them. Instead the law intends to address the harm being caused by the person pressuring them or who shared the image/video further.
- Rape is a form of serious sexual assault. Rape is when someone puts their penis in another person's vagina, anus or mouth without consent. Sometimes this term is misused on social media which can have far reaching consequences and cause emotional distress.
- Flirting, saying nothing and clothing are not forms of consent in any circumstances. Nothing a person has done, said or didn’t say or wore would justify or ‘ask for’ any sexual assault, ever.
- Sexual assault is always wrong and always illegal. There are no exceptions and anyone whose consent is not sought, or whose decision is not respected, can seek help about this. It is always the responsibility of the person seeking consent to ensure this is given freely.

Worried about anything you have seen in this lesson?

Try these websites to answer your questions, but please ask a trusted adult if you are still worried:

Worried about a possible sexual assault:

- **NHS - help after rape and sexual assault:**
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/help-after-rape-and-sexual-assault/>
- **Childline - help after rape and sexual assault:**
<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/abuse-safety/rape-sexual-assault/>

Worried about shared images or contact online?

- **CEOP (National Crime Agency):** <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>
- **Childline:** <https://www.childline.org.uk>

Want to report a post/image or have it removed?

- **Childline - remove nude image shared online**
<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/remove-nude-image-shared-online/>