

ACTIVE* CONSENT

THE ACTIVE* CONSENT PROGRAMME

2019-2022: ACTIONS, OUTREACH,
PARTNERSHIP & IMPACT



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

THE ACTIVE* CONSENT PROGRAMME

2019-2022: ACTIONS, OUTREACH, PARTNERSHIP & IMPACT

Programme Co-Leads

2019-2022:

Siobhán O'Higgins
Charlotte McIvor
Pádraig MacNeela

Active* Consent Core Team

Members 2019-2022:

Alexandra Black
Lorraine Burke
Rebecca Connolly
Kate Dawson
Maureen D'Eath
Gavin Friel
Siobhan Healy-Cullen
Eve McDowell
Sinead McGrath
Eva O'Byrne
Theresa O'Rourke
Kate Tierney
Laura Tierney
Caroline West

Active* Consent Team

Contributors and Performers

2019-2022:

Lisa Achteresch
Ikenna Anyabuiké
Michael Arrigan
Ariyan Bhatti
Connor Brennan
Fiona Buckley
Valentina Carrion
Lelia Connolly
Sarah Corsini
Jérémie Cyr-Cooke
Michael Foley
Ashweeja Gowda
Mark Heffernan
Alice Keane
Fionn Kenny
MJ Devlin Larsen
Ailish McDonagh
Chloe Naomi
Lucy Naughton
Megan O'Connor
Mike O'Halloran
Dagda Semler

Our Partners:

We would like to acknowledge and thank all of the young people, educators, professional services support staff, parents and guardians, and collaborators who have worked with us since 2019.

Our collaborators have included organisations such as Galway Rape Crisis Centre, Rape Crisis Network Ireland, Sexual Health West, the Union of Students in Ireland, the Irish Second-Level Students' Union, and many others - including Higher Education institutions, Further Education & Training Centres, Youthreach centres, and post-primary schools across the country.

We would like to acknowledge and thank our funders, without whom the breadth and depth of our work would not be possible. Lifes2good Foundation have believed in our vision since 2019, as has Rethink Ireland, the University of Galway, and the Galway University Foundation.

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OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

RETHINK
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CONTACT US:

CONSENT HUB:



[HTTPS://WWW.CONSENTHUB.IE/CONTACT](https://www.consenthub.ie/contact)
ACTIVECONSENT@UNIVERSITYOFGALWAY.IE

ACTIVECONSENT

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WELCOME

The Active* Consent programme has pioneered sexual consent education and research with young people in Ireland since 2013, bringing together expertise from areas like psychology, health promotion, theatre and drama, psychotherapy, and social media.

Our programme ethos is that consent is ongoing, mutual, and freely given – that consent is for everyone, in all relationships, across genders and sexual orientations, and for each type of intimacy whether or not someone ever chooses to engage in it.

From its base at the University of Galway, it has grown into a national programme – including surveys, campaigns, resources, workshops, theatre and training – helping young people to achieve:

- Knowledge: Accurate information on consent attitudes and behaviours, how alcohol and drugs affect consent, digital intimacy, laws on consent and sexual assault.
- Communication skills: Verbal and nonverbal behaviour, what helps or hinders consent, how to talk to peers or partners about consent.
- Confidence: Seeking assistance or support for themselves or their peers should they need it from their school, college or a professional service.
- Challenge: Being part of the change in our culture that recognises and responds to non-consenting attitudes or actions, including sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Scaling up Active* Consent nationally involved continuous actions, learning and growth over the past decade:

- 2013: Student focus groups revealed consent was typically not discussed. Our case study-based, non-judgemental approach to talking to young people about consent supported open discussion.
- 2015–2018: Pioneering surveys on consent, sexual violence and harassment fed into consent drama initiatives and the consent workshops we devised that also foregrounded group discussion. Train-the-trainers methods were designed to build capacity in workshop facilitation.
- 2019–2022: Active* Consent scaled up to expand its offerings through philanthropic funding from Lifes2good Foundation, the University of Galway, Rethink Ireland, the Government of Ireland.

“OUR PROGRAMME ETHOS IS THAT CONSENT IS ONGOING, MUTUAL, AND FREELY GIVEN – THAT CONSENT IS FOR EVERYONE, IN ALL RELATIONSHIPS, ACROSS GENDERS AND SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS, AND FOR EACH TYPE OF INTIMACY WHETHER OR NOT SOMEONE EVER CHOOSES TO ENGAGE IN IT”

THE ACTIVE* CONSENT PROGRAMME ETHOS IS ON GOING, FREELY CONSENT ONE, IN ALL S, ACROSS SEXUAL AND FOR INTIMACY NOT SOMEONE TO ENGAGE

The Active* Consent programme has secured funding to continue this work for another five years, from 2023-2027 – during this time we will also expand our educational engagement to an international stage, while also improving workplace culture in Ireland.

One of our most important learnings in the past decade is that consent education for young people becomes sustainable when it is part of a broader programme of culture change. This 'socio-ecological model' states that successful outreach and support for large numbers of young people requires there to be an equal focus on capacity building, institutional ownership and network development.

Working together with partners such as Galway Rape Crisis Centre, our initiatives can take a learning community through a tiered, spiral model of increasing complexity, from brief social media messaging, to workshops and arts-based interventions, and on to specialised training for staff members and community leaders.

For example, staff members who deliver student consent workshops can be supported by champions in their institutions who have taken our professional development training module, 'First Point of Contact' disclosure training, and briefings to senior management and staff members.

The past decade has brought considerable learning on consent for all of us. Now there is an active national conversation on consent, while ten years ago there was largely silence. The Active* Consent team have proudly contributed to this change – we have enabled thousands of teachers and Higher Education staff to use the research-informed tools and resources we designed, not alone reaching out to tens of thousands of young people in the process, but also helping to shape our national policies and conversation about consent for the better.

We have learned what works to engage young people on consent, and, just as importantly how to implement and scale up consent education and research in the settings and systems that shape young people – including schools, colleges, and sports. As Active* Consent continues its journey for another five years, we pledge to continue sharing our learning and resources, as we strive for our communities to reach their potential in enabling active, informed consent.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Beginning in 2013 with student focus groups, the Active* Consent programme has become a leader in Higher Education on educational initiatives on consent, sexual violence and harassment, and research on campus climate including the sexual violence and harassment (SVH) experiences of students and staff. Our work supports students and staff through brief messaging, workshops, creative arts, the provision of training, and professional development. All of our resources are grounded in data collected with stakeholders, piloted, evaluated and continuously updated based on stakeholder feedback.

Active* Consent has developed multiple resources for awareness raising, education, and training, including:

For Students and Staff:

- Social media campaigns (e.g., *Start Here, Consent is for Everyone*).
- Campus initiatives such as *Consent Week*, *Green Flag Stall*.
- eLearning module on consent, sexual violence and harassment.
- ConsentHub national website for learning resources.
- Consent workshop facilitator training.
- Campus climate survey tool.

For Students:

- Consent educational resource designed for orientations.
- Discussion-based consent workshop for smaller groups.
- Theatrical drama, *The Kinds of Sex You Might Have at College*, study guide and video.

For Staff:

- Staff awareness-raising information video.
- Management briefing session.
- 10-ECTS continuous professional development module (with Galway Rape Crisis Centre).
- 4-session First Point of Contact in disclosure skills (with Galway Rape Crisis Centre).

CONSENT IS FOR EVERYONE

FOR ALL RELATIONSHIPS, GENDERS AND ORIENTATIONS. LEARN MORE ABOUT CONSENT, WHAT IT IS (AND WHAT IT ISN'T) ON CONSENTHUB.IE

DIVE IN

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ACTIVE* CONSENT

Lifes:good FOUNDATION
RETHINK IRELAND
COLLEGE OF GALWAY UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY
Killeshil na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



START HERE: TIPS FOR RECEIVING A DISCLOSURE

DON'T

DON'T ASK "WERE YOU DRUNK?/ARE YOU SURE?/ WHY DID YOU GO HOME WITH THEM?" - THAT SOUNDS LIKE YOU THINK IT'S THEIR FAULT. TRY TO LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGEMENT.

DON'T SAY THINGS LIKE "I'LL KILL THEM!" - HEARING ABOUT SOMEONE'S NEGATIVE SEXUAL EXPERIENCE CAN BE UPSETTING - BUT TAKE A BREATH AND TRY TO FOCUS ON THEIR FEELINGS, INSTEAD OF YOUR OWN.

DON'T RUSH THEM INTO SHARING ANYTHING THEY DON'T WANT TO. THEY MIGHT JUST TELL YOU A BIT, OR THEY MAY TELL YOU THE WHOLE STORY.

DON'T SAY "YOU HAVE TO REPORT IT!" - PUSHING SOMEONE TO TAKE ACTION THEY DON'T WANT CAN BE DISEMPowering AND RE-TRAUMATISING.

DO

DO SAY "I BELIEVE YOU" - OPENING UP ABOUT A NEGATIVE SEXUAL EXPERIENCE CAN BE STRESSFUL. LET THE PERSON KNOW YOU ARE LISTENING, YOU BELIEVE THEM AND WILL SUPPORT THEM.

DO ASK "WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO NEXT?" THEY MIGHT NOT KNOW WHAT THEY WANT TO DO RIGHT AWAY, BUT WHAT HAPPENS NEXT NEEDS TO BE THEIR CHOICE.

DO ASK "HOW CAN I HELP?" YOU COULD OFFER TO FIND OUT ABOUT SUPPORT SERVICES LIKE STUDENT COUNSELLING, SU WELFARE OFFICER, THE LOCAL RAPE CRISIS CENTRE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT TREATMENT UNIT. EVEN JUST LISTENING TO THE PERSON CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE.

DO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF - HEARING ABOUT SOMEONE'S NEGATIVE SEXUAL EXPERIENCE CAN BE VERY DIFFICULT. MAKE TIME FOR YOUR OWN SELF-CARE AND MENTAL WELLBEING.

VISIT RAPE CRISIS HELP FOR A NATIONAL DIRECTORY OF SERVICES:
WWW.RAPECRISISHELP.IE

FIND OUT YOUR OPTIONS FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT AND REPORTING:
WWW2.HSE.IE/SEXUAL-ASSAULT-TREATMENT-UNITS

VISIT AN GARDÁ SÍOCHÁNA FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON REPORTING:
WWW.GARDA.IE/EN/CRIME/SEXUAL-CRIME

FOR MORE ACTIVE* CONSENT TOOLS AND TIPS, VISIT
CONSENTHUB.IE

ACTIVE* CONSENT
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

CHILDSKILL & CHALLENGE UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY
USI
Galway Rape Crisis Centre
RACIAL EQUALITY

CONTACT YOUR INSTITUTION FOR ON-CAMPUS SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND MISCONDUCT SUPPORT SERVICES

79% OF COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO DISCLOSED AN EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT TOLD A CLOSE FRIEND

(SEXUAL EXPERIENCES SURVEY, 2020)

44% OF STUDENTS SURVEYED EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE SINCE BEGINNING COLLEGE (UNWANTED SEXUAL TOUCHING, COMPLETED/ ATTEMPTED PENETRATION)

HEA SURVEY, 2022

HIGHER EDUCUCATION

ACHIEVEMENTS

- We partner with 22 higher education institutions (HEIs) to bring consent education and training to campuses across Ireland and the United Kingdom.
- Thousands of staff members have engaged with our Staff Awareness Video.
- Over 22,000 First Year students participated in consent workshops in academic year 2022–23.
- 90% of workshop participants would recommend it to a friend, while 91% learned something useful.
- Significant pre/post workshop levels of agreement that participants: Have skills to deal with consent, feel well informed, that peers consider consent important, and confidence talking with peers.
- Over 1,500 HE staff and students trained as consent workshop facilitators since 2016.



HIGHER EDUCUCATION PLANS

- Support the goals of the HEA Implementation Plan (2022–2024) by continuing to provide our outreach support to universities across Ireland.
- Expand our coverage of key issues related to consent by making available workshops and train-the-trainer resources on digital intimacy, for postgraduate students, and in-depth student 'consent champion' training.
- Internationalise our programme by engaging with North American universities, forming partnerships with researchers, and adapting our programming to meet the needs of students internationally.



HIGHLIGHTS

“I’VE ALWAYS ADMIRERD AND BEEN SO GRATEFUL FOR ALL THE WORK THAT YOU DO AROUND PROMOTING CONSENT AND ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT ON CAMPUSES. YOUR WORK IS CHANGING SOCIETY AND THE MINDSETS OF PEOPLE” (STUDENT LEADER)

“IT’S A WORKSHOP EVERY TEENAGER IN IRELAND SHOULD HEAR. IT WAS GOOD TO HEAR EXACTLY WHAT CONSENT IS CAUSE MOST PEOPLE JUST ASSUME IT’S SAYING YES OR NO ONCE” (STUDENT)

“I REALLY LIKE HOW IT WAS SEX POSITIVE AND GAVE GOOD EXAMPLES OF HOW TO SHOW/ ASK CONSENT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE ACT OF SEX” (STUDENT)

“IT CREATES A REAL SAFE SPACE IN THE COLLEGE KNOWING THAT EVERYONE HAD RECEIVED THE TRAINING” (STUDENT)

OVER 75,000 STUDENTS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN CONSENT WORKSHOPS SINCE 2017

OVER 800 STUDENTS COMPLETED OUR ELEARNING MODULE *SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT: HOW TO SUPPORT YOURSELF AND YOUR PEERS*

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The *Active* Consent for School Communities* programme launched in 2021. It used baseline research with Transition Year and 5th year pupils to inform the development of a consent workshop for this age group and the 'Sex on Our Screens' (SOOS) eLearning resource which challenges how pornography and other sexual media represent body image, consent and sexual violence. The schools programme for pupils expanded further with a live consent drama that was performed across Ireland to pupils from 16 different schools in 2022.

The Active* Consent model involves applying a socio-ecological approach to each setting. We designed a training package to support teachers facilitate the workshop and SOOS in the classroom. Parents are very much included in the school community programme and each school invites their parents to seminars facilitated by our team following the teacher training. Parents are supported by an online seminar and by [Consenthub.ie](https://www.consenthub.ie) resources on talking to teenagers. These address some of the anxieties parents can have talking to children about topics like pornography, while clarifying the content and objectives of the consent workshop for pupils.

We have partnered with groups such as the National Parents Council and the Irish Second-Level Students' Union to help ensure that our content and approach is appropriate. At a sectoral level, we contributed to the National Council for Curriculum & Assessment Development Group for the new Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum. From 2023, we are supported by the Rethink Ireland 'Scaling Education' fund to work intensively with DEIS schools in particular to roll out our programme.

Active Consent for School Communities* resources currently include:

For Pupils, Staff and Parents;

- [Consenthub](https://www.consenthub.ie) national website for learning resources.

For Pupils:

- Active* Consent workshop.
- *Sex on Our Screens* eLearning module.
- The theatrical drama *How I Learned About Consent*, study guide and video.

For Teachers and Educational Staff:

- Online training for teachers in facilitating the consent workshop for pupils.
- The professional development module *Consent, Sexual Violence and Harassment: Practitioner Skills & Practice* (5 ECTS / 10 ECTS).
- eLearning module on consent, sexual violence and harassment.

For Parents and Guardians:

- Online seminars exploring the context in which their children may be exploring their sexuality and sharing various resources to support conversations at home.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- In the academic year 2021-2022, more than 4,000 secondary school students across the Republic of Ireland engaged with this programme.
- Our validation research in 2021 demonstrated significant improvements in knowledge and attitudes after TY students took part in the workshop.
- "The Active* Consent team have been kind, professional and accommodating every time we've worked together and their workshops were loved by every student who took part (several students even wanted to get their workshops done again in their own schools!). We can't praise them enough, they really are fantastic asset to the Irish Education system and are changing the face of consent education" (President, Irish Second-level Students' Union, 2021).
- Since 2021, 754 teachers from over 130 secondary schools have trained as consent workshop facilitators. Their feedback included:
 - "Excellent workshop and wonderful resources sharing many thanks."
 - "Will definitely recommend to others. Really enjoyed how open and honest your chats are."
 - "This should be compulsory CPD for every RSE teacher – such a need for workshops and resources like this."
- Almost 1,000 parents have participated in online information seminars. Parents have said:
 - "Thank you brilliant presentation so important a programme for the students...just wondering if this is going to be in all secondary schools?"
 - "Super and practical ... love the stories to describe situations, the answers to give kids to help them get out of tricky situations, being empathetic taking a breath and discussing it with our kid."
 - "Thank you, a very good information session, hopefully will make it easier for me as a parent to be able to talk to my young people as well as having the workshop in school."

HIGHLIGHTS

Feedback from pupils on the consent workshop:

83% WOULD RECOMMEND IT TO OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE

79% AGREED THAT THE WORKSHOP SHOWED HOW YOU CAN COMMUNICATE WITH A PARTNER

“I WAS HAPPY HOW OPEN IT WAS TO ALL GENDERS AND SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS” (FEMALE PUPIL)

“IT WAS SUCH A USEFUL WORKSHOP I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER ABOUT SAYING NO AND THE RULES AND INFORMATION SURROUNDING CONSENT THANK YOU” (FEMALE PUPIL)

“EVERYONE SHOULD BE TAKING THIS WORKSHOP FROM 1ST YEAR AS IT PREPARES THEM FOR LATER LIFE AS THEY NEED TO BE EDUCATED” (TY PUPIL)

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

HIGHLIGHTS

on the Consent workshop, Sex on our Screens, and our survey of parents

AT THE END OF THE POST-PRIMARY CONSENT WORKSHOP, WE INTEND YOUNG PEOPLE TO:

- See that sexual consent is an extension of the respect and care we show for all of the people in our lives.
- Know what consent is, and what helps or stops communication about consent.
- Realise that consent is ongoing, mutual, and freely given (OMFG) – for all forms of intimacy, for all relationships, genders and sexual orientations.
- Understand legal definitions and laws relating to consent.
- Be aware of what they actually might say to communicate about consent.
- Have accurate information about what their peers believe about consent – that most young people agree that consent is important.
- Know it's ok not to engage in intimacy with someone, and that their peers think so too.
- Be aware of how internalised peer pressure and issues like alcohol use can impact on decisions and choices.
- Be better prepared to support their friends in difficult situations.

AT THE END OF THE 'SEX ON OUR SCREENS' E-LEARNING RESOURCE, WE INTEND YOUNG PEOPLE TO:

- Be better prepared to communicate about consent in their relationships.
- Have knowledge and critical media engagement skills to question the reality of the sexual media messages that they see.
- Understand the concept of sexual scripts and how the media can shape our understanding of what is expected and acceptable.
- Be aware of the laws around sexual media use, production, and sharing in Ireland.
- Critically think about how pornography is produced and marketed.
- Understand how pornography can influence our feelings about our bodies.

The Active* Consent programme surveyed 409 Irish parents in 2021 on their beliefs about young people's use of pornography. Most accepted that it is normal for teenagers to be curious about pornography but were worried about how using porn impacts on healthy relationships, sexual consent, and body image. Parents agreed that they needed help in knowing how to have on-going conversations with their children. Many did not know where to get reliable information about pornography and how it might impact young people:

- **93% BELIEVED PARENTS SHOULD DISCUSS PORNOGRAPHY WITH THEIR TEENAGERS.**
- **92% BELIEVED THAT THE SCHOOL-BASED SEX EDUCATION SHOULD INCLUDE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY.**
- **ONLY 37% KNEW WHERE TO ACCESS INFORMATION ON HOW TO EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN ABOUT THIS TOPIC.**

PLANS FOR POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION

- Expand the Active* Consent for School Communities project, particularly in communities that experience educational challenges or social exclusion.
- Develop our education and training offerings to teachers and educators, working in collaboration with other groups wherever possible.
- Work on developing the ecological model further by partnering with schools prepared to engage with us on a whole-school approach.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS IRELAND

Active* Consent began a partnership with Education & Training Boards Ireland in 2022 to incorporate consent promotion in programmes offered by Further Education & Training and Youthreach centres. This initiative is supported by the Department of Justice and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. It is a unique opportunity to work with a sector that is part of local communities throughout Ireland, with the potential to integrate consent education in programmes for Post-Leaving Certificate, apprenticeship and Youthreach learners.

This project is also an opportunity to adapt the Active* Consent programme to the diversity in learning styles and cultural backgrounds seen in the sector. We have begun by applying the socio-ecological approach toward devising a toolkit that will support culture change, with actions including:

- Conducting interviews and focus groups with students, learners and staff.
- Training for staff to enable them to deliver consent programming to students and learners.
- Preparing staff with skills for receiving disclosures through the First Point of Contact training (FPOC) offered with Galway Rape Crisis Centre.
- Delivering our professional development Level 9 module, *Consent, Sexual Violence and Harassment: Practitioner Skills & Practice*, so that staff members can take a lead on championing consent education in their centres.
- Briefing sessions with staff to explain the background to the programme, including research and methodology, societal trends, current laws, training opportunities and available resources.

"WE LOVED HAVING SINÉAD AND HER TEAM HERE AT DIFE TO DELIVER THE ACTIVE CONSENT WORKSHOP. SINÉAD PROVIDED A SAFE SPACE FOR STUDENTS TO EXPLORE THE NUANCES AND BLURRED LINES OF CONSENT. OUR STUDENTS WERE FULLY ENGAGED AND EMPOWERED BY WHAT THEY LEARNED. WE LOOK FORWARD TO INVITING ACTIVE* CONSENT BACK IN THE FUTURE"
(GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR, DIFE)

ACHIEVEMENTS

- The Active* Consent team and our partner Sinéad McGrath from Evolve Education have delivered almost 40 online and in-person training sessions in the past year, which have had over 350 staff participants.
- Engagement has commenced with all 16 ETB areas, a network building efforts illustrated by in-person briefing sessions for sector leaders and all-staff professional development meetings – with over 400 participants so far.
- We have worked with FET Professional & Learning Development specialists in each ETB, collaborating with the national PLD office to establish #FETisStartingHere as an annual awareness campaign on consent, sexual violence and harassment.
- Our research with staff and learners is guiding our programme implementation, with initial findings documenting the acceptability and value placed on Active* Consent resources and training.

PLANS

- Building the capacity of staff at all levels of involvement, from awareness of consent to leading out on programme implementation, with training available nationally as well as at local level.
- Add further depth of research so that the Active* Consent programme can meet the full range of staff training needs and be inclusive of all student and learner requirements and characteristics.
- Reviewing all resources to include research findings from staff, students and learners.
- Encourage ongoing messaging with consent initiatives throughout the year.
- Launch a practical toolkit as guidance for staff, centres and ETBs to scale up programming on consent education.
- Contribute to the #FETisStartingHere campaign with new videos that feature staff and learners from ETBs and FET centres, linking staff and learners with follow-up information and support through [Consenthub.ie](https://www.consenthub.ie).

HIGHLIGHTS

“I BELIEVE THAT ASSUMPTIONS ARE THE ROOT OF THE MANY ISSUES SURROUNDING THE LACK OF CONVERSATION ABOUT CONSENT AND THAT THESE WORKSHOPS RAISE THIS AND PROMOTE HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO AVOID ASSUMPTIONS PARTICULARLY ABOUT HOW A PERSON IS FEELING OR WILL REACT” (YOUTHREACH LEARNER)

“IT MADE ME MORE AWARE OF THE LACK OF EDUCATION OUT THERE WHEN I LISTENED TO MY FRIENDS’ RESPONSES WITH THE STORIES, EVEN THOUGH I KNEW SOME OF THE LAWS, THEY DIDN’T SO IT HELPED TO TALK ABOUT IT ALL TOGETHER” (YOUTHREACH LEARNER)

“I FOUND THE ACTIVE CONSENT PROGRAMME TO BE A VALUABLE RESOURCE THAT I WILL USE WITH ALL MY LEARNERS TO HELP THEM NAVIGATE WHAT CONSENT IS USING A SEX POSITIVE APPROACH. I WOULD HIGHLY RECOMMEND THIS PROGRAMME TO ANYONE WHO WANTS TO SUPPORT THEIR LEARNERS USING A RESPECTFUL AND NON-JUDGMENTAL ATTITUDE IN UNDERSTANDING WHAT CONSENT IS” (YOUTHREACH RESOURCE MANAGER)

KERRY COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION ENGAGES INCOMING LEARNERS THROUGH CONSENT WORKSHOPS OFFERED DURING PROGRAMME ORIENTATION. OVER 700 LEARNERS TAKE PART ANNUALLY IN THE WORKSHOPS, LED BY STAFF WHO HAVE COMPLETED TRAINING WITH US. WE HAVE ALSO SUPPORTED STAFF MEMBERS THROUGH FIRST POINT OF CONTACT TRAINING AND WILL FACILITATE AN ALL-STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION THIS YEAR.

THEATRE AND DRAMA

Active* Consent programme is an interdisciplinary programme. Drama-based initiatives, including live and filmed performances, have been integral to that collaboration since the programme began – supported by Rethink Ireland's Arts to Impact Fund. Outreach to Higher Education took place through national tours in 2019 and 2022, extending last year to post-primary schools as well. Drama and theatre have also contributed to national campaigns on social media led by Active* Consent.

Our play for Higher Education students, *The Kinds of Sex You Might Have at College*, was led by Dr Charlotte McIvor from the O'Donoghue Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance at the University of Galway. The play has evolved continually since 2014 – Four rounds of development and performance have taken place during this time, propelled by over 40 students and alumni who contributed to its writing and performance.

A grant from the Community Foundation of Ireland enabled us to adapt our drama to post-primary schools audiences. *How I Learned About Consent* was performed to pupils from 16 schools, enabling us to explore how drama can be integrated with our schools programme.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- A large majority of young people who viewed the dramas for post-primary schools and Higher Education indicated that they had learned more about consent, sexual violence or harassment and how to seek advice or help. Feedback on the acting, writing, performance styles, and messaging of the dramas was prominent.
- *The Kinds of Sex You Might Have at College* was performed at 19 Higher Education campuses across the island of Ireland in 2022.
- Following the play, 94% of students agreed that they feel well informed about sexual consent, while 87% agreed that the performance improved their understanding of sexual consent.
- *How I Learned About Consent* was performed to pupils from 16 post-primary schools across four locations in the Republic of Ireland.
- With the support of John Corless at Claremorris Town Hall Theatre, it reached over 600 young people during one day of performance.
- After the play, 92% of pupils agreed that they feel well informed about sexual consent.
- 81% of pupils agreed that the performance improved their understanding of sexual consent.

THE ACTIVE* CONSENT DRAMAS INTRODUCE AND EXPLORE A NUMBER OF TOPICS CONCERNING SEX AND CONSENT, INCLUDING GENDER IDENTITY, DISCLOSURE, HOW TO NAVIGATE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT WITHIN A FRIEND GROUP, THE NATURE OF HEALING FROM TRAUMA, AND IMAGE-BASED SEXUAL ABUSE. THE TOPICS AND SCENES COVERED IN THE PLAY WERE DEVELOPED IN RESPONSE TO ACTIVE* CONSENT RESEARCH DATA INTO YOUNG PEOPLE'S SEXUAL EXPERIENCES, AND EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT. THE PLAY ALLOWS AUDIENCES TO SEE WHAT CONSENT AND NON-CONSENT LOOK LIKE, HOW THEY IMPACT INDIVIDUALS AND PEER GROUPS, AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO RESPOND TO THE SCENARIOS THAT ARE PRESENTED.

PLANS

- *The Kinds of Sex You Might Have At College* and *How I Learned About Consent* stage productions were professionally filmed.
- They will be available in 2023 as a teaching resource, including a study guide and background research.





**THE LIVE PERFORMANCE
OF *HOW I LEARNED
ABOUT CONSENT* WAS
VIEWED BY 1,300
PUPILS AND STAFF**

**THE LIVE PERFORMANCE
OF *THE KINDS OF SEX
YOU MIGHT HAVE AT
COLLEGE* WAS VIEWED
BY 2,270 STUDENTS
AND STAFF**

HIGHLIGHTS

“EVERY CHARACTER WAS HUMANISED. AND THE FINAL SCENE SHARING A MOMENT OF POSITIVE CONSENT WAS REALLY HARD HITTING BECAUSE I THINK A LOT OF CONSENT BASED WORK FOCUSES ON THE NEGATIVITY AND WHAT CAN GO WRONG” (GENDER NON-CONFORMING STUDENT)

“I REALLY LIKE THE SCENE WHERE YOU SHOWED THAT HEALING IS NOT A LINEAR PROCESS. THAT FELT VERY REAL + I FELT SEEN. THANK YOU” (STUDENT)

“I LOVED HOW IT WAS MODERN AS IT MADE IT VERY RELATABLE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS. A LOT OF SCENARIOS ADDRESSED & LOVED THE EVIDENCE BASED RESEARCH. IT WAS NICE TO SEE SCENARIOS PLAYED OUT SO THE AUDIENCE CAN SEE HOW TO DO THINGS BETTER. ALSO - IT WAS VERY GOOD!” (FEMALE STUDENT)

“THE FACT THAT CONSENT ISN’T ABOUT SEX BUT IT’S ABOUT EVERYTHING” (FEMALE PUPIL)

“IT SHOWS BOTH SIDES OF EVERY STORY -SHOWS ANYONE COULD BECOME A PERPETRATOR - DOES A GOOD JOB AT ILLUSTRATING THE THOUGHT PROCESSES AND EMOTIONS” (MALE PUPIL)

“THE ACTING WAS VERY REALISTIC AND THE USE OF LANGUAGE AND TERMS WERE VERY RELATABLE TO YOUNG PEOPLE. THE MOVEMENTS DISPLAYED HOW CAUGHT UP YOUR HEAD MAY FEEL” (FEMALE PUPIL)

SPORTS GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS

Sports clubs and organisations are a key setting for engaging young people in a positive developmental context. Recognising this opportunity, the Active* Consent programme has supported a range of sports groups, including sports codes such as rugby, GAA and athletics in Higher Education and the wider community.

We have partnered with Rugby Players Ireland on the delivery of consent programming in the Academy Programme since 2019. Active* Consent workshops have been provided to Academy rookie camps attached to the provincial teams, as well as to senior teams in all four provinces in 2022. Our workshops with these players have provided a space for participants to discuss healthy relationships and the role that senior players can have as peer opinion leaders.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Feedback from rugby players noted the engaging presenters, interactive exercises, openness and sex positivity, and the use of humour as key highlights from the workshop.

In 2021 Active* Consent supported Sinéad McGrath to deliver 10 consent workshops with GAA and Athletics students at DCU. We also provide workshops to the University of Galway students who take part in the Elite Sport Scholarship Programme and to individual sports clubs in the university.

PLANS

Work with partners such as Rugby Players Ireland to extend the range of resources that are available to them and adapted to their needs, including outreach to female teams.

Offer the Active* Consent model of awareness raising, skills development, and culture change to other sports codes.



TEN ACTIVE* CONSENT TEAM WORKSHOPS WERE HELD WITH DCU SPORTS, INCLUDING A TOTAL OF 173 GAA AND ATHLETICS STUDENTS. OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES PROVIDED BY THE SPORTS PLAYERS ON WHAT THEY LEARNED FROM THE WORKSHOP SIGNALLED THE UNDERSTANDING OF 'OMFG' AS ONE OF OUR KEY MESSAGES: THAT CONSENT IS ONGOING, MUTUAL, AND FREELY GIVEN:

“

ONGOING, FREELY GIVEN

WHAT IS RIGHT AND WHAT IS WRONG, GAINING A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF SITUATIONS

CONSENT IS KEY

CONSENT IS ACTIVE AND ONGOING

BE OPEN AND MIND EVERYONE AROUND YOU

COMMUNICATE

ALWAYS MAKE SURE THAT THE OTHER PERSON YOU ARE INVOLVED WITH WANTS TO GO AHEAD WITH IT

CONSENT IN PRACTICAL CONDITIONS

MAKE SURE YOU ASK FOR CONSENT. LISTEN TO OTHERS

IT'S IMPORTANT TO GIVE AND GET CONSENT

DRINK LESS AND TALK MORE

CONSENT SHOULDN'T BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED

DOUBLE CHECK, LISTEN

RELATIONSHIP OR NOT, CONSENT MUST ALWAYS BE ASKED

ALWAYS ASK FOR CONSENT

YOU SHOULD ASK VERBALLY IF YOU ARE NOT SURE OF SOMEONE'S BODY LANGUAGE

IT'S OK TO SAY NO

IT'S NEVER SILLY TO DOUBLE CHECK WITH SOMEONE NO MATTER WHAT

DON'T BE AFRAID TO TELL SOMEONE IF SOMETHING HAPPENS

LISTEN TO ANYONE ELSE WHO HAS A STORY AND BE THERE FOR SUPPORT

TALK TO SOMEONE IF YOU EXPERIENCE AN ASSAULT

YOU CAN ALWAYS SAY NO AT ANY TIME

DEFINITION OF RAPE

THERE IS LOTS OF HELP AVAILABLE ON CAMPUS. THEY DON'T BLAME THE VICTIM THEY SUPPORT THEM AND HELP THEM

DRINK IS A MAJOR FACTOR WHICH AFFECTS CONSENT AND I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS TO REALISE THAT

THE NUMBER OF MALES THAT ARE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

SENDING SOMEONE'S NUDES = ILLEGAL

SENDING INTIMATE PICTURES WITHOUT CONSENT IS ILLEGAL

IF YOU CONSENT ONCE DOESN'T MEAN IT'S EVERY TIME

THERE'S LOADS OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE AND THE LAW IS IN PLACE

”

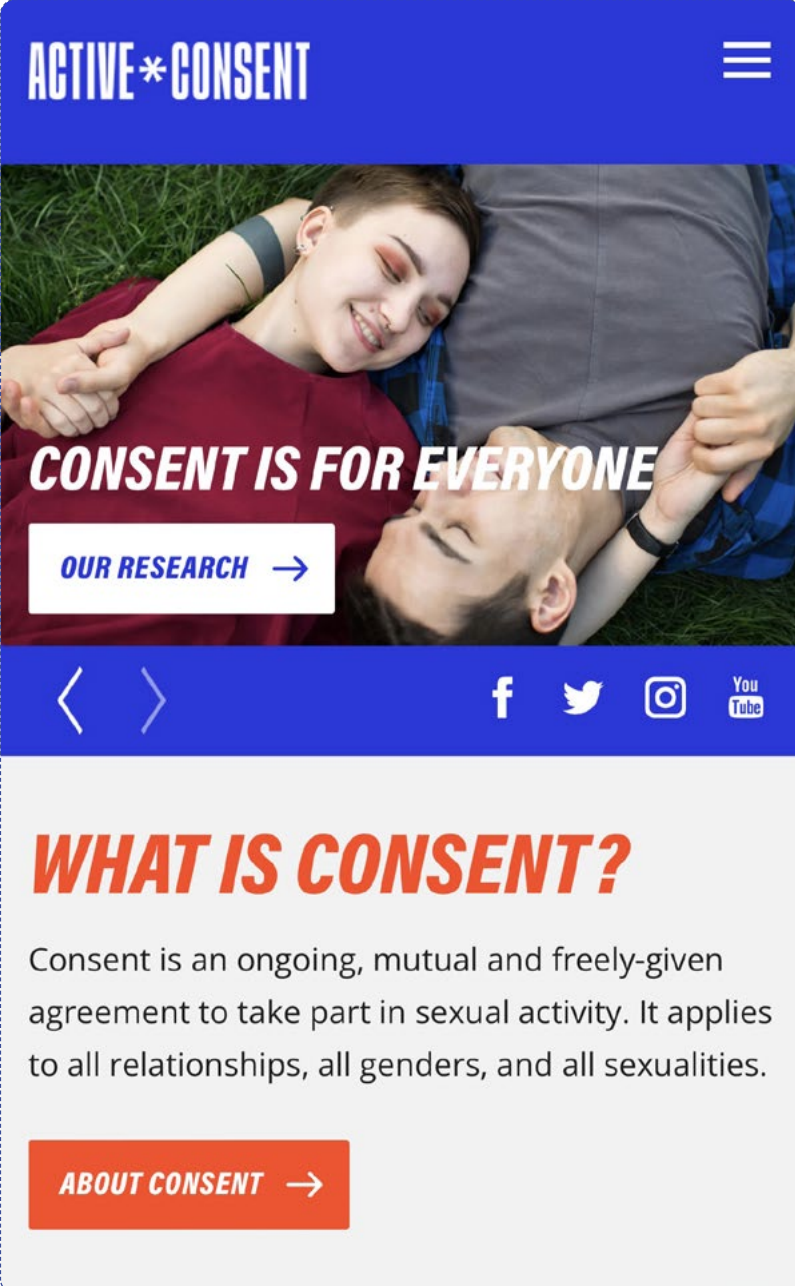
COMMUNICATIONS, CREATIVE ARTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The Active* Consent programme uses social media and other communication formats to engage stakeholders. By responding to cultural events and trending social media topics, we can draw out the implications for consent and sexual health in a dynamic and engaging way. In addition, since 2022 we have a dedicated website, ConsentHub.ie.

ConsentHub is the first national, publicly available online resource on consent awareness and learning in Ireland. It is offered in partnership with the Department of Justice, and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science. Consistent with our tiered approach to engaging people to meet their particular needs, we use the website to host resources ranging from brief awareness raising to in-depth resources that support professionals who have taken part in one or more of our trainings.

Minister Simon Harris has had this to say about ConsentHub: "This is a really important hub of resources and tools for student and wider society engagement. It plays a key part in our overall goal to build a meaningful culture of consent in our campuses, further education settings and in our communities across Ireland."

"OUR SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT IS ILLUSTRATED BY 8.2 MILLION IMPRESSIONS AND 102K ENGAGEMENTS ON TWITTER, FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, LINKEDIN, AND TIKTOK"



The screenshot shows the Active* Consent website interface. At the top, there is a blue navigation bar with the logo 'ACTIVE* CONSENT' and a hamburger menu icon. Below the navigation bar is a hero image of a young couple lying on their backs on grass, smiling and holding hands. Overlaid on the image is the text 'CONSENT IS FOR EVERYONE' in white, and a white button with 'OUR RESEARCH →'. Below the hero image is a blue bar with navigation arrows and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. The main content area has a light grey background and features the heading 'WHAT IS CONSENT?' in orange, followed by a paragraph of text: 'Consent is an ongoing, mutual and freely-given agreement to take part in sexual activity. It applies to all relationships, all genders, and all sexualities.' At the bottom of this section is an orange button with 'ABOUT CONSENT →'.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Our social media engagement is illustrated by 8.2 million impressions and 102k engagements on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Tiktok.
- Active* Consent social media work includes the *Consent Is For Everyone* campaign that targeted Higher Education students in 2022, achieving 1.4 million impressions across platforms.
- The 'Start Here' disclosure awareness and skills campaign reached over 250,000 Higher Education students in 2021, including 1.9 million Instagram impressions.
- The Green* Light Podcast has achieved over 6,000 downloads across 9 episodes.
- One of our team members is a member of the Advisory Group on the national awareness campaigns provided under the Third National Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. We have also contributed to the planning of communications campaigns offered by the Irish Universities Association.
- Since 2019, Active* Consent had a significant impact on the national conversation about consent, illustrated by 117 regional/national newspapers, magazines, digital articles, 55 radio and podcast interviews, and 6 television appearances.

PLANS

The Active* Consent programme is continually updating our social media and communication resources.

ConsentHub resources are expanding, including:

- Short videos on topics that parents have told us are priorities for them, including: Having positive conversations with your child about consent, sex, healthy relationships, and pornography; Supporting your child if they disclose sexual violence and introducing how professional services assist people coping with sexual violence (created with University of Galway Student Counselling and Galway Rape Crisis Centre).
- Follow up resources and videos for participants who have completed the First Point of Contact Training programme hosted by Active* Consent and Galway Rape Crisis Centre.
- An updated eLearning module for higher education students on consent communication skills, bystander intervention, and sexual violence prevention skills.
- A redesigned, four-part awareness-raising video series for Higher Education staff that introduces them to: Statistics on staff and student experiences of sexual violence, tips on creating a culture of consent on their campus, services and resources for HE staff including Speak Out, awareness raising on how to handle a disclosure of sexual violence from a student or fellow staff member, and national resources available to people who have experienced sexual violence and their supporters.

HIGHLIGHTS

ConsentHub.ie provides reliable, evidence-based information to young people under 17, over 17, to parents and guardians, and to educators. Over 40% of visitors to ConsentHub.ie are male.

ConsentHub.ie includes accessible content to young people, their parents and guardians to raise their awareness of Irish legislation on consent, sexual violence and harassment, to learn tips on how to support someone who discloses sexual violence, FAQs for parents on pornography and sexual media, as well as detailed resources and materials for educators.

Consent is For Everyone ran at the start of the 2022 academic year to raise HEI students' awareness that 'Consent is for everyone, consent is for everything- for all relationships, genders and orientations, and types of intimacy- including the sharing intimate images without consent' – an example of the Rethink Ireland Arts to Impact initiative.

Active* Consent collaborated with the University College Cork Bystander Intervention programme on the *Moving Parts* animation project led by Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology. Students drove the creative process from concept and story development to production and post-production, resulting in several animations that draw attention to key issues across the spectrum of sexual violence.

STAFF TRAINING AND PREPARATION

Part of our vision for changing our culture and practices through the 2023–2027 Active* Consent programme is to further develop our training and education for professionals and organisations. We draw on decades of experience in creating and delivering university-accredited teaching programmes, and a unique level of insight into applied practitioner skills in sexual consent education.

We are building on achievements and partnerships in this area that have rolled out specialised preparation for professionals and advocates, such as Higher Education academics and professional support staff, HE student leaders, post-primary teachers, Further Education and Youthreach centre staff members, members of An Garda Síochana, the Defence Forces, and sexual health education professionals.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- We have collaborated with partners such as Galway Rape Crisis Centre and Rape Crisis Network Ireland to run a one-semester Level 9 continuous professional development module (10 ECTS) to four cohorts of participants since 2020. This has been supported by DFHERIS and is recognised by the national MicroCreds programme to offer short, flexible micro-credential courses. It contributes to staff capacity building in projects such as our work with the Further Education & Training sector.
- Again working through a partnership approach, an innovative 12-hour version of Galway Rape Crisis Centre's longstanding disclosure skills training programme has been delivered since 2020. The 'First Point of Contact' disclosure skills and culture change training is offered over four sessions. It has been taken by our Level 9 module participants, staff members working in ETBs across the country, and almost 100 staff members and student leaders at the University of Galway.

PLANS

- Active* Consent will build on our unique position of being rooted in the teaching excellence of our home university and our leading role in applied consent education.
- Wherever possible we will work in partnership with experts and specialist providers to offer complementary, evidence-informed training.
- We will engage with international experts to devise a 'consent curriculum' that is relevant to the training and support needs of young people and professionals in educational settings.
- We intend to grow our existing teaching, training and practitioner development initiatives to meet the needs of private industry and the public sector.

TEAGASC PROGRAMMES

The Active* Consent programme has worked closely with Teagasc, the state agency for agriculture and food development, since 2019. We have delivered consent workshops to students who are on full-time Teagasc programmes at agricultural and horticultural colleges annually. This was a new development for the colleges, and an important outreach opportunity for us as Teagasc is a critical resource for young people from rural communities across Ireland. For instance, in 2022 our team delivered workshops to 650 Teagasc students in seven colleges across rural communities in Galway, Cavan, Limerick, Cork and Kilkenny. Three-quarters of respondents to an end of workshop survey agreed that they had learned something useful, while 86% would recommend the workshop to a friend.

AN GARDA SÍOCHANA

The Active* Consent theatre troupe was invited to perform our drama to Garda Trainees at the Garda College in Templemore in 2022. A total of 110 trainees attended the performance. We plan to offer staff at the Garda College our eLearning and workshop materials as resources that can be offered to members of An Garda Síochana to support basic training and professional development.

FIRST POINT OF CONTACT DISCLOSURE SKILLS TRAINING AND CULTURE CHANGE

Since 2021, 170 staff completed 12-hour First Point of Contact disclosure skills training. This initiative builds on the disclosure skills training that Galway Rape Crisis Centre has offered to staff members and students, extending that training to incorporate critical thinking on organisational culture and identifying your role in culture change.

Oriented toward education settings in particular, the training provides the opportunity for personal reflection on assumptions about sexual violence and harassment. It supports participants to develop the communication and interpersonal skills that enable someone to provide initial support and signposting for someone who has experienced sexual violence or harassment.

The Active* Consent team has worked closely with Gemma MacNally (University of Galway Student Counselling Service) and Michelle Caulfield (Education Department, Galway Rape Crisis Centre) to devise and deliver this training. The Office of the Vice President for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at the University of Galway has supported the roll out of the programme to staff members and student leaders, led by Rebecca Connolly.

We have been funded by the Irish Research Council New Foundations programme to evaluate the First Point of Contact initiative. The evaluation will lead to further improvements in training content, ongoing supports, and the sustainability of this form of training. Feedback from participants so far includes:

- "Being able to openly discuss difficult topics was hugely beneficial. It helps that there was a diverse group of people at the training who were willing to engage fully with our conversations/discussions. I feel more equipped to deal with/respond to someone who reports trauma (sexual violence). Very relevant to anyone who works with the public. This should be delivered nationally and as part of the education curricula/CPD."
- "I really enjoyed the training; a well-informed supportive environment was created from the beginning. I particularly liked that the trainers were practitioners and could share previous experiences. This training is essential for all staff and students – particularly managers and those in positions of influence."
- "As a guidance counsellor in a busy college of Further Education I highly recommend this course, gives us the skills to be the first point of contact, in an empathic, compassionate and professional way."



HIGHLIGHTS

CONSENT LEADERSHIP: PRACTITIONER SKILLS AND PRACTICE IN CONSENT, SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Our CPD module (10 ECTS, one semester) is delivered by the Active* Consent programme and our partners such as Galway Rape Crisis Centre and Rape Crisis Network Ireland. The module supports practitioners, researchers, and advocates to further develop their skills in leading out on and contributing to consent, sexual violence and harassment initiatives – such as education programmes, policy developments, and championing culture change in their organisation or setting. Since 2020, almost 100 staff and student leaders completed 10-ECTS CPD module. Initially delivered fully online, the module is now delivered in a hybrid format that brings participants together for an in-person session designed to enable later networking and sharing.

- "It included research, short films, case studies and breakout room discussions. On completion of this module, we were then able to use the skills we acquired to develop our own training module for Tackling Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence for staff. We piloted it in specific departments, made the necessary changes and rolled it out as part of new staff induction and to all staff across the University and will continue to do so. We would highly recommend anyone that is involved in this area of work to participate in this module."
- "I was very satisfied with the trainers and the learning I took from this course. I felt empowered to take this important message back to staff learners and management that all Youthreach Centres can be Consent centres."
- "As a practitioner in the area of sexual violence awareness and prevention, completing the Active* Consent module enhanced my confidence and knowledge in this area. The module was informative, enjoyable and interactive which was due to the amazing work of the Active* Consent team and the mix of participants too. I thoroughly enjoyed this module and gained so much from being part of it."

RESEARCH AND IMPACT

Research is integral to all parts of the Active* Consent programme ethos and how we contribute to culture change. Our original research on beliefs, attitudes, and experiences contributes to knowledge generation on issues and responses concerning consent, sexual violence and harassment – including in peer-reviewed international journals – while our background in Higher Education means that research evidence is foundational to how we design, evaluate and improve our initiatives.

We are committed to disseminate our findings across a range of formats to reach policy makers, stakeholders, and target beneficiary groups. This is a critical step in our socio-ecological model of achieving impact, leading and supporting culture change.

We promote research findings in our social media campaigns and use ConsentHub.ie to share our research-informed knowledge and guidance with parents, teachers and other stakeholders in accessible formats such as short videos.

PLANS

- The Active* Consent programme has a particular focus on understanding and supporting males with consent beliefs and behaviour. We will contribute to the research base on males by conducting a study that focuses on how ideas and roles concerning consent evolve for teenagers and young men.
- Active* Consent is working with Dr Susan Lagdon in the University of Ulster on the COSHARE survey of staff members' experiences of consent, sexual violence and harassment in Higher Education institutions, funded by the HEA North-South Programme. COSHARE will also help support networking and dialogue between researchers, NGOs and professional support services, with the aim of promoting greater consistency in practices and survey techniques across the island of Ireland.
- We wish to bring together experts internationally to contribute to our programme and provide input to the development of shared resources that can be used in awareness raising, education and training.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- We provide feedback on the Active* Consent initiatives to the groups and organisations that collaborate with us through regular short reports.
- Since 2020 we have published three major Active* Consent reports and organised an annual celebration of partnership, introducing the in-person 'Consent Event' to complement this in 2022.
- We promote research findings in our social media campaigns and use ConsentHub.ie to share our research-informed knowledge and guidance with parents, teachers and other stakeholders in accessible formats such as short videos.
- We surveyed 613 post-primary school students on consent, social norms, and their reactions to consent stories, generating an evidence base to inform the consent workshop in the Active* Consent for School Communities programme. We then demonstrated the value of the consent workshop in a validation study with 993 post-primary pupils.
- We have also provided expertise in designing research surveys, conducting statistical and qualitative analysis, and writing evaluation reports for Tusla and the rape crisis centres (Manuela Programme, 2021; Consent-Ed Programme, 2023) – demonstrating our contribution to sectoral developments and commitment to partnership.
- The Active* Consent team have played a leading role ensuring that the gathering momentum toward culture change in the Higher Education sector in Ireland is evidence-based. We have analysed over 17,000 survey responses from students and staff members on personal experiences, attitudes, and preparedness to engage positively in culture change initiatives:
 - 6,026 student responses to the 2020 Sexual Experiences Survey that we carried out in partnership with the Union of Students in Ireland.
 - 11,417 responses to surveys of students and staff carried out by the Higher Education Authority in 2021, which we were selected to analyse (7,901 students and 3,516 staff members).

HIGHLIGHTS

USING RESEARCH EVIDENCE TO INFORM POLICY ENHANCEMENT AND THE TARGETING OF RESOURCES

- The Consent Framework ('Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive: Ending Sexual Violence & Harassment in Higher Education Institutions', 2019) is a key policy recognised as a leading example internationally.
- Culture change depends on a commitment to implementation. Our research work has helped to maintain a momentum toward sectoral commitment and resource allocation.
- Citing our Sexual Experiences Survey report, Minister Harris and the CEO of the Higher Education Authority wrote to institution Presidents in 2020 to require that students are provided with mainstreamed consent education. All HEIs were subsequently required to publish consent, sexual violence and harassment Action Plans and to make annual reports as part of the strategic dialogue with the HEA.
- The HEA Centre of Excellence for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion adapted the SES campus culture survey methodology in order to conduct national student and staff surveys in 2021, making a further commitment to ongoing survey work. The Active* Consent team was selected to prepare the national survey research reports.
- The report recommendations informed the national Implementation Plan (2022-2024) launched by Minister Harris in October 2022. One highlight of the plan was the funding allocation of €1.5 million annually to fund sexual violence and harassment prevention and response managers in Higher Education institutions across the country.

CITING OUR SEXUAL EXPERIENCES SURVEY REPORT, MINISTER HARRIS AND THE CEO OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY WROTE TO INSTITUTION PRESIDENTS IN 2020 TO REQUIRE THAT STUDENTS ARE PROVIDED WITH MAINSTREAMED CONSENT EDUCATION



RESEARCH AND IMPACT

USING COMMUNICATION STORIES TO EXPLORE HOW YOUNG PEOPLE DRAW ON SEXUAL SCRIPTS WHEN MAKING SENSE OF SEXUAL CONSENT (HEALY-CULLEN ET AL., 2023)

- Our article in *Sexuality & Culture* in 2023 analysed the responses of 613 14-17 year-old post-primary school students to a 'consent story' about two characters (Aoife and Martin) in a survey¹.
- Our use of consent stories began in a research project in 2013, later evolving into using stories in consent workshops as a safe means to pose consent dilemmas.
- Practice in applying 'consent literacy' principles to ambiguous consent scenarios should assist with autonomous decision-making.

FOUR IN TEN (42%) OF FEMALE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS EXPERIENCED UNWANTED SEXUAL TOUCHING SINCE STARTING COLLEGE SIX MONTHS PREVIOUSLY

Students Who Had Not Experienced Sexual Misconduct	Our research questions:	What we found:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thousands of college students have responded to the 'Aoife and Martin' story in workshops – an easily recognisable casual hook-up scenario that features gendered power dynamics and alcohol consumption. • Martin initiates sexual intimacy, Aoife smiles in response to Martin's behaviour, and the story context references a number of factors that might impact on consent. • Young people can consider whether Aoife wanted to give her consent, if she lacked confidence to say no, was uncomfortable in the situation, or lacked capacity as a result of drinking alcohol. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We wanted to find out how post-primary school pupils would react to the use of force by the male partner who initiates the event, and if they would accept a non-verbal response as an acceptable form of consent. • We constructed three story variations on 'Aoife and Martin' for our post-primary programme. • The stories varied according to the forcefulness of Martin's non-verbal behaviour in initiating oral sex, and whether Aoife did or not smile in response to him. • Participants rated their agreement that sexual consent was present and gave written comments on their decision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied sexual scripts were applied that upheld or challenged heteronormative beliefs about females being responsible for stopping intimacy and which minimise the responsibility of males for establishing ongoing, mutual consent. • Most pupils who read about Aoife smiling agreed that a smile was sufficient non-verbal consent for significant intimacy. • The pupils were sensitive to when a non-verbal signal was not present at all – a minority agreed that consent was present in the story version where Aoife did not smile at Martin. • There was less sensitivity in response to Martin's behaviour – reflected in comparatively little difference in responses to when Martin 'firmly pushed' or 'pushed' Aoife's head down.

¹ Healy-Cullen, S., O'Rourke, T., O'Higgins, S., McIvor, C., Achteresch, E., Bharath, A., Dawson, K., Burke, L., Connolly, R., D'Eath, M., Foden, E., McGrath, S., Tierney, L., & MacNeela, P. (2023). Using Communication Stories to Explore How Young People Draw on Sexual Scripts When Making Sense of Sexual Consent. *Sexuality & Culture*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-023-10078-y>

² Burke, L., Dawson, K., Flack, W. F., O'Higgins, S., McIvor, C., & MacNeela, P. (2023). Alcohol, drug use and experiences of sexual violence victimisation among first-year college students in Ireland. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2023.2216221>

ALCOHOL, DRUG USE AND EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE VICTIMISATION AMONG FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS IN IRELAND (BURKE ET AL., 2023)²

- First Year in college is recognised as a high risk period for sexual violence.
- Vulnerabilities during this time include changes in support networks and increased access to alcohol and drugs.
- This analysis explored the relationship between sexual violence victimisation, alcohol use, and drug use – among 1,778 First Year college students who completed the 2020 Sexual Experiences Survey carried out by Active* Consent and USI.
- Sexual violence is never the fault of the victim. Drawing links between drinking alcohol or using drugs and sexual violence victimisation can blame or shame victims.
- The decision to commit sexual violence is always the choice of the perpetrator – this behaviour is more likely when the victim is particularly vulnerable through incapacitation.
- While it is difficult to address alcohol and drug use, their role as risk factors means that they should be highlighted sensitively and consistently in consent and active bystander programming.
- Previous Active* Consent research showed that many students considered it possible to give consent while quite intoxicated – so at the very least our cultural beliefs about the capacity to freely give consent must be challenged.

FOR MALE STUDENTS, THE EXPERIENCE OF NON-CONSENSUAL PENETRATION WAS PARTICULARLY ASSOCIATED WITH HAVING USED DRUGS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

Recently published in the Journal of Sexual Aggression, the study identified that sexual violence was common in the First Year of college

The SES survey also showed that alcohol consumption and drug use were relatively common among First Year students.

- Four in ten (42%) of female First Year students experienced unwanted sexual touching since starting college six months previously.
- Almost three in ten (29%) had experienced completed penetration against their will, similar to the definition of rape.
- One in five (22%) male students had experienced unwanted sexual touching, 9% had experienced penetration against their will.
- The most common perpetrator tactic described by females was incapacitation by alcohol or drugs (35%), followed by coercion (34%), and force / threat of force (20%).
- Incapacitation was also most common among men (18%), followed by coercion (16%), and force / threat of force (8%).
- Two-thirds (65%) of females and 72% of males had a hazardous pattern of alcohol consumption (AUDIT-C screening questions).
- Four in ten of females reported cannabis use in the past 12 months – while 13% had used cocaine, 10% used ecstasy, and 6% had taken ketamine.
- Among males, 50% said they had taken cannabis over the past 12 months, 16% had used cocaine, 14% had taken ecstasy, and 11% had used ketamine.²

Sexual violence incidence rates were related to alcohol consumption and the use of drugs.

For instance, among females, the experience of completed non-consensual penetration rose to over 35% of those who used alcohol at a hazardous level and those who had used cannabis in the past 12 months. This rose to 44% among females who had used ecstasy and 48% among those who had used cocaine or ketamine.

For male students, the experience of non-consensual penetration was particularly associated with having used drugs in the past 12 months.

RESEARCH AND IMPACT

The impact of the Active* Consent programme is represented through our socio-ecological model of engagement. It is illustrated here at the different ecological levels of the individual, relationships, peer groups, stakeholder engagement, organisational support, and at the national level of policy making and societal discourse.

Engagement level, actions, and Indicators	Outcomes and Impact
<p>The individual, relationships, and with peers</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent workshops • Drama performance • Social media campaigns <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of young people reached • Satisfaction with taking part • Pre/post intervention change • Qualitative feedback on impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 70,000 college students have taken part in our workshops since 2019. • 90% of college students subsequently recommended the workshop, 85% agreed that the workshop was relevant to them. • Increase in the percentage of college students who agreed that they had all the skills they needed to deal with consent, and who said they were well informed about consent. • The HE workshop <i>"creates a real safe space in the college knowing that everyone had received the training"</i> (student). • Increase in the percentage of college students who agreed that you should always assume you do not have consent when initiating sexual activity, and who agreed that their peers thought sexual consent was an important issue. • Increase in the percentage of college students who agreed that they felt confident talking about consent with their peers. • The HE workshop was <i>"very informative and can help others on proper communication in regards to consent"</i> (student). • Over 4,000 pupils have taken part in post-primary consent workshop since its introduction in Autumn 2021 – 83% subsequently recommended the workshop. • The school workshop <i>"was such a useful workshop I feel much better about saying no and the rules and information surrounding consent thank you"</i> (pupil). • Almost 5,000 college students and post-primary pupils have attended our live drama performance since 2019. • Three-quarters agreed that the performance improved their understanding of sexual consent. • The consent drama <i>"shows both sides of every story -Shows anyone could become a perpetrator - Does a good job at illustrating the thought processes and emotions"</i> (pupil). • Over 250,000 college students viewed 'Start Here' (2021) social media campaign on disclosure of sexual assault – 1.9 million Instagram impressions over 8 week campaign. • 'Consent is For Everyone' (2022) campaign had 1.5 million impressions across social media platforms, 1.1 million video views across these platforms.

“VERY INFORMATIVE AND CAN HELP OTHERS ON PROPER COMMUNICATION IN REGARDS TO CONSENT” (STUDENT)

“CREATES A REAL SAFE SPACE IN THE COLLEGE KNOWING THAT EVERYONE HAD RECEIVED THE TRAINING” (STUDENT)

“I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THIS COURSE, GIVES US THE SKILLS TO BE THE FIRST POINT OF CONTACT, IN AN EMPATHIC, COMPASSIONATE AND PROFESSIONAL WAY” (STAFF MEMBER)

Engagement level, actions, and Indicators	Outcomes and Impact
<p>Academics, educators, professional services support staff, and members of the community</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent workshop facilitator training – for Higher Education and post-primary schools • First Point of Contact disclosure and organisational change training (with Galway Rape Crisis Centre) • Staff briefing sessions • Parent seminars <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of staff, professionals and community members reached • Satisfaction with training • Qualitative feedback on impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 1,500 HE staff and students have trained as consent workshop facilitators since 2016. • <i>“The main impact ... is that consent is now being discussed formally at our Institute”</i> (HE staff member). • <i>“The training really opened up people’s eyes ... It generated really good conversations and moved the support services forward in terms of the support they felt they needed to provide and increase co-ordination”</i> (HE staff member). • Since 2020 thousands of staff viewed our staff awareness raising video (e.g., 2,000 at TU Dublin alone). • Since 2021, 170 staff completed 12-hour First Point of Contact disclosure skills and organisational change training. • 97% of FPOC disclosure skills training participants would recommend it to others, 100% agreed that it was effective in covering skills for receiving disclosures. • <i>“As a guidance counsellor in a busy college of Further Education I highly recommend this course, gives us the skills to be the first point of contact, in an empathic, compassionate and professional way”</i> (FE staff member). • Over 350 Education & Training Boards staff participants in training since 2022. • Over 400 ETB staff engaged since 2022 with in-person briefing sessions for sector leaders and all-staff professional development meetings. • <i>“I would highly recommend this programme to anyone who wants to support their learners using a respectful and non-judgmental attitude in understanding what consent is”</i> (Youthreach resource manager). • Since 2021, 754 teachers from over 130 secondary schools have trained as consent workshop facilitators. • <i>“This should be compulsory CPD for every RSE teacher - such a need for workshops and resources like this”</i> (teacher). • Almost 1,000 parents have participated in online information seminars. 97% of parents found the seminar to be informative, 88% agreed that their confidence to communicate with their child about sexual consent had increased. • <i>“Very pleased with the language used and the no nonsense attitude towards such an important but often ‘skirted’ around topic”</i> (parent).

RESEARCH AND IMPACT

Engagement level, actions, and Indicators	Outcomes and Impact
<p>Collaborators, partner organisations, and expert input</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration on mutual delivery of initiatives together • Organisational partnership to provide training and preparation to staff or students • Networking and consultation with organisations • Providing expert input to working groups and projects <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of initiatives • Sustainable programmes embedded in organisations • Co-creation of new resources • Contribution to policies and initiatives Reference to Active* Consent in action plans and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering with 22 Higher Education institutions on consent education and training across Ireland and in the United Kingdom. • Partnership in delivering training and education initiatives with Galway Rape Crisis Centre, Rape Crisis Network Ireland. • Partnership with Union of Students in Ireland on Sexual Experiences Survey (2020), hosting our resources and supporting training. • Engagement with all 16 Education & Training Board areas nationally. • Partnership with ETBI and Solas to develop a consent programme for Further Education & Training. • Teachers from over 130 post-primary schools trained to deliver consent workshops. • Engagement with organisations outside education (e.g., An Garda Síochána, Rugby Players Ireland). • Expert input to DFHERIS 'Consent Framework' ('<i>Safe, respectful, supportive and positive: Ending sexual violence and harassment in Irish third level institutions</i>'), National Women's Council National Advisory Committee, Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland (PCHEI) 'Speak out' anonymous reporting tool, Department of Justice Campaigns Advisory Group, Higher Education Authority Advisory Group on Ending Sexual Violence & Harassment in Higher Education, National Council for Curriculum & Assessment expert group on Junior Cycle SPHE. • Consultation and information provision to national groups (e.g., National Parents Council, Irish Second-Level Students' Union, National Youth Council of Ireland, Tusla Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence service).

Engagement level, actions, and Indicators	Outcomes and Impact
<p>National policy, sectoral engagement, and societal discourse on consent</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination activities such as reports, events, feedback to partners, regular communications • ConsentHub website • Offering standardised training and tiered levels of preparation • Engagement with media to promote societal change <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • References in national policy and key reports • Engagement with policy makers • Sectoral uptake of programming • Level of engagement with media outlets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cited 30+ times since 2019 in Oireachtas debates, Parliamentary Questions. • Referenced by Joint Committee on Gender Equality, Joint Committee on Education, Further & Higher Education. • Cited in Department of Justice '<i>Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual, & Gender-Based Violence Implementation Plan</i>' (2022). • "<i>I'm very proud of all of the work of the Active* Consent team. ... Active* Consent has been an amazing initiative, you have been leading the way</i>" (Minister Simon Harris, 2020). • "<i>I would urge that this programme be implemented in the widest number of schools possible. ... This Active* Consent programme goes a long way to outcomes what can facilitate good, ongoing consent and highlights the possible barriers</i>" (The Ombudsman for Children, 2021). • Cited as a key source in reports by the Higher Education Authority, Technological Higher Education Association, Irish Universities Association, Law Reform Commission, Oireachtas Research Reports. • Resource dissemination through meetings and trainings (e.g., Annual stakeholder celebration since 2020; USI Officers training since 2019; 1-day 'Consent Event', 2022), published Active* Consent reports in 2020 and 2021. • Ongoing network engagement through social media, email blasts, ConsentHub updates. • Informing national discourse on consent through media engagement: Over 100 regional/national newspapers, magazines, digital articles, more than 60 interviews on radio, television, and podcasts. • Societal engagement through social media: Over 8 million impressions on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Tiktok.



ACTIVE* CONSENT

CONTACT US:

CONSENT HUB:



[HTTPS://WWW.CONSENTHUB.IE/CONTACT](https://www.consenthub.ie/contact)

ACTIVECONSENT@UNIVERSITYOFGALWAY.IE



ACTIVECONSENT