

# LET'S TALK ABOUT YES ACTIVISM TOOLKIT

Moving from a 'rape culture' to a 'consent culture'

## OVERVIEW

The Amnesty Student Network have joined a Europe-wide campaign to make it clear that sex without consent is rape. The UK is among the few European countries where the law already makes it clear that rape is defined by a lack of consent. But that does not mean consent is always sought. A clear understanding of what sexual consent means can contribute to preventing rape and other sexual offences

This toolkit has been developed by contributions from Amnesty International staff and activists and has been edited for use by student groups in the UK. The campaign is expanding to other countries in Europe and builds on years of work and activism on sexual violence in different countries.

We hope the campaign will help start or engage young people in conversations about sexual consent and contribute to a cultural shift where positive, enthusiastic consent is the norm, and people don't feel awkward to ask someone if they want to move forward. We envisage a student culture based on mutual consent, respect, and positive sexuality.

- Rape is a violation of human rights which can affect people of any age, sex, sexuality and gender identity. Rape is a gendered crime that is disproportionately perpetrated by men against women. For an overview of the campaign and why this is an important matter see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2018/11/rape-in-europe/>

The #LetsTalkAboutYes campaign seeks to engage activists, creatives and young people of all genders and backgrounds to talk about sexual consent, and contribute to:

- Increasing the number of conversations about sexual consent among young people
- Increasing collaboration with, and involvement of, youth activists and artists in these conversations
- Increasing awareness of myths surrounding rape and how to eradicate them
- Increasing engagement with, and visibility of, the #LetsTalkAboutYes hashtag

This toolkit provides guidance and suggests ways in which you can contribute to the campaign and engage more people, especially youth, in talking about sexual consent in a light-hearted and respectful way.

If your group is interested in getting involved with the Let's Talk About Yes campaign get in touch with [cara.brodie@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:cara.brodie@amnesty.org.uk) and [leo.kilkenny@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:leo.kilkenny@amnesty.org.uk)

They're coordinating the campaign on behalf on the Student Action Network Committee and will be organising student network planning calls for the campaign.

## WHAT'S INSIDE

1. Thinking and talking about consent.
2. Moving barriers: how to debunk myths and combat stereotypes.
3. Taking Action:
  - Lobbying universities and student unions to improve support for survivors and have a no tolerance approach to sexual violence.
  - Running an Art Workshop: how to run workshops to encourage conversations and creative expression.
  - Take Action Online: How to create content that triggers conversation.
4. Resources for survivors and advocates.
5. Good reads and resources: how to learn more about consent.

## TALKING AND THINKING ABOUT CONSENT

In any conversation around consent, whether it is a public talk, a workshop or as part of a social media conversation we must be clear: **when it comes to sex, consent is everything and there are no blurred lines.**

You can use the following definition:

### Consent is...

**Given freely:** Sexual consent must be a voluntary and free choice for all parties involved. Being silent or not saying no is not the same as giving consent. Unconscious people and people under the influence of alcohol and drugs cannot consent. Sex is not consented under coercion or intimidation.

**Informed:** Lying or deliberately hiding certain intentions such as unprotected sex is not consensual sex. Getting someone too drunk to refuse sex or to agree to certain practices is not getting consent.

**Specific:** Consenting to one thing (i.e. kissing) does not mean consenting to everything else. A general rule is: If in doubt, ask. If you're still in doubt, stop.

**Reversible:** Consenting once does not mean consenting for ever.

**Enthusiastic!** The question is not whether a person says “no”, but whether they say “yes” or otherwise actively express consent in a variety of verbal and non-verbal ways. This is what is called ‘yes means yes’. ‘I don’t know’ doesn’t mean consent.

Meme from <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/teens/sex/all-about-consent> + see their video: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bw2m5QbF50I/>

Consent is about communication and about making sure all sexual activities happen with mutual consent. Demystify the ‘awkwardness’ of talking about consent.

The Family Planning Association in the UK have compiled verbal and non-verbal signs to express consent – or not: <https://www.fpa.org.uk/sites/default/files/consent-giving-getting-respecting-leaflet.pdf>. And this is what consent looks like for US-based Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN): <https://www.rainn.org/articles/what-is-consent>.

The importance of sexual consent can be explained by considering other scenarios in which consent may be important and how they might be analogous to sexual situations:

- Would you eat someone else’s food without asking them?
- Would it be ok to go into someone else’s room/house without asking them? What if you were only going in to tidy up for them, or do some other kind of favour?
- If you bought someone a jumper as a present, would it be ok to make them wear it, or threaten that you will no longer be their friend if they don’t wear it?

A common analogy used to illustrate how sexual consent should work is of making someone a cup of tea. Search ‘tea consent’ or watch the video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQbei5JGiT8>

Other useful analogies are ‘handshakes and consent’: <https://megjohndandjustin.com/sex/handshakes-and-consent/> and the ‘consent castle’: <https://everydayfeminism.com/2016/07/metaphor-for-consent/>.

Useful leaflet from the Family Planning Association <https://www.fpa.org.uk/sites/default/files/consent-giving-getting-respecting-leaflet.pdf>

## DEBUNKING MYTHS AND COMBATING STEREOTYPES

Myths about rape are widespread at every level of society, from interpersonal relationships to the courtroom. It’s vital to challenge them to build a culture of consent when it comes to sex. Here are some facts to respond to some common misconceptions and stereotypes:

- Dressing a certain way, drinking alcohol, other lifestyle choices DO NOT establish consent to sex.

- The absence of a “no” DOES NOT mean “yes” – only an enthusiastic “yes” means “yes”.
- Sex on a previous occasion DOES NOT establish consent on other occasions.
- Perpetrators are NOT normally complete strangers. Most often, perpetrators are victims’ partners, ex-partners or friends. They have friends, families, careers, they say “hello”, “thank you”, they can be famous or charismatic, they can be our friends.
- Rape is NOT ‘just unwanted sex’. Rape is a violation of human rights and bodily integrity which does extensive physical, psychological and emotional damage.
- A delay in reporting rape is more likely evidence that the victim is traumatised and fear their rapist, NOT evidence that the rape didn’t happen. Most survivors do not report. Those who do report or tell their stories often do so several weeks, months or even years after the rape. Their experiences are still valid and important. See *#WhyIDidn’tReport on Twitter*)
- Rape is NOT uncommon. In the EU, 1 in 20 women aged 15 and over have been raped. That is around 9 million women. And 1 in 10 women aged 15 and over in the EU have experienced some form of sexual violence. (*in response to: ‘rapes don’t happen often’*)
- Anyone can be raped but women are disproportionately raped by men. It’s important to use a gendered approach when talking about rape and consent. For example rape myths are based in stereotypes of how men and women are supposed to behave or not behave and need to be tackled head on. The measures that help women (talking about consent, promoting a consent culture, providing support services and amending legislation) also benefit men, non-binary people and people of other genders who suffer from sexual violence.

## TAKING ACTION

The Student Action Network Committee are encouraging student groups to support the campaign in three ways. They’re each different, targeting different groups of students - combining all three would be very effective!

1. **Lobbying universities and student unions**
2. **Art workshops**
3. **Taking Action Online: use the #Let’sTalkAboutYes in posts.**

## LOBBYING UNIVERSITIES AND STUDENTS’ UNIONS

Universities should be a safe space for students. Unfortunately, sexual assault is all too common on University campuses. In January 2019 found that 56% of respondents had

experienced unwanted sexual behaviour, but only 8% of those reported it to the police or their University.

Your University and student union should have a very clear **zero tolerance approach** to sexual assault, and very clearly signposted services that can be accessed for reporting and support for survivors. It should also actively promote a consent culture.

Here are some steps that you should take to primarily check whether your university already has these services in place and that they are very publicly available so that there is a positive culture around consent on campus.

### **1. Research existing services on your campus**

We believe that the first practical aspect of this campaign is to establish what services exist on your university campus. Every University differs in terms of what services and support exists for survivors of sexual harassment on campus and therefore it is necessary to know your own university's strengths and weaknesses in terms of support. We have a checklist for your university having a proactive response to preventing sexual violence and promoting sexual consent within the campus culture:

- Training, education and resources (staff and students, within societies and clubs, clear information and guidelines on reporting of sexual harassment, abuse, violence and rape)
- Awareness (through the Student Union, at university social events, on social media platforms)
- School/College Initiatives (e.g. dedicated time slot for a mass group to engage in sexual education)
- Student services (how they are communicated, what are the barriers to access?)
- Care and support (campus safety, 24 hour crisis response, training for staff)
- Complaints process (explain the process, find identifiable points of contact)
- Monitoring and evaluation (maintain a high standard of support, who is assessing this)
- Do services respond to the needs of diverse students? E.g. LGBT, BAME students, students with disabilities

### **2. Conduct a survey online**

In addition to finding out how much support there is for survivors of sexual assault, it is important to gauge the perspective of current students. Only 25% of rape survivors among University students report their assault, so it is crucial to understand regardless of how extensive the university support is, if students feel they are aware or feel comfortable using the resources.

We will be sending out a google form survey at the beginning of the semester that asks a range of questions about students' awareness, and feelings towards the support available and how proactive they feel the support for sexual abuse survivors on campus is. This will help you assess how students on your campus feel about the available supports for survivors. You can use the data from these surveys to take to a meeting with your university and/or students' union.

### **3. Ask for a meeting with you university and/or students' union (e.g. with the Vice Chancellor or students' union president)**

With your checklist and data from the online survey, we encourage you to ask for a meeting with members of the senior level of your university. This will be a great opportunity for your group to explain to your university leaders the importance of this issue, present your findings with the online survey and the checklist and highlight your universities potential fallings in its support on campus.

### **4. Raise awareness –panel discussions (online or in person), regional talks, art workshops**

As well as contacting university management directly, it is important to raise awareness of the issue of consent among the student population. You can do this by organising a talk or panel discussion (either on campus or using an online platform depending on current coronavirus guidelines) in collaboration with other societies on campus (such as Sexpression or the Feminist Society). You could also team up with other Amnesty student groups in your region to host an online event to reach a wider audience and show support for the campaign across universities in your region. Art workshops are also a great way of engaging people in what are sometimes difficult conversations (see details below).

#### **Documentary/Discussions**

- Creating a space of open dialogue on creating consent culture- this could be a panel discussion, a more informal 'Amnestea' and discussion or any other event you envision.
- At these events it is important to create a safe and welcoming space for discussion and to provide links to resources and helplines before, during and after the meeting, as well as trigger warnings, as it can be a very sensitive and difficult subject for many people to discuss.
- If you want to show a documentary, video or film concerning the topic of sexual assault, make sure you give all the appropriate warnings and support needed.

## **ART WORKSHOPS**

Consent may seem a vague and indescribable concept, and its boundaries appear blurred at times. As well as a crucial expression of self-determination and dignity, the idea of consent is also extremely personal to each and every one of us. To best express this individuality and multifaceted concept, the Amnesty Student Network are encouraging student groups to organise art workshops themed around consent.

If current coronavirus guidelines allow you to hold a physical event, attendees should be given art supplies and settle in an environment where they feel safe to engage in perhaps difficult or triggering conversation and reflection. A short introduction should be given on why consent is a crucial issue and the questions attendees could ask themselves during the creation process. Attendees can then be left to create whatever is a representation of consent for them. This may be a picture or painting, a piece of writing, a cartoon, a photograph, even T-Shirt art. Workshop organisers should respectfully and sensitively encourage conversation between the attendees, perhaps on why they chose this type of art, and how this represents consent to them.

This event can also easily be held using an online platform. Simply encourage attendees to gather their own art supplies in advance, and give an introduction and discussion before carrying on with creating artworks. You can share the sound from your computer and play some background music while people get creative, and encourage conversations on the topic afterwards. With permission, the pieces of art can be shared on social media or exhibited in students' unions or other spaces where they will spark a conversation between students.

The aim of these art workshops is not only the creation of artwork to engage students with the issue, but through process of creation, the personal reflection and discussions that may arise when participants explore their personal expression of consent.

Steps to organising an in-person consent art workshop with your Amnesty student group:

- 1) Find a venue where discussions and creations stay private. Booking a room at your university or students' union may be a good idea.
- 2) Provide art supplies: paper, cardboard, pens, paints, clay/playdough, scissors, crayons, white T-Shirts.
- 3) Create a comfortable space: offer drinks and snacks, put some music on, perhaps set the tables out in a circle.
- 4) Give a trigger warning and hand out resources on where and how to get help. It's important to research support services that are available locally, such as provided by the student union, university, or local council, which you can signpost students to.
- 5) Give a short introduction to the theme and the myths surrounding it. There is no need to go into too much detail, just lay out the definition of consent and how it may not encompass all its more subtle meanings.
- 6) Let the creative process begin! Ask a few questions which attendees can think about when creating: What does consent mean to you? When is consent required? How do you know when consent has been given? Do you think consent is a taboo subject? Why might it be taboo? Why do we find it so hard to define consent? What feelings does the absence of consent provoke? Why? Does consent evoke positive or negative feelings? What do you want your piece to express? Which art form represents your ideas about consent best?
- 7) Encourage a discussion: How did the workshop make you feel? Did you enjoy it? Do you think art is a good way of expressing personal ideas about consent? Do you feel more open to having conversations about consent now?

## **Impact**

- Think about ways you could make your campaign as impactful and relevant as possible- what is your aim? What issues that are particularly relevant to your campus or to your local town? What are the best ways to spark conversation about consent?
- Having a visually impactful campaign is a brilliant way to attract more people- think about what would be most visually impactful at night (UV paint, (fake) candles for example) and the spaces that are most impactful to occupy (a busy student union, a walk from the university to a prominent area for university night life).
- What would work best for your group- a sit-in or camp out, a march, a silent protest, a candle-lit vigil?

# TAKING ACTION ONLINE

YES to spending time with an old friend/having a blowout birthday meal/putting on my trainers and getting outdoors.

'Yes' is a small, everyday word but 'Yes' gives us power'. 'Yes' shapes our lives. 'Yes' is important. Everyone should be able to decide when, what, and who they say 'yes' to.

...and it's the same for SEX. Sex without consent is rape. It's simple.

So, what did you say 'yes' to today? Help us spread the campaign #Let'sTalkAboutYes @Let'sTalkAboutYes #YesMeansYes #consent #womensrights

What have you said 'yes' to today? Snap a pic and share with the hashtag #Let'sTalkAboutYes @Let'sTalkAboutYes !

- See the Amnesty UK Students Instagram for example posts on normalising yes.
- Remember to time your post at a peak use time, like in the evening, and to use tags and hashtags!

# OTHER TIPS AND IDEAS FOR TAKING ACTION

- Working with arts societies/art departments or students' unions at universities, organise workshops or creative competitions on the topic of consent. For example, a competition could be held over the course of a few months, increasing the length or regularity of engagement – and through student unions could increase engagement across campuses to ask people to vote in the competition with a prize of some sort to be won.
- Combine creative projects with campaigns for change on both a national level, and local university level.
- Encourage students to create merchandise (posters, postcards, t-shirts etc) using the art that is created by the students to sell across campuses with funds being raised to support relevant organisations.
- Run events or stunts on campus (following current coronavirus guidelines), linking them up to engagement with the campaign on social media:
  - Panel discussions/film screenings (good for visibility and cross-campus engagement) - team up with other societies on campus and invite speakers
  - Provide students with examples of stunts that have taken place on university campuses around the world, for inspiration (particularly if their university has been quiet on the issue of sexual assault or consent) -such as:
    - 'Carry That Weight' Changes the Conversation on Campus Sexual Assault and 'A rapist in your path': Chilean protest song becomes feminist anthem, replicated in many countries.

- Other collaborative creative events e.g.:
  - Team up with the drama department to write and produce a play (such as <http://www.sin.ie/2019/09/11/active-consent-programme-to-tour-ireland-with-original-play-the-kinds-of-sex-you-might-have-at-college/>)
  - Team up with the fashion department and run a fashion show to increase visibility of the campaign and promote a culture of consent.

## RESOURCES FOR SURVIVORS

You will find some useful resources linked throughout this toolkit, but here are some general UK based examples:

- Rape and effects of rape- Rape Crisis South London [http://www.rasasc.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/rapeCrisisSouthLondon\\_rapeAndTheEffectsOfRape\\_informationForSupportersOfSurvivors.pdf](http://www.rasasc.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/rapeCrisisSouthLondon_rapeAndTheEffectsOfRape_informationForSupportersOfSurvivors.pdf)
- Self Help Guides SARSA <https://www.sarsas.org.uk/self-help-guides/>
- The Consent Collective <https://www.consentcollective.com/> work with institutions, including universities
- How Do I Tell Someone About My Sexual Assault? - <https://www.projectconsent.com/how-do-i-tell-someone-about-my-assault>
- My Body Back, London-based project to support women one year on from a sexual assault: <http://www.mybodybackproject.com/>
- Sexpression (find out if there is a Sexpression Society on your campus) - <https://sexpression.org.uk/>
- Brook – sexual health charity [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)
- Survivors Library – an international group of survivors who create resources about sexual assault and to support survivors [www.survivorslibrary.org/](http://www.survivorslibrary.org/)
- Ruby Rare on Instagram – sex educator, formerly with Brook [www.instagram.com/rubyrare/](http://www.instagram.com/rubyrare/)
- Survivor Stories Instagram pages (there are several run by students at universities in the UK, for example Edinburgh Anonymous, QUB Survivors, St Andrews Survivors)

**Make sure to research relevant organisations and support services for your city/campus.**

# GOOD READS AND MORE RESOURCES

## Educational resources

- Everything You Need to Know About Consent That You Never Learned in Sex Ed: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/consent-how-to>
- TedX Talk: Why we need to change the way young men think about consent: [https://www.ted.com/talks/nathaniel\\_cole\\_why\\_we\\_need\\_to\\_change\\_the\\_way\\_young\\_men\\_think\\_about\\_consent](https://www.ted.com/talks/nathaniel_cole_why_we_need_to_change_the_way_young_men_think_about_consent)
- Quickies: Sexual Consent Basics: [https://www.scarleteen.com/article/disability\\_quickies/quickies\\_sexual\\_consent\\_basics](https://www.scarleteen.com/article/disability_quickies/quickies_sexual_consent_basics)
- Consent video from Amaze: <https://amaze.org/video/consent/>
- What is Consent?: <https://www.loveisrespect.org/healthy-relationships/what-consent/>
- The Consent Castle metaphor: <https://everydayfeminism.com/2016/07/metaphor-for-consent/>
- All About Boundaries: <https://www.rewriting-the-rules.com/sex/all-about-boundaries/>
- The Consent Checklist by Meg-John Barker: <https://www.rewriting-the-rules.com/zines/#1570712847485-79489f1b-f52a>
  - “This zine provides a checklist that you can work through when considering how to do anything – sex, a social event, work, a relationship – consensually. It explores and unpacks the key elements needed to ensure that people are freely agreeing to something, that they can tune into their wants, needs, limits, and boundaries and feel safe-enough to express them to others concerned.”
- Self consent: an introduction: <https://loveuncommon.com/2017/09/28/self-consent/>
  - "Self consent, at its heart, is about treating your needs, desires and limits with respect. It is about being curious about yourself, and making choices that express your authentic self. It is central to learning to have a consensual relationship with others because it embeds consensual practice in your life and all your interactions.[...]"
- Sexual abuse: The questions you've never had the chance to ask (video explainers): <https://ninaburrowes.com/sexual-abuse-the-questions-youve-never-had-the-chance-to-ask/>
- ChemSex and consent (useful resource for the discussion of consent in general): <https://lgbt.foundation/news/chemsex-and-consent/228>

## Training resources

- Beware of trolls and online harassment, the best strategy is often to ignore them. For other strategies, see: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-deal-with-trolls-on-social-media/>
- Handshakes and consent activity: <https://bishtraining.com/three-handshakes-an-activity-for-learning-how-consent-feels/> and video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awrp7EJGqyc>
- Top tips to teach about consent: <https://bishtraining.com/top-tips-for-teaching-about-consent/>
- Negotiating sex – start with the wheel of consent: <https://loveuncommon.com/2018/02/14/negotiating-sex-start-with-the-wheel-of-consent/> and the 3-minute game <https://bettymartin.org/download-wheel/>
- On disclosure and building trust in workshops (pages 14-16) <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ACT3000102015ENGLISH.PDF>

## Podcasts

- 7 Tips for a Consensual Hook Up: <https://megjohnandjustin.com/sex/7-tips-consensual-hook-up/>
- Make Consent Your Aim: <https://megjohnandjustin.com/relationships/make-consent-aim/>
- Laid Bare podcast by Oloni, about sex, relationships, feminism and race in ("adult content"): <https://soundcloud.com/laidbarepodcast>

## Series on Netflix

- Unbelievable, a series based on a true story of American survivor Marie Adler's story: <https://www.netflix.com/gb/title/80153467>
- Sex Education, a series about well, sex education: <https://www.netflix.com/gb/title/80197526>