

*Apprenticeship CARE: Consent Awareness and Respect for Everyone*

# ***The Apprenticeship CARE Survey and Development of Learning Resources on Consent Promotion, Sexual Violence Prevention and Response***

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# Executive Summary

This executive summary presents the key findings and recommendations from the Apprenticeship Consent Awareness and Respect for Everyone (CARE) Survey. Conducted through a collaboration between the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Department (Apprenticeship Supports) at Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) and the Active\* Consent programme at the University of Galway, the survey captures, for the first time in Ireland, the perspectives of apprentices on consent, sexual violence and harassment (SVH), relationships, and associated social norms.

*This is the first time apprentices in Ireland have been directly asked about consent, sexual violence and harassment, providing the foundation for creating targeted educational resources.*

Drawing on responses from 723 apprentices, the demographic profile of respondents reflected craft apprenticeship programmes nationally; 96% identified as male and 92% were aged less than 25. Participants were drawn primarily from construction (62%), industrial (24%), and mechanical (14%) apprenticeship programmes. Over half of respondents (54%) reported being in a relationship at the time of the survey.

The findings highlight both strengths in views and attitudes and critical gaps that should be addressed. Apprentices demonstrated broadly positive attitudes towards getting consent for any form of intimacy, yet demonstrated challenges in applying these principles in real-world scenarios. This gap between knowledge and practice, particularly in contexts involving alcohol, digital intimacy, and peer

dynamics, represents a key finding of the report.

The Apprenticeship CARE Survey findings provide evidence to inform a settings-based approach to consent education and culture change, aligned with national priorities in the Further Education and Training sector on inclusion, wellbeing, and learner support. The report provides examples of how the survey findings can be used to co-create innovative educational resources in partnership with apprentices themselves.

## Key Findings

### 1. **Consent Awareness and Application of Principles**

Responses to survey items demonstrated that apprentices overwhelmingly endorsed the principles of active consent founded on communication.

*93% of participants agreed that verbal consent should be obtained before sexual intercourse, and 88% agreed that verbal consent should apply to all forms of intimacy.*

Despite this strong baseline, apprentices in the survey identified challenges related to communication and practice:

- Almost half (**46%**) agreed they would continue to move forward in sexual behaviours until their partner stopped them.

- **50%** reported that verbally asking for consent was awkward.
- Only **51%** had discussed consent with a friend.

These findings indicated that, while apprentices understood what consent is, they also experienced obstacles. There is a need to support apprentices to become more comfortable talking about consent and checking in with a partner.

## **2. Applied Consent in Real-Life Scenarios**

The Apprenticeship CARE Survey featured four story scenarios that featured consent. The responses made to the stories provided a deeper understanding of how apprentices interpret consent in context. There was a consistent pattern: Apprentices' reactions often did not reflect the clear principles they had earlier endorsed because the stories portrayed consent ambiguously and in the context of alcohol use and non-verbal cues.

*Apprentices showed strong support for verbal consent in principle but frequently relied on contextual and non-verbal cues.*

- In a case involving pressure to share intimate images, 43% still believed consent was present, despite 83% recognising that the individual felt pressured to share.
- In a scenario featuring alcohol intoxication and non-verbal cues, 48% inferred that consent to sex was present

because the couple had been kissing earlier in the evening, while 44% agreed that there was consent to sex because the woman partner smiled when the man produced a condom.

- Across the stories, a large percentage of participants (often one third or more) selected the neutral response in response to questions, indicating uncertainty about how to respond to consent dilemmas.
- These findings suggest that educational approaches must build on the awareness of consent principles and extend the apprentices' skills for critical thinking, communication skills, and applied judgement about consent.

## **3. Alcohol and Consent**

Apprentices' understanding of how alcohol impacts the capacity to consent was inconsistent.

- Up to **44%** of apprentices were unsure whether alcohol impaired the ability to give consent.
- Only **52%** agreed that individuals were too drunk to consent in a scenario where the story characters were described as drunk and unsteady on their feet.
- In a story that relied on describing the impact of alcohol by focusing on describing the amount of alcohol consumed, just **29%** of participants agreed that they were too drunk to give consent.

In their open-text feedback, apprentices highlighted the need for education on alcohol and consent.

These findings point to the priority for education on how alcohol impacts capacity and impairs the capacity to give consent – including reference to legal responsibilities.

## **4. Digital Intimacy**

Digital intimacy, including the sharing of explicit images with a partner, is a significant issue:

*32% of apprentices had sent intimate images and 68% had received them.*

There was a strong recognition of the risk of image sharing:

- Over **80%** recognised intimate image sharing as risky and creating vulnerability.
- **72%** believed it may lead to future problems.

However, attitudes were ambivalent:

- Over **50%** viewed intimate image sharing as exciting or positive.
- **48%** agreed that it is a normal feature of relationships.

Apprentices simultaneously perceived digital intimacy as high-risk and normal; a dual perception that reflects the need for design and implement exercises that support critical thinking about this issue.

## **5. Bystander Intervention**

Apprentices demonstrated confidence to intervene in high-risk situations. Nearly all felt at least somewhat prepared to act, and the vast majority responded positive to specific situations:

*80% of apprentices agreed that they would act to prevent potential physical sexual violence.*

However, the likelihood of intervention dropped for everyday problematic behaviours:

- **36%** would challenge sexist language.
- Only **21%** would challenge sexist jokes.

These findings suggest a need for extending bystander intervention into outreach approaches with apprentices, including addressing the everyday sexism that helps to perpetuates sexual violence.

## **6. Gender Norms**

Responses to gender-related statements revealed divided views among apprentices:

- **31%** agreed that “men are always ready for sex.”
- **58%** disagreed that it is a woman’s responsibility to prevent sexual activity from progressing.
- A large proportion (from **25–31%** of apprentices) remained neutral across all gendered beliefs.

*Apprentices occupy a spectrum from traditional to progressive views, with a substantial group expressing uncertainty.*

This ambivalence highlights an opportunity for critical reflection on gender norms and stereotypes – which would allow apprentices to consider how these views impact on consent and relationships.

## **7. Consent Education**

While 76% of apprentices were satisfied with the sex education that they had previously received, the delivery methods used to engage them on the subject of consent were largely passive:

- **93%** received talks.
- **80%** watched videos.

*Less than half (46%) of apprentices had experienced interactive, discussion-based consent workshops.*

Meanwhile, apprentices reported learning most about sex and relationships from a previous or current partner:

- **90%** identified romantic partners as a key source.
- Other sources such as peers (**78%**) and school (**80%**) were also important, with media (**38%**) and pornography (**25%**) cited less often.

These findings reinforced the need for more engaging, applied learning approaches.

## **8. Awareness of Supports**

The survey identified varying levels of awareness of supports and reporting mechanisms.

*A majority of respondents indicated that they knew where to access support (57%) or report incidents (62%) within their college or training centre.*

Preparedness to respond to disclosures was moderate:

- **35%** felt well prepared;
- **13%** felt not prepared at all.

These findings highlight the importance of ensuring that all apprentices know what supports and services are available to them: in their colleges and training centres, in their local communities, and online.

## **Apprentices' Voices: Priorities for Education**

Open-ended responses provided valuable insight into learner needs. For example, one participant said they wanted to learn more about *"How to ask for consent without it being awkward."*

Key requested topics include:

- Practical communication skills
- Alcohol and drugs
- Digital intimacy
- Legal clarity
- Healthy relationships
- Social pressures and norms

Learners also emphasised the value of interactive learning formats:

*"Group discussions to see others' opinions... everyone sharing their honest views."*

Resistance was present among a minority, particularly around perceptions of masculinity and relevance, reinforcing the need for inclusive, balanced messaging.

## **Innovation in Practice: Co-Creation and Workshop Development**

The Apprenticeship CARE Survey findings informed the development of a pilot workshop using participatory methods, which explored how the findings could be used to support:

- Scenario-based learning
- Group debate activities
- Practical communication exercises
- Application of the "OMFG" (Ongoing, Mutual, Freely Given) model

Following delivery to **48** apprentices, feedback was highly positive as **100%** of participants would recommend the workshop.

*"Good fun and educational... really good for communicating consent."*

This demonstrates the potential for co-created, learner-centred approaches to engaging apprentices.

## **Recommendations**

A set of **17** recommendations were designed, under the following themes:

- **Establish a system for consent education to be delivered within apprenticeship programmes**
- **Content of consent education for apprenticeships**
- **A whole of institution approach to culture change**
- **Create a strategic approach to consent education in apprenticeship programmes**
- **Share progress with the FET sector and relevant stakeholders**

## **Conclusion**

The findings of the Apprenticeship CARE Survey represent a step forward in understanding the knowledge, attitudes, and experiences of this group in relation to consent, relationships, and sexual violence and harassment. It provides the insight that, while supportive of consent and respectful relationships, apprentices nonetheless must navigate complex social norms and practical challenges when applying these values.

The findings demonstrated the challenges that arise as obstacles to the translation of positive intentions. The commitment to culture change that will address these issues needs to be sustained, applied, and context-sensitive – grounded in the lived experiences of learners.

*At a critical point in the development of Government strategy on apprenticeships and the Further Education & Training sector, there is an opportunity to equip apprentices with the skills, confidence, and learning environment needed to put respect and consent into practice.*

With strategic leadership, investment, and collaboration across the FET sector, Ireland is well positioned to lead internationally in embedding consent education within apprenticeship training supporting safer, more inclusive learning environments for all.



# Introduction

This report describes an innovative collaboration between the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Department (Apprenticeship Supports) at Waterford Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) and the Active\* Consent programme based at the University of Galway. This collaboration has created, for the first time, an insight on how apprentices view subjects related to consent, sexual violence and harassment, including the views of apprentices on prevention of violence and how to respond when it occurs.

*Building from a survey of 730 apprentices that was carried out by Apprenticeship Supports, the Active\* Consent team have created this report on the results of the survey, working subsequently with apprentices themselves and Apprenticeship Supports staff to co-create new learning resources that respond to the findings.*

By the end of 2024, the number of apprentices had grown to 29,772, which included 9,352 apprentice registrations (National Apprenticeship Office, 2025a). With increasing numbers of registrations annually and an expanding range of career pathways, apprenticeships have become a more prominent part of the national education and training infrastructure. The Generation Apprenticeship strategy represents a significant strategic investment in this area of training, in recognition of the importance of the area to the economic development of the country.

Established by the Government in 2022 as the lead agency to lead out on Generation Apprenticeship, the National

Apprenticeship Office (NAO) has worked closely with employers and industry, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Quality and Qualifications Ireland, and the providers of training and education to achieve the goals of the Action Plan for Apprenticeship (2021-2025). Over this time, the apprenticeship training sector has been characterised by change and development. Eighty apprenticeship routes are now offered nationally. These include relatively new pathways in hospitality and retail, technology and financial services, along with traditional areas such as construction and manufacturing trades.

The apprenticeship model consists of a planned sequence of phases that take place across workplace and educational settings. Over the course of an apprentice's training, on-the-job experience with an employer is combined with more formal training at an education or training centre typically located in an Education and Training Board (ETB) at Phase 2 and in a technological university at Phases 4 and 6. The off-the-job training takes place in blocks of two to six months, providing the opportunity for the development of the whole person alongside technical knowledge and skills.

Equality of access has become an increasingly important factor for apprenticeship planners cognisant of inclusion and diversity. While many apprenticeship programmes continue to be overwhelmingly populated by men, national recruitment strategies such as careers fairs and exhibitions, advertising campaigns, and schools' outreach have targeted women. In addition, widening the representation of age groups, socio-

economic status, ethnicity and disability in the profile of apprentice recruitment have become strategic objectives. In the case of gender, bursaries and campaigns such as 'Facts, Faces, Futures' are tangible examples of the drive to widen traditional gender recruitment patterns. By the end of 2025, almost 10% of apprentices were women, growing from 2% a decade before.

*Based on responses from 5,578 individuals, the National Survey of Apprentices 2024-2025 (NAO, 2025b) demonstrated that apprenticeships now comprise an increasingly heterogeneous group. While nearly two-thirds (64%) of the survey participants were aged 22 or younger, almost one quarter (24%) were between 23 and 30, and 13% were over 30 years of age. Although still usually White Irish in ethnicity (89%), 7% of survey respondents identified as coming from other White backgrounds and 5% were from another ethnic background.*

The survey provided a number of insights on the experiences and satisfaction rates of apprentices across the country. High satisfaction rates were reflected in 85% of respondents agreeing that they were pleased that they chose the apprenticeship route over other study or work options, while 80% indicated that they would recommend an apprenticeship to a friend or family member. In terms of their experience in college, 87% stated that teaching staff are supportive of their learning, 90% were happy to ask questions in the learning environment, and 84% agreed that their learning gave them confidence. These positive trends notwithstanding, 30% indicated that they experienced challenges during their apprenticeship, particularly in

relation to linking theory to practice, feeling overwhelmed by the study component of their apprenticeship, and when acquiring new information they had not already learned in the workplace (NAO, 2025b).

The Further Education and Training sector has a leading role in providing the off-the-job training component of apprenticeships at centres across the country. While each centre is separate and is managed by the ETB in which it is based, there is a consistency in the learning environment that is created across the centres. The craft trade apprenticeship programmes with which this report is principally concerned are organised into class groups of up to 15 learners. The learners complete a full working week in the teaching setting over the course of their off-the-job training at the training centre or FET college where they have been assigned. While each learner has a senior training advisor who acts as a mentor, the learner groups are supported by instructors, lecturers and tutors associated with their apprenticeship programme, along with support staff who assist apprentices from a learning and wellbeing perspective.

Standards for apprenticeship programmes are guided by the goals of the National FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2020), which identifies the importance of an inclusive environment that provides consistent support for all learners, ensuring that all individuals have the same opportunity to learn and develop. In pursuit of this goal, the FET Learner Support Framework was developed to support access and achievement and to improve the overall experience of FET learners (SOLAS and ETBI, 2024). This framework recognises the importance

of extracurricular support and guidance to create a positive learner experience, in which the importance of personal, mental and social well-being are firmly acknowledged. Each ETB is responsible for implementing the Learner Support Framework through staff members who have been prepared to fulfil these roles by professional learning and development (SOLAS & ETBI, 2024). The wellbeing approach reflected in the FET Learner Mental Health Framework (ETBI, 2023) is a further support to person-centred initiatives and services that have become available across the sector.

To ensure that these responsibilities for delivery of supports are fulfilled to a high standard, Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) became the first ETB in Ireland to establish a dedicated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Department for FET. Launched in September 2024, the department comprises three key areas:

- **EDI Initiatives:** *Leading out on policies, action plans, and programmes that promote equality, diversity, and inclusion.*
- **FET Learner Support Services:** *Providing academic, disability, and wellbeing supports to ensure that courses are accessible and inclusive.*
- **Access and Inclusion Office:** *Supporting learners from underrepresented, minority, and disadvantaged backgrounds, and ensuring compliance with equality and disability legislation.*

The EDI Department has a key role in creating the conditions for greater participation of traditionally underrepresented groups in Further Education and Training. These important

changes and developments focus on making consistent learner support available, accommodating the impact of disability, and achieving compliance with equality and disability legislation. The EDI department is also responsible for delivering mental health and general wellbeing initiatives. It is in this capacity that a strong partnership has emerged between WWETB EDI Department and the Active\* Consent Programme. This partnership aligns with EDI principles by setting out to foster a culture of respect, dignity, and safety in the learning environment. This report shows how that partnership has progressed in the area of apprenticeships.

The Active\* Consent programme complements WWETB's Learner Support Services under the Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Engagement pillar by providing training and ongoing support to staff members so they can engage directly with learners on consent education. Based in the School of Psychology at the University of Galway, the Active\* Consent programme provides sexual consent education, training and promotion to education settings throughout the country. The settings-based approach used by the programme has developed over the course of over a decade to reach out to groups from post-primary pupils from Transition Year through the Senior Cycle to Higher Education institutions.

Beginning in 2022, with the support of DFHERIS and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration (and later Cuan), Active\* Consent has partnered with ETBs across the country to bring consent education to the Further Education & Training (FET) sector for the first time, promoting healthy relationships and respect alongside sexual violence prevention and response. Over this time,

the Active\* Consent team has provided staff training and resources suitable for learners on full- and part-time courses in FET colleges, Youthreach centres, adult education and apprenticeship programmes. These resources have been used with learners as part of induction within the larger FET colleges and during the academic year in other settings. An Active\* Champions peer educator programme has been more recently introduced to support learners to have leadership role in consent education.

The programme takes a socio-ecological approach to culture change, which prioritises the importance of sustainability of programming by engaging with staff members at all levels in ETBs, from tutors, instructors, administrators, and lecturers to support staff, centre management and ETB senior management.

*Training has been provided to over 3,000 staff onsite in FET colleges through a range of mediums – including education briefings, workshop facilitator preparation sessions, and disclosure response skill trainings. Active\* Consent has facilitated presentations to leadership groups and many staff have successfully completed the University of Galway accredited Level 9 micro credential on consent education practitioner skills.*

Across all of the settings that it works in, the Active\* Consent programme ethos is based on a rights-based approach that prioritises mutual respect and communication. This approach emphasises that everyone has the right to choose what happens to them if and when they choose to become intimate. This is summed up in the advocacy of Active\* Consent for the messaging that consent is Ongoing, Mutual, and Freely Given (OMFG), for all relationships, genders and orientations. Concerned with both

positive rights to healthy relationships and the right of freedom from harm, the Education & Training and Clinical & Therapeutic Programme Leads collaborate with groups such as Galway Rape Crisis Centre to provide preparation and training on how to respond to disclosures of sexual violence and harassment.

The Active\* Consent programme works by combining knowledge and expertise from the areas of psychology, psychotherapy, social work, nursing and midwifery, and drama and theatre studies. Active\* Consent initiatives work on a tiered, spiral model of increasing complexity, ranging from brief social media messaging and poster campaigns to interactive workshops and specialised training for staff members and volunteer learners. A solid evidence base, grounded in research, is the foundation for the resources and training that it provides. Resources are reviewed and revised each year using participant feedback to ensure that they remain relevant and effective.

Establishing an evidence base is an essential first step in promoting a safe, respectful consent culture on site. The collaboration with the WWETB EDI Department described in this report shows how an evidence base with a particular learner group can be established. The research carried out through WWETB shows how understanding learner knowledge, skills and viewpoints can serve as the basis for understanding our learners and the co-creation of new resources that are devised to meet their needs.

## **International research trends**

Research into the provision of positive sexual health promotion programming to apprentices and in the context of apprenticeship programmes is not well developed internationally. Advice and guidance on how to engage apprentice populations on the topics of consent, sexual violence and harassment has not been developed. Although apprentice training and preparation are distinct areas, it may be relevant to begin with principles derived from working with target groups in other education settings, such as schools and colleges.

One area where limited findings are available is in experience of harassment among trade apprentices. For example, Galarneau and colleagues (2024) found that, among a sample of apprentices in one region of Canada, 44% of women and 3% of men had experienced sexual harassment during their period of training. Researchers also found that harassment of any kind (sexual or non-sexual) was linked to higher rates of anxiety and depression. While there is limited research on apprentices and the experience of sexual violence and harassment, comparable findings arise from the study of bullying encountered by apprentices in the workplace (Nuñez & Ollo-López, 2025; Greacen & Ross, 2023).

*One recent study that included sexual violence and harassment within the scope of bullying reported on a national survey of 5,539 apprentices in Austria (Zauchner et al., 2025). That study found that, among the one-third of apprentices who described experiencing workplace bullying at least once, women were affected more often than men. Their experiences included examples of sexual harassment and physical abuse.*

Zauchner et al. went on to create a series of resources to address cyberbullying in particular, creating innovative assets they found suitable for an apprentice population, such as:

Prevention and intervention workshops, serious games, card-based reflection tools, graphic novels, airplane-style "safety cards" that convey key messages concisely and accessibly, and role models (p. 1536).

The trend toward women apprentices experiencing sexual harassment in a trade environment is consistent with research on women in the workplace. In a qualitative interview study in the UK, Wright (2013) found that women employed in manual construction trades such as electricians and plumbers described sexual harassment as a common experience – although women in professional roles in construction, such as quantity surveying and management roles, suggested that sexual harassment had become less common than in the past. In another qualitative study, Galea et al. (2015) found that senior managers in Australia described gender equality initiatives in the construction industry as largely concerned with increasing the number of women working in the sector. They contended that policies tended to not challenge gendered norms and practices to a sufficient degree.

Consistent with this pattern of findings, a systematic review of 26 studies carried out in the two decades up to 2019 found that considerable work remained to be done before employment practices achieved equality (Bridges et al., 2020). In a recent interview study of women working as pilots and in automotive trades, Foley et al. (2022) documented a culture of daily sexual harassment that often took the form of undermining 'humour' and comments. These arose from their own colleagues, as well as from managers in the workplace and from customers. The

women explained the behaviours as arising from men being dissatisfied with women entering traditionally male occupations. The harassment was impactful, leading to experiences of humiliation and intimidation, but Foley et al. found that the women did not have terminology to name what was happening and to define the nature of the harassment. Experiences of sexual harassment can be especially challenging for women, who have to navigate gendered social norms of their sector, including judging when 'jokes' or other actions move from acceptable humour to sanctionable offences (Denissen, 2010).

Research has indicated that the passivity of bystanders can be a contributing factor to workplace harassment, as bystanders may join in with what they perceive as 'normal banter' without recognising the negative impact of their behaviour (Paull et al., 2010). Internationally, interventions have been implemented to decrease job-site harassment in construction trades, including apprentices, such as the Green Dot bystander intervention programme in the U.S. (Kelly & Basset, 2015). That programme targets community members as potential active bystanders and engages them through awareness, education, and skills with the goal of having them learn to recognise and challenge negative behaviours safely. Initial evaluation of this programme suggests that it led to an increase in bystander intervention actions and a subsequent decrease in the level of harassment (Kelly & Wilkinson, 2020).

Approaches such as bystander intervention depend on community members holding values and attitudes that support equality. However, there has been increasing concern voiced about the attitudes of young men toward gender equality in recent years.

*In an Irish context, Doyle and Hammersley (2022) have documented a disparity between the beliefs that men themselves endorse, and their perception of social norms on what they think society expects of them. Their own attitudes were more progressive and caring than the attitudes that they felt other people in society expected them to endorse.*

This raises the potential for educational programming such as bystander intervention and other forms of engagement with young men that would enable them to question those norms and experience solidarity with their peers on the relatively positive views that they hold personally.

Contemporary research trends on masculinity provide an important perspective on how social norms are maintained over time, and how they can be changed. Values associated with traditional, hegemonic masculinity can act to stifle positive changes toward greater equality. One relevant concept in this context is "the Man Box", which refers to beliefs that set out a script for how men "should" be (e.g., self-sufficient, adhering to rigid gender roles, having sexual prowess; Heilman et al., 2017). Men who agree with these beliefs are described as being in the Man Box. The source of the beliefs is usually described as being rooted in society and culture, as communicated and reinforced by families, peers and wider society. A survey of 3,673 young men aged 18–30 in the U.S., UK and Mexico found that men who adhered to Man Box beliefs experienced a positive reinforcement from meeting societal expectations, but holding these views was also associated with negative outcomes for them such as higher rates of depression (Heilman et al., 2017). Men in the Man Box were six times more likely to report perpetrating sexual harassment.

Therefore, while detrimental to men's own health outcomes and increasing the risk of perpetrating harassment, staying in the Man Box can provide validation from others and pose a social risk in breaking away from this set of beliefs. Support from peers and external sources such as educators may help men to establish a more positive set of beliefs. Doyle and Hammersley's (2022) survey study of the Man Box in an Irish context with 1,103 men of different ages demonstrated a comparable profile to research conducted internationally. Men who were categorised by their survey answers as being in the Man Box reported higher levels of drinking, a greater likelihood of mocking others and using negative labelling toward others but also described lower levels of life satisfaction on average.

One alternative to the view of masculinity as a source of attitudes that are problematic both for individuals themselves and for wider society is the emerging model of positive masculinity. For instance, Wilson et al. (2022) recently proposed a framework of positive masculinity that sought to bring together a number of emerging perspectives on healthy expressions and identities of masculinity. Wilson et al. argue that it is important to engage in this synthesis as a framework for health promotion actions and interventions. The first pillar of this framework is 'knowing', which represents the knowledge that boys and young men require to critically appraise societal expectations of masculinity. The second is that of 'being', where positive masculinity is embodied through three key human strengths. These strengths include men's connection both to themselves and others, illustrated by interpersonal relationships that are respectful, communicative and non-violent. A further strength is that of being motivated, which refers to an intrinsic drive to engage with and contribute to society, while the third

strength is being authentic, which can be recognised in commitment to values and openness to help-seeking (Wilson et al., 2022).

*While debates concerning masculinity have been related to many different contexts and social issues in recent years, the benefits of having more insight on how the individual engages with the expectations of society have been documented recently among apprentices. A recent New Zealand study found that self-compassion was associated with increased psychological well-being and decreased psychological distress among a sample of 252 apprentices working in the construction trades (Caldwell & Tairi, 2023).*

Nevertheless, there are concerns about the direction of attitudes among young men that have been voiced. A recent survey by Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (2025) provided a perspective on views of sexual violence and harassment in Ireland from a nationally representative sample of 1,042 people. Among the attitudes expressed by this cross-section of the population, two-thirds of people believed that rates of sexual violence are increasing in Ireland, while almost three-quarters agreed that education about consent can help reduce incidents of sexual violence. Focusing on the views of men who took part in the survey, there were concerns identified with the attitudes of younger men toward issues concerning sexual violence. Young men aged under 24 were the most likely demographic in the survey to agree with victim-blaming attitudes, compared with other age groups of men and of women. This age cohort was also the most likely to agree that people make a 'big deal' about sexual violence when it is not really such a serious issue, and most likely to consider that someone's claim of sexual assault is

credible only if it is reported to the Gardai. These trends are further reflected in another survey of men and their endorsement of Man Box attitudes, carried out in Ireland recently with 500 men by Women's Aid (2024).

Taken together, these trends in attitudes and views in Irish society, and among men in particular, provide a backdrop to engaging with apprentices for the first time in a survey of their attitudes and views toward consent, sexual violence and harassment. The goals of the survey were based on the aim of understanding the needs and characteristics of this group, as the basis for developing a settings-based approach to awareness raising and education. The following objectives guided the process of survey development, to describe:

- 1. Apprentices' attitudes to sexual consent.*
- 2. The ability of apprentices to put attitudes on consent into practice in applied problem solving through stories about intimacy.*
- 3. The understanding and views taken of digital intimacy.*
- 4. Current perspectives on gender stereotypes among apprentices.*
- 5. Preparedness to support others affected by sexual violence and harassment through bystander intervention and disclosure response, and knowledge of supports.*
- 6. The understanding of legal rights and responsibilities in relation to topics such as the age of consent and the age at which intimate images can be shared with another person.*
- 7. A comprehensive bank of survey findings that can be used to co-create relevant, engaging and effective resources awareness raising and education of apprentices on consent, sexual violence prevention and response.*

# **Apprenticeship CARE Survey Methodology**

The WWETB Apprenticeship Supports Service facilitated a supported environment for apprentices to complete an anonymous online survey of trade apprentices on consent and related issues which received responses from 723 craft apprentices. Led by Joann Power (Apprenticeship Supports), with the support of Sarah Lavan (EDI Coordinator), the planning phase involved identifying the key issues that would be relevant to creating a new learning resource for apprentices, which were developed further into the survey objectives. These questions were represented on the survey form, with permission provided by the apprenticeship programme at WWETB to offer apprentices the opportunity to take part.

Data collection took place on-site at four apprenticeship training centres in WWETB during periods of class time. The purpose of the survey was explained to each cohort of apprentices. Once they were aged 18 or more, they were given the opportunity to take part, without any incentive, or to complete an alternative task during the class time. The vast majority of apprentices in these groups chose to take part in the survey, which tended to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The survey findings were collated in a SPSS file and stored on a secure SharePoint folder. A descriptive overview of the survey findings was created from this source and reviewed to identify key needs relevant to the objectives of the Apprenticeship CARE survey. A plan for consent awareness and education for apprentices was devised from this analysis. The immediate priorities identified for new assets and resources for use in an outreach campaign were visual

assets including posters and a practical interactive workshop on consent. Pilot stage resources were designed by Apprenticeship Supports and Active\* Consent for review by apprentices.

Piloting of these new resources took place using a co-creation process, in which apprentices were told about the goal of designing a new learning resource for use with apprentices at Phase 2 nationally. The apprentices could choose to take part in the review exercise, which lasted approximately 45 minutes, or to complete an alternative activity. Four groups of apprentices took part (n = 48). They participated in the workshop activities, which introduced survey findings and learning materials such as stories that represent consent scenarios included in the survey. The apprentices provided feedback on their experience using an anonymous form (e.g., "group discussions to see everyone's opinions", "everyone was involved", and "everyone sharing their honest opinions without being silenced") and identified what they considered to be the most effective and engaging components of the workshop. One hundred per cent of piloting participants agreed they would recommend the workshop to a friend. They also gave suggestions about what could be improved. This process of feedback and co-creation resulted in the first workshop format on consent designed specifically for apprentices. Complementary perspectives on the survey topics were provided by Siobhán Nolan and Lean Lynch at the Active Inclusion Support Service in Cork ETB, who consulted with over 150 apprentices in Cork on their views about the topics covered in the Apprenticeship CARE Survey.

## **Apprenticeship CARE Survey form**

Following a verbal description of the purpose and content of the survey, the participants who chose to engage followed a QR code to take part in the online survey form. The landing page for the survey informed them that the Apprenticeship CARE Survey was being carried out to get a better understanding of consent awareness and to promote respect for everyone. The page informed them that the survey was designed to provide information on consent in apprentice education, with the CARE survey the first time that apprenticeship were asked directly what they thought about consent.

The landing page clarified that participants had to be a minimum of 18 years of age to take part. They were told that they could choose to skip any of the survey questions that they did not want to answer. They were informed that they would be asked for demographic information about themselves, and that the survey would include sections on what they had heard about sexual consent, bystander intervention, and sexual misconduct in the past; their attitudes to these topics and to sending / receiving 'nudes'; and their reactions to short stories about topics like sexual consent. Apprenticeship Supports ensured that participants were aware of the ongoing supports available in WWETB.

The landing page informed them that the survey was not a test but was intended to find out what people think about these topics. They were also told that the survey did not ask anything about any personal experiences of sexual misconduct. The estimated time for completion was noted

of approximately fifteen minutes. The apprentices who reviewed the landing page also read that taking part in the survey was entirely voluntary. They could decide to take part or not and could stop at any stage without having to give a reason for discontinuing the survey. The participants were informed that their survey responses were anonymous, with no request made for their name or contact information. The survey responses would be kept confidential and not shared with anyone else. There would be no follow up contact about their responses. If they chose to click on at the end of the landing page, the participants first came on to demographic questions on items such as age, gender, and relationship status. They were also asked to indicate which apprenticeship programme they were taking part in, out of the following choices:

- **Mechanics:** Including agri-mechanics, Heavy Goods Vehicles, and motor mechanics.
- **Construction:** Such as brick and stone laying, plastering, plumbing, carpentry and joinery, wood manufacturing, and electrical work.
- **Industrial:** Including industrial insulation, mechanical automation and maintenance fitting, pipe fitting, metal fabrication, and sheet metal working.

After the demographics section, the participants came on to a sequence of topics presented on the online survey that addressed:

- **Sex education** – The content for these items was developed for the survey, and asked participants to summarise their previous experience of education on sexual health topics in their community and through formal education prior to this.
- **Consent attitudes** – A selection of items was included from established attitude measures developed by Humphreys and Brousseau (2010), Jozkowski and Peterson (2014), and MacNeela et al. (2022), typically presented as Likert items in an agree / disagree response format.
- **Knowledge of supports** – Brief items on awareness of FET supports and external services were developed and included in the survey.
- **Gender beliefs and stereotypes related to gender** – A selection of items from Seabrook et al.'s (2016) measure of sexual scripts and gender stereotypes was presented. The response format was based on Likert agree / disagree choices.
- **Views on hooking up** – Items from Barriger and Vélez-Blasini's (2013) study were adapted to the survey. These asked about their participants' own comfort levels in engaging in forms of intimacy that might take place in a 'hook up' or one-off encounter, should they take part in one. The same items were then presented in revised format to ask participants about their expectations for how comfortable their peers were with taking part in the same

forms of intimacy in a hook up. These questions were introduced to assess any disjunction that might arise between personal attitudes and perceptions of what was acceptable to peers.

- **Digital intimacy and image sharing** – Items on the perception of engaging in intimate image sharing as a form of digital intimacy were included in the survey, along with items that asked whether sharing of intimate images was presumed by participants to be enjoyable or risky behaviours. These items were adapted from a measure designed by Döring and Mohseni (2018).
- **Bystander intervention** – Items on the likelihood of intervening in several bystander scenarios were included in the survey. These items were selected from a longer scale developed by Banyard (2008).

Each of the items included from existing psychometric measures are described in the findings section. Other Apprenticeship CARE survey items were designed for the survey and are outlined below. First, the question on exposure to sexual health education in the past was created for the survey. It asked:

*People have got their information on sex and relationships from different sources. Please say how important each of the following sources was to your sexual education.*

The response options from which participants could choose comprised: Parents; family; romantic partner; peers or friends; school; pornography; social media; and media (TV, movies, etc.). Participants indicated whether each source had been 'not important', 'somewhat important', or 'very important' for them as a source of information.

Following this, the participants were asked about the sex education that they had received at school or on any other courses:

*Please rate the quality of any sex education you received in the past, on topics like healthy relationships, consent, reproduction, or sexual violence (e.g., at school or on other courses you have taken).*

The participants responded by choosing from four options: 'I didn't have any sex education', 'not satisfactory', 'satisfactory', and 'very satisfactory'.

Those participants who had received sex education in the past were asked whether the following topics were covered in any of the sex education that they had received:

*Sexual consent; Sexual violence; Healthy relationships.*

For those participants who indicated that they had received sex education on consent, they were asked:

*Were any of the following methods used when you received sex education on consent?*

The options that participants were presented with were: 'Watched a video about consent', 'took part in a workshop where we talked about consent', 'got a talk on consent from a teacher or educator'. The participants could select one or more of these options.

Two further items were designed for the survey that asked about preparedness to engage as a bystander and, separately, in responding to a disclosure of sexual violence or harassment. The participants were asked how well prepared they were to respond to the following situations:

*Reacting if you saw sexual harassment and / or violence taking place?*

*Responding to someone if they told you that sexual harassment and / or violence happened to them?*

For each item, the participants choose from three options:

'Not prepared at all', 'somewhat prepared', and 'well prepared'.

The next questions that were designed for the survey concerned awareness of legal issues. The first of these asked participants about the legal age for consent:

*What is the legal age to have sex in Ireland?*

Participants chose one of six age categories that were presented, from age 16 to 21.

In the next item, the participants were asked about the minimum legal age to send explicit images of themselves:

*In Ireland, what is the legal age for people to send 'nudes' of themselves (i.e., sexually explicit images and videos)?*

Again, participants could choose one of the six age categories that were presented, from age 16 to 21.

They were next asked a related question concerning consent for sending images:

*In Ireland, for over 18s, do you need consent from the other person before you send them a 'nude' of yourself (i.e., sexually explicit images and videos)?*

Toward the end of the survey, the apprentices were asked for their views on four short stories presented in turn. Each story was brief (100 words or less) but described a scenario involving two people aged 18 or more. The stories each feature an 'initiator' who used particular behaviours and strategies to try to achieve intimacy with the other person. The participants read the stories in sequence, responding after each one to reply to Likert items that asked them to agree or disagree with questions that related to features of the story (e.g., was consent present).

While following a similar format of including an initiator and positioning the two characters in a familiar situation, the stories differed in the setting that was presented and the type of relationship that the story characters had. The stories illustrate issues that were covered in the attitude questions, such as whether consent is required before any form of intimacy, if consent should be verbal, and whether it was necessary to have verbal consent before sexual intercourse takes place.

By presenting these points in a contextual scenario – that fitted or conflicted with social and gender norms, the characters' behaviour earlier, whether they had a pre-existing relationship, changes from verbal and communicative engagement to one-sided actions, and varied levels of alcohol intake – the stories challenged participants to apply their attitudes and beliefs to situations that may more closely match the

conditions for critical thinking and problem solving regarding consent in real life. A summary of each story is presented below.

### **Story 1: James and Sophie.**

**Summary:** They had met through a dating app and interacted online. They had shared some images of themselves, but James asked for a more intimate image of Sophie.

Six questions were presented afterwards, including whether participants thought that James and Sophie would find image sharing exciting, if they would have considered it a risk, if James had behaved respectfully, and whether consent was always present.

### **Story 2: Rachel and Ben.**

**Summary:** They had been going out for a few months and were having sex in their relationship. They had been out drinking one evening, Rachel suggested that Ben come home with her. When they got there, she pressurised him to have sex.

Seven questions were presented after this story. Participants were asked questions such as whether Rachel had a good reason to expect that Ben would have sex with her because they were going out, if they had consumed too much alcohol to be able to consent, and whether the intimacy that took place in the story was consensual (a question on consent was included in each set of questions presented after the stories).

### **Story 3: Aoife and Martin.**

**Summary:** The story characters met for the first time on a night out. They were drinking and enjoyed each other's company. Martin asked Aoife if she wanted to come back to his place. When they got there, they kissed and touched on the couch. Then Martin brought her to his bedroom and took off his and her clothes. Aoife smiled when Martin took out a condom and he had sex with her.

The seven questions that follow ask about issues such as whether Aoife's kissing Martin earlier showed an interest in having sex with him, if her smile was a clear signal of consent, and if verbal consent would have made things clearer.

### **Story 4: Liam and Sarah.**

**Summary:** They were studying together at Liam's apartment. He began flirting, then moved in to kiss her. She asked if they could go slower and returned to the conversation they had been having. He started to touch her again, then his flatmates returned and Sarah left the apartment.

The six questions that follow this story asked participants about whether Liam should have asked Sarah before kissing her, whether Sarah was afraid of what would happen if she did not go along with Liam, and participants' views on whether Sarah had the right to say she was uncomfortable.

Finally, the survey provided the participants with the opportunity to provide open-ended feedback. They were asked:

*Please let us know the most important topics or areas that should be covered in apprentice education about consent. You can add in any other comments here as well.*

Participants had contact details for members of staff that they could later speak to if they had any queries about the survey, or if the content had raised an issue for them that they wanted to share. Information supports and community services were provided as part of the debriefing on survey participation.





**ACTIVE\***  
**CONSENT**

***SURVEY***  
***FINDINGS***

## Demographics

A total of 723 craft apprentices chose to take part in the Apprenticeship CARE Survey. The demographics of the survey group were broadly representative of craft apprenticeships in Ireland generally in terms of gender, age profile, and the crafts they are studying. Reflective of the breakdown of craft apprentices nationally, the vast majority of respondents were men (96%) and under the age of 25 (92%). Most were aged between 20 and 25 (61%).

Consistent with the catchment area for apprentices in WWETB, respondents were typically from Leinster (59%) and Munster (37%), with the remainder from Connacht and Ulster. The participants were in Phase 2 of their studies, taking part in off-the-job training at WWETB FET College of Further Education (Wexford), the Wexford Training Centre, the Waterford FET Training Centre, or the Kilcohan Training Centre (Waterford).

**Table 1**

*Percentage of respondents to the Apprenticeship CARE Survey in each age category*

Age	Percentage
<i>Under 20</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>20-21</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>22-23</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>24-25</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>26-29</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>30 or over</i>	<i>4</i>

**Table 2**

*Apprentices' province of normal residence*

Residence	Percentage
<i>Connacht</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Ulster</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Munster</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Leinster</i>	<i>59</i>

**Table 3**

*Gender of apprentices who took part in the survey*

Gender	Percentage
<i>Man</i>	<i>96</i>
<i>Woman</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Non-binary/gender non-conforming</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Other (please specify)</i>	<i>&lt; 1</i>

**Table 4**

*Relationship status of apprentices at time of survey*

Relationship Status	Percentage
<i>Exclusive relationship (one year or more)</i>	42
<i>Exclusive relationship (less than one year)</i>	12
<i>Seeing someone</i>	7
<i>Not in a relationship</i>	37
<i>Prefer not to say</i>	2

All the participants came from craft trades. This category includes the trades of brick and stone laying, plastering, plumbing, carpentry, manufacturing, and electrical work. One-quarter (24%) were studying an industrial apprenticeship (e.g., industrial insulation, mechanical automation and maintenance fitting, pipe fitting, metal fabrication and sheet metal). The remainder (14%) of the participants were studying a mechanical trade (e.g., agri-mechanics, heavy goods, vehicles, motor mechanics).

**Table 5**

*Percentage of survey participants in each apprenticeship programme type*

Apprenticeship type	Percentage
<i>Construction</i>	62
<i>Industrial</i>	24
<i>Mechanics</i>	14

## **Sources of Information on Sex and Relationships**

The most important sources of information on sex and relationships to apprentices were romantic partners; 90% stated that romantic partners were somewhat or very important to their sexual education. Schools were a formal source of learning that was the next most popular as a source of learning for participants. This was followed by parents and peers. Taken together, most of the apprentices indicated that they had learned about sex and consent through experience and via trusted sources close to them.

The apprentices described social media, pornography and conventional media such as TV / movies as the least important sources of information for their sexual education. Three quarters of apprentices described pornography as “not important” as a source of their sexual education. Feedback was generally positive for formal sex and consent education, with 76% saying they were satisfied with the sex education they received, and, of those who received sex education, 92% said sexual consent was covered.

Given the absence of information currently about the sources of information on sex and relationships for apprentices in Ireland, the survey included prompts of formal and informal sources of this information. The participants could describe these as not important, somewhat important, or very important. The question wording was phrased in the past tense to ask

participants on what they had learned up to this point (“Please say how important each of the following sources was to your sexual education”). The question focused participants to consider their sources of education, thus the responses identify sources of information rather than a more in-depth perspective on the impact of these sources on their perceptions of sex and consent.

The most important source of information for participants was their own romantic partners, with 90% stating that romantic partners were somewhat important or very important to their sexual education.

This suggests that the participants enter romantic relationships with inadequate knowledge and develop their understanding of sex and intimacy together.

The next most important source was reported as peers and friends (78% chose somewhat or very important) and school (80% chose somewhat or very important). Pornography was much less frequently seen as important. One-quarter said it had been somewhat or very important to them, while 75% of participants described it as not important. Media such as TV and movies were usually cited as not important (63%), as was social media (56%).

**Table 6**

*Reported importance of sources of information on sexual education as percentages*

	Not important	Somewhat important	Very important
<i>Romantic partner</i>	9	29	61
<i>Peers or friends</i>	22	60	18
<i>School</i>	21	53	27
<i>Parents</i>	29	47	24
<i>Family</i>	43	45	12
<i>Social media</i>	56	37	7
<i>Media (TV, movies, etc.)</i>	63	33	5
<i>Pornography</i>	75	19	6

The survey next explored perceptions of school as a source of sex education in more detail. While 80% of apprentices indicated that school was a somewhat or very important source of information on sex and relationships, 68% of them were broadly satisfied with the sex education that they had received in school or on other courses

that they had taken. Just one in eight of the apprentices indicated that their sex education was very satisfactory. A small number of participants (6%) suggested that they had not experienced any sex education to date, while one in five (18%) considered their sex education to be not satisfactory.

**Table 7**

*Level of satisfaction with sex education received in the past*

	Percentage
<i>I didn't have any sex education</i>	6
<i>Not satisfactory</i>	18
<i>Satisfactory</i>	68
<i>Very satisfactory</i>	8

Follow-up questions were included for the respondents who indicated that they had received sex education. These enquired about the coverage of three topics:

- 92% of respondents said sexual consent was covered in previous sex education.
- 73% said sexual violence was covered.
- 74% said healthy relationships were covered.

Thus, nearly all of the participants had received sex education, and among this group, the vast majority agreed that they had learned about consent, sexual violence and healthy relationships. Another follow-up item appeared on the online survey for survey participants who indicated that their previous sex education had covered sexual consent. This enabled us to identify that, of those who had received education on sexual consent, the most common formats were a talk from a teacher (93%) and watching videos about consent (80%). While less prevalent, almost half (46%) of the apprentices indicated that they had taken part in a workshop on consent.



## **Attitudes Toward Consent**

The responses to survey items concerning sexual consent demonstrate an important strength among the participant group with respect to positive attitudes on this topic. The responses made are compared later in the report to how the apprentices reacted to stories that featured verbal and nonverbal consent scenarios. In responding to the general attitude survey questions in the earlier part of the CARE survey, at least four out of five participants responded positively in agreeing with ideas that reflect attributes of active consent and communication. For instance, nearly all agreed that you should ask for consent

before having sexual intercourse, while 88% agreed that consent should be obtained before any form of intimacy. Examined more closely, however, not all of the participants strongly agreed with these sentiments, raising a question about the strength of this agreement. Moreover, almost half of the participants agreed with two items that identified challenges with putting mutual, verbal consent into practice. For instance, 46% agreed that they would keep moving forward in sexual behaviours or actions unless their partner stopped them, while 28% disagreed with this approach.

In order to gain an understanding of foundational beliefs held by apprentices in relation to consent, survey participants were presented with statements about consent that they responded to on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Two items in the attitude scale on consent attracted particularly strong agreement from the survey participants:

- 82% strongly agreed that you should ask for consent before having sexual intercourse.
- 70% strongly agreed that you should get verbal and non-verbal consent before any kind of intimacy.

The remaining attitude items on consent also attracted strong support, but with fewer apprentices choosing the strongly agree category. While 48% of apprentices strongly agreed that they had all of the skills they need for sexual consent, 35% chose the agree category. Thus, while there was strong support for an active model of consent in which verbal or non-verbal agreement is sought and achieved for any form of intimacy, there were important nuances to these findings.

**Table 8**

*Attitudes to consent item responses, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
<i>You should ask for consent before having sexual intercourse.</i>	2	1	4	11	82
<i>You should get sexual consent (verbal or non-verbal) before the start of any kind of intimacy, including kissing or touching.</i>	2	4	5	18	70
<i>I feel well informed about sexual consent.</i>	2	2	8	31	57
<i>My peers or friends think it is important to obtain consent before any intimacy.</i>	3	2	14	25	56
<i>You should ask for consent before any kind of intimacy, including kissing or touching.</i>	1	6	11	29	53
<i>I have all the skills I need to deal with sexual consent.</i>	2	2	13	35	48

Two attitude items on consent were chosen to represent challenges that people may experience in following up on a verbal, mutual model of consent in practice. The survey findings demonstrated that nearly half (46%) of the apprentices agreed that they would keep moving forward in sexual behaviours unless their partner stopped them (16% strongly agreed, 30% agreed). Moreover, one quarter (27%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this item, leaving just 28% of the participants who disagreed with the idea that they would just keep moving forward.

Discomfort with being verbal about consent was noted among half of the survey participants, as reflected in responses to an item about whether verbally asking for consent is awkward. One in eight (13%) strongly agreed that it is awkward to do so and over a third (37%) agreed with this sentiment. Nearly one in five (18%) chose the neutral option to this item, leaving one-third of participants who disagreed about verbal consent being awkward.

**Table 9**

*Attitudes to challenges associated with consent communication, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
<i>I would keep moving forward in sexual behaviours or actions unless my partner stopped me.</i>	15	13	27	30	16
<i>I think that verbally asking for sexual consent is awkward.</i>	18	15	18	37	13

In two remaining items on consent, one half of the survey respondents agreed that sexual consent was a topic of conversation and discussion. Thus, half had discussed consent with a friend, while a similar percentage had heard consent being talked about. These figures leave considerable potential for further activation of participants on communication and talking about consent with people other than romantic partners.

- 49% have heard sexual consent issues being discussed by peers or friends.
- 51% have discussed sexual consent with a friend.

## Knowledge of Bystander Preparedness and Disclosure Response

A majority of the survey respondents indicated that they were aware of the options for support after sexual violence or harassment and of the opportunities available to them to report these issues. When it came to responding to incidents themselves, nearly all of the apprentices felt at least somewhat prepared to respond if they saw sexual violence or harassment taking place. Most apprentices said they would intervene in situations of sexual violence – for instance, four

out of five participants said that they would intervene if a friend was planning to take a drunk person into a room alone at a party, and over three-quarters would intervene if their friend was drunk and being brought into a room alone. However, far fewer said they would intervene in cases of verbal sexism; just over a third indicated that they would challenge a friend's choice of language and only one in five agreed that they would challenge sexist jokes.

A majority of apprentices indicated that they had knowledge of two important issues, namely where to go in their FET College or Training Centre if they wanted to report harassment or a non-consensual experience or if they wanted to get support for these issues. Half of the participants (52%) replied that they were aware of community supports such as their local

Rape Crisis Centre. These findings are encouraging indicators of awareness, and relatively few of the respondents indicated that they did not have any knowledge of these services. Nevertheless, a quarter of the respondents were unsure about these matters.

**Table 10**

*Awareness of support and reporting options, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	Yes	Unsure	No
<i>I know where to go in my college or training centre for support about harassment or non-consenting sexual experience</i>	57	27	16
<i>I know where to go in my college or training centre to report harassment or non-consenting sexual experiences.</i>	62	23	15
<i>Are you aware of any support you could go to outside the college or training centre (e.g. Rape Crisis Centre)?</i>	52	23	26

The survey included two items that assessed personal preparedness to respond to sexual violence and harassment. This was reflected in one item that asked about being prepared if someone disclosed an experience of sexual violence and harassment to them, and another that concerned the ability to intervene as a bystander if the person saw SVH taking place. Nearly all of the participants felt well prepared or somewhat prepared to

respond if they saw sexual harassment or violence taking place, with some evidence of greater readiness to respond in the case of bystander intervention. While half of the participants felt somewhat prepared to receive a disclosure, fewer participants (35%) felt well prepared. By comparison, a greater number of apprentices (50%) felt they were well prepared to react if they saw SVH taking place.

**Table 11**

*Feelings of readiness to respond to sexual violence/harassment, and disclosure, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	Not prepared at all	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared
<i>Reacting if you saw sexual harassment and/or violence taking place</i>	6	45	50
<i>Responding to someone if they told you that sexual harassment and/or violence happened to them</i>	13	52	35

The participants responded to questions that explored bystander intervention attitudes in greater detail by asking them to respond to four situations that might be encountered. The response format asked the participants to indicate how likely they would be to intervene as a bystander (very unlikely to very likely). Participants saw themselves as highly likely to intervene by saying something to stop a friend from

bringing a drunk person into a room at a party, and by checking in with a friend who appears drunk and is being brought into a room alone at a party. There was a relatively strong impetus to intervene in these situations, with nearly half of the participants indicating that they were very likely to respond. Relatively few of the apprentices were neutral on these issues or said they were unlikely to act.

**Table 12**

*Likelihood to intervene as a bystander in instances of sexual violence, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Likely	Very likely
<i>Say something to stop a friend if they are planning to take a drunk person into a room alone at a party.</i>	2	4	14	32	48
<i>Check in with a friend if they look drunk and are being brought into a room alone with someone else at a party.</i>	3	6	14	33	43

There was a marked difference in responses when responding on the likelihood of acting in the case of witnessing sexist behaviour. One survey item assessed the likelihood of action if a friend used disrespectful language to describe women and another asked about the likelihood of expressing concern if a person made a sexist joke. One third (36%) of the participants were likely to intervene if they heard disrespectful language about women, while one fifth were likely to intervene if they heard a sexist joke. Many participants chose the neither likely nor unlikely response

option, indicating a level of uncertainty or neutrality about how they would respond. Many participants said it was unlikely that they would intervene. Compared with the likelihood of responding to intervene when a peer is about to be physically harmed, the findings illustrate much less certainty about responding to sexism that may be encountered in a social situation or with peers. This merits further exploration, as to whether apprentices recognise that an issue exists or if the challenge of being an active bystander lies in the social setting and expectations for peer reactions.

**Table 13**

*Likelihood to intervene as a bystander when witnessing sexist behaviour, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Likely	Very likely
<i>Challenge a friend who uses “ho,” “bitch,” or “slut” to describe women.</i>	14	18	32	23	13
<i>Express concern if a friend makes a sexist joke.</i>	21	20	38	17	4

## Beliefs about Gender Expectations for Sexual Scripts

Responses indicate that apprentices subscribe to certain beliefs around gender, particularly as it relates to men's and women's roles in sexual situations. While the majority disagreed with the idea that it is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually, almost a third (31%) support the idea that "guys are always ready for sex". Apprentices were divided

on whether they agreed with the statements "most guys don't want to be 'just friends' with a woman" and "guys are more interested in physical relationships, and women are more interested in emotional relationships". These beliefs likely have an impact on how apprentices approach consent and intimacy, as seen in the Stories section of this report.

Survey participants responded to four statements that refer to gender-related expectations for engaging in sexual activity. A wide range of views were expressed on these items, indicating a level of ambivalence at group level on expectations for the sexual roles of men and women. One third or more of the participants agreed with stereotyped views on the role of men, that most men do not just want to be friends with a woman (38%), that men are more interested in physical relationships while women are more concerned with emotional relationships (33%), and that men are always ready for sex (31%). A large percentage of respondents chose the neither agree nor disagree option in responding to these questions, while 37-45% of participants disagreed with these stereotyped views on the sexual role of men.

The strongest evidence of consensus among participants in responding to these items was in the rejection of the stereotype that "it is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually". Over half of the participants (58%) disagreed with this statement. However 30% of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, and a number of participants (13%) agreed that it is up to women to be gatekeepers on sexual activity.

Taken together, these results suggest a range of views among apprentices, from those who accept traditional male and female stereotypes to those who reject these, with a considerable number of participants registering their uncertainty about these matters. This suggests an important space for education and discussion that apprentices can avail of to inform their critical thinking on gender-related aspects of sexual roles and scripts.

**Table 14**

*Support for gendered beliefs about sex and relationships, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<i>Most guys don't want to be "just friends" with a woman.</i>	20	20	22	25	13
<i>Guys are more interested in physical relationships and women are more interested in emotional relationships.</i>	19	18	31	24	9
<i>Guys are always ready for sex.</i>	25	20	25	20	11
<i>It is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually.</i>	39	19	30	9	4

## Personal Views and Social Perceptions of ‘Hooking Up’

The apprentices differentiated between sexual activities that they would be comfortable with engaging in on a casual encounter. Over half indicated that they would be comfortable having oral sex (58%) or vaginal sex (64%). In general, a similar perception was expressed when the apprentices were asked how comfortable they

felt their peers are in participating in the same actions. The importance of having necessary skills to communicate about consent is underscored by the openness of many participants to engaging in casual sexual activity and their belief that peers are also accepting of this.

Turning towards sexual activity that may take place outside of a relationship context, apprentices were asked to describe on a five-point scale (from very uncomfortable to very comfortable) their comfort levels in engaging in sexual activities with someone they had just met. They were then presented with the same activities again, this time being asked to estimate how comfortable their peers would be with those acts. Most participants stated that they were personally comfortable having oral sex (27% were somewhat comfortable while 31% were very comfortable). A similar pattern was noted in comfort levels in having vaginal sex (28% were somewhat comfortable, 36% were very comfortable). Far fewer survey respondents were comfortable with having anal sex in this context. The research did not identify

a social norms gap between personal comfort levels with hook ups and the perceived comfort of their peers. The participants’ perception of their peers’ comfort levels was comparable to their personal comfort levels.

Taking these results in the context of earlier survey findings, the apprentices’ openness to casual sexual encounters suggests the need for awareness raising and education on consent in these situations. For instance, in an earlier section of the survey, many participants indicated that asking for consent was awkward and that they would move forward with intimacy unless stopped. These beliefs may well arise more often in a casual encounter when the person does not have previous experience of talking about consent with a partner.

**Table 14**

*Personal comfort with sexual activities on a hook up or casual sexual encounter, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	Very uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Neutral	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<i>Having oral sex.</i>	6	9	27	27	31
<i>Having vaginal sex.</i>	6	6	24	28	36
<i>Having anal sex.</i>	35	22	25	8	11

**Table 16**

*Perceived comfort of peers with sexual activities on a hookup or casual sexual encounter, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	Very uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Neutral	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
<i>Having oral sex.</i>	4	6	34	25	31
<i>Having vaginal sex.</i>	5	3	33	25	35
<i>Having anal sex.</i>	20	15	41	10	14

## **Legal Responsibilities and Digital Intimacy**

One third of apprentices had sent a partially/fully nude image or video of themselves, and over two-thirds had received a partially/fully nude image or video. While apprentices generally had a good level of knowledge regarding the age of consent for sexual intercourse, and 91% understood that one needed consent before sharing intimate images, 15% underestimated the legal age for sharing intimate images of oneself.

Most apprentices perceived sending/receiving nudes to be a high-risk activity, with over 80% agreeing that it was risky and that it left people vulnerable, and almost three-quarters agreed that it could cause problems for people in the future. However, apprentices also noted positive aspects of sharing nudes, with over half agreeing that image exchange of this kind can be exciting.

The survey participants were presented with a set of questions that assessed their knowledge of legal responsibilities related to consent. One encouraging finding from the survey responses is that very few participants (5%) incorrectly identified the age of consent in Ireland as 16 years of age. Most participants (61%) correctly identified the age of consent for sexual activity as 17 years. The remaining participants (35%) overestimated the age of consent as being 18 or older. Another positive finding is that most participants (82%) correctly identified

that 18 is the minimum legal age for people to send 'nudes' (i.e., sexually explicit images and videos), while 3% indicated an older age. Yet one in eight of the apprentices (13%) incorrectly indicated that the minimum legal age for people to send 'nudes' is 17 and 2% believed that it is 16 years of age. Finally, nine out of ten apprentices (91%) knew that consent is needed from the other person before sending them a 'nude', but the remaining participants did not express this understanding.

The apprentices' responses to questions about their engagement with digital intimacy demonstrated that this is a relevant issue for the apprentices. In their survey responses, one third of the participants (32%) indicated that they had sent a partially or fully nude image or video of themselves, while 68% had received a partially or fully nude image or video from another person.

Separately, the participants were asked about their attitudes toward digital intimacy by responding to a set of statements using a five-point scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. These items suggest that attitudes to the send of images is completed, with many apprentices expressing reservations while at the same time identifying image sharing as potentially exciting.

A large majority of respondents agreed that there is risk associated with sending and receiving nudes (39% chose the somewhat agree option, while 43% chose strongly agree). Further to this, 81% agreed that intimate image sharing left people vulnerable and 72% felt that it could cause problems for people in the future.

Concurrently, a majority of participants agreed that sending and receiving 'nudes' can be exciting (41% somewhat agreed and 15% strongly agreed). Just under half agreed with other positive sentiments about image sharing – that sending 'nudes' can be fun (45%) and a positive part of a relationship (47%). While these rates of agreement are lower than for the items concerning risks, very few participants disagreed with the items that depicted image sharing as a positive activity – the main difference is that approximately a third of the respondents chose the ambivalent option of neither agree nor

disagree in response to the items framing image sharing in a positive manner. The remaining two items in this part of the survey asked participants about their views on whether image sharing has become normalised. There was evidence from the responses that this practice has become accepted. Almost half (48%) agreed that image sharing is a regular part of romantic relationships nowadays, while 33% were neutral on this point and 19% disagreed that is a regular feature of relationships. The rate of agreement with the item suggesting that there is little or no harm in sending or receiving 'nudes' of themselves was lower but still above one third (36%). However, another 37% recorded a neutral response to the idea that image sharing is associated with minimal harm and just 26% of participants disagreed with this premise.

The responses to questions about legal responsibilities and to digital intimacy suggest an encouraging trend regarding awareness of the law and on the recognition of risks that can arise from digital image sharing. This is a positive base to build on in future programming. As some survey participants were not aware of the law concerning age of consent for sexual activity and for image sharing, there is clearly a need to ensure that a universal understanding of these issues is achieved. Moreover, the ambivalence apparent in responses to attitude questions on the risks and attractions of image sharing provide a rationale for designing engaging exercises on critical thinking about this issue.

**Table 17**

*Apprentices' perception of intimate image sharing, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<i>Sending / receiving 'nudes' of themselves is risky.</i>	2	1	16	39	43
<i>Sending / receiving 'nudes' of themselves leaves people vulnerable.</i>	2	2	15	44	37
<i>I think that sending / receiving 'nudes' of themselves may cause problems for people in the future.</i>	2	5	21	46	26
<i>For most people, there is little or no harm in sending / receiving 'nudes' of themselves.</i>	9	17	37	31	5
<i>Sending or receiving 'nudes' of themselves is a regular part of romantic relationships nowadays.</i>	11	18	33	31	7
<i>Sending or receiving 'nudes' of themselves can be exciting.</i>	6	6	32	41	15
<i>Sending / receiving 'nudes' of themselves can be fun.</i>	8	8	38	33	12
<i>Sending / receiving 'nudes' of themselves can be a positive part of being in a relationship.</i>	8	9	36	36	11

## **Applying Knowledge of Consent to Scenarios Presented in Stories**

Participants were invited to review short story-based representations of consent and sexual intimacy that were embedded in familiar interpersonal scripts. The stories reflected a range of in-person and online situations that people may encounter when applying their consent-related attitudes and knowledge. Each story is written with a degree of ambiguity as to whether or not the characters are consenting. The participants registered their judgements and decisions in response to follow-up questions that were written for each of the stories. Participants responded to seven questions concerning Story 1.

### **Story 1 James and Sophie**

Apprentices' reactions to this story are consistent with their earlier reported perception of digital intimacy – with 80% agreeing that there was a high risk of James and Sophie's images getting shared with other people. While participants tended to disagree that James and Sophie's image sharing was appropriate for their relationship, one in three (32%) viewed the image sharing practice as fun and exciting for the couple.

The participants displayed good recognition of the problematic way in which James approached requests for images. Over 80% agreed that Sophie felt pressured to share nudes of herself. Yet four out of ten survey respondents agreed that there was

consent between James and Sophie throughout the story, which suggests an ongoing need to apply the principles of consent that apprentices clearly agree with to particular scenarios and issues such as image sharing.

This story was designed to explore the topic of sharing intimate images online. We have seen earlier that participants agreed that image sharing is risky, but also tended to be neutral or supportive of the idea that image sharing is also exciting. In addition, many of the apprentices who took part in the survey saw image sharing as a normal feature of relationships.

The story features two characters, James and Sophie, who were in the early stages of a relationship together. They have met on a dating app and began sharing intimate images at James' suggestion. The story provides the opportunity to assess perceived risks and beliefs about the safety of intimate image sharing in an applied scenario. This is illustrated by having James and Sophie agree to delete images if the other person requests it. That provides the basis for asking a question after the story about whether that agreement was seen as reliable and credible.

The story depicts a key issue in which James asks for more explicit images. He appears to use the strategy of withholding further contact with Sophie until she does so (i.e., he does not contact her after she declined to send the image). By including these issues, the story allows us to understand how the apprentices viewed

the safety of image sharing and their reaction to a potentially non-consensual incident.

James (18) and Sophie (18) met through a dating app and have been chatting online for a month now. For the first few weeks, they chatted, exchanged non-sexual photos, and got to know one another. They enjoyed flirting and felt good about how things were going. Then, two weeks ago, James said that they should share photo and video nudes of each other. They talked about it, and each shared some partly nude images. They also said that they can ask the other person to delete any of the images when they want. Both agreed that they enjoyed taking their relationship to the next level.

Last week, James asked Sophie for a more explicit nude photo. She declined to do it. James said to forget it. He backed off talking to her online. Yesterday Sophie sent the photo to him. James got back on to her straight away and told her how hot it was.

The most popular response from participants was that consent was present throughout this story (43%), followed by a neutral view as to whether there was consent or not (31%). One in four (26%) disagreed with the idea that consent was present throughout. While we can see mixed views on whether consent was present, nevertheless, James appears to have pressurised Sophie by 'ghosting' her when she did not send him more explicit images. This raises a question over whether the participants recognised this as a problematic behaviour.

At the same time, there was a consensus (83%) that Sophie felt pressured to send an explicit image and that James did not act respectfully (75%). Thus, while a clear majority of participants recognised Sophie feeling pressured and James being disrespectful, this did not translate into the view that consent was not present. While 91% of respondents earlier agreed that consent was needed before sharing intimate images, their reactions to this story indicate that, in the case of digital intimacy, feeling pressured did not invalidate consent in their eyes.

A large majority of participants (81%) agreed that a significant risk was present that some of James and Sophie's images would be shared without the other's consent, although most of these participants chose the agree rather than the strongly agree option in responding to this question. Apprentices were more divided in responding to a more specific question about whether the agreement to delete texts and photos created a low-risk environment. One in three (35%) agreed that it did, while 38% disagreed. Over a quarter (27%) chose the neutral option of neither agree nor disagree. Thus, some of the apprentices who identified the risk of image sharing nonetheless accepted that a simple mutual agreement to delete images managed that risk in an acceptable manner.

Turning to their appraisal of the benefits or attractions of image sharing, there was also evidence of a divided perspective between the participants. Asked whether sharing their images was fun and exciting for James and Sophie, the most popular response among participants was to agree it was (42%). Almost as many (35%) disagreed that it was fun and exciting, while 23% chose the neutral response. The participants were more consistent in their views on whether image sharing was appropriate

at all for this stage of James and Sophie’s relationship. Only 18% agreed that it was appropriate, while 35% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 47% disagreed that was appropriate.

A further point of general agreement among the participants was that James had not behaved respectfully toward Sophie. Only one in ten (9%) agreed that he had been respectful toward her, and relatively few (16%) chose the neutral response to this question. Three quarters saw his behaviour as disrespectful, which indicates a clear sense of disapproval for seeking images in this way, particularly in relation to James’ behaviour in ghosting Sophie when she did not comply.

Nevertheless, some participants appeared to have struggled in applying the principles of consent that they had evidenced in the section on consent attitude to this scenario. More than four in ten (43%) of the apprentices agreed that there was consent throughout for sending nude images, which appears to undermine the idea that James had engaged in apparent manipulation of Sophie in pressurising her. Almost a third (31%) of participants were neutral on whether consent was present for image sharing, and only 26% disagreed with the premise that consent was present. Thus, there is scope to create educational programming for use with apprentices that supports them to apply the principles of consent to digital intimacy scenarios.

**Table 18**

*Apprentices’ reactions to Story 1: James and Sophie, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
<i>Sophie felt pressured to send the more explicit image at the end of the story.</i>	2	2	12	27	56
<i>There is a significant risk that some of James and Sophie’s images will end up being shared with others without consent.</i>	2	2	15	45	36
<i>There was consent throughout this story for sending nude images.</i>	8	18	31	32	11
<i>Sharing their images was fun and exciting for James and Sophie.</i>	17	18	23	34	8
<i>Their agreement to delete texts and photos created a safe, low-risk environment.</i>	16	22	27	27	8
<i>Overall, the use of nude images was appropriate for their relationship.</i>	20	27	35	14	4
<i>James acted respectfully toward Sophie.</i>	47	28	16	6	3

## Story 2

### **Rachel and Ben**

Story 2 was designed to explore the views of apprentices on an applied consent scenario which features alcohol use, initiator behaviour from a female as opposed to a male, and the issue of how consent communication takes place in a relationship. In this story, Rachel and Ben are portrayed as being in a relationship. They are both feeling drunk after a night out when Rachel invites Ben home to her place. Although it is stated that Rachel was hoping to have sex with him (i.e., we get an insight into her internal feelings), she does not explicitly ask him for sex. Rachel relies on implicit actions to communicate her goal, such as asking him to stay over. We also get a perspective on Ben's true feelings (he was feeling uncomfortable), which contrasted with this action of going along with Rachel's actions.

Given that the apprentices agreed that people should ask for consent, Rachel's actions can explore how they perceive a scenario in which sexual intercourse takes place in the absence of verbal communication. Indeed, she uses verbal phrases to minimise Ben's agency ("just relax"). By including this detail, we can explore the participants' perceptions of compliance during sexual activity. This story also allows us to examine perceptions of sexual activity taking place in the context of drinking, as it describes Rachel and Ben as "unsteady on their feet" and "feeling fairly drunk".

Rachel (21) and Ben (21) have been going out for a few months. They recently started having sex. Recently, they went on a night out in town to some bars with friends. Both were

drinking shots throughout the night. They were unsteady on their feet and feeling fairly drunk by the time the pub closed at 1 AM.

Rachel invited Ben back to her place. Rachel was hoping to have sex with him. She told him it was getting a bit late, and he should stay over. Ben agreed to go back with Rachel. When they got to her bedroom, Rachel started undressing herself and then started undressing Ben. "You'll enjoy it", she said, "just relax."

Ben started feeling uncomfortable; he didn't feel in charge of what was happening. Ben went along with it, as Rachel was really excited and enjoying herself, and then they had sex.

In their responses to this story, most of the apprentices demonstrated an awareness that Rachel's behaviour toward Ben was inappropriate. Two thirds of the apprentices agreed that Ben did not want to have sex with Rachel and simply "went along with it", while only 14% agreed there was consent to sex between the two characters. These findings highlight the ability of participants to go beyond stereotyped gender beliefs, such as the idea that "guys are always ready for sex", to recognise that Rachel had assaulted Ben. Many of the participants recognised the sexual scripting apparent in the story. Thus, half of them agreed that Rachel clearly asked Ben for sex when she invited him over to her place (52%), and many placed the scenario within their expectations for sexual intimacy in relationships (i.e., 42% agreed that Rachel had good reason to expect sex from Ben because they were going out). However, the respondents typically recognised that

Rachel's behaviour towards Ben was wrong, with only 17% agreeing that her behaviour was ok and just 9% felt that Ben should just go along with her. Although they were described as feeling drunk, the apprentices were split on the role of alcohol in this story. Half of the participants agreed that they were too drunk to consent to sex while the other half were not in agreement with this view.

Most apprentices did not view sex between Rachel and Ben in this story as consensual. The majority (62%) disagreed that there was consent. A large number of participants did categorise what was happening as compatible with their sexual script expectations for what happens when someone is invited home, especially in a relationship context. They appeared to accept that these factors signal sexual interest and implicit agreement to be intimate without any explicit verbal consent taking place. Nonetheless, a majority of participants disapproved of Rachel's coercive behaviour, indicating their ability to recognise when demands go beyond what might be expected in a relationship scenario. Two thirds of the participants disagreed with the idea that Ben should go along with sex to please Rachel (67%) and the majority disagreed that Rachel's behaviour was ok (55%) (only 17% agreed that it was ok).

There seemed to be less consistency in how the apprentices viewed the impact of being drunk on the ability to give consent. Although they were described in the story as feeling drunk, only half (52%) of the participants agreed that Rachel and Ben were too drunk to consent to sex, with a large proportion (30%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing. This confusion about the role of alcohol in consent is reflected in participants' responses to open-ended comments about what kind of education should be provided to apprentices', where

several requested more information on alcohol.

Taken together, these results suggest that apprentices believe that contextual cues, such as asking someone back to your place, serve as coded ways of asking for sex. At the same time, most apprentices recognised that a lack of verbal communication leads to non-consensual experiences. When read in the context of this story, apprentices were able to set aside any tendency they may have had to apply gender stereotypes to intimacy. While only 45% of the participants earlier disagreed with the idea that "guys are always ready for sex", two thirds agreed that Ben did not want to have sex with Rachel. This suggests that reading and reflecting on consent scenarios could be a means to promote critical thinking on the role of issues such as gender expectations for intimacy.

**Table 19**

*Apprentices' reactions to Story 2: Rachel and Ben, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
<i>Although he went along with it, Ben did not want to have sex with Rachel.</i>	2	6	26	39	27
<i>They were unable to consent to sex because they were too much under the influence of alcohol.</i>	6	13	30	28	24
<i>It was clear that Rachel was asking Ben for sex when she invited him over to her place.</i>	9	17	23	30	22
<i>Because they were going out together, Rachel had good reason to expect sex with Ben.</i>	15	16	28	31	11
<i>When they got back to her place, Rachel's behaviour towards Ben was ok.</i>	23	32	28	13	4
<i>In this story, there was consent to sex between Rachel and Ben.</i>	37	25	24	10	4
<i>In a situation like this, Ben should go along with Rachel to please her.</i>	38	29	24	5	4

## **Story 3**

### **Aoife and Martin**

This story features two characters, Aoife and Martin, who have just met on a weekend night out. Both are heavily intoxicated, having drunk a naggin of vodka plus €30 worth of shots each. In terms of alcohol consumption, this would be the equivalent of approximately six pints of beer or 11 shots each. By including a specific amount of alcohol that they had drunk, the story enables a closer examination of apprentices' beliefs about how alcohol impedes the capacity to consent. Aoife verbally agrees to go back home with Martin, setting up the script-based expectation referenced in Story 2 that intimacy may be going to take place. However, there is no verbal communication after that point. When they arrive home, there is intimacy between the two story characters on the couch. Then Martin takes Aoife by the hand and leads her to his bedroom and touches her intimately.

In this final section of the story the language used changes from referencing what both were doing to foregrounding Martin as the initiator who seeks further intimacy. The only reaction from Aoife is a smile when Martin produces a condom. The ambiguity of this behaviour is clear. It may convey Aoife's non-verbal consent, however as she is at this point on the bed in his bedroom and within his apartment, it may be that she is concerned or frightened. There is no indication as to why Aoife was smiling. The seven questions that followed this story explored the apprentices' perception of communication in the scenario, whether non-verbal cues mentioned in the story might indicate interest in sex, the impact of alcohol consumption, and whether consent was present.

Aoife (20) met Martin (22) on a weekend night out, when she joined a group of her friends pre-drinking at the house that three of them shared. Martin was there with one of her friends, they had not met before. They each had the equivalent of a naggin of vodka during drinks at the house. Most of them went out to a nightclub. Aoife and Martin chatted and flirted at the house and ended up in the same taxi going into town.

Each spent about €30 on shots at the nightclub. Martin started kissing Aoife

when they were dancing together. He asked her home to his place when the nightclub was closing. She said okay. She began to kiss him on the couch when they got there. Martin moved his hands onto Aoife's lower body.

Then he took her by the hand and brought her to his bedroom. Martin started to touch her intimately. He took off her jeans and his own pants. After a while Martin leaned over to his bedside locker and took out a condom. Aoife smiled at Martin, and then they had sex.

Many participants interpreted Aoife's non-verbal actions in this story as signalling an interest in sex. Nearly half (48%) viewed her kissing and touching Martin as indicative of her interest in having sex and 44% agreed that Aoife smiling at Martin was a clear signal. An additional one third of the participants chose the neutral option in response to these questions. Only one quarter or less of the participants disagreed that these behaviours were suggestive of her interest in sex. Most participants (75%) agreed that verbal consent would have made this situation clearer, and

55% agreed that Martin should have checked in more with Aoife toward the end of the story. Nevertheless, 66% of the apprentices agreed that communication was mutual and equal, and almost half (48%) agreed that Aoife consented to have sex with Martin. Only a minority of the survey respondents considered that they were too drunk to consent to sex. While verbal consent was recommended by a majority of respondents, the profile of responses to this story overall indicated an openness to relying on non-verbal and implicit situational cues in an applied consent scenario.

Participants were divided in their reactions to this story. Almost half (47%) agreed that Aoife had consented to sex with Martin in this story and a further 35% neither agreed nor disagreed that she did. Only 19% disagreed that she had consented. A similar range was apparent in responses to items on whether Aoife's non-verbal cues represented her interest in having sex. Almost half (48%) regarded her kissing and touching Martin as indicating her interest, while 44% agreed that Aoife smiling at Martin in the bedroom conveyed her interest in sex. In the case of both of these questions, a further 33% neither agreed nor disagreed that these signals conveyed her interest. Only 20-24% of the respondents disagreed that these behaviours showed her interest in sex.

The apprentices recognised the value of verbal communication in clarifying the situation. Three quarters of them agreed that verbal consent would have made this situation clearer (25% chose the somewhat agree response while 50% chose the strongly agree response, indicating a clear tendency to endorse greater communication). Nevertheless, while a

majority (57%) of participants agreed that Martin should have checked in on Aoife towards the end of the story, this trend did not reflect an overwhelming response.

That judgement on the part of the respondents runs counter to the strength of their views on consent attitudes presented earlier in the survey – the vast majority agreed that consent should always be asked for before sexual activity. Although a clear reference point was provided on the amount of alcohol consumed by both characters, apprentices were less clear about the issue of capacity to consent than in Story 2. Only 29% of participants agreed that they were too drunk to give their consent to sex, while 44% chose the neutral response option, and 27% disagreed with the premise that they were too drunk. It would appear that apprentices felt more assured about the story characters' capacity to consent under the influence of alcohol when they had information about how alcohol affected their subjective state and their behaviour. Providing information on the amount of alcohol consumed and its cost did not seem to be as informative.

On the whole, apprentices' reactions to this story speak to a contrast between their standalone attitudes toward verbal consent when it is assessed on single attitude items, and their acceptance of non-verbal cue as a credible signal of consent when presented in the context of a story. This suggests a gap between

their sentiment toward consent and their application of the same principles once context and framing are introduced. Nevertheless, there was agreement that more verbal communication would have been beneficial, which does speak to the relevance attributed to verbal consent by apprentices.

**Table 20**

*Apprentices' reactions to Story 3: Aoife and Martin, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
<i>Verbal consent would have made this situation clearer.</i>	2	3	21	25	50
<i>Communication in this story seems to be mutual and equal.</i>	2	6	25	33	33
<i>At the end, Martin should have checked in more with Aoife.</i>	4	8	32	38	19
<i>Aoife kissing and touching Martin earlier showed she was interested in sex.</i>	7	13	33	34	14
<i>Based on what I've read, Aoife consented to have sex with Martin.</i>	9	10	35	35	12
<i>Aoife's smile is a clear signal of her consent to sex.</i>	10	14	33	34	10
<i>The amount of alcohol they consumed made them unable to give consent.</i>	9	18	44	18	11

## **Story 4**

### **Liam and Sarah**

The final story presented in the Apprenticeship CARE survey featured Liam and Sarah. This story was designed to explore consent communication in a situation outside of a sexual script associated with socialising or being in a relationship. It also explored the views of apprentices toward a man initiating kissing and touching and their perspective on a woman who rebuffs these overtures.

The story features two characters who are depicted studying together at Sarah's apartment. Framed by this apparent collaborative working situation, Liam kisses Sarah after flirting with her and having her touch him on the arm. Sarah is portrayed as kissing him back. Liam then initiates more intimacy. Sarah asks him to go slower and they stop. He then initiates intimacy again a few minutes later, with Sarah again

deflecting him. Liam continues to seek more intimacy, now moving to touch her more intimately. She does not push him away and he initiates another behaviour. The story ends with her flatmates returning and Liam leaving going home.

The six questions that followed this story assessed the apprentices' appraisal of Sarah's internal state during this incident, asking whether she did not want to offend him or was afraid of what might happen if she did not comply. They were also asked about her right to speak up if she was not comfortable with what was happening. The remaining questions asked whether consent was present, whether Liam should have asked Sarah before kissing her, and if he was right to think she wanted intimacy with him.

Liam (22) and Sarah (22) were studying at Sarah's apartment. They were sitting on the couch working on their laptops. When they finish, Liam starts flirting and joking with Sarah, who laughs and touches his arm. He puts away his computer, moves closer to her on the couch, and leans in to kiss her. Sarah kisses him back.

Liam then places his arm around her and begins to kiss her more intensely.

Sarah says, 'can we go slower'. He says yes, they chat for a few minutes. Then he starts caressing her neck, Sarah tries to return to the conversation they were having previously. He moves on to touching her above the waist over her clothes. She does not push him away. Liam takes her hand and places it on his upper leg. At that stage, Sarah's flatmates return, and Liam goes home shortly after that.

While more than eight out of ten participants had earlier agreed that consent should be asked for before any kind of intimacy (including kissing), only 55% agreed that Liam should have asked Sarah before kissing her. Alongside this inconsistency between attitude and appraisal, a large majority (80%) of apprentices agreed that Sarah had the right to speak up. Most apprentices saw that Sarah may not have been comfortable with what was happening – including 64% who agreed that she

went along with what was happening because she did not want to offend Liam and 52% agreeing that she was fearful of what would happen if she did not comply with him. There was also evidence that the apprentices recognised that Liam's behaviour was one-sided and that he did not seek consent – only 8% of participants agreed that consent was present in the story, while a minority (23%) agreed that Liam was right to infer from Sarah kissing him that she was interested in greater intimacy with him.

Overall, the rate of agreement with the idea that there was consent in this story was very low. Only 8% of participants agreed that there was consent between Sarah and Liam. However, just over half (55%) agreed that Liam should have asked Sarah at the beginning of the story before kissing her. This figure is considerably lower than the proportion observed in an earlier section of the survey, in which eight out of ten respondents agreed that one should ask for consent before any physical intimacy, including kissing. Nevertheless, there were clear signs that, as a group, the participants recognised that Liam was the initiator in this story with minimal engagement from Sarah. Only 23% of participants agreed that Liam was right to consider Sarah kissing him back as a sign she was interested in more intimacy, while almost half disagreed (46%). Yet 31% chose the neutral option in response to this question, indicating uncertainty for many of the participants as to whether he was right

in his assumption, even without verbally checking in.

A strong level of agreement was apparent in response to the question on whether Sarah had the right to speak up if she was not comfortable with what was happening – 80% agreed with this, including 66% who strongly agreed. Thus, there was recognition that Sarah could freely choose how much (if any) intimacy she wanted with Liam. Participants were also asked to respond to questions exploring why Sarah may not speak up when uncomfortable. There was a high level of recognition that Sarah may not have wanted to offend Liam (64%), while half of the participants thought Sarah was afraid of what would happen if she did not go along with Liam (52%). Thus, most of the apprentices could foresee her having a negative reaction to what was happening, despite her apparent compliance with much of what was happening.

**Table 21**

*Apprentices' reactions to Story 4: Liam and Sarah, by percentage of the apprentices who chose each response option*

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<i>Sarah had the right to speak up to say she was uncomfortable.</i>	1	1	18	14	66
<i>Sarah did not want to offend Liam.</i>	2	3	31	49	15
<i>Liam should have asked Sarah before kissing her at the start.</i>	2	8	35	34	21
<i>Sarah was afraid of what would happen if she didn't go along with Liam.</i>	4	10	34	39	13
<i>Because she kissed him back, Liam was right to think that she was interested in more.</i>	23	23	31	19	4
<i>There was consent between Sarah and Liam for everything in this story.</i>	31	29	31	6	2

## **Analysis of Open-Ended Question Responses**

The Apprenticeship CARE Survey concluded with an opportunity for participants to write in free text comments in response to a prompt about what should be covered in consent education for this group: *“Please let us know the most important topics or areas that should be covered in apprentice education about consent. You can add in any other comments here as well”*. A content analysis was carried out of the responses provided by 163 apprentices who chose to make comments. The comments were categorised into a) Suggestions for content of consent education and b) Additional observations and feedback.

### **Suggestions for content of consent education**

Comments made on topics to include in consent education reflect a desire to ensure that intimacy is consensual. Skills and definitions related to consent were deemed relevant, as were language and skills to communicate about consent.

Other topics highlighted as relevant to apprentices included digital intimacy and sexual health, with one of the most commonly requested topics being alcohol and drugs.

Information was also requested on healthy relationships, the law, and the role of social norms including social media as an influence.

The comments left by participants offered a range of suggestions for the topics that consent education ought to cover. Most commonly, participants offered brief answers such as *“consent”* and *“sexual consent”*. Expanding further on this, consent education should describe *“the importance of verbal consent”* and promote the message that people should *“always ask for consent”*. Some participants suggested that *“non-verbal signals”* should be included in education on consent, as well as *“signs that consent has not been given, even if it’s non-verbal”*. Relatedly, many apprentices recommended education on *“what counts as a valid expression of consent”*, *“what can be considered consent”* or simply *“what consent is”*.

The word *“communication”* often appeared, including references to the need for specific communication skills beginning with the phrase *“how to”* (for instance: *“How to say no”*, *“the correct way to obtain consent”*, *“how to ask for consent”*, with one participant specifying *“[...] without it being awkward”*). Collectively, these comments suggest a strong interest among apprentices for information on how to discuss consent comfortably. This relates to information about what constitutes consent and language to check in with a partner or discuss their own comfort / discomfort.

The role that drugs and alcohol play in sexual consent was one of the most commonly suggested topic by apprentices. Some of the points raised were more specific questions related to the law (*“What are the legalities of consent under the influence of alcohol and drugs”*) or knowing how to manage alcohol levels

*“How much alcohol is too much”*). One respondent highlighted that the topic of alcohol is particularly relevant to consent education as *“a lot of men and women go out with the end goal of going home with someone”*. These comments, as well as the apprentices’ reactions to stories in which characters are under the influence of alcohol, suggest that consent education for apprentices should integrate education on alcohol and drugs.

Participants suggested that consent education should cover *“healthy relationships”*. This included positive points such as *“how to have a healthy relationship”* and *“sex in relationships”* as well as negative aspects such as *“signs of a toxic relationship”* and *“the topic of cheating”*. Others were interested in the physical health aspects of sex and intimacy, with references made to addressing *“STIs and STDs”*, *“consent to ensure the use of a contraceptive”* and *“safe sex”*.

Less frequently, suggestions were made to include digital intimacy as a topic (*“the dangers of sharing other people’s nudes without their consent”*) and the influence of social media (*“influencers [who] persuade people how they should act or be around women and men”*). Others requested more information about the laws related to consent such as the age of consent. Participants suggested that consent education should also cover non-consensual sexual experiences such as harassment and sexual abuse. One participant alluded to how coercion can be present without physical violence in a relationship: *“Men often would ask for consent, but if not given, they show less interest and affection towards the women;*

*roles can also be reversed.”* Another suggested that *“more needs to be done to help young people understand the consequences of not asking for consent.”*

Comments were made which expressed an interest in addressing the social norms and pressures that impact consent. One participant described how *“consent is an awkward subject. The majority of the time it’s not verbal, more so cause it ruins a mood and makes things awkward, but it’s important to understand each other.”* Another expressed that consent education should be delivered with a goal of *“[making] not giving consent normal”*.

Several suggestions were made on the process of how consent education ought to be delivered to apprentices, with participants indicating that education should be delivered frequently and to all apprentices (*“There should be a class a week on stuff like this”*, *“A talk on consent should be given to all apprentices”*). Other participants reported that completing the survey had been beneficial and suggested that elements of it could be incorporated into consent education (*“I believe that this questionnaire is perfect for teaching about the importance of sexual consent”*). Another participant expressed how completing the survey normalised the subject matter for them: *“It was good to read and understand that this stuff goes on on a regular basis”*. Hence, while education was not the intended goal of the survey, certain elements of it, such as the stories, may be valuable to include in future interventions.

**Table 22**

Example suggestions for content, with illustrative open-ended comments

Topic	Example apprentice quote
<i>Consent</i>	<i>"Sexual consent" (multiple respondents)</i>
<i>Communication (verbal and non-verbal)</i>	<i>"Signs that consent has not been given even if it's non-verbal" (20- 21 years)</i>
<i>Alcohol and drugs</i>	<i>"How much alcohol is too much" (22-23 years)</i>
<i>Skills and definitions</i>	<i>"How to ask for consent without it being awkward" (20-21 years)</i>
<i>Healthy relationships</i>	<i>"Sex in relationships" (20-21 years)</i>
<i>Sexual health</i>	<i>"Consent to ensure the use of a contraceptive" (20-21 years)</i>
<i>Digital intimacy and social media</i>	<i>"Should highlight the dangers of sharing other people's nudes without their consent" (22-23 years)</i>
<i>Law</i>	<i>"Age of consent law" (18-19 years)</i>
<i>Sexual violence and harassment</i>	<i>"More needs to be done to help young people understand the consequences of not asking for consent" (20-21 years)</i>
<i>Social norms and pressures</i>	<i>"Consent is an awkward subject. The majority of the time it's not verbal, more so cause it ruins a mood and makes things awkward, but it's important to understand each other" (20-21 years)</i>
<i>Frequency and scale of education</i>	<i>"A talk on consent should be given to all apprentices" (20-21 years)</i>
<i>Reaction to survey</i>	<i>"This questionnaire is perfect for teaching apprentices about the importance of consent" (22-23 years)</i>

## **Additional observations and feedback**

Besides suggestions for coverage of particular issues in consent education, additional comments provided an insight on how some of the apprentices felt about consent promotion. Many participants expressed opposition to consent promotion efforts, usually questioning the relevance of these interventions to their apprenticeship. One commented that *"none of them [referring to aspects of consent promotion] unless it helps us pass a phase faster, respectfully,"* and others said they wanted to focus on *"the actual apprenticeship"* rather than aspects of consent promotion. For others, there was opposition to the survey itself (*"the survey was too long"*).

Several comments reflected on how men are portrayed, either in the consent scenarios included in the survey or in consent education more broadly. This was reflected in a call for further discussion of consent issues that centres male perspectives (e.g., *"talk a bit more about how sometimes men don't always want to have sex", "cases of men refusing to give consent"*). There were also comments from participants who felt sexual violence was too often depicted as something exclusively perpetrated by men. For instance, one wrote that *"The questions are very sexist towards men and imply that it's only men who commit rape and don't ask for consent"*, while another said that:

*Not all men are bad people. This survey is obviously created by another woke [radical] feminist. This kill all men movement need to be stopped. You haven't got a clue what men go through day in day out with you lot.*

Other comments suggested a degree of support for consent education, with participants suggesting that it was *"very important"* and *"good to run through consent with apprentices"*. Another offered further context, stating:

*Being one of the older students in my class, I believe this questionnaire to be very important as I've seen and heard behaviours down here which are very concerning, and I hope this will help those individuals wake up and realise the importance of consent.*

On balance, these responses provide an insight on resistance that might be encountered to consent education. Particular care needs to be given to how men and masculinity are portrayed when discussing the issue, as the comments provided examples of apprentices who regarded this as a sensitive and emotive issue. These challenges notwithstanding, other apprentices appeared to welcome and value education that supported promotion of consent.

**Table 23**

*Example suggestions for content, with illustrative open-ended comments*

Topic	Example Participant Quotes
<i>Opposition to consent promotion, questioning of its relevance</i>	<i>"None of them, unless it helps us pass a phase faster, respectfully" (20-21 years)</i>
<i>Men and consent</i>	<i>"Talk a bit more about how sometimes men don't always want to have sex" (18-19 years)</i>
<i>Support for consent education</i>	<i>"Being one of the older students in my class, I believe this questionnaire to be very important as I've seen and heard behaviours down here which are very concerning, and I hope this will help those individuals wake up and realise the importance of consent" (22-23 years)</i>



# ***Co-Creating Educational Resources***

The following example illustrates the process underway to co-create educational resources based on the findings of the Apprenticeship CARE Survey. In this example the process used to trial an interactive workshop is described. Over time, further development will take place to create a set of assets that can be used in Training Centres.

The Apprenticeship Supports service at WWETB invited apprentices to volunteer in reviewing and feeding back on a workshop exercise that lasted approximately 45 minutes. The review took place at a WWETB Training Centre with four groups comprising 48 men in total aged over 18, who were engaged in bricklaying, plastering, and electrical apprenticeships. Apprenticeship Supports ensured that participants were aware of supports and services available to them. A facilitator led the groups supported by a WWETB staff member present at all times.

The facilitator explained to participants that the sessions were run as the first step in creating a workshop exercise derived from one of the stories included in the survey and a range of the survey findings. Each session began with information on the topics that would be covered and a group agreement phase to establish ground rules for respectful communication. The voluntary nature of workshop participation was discussed, including encouragement of participants to take part to the degree that they were comfortable doing so. The facilitator described the purpose of holding the co-creation sessions as being an opportunity for apprentices to offer suggestions and feedback on an initial effort to create an engaging workshop based on the survey findings.

The session was based around an adaptation of one of the survey stories, which featured Aoife and Martin. The facilitator explained that intimacy was going to unfold in the story, and the task of the group would be to suggest how this could be done safely and respectfully. They were going to hear about a series of scenes and would be asked for their views on the choices that the story characters made.

The text of the first part of the story was shared with the group and read out by the facilitator, to clarify whether Aoife and Martin knew each other, how they met, and how much alcohol they had to drink:

*Aoife (aged 20) met Martin (22) on a weekend night out, when she joined a group of her friends pre-drinking at the house that three of them shared. Martin was there with one of her friends, they had not met before. They each had the equivalent of a naggin of vodka during drinks at the house before they shared a taxi together into town. Each spent about €30 euro on shots at the nightclub.*

Participants were next organised into groups of four and given laminated sheets printed with a red, amber or green circle. Clarifications were provided on how many pub measures are in a naggin of vodka and how many shots of alcohol would be purchased for €30.

The next part of the story was then shared with the group and read by the facilitator:

*Martin started kissing Aoife on the dancefloor of the nightclub. He asked her home to his place when the nightclub was closing. She said okay. She began to kiss him on the couch when they got there.*

### **Exercise 1: Martin initiating further intimacy**

The first workshop exercise was introduced, to review the next thing that happened in the story, in which Martin initiated more intimacy. The groups were provided a laminated statement that stated:

*Martin moved his hands onto Aoife's lower body.*

They were asked to discuss it and decide if the behaviour was unacceptable (red), that the group was unsure or did not agree (amber), or acceptable (green). The groups then fed back on which response they had chosen, followed by a facilitator-led discussion of the issues that could arise in the story following Martin's action.

### **Exercise 2: Survey results about verbal consent**

The next exercise piloted a walking debate technique to create active engagement in discussing how important verbal consent was at this stage in the story. Percentage signs of 100%, 75%, 50%, 25% and 0% were placed on the walls in the training room. The participants were asked to stand beside whatever percentage sign they thought was the correct answer to the following question:

*In the Apprenticeship CARE Survey, what percentage of apprentices agreed that: 'You should ask for consent before any kind of intimacy, including kissing or touching.'*

Most underestimated the percentage obtained in the survey findings (82%). The facilitator led a discussion of the choices they made and of the survey statistic.

### **Exercise 3: Awareness raising on verbal consent options**

Having introduced the idea of using verbal consent in the story, the participants were asked about what phrases people in general might be personally comfortable with if they wished to communicate their agreement to try a type of intimacy or to communicate that they were not comfortable with doing so. The groups of four were provided laminated written phrases on cards to review and asked to categorise them into red, amber and green piles. Examples of phrases included:

*Are you comfortable doing this?  
Can we slow down if I want to?  
I am uncomfortable doing this.  
Do you like this?*

The small groups then verbally reported back on how they had categorised the phrases provided, with the facilitator leading a discussion of what kind of language was seen as acceptable.

### **Exercise 4: Moving into the bedroom**

The facilitator explained that the next thing that happened in the story was going to be introduced, in which Martin initiated more intimacy. The groups were provided a laminated statement that stated:

*Martin led the way, took her hand and brought Aoife to the bedroom.*

As before, the small groups were asked to discuss Martin's action and to decide if the behaviour was unacceptable (red), that the group was unsure or did not agree (amber), or acceptable (green). The groups fed back and the facilitator led a discussion of how Martin's action was seen.

They were then introduced to positive consent principles that are used by the Active\* Consent programme: That consent is Ongoing, Mutual and Freely Given (OMFG). A copy of this was given to the small groups, with each element explained (e.g., 'freely given' refers to having the capacity to consent without being affected by alcohol or drugs, and includes freedom from pressure physically or verbally).

The groups were asked to apply the OMFG criteria to Martin's action and whether they would revise their response to the action in light of these principles. The apprentices were also asked for their views on the relevance of survey findings to informing the discussion. These findings include:

- 74% of the survey participants who read the Aoife and Martin story agreed that *'Verbal consent would have made this situation clearer.'*
- 59% of survey participants agreed that *'At the end, Martin should have checking in more with Aoife.'*
- Many participants seemed unsure whether alcohol impaired Aoife and Martin; 42% chose the *'neither agree nor disagree'* option as to whether Aoife and Martin were too drunk to consent.

## **Exercise 5: In the bedroom**

The final part of the story was provided to workshop participants, and they were asked to review what happened in their small groups:

*Martin started to touch her intimately. He took off her jeans and his own pants. After a while Martin leaned over to his bedside locker, took out a condom. Aoife smiled at Martin and then they had sex.*

The groups were asked to consider:

- Imagine if Martin could press the rewind button the next day. What would you advise him?
- Would you have advised Martin to have done anything differently?
- Would it be appropriate to intervene in a situation like this?

The facilitator introduced relevant survey findings for the apprentices to review with respect to whether they would be relevant to informing the discussion:

- 80% of apprentices would say something to stop a friend if they are planning to take a drunk person into a room alone.
- 82% of the survey participants agreed that *'You should ask for consent before any kind of intimacy, including kissing or touching.'*

The workshop ended with a final discussion of the OMFG principles and how they would apply at the end of the story.

## **Participant feedback**

Besides the comments that the apprentices offered on the workshop as it took place, and their reaction to the activities in the workshop, they were invited to give anonymous written feedback. They were asked for their views on what were the most effective and engaging components of the workshop, their suggestions for improvements, and whether they would recommend it to others.

All of the participants in the workshops who replied agreed that they would recommend the workshop to a friend. In describing what they considered the best parts of the workshop, they emphasised the openness of the workshop environment (*"good conversation", "the talking", "in groups"*). They also emphasised how the positive environment was channelled into a productive process (*"group work", "team communication", "the debates of the class"*), evident in the following examples:

- *"Group discussions to see others' opinions"*
- *"Everyone was involved"*
- *"Everyone was giving their opinion on the situation"*
- *"Everybody sharing their honest opinions without being silenced"*
- *"Group work"*
- *"Good fun and educational"*
- *"Really good for communicating consent to other people"*

Among the key messages that they took from the workshop, participants first of all referenced the need to have consent and also described the importance of communication: *"Make*

*sure to communicate", "Try to improve communication between people with regards to consent", and "That communication is important to consent"*. The suggestions they had included the use of posters and awareness raising campaigns. The challenges noted by some participants were *"a little bit awkward but worthwhile nonetheless", "having to explain the answers", and "lack of context around the Aoife and Martin situation"*.

## **Staff recommendations**

The facilitator and WWETB staff debriefed on the piloting of the workshop session. The staff members had been present in an observational and support capacity. Their evaluation of the sessions was that the sessions had an engaging style that separate it from a formal lecture. Grounding the session in the discussion of a particular story worked effectively as a structure. While the workshop was well organised, it was not too scripted. The activities had worked well in prompting discussion and actively involving participants.

The opportunities to get up, move around, and work in groups would appeal to apprentices with additional needs. Their degree of involvement suggested that the content was relevant to them, they were surprisingly ready to speak up in this engagement format and comfortable in the space. The atmosphere in the sessions was lively and stimulating. Further work would be required to finish the workshop on a stronger closer to consolidate learning. Additional opportunities were identified such as using merchandise branded with key messages and supporting the apprentices' suggestion for the use of posters in the Training Centre.

Group discussion had indicated that some groups had little prior experience of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) when they had attended school. The group discussions that took place illustrated gaps in previous learning about consent that the workshop could be useful in addressing:

- Reactions of apprentices varied across the workshops. In one session, more than half of the apprentices selected the 25% or 40% options in the walking debate exercise on the percentage of peers who had agreed verbal consent was always necessary.
- The participants were prepared to challenge views that they did not agree with (e.g., on one occasion a comment that Aoife had so much to drink she would do anything was critiqued by peers).
- The reactions of participants to some elements of the story could be taken into account and woven into the workshop activities (e.g., assumptions that Aoife had agency in the situation: *'She didn't say no', 'she should have let go of his hand'*).
- For some, Martin's initiator behaviour in the story seemed acceptable, as long as physical force was not used. Further development of empathic identification with her perspective could be an important strategy to raise awareness that non-consent does not need to be violent.
- Comments from groups suggested that some participants assumed that nonverbal appraisals and reading of the situation would be sufficient, rather than actively checking in.
- For some, there appeared to be limited learning to date on how alcohol affects the capacity to make decisions and give consent.
- Repeated messaging would be important. Some reactions were defensive regarding the role of men, and further repetition of the OMFG message would help ensure it is fully explored.

## **Discussion**

The Apprenticeship Consent Awareness and Respect for Everyone (CARE) Survey report has represented for the first time the attitudes and knowledge of this group on sexual violence prevention and response and the promotion of healthy relationships. This includes apprentices' knowledge and opinions on a range of topics, from consent and sex education to sexual violence and harassment, bystander intervention, digital intimacy, help seeking and disclosure response, as well as legal rights and responsibilities.

The survey findings are an important step toward creating awareness raising and education resources grounded in the social ecology of apprentices' lives, and which will therefore be well positioned to address their needs. The information collected through the Apprenticeship CARE Survey is also an important resource for staff members working in Further Education and Training. Briefings for professionals can incorporate the survey findings and contribute to staff members having the up-to-date, comprehensive understanding they need to support the apprentices who they work with.

The findings that can inform these developments have come from a survey of 723 craft apprentices carried out by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Department (Apprenticeship Supports) at WWETB in partnership with Active\* Consent. This knowledge base will enable the cycle of developing educational resources to be founded on a reliable foundation. Work has already begun on co-creating awareness raising and educational assets with apprentices. That is a significant step, as the ultimate goal of this initiative is to devise useful and engaging tools for

consent promotion and SVH prevention and response, in the first settings-based approach to culture change for apprenticeships.

The survey aimed to understand the needs and characteristics of apprentices as a distinct group, guided by key objectives, to describe:

- 1. Apprentices' attitudes to sexual consent.*
- 2. The ability of apprentices to put attitudes on consent into practice in applied problem solving through stories about intimacy.*
- 3. The understanding and views taken of digital intimacy.*
- 4. Current perspectives on gender stereotypes among apprentices.*
- 5. Preparedness to support others affected by sexual violence and harassment through bystander intervention and disclosure response, and knowledge of supports.*
- 6. The understanding of legal rights and responsibilities in relation to topics such as the age of consent and the age at which intimate images can be shared with another person.*
- 7. A comprehensive bank of survey findings that can be used to co-create relevant, engaging and effective resources awareness raising and education of apprentices on consent, sexual violence prevention and response.*

The planning, development and implementation of the Apprenticeship CARE Survey was led by Joann Power on behalf of WWETB EDI Department, with the support of the Apprenticeship Programme and the Training Centres. Apprentices were approached to take part in the survey during periods of class time. It was rolled out to each cohort of apprentices in turn during class sessions, with time available to explain the purpose of the survey, to answer any questions from participants, and to enable any apprentice who did not want to take part to opt out.

Survey participants took approximately 15 minutes to complete it. There was a relatively low level of attrition in the responses. The vast majority of apprentices who began the process went on to complete all of the ratings-based questions on the survey form. Support information was provided to each group after the survey. The instructors, tutors and lecturers on the apprenticeship programme were provided information about the survey and given contact points should any support issues subsequently arise.

The demographics of the survey group were representative of craft apprenticeships in Ireland in terms of gender, age profile, and the apprenticeships they were studying. Reflective of the breakdown of craft apprentices nationally, the vast majority of respondents were men (96%) and under the age of 25 (92%). Most were aged between 20 and 25 (61%). The survey participants were studying one of the following areas:

- **Mechanics:** Including Agri-mechanics, Heavy Goods Vehicles, and Motor Mechanics.
- **Construction:** Such as Brick and Stone Laying, Plastering, Plumbing, Carpentry and Joinery, Wood Manufacturing, and Electrical Work.
- **Industrial:** Including Industrial Insulation, Mechanical Automation and Maintenance Fitting, Pipe Fitting, Metal Fabrication, and Sheet Metal Working.

Following the survey, Siobhán Nolan and Lean Lynch at the Active Inclusion Support Service in Cork ETB consulted with over 150 apprentices in Cork on their views about the topics covered in the Apprenticeship CARE Survey. The apprentices in Cork spoke about their views on the stories included in the survey, providing their insights on the quantitative survey responses. A summary of these discussions helped inform the design of a pilot interactive learning session for apprentices in WWETB. The learning session that was piloted comprised short individual and group tasks, based on one of the stories presented in the survey and introducing quantitative findings on a number of the survey topics.

### Sex education

When asked about their previous experience of receiving sex education from community, media and formal education sources in the past, the apprentices indicated that their primary sources of information on sex and relationships were trusted sources close to them. Romantic partners were by far the most important single source of information. School, parents and peers received comparable levels of support as the next tier of important sources of information on sex and relationships.

Social media, pornography, and conventional media such as TV / movies were the least important sources of information for information on sex and relationships. Nevertheless, 44% of apprentices did say that social media was somewhat or very important as a source of information – although only 7% regarded it as very important (as opposed to 61% of apprentices who regarded romantic partners as a very important source). While three quarters of apprentices described pornography as not important as a source of their education on sex and relationships, some (6%) responded that it was very important.

Overall, the feedback given on formal sex and relationships education received through school was positive. Although 6% of apprentices said that they had not received any sex education, three quarters of the participant group as a whole said that their sex education was satisfactory or very satisfactory (this figure included just 8% who chose the very satisfied option).

Of those who did receive sex education at school or through other courses they had taken, nearly all (92%) said that sexual consent had been covered, alongside a large majority who indicated that sexual violence (73%) and healthy relationships (74%) had been covered.

For those participants who had received education on sexual consent, the most common formats were to have received a talk from a teacher (93%) or to have watched a video about consent (80%). Almost half (46%) of the apprentices indicated that they had taken part in a workshop on consent.

These findings suggest that the apprentices who took part in the survey felt satisfied with the sex education that they had received in the past, and have been introduced to information on consent and SVH. Yet only half had taken part

in a workshop format that would have enabled them to discuss these issues in a more applied format – most commonly they experienced this education through relatively passive methods such as hearing a talk or watching a video. The finding that learning about sex most commonly takes place with a romantic partner suggests a need for more active engagement with this group on healthy relationships.

### **Consent attitudes**

The responses to survey items concerning sexual consent demonstrated an important strength with respect to positive attitudes on this topic. In their responses to a selection of items from established attitude measures (Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2014; MacNeela et al., 2022), four fifths or more of the participants agreed with key ideas that underpin active consent and communication.

For instance, nearly all agreed that consent should be asked before sexual intercourse takes place, while 82% agreed that consent should be obtained prior to any form of intimacy taking place. Most apprentices considered themselves well informed about sexual consent and also tended to agree that they had all the skills they need to deal with it.

There were several caveats to this positive depiction. Despite feeling confident about consent on a personal level, only half of the apprentices had heard sexual consent issues being discussed by their peers or friends, or had discussed sexual consent with a friend themselves.

In addition, almost half referenced significant issues that are obstacles to translating attitudes into practice. Thus, 50% agreed that verbally asking for consent is awkward, while almost half (46%) agreed that they would keep moving forward in

sexual behaviours or actions unless their partner stopped them – only 28% disagreed with this approach. These findings highlight the need to support apprentices to become more comfortable with asking for consent and checking in with a partner, given their more general acceptance of the need for verbal consent.

## **Legal responsibilities and digital intimacy**

There were encouraging trends in the survey participants' understanding of several of the legal issues that concern consent, as well as some scope for apprentices to improve their knowledge. Most participants (61%) were able to correctly identify the age of consent for sexual intimacy as 17 years. More of the apprentices (35%) overestimated the age of consent than those who incorrectly identified it as 16 years of age (5%).

Similarly, the vast majority of participants (85%) indicated the minimum legal age for sending 'nudes' (i.e., sexually explicit images and videos) as 18 or older. Yet 15% of the apprentices indicated a minimum legal age of 17 or 16 years of age. Finally, while 91% knew that consent is needed from the other person before sending them a 'nude', this left some participants who did not have this understanding.

Image sharing was identified as a relevant issue for the apprentices, as 32% indicated that they had sent a partially or fully nude image or video of themselves and 68% had received a partially or fully nude image or video from another person. Using questions adapted from Döring and Mohseni (2018), the survey found that 80% of apprentices perceived sending / receiving nudes to be a high-risk activity that left people vulnerable. Almost three-quarters agreed that it could cause problems for people in the future.

At the same time, over half agreed that sharing images had some positive connotations such as excitement. Thus, many survey respondents viewed engaging in intimate image sharing as both enjoyable and risky. The ambivalence concerning risks and attractions of image sharing provide a rationale for supporting apprentices with critical reflection on this behaviour and to ensure that all individuals have an accurate understanding of the law concerning it.

## **Knowledge of bystander preparedness and disclosure response**

One third (35%) of the respondents said that they were well prepared themselves to respond to someone who disclosed that they had experienced sexual violence or harassment. Half of the respondents (52%) felt somewhat prepared to respond to others, while one in eight (13%) were not prepared at all.

Most of the survey respondents indicated that they were aware of where to go in their college or training centre for support about sexual violence or harassment (57%) and to report harassment or a non-consenting sexual experience (62%). Approximately one quarter were unsure and just 15% said that they did not know where to go.

Participants were less confident of their knowledge of supports outside FET. One quarter (26%) did not know of any support outside the training centre (e.g., a Rape Crisis Centre) and a similar proportion were unsure (23%), while just over half (52%) indicated that they did have some knowledge of external supports. These findings highlight the importance of ensuring that all apprentices know what supports and services are available to them, both in their colleges and training centres, in their local communities and

online.

The apprentices suggested that they were prepared to engage in bystander intervention, but were more reserved when it came to reacting to issues that they may experience on a relatively frequent basis. Nearly all felt at least somewhat prepared to react to sexual violence or harassment if they saw it taking place (half felt well prepared, 45% felt somewhat prepared); only 6% said they were not prepared at all.

Consistent with this outlook, the vast majority of apprentices said they would intervene in situations where there was an immediate threat of sexual violence. Responding to items from Banyard's (2008) bystander intervention scale, four out of five said that they would intervene if a friend was planning to take a drunk person into a room alone at a party and over three-quarters would intervene if their friend was drunk and being brought into a room alone.

By contrast, far fewer participants said that they would intervene in cases of verbal sexism. Just over one third (36%) indicated that they would challenge a friend's use of hostile and demeaning sexist language. Only one in five (21%) agreed that they would challenge a friend's use of a sexist joke. These findings suggest a strong interest and commitment to intervening, but one that did not extend to sexist language and behaviour that may be encountered on a regular basis – resulting in a need for extending bystander intervention into outreach approaches with apprentices.

## ***Beliefs about gender expectations for sexual scripts***

The participants' responses to survey items on gender-based expectations for sexual behaviour (Seabrook et al., 2016) demonstrated diverse views on stereotyped sexual scripts. Most participants (58%)

rejected the premise of one of these items, 'it is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually'. Only 13% agreed that this was women's role – however, 30% of the apprentices neither agreed nor disagreed with this idea.

There was a three-way split in responses on the remaining items on gender. A significant number of respondents agreed that 'most guys don't want to be 'just friends' with a woman' (38%). A similar proportion disagreed with this statement (40%), leaving one in five (22%) who chose the neutral response option.

In a similar pattern, 33% agreed that 'guys are more interested in physical relationships and women are more interested in emotional relationships', while 37% disagreed with that statement and 31% were neutral. Nearly one in three (31%) agreed that 'guys are always ready for sex', while 45% disagreed and 25% opted for the neutral response. These diverse findings suggest the importance of creating a space for discussion on gender stereotypes. This would provide apprentices with the opportunity to critically reflect on the implications of these views for consent and relationships.

## ***Personal views and social perceptions of 'hooking up'***

While over half (54%) of apprentices were in relationships, the survey explored everyone's views on hooking up or having a one-off encounter in the case of not being in a relationship (Barriger & Vélez-Blasini, 2013). These questions assessed whether a difference would be observed between

the personal norm for engaging in these behaviours compared with the perceived social norm for peers.

Over half of the apprentices indicated that they would be comfortable personally having oral sex (58%) or vaginal sex (64%) on a hook up. Approximately one quarter of the apprentices were neutral as to whether they would be comfortable doing so, leaving between 12% (vaginal sex) and 15% (oral sex) who indicated that they would be uncomfortable with these forms of intimacy. There was no clear trend toward a social norm gap between personal comfort and perceptions of what peers would be comfortable with.

These findings underscore the importance of having the skills to communicate about mutual consent when engaging in casual sexual activity. Many participants indicated that asking for consent was awkward and that they would move forward with intimacy unless stopped. In that context, there may well be a greater risk of avoidance of verbal consent in a casual encounter where the person does not have previous experience of talking about consent with a partner. Awareness raising and education on consent in these situations is clearly important so that apprentices follow through on their attitudinal openness to verbal consent for all forms of intimacy.

### ***Applying attitude and beliefs to consent scenarios presented through stories***

The responses to attitude and knowledge questions presented in the survey provide an insight on apprentices' views for the first time on a wide range of topics related to consent and sexual violence. These findings alone inform what priorities should be focused on in planning future awareness

raising and educational initiatives with this group. The survey then went on to invite the apprentices to apply their attitudes and knowledge to four stories, each of which presented an applied scenario relevant to the topics addressed earlier in the survey. The stories and the apprentices' responses to them created a second set of findings to draw on in creating educational resources, with particular applicability in a discussion and activity-based workshop format. The four story-based narratives place acts of intimacy in a wider context, reflecting the complex reality of how judgements and choices concerning consent are made in practice. The stories put beliefs and attitudes into dialogue with familiar scenarios that feature the factors and issues that individuals and couples must navigate, including:

- Image sharing and the use of dating apps.
- Consent in online relationships, established relationships, and when not in a relationship.
- The impact of alcohol on decision-making and the capacity to consent.
- Expectations for intimacy based on gender stereotypes and intimacy dynamics that run counter to gender roles.
- Checking in for ongoing consent when intimacy has taken place earlier and when someone agrees to come home with another person.
- Mutual, respectful communication when handling rejection, reading nonverbal signals, and seeking verbal confirmation of consent.

The questions placed after each story provided the opportunity to see how apprentices responded to these issues,

with a number of useful comparisons to be made with their earlier responses to knowledge and attitude questions. The findings demonstrated the value of a story-based approach to identify strengths and challenges that arose when the apprentices applied their mental model of consent. Key observations arising from each story are highlighted below to illustrate the dilemmas that apprentices appeared to experience when applying their understanding.

### ***Story 1: James and Sophie - Consent, pressure and digital image sharing in an early-stage online relationship***

In keeping with their views on digital intimacy, a large majority (83%) of the apprentices viewed the image sharing described in this story as risky. Only a minority (35%) accepted that the story characters' agreement to delete photos created a low-risk environment for image sharing, while 81% saw a significant risk that the images would end up being shared without consent.

The participants were able to recognise that James' behaviour made Sophie feel pressured to send a more explicit image (83%), and 75% disagreed with the idea that James had behaved respectfully toward her.

Nevertheless, just as some apprentices viewed sending or receiving nudes as exciting, many (42%) felt that the story characters saw their image sharing as fun and exciting. Moreover, 43% felt that there was consent throughout the story for sending nude images, suggesting that some apprentices believed that consent could take place when feeling under pressure from another person. Just 26% of the survey participants disagreed with the idea that consent was present throughout for sending nude images.

### ***Story 2: Rachel and Ben - A man being pressured to have sex within an established relationship while both people are drunk***

Ben was uncomfortable with having sex with Rachel and did not feel in charge of what was happening to him. Two thirds of apprentices recognised that he did not want to have sex with Rachel, and only 14% agreed sex between them was consenting – illustrating an awareness of how to recognise when someone does not consent. These reflect the ability of most apprentices to put aside any gender-based expectation that men are always ready and available for sex.

Many apprentices recognised there would be an expectation for sex because Ben was invited by Rachel to come back to her place (52%), and the expectation that she would have for sex with him because they were in a relationship for several months (42%). Very few of the participants (9%) thought Ben should go along with Rachel to please her. This invites further discussion about what someone can say to assert their right not to have intimacy or sex if they do not want to do so, especially in a situation where the partner might expect that it was going to happen.

Although they were described as drinking shots throughout the night, being unsteady on their feet, and feeling fairly drunk, just 52% of the participants considered Rachel and Ben too drunk to give their consent. This suggests that they had in mind a very high threshold for applying their understanding of the impact that alcohol has on the ability to make decisions.

### **Story 3: Aoife and Martin - Is a smile enough? Sex between two people who have just met and have been drinking**

While there was intimacy earlier in the evening with both story characters initiating kissing and touching, at the end of the story Martin clearly becomes the initiator – bringing Aoife by the hand to his bedroom, taking her clothes off, and taking out a condom. The only signal from Aoife at that point is a smile while undressed on Martin's bed.

Many participants (44%) agreed that her smile was a clear signal of her consent to sex as was her kissing and touching Martin earlier (48%). Almost half (47%) agreed that she consented to sex with Martin.

Although 75% of the participants indicated that verbal consent would have made this situation clearer and 57% agreed that Martin should have checked in more with Aoife, a clear majority (66%) considered communication in the story to be mutual and equal.

This pattern of responses suggests that, while 93% of the survey respondents agreed that someone should ask for consent before having sexual intercourse and 82% agreed that consent should be asked for before any kind of intimacy, in a contextualised scenario where a woman appears interested in kissing and touching earlier, many of the apprentices viewed her consent to sex as implied. This points to a gap between attitudinal beliefs and their application in a more real world situation.

Aoife and Martin were portrayed as drinking a naggin of vodka and €30 worth of shots during the night, yet only 29% considered them unable to give consent. This is much lower than the equivalent figure given by the apprentices in response to the Rachel and Ben story (52%) – which itself set a high threshold for acceptable levels

of drunkenness. This finding highlights an apparent lack of understanding of the impact of alcohol on sexual decision making and the legal capacity for consent.

### **Story 4: Liam and Sarah - Unwanted persistence in seeking intimacy and the ability to read signals of rejection**

The strengths apparent in the pattern of judgements made following this story were that most apprentices (80%) agreed that Sarah had the right to speak up to say she was uncomfortable with Liam's repeated physical advances (leaning in to kiss her, placing his arm around her, kissing her more intensely, touching her, putting her hand on him), and that only 8% of the apprentices said there was consent for everything that happened in the story.

Most of the apprentices recognised that Sarah was uncomfortable with Liam's behaviour. This included 64% who agreed that Sarah did not want to offend Liam and 52% who agreed that she was afraid of what would happen if she did not go along with him. Relatively few (23%) of the participants agreed that Liam was right to think that Sarah wanted more intimacy because she had kissed him back.

These were positive signs from the group as a whole that a majority recognised the pressure that Liam was applying to Sarah and the subtle way that she was attempting to manage it without directly saying 'no'. Nonetheless, between 31–35% of apprentices chose the neutral response option on a series of questions – that Sarah did not want to offend Liam, that she was afraid of what would happen, that Liam was right to think she was interested in greater intimacy, and that there was consent for everything in this story – suggesting that a large sub-group of the participants could benefit from support with how to read signals from a partner that they do not want to be intimate.

# Recommendations

Reviewing the learning from the findings of the Apprenticeship CARE Survey and the priority attached to creating engaging awareness raising and education resources that are both sustainable and scalable, the following recommendations are made by the project team. These suggest how the FET sector (and individual ETBs) can best support the introduction of consent and SVH prevention and response programming.

The recommendations are grouped to envision the development of resources and the underlying implementation process. Piloting of this process in case study sites would allow for learning to occur that would promote a long-term commitment across the FET system of apprenticeship training. Establish a system for consent education to be delivered within apprenticeship programmes

1. Prioritise the allocation of time within trade-based apprenticeship programmes to accommodate consent education as a mainstreamed learning opportunity.
2. Co-create the highly applied, adaptable resources needed for awareness raising and education of apprentices, recognising the profile of learner needs and characteristics identified in the survey findings.
3. Pilot the delivery of consent education in a cross-section of trade-based apprenticeship programmes.

## **Content of consent education for apprenticeships**

4. Ensure that consent education has an applied focus, incorporates important concepts and skills, set in the context of issues such as digital intimacy, healthy relationships, and alcohol and drugs.
5. Include legal rights and responsibilities and the FET commitment to a respectful culture within educational programming.
6. Use the opportunity arising from consent education to ensure that apprentices are made aware of the supports and services available for themselves and for peers who experience sexual violence or harassment.
7. Incorporate bystander intervention programming principles and skills in consent education for apprentices.

## **A whole of institution approach to culture change**

8. Recognising the opportunities of the setting, link the roll out of apprentice consent education resources to sustainability measures, such as a train-the-trainers approach for appropriate staff, brief awareness raising for all members of FET colleges, and engagement of instructors, teachers and managers with education briefings.
9. Support the sustainability of college-based programming by supporting a shared learning strategy across colleges and community of practice to support staff development.

10. Engage with stakeholders including apprentices, staff members and managers to evaluate roll out efforts and respond to feedback through ongoing learning and revisions to programming.
11. Assess the impact of consent education in apprenticeship programmes, sharing learning, challenges, and how to engage in effective leadership in this area.

### ***Create a strategic approach to consent education in apprenticeship programmes***

12. Support the uptake of consent education by agreeing an action plan in those centres where it is delivered that has been approved supported at managerial level in participating colleges and ETBs.
13. Identify how consent education can be incorporated within relevant frameworks such as the mental health learner framework and the national apprenticeship strategy, taking account of shared concerns for wellbeing, gender equality, diversity and disability.
14. Advocate for the assignment of funding to ensure that staff time is made available to participate in training, support and deliver of consent education, locating leadership for such initiatives within an appropriate office or service in FET centres.

### ***Share progress with the FET sector and relevant stakeholders***

15. Disseminate and share the learning from applying consent education to apprenticeships across the FET sector and to stakeholders in Solas, ETBI and DFHERIS.
16. Adapt the Apprenticeship CARE Survey model of need identification and gap analysis to other relevant populations in FET, such as a wider range of apprenticeship programmes, adult learners, full and part-time programmes, and Youthreach centres building on the considerable progress that has been already achieved with consent education within these settings.
17. Advocate for the development of strategy, planning and resourcing on consent, sexual violence and harassment prevention and response to ensure that FET learners and staff have equivalent opportunities to those available in the Higher Education sector.

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