

[WWW.SUSSEX.AC.UK/WELLBEING/SEXUALCONSENT](http://WWW.SUSSEX.AC.UK/WELLBEING/SEXUALCONSENT)

WE VALUE

# Sexual Consent

JOIN US



**Consent is...  
mutual, active,  
respecting boundaries,  
comfortable,  
retractable,  
checking and  
willingly given.**

## Introduction

University: the best time of your life.

From Freshers' Week to Graduation you will meet lots of new people – some of whom may become your friends for life. However, some of the people you meet may push your boundaries or make you feel uneasy. This guide gives you all the information you need, including what to do if you are the victim of unwanted sexual advances and where you can go.

We think it's good to talk about these issues so we want to empower you to make informed choices and to be able to say no when you want to.

There can be so much misinformation about what unwanted sexual advances actually means but you can find out more on the following pages. There are also a lot of myths about consent and sexual assault, such as the idea that someone's 'no' doesn't always mean 'no'. We've broken some of those myths for you on page 8. If you need any help or support we've included information on where to find it on page 12 & 13.

Remember to be aware of people's boundaries; for some, it might seem like a bit of fun to touch someone inappropriately without asking or kiss them on a night out. But it is never OK to do that to anyone without their permission, no matter how well or little you know them. We want everyone to have a great time at university, and you can make that happen by respecting other people's wishes.

For more information visit:  
[www.sussex.ac.uk/wellbeing/sexualconsent](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/wellbeing/sexualconsent)

# Five of the rules we live by at Sussex

## JOIN US

1

We understand that not everyone wants to be hugged or touched.

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2

We know that people don't always want to talk about who they're dating or their sexual history.

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3

We're conscious of not making assumptions about someone's gender or what pronouns they prefer. The same goes for sexuality.

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4

We understand that staying in someone's bed that doesn't mean you have to have sex.

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5

We know that it's a joint responsibility to look after sexual health and contraception.

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# What is Sexual Assault?

## WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT?

### THE LAW

In England, the legal age of consent to most forms of sexual activity is 16 for everyone. However, this doesn't mean that all sexual activity gets the green light once you hit 16. It is an offence for a person to intentionally touch another person sexually without reasonable belief that they consented. Touching covers all physical contact, whether with a part of the body or anything else, or through clothing. The current legal definition of rape is only defined as penetration of another person's body with a penis, but anyone can be a perpetrator of sexual assault. If you haven't consented to sexual activity, you can choose to seek support from the police and legal system.

### THE REAL WORLD

CPS guidance defines consent as '*if he agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice*'. We see consent as both/all participants being happy, comfortable and informed about what they're doing. We know that having consent is more than your partner not saying no, as the absence of a no does not mean yes.

Talking about consent can be a difficult thing. We aren't always taught in school how to tell a partner what we like or don't like, plus talking openly with someone about our desires can be new and scary. But it's important to be sure you are both comfortable and happy with what you're doing – informed consent is vital.

### MAKE SURE YOU'RE BOTH CONSENTING

Good communication is so important! Ask your partner if they are enjoying what you are doing and if they want to continue; talk about what your interests and boundaries are. You want to feel safe and confident that you can trust each other.

Sometimes, it's difficult for a person to feel like they can say no, so body language is also really important. If your partner is relaxed it is likely that they feel comfortable. If they are tense, they may be nervous or frightened and are probably trying to hide how they really feel.

### SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER

People shouldn't have to be persuaded into sex. If someone has said no, you should respect that.

Saying yes once doesn't mean you've consented to having sex with that person forever, or that you've consented to all forms of sexual activity.

Just because you've had consensual sex with one person doesn't mean people can assume you will consent to anyone.

You **never** owe somebody sex. Having a kiss isn't consenting to other sexual activity.

Consent is an affirmative, enthusiastic and resounding **YES!**

# Myth busting

## MYTH 1

People are more likely to be a victim of unwanted sexual advances by a stranger in a dark alley.

### REALITY: FALSE

The majority of reported cases have been where the person knows the other person.

## MYTH 2

Some people provoke rape by their sexy clothing or by their behaviour.

### REALITY: FALSE

Provocative clothing does not mean a yes. There is never an excuse to be guilty of unwanted sexual advances towards someone because of what they wear.

## MYTH 3

People who take drugs or drink alcohol should not be surprised to be a victim of unwanted sexual advances.

### REALITY: FALSE

If someone is on drugs or is under the influence of alcohol, they're vulnerable. Still that does not mean they consent to sex or are able to. You cannot consent to sex if you are unconscious or not able to make an informed choice because you are drunk.

## MYTH 4

You can't be sexually assaulted when you're in a relationship, or if you have had sex with them before.

### REALITY: FALSE

People can be sexually assaulted by a partner in a long term relationship. If you don't want to have sex, then that should be taken as a clear no and there is no way around it. If you have had sex with someone before, that does not mean you have gained consent from them for future times. There needs to be consent from each partner every time.

## MYTH 5

Some people feel guilty after sex so they report it as sexual assault, so we should be careful and treat any allegations as false.

### REALITY: FALSE

There is no evidence that many people lie about being sexually assaulted. But, there is evidence that many people do not report being sexually assaulted because of being ashamed, for fear of being blamed for it and/or because of stigma. There is also an interesting discussion to be had around why some people feel guilty after sex.

## MYTH 6

People can only be sexually assaulted by a man with a penis.

### REALITY: FALSE

Women, men and people with other gender identities can be sexually assaulted by someone of the same or different gender. Although the British legal definition of rape only includes a penis, the use of an object or hands is an assault by penetration.

### I HEART CONSENT

The I Heart Consent campaign, from the NUS, aims to tackle myths, misunderstandings and problematic perspectives about rape, sexual consent and sexual harassment, and educate Sussex students on these issues.

'I Heart Consent' aims to create a healthy understanding of consent; sexual activity which is sought enthusiastically, rather than viewed as the beginning of a negotiation.

[www.sussexstudent.com/campaigns/i-heart-consent/](http://www.sussexstudent.com/campaigns/i-heart-consent/)

### SAFER SUSSEX

Safer Sussex is a student-led movement comprised of students and various allies, such as Student Union officers and administrative staff, working towards offering a more holistic and thorough support system for survivors of sexual and domestic violence on campus at Sussex.

We're proud of the response shown by our staff and students towards our campaigns. We know that people care passionately about everyone in our community and knowing that people feel safe is so important.

### CONTACT SAFER SUSSEX

Please email [SaferSussexVolunteer@gmail.com](mailto:SaferSussexVolunteer@gmail.com) if you want to join us to organise events and take part in raising awareness of sexual violence on campus.



# University Support

## CAMPUS & RESIDENTIAL SUPPORT SECURITY

Ground floor York House, 01273 877250  
[www.sussex.ac.uk/campus-support](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/campus-support)  
[campus-support@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:campus-support@sussex.ac.uk)

- Available 24 hrs/day and 7 days/week to students on campus.
- Phone number above during office hours (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm)
- Out-of-hours, contact them through Security 01273 873333, your Residential Advisor, or porter
- Crisis intervention and specialist support for students who have experienced sexual violence or harassment
- Sign-posting to appropriate external services

Ground floor York House, 01273 873333 or 3333 on an internal phone  
[www.sussex.ac.uk/sef/services/security](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sef/services/security)  
[security@sussexstatesfacilities.co.uk](mailto:security@sussexstatesfacilities.co.uk)

- Available 24 hrs/day and 7 days/week to students on campus.
- Call Security if you need emergency help from police, ambulance or fire
- Call Security if you need support from the Campus & Residential Support team out of hours

## STUDENT LIFE CENTRE

Ground floor, Bramber House, 01273 876767  
[www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre)  
[studentlifecentre@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:studentlifecentre@sussex.ac.uk)

- Available 9am–5pm Monday to Friday in and outside term
- Ask for a priority appointment with a Student Advisor
- Specialist support for students who have experienced either recent or historical sexual violence and harassment
- Sign-posting to appropriate external services
- Advice on issues affecting academic work and attendance

## COUNSELLING SERVICE

Health Centre Building, 01273 678156  
[www.sussex.ac.uk/counselling](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/counselling)  
[counsellingreception@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:counsellingreception@sussex.ac.uk)

- Available 9am–5pm and some evenings, Monday to Friday in and outside term
- Counselling not recommended immediately after any incident, but sign up in advance.
- Specialist and professional counselling support for students who have experienced either historical or more recent sexual violence and harassment

## THE STUDENTS' UNION SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY TEAM

First floor Falmer House, 01273 877038  
[www.sussexstudent.com/support](http://www.sussexstudent.com/support)  
[advice@sussexstudent.com](mailto:advice@sussexstudent.com)

- Available 9am–5pm, Monday–Friday
- Independent advocacy for students using the disciplinary process either as complainant or as subject of complaint

**Having everyday conversations about consent can be a way of engaging people who haven't had the chance to have informed discussions whilst growing up.**

# Specialist external support

**Advocacy, advice and sign-posting for Brighton and Hove specialist services for recent or historical sexual violence can be sourced here [www.theportal.org.uk](http://www.theportal.org.uk)**

## DETAILS OF INDIVIDUAL SERVICES THE SATURN CENTRE

(Sexual Assault Referral Centre) Crawley Hospital, West Green Drive, Crawley, West Sussex RH11 7DH  
[www.saturncentre.org](http://www.saturncentre.org)  
sc-tr.saturncentre@nhs.net

- Available 24 hrs, Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm phone 01293 600469 for an appointment
- Out of hours phone 0800 0337797 for advice from the on-call team
- for crisis and medical support following recent sexual violence
- collection of forensic evidence so that reporting to the police can be delayed

## THE SOLAR CLINIC AT SHAC(EAST)

Royal Sussex County Hospital, Eastern Road, Brighton, 01273 523388 (opt 2)  
[www.brightonsexualhealth.com/advice/sexualassault](http://www.brightonsexualhealth.com/advice/sexualassault)

- Available Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm
- For support, STI tests, treatment and emergency contraception
- Phone number above requesting urgent appointment with Health Advisor

## SURVIVORS' NETWORK

6a Pavilion Buildings, Brighton BN1 1EE  
[www.survivorsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.survivorsnetwork.org.uk)

- Support services for all genders 14–18 yrs
- Support services for self-identifying women survivors of sexual abuse above 18yrs
- Helpline: 7pm–9pm, Weds 01273 720110, text 07717 999989 [help@survivorsnetwork.org.uk](mailto:help@survivorsnetwork.org.uk)
- Drop-ins: 7pm–9pm, Mondays & Thursdays, 01273 203380 [dropin@survivorsnetwork.org.uk](mailto:dropin@survivorsnetwork.org.uk)
- Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA): 01273 203380 x103 [referrals@survivorsnetwork.org.uk](mailto:referrals@survivorsnetwork.org.uk)
- Counselling: 01273 203380 or email [counselling@survivorsnetwork.org.uk](mailto:counselling@survivorsnetwork.org.uk)

## SURVIVORS NETWORK AND LGBT SWITCHBOARD

Phone: **01273 204050**  
**Sunday 1–5pm**  
[www.switchboard.org.uk/projects/helpline/](http://www.switchboard.org.uk/projects/helpline/)

First UK helpline for trans and non-binary survivors of sexual violence and abuse.

## MANKIND

1 Brunswick Road, Hove, BN3 1DG  
Phone: 01273 911680  
[www.mankindcounselling.org.uk](http://www.mankindcounselling.org.uk)  
[admin@mankindcounselling.org.uk](mailto:admin@mankindcounselling.org.uk)

- Support for self-identifying men (18+) survivors of sexual abuse and their partners, families and friends through 1:1 counselling, therapeutic groups and couples

## RESPECT

Phone: **0808 802 4040**  
[info@respectphoneline.org.uk](mailto:info@respectphoneline.org.uk)  
[www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net)

- Runs support services and programmes for men and women who inflict violence in relationships
- Open: Monday–Friday, 10am–1pm and 2pm–5pm





CONTACT US

[www.sussex.ac.uk/wellbeing/sexualconsent](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/wellbeing/sexualconsent)