

Sexual Harassment

We often think of consent as only being connected to rape or sexual assault but there are a whole range of acts that make others feel uncomfortable, not to mention illegal.

Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which:

- violates your dignity
- makes you feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated
- creates a hostile or offensive environment

Sexual harassment isn't always of a physical nature. Some common examples of sexual harassment are:

- sexual comments or jokes
- physical behaviour, including unwelcome sexual advances, touching and various forms of sexual assault (this could be on top of clothes)
- displaying or sharing pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature
- sending unwanted messages with a sexual content



You need to ensure that the person you are doing these things with is comfortable with it and consents to you acting in this way. For example, only touch a friend on the knee if you know that they are happy to be touched in this way.

Likewise, only make sexual jokes if you are sure that the recipient is comfortable and does not take any offence. If you're at all unsure: don't do it. Simple.

The Law

Consent is defined by section 74 Sexual Offences Act 2003:

“Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs.”

So by the law, consent has three components:

CHOICE someone should choose when, how and with whom to have sex, each time.

FREEDOM someone should be free to make these choices and are not forced to consent by their circumstances.

CAPACITY a person is capable and able to make these choices. I.e. they aren't unconscious or too drunk to make this decision.

The legal age of consent to most forms of physical activity is 16 in the UK (though this is not automatic consent. You still need to ensure that they consent in the ways stated above).

If you know that someone cannot or does not consent to you touching or being sexual with them in any way then you are breaking the law.

If you haven't consented to sexual activity, you have a legal right to take action and report it as a crime, if you choose to do so.

Further Support & Resources

- [AUB Student Support](#): provide on-campus wellbeing and counselling support with staff who have received training in sexual assault
- [STARS Sexual Trauma And Recovery Service](#): offers specialist emotional and practical support to survivors who have suffered sexual violence of any kind at any time, including ongoing counselling
- [The Shores](#): Dorset Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) will collect evidence and can provide an ISVA to support through any criminal investigation and prosecution
- [Over The Rainbow](#): provides sexual health services and support for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community

Further Support & Resources

- [Dorset Mind](#) provide support, advice and information on mental health and can connect you with local support groups
- [Samaritans Helpline](#) offer a safe space for you to talk at any time and can help you explore your options, understand your problems better, or just be there to listen
- [Sexual Health Dorset](#) offers advice and information on sexual health and can provide STI screenings, pregnancy testing, contraception and emergency contraception

Check [our calendar](#) for on-campus sexual health drop-ins with [Sexual Health Dorset](#)