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# Consent and Chemsex information for Gay & Bi men in London

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## Why are we issuing this information now?

There have been a number of recent high profile court cases in London that have focused on the death and sexual assault of gay/bi men by other gay men, all involving the use of hook up apps and chemsex. We know that some gay/bi men are worried about this, and unsure of their rights, the law and how to be safer.

This document was written by Galop, London Friend and Survivors UK. We are London-based organisations working with gay/bi men, and men who have sex with men, who experience sexual assault and other challenges relating to consent and chemsex.

## Consent: do what you both (or all) want!

This is the heart of the consent message: you don't have to do anything you don't want and you shouldn't make anyone do anything they don't want. Just agreeing to meet up with someone via an app or stepping through the door into a sauna or chemsex party/chillout does not mean you are agreeing to whatever anyone else wants to do. You have to work it out as you go along. And the law says you can change your mind at any point.

The law says to be able to consent to sex you must:

## Have the capacity to consent

If you are asleep, unconscious or so out of it that you can't make a decision for yourself then you cannot consent. Whatever anyone does to you while you're in this state is done without your consent and that makes it a crime.

## Be free to consent

Consent has to be freely given. If you are threatened or coerced into saying yes, then you are not giving your consent freely. This can invalidate your 'yes' and may mean the person/people having sex with you are committing a crime. Taking advantage of someone because they are 'out of it' or unsure, vulnerable or inexperienced is not OK. In fact, it's a crime.

***Do what you both want***

***If it isn't what you both want – or you aren't sure – the best advice is stop, wait, give yourself time to talk, listen and think***

## If bad stuff happens to you, it's not your fault

People who are sexually assaulted often ask themselves if it was their fault or whether they could have done something different to prevent being assaulted. We believe it is very important to say clearly: it is not your fault. No one has the right to take advantage of an intimate situation to hurt you.

If you're taking drugs, having sex with lots of guys, accidentally over-dosing, involved in kink, experienced or new to the apps/chemsex/gay scene, none of it gives someone else the right to take advantage of the situation to sexually assault you - or commit any other crimes, like robbery, filming you without consent or blackmailing you. You're allowed to make unwise or naïve choices without other people having the right to take advantage of that or harm you.

***It doesn't matter who you are, where you are, what you're doing or what you've taken, no one has the right to commit a crime against you, and having sex without consent is a crime***

There is independent, confidential, specialist support available in London from Galop and Survivors UK for men who have experienced sexual assault (detail on next page). Everyone is entitled to call 999 if they are in danger or have just been a victim of crime.

## Feeling more empowered

We know sex, intimacy and relationships can sometimes be awkward and complicated, and we can all make mistakes. But each of us is responsible for our behaviour, including making sure that the person/people we want to have sex with *also* want what we want.

***If you are not sure if someone is consenting, stop, wait, talk, listen and think  
[www.dowhatyoubothwant.com](http://www.dowhatyoubothwant.com)***

There are lots of things we can do as individuals, and as a community, to make the sex we have truly consensual and to take action when things are not great or when someone is abusive. Here are some ideas:

## Use apps with knowledge...

Apps are part of life and offer great opportunities but use them in an informed way. **Galop** has issued new advice (*Crime, Safety and Hook Up Apps: Advice for Gay & Bi Men*, [www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)). **London Friend** has safety advice at [www.londonfriend.org.uk/apps](http://www.londonfriend.org.uk/apps).

## Get help with the chems...

We know some people find drugs fun and that they can enhance sexual pleasure, but for others they can begin to dominate your life. One of the downsides is the effect they can have on relationships, work, money and emotional health. If you are experiencing any difficulties help is available.

**London Friend runs Antidote**, a specialist LGBT drug and alcohol support project. Antidote can help you manage your chem use, and give practical support to help you stop altogether or gain more control. It also offers counselling which can help you look at any emotional or underlying issues that may be connected to your drug or alcohol use. All support is confidential.

[www.londonfriend.org.uk/antidote](http://www.londonfriend.org.uk/antidote) **020 7833 1674**

**Antidote runs drop-in clinics on:**

Mondays - at 86 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DN, 11am-1pm  
Thursdays - at 32a Wardour Street, Soho, London W1D 6QR, 6pm-8.30pm

**56 Dean Street, the sexual health clinic** ([www.dean.st/chemsex-support](http://www.dean.st/chemsex-support)) also runs chemsex drop-in clinics on:

Tuesdays-5pm-7.30pm (Code Clinic, in partnership with Antidote) Thursdays -

1pm-4pm

Saturdays – 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> of the month, 1pm-3pm

**GMFA** has information for men involved in chemsex: [www.gmfa.org.uk/saferchems](http://www.gmfa.org.uk/saferchems)

## Speak up if you've been sexually assaulted

If you've been sexual assaulted by someone you met via an app, or you're confused about what happened to you, don't keep quiet about it. Specialist independent advice is available and you can talk to the police if you want to.

**Galop** is the leading LGBT anti-violence organisation and has a lot of experience working with gay/bi men who have experienced sexual assault in a chemsex context, including around reporting options. Our specialist support is independent, confidential and free:

[www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk) (online reporting and national web chat service) **020 7704 2040**

[referrals@galop.org.uk](mailto:referrals@galop.org.uk)

**Survivors UK** supports men who have experienced sexual assault, sexual abuse or rape - whenever it happened. We support men across the UK but offer face to face services in London.

[www.survivorsuk.org](http://www.survivorsuk.org) (national webchat service) **020 3598 3898**

**Getting medical help and talking to the police:** The Havens is London's Sexual Assault Referral Centre. The Havens operates from three sites and offers confidential forensic, medical and counselling help to everyone who has experienced sexual assault in the last year. It is open 24 hours a day/7 days a week and you can get medical help and have forensic evidence captured, without having to talk to the police if you don't want to.

**Tel: 02032996900 to find out where to go and make an appointment**

[www.thehavens.org.uk](http://www.thehavens.org.uk)