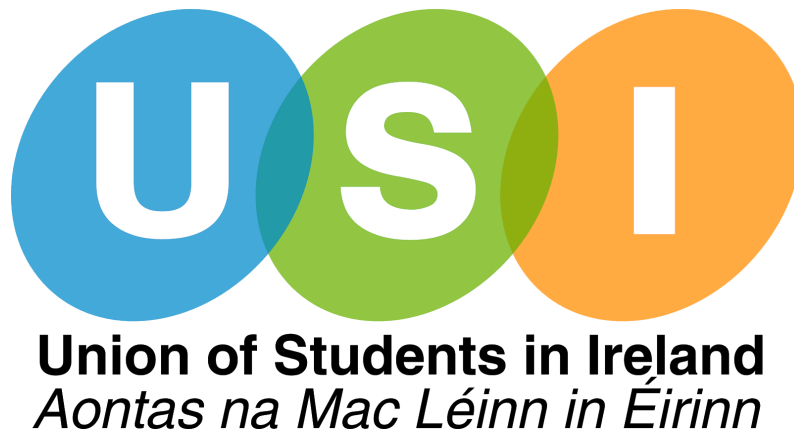


Review of Sexual Health and Relationship Education, Including matters relating to Contraception and Consent.



The Union of Students in Ireland: Overview

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the sole representative body for students in Ireland and represents 354,000 students in over thirty member colleges across Ireland, North and South. Throughout its history, USI has worked relentlessly in the pursuit of student rights in all areas of the student experience.

USI runs many initiatives in relation to sexual health and consent throughout every year.

Most notably our sexual health campaign (S.H.A.G Week -Sexual health awareness and guidance) which consists of a national roadshow where we give out information on contraception, STI's, condom demonstrations, healthy relationships and consent. We also disseminate over 20,000 sexual health packs which contain a condom, a sachet of lube and information on STI's, Consent and how to use a condom/dental dam.

Apart from our sexual health week, we also run online sexual health campaigns which are gender neutral and inclusive of all sexualities. In 2013 we conducted research on Sexual Violence, Harassment and abusive relationships named the "Say Something" Survey.

The report focused on the following areas; Unwanted Sexual Experiences, Physical Mistreatment, Harassment, Obsessive Behaviour and Information on Campus. Some of the key findings highlighted in the report include:

- 16% of respondents experienced some form of unwanted sexual experience while at their current educational institution.
- 1 in 5 women surveyed experienced some form of unwanted sexual experience, with 11% experiencing unwanted sexual contact.
- Just 3% of respondents who had an unwanted sexual experience reported it to the Gardaí.
- The largest proportion of victims of unwanted sexual experiences identified the perpetrators as being acquaintances.
- 10% of women and 5% of men experienced obsessive behaviour that made them afraid or concerned for their safety.
- 19% of men and 17% of women have been photographed or filmed without their consent.
- Over 10% of men and 8% of women have had photographs or videos circulated online without their consent.
- 3 out of 10 women respondents experienced comments with a sexual overtone that made them feel uncomfortable.

- 51% of the women surveyed discussed the issue of sexual violence with their friends, only 38% of men did.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender students.

- LGBT students account for 14.72% of respondents. The survey data suggests that LGBT students were more likely to have experienced the behaviours examined in the study than non-LGBT students:
- 17% of LGB students were the victims of obsessive behaviour as against 11% of non-LGB students.
- 22% of LGB students experienced physical violence compared to 14% of non-LGB students.
- 25% of LGB students recorded having an unwanted sexual experience compared to 14% of non-LGB students.

While the number of Trans respondents was insufficient to draw firm conclusions, they indicate even more pronounced levels of students experiencing physical and sexual violence.

The Vice President for Welfare of USI currently sits on the HSE Sexual Health Communications committee and the HSE Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme committee.

Third Level Education and Young People

National Framework:

USI recommends that the HSE (Health Service Executive) and HEA (Higher Education Authority) set up a group with USI and relevant bodies such as AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access & Disability), CSSI (Confederation of Student Services Ireland) and ISHA (Irish Student Health Association) to ensure there is cohesive sexual health education with a focus on STI's, Contraception, Healthy Relationships and Consent.

Under current structures students have sometimes received little or inadequate sexual health education, and so third level education is often a key source of information around sexual health, consent and relationships.

We need to work together to ensure students and young people receive the most relevant information to them that is inclusive of all genders, binaries and sexualities.

Consultation and inclusion of organisations such as TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland) and Belong To as will ensure inclusion and cohesive sexual health material and resources.

Online Resources:

With the recent streamlining of sexual health resources to a HSE website on many aspects of sexual wellbeing, USI recommends utilising this to its full potential with targeted resources for young people, who are still beginning to navigate personal and physical sexual relationships, and further explore sexuality.

STI Testing:

A key part looking after our sexual health is ensuring our health is looked after. USI recommends that free STI testing be available in every HEI and county.

Sexual Health checks should be a regular part of maintaining overall health and to reduce the risk of long term after effects and further spread of infection to others.

Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) provisional records show that in 2017, there were 5200 cases of young people diagnosed with either, chlamydia (n=3730), gonorrhoea (n=872) or genital herpes (n=598), representing an 11.2% increase of these STIs in this age group (15-24) when compared to 2016 figures.

Campaigns:

For all upcoming educational campaigns, USI recommends that they consider the wide range of diversity, sexualities and binaries that exist, and ensure gender neutrality wherever possible to ensure inclusivity.

Contraception:

USI believes that access to contraception is important for all citizens including young people to have access to free contraception, knowing which contraception choice is best for them. Having free contraception is important to ensure there are no barriers to access.

Crisis Pregnancy:

Crisis or unplanned pregnancy can occur at any time. USI recommends that supports and literature including all 3 options which is un-biased, factual and easily accessible to any pregnant person or anyone in a support capacity.

Consent:

Many students' unions and HEI's are already running consent classes for 1st years and subsequent years. USI recommends consent classes be supported as part of orientation programmes in every HEI.

Second Level Education

Curriculum

USI recommend a standardised curriculum for all second level schools, so that all students are afforded the equal right to sexual health education.

USI also recommends that the curriculum be evidence based and free of any religious ethos or influence.

LGBTI+

USI recommends inclusion of LGBTI+ within all modules and curriculum relating to sexual health, consent and healthy relationships.

Consent

USI recommends consent classes and space to explore healthy relationships be a key part of sexual education throughout second level.

Contraception and STI's

USI believes that students need to be armed with factual information to ensure they can make informed decisions when it comes to their sexual health.

Primary School

Consent and Healthy Relationships

USI recommends that curriculum should include consent and healthy relationships at primary level. This is key in development and fostering of dialogue around consent, healthy relationships and what they feel they should look like. LGBTI+ inclusion also needs to be insured to include all students at primary level.