# THE CONSENT ED. PROJECT
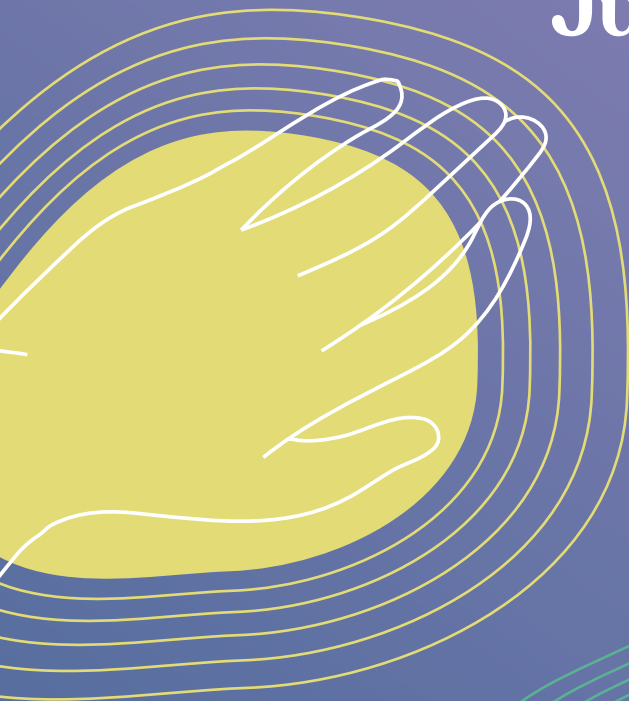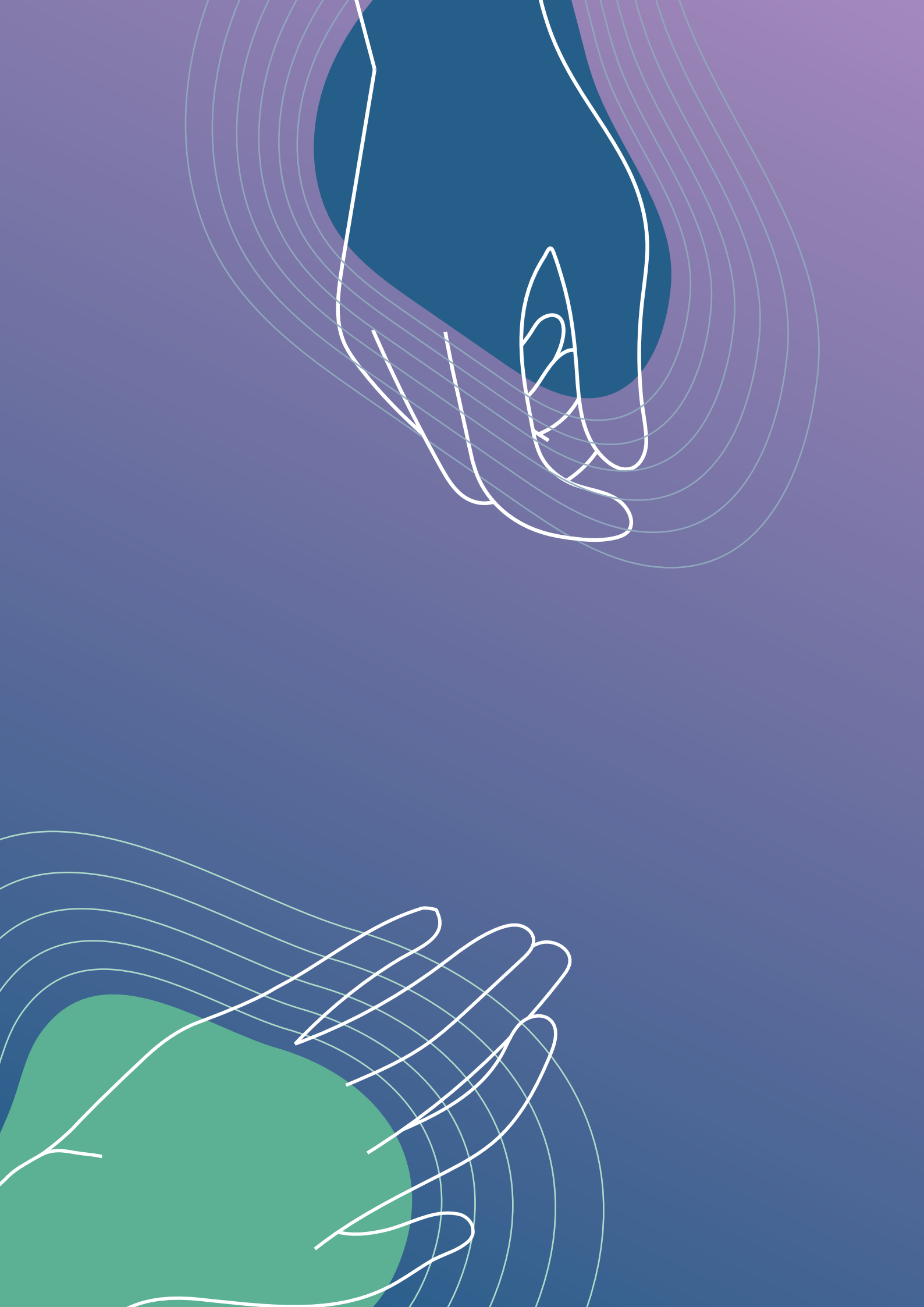
# The Consent-Ed Toolkit
## Junior Cycle

# THE
# CONSENT ED.
## PROJECT

**These lessons have been developed through the partnership and collaboration of the Tusla Child and Family Agency, Galway Rape Crisis Centre and Pavee Point, and is funded by the EU.**

## Developed by the
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# Foreword

'Consent' is a term that has gained greater attention in recent years. Consent is necessary not only to stay within the bounds of legality, but also to foster respectful sexual relationships. Consent is not only a vital element within sexual relationships, but is an aspect of all interpersonal relationships.

This programme seeks to reduce sexual violence through culture change. It is within culture that we create norms about life, what is acceptable and what is not – this is profoundly true regarding consent and the gendered social expectations of females and males. Within society, we have created certain 'norms' that influence the society we live in. We hold these norms to be true and, in turn, reinforce them. However, history also teaches us that we have the capacity to change, as a culture and a society. To do this, we must first become aware of what requires change, after which we can create a pathway towards that change. This programme is one part of many initiatives designed to raise young people's awareness about the importance of consent as a foundation to healthy relationships and to help change our society's expectation around gendered stereotypes and sexual behaviour.

It is important to acknowledge Ms Manuela Riedo, whose short life was the catalyst for the development and emergence of the original Manuela Programme. The Manuela Programme was developed by a national consortium of passionate people from the Rape Crisis sector of Ireland to help challenge and change the sexual landscape for young people in the country. Through this movement, the Manuela Riedo Foundation Ireland was founded to commemorate and celebrate the life, memory and legacy of Manuela Riedo, and to continue work to make Ireland a safer place for all.

# Introduction

This toolkit aims to support SPHE teachers in fostering positive ideals and behaviours around consent and respect within relationships. The following introductory pages of this toolkit outline the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland, the research underpinning effective consent education, and theories that help to inform the methodologies used for effective engagement with young people.

There is a growing awareness of the importance of gender equality and consensual sex in Irish society. The #MeToo movement highlighted the prevalence of sexual violence and harassment nationally and internationally. Society is ever-changing, with emerging trends becoming norms that are then woven into the fabric of young people's everyday life, placing different codes of expected behaviours into their reality. Sexual violence is a public health issue, and the long-term negative consequences of sexual violence of all types indicate the necessity of effective prevention programmes. The Consent-Ed Toolkit relies on interactive techniques that enhance critical thinking which supports the personal and social development of young people to increase levels of confidence in negotiating consent healthily and to reduce levels of sexual violence. This is done through engagement of young people in dialogue that challenges attitudes, knowledge, and skills in relation to consent, sexual violence and harassment.

> *Sexual violence against children, which includes anyone under the age of 18, is one of the largest silent global pandemics of our time, occurring in countries at all levels of development and affecting children of all ages. Sexual violence consists of a range of sexual acts against a child, including but not limited to child sexual abuse, incest, rape, sexual violence in the context of dating/intimate relationships, sexual exploitation, online sexual abuse, and non-contact sexual abuse.*
>
> *(Hart et al., 2019, p. 3)*

Consent education is vital for creating healthy and respectful relationships across many spheres in one's life and is not limited to sexual behaviour or activity. Creating a safe and structured space where children and young people can explore their understanding of their own rights, responsibilities and boundaries is crucial in promoting their own ability to partake in healthy relationships.

The Consent-Ed Programme is founded upon key ethical pillars which include **AWARENESS, CONSENT, RESPECT, DIGNITY, BOUNDARIES, THE RIGHT TO BE DIFFERENT, THE RIGHT TO SEXUAL HEALTH** and **THE RIGHT TO OPT OUT**. Facilitators of the Consent-Ed Programme are in an ideal position to act as a catalyst to create cultural and social change.

# The Context

## Irish Adolescents' Experience of Sexual Violence

In 2021, a research study released by RCNI ("Storm and Stress": An Exploration of Sexual Harassment Amongst Adolescents', Walshe 2021), explores the rates of sexual harassment and violence experienced by Irish young people today. This study found that 80%, of young people who took part in the study had been subjected to some form of sexual harassment in the past year. It found that girls were 2.11 times more likely than boys to report that they experienced unwelcome sexual comments, and 2.49 times more likely to have experienced unwanted sexual touches. In contrast, boys were 1.92 times more likely to be exposed to homophobic name-calling than girls, and 68% of those who identified as LGBT+ experienced serious sexual harassment compared with the whole of the study. Older Irish adolescents (16–17) were 2.71 times more likely to report that they had been forced to do something sexual against their will when compared with younger adolescents (13–15).

Further findings from this study located within Irish schools, pointed out that it is vital that all young people are educated as early as possible on the importance of consent, respect and personal responsibility to ensure one is behaving consensually and positively towards another person, regardless of their gender or sexuality.

## Third-Level Context

The Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) 2020 was carried out by Active* Consent and the Union of Students in Ireland and completed by 6,026 students at Irish higher education institutions (HEIs). These findings point to a high level of exposure to unwanted sexual experiences across the student population.

Rates of sexual harassment identified in the SES were similar to a survey of students at NUI Galway (MacNeela et al., 2018), which identified sexist and sexual hostility as posing particular issues. 75% of students in Year 3 or higher described experiencing sexist hostility at some point since starting college. Similarly, the SES found that 61% of male, 69.9% of female and 82% of non-binary students reported experiencing one of the following: sexist hostility, sexual hostility, attempts to establish unwanted sexual relationships, or harassment via electronic communication. The rates of sexual misconduct and harassment are higher than comparable studies in the US. The greatest area of vulnerability identified in the SES was around socialising at night, with a mere 24% of female students reporting feeling safe while socialising at night, dropping to only 13% of females who had previously experienced sexual misconduct.

## The Wider Irish Context

Statistics taken from the Sexual Violence Survey (SVS) 2022 conducted by the Central Stastics Office indicate high rates of sexual violence in Irish society. The SVS found that 4 in 10 adults (40%) had experienced sexual violence at some point in their lifetime. The levels were higher for women, with 52% having experienced sexual violence, but still significant for men, with 28% reporting having experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives.

Younger men aged 18-24 experienced sexual violence in their lifetime (39%) at almost double the rate of those men aged 65 and over (17%). Similarly, younger women aged 18-24 experienced sexual violence in their lifetime (65%) at a far higher rate than those aged 65 and over (35%). 1 in 5 women in Ireland reported experiencing sexual violence, with women experiencing four times the rate of non-consensual sexual intercourse (21%) than men (5%) over their lifetime. Most adults (78%) who experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetime knew the perpetrator. About half of adults (47%) who experienced sexual violence in their lifetime told someone about it, meaning the majority kept the experience to themselves.

# Relevance to Third National Strategy

This toolkit seeks to support SPHE teachers in addressing important learning that is not only set out in the SPHE curriculum, but is also set out in government policy. The Department of Justice's 'Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual & Gender-based Violence for 2022–2026: Zero Tolerance' seeks to create a society in which there are zero instances of domestic sexual or gender based violence through education and awareness-raising.

In accordance with the Department of Justice's Zero Tolerance strategy, the NCCA aligned the revised Junior Cycle SPHE and RSE curriculums to fit under the Prevention Pillar named in the strategy, and to provide schools with guidance on ways to foster a partnership approach with parents to end domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

This toolkit intends to support this curriculum in nurturing these attitude-changing conversations. Based on the idea of a culturally accepted 'no tolerance' policy towards sexual violence, these learning outcomes seek to make effective and lasting cultural change through educating young people on consent, healthy boundaries and relationships, and, furthermore, the harms of gender stereotypes and the social structures that hold up rape culture and perpetuate gender-based and sexual violence.

# What is Consent?

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, which amended The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006, defines consent in Ireland as involving both the internal desire to engage in intimacy (a feeling of willingness) and the external act of communicating one's consent through verbal or nonverbal signals. The 2017 Act also provides a non-exhaustive list of situations where consent will be deemed to be absent and in Section 48 it defines consent as the following:

> *'A person consents to a sexual act if he or she freely and voluntarily agrees to engage in that act'.*

The legal definition is not dissimilar from Hickman and Muehlenhard's (1999) definition of sexual consent which is:

> *'The freely given verbal or non-verbal communication of a feeling of willingness to engage in sexual activity'.*

Verbal and non-verbal behaviours range from direct, affirmative behaviour (e.g. talking to a partner about intimacy, asking for consent) to indirect behaviours (e.g. touching the other person or removing clothing), and passive behaviours (e.g. not resisting the other's person's advances). Passive consent can be seen as problematic because a person who is in fear or in an intoxicated state may not resist while still not expressing the desire to have intimacy.

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# Defining Sexual Consent

Although it may at first seem obvious, the definition of consent is, unfortunately, not always so. In the above definition of consent, 'freely given' denotes that an individual's sexual decision-making is free from factors that constrain the ability to make autonomous sexual choices. These constraints, or barriers, to freely given consent include social, interpersonal and contextual controllers, such as alcohol consumption, physical or emotional coercion, deception, perceived social norms and obligations, and gender-based inequities (Muehlenhard et al., 2016).

Consent can also be defined in sequential terms, because consent is an ongoing process. Understanding consent as an ongoing process means that an agreement to perform a certain sexual act does not imply consent for further acts or future periods of sexual contact. This also means that consent can be retracted at any stage. However, early research is already suggesting a divergence in the (binary) gendered understanding of consent: men are more likely to view consent as a discrete event while women are more likely to regard it as an ongoing process (Humphreys, 2004; Humphreys & Herold, 2007).

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### Consent Challenges Harmful Beliefs

Rape myths can shape young people's understandings of sexual consent and the acceptability of sexual violence. Rape myths are false narratives about rape that seek to divert responsibility for violence from a perpetrator towards the victim (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Common rape myths include the belief that the perpetrator 'did not mean to commit the act' or that the victim 'did not say no' and so the situation cannot be identified as rape. Such views outline a particular perspective on sexual scripts and roles. Measures of rape myth acceptance assess the degree to which these beliefs are endorsed by individuals.

Rape myth beliefs are associated with perceptions that rape can be the outcome of miscommunication, and that it is a victim's responsibility to clearly communicate their sexual desires, as opposed to the potential perpetrator's responsibility to make sure consent is given before engaging in the behaviour. There is some support for this 'miscommunication theory' as one potential cause of non-consensual sex. For instance, research has found that in certain instances, such as those involving alcohol consumption, people may overestimate their partner's signals of

interest. Some may also proceed with their sexual advances following their partner's initial refusals under the assumption that they are engaging in 'token resistance', i.e. resisting so as not to appear sexually available (Muehlenhard et al., 2016).

While in the past, perpetrators may have used miscommunication as an excuse for more intentional sexual violence (Beres, 2010; Beres et al., 2013; O'Byrne et al., 2006, 2008), new reforms to Irish law under the General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2022 require an accused perpetrator to reasonably prove what steps they took to ensure that their accuser was consenting to a sexual act before this can be used as a defence in a criminal investigation. In any case, the assumption or mistaken belief that a partner wants to engage in intimacy can be discussed, rather than being simply acted upon.

## Theoretical Underpinning of Consent-Ed Approach

Taken together, the consent research literature describes active consent as an important supportive element of positive sexual development. The research highlights factors which can serve as barriers to effective consent communication and can contribute to sexual violence and misconduct. Although there has been limited development of consent education interventions, sexual education programmes have an important role in supporting young people to balance a norm of affirmative consent communication with the capacity to challenge the sexual script norms and power inequities linked to non-consensual behaviour. Programmes that help participants to build the skills to interpret one another's sexual cues, alongside the practising of self-control and responsibility for being proactive in consent-seeking no matter one's gender, would go a long way towards reversing these assumed sexual scripts.

To achieve this, 'Primary Prevention', i.e. whole-community intervention before abuse occurs, has been shown to be an effective method to prevent the development of risk factors associated with sexual violence and to promote the factors that protect against it (Julich et al., 2015). The Consent-Ed Programme is underpinned by key theoretical composites that consider the complexity of the learning process, and how best to engender positive behaviour change. The role of social norms in the behaviour change process has been analysed using both the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985) and the Theory of Normative Social Behaviour (TNSB) (Berkowitz, 2013). These theories posit that once one perceives oneself as capable of behavioural control, and believes that there are environmental expectations for appropriate and respectful behaviour, one will reduce volitional behaviours towards others.

Individual

Environment ↔ Behaviour

Planned Behaviour

Attitude

Norm — — — — Intention — — — Behaviour

Control
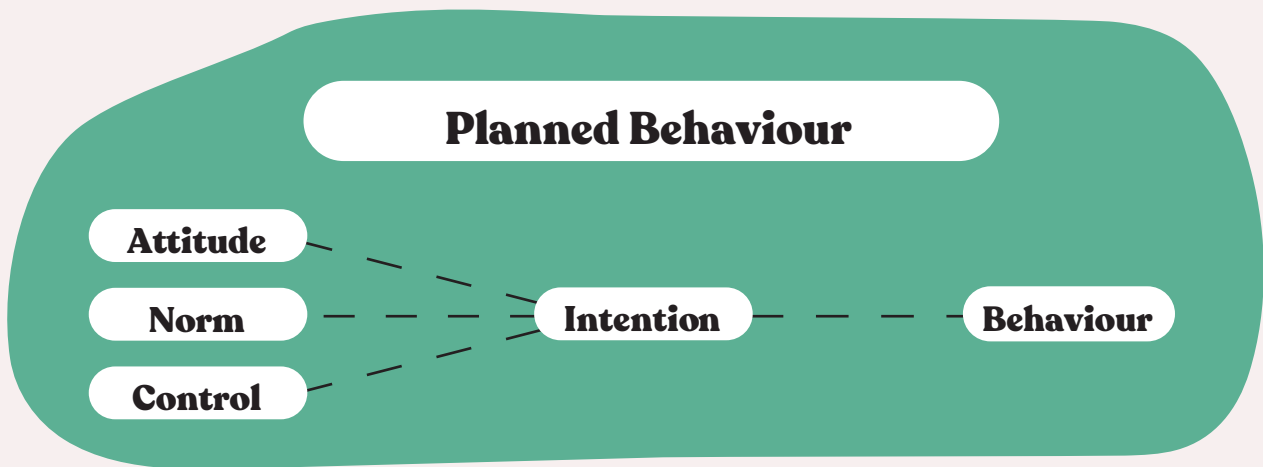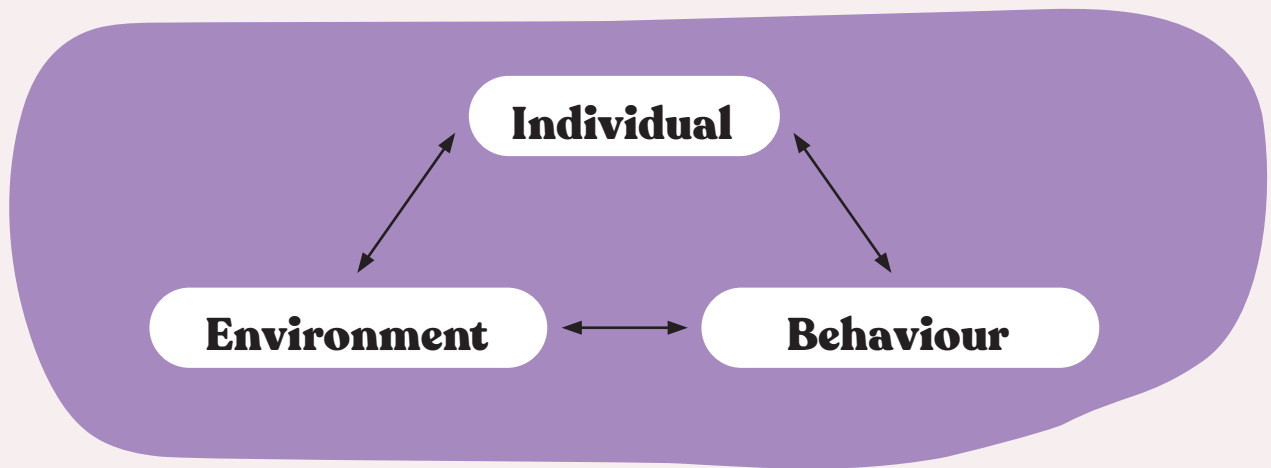
In designing Consent-Ed as an educational intervention for young people, several theories of learning were considered: Vygotsky's Theory of Social Development (1978), Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory (1938) and Lave's Situated Learning Theory (2009). These three theories emphasise the need for an educational approach that allows young people to participate actively in their own learning around relationships and consent, to learn from interactions between them, and to become a community of learners, which will help them reinforce positive attitudes and behaviours among themselves.

The culmination of this theoretical foundation in the Consent-Ed programme has been to endeavour to facilitate an open and safe learning environment while harnessing the opportunity for individual outcome attainment and new knowledge acquisition. Greathouse et al. (2015, p. x) pinpointed that 'a smaller number of studies have also identified a link between sexual assault perpetration and perceptions of peer pressure to engage in sexual activity'. Therefore, it is critical that this programme highlights the opportunity for new learning and encourages learners to embrace and engage in this learning process in the context of their peers.

# The Consent Ed Approach and Links with SPHE

These lessons address a number of learning outcomes within the updated Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum (2023) which are set out below.

**Toolkit Structure**

This toolkit provides materials for teachers of Junior Cycle SPHE curriculums. This includes guidance for teachers, preparatory work needed, interactive activities, materials required and media links. While the Junior Cycle materials are aimed towards the student groups specified in the lesson plans (1-3 years), the topics covered are relevant to all Junior Cycle students, as they provide a foundational understanding of healthy boundaries and relationships, while emphasising critical thinking skills and informed decision making. These lesson plans and activities may be used at the teacher's discretion with differing age groups.

The Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum is meant as a foundation on which more in-depth consent education will be built.
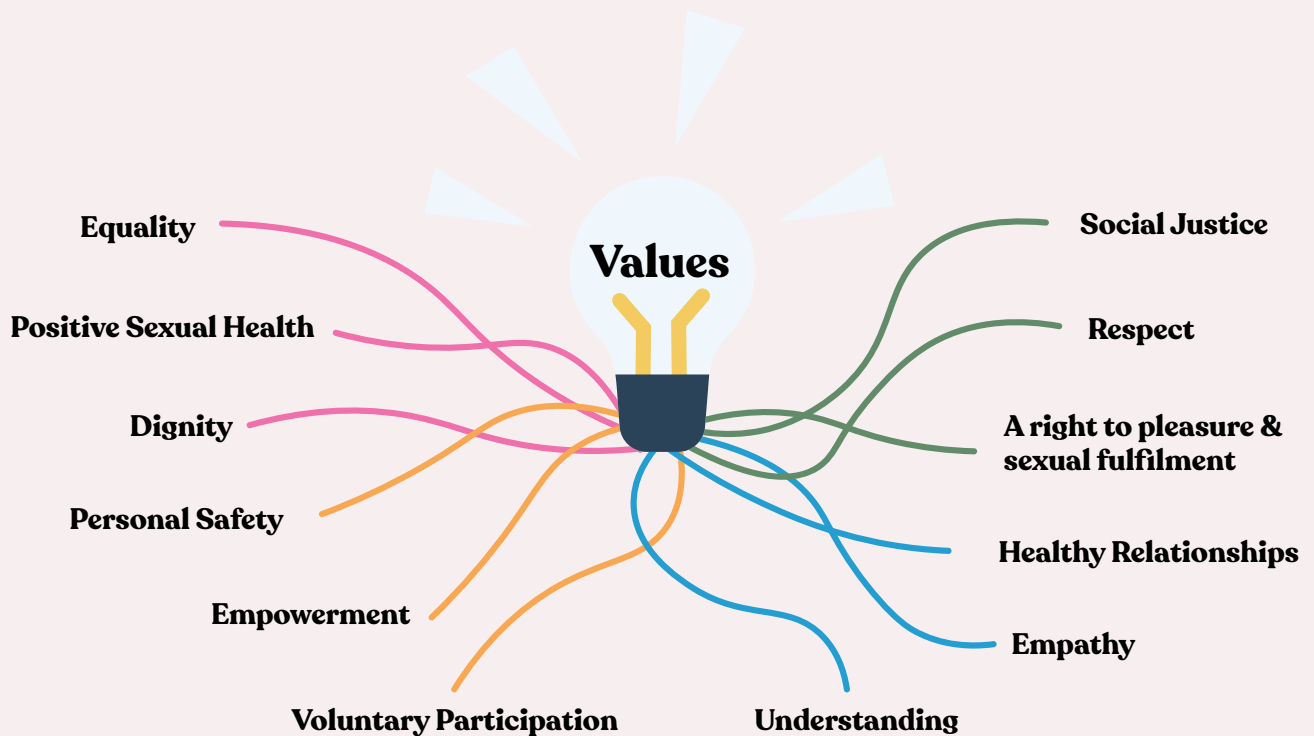
## Junior Cyce SPHE Learning Outcomes

| | |
|---|---|
| **Session 1**<br><br>Healthy Sexual Expression and Sexual Harassment | **3.4** Appreciate the importance of setting healthy boundaries in relationships and consider how to show respect for the boundaries of others.<br><br>**3.6** Appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways. |
| **Session 2**<br><br>Online Sexual Harm | **2.7** Assess the benefits and difficulties associated with their online world and discuss strategies for dealing with a range of scenarios that might arise.<br><br>**3.11** Demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy advice, support and services related to relationships and sexual health. |
| **Session 3**<br><br>Sexting and Intimate Image Sharing | **2.9** Explore why young people share sexual imagery online and examine the risks and consequences of doing this. |
| **Session 4**<br><br>Grooming and Sexual Exploitation | **4.6** Examine different kinds of abusive and bullying behaviour that can occur in online and face to-face interactions.<br><br>**4.4** Discuss ways to support themselves in challenging times and where / how to seek support, if needed. |

# Toolkit Aim, Values & Principles

## Aim

This toolkit aims to create dialogue around relationships, sexuality, consent and sexual violence to support young people in healthy decision making.

## Values



**Values**

- Equality
- Positive Sexual Health
- Dignity
- Personal Safety
- Empowerment
- Voluntary Participation
- Understanding
- Empathy
- Healthy Relationships
- A right to pleasure & sexual fulfilment
- Respect
- Social Justice

## Principles

- ❯ A human rights-based approach – young people have a right to be informed.

- ❯ Facilitated in a safe and supportive setting.

- ❯ Sexuality education is age-appropriate, in line with the young person's level of development and understanding, culturally and socially responsive, and gender-responsive. It corresponds to the reality of young people's lives.

- ❯ Recognises that young people are active participants in their own lives and that they play an important role in changing attitudes and raising awareness about ending violence.

- ❯ Acknowledges gender inequality as a cause and consequence of violence.

- ❯ Adopts a non-formal education approach, based on a holistic concept of health and wellbeing.

- ❯ Utilises a syllabus that is adaptable, relevant and culturally appropriate for young people, recognising that sexuality is a central part of being human.

- ❯ Works in partnership with communities, building relationships with young people, parents, schools, support services and other relevant organisations working towards a fair and compassionate society by empowering individuals and communities.

- Acknowledges that men and boys, along with non-binary and queer people, experience non-consensual behaviour and sexual violence, and actively encourages all students to think of consent as a vital part of everyone's safe sex experience, regardless of background or identity.

- Engages with experiences of men and boys, acknowledging that men and boys play an active role in stopping violence. It creates safe spaces for all participants to think about and challenge gender inequality and violence and encourages them to take an active role in preventing and ending violence.

- Delivers a survivor-centred approach that respects the privacy of survivors.

- Takes an evidence-based approach informed by initiatives in violence prevention around the world.

- Supports the attainment of knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills required for healthy sexual expression.

# Group Guidelines

## Why are group guidelines important?

Group guidelines are important in all group facilitation but are of particular importance in sexual violence prevention work as they ensure that boundaries are kept and that the place where the session is facilitated remains a safe place. Group guidelines enhance respect and give students a sense of safety when discussing such sensitive topics. Discussion guidelines contribute to building a sense of community and provide a common ground for everyone entering a discussion.

## Examples of Group Guidelines

- **Have fun!** (Wherever possible, enjoy the programme).
- **Participation** (Engage at your level of comfort – you can always choose to opt out if you are not comfortable). Everyone is welcome to have a say.
- **Inclusiveness and non-judgemental** (Be mindful of each other and inclusive of all genders, relationship types and sexualities).
- **One voice** (Supporting one speaker at a time).
- **Opinions** – Only represent your own opinion, use the term I rather that we when speaking your own opinion. Respect those who may disagree with your opinion
- **Listen to each other** (You have great ideas and knowledge to share).
- **Be open** (To the session topics and having a conversation about them).
- **Mobile Phones** (Give them a break, put them on snooze).
- **Respect** (Everyone, their opinions, surroundings. Jokes about rape, child abuse, or sexual violence will not be tolerated. We do not know what is going on in anyone's life at any given time and such jokes can cause further hurt and harm. Put yourself in a victim's shoes - would you like to hear such jokes?)
- **Confidentiality** (What is said in the group belongs in the group. No gossiping after the sessions about what someone said. However, state clearly that there is a limit to confidentiality and if something is said that the facilitator believes may mean that a young person is a harmful situation, may harm someone else, or they directly disclose something, under Irish Law and Child Protection the Education Worker/Facilitator must share this information with a Designated Liaison Officer (DLP) - this is for everyone's safety). Nothing that is said or disclosed in the session should be discussed outside the group.
- **Supports:** Signpost in-school supports to students, and encourage them to take note of the support services mentioned in the sessions.

## Facilitating Group Guidelines

- Explain to the group the importance of group guidelines for sessions like these.
- Use a large piece of poster paper and a marker to draft the guidelines, with input from the group, and then display the guidelines where the group can see them.
- Define confidentiality and explain the importance of it when discussing topics in this course.
- Ask students to give a thumbs up to show that they agree with the guidelines.
- Remember, it is important to recap the guidelines at the beginning of each session.

## Facilitation Skills

For more guidance on facilitation, see NCCA's resource.
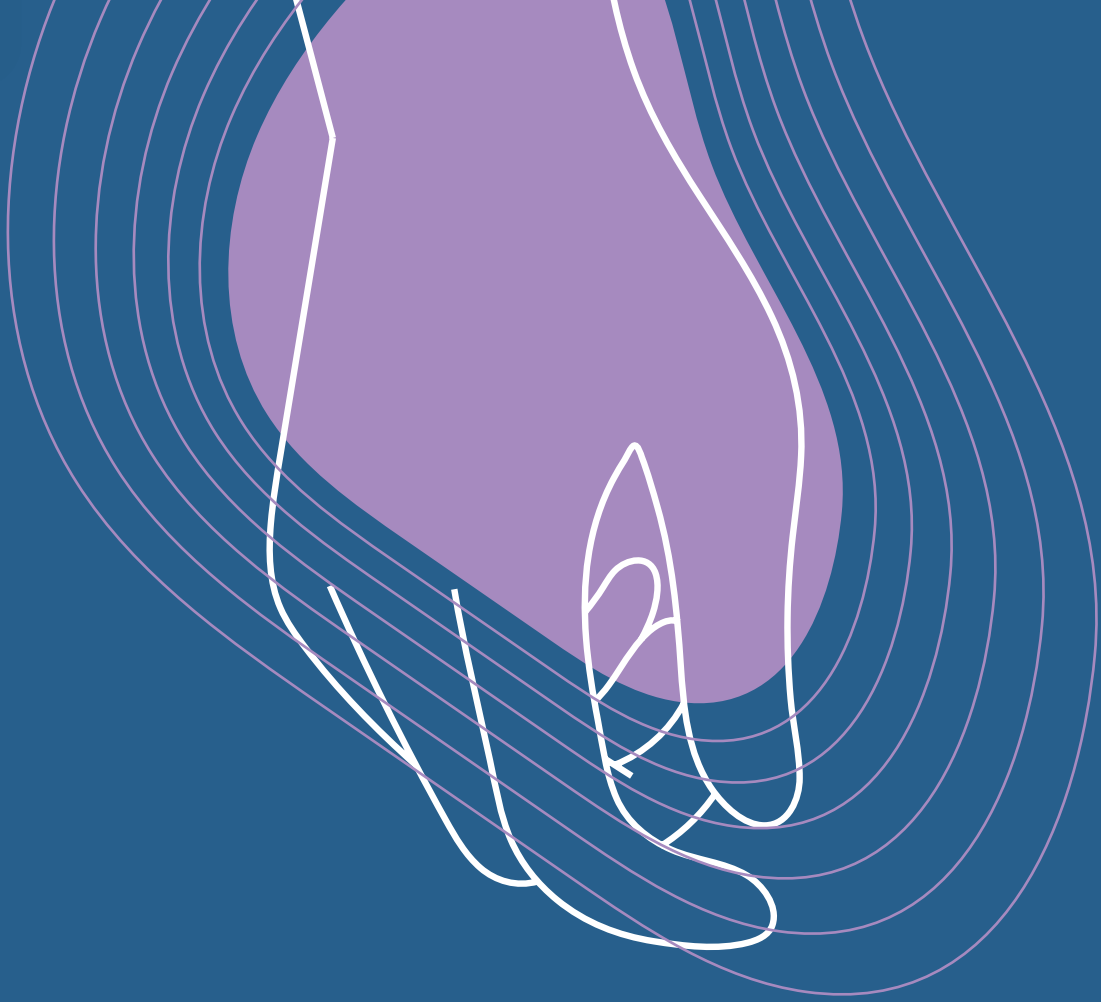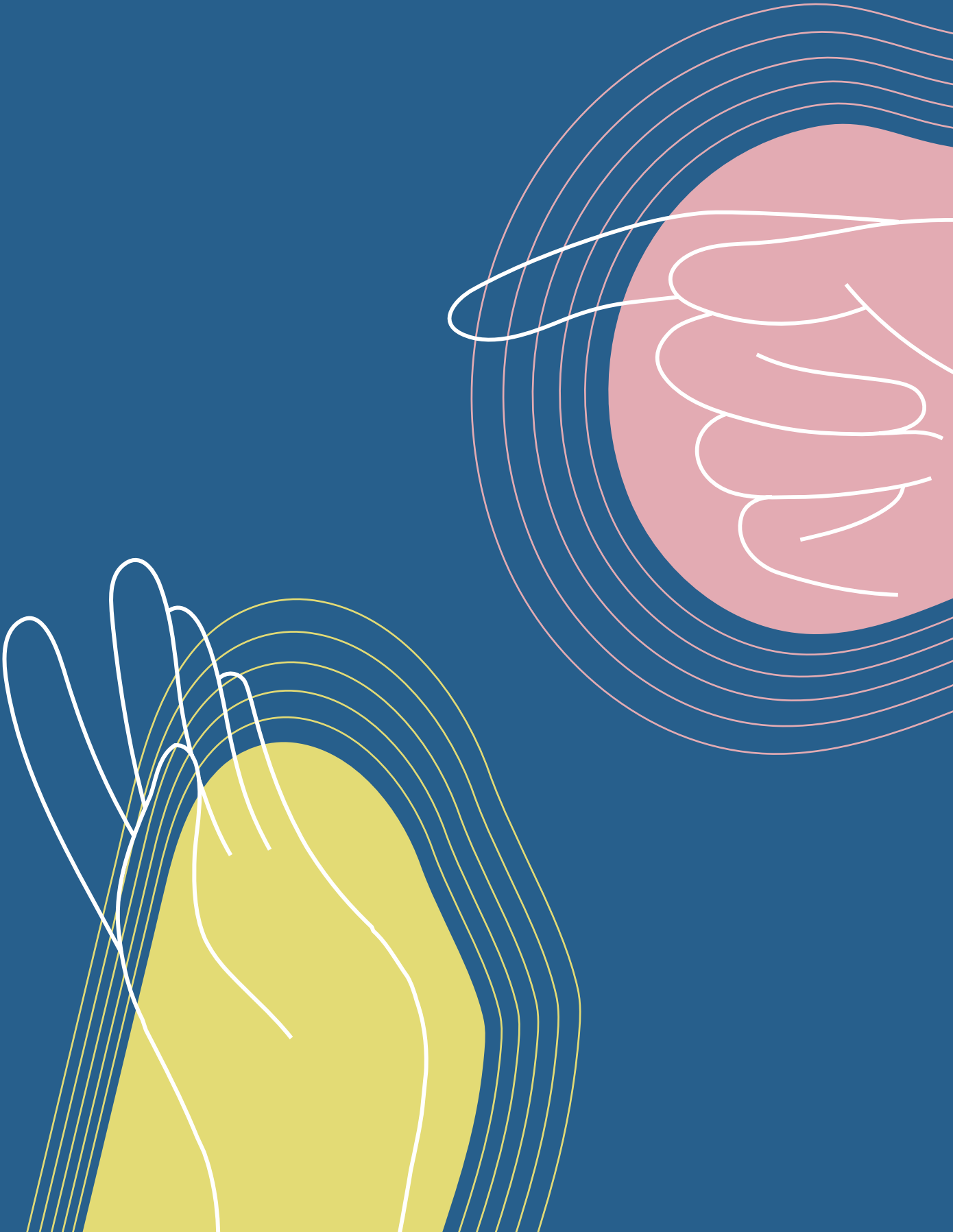
These sessions were designed for students in 2nd year, but may be used with other ages at teacher's discretion.

2nd Year

# Session 1

## Healthy Sexual Expression and Sexual Harassment

### Lession Plan

This session focuses on healthy sexual exploration, sexual expression and sexual harassment.

### SPHE Learning Outcomes

3.4 Appreciate the importance of setting healthy boundaries in relationships and consider how to show respect for the boundaries of others.

3.6 Appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways.

### Materials Needed

- Markers.
- Post-it notes – sticky and a variety of different colours.
- Spare pages for 'brainstorm' activity.
- Space for walking debate.
- Worksheet or prompt cards for Activity 1.

### 1. Group Guidelines

Refer to the group guidelines section of the manual for tips and guidance.

Clearly outline to the group that there are a set of guidelines for these sessions.

Engage participants to contribute to the group guidelines.

Display these in each of the four sessions.

### 2. Introductory Activity

See introduction exercise prompts in teacher guidance section of this course.

Ask the students to take out a piece of paper and in pairs brainstorm answers to the prompts.

Facilitate this activity and guide discussion with class group after this.

### 3. What is Sexual Harassment?

Introduce the topic of sexual harassment.

Explore the meaning of this with students and use examples listed in teacher guidance for this session.

### 4. Activity - Healthy and Unhealthy Forms of Sexual Expression

Explain the definition of sexual harassment to students. Further definition and information for this excerise is in the teacher guidance section of this course.

### 5. Activity – Is this Sexual Harassment? - Walking Debate

For this activity you will need a wide-open space.

Please find walking debate exercise details and examples in the activity section.

Encourage students to share why they have chosen to stand where they are and to debate with each other.

Make it clear that they can change their minds and move position at any stage if they want, or if a point raised by another student convinces them otherwise.

### 6 . Reflection, Summary and Session Close

- Summarize the session and reflect on the content that was covered.
- Reiterate the key points.
- Allow time for any questions.
- Provide details of support options available to young people if needed.

# Healthy and Unhealthy Forms of Sexual Expression

In your groups, discuss and categorise what are healthy and unhealthy forms of sexual expression.

**Circle the answer your group picks.**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Talking to your friend about someone you have a crush on. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Asking an older person for advice about feelings you think you have for someone in your peer group. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Commenting something sexual on someone's photo. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Telling someone that you want to be more than friends. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Using an emoji to depict a sexual organ. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Sending someone a sexual GIF to make it known to them that you like them sexually. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Interacting with someone romantically online - liking their posts, messaging them, etc. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Asking someone out on a date. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Declaring your feelings for someone in a public way without talking to them first. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Unhooking someone's bra, either in private or public, without asking. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Continuously viewing someone's social media and taking note of anynew followers they have, or who likes their pictures. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Slapping someone on their bum in a joking way when they aren't expecting it. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Speaking about sexual things to someone, even though it makes them uncomfortable / speaking about sexual things within someone's earshot, in order to make them uncomfortable. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Asking someone for sexual photos, even when they have not said they are interested. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Sending someone a sexual photo, without asking if they would like to receive it. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Buying someone a Valentine's Day card. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Spending time alone with a friend that you have a crush on but not telling them your feelings. | Healthy | Unhealthy |
| Kissing someone that you like. | Healthy | Unhealthy |

# Session 1

## Teacher Guidance

- Group Guidelines
- Introductory Activity
- What is Sexual Harassment?
- Activity - Healthy and Unhealthy forms of Sexual Expression
- Activity - Is this Sexual Harassment? Walking Debate
- Reflection, Summary and Session Close

The aim of this session is to explore what students baseline knowledge of the topics that will be covered and sexual harassment. It also examines the prevalence of sexual harassment in a young person's world. The aim of this session is to meet the SPHE outcome below by exploring human sexuality with students. It looks at how young people may express their sexuality in healthy and unhealthy ways, and also how unhealthy sexual expression can lead to sexual harassment. During this session, sexual harassment will be examined and discussed, as it is important that students can identify unhealthy sexual expression and understand that it can lead to other forms of sexual violence.

## 1. Group Guidelines

All guidance on making a group contract can be found in the introduction section of this handbook. Group guidelines are incorporated into this programme to support young people and create a safe space throughout delivery, encouraging them to seek support if needed.

## 2. Introductory Activity

Ask the students to break into pairs.

Ask the students to take out a piece of paper and brainstorm answers to the following prompts.

**Prompts**

- When you hear the word Consent, what do you think of it?
- What are your expectations for this lesson?
- When you hear the term "sexual harrassment", what do you think of?
- Think of the relationships in your life at present. How do you interact with these people? Who are these different people?
- What do you value in these relationships? What aspects of these relationships make you feel valued?
- How do you express your feelings towards these people? What actions do you take to express your feelings?
- Are all of your interactions in these relationships healthy? Are there some aspects of these relationships that you feel may have some unhealthy behaviours? How do these make you feel?

### 3. What Is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual behaviour that makes someone feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated, or is meant to make them feel that way. The harassment can be written, verbal or physical. It can happen to people of all genders. Sexual harassment may include unwelcome touching, or other unwanted physical contact.

### What are examples of harassment?

- Sexual or offensive comments.
- Making you feel uncomfortable by making comments about your body or sexual organs.
- Sending inappropriate texts, memos, or images that are sexual or crude in nature.
- Sexual innuendos in conversation.
- Unwarranted or unwelcome physical touch, such as rubbing, touching or hugging.
- Catcalling / wolf whistling.
- Non-consensual touching.
- Slapping someone's bum.
- Spamming or persistent communication.
- Up-skirting or pulling down someone's pant.

### What are the Effects of Sexual Harassment on Young People?

Victims of sexual harassment can suffer significant psychological effects, including anxiety, depression, guilt, headaches, sleep disorders, weight loss or gain, nausea, lowered self-esteem and sexual dysfunction. These are only some examples, as experiences of sexual harassment and its effects vary greatly from person to person.

**For more information on Sexual Harassment and Adolescents, please follow this link.**

### 4. Activity - Healthy and Unhealthy forms of Sexual Expression

- In the activities section of this session, please find worksheet titled "Healthy and Unhealthy forms of Sexual Expression". Ask students to work in groups as this activity will help establish the baseline knowledge that students may or may not have regarding sexual expression and unhealthy behaviors that can lead to sexual harassment.

- Ask the students to circle the answers that they feel are appropriate and correct in relation to each behavior. Encourage discussion and debate between students while engaging in this exercise.

### 5. Activity - Is this Sexual Harassment? Walking Debate

For this activity you will need a wide-open space.

Ask the students to line up in single file in the middle of the room. This is the 'sometimes' space. Advise them to move to the left if they think an answer is 'always' and right if 'never' when you read out the debate prompts list found in the activities section of this handbook.

#### Prompts

1. Commenting on someone's body size/shape/personal appearance.
2. Saying "That's gay".
3. Making jokes about sex or a sexual act.
4. Staring at someone's body for a long time.
5. Taking a photo of someone's body.
6. Touching someone's body/ clothing or personal belongings.
7. Wolf-whistling/ Catcalling - this means saying something sexual to someone you don't know in public.
8. Posting images of someone's naked body on social media.
9. Repeating rumours about a person's relationship or sexuality.
10. Send someone a picture of your genitals – sending a "Nude".
11. Asking someone out on a date when they've already said no once before.
12. Thinking about someone in a sexual way, having thoughts about engaging in sexual activity with them.
13. Imagining what someone in your peer group might look like naked.
14. Telling your friends the details of a sexual experience that you had with someone.
15. Talking about someone in sexual way without them being present.

# Session 2

## Online Sexual Harm

### Lession Plan

Session 2 focuses on the effects of online sexual harm and prevention tools for a range of harmful online scenarios.

### SPHE Learning Outcomes

2.7 Assess the benefits and difficulties associated with their online world and discuss strategies for dealing with a range of scenarios that might arise.

3.11 Demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy advice, support and services related to relationships and sexual health.

### Materials Needed

- Worksheets – Bingo.
- Markers.
- Phone templates: green and red phone printouts (laminated if possible).
- Whiteboard marker.
- PowerPoint – Preventing Online Harm.
- Laptop / desktop and access to a projector.

### 1. Procedure – Getting Started

Introduce the topic and read through SPHE outcomes.

Recap on group guidelines.

### 2. Activity - Healthy vs. Unhealthy Phone Activity

- Stick two phone templates on the board, green for positive and red for negative.
- Ask students to write examples of benefits and negatives of the online world on post-it notes.
- Ask students to stick benefits on the green template and difficulties on the red template.
- Discuss their suggestions as a group to assess why each is either a benefit or a difficulty

**See teacher guidance for more details, examples and discussion points.**

### 3. Activity - Online Sexual Harm Terminology Bingo

Call out definitions of different forms of exploitation, harm and sexual harassment online. Students should work in small groups to try to match the definitions to the vocabulary bank on worksheets provided.

Once all definitions have been matched, ask students to call out their answers, and give examples of what each definition might look like in everyday life. Discuss ways that someone might feel if they were to experience one of these examples of online sexual harm. How could they get help?

See teacher guidance for more information.

### 4. Activity - PowerPoint

The PowerPoint illustrates tips on prevention of online sexual harm.

**Additional information on each topic can be found in the teacher guidance section.**

### 5. Reflection, Summary and Session Close

- Reiterate the key points.
- Recap on definitions, if needed.
- Allow time for any questions.

Provide details of support options available to young people.

# Healthy Forms of Online Activity

**Unhealthy Forms of Online Activity**
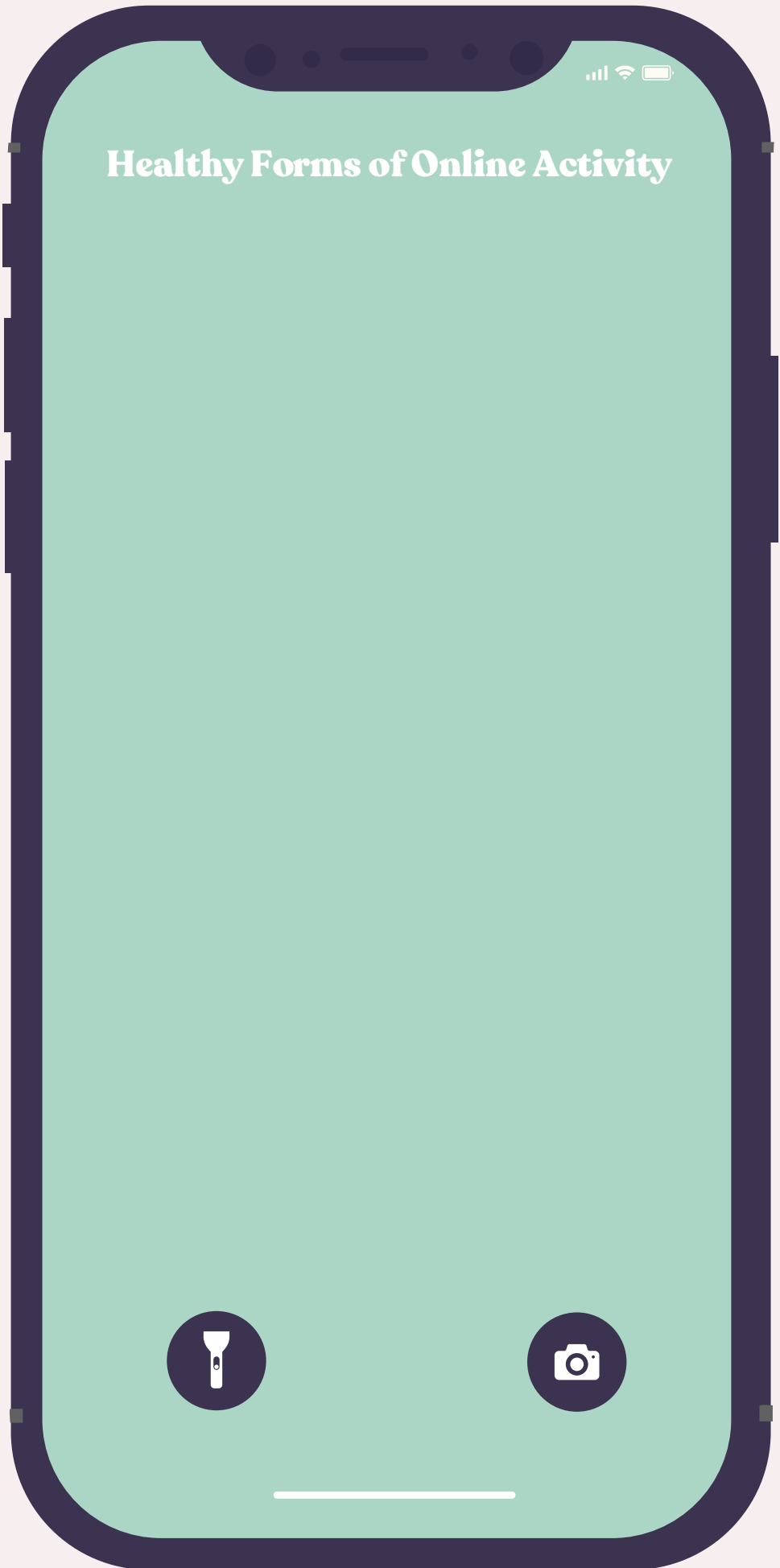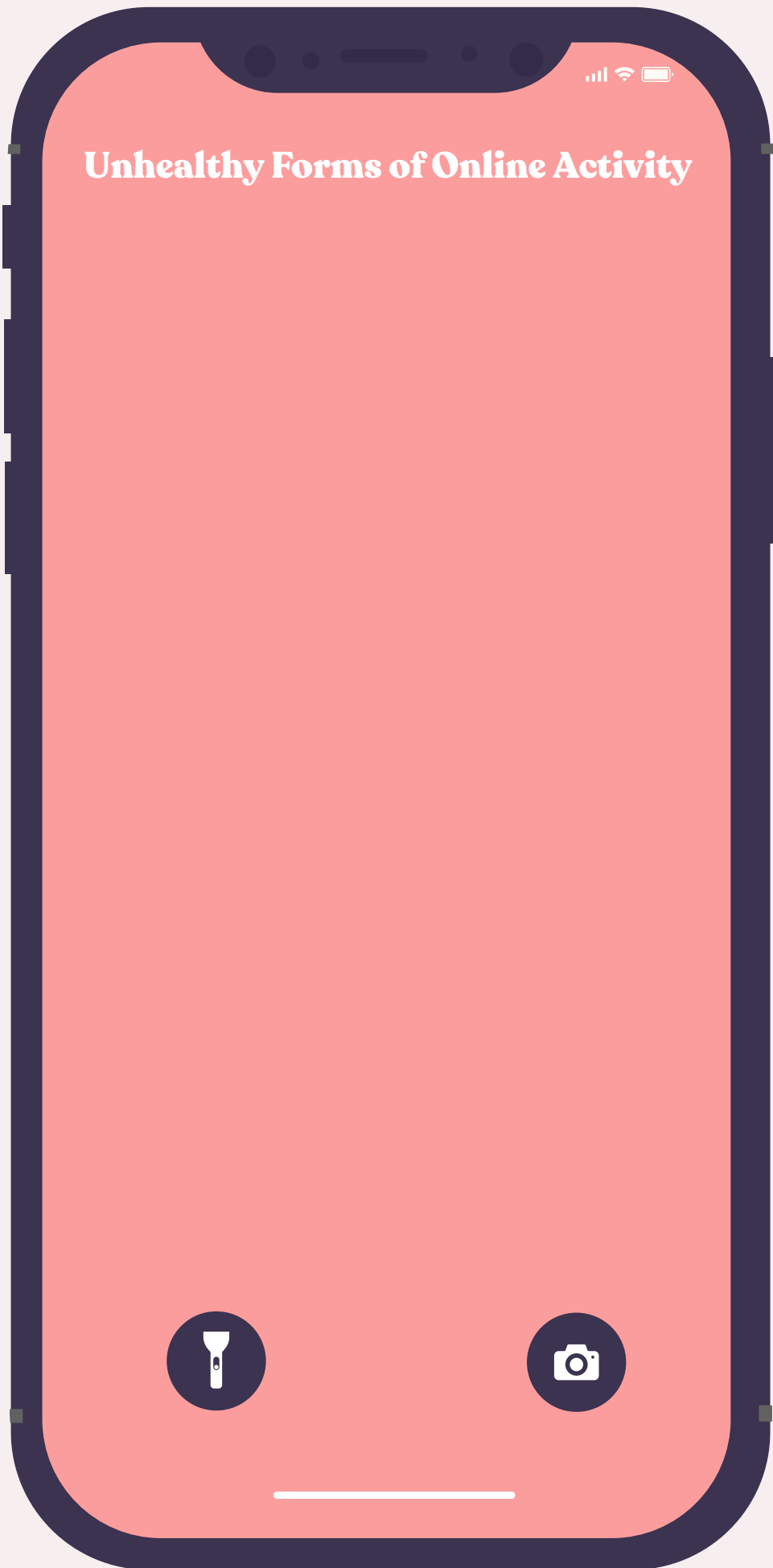
# Bingo

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Gaslighting | Grooming | Non-consensual sharing of Explicit Material |
| Homophobic behaviours | Stalking | Hacking |
| Sexual Exploitation | Coercive Control | Doxxing |
| Catfishing | Intimate | Indecent Exposure |

# Bingo

## Definitions without answers listed

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1) When an older person intends to cause harm to a child by convincing them to meet in person, or engage online, in a sexual way. | 2) 'Flashing': someone deliberately exposes their body or genitals in order to frighten or upset someone else. | 3) Searching for and publishing private/ identifying information on the internet about a person, usually deliberately to hurt them. |
| 4) When someone shares any nude or sexual image of someone else without their consent. | 5) Showing a dislike of, fear of or prejudice against gay/queer people. | 6) Getting unauthorised access to data in a system or computer. |
| 7) A person profiting by using someone else's body in a sexual way to gain money or other benefits. | 8) A pattern of manipulating and threatening behaviour, including domestic abuse by a partner. | 9) The process of luring someone into a relationship by pretending to be someone else online. |
| 10) Any image of a person who is naked or engaged in a sexual act. Includes any image of an intimate part of the person's body or an image of underwear covering that part of their body. | 11) A type of emotional abuse (often in an abusive relationship) where one person deliberately misleads the target, making them question their judgments, memories or reality. | 12) A pattern of unwanted behaviour towards a specific person, which causes that person to change their routine or feel afraid, nervous, or in danger in their daily life. |

# Session 2

## Teacher Guidance

- Forms of Online Sexual Harm
- Definition of Online Sexual Harassment
- Activity - Healthy and Unhealthy Phone Activity
- Activity - Terminology Bingo
- Activity - Prevention of Online Sexual Harm: Presentation

Session 2 looks at the positives and negatives of online interactions, online sexual harassment, sexual consent in the online world, cyber abuse and how to stay safe online. It also discusses the many different forms of online sexual harassment and the effects of online sexual harassment on young people. Additionally, included is a section on the terminology and vocabulary associated with online sexual harm, aiming to create an understanding around the categories identified and the potential effects on young people.

## Forms of Online Sexual Harm
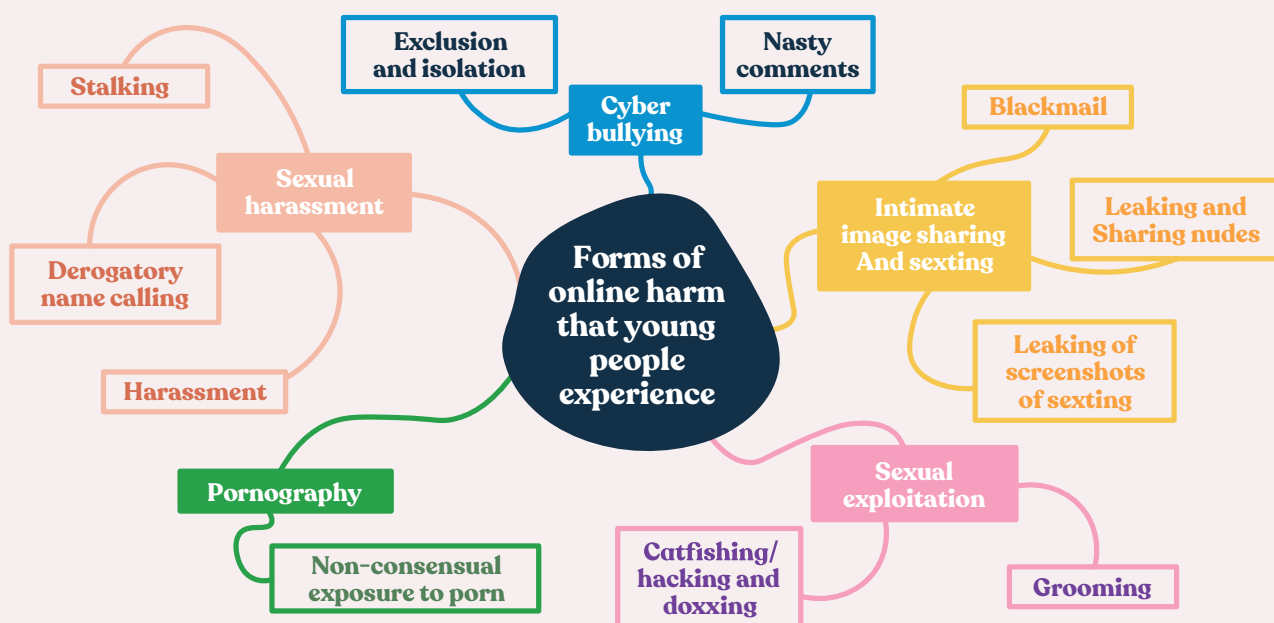


For context. All of the above forms of online sexual harm are experienced by young people. All of the ones that are relevant for this age group are defined in the Bingo activity section of this session.

**Further teaching resources on these topics can be found on Webwise.ie**

# Definition of Online Sexual Harassment

Online sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual behaviour on any digital platform, and it is a form of sexual violence. Online sexual harassment consists of a wide range of actions that use digital content (images, videos, posts, messages, pages) on a variety of platforms (private or public).

**??**

### Effects of Sexual Harassment Online

Sexual harassment online can make a person feel threatened, unsafe, exploited, exposed, humiliated, upset and violated.

## 2. Activity - Healthy and Unhealthy Phone Activity

Students are asked to write on post-it notes the difficulties that they may face online. Unhealthy activity, examples of online sexual harassment and struggles that young people face should be then stuck to the red template. Facilitator should lead a discussion about positives and negatives of online interactions, referring to student-made visual comparison on the board.

### Examples of Positive Online Interaction

- Using the internet for schoolwork, research and other educational benefits.
- Googling – Google Maps – Google Scholar – Google Classroom.
- YouTube tutorials.
- Online shopping / online banking.
- Music and podcasts.
- To stay in touch.
- Online gaming.
- Long-distance relationships.
- Meeting new people.
- Online dating (with safety precautions).

### Examples of how Online Sexual Harm can take place

- Cyber abuse and cyberbullying.
- Exclusion from online groups or platforms.
- Sexting.
- Nude image sharing.
- Pornography.
- Pace at which information circulates / misinformation.
- Hate-crime videos.
- Grooming and online sexual exploitation.
- Unhealthy sexual expression online.
- Hacking and doxxing.
- Impersonating someone else or catfishing.
- Trolls / keyboard warriors.
- Makes it easier to keep track of or stalk someone.

Nurture this activity to ensure the post-it notes reflect the lists above, providing hints and prompts if needed.

Let participants know that the majority of online usage can be positive but just like anything in life, there are negative sides to being online and the internet that we must be able to recognise in order to know what a healthy, positive sexual expression looks like.

# 3. Activity – Terminology Bingo

This activity is designed to expand students' vocabulary and educate them on the different forms of online sexual harm that they may encounter.

Divide students into pairs or small groups and pass them out a Bingo card. Facilitator reads out the numbered definitions from the facilitator definition guide and students write the number next to the term they believe matches the definition.

Students self-correct their answers and the class are given a detailed explanation and examples of the vocabulary or term that they are not familiar with. Recap and explain the definitions, if needed.

Finish the activity by asking students to give examples of what each type of online sexual harm might look like in their own lives. This is to give students concrete ways to recognise how negative behaviours might manifest, (E.g. Often, we hear in the news about celebrities being doxed, but young person could have their personal details shared online without their permission, and feel threatened and insecure in their school/home).

**Definition Bingo Answers Sheet**

Grooming – 1

Indecent Exposure - 2

Doxxing - 3

Non-consensual sharing of Explicit Material - 4

Homophobic Behaviours – 5

Hacking - 6

Sexual Exploitation – 7

Coercive Control - 8

Catfishing – 9

Intimate Image - 10

Gaslighting - 11

Stalking – 12

# 4. Activity – Prevention of Online Sexual Harm: Presentation

This PowerPoint emphasises the ways in which students can protect themselves from online harm. It includes practical tips and advice from professional organisations. Students are signposted to websites that will help if they need further information.

# Session 3

## Sexting and Intimate Image Sharing

### Lession Plan

This session discusses sexting, the sharing of intimate images and the legal status surrounding this, with a primary focus on Coco's Law and the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998.
The session will also discuss harm prevention in relation to sexting and sharing of intimate images.

### SPHE Learning Outcomes

2.9 Explore why young people share sexual imagery online and examine the risks and consequences of doing this.

### Materials Needed

- YouTube video
- Markers
- PowerPoint
- Worksheets

### 1. Introduction

Introduce the topics and remind the students of the group guidelines.

### 2. What is Sexting and Nude Image Sharing?

Open up a discussion around the prompt "what is sexting and intimate image sharing?".
See information and definitions in teacher guidance section of the handbook.

### 3. Legislation

Ask the students if they think sexting and sending nudes is illegal under the age of 18.
**Answer:** Yes, it is.

Give overview of legislation; include the Trafficking of Child Pornography Act 1998 and Coco's Law.

### 4. Activity - Why Do Young People Sext?

Break students into small groups and give each group a selection of post-it notes. Students brainstorm why someone might send a sexual image or engage in sexting and what are the possible effects of sending images. Read through answers and ask groups to feed back their answers to the group if comfortable.

**See further information in teacher guidance.**

### 5. Activity - Sexting Video

Show this video to students and see teacher guidance for discussion points.
Link to video.

### 6. Activity - PowerPoint and Prevention Worksheet

**Part 1. PowerPoint**

Go through sexting and sexual image prevention PowerPoint.

Further information on this section in teacher guidance.

**Part 2. Supports and Self-Help Worksheet**

See worksheet in the activity section of this handbook.

### 7. Reflection, Summary and Session Close

- Summarize the session.
- Reiterate the key points.
- Allow time for any questions.
- Provide details of support options available to young people.

**?** It is illegal to have a nude image of yourself or others under the age of 18 on your phone or other device.

# Prevention of Nude Image Sharing

**Think of some tips that could help with the prevention of nude image sharing and write them on the objects below**

Speak to
an adult
you trust

hotline.ie

# Session 3

## Teacher Guidance

- What is Sexting?
- Why Do Young People Sext?
- Activity - Why Do Young People Sext?
- Legislation
- Activity - Sexting Video
- Prevention and Response Powerpoint
- Activity - Prevention and Supports Worksheet

This session's primary focus is to explore why young people sext and the dangers and complexities that can come from this. It closely examines the legislation that is in place in Ireland regarding child pornography, intimate images and sexting. It also gives students the tools to prevent harm from sexting and intimate image sharing. Two of the four activities in this session focus on the reasons why young people sext and share intimate images, while the other two activities focus on prevention and supports available.

*Often when discussing sexting and nude images with students there may be awkwardness and silence. It is important to guide the students through this by talking through the materials and opening the floor to discussion.*

### 2. What is Sexting?

Sexting is sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or videos, primarily between mobile phones. Sexting can be sexually explicit text messages, provocative audio clips, suggestive selfies or videos, which young people often refer to as 'nudes'. No matter what form sexting takes, it should always be a consensual practice between two or more parties. Unfortunately, this is not always the case: Dr. Michelle Walsh's research, Storm and Stress (2021), reported that 26% of young people who participated in the research experienced moderate sexual harassment which included unwanted sexting, seeing sexual images or being sent them. These pictures can include sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others, or sending sexually explicitly worded messages (ISPCC 2021).

### Some Risks of Sexting

- Permanency: You can't 'unsend' a sext as it may have been saved or screenshotted by the other party.
- Blackmail: Sexual messages could be used to manipulate or exploit in the future.
- Emotional health: If someone shares a message without your consent, it could affect your mental and emotional wellbeing.
- Physical safety: You could be harassed or bullied.
- It could affect your self-esteem.
- It might become a normal behaviour and a young person may not identify the risk associated with it.
- It could be part of an unhealthy relationship.

Young people are likely to use popular apps like WhatsApp and Snapchat to sext, but it can also take place on anonymous apps, such as Omegle or instant chat rooms where they may engage in

sexting with a stranger. Many of these sites have options for video calling and picture sharing, do not require age verification to use them and can be used anonymously.

### 3. Legislation

It is important that young people understand the law and legislation surrounding sexting and nude image sharing. Many young people are probably not aware of the laws surrounding this area and can be naïve around the consequences of nude image sharing.

The Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998 is an act to prohibit trafficking in, or the use of, children for the purposes of their sexual exploitation and the production, dissemination, handling or possession of child pornography, and to provide for related matters.

*Click here to learn more.*

### Coco's Law

Coco's Law, otherwise known as The Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act, provides for two new offences dealing with the non consensual distribution of intimate images and is underpinned by other Irish legislation. Coco's Law is named after Nicole Fox (21), a young victim of cyberbullying. Nicole died by suicide in January 2018 after three years of intense online and in-person bullying. The bullies went so far as to create fake 'hate' pages purporting to show Nicole partaking in pornographic images and videos.

The sharing of explicit images of minors is captured by the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998. This act was designed to protect children from exploitation. If sexual images or videos of a child (under 18 years of age) are shared or stored on a device, the act can be invoked, provided the content shared meets the definition of child pornography. Self-produced explicit images exchanged by adolescents, under the age of 18, could be considered as child pornography.

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Independent research commissioned by the Department of Justice found that 1 adult in 20 claims to have had an intimate image of themselves shared to an online site without consent. This rises to 1 in 10 among 18- to 24- and 25- to 37-year-olds. (Irish Times, 2021).

**4. Activity - Why Do Young People Sext?**

Young people sext as part of their sexual exploration and, in recent years, it has become a large part of young people's early sexual experiences. While sexting may seem alien or even uncomfortable for some adults, it has become a major part of online culture for young people. By sexting, young people are exploring their sexuality. However, it can negatively affect their sexual, mental and physical wellbeing. When young people are asked why they engage in sexting, some expected responses may be 'peer pressure', 'curiosity', 'attention', 'validation' and 'because it is an expected social norm in a young person's relationship'.

Exploring sex and relationships is a natural part of adolescence and sexting has become a major part of this for young people today. Some young people may get attention or a boost to their self-esteem and find that sexting is an opportunity to connect with new people on social media, or to connect more deeply with a crush or a friend. For other young people, they may be in a relationship and feel that they trust the person they are sexting. It can be seen as an element of safe sex. Young people often feel that they love and trust their partner and want to express their sexual feelings; now, with mobile phones, that's easier than ever. Smart phones and the internet make accessibility to a teen's friends and peers immediate, providing instant gratification from just sending a message. This may cause some young people to make rash decisions like sending a nude photo without fully reflecting on the potential consequences.

[Further reading](#).

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**Step 1:** Divide the class into groups of four or five people per group.

**Step 2:** Ask each group to brainstorm on why someone might send a sexual image or engage in sexting and what are the possible effects of sending images.

**Step 3:** Add these suggestions to post-it notes. One answer per post it.

**Step 4:** Gather the post-it notes and stick them on the board.

**Step 5:** Facilitator reads through answers. Ask groups to feed back to facilitator where comfortable.

- Why someone might send a sexual image or engage in sexting?

- What are the possible outcomes of sending sexual images?

- How would a person react to being sent a sext? What emotions would they feel?

- How might a person feel if they were sending an image or sext to someone else?

- What would it feel like to receive or see an image that was being sent without the person's permission or knowledge?

- If someone experienced this, how or where could they go to get help and support?

### 5. Activity - Sexting Video

**Step 1:** Show the students the linked video on large screen or device.

**Step 2:** Pick prompts from below that suit your group and suit your timings.

- Why do you think the boy in the video felt pressured to send the video to his friend?
- How do you think he felt when he realised the video was being circulated?
- How do you think the girl in the video felt? What emotions was she experiencing?
- What sorts of impact do you think this incident would have on the girl's life? How about the boy, what affect would it have on his life?
- What could a young person do to protect themselves from getting into a situation like this?
- Why is consent (including age of consent) so important when it comes to sexual image sharing?

### 6. Part 1: Prevention and Response Powerpoint

It is important that the students should know the supports that are available on a local and national level if they are a victim of sexual image sharing. The PowerPoint contains signposting to national organisations along with those listed in this handbook. These are the recommended supports. It would also be a good idea to mention in school supports, such as a counsellor, etc., if these are available to students.

Go through PowerPoint with the preventions and supports on it.

For more information below on Hotline.ie and Webwise.ie.

### What is a trusted adult?

A trusted adult or safe adult is chosen by the young person as a safe figure that listens without judgment, agenda or expectation, but with the sole purpose of supporting and encouraging positivity within a young person's life.

It is important that young people can identify at least one trusted adult in their life. Young people need support from trusted adults to make decisions, for support and to help guide them in times of need.

Remind students of in school supports such as class teacher, Chaplin, guidance counselor and principal. If schools are affiliated with external support services such as a counselling service or a youth club, these can also be signposted to students.

If young people do not feel that they can talk to their trusted adult about what is going on for them they need to know where to get information and help. See supports below:

### Hotline.ie.

This online platform is a confidential way of reporting illegal material. Hotline.ie is an Irish-based internet watchdog. It has been running since 1999 and aims to help combat the spread of online images of child abuse by providing internet users with a confidential, anonymous and secure way of reporting such material. Administered by the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland and overseen by the Office of Internet Safety at the Department of Justice, Hotline.ie staff will investigate and, where content deemed illegal under Irish law is found, they will have the page removed. Even if the site is hosted outside Ireland, Hotline.ie works closely with international counterparts who will continue the investigation in their jurisdictions to have the illegal content taken down. While it was set up to target child abuse imagery, you can also file complaints over other issues like instances of online racism and incitement to hatred.

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### Webwise.ie

Webwise is the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre, which is co-funded by the Department of Education and Skills and co-financed by the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility. Webwise is part of Oide Technology in Education, part of Oide, a new support service for teachers and school leaders, funded from the Department of Education.

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### 6. Part 2: Activity - Prevention and Supports Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to be a take home tool for students. Each student gets their own worksheet. The worksheet will act as a point of reference for students if they find themselves in a situation that requires getting support from one of the above organisations. Students should reflect on all three sessions of the course that they have completed so far.

**Step 1:** See worksheet in the resource pack with a section that students can fill out themselves if they ever found themselves in a situation where they were a victim of an intimate image being circulated. The reverse of the worksheet signposts students to the correct supports.

**Step 2:** PowerPoint Healthy or Unhealthy: Show students linked PowerPoint above on the prevention of sexting and sharing of intimate images.

Ask students to put them in a safe place and reference them if needed in the future.
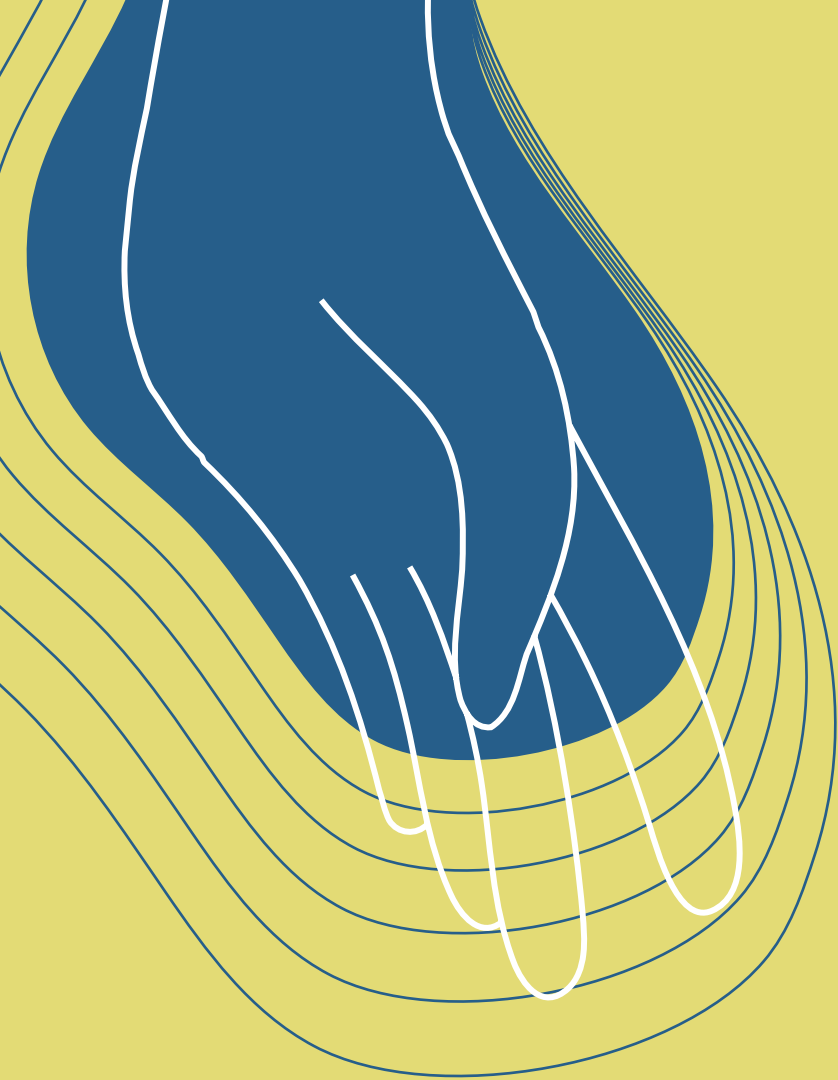
# Session 4

## Grooming and Sexual Exploitation

### Lession Plan

This final session of Consent-Ed examines the topics of grooming and sexual exploitation. The session comprises two parts, addressing the topics aligned with the relevant SPHE outcomes.

### SPHE Learning Outcomes

4.6 Examine different kinds of abusive and bullying behaviour that can occur in online and face-to-face interactions.

4.4 Discuss ways to support themselves in challenging times and where / how to seek support, if needed.

### Materials Needed

- Worksheet Activity 1 – Gráinne's Story
- Activity 4 - Scenario-based Questions
- Markers
- Access to laptop / desktop and PowerPoint

### 1. Introduction

Introduce the topics and refer again to the group guidelines. Highlight that this session contains some difficult content, so it is important to remind students of in-school supports and external supports.

### 2. Activity - Gráinne's Story

**\*\*Trigger Warning: See Teacher Guidance**
**Step 1:** Give each of the students a copy of the story so they can read through it at their own pace.
**Step 2:** Read activity titled Gráinne's Story to the class.
**Step 3:** After the story is read, commence a large group discussion around the story.
**\*\*\*It is your responsibility to ensure students understand that the narrator (Gráinne) is not at fault – sexual violence is always the perpetrator's fault.\*\*\***

**Main discussion points might include:**
- What were the ways that Kevin groomed Gráinne?
- What were the warning signs or red flags?
- What are some steps a young person could take to protect their privacy online?
- How could Gráinne have gotten help?
- Is there anything about this story that surprised you?
- Do you think that this type of scenario is likely to happen to someone your age?

**Step 4:** After reading through the story with students, ask them to identify the red flags or signs that Kevin was grooming Gráinne. **Examples should include:**

- Met online through a game, never met in real life.
- Kevin was older than Gráinne.
- Slowly introducing sexual topics and telling Gráinne about his sex life.
- Telling Gráinne he would not be able to 'restrain himself' if he met her in person.
- Buying her gifts – game rewards.
- Using the gift buying to extract more information from Gráinne.
- Extracting personal information over time. Asking Gráinne for nudes.
- Sharing nudes with Gráinne.
- Threatening Gráinne with exposing her nudes.
- Coercing Gráinne to come and meet him.

### 3. Group Discussion: What is Grooming and Sexual Exploitation

**Step 1:** Explore and define the definition of grooming and sexual exploitation with students.
"The NCMEC found that 67% of offenders threatened to post sexual content online, with 29% specifically threatening to post it in a place for the victim's family and friends to see." (Be in Ctrl, Webwise).

**Step 2:** Have students to reflect on Gráinne's story and the above definitions.

**Example prompts are listed below:**

- How did this story make you feel?
- How do you think the girl in this story felt at the beginning? Middle? End?
- If you were the girl in the story, what would you have done?
- Did you know that exploitation, like in this story, is a crime?
- Do you think this could happen to someone you know?
- Can you think of some steps she can take to protect herself from further sexual exploitation?

## 4. Activity - Scenario-based questions

**Step 1:** Break the students into groups of 4/5. Each are given one of the below scenarios about sexual exploitation and online sexual harm.

**Step 2:** Give the students worksheets with the following scenarios. Each group writes their opinions and advice in response to their scenario.

**Step 3:** Before feeding back to the full group, each small group passes their sheet onto the next group. Students are instructed to read through the new scenario/advice given and see if they would add any more ideas.

**Bystander** – Someone in your immediate peer group, shows you a partially nude picture that one of their friends has shown them. You recognise that the boy in the picture is a lad that you vaguely know from a team you are on. You have never spoken to him properly before. It makes you uncomfortable, as your friends think it's amusing that this photo is being circulated and some of them have reposted it on their private online stories where people have been commenting on it. What do you do? Do you tell the lad in the picture that it is being circulated? Who could he turn to for help?

**You** – I am beginning to dread going to school because I feel so uncomfortable. A few months ago, a joke started between my peers where they call me "sexybum". They often slap my bum really hard, and everyone laughs. It makes me feel so uncomfortable. They do it constantly. It escalated of late because someone commented on a picture of me online saying "looking well Sexybum" and now my Mum will not stop asking me about it. I do not know what to do. I do not want to get my friends in trouble, but I can't hack it anymore. What should I do?

**Friend** – A friend comes to you and says that they fear a nude picture of them, and screenshots of sexts they sent are circulating amongst their peers. They fear the photos have been leaked on a classmate's private story as per a rumour they heard earlier that day in school. How would you help them? What could they do?

**Step 4:** Explain to students what the "Bystander Effect" is and discuss *Notes in Teacher Guidance*

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## 5. Reflection, Summary and Session Close

❯ Summarise session, reiterate key points, and allow time for students to reflect on what they have learned throughout the programme.

❯ Ask students to reflect on key takeaways from Consent-Ed programme and on how they may change their behaviours or actions based on what they have learned.

❯ Sample prompts given in Teacher Guidance section.

❯ Reiterate the supports available to students

❯ Close

# Gráinne's Story

I was just 13 when I first met the man that groomed and sexually exploited me. I was an intelligent, shy and quiet girl, so I was more confident chatting to strangers online than in person. I enjoyed playing video games and had a large platform of online friends. Some of these friends attended my school and youth club, others I had built a rapport with online and now considered them friends. One of these friends was a male by the name of Kevin, who I spoke with daily. We enjoyed playing the same video game. We chatted for months about perfectly innocent things. Gradually, he began telling me things about him and his girlfriends. It began with the odd mention of his sex life or sexual innuendo. It progressed to him telling me stories in detail, such as when he had sex with a woman he was seeing in front of a friend who was a virgin. It made me uncomfortable but I didn't know how to tell him to stop. I liked that the conversations made me feel mature and gave me an insight into an adult sexual relationship. I saw this as an advantage I had over my peers.

As time went on, he began suggesting things he wanted to do to me. Still, there remained an invisible barrier between us, between the talking and the acting. The internet provided space between us to make the conversations feel safe and at times almost a fictional existence. He wouldn't meet me in person, he would say, because he was unsure he could restrain himself. A noble man restraining himself, the story went. He began to pay for extra game subscriptions for me so that we could unlock new levels. This was exciting. It was all exciting. This was until he decided we should meet, upon which he repeated the same gradual weaving of the everyday and the sexual into our physical encounters, just as he did our virtual ones. Part of these virtual encounters consisted of nude image sharing by both him and I. At first, I was apprehensive but he assured me because he had also sent me a picture that I was doing nothing wrong.

This is grooming. It's the gradual weaving of sexual ideas into an otherwise normal conversation until they become normal conversation. And then, slowly, inexorably, things move beyond conversation. He began to put pressure on me to meet him. He did this slowly by suggesting seeing a movie to taking a trip to meet him in the nearby city. These invites I politely declined by making excuses. Then one day he told me that he was going to come to my village the next day to meet me, a small rural village in Ireland. How would I explain I know this man to my peers, to my family, to everyone? Everyone in this village knew me, they knew my hardworking parents. Surely someone would spot me meeting with this stranger.

I was scared. I told him that he couldn't come that I was away with my youth club on a trip. I was beginning to realise how much information he had extracted from me when he threatened to come in my absence and post the nude pictures through the door of my home, addressed to my father. I did not realise that he knew where I lived. In hindsight. I remembered needing to give it to him so he could subscribe me to the game add-ons. He knew where I attended school by the crest on my uniform in selfies I had sent him. He knew which clubs I was part of by the crests on my hoodies. I felt stupid and trapped. I had no option but to meet him. I agreed to meet him in the nearby town which was a just a short bus ride away... and this is how it all started and led me to where I am today.

What is rarely spoken about is the immense confusion this situation creates for the survivor. You can care for perhaps even think you love, your perpetrator. In my case, I never wanted sexual attention as a child. At 13. I didn't really know what sex was. My perpetrator was so skilled that, in time, not only did I stop saying no to the touching, to the other things he wanted, he got me to say yes. My resistance was gently, worn down. I welcomed him into my childhood bedroom. I said yes as much as a child can say yes to something they don't comprehend.

# Session 4

## Teacher Guidance

- Activity - Gráinne's Story
- Group Discussion: What is Grooming and Sexual Exploitation?
- Scenario-Based Questions
- Reflection, Summary and Session Close

The final session of Consent-Ed examines the topics of grooming and sexual exploitation, as, unfortunately, these are threats in the lives of young people today. It can be scary if it happens to a young person, but it can happen to anyone. The session comprises two parts, addressing the topics aligned with the relevant SPHE outcomes.

**?** The NCMEC (National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children) found that 67% of offenders threatened to post sexual content online, with 29% specifically threatening to post it in a place for the victim's family and friends to see.

**Part 1** of this session addresses Outcome 4.6 by looking at the topic of grooming and how a young person may be groomed. The first two activities – 'Gráinne's Story' and a video highlighting teenage grooming – focus on the warning signs that someone is being groomed and the effects of grooming.

**Part 2** of this session requires students to reflect on the previous three sessions that they have covered in the second-year module and construct a plan as to how they would help the victim in each of the scenarios and how they would get them support that they needed.

**Learning Intention:** At the end of this lesson, students will be able to define sexual exploitation and grooming, and practice the skills of identifying and communicating support services.

### 2. Activity - Gráinne's Story

**\*\* Warning: Some students may find this story heavy or disturbing. You as teacher will know your group best. Feel free to edit the story to tone it down if needed. It is strongly suggested to have a conversation about the topics that will arise in the story to make the students aware of what might come up before commencing this activity.**

Gráinne's story is based on two true stories of young girls in their early teens that were groomed by strangers. They were aged 12 and 13 respectively when they first encountered their groomers. Each part of Gráinne's story is an adaptation of these two young victims' stories. Both girls chose to tell their stories to raise awareness of grooming and the long-term effects it had on them and their families. The story aims to highlight that anyone can be groomed and to emphasise how the

abuser groomed Gráinne in different ways. It is really important to explain to students that none of the abuse that Grainne suffered was her fault. Sexual violence, no matter what kind, is never the victim's fault. Pre-empt some responses blaming the narrator here: this may be part of participants processing what happened in this story but also displaying societal norms of victim blaming.

During the feedback and discussion, it is the role of the facilitator to ensure there is no ambiguity as to where fault lies, and the following points are made clear:

- Kevin is fully to blame for this situation, none of the actions Gráinne took or didn't take are to fault for what happened. We only look into Gráinne's actions as warning signs as to what can happen online.

- In all sexual violence, including grooming, only the perpetrator(s) are to blame.
- Perpetrators know how to groom successfully.
- Perpetrators know how to look for vulnerabilities that make victims more susceptible.
- Perpetrators know how to isolate a victim, lower their self-esteem and make them feel extreme shame or fear, so they feel that they can't leave the situation.

It is not our role to judge the decisons that Gráinne may have made, as we don't understand the aspects of her life and her vulnerabilities that may have led her here, e.g. poor home life, parental neglect, special educational needs, previous trauma, etc.

**After reading through the story with students, ask them to identify the red flags or signs that Kevin was grooming Gráinne.**

- Met online through a game, never met in real life.
- Kevin was older than Gráinne.
- Slowly introducing sexual topics and telling Gráinne about his sex life.
- Telling Gráinne he would not be able to 'restrain himself' if he met her in person.
- Buying her gifts – game rewards.
- Using the gift buying to extract more information from Gráinne.
- Extracting personal information over time.
- Asking Gráinne for nudes.
- Sharing nudes with Gráinne.
- Threatening Gráinne with exposing her nudes.
- Coercing Gráinne to come and meet him.

**Further Discussion Prompts**

- If you were in Gráinne's shoes, who might you talk to about the situation?
- Is there anything about this story that surprised you?
- Do you think that this type of scenario is likely to happen to someone your age?

### 3. Group Discussion: What is Grooming and Sexual Exploitation?

Introduce the definitions below to the students and explain the importance of learning about these two topics. Then get students to reflect on Gráinne's story and the definitions provided. Note: Gráinne's story can be very heavy, get students to discuss how reading the story made them feel and how it affects the way they will approach meeting people online. Some discussion prompts are provided.

**Grooming:** When an adult builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit, or abuse them.

**Sexual Exploitation / Extortion:** When someone is persuaded or forced to send sexual images and/ or videos of themselves, or perform sexual acts via webcam, or threatened with such material in order to get money.

**Though grooming and sexual exploitation can take many different forms, it often follows a similar pattern.**

- **Victim selection:** Abusers often observe possible victims and select them based on ease of access to them, or their perceived vulnerability.
- **Gaining access and isolating the victim:** Abusers will attempt to physically or emotionally separate a victim from those protecting them and often seek out positions in which they have contact with minors.

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- **Trust development and keeping secrets:** Abusers attempt to gain trust of a potential victim through gifts, attention, sharing 'secrets' and other means to make them feel that they have a caring relationship and to train them to keep the relationship secret.

- **Desensitisation to touch and discussion of sexual topics:** Abusers will often start to touch a victim in ways that appear harmless, such as hugging, wrestling and tickling, and later escalate to increasingly more sexual contact, such as massages or showering together. Abusers may also show the victim pornography, or discuss sexual topics with them, to introduce the idea of sexual contact.

- **Attempt by abusers to make their behaviour seem natural to avoid raising suspicions:** For teens, who may be closer in age to the abuser, it can be particularly hard to recognise tactics used in grooming. Be alert for signs that your teen has a relationship with an adult that includes secrecy, undue influence or control, or pushes personal boundaries.

**Sexual exploitation:** Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse. When a child or young person is exploited, they are given things, like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection, in exchange for performing sexual activities, (NSPCC Learning, 2022).

**Reflection discussion prompts: Pick prompts that suit your group and suit your timings.**

- How did this story make you feel?
- How do you think the girl in this story felt?
- If you were the girl in the story, what would you have done?
- Did you know that exploitation, like in this story, is a crime?
- Do you think this could happen to someone you know?
- Can you think of some steps she can take to protect herself from further sexual exploitation?

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### 4. Scenario-Based Questions

Scenario-based questions is an activity that requires students to think critically and to use the knowledge and skills that they have learned during this course. In their groups, students decide how they would help and what advice they would give themselves, a friend, or a bystander in the three situations. Students can either work on each scenario or one group takes a scenario each, depending on group dynamics and time allowances.

This is a good place to talk to your students about a trusted or "safe adult" in their lives that they can turn to when in need. This may be a parent, aunt/uncle, older sibling or cousin, a teacher, youth worker or coach that they feel they can trust and will help them to the best of their abilities.

**Additional Information**

**Bystander Effect:** The bystander effect occurs when the presence of others discourages an individual from intervening in an emergency situation, against a bully, or during an assault or other crime. The greater the number of bystanders, the less likely it is that any one of them will provide help to a person in distress. People are more likely to take action in a crisis when there are few or no other witnesses present.

This activity is designed to show the effects of the bystander effect among people in relation to sexting. A lot of young people feel that it isn't their place to get involved when someone is being sexually harassed, as they don't want to get involved in someone's business and don't know how to intervene. This is also common online. People may not report abusive comments, or circulation of explicit material, because they presume that someone else will report it or help the person involved to get help.

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### 5. Reflection, Summary and Session Close

Summarise session, reiterate key points, and allow time for students to reflect on what they have learned during this session and throughout the programme.

Ask students to reflect on key takeaways from Consent-Ed sessions and on how they may change their behaviours or actions based on what they have learned.

**Example prompts:**

- Most useful information
- New support services they were previously unaware of
- Facts or statistics that surprised them
- Something they learned that they want their friends to know
- Something they might tell their parents/families about
- One thing they will do differently from now on
- Identify one safe adult they would go to if they encountered the issues discussed throughout the programme

Reiterate the supports available to students

Close.
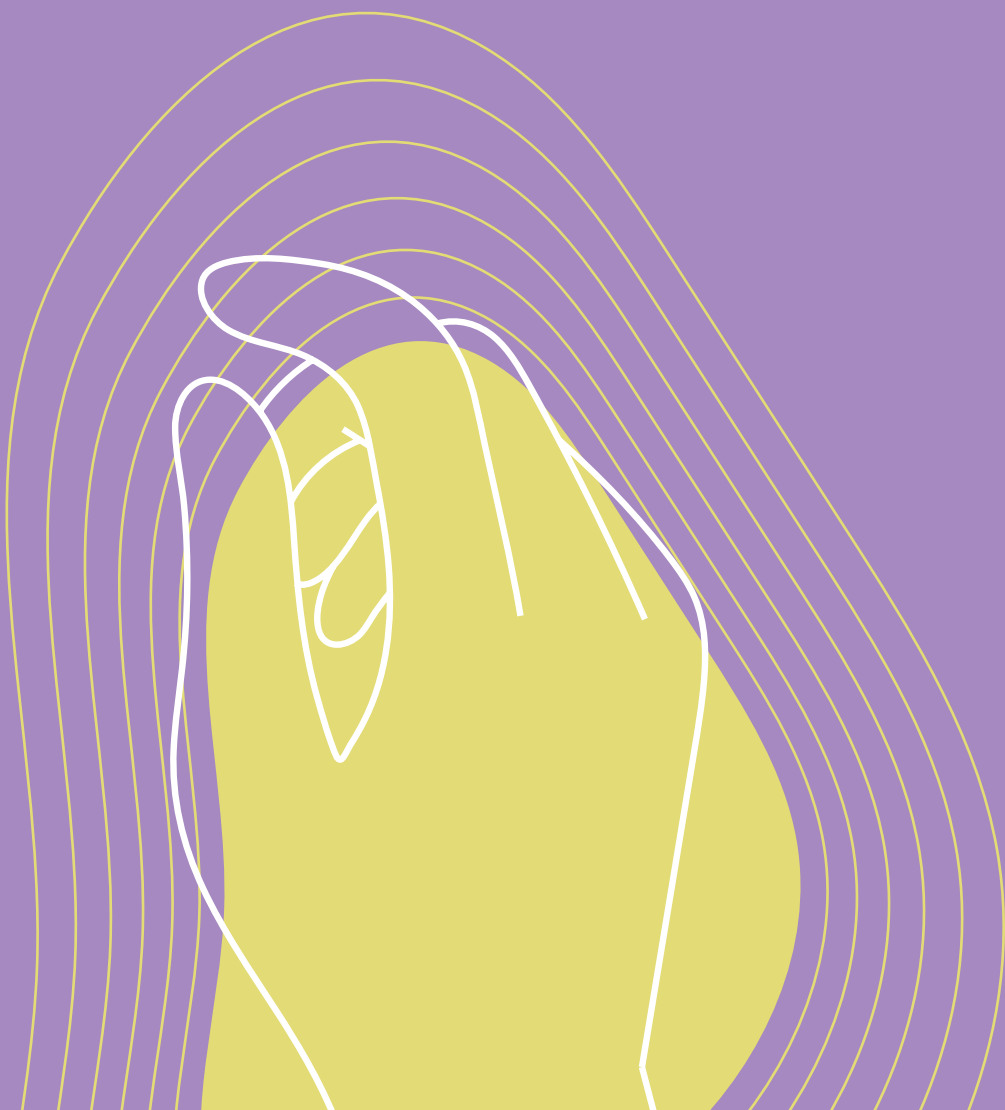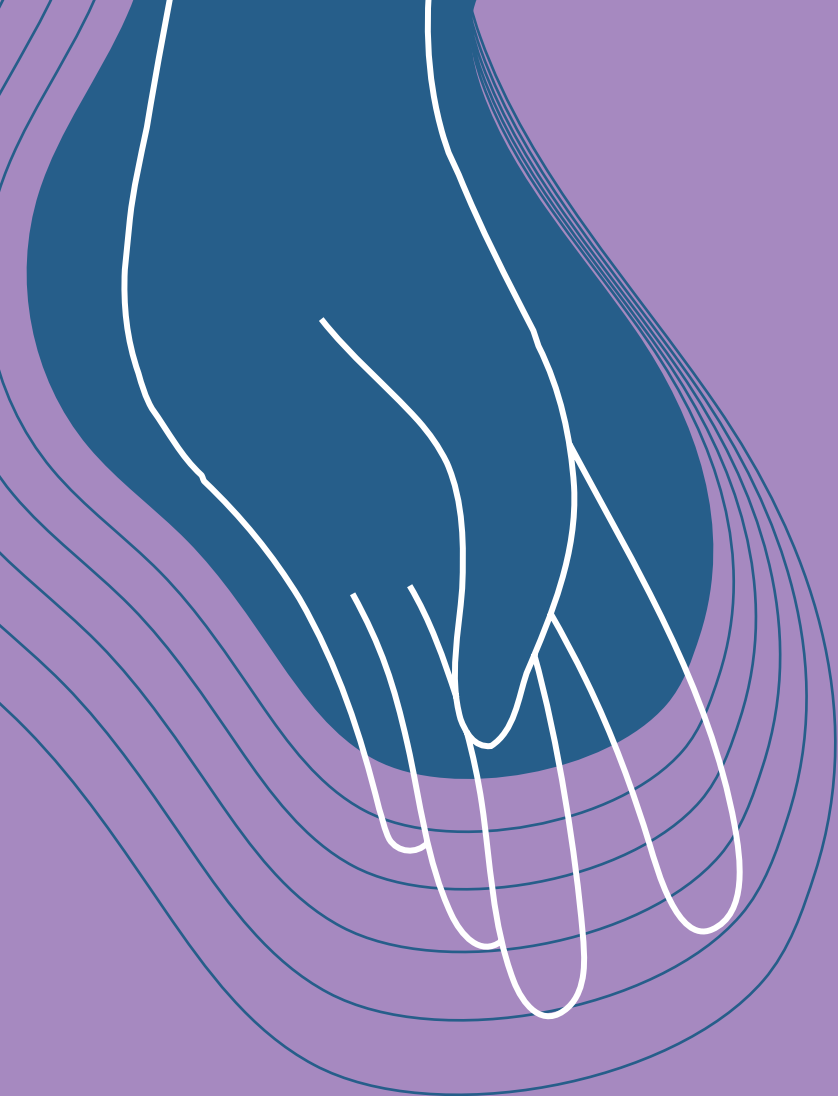
# Appendix 1: Additional Supports

- **Gardaí:** Your local Garda station should be notified if you or a member of your family are being cyberbullied, threatened or harassed.

- **National Crisis Text Line:** Free text 'Hello' to 50808.

- **Tusla:** Concerns about child welfare should be reported directly to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

- **Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU):** https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/sexhealth/satu/ SATU is a safe place for those who have, or believe they may have, been raped or sexually assaulted. SATU looks after all genders and gender identities, aged 14 years and over. Each member of staff in the unit has received specialised training to provide care and treatment in a respectful, person-centred, non-judgmental environment. There are six units in Ireland – in Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Mullingar and Waterford.

- **Rapecrisishelp.ie** Has a directory of all Rape Crisis Centres in Ireland to find one closest to you, along with other useful information. The RCC's national 24-hour helpline is open 365 days of the year and is completely free – you can contact them on 1800 778888.

- **B4uDecide.ie** The HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme runs the B4uDecide campaign – for teenagers most importantly, but also for parents, teachers and youth workers, to help them in talking to teenagers in their care about relationships and sex.

- **Belongto.org** Is the national organisation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI+) young people in Ireland.

- **Bodywhys.ie** Is the national voluntary organisation supporting people affected by eating disorders. Its mission is to ensure support, awareness and understanding of eating disorders among the wider community, as well as advocating for the rights and healthcare needs of people affected by eating disorders.

- **Childline.ie** Is a part of the ISPCC (Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children), offering free and confidential supports to young people 24 hours a day – call 1800 66 66 66, or text Talk to 50101.

- **Consenthub.ie** Supports young people and those important to them (teachers, parents, college staff and policy makers) in building their knowledge of consent with interactive resources, videos, and trainings.

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- **Hotline.ie** Provides free reporting and support for IBSA (image based sexual abuse). This is an anonymous facility for the public to report suspected illegal content encountered on the Internet, in a secure and confidential way. It is run by the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland.

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- **Myoptions.ie** Aims to make women aware of the existence of a range of high-quality, State-funded, crisis pregnancy counselling services that can assist them in finding a resolution to a crisis pregnancy.

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- **Reachout.com** Is an online youth mental health service helping young people through tough times.

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- **Samaritans.ie** Samaritans' mission is to alleviate emotional distress and reduce the incidence of suicidal feelings – available 24 hours a day to provide emotional support for people who are struggling to cope.

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- **Sexualwellbeing.ie** The HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme is a national programme tasked with implementing Ireland's framework for sexual health and wellbeing. Spunout.ie Is Ireland's youth information website – created by young people, for young people. This site aims to inform its readers about the importance of holistic wellbeing and how good health can be maintained, both physically and mentally.

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- **Teni.ie** Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) seeks to improve conditions for and advance the rights and equality of trans people and their families.

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- **Webwise.ie** Offers information, advice and support to those who have been affected by abuse relating to sexting.

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- **Yourmentalhealth.ie** Is a place to learn about mental health services in Ireland, coordinated by the HSE, National Office for Suicide Prevention and partner organizations across the country.

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