

How to identify a sexual offence when the victim is an adult

The aim of these instructions is to provide people working in sports clubs with more information about sexual offences against adults. These instructions are not intended to be fully comprehensive, nor are they meant to address legal questions. With regard to legal questions, it is worth remembering that a victim of sexual violence is almost always entitled to free legal counsel.

About consent

Everyone has the right to sexual autonomy: the right to decide for yourself when, how, and with whom you are prepared to interact sexually. In all sexual interactions, there must be certainty about the consent of all parties, and everyone must have the possibility to change their consent during the interaction. Consent refers to a voluntary expression of willingness by all parties involved.

Consent...

- can be given verbally, through gestures and behaviour, or in other ways
- is not universal and cannot be inferred from e.g. how someone dresses, nor is it applicable to all situations, circumstances, or people.
- applies only to one specific moment or act. Consent applies specifically to the situation, actions and parties for which it was given.
- can always be withdrawn. Everyone has the right to change their mind at any point, for no specific reason, even if they already gave their consent.
- cannot be given if coerced or in a situation where, due to the circumstances (intoxication or a significant imbalance of power), a person is not able to reliably form or express their will.

Sexual violence refers to sexual and non-consensual acts that violate a person's boundaries. Sexual violence violates another person's autonomy, sexual integrity, privacy, and sense of safety.

Sexual violence is always an abuse of power. However, not all hurtful acts that violate sexual autonomy are sexual offences. A safe sports club will also intervene in acts that violate sexual autonomy and integrity but which do not constitute an offence.

Sexual offences

Sexual offences are defined in [Chapter 20 of the Criminal Code of Finland](#). If you are unsure of whether to suspect a sexual offence, you can always consult the police or ask an expert for advice. Please note that if you suspect a sex offence against an adult, you can consult the police but you cannot report an offence without permission from the injured party. Always remember to ask for advice without disclosing anyone's name.

- Your local police
- Victim Support Finland (RIKU): <https://www.riku.fi/en/contact-information/>
- The Et ole yksin (*You are not alone*) service: www.etoleyksin.fi

You can also find more information on the following website:

- poliisi.fi/en/sex-offences

If an adult tells you that they have been the victim of a potential sexual offence, you can encourage them to contact the experts above and/or to report an offence. An adult decides for themselves whether or not to report an offence, even if they were a minor at the time of the incident. It is always advisable to report an offence, even if it took place years earlier. The police will assess the potential offence in question and the statute of limitations applicable to the act.

Reporting an offence

When you report an offence, the police will consider whether there are grounds to suspect an offence and, if necessary, launch preliminary investigations. As such, the person reporting the offence does not need to be certain that an offence has been committed or what type of offence it would be. The suspicion of an offence all that is needed to file a report. If the victim of a sex offence is an adult and refuses to report the offence, their wish must be respected, even if they were a minor at the time of the incident.

You are always obligated to report an offence if you suspect that someone is planning rape, aggravated rape, rape of a child, aggravated rape of a child, or aggravated sexual abuse of a child. (Criminal Code of Finland 15:10). Reports that contain very little information will not necessarily progress to preliminary investigations. A good rule of thumb is that if you know who the victim is, there is enough information to report an offence. You do not need to know the perpetrator.

If you suspect a sexual offence, it should be reported to your local police department. Do not gather evidence for or against a person's account. Independent investigations carried out by individuals may hinder the police's work later on.

For example, the following acts meet the criteria to constitute an offence:

- Directing sexual acts at a person who has not given their consent, or who is not capable of giving voluntary consent, as well as attempting such acts.
- Inappropriate sexual comments, such as jokes or sexually charged remarks or questions about a person's body or intimate private life
- The unauthorised display or distribution of sexually suggestive images of a person, including where the image has been edited to deceptively resemble the person
- Sending or displaying sexual images without consent
- Taking sexual images of another person without their consent
- Indecently exposing yourself, such as by showing your genitals to another person without their consent
- Non-consensual touching, such as with the hands or lips of areas of the body generally considered to be sexually significant. Such areas include e.g. the breasts, genitals, bottom, and thighs.
- Blackmailing someone with self-produced sexual material.

Organisations that provide support to victims of sex offences:

- [The Et ole yksin service](#)
- Some health services/health centres in wellbeing services counties
- [Victim Support Finland \(RIKU\)](#)
- Tyttöjen talot and Poikien talot for 13–28-year-olds
- [The Tukinainen support organisation](#)
- [The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters](#)
- [Naisten Linja](#)
- [Miessakit Association](#)
- [Nollalinja: for people who have experienced violence in close relationships](#)
- [Välitä! work against sexual violence](#)
- [Seri support centres for people over 16 who have experienced sexual violence](#)