**Consent Workshop Report**

This report highlights the issues that the Catz JCR had when organising and preparing ourselves for the consent workshops in fresher’s week. At the end of this report I will suggest some amendments to the consent training for Michaelmas 2023.

**Contents:**

1. Management
2. SU resources
3. Proposal for 2023

**Management**

The other welfare reps and I were informed by the outgoing reps that the SU would send us information about the consent workshop facilitator training over the summer. We wanted to wait until we knew this information to recruit facilitators, so that they could sign up being fully informed about what the training would entail.

Issues:

* We did not receive the training dates until the 2nd of September, which was just over 2 weeks before the training dates began (19th – 30th of September) and were told that the training would be held online – this was all the information we had, which made it difficult to recruit facilitators
* The training dates were very close to fresher’s week, which did not give facilitators much time to prepare

The training used resources (see below) that were crucial for facilitators to have to prepare themselves to lead the consent workshops.

Issues:

* We were told that we would receive all the documents within a few days of being trained, but did not receive them until the 5th of October, the day after our workshops (despite sending another email before fresher’s week)
* We had to ask the MCR (who also sent the SU a follow-up email) to send them to us the day before the workshops were led, meaning the facilitators felt unprepared
* The resources were not finalised until after the facilitator training had taken place, meaning we were being trained with incomplete resources

**SU Resources**

The training itself involved 3 documents: an instruction document for the facilitators (this was the main source of information for the facilitators to use in the workshops), a hand-out signposting important contacts, and a hand-out for the first years being trained containing only the scenarios being used.

After consulting with the Terrence Higgins Trust and our facilitators at Catz, we have identified some areas for improvement with the resources used:

Starting the workshop with statistics – statistics can certainly be useful but beginning a workshop with them may scare some people and give others a basis on which to be contrary (we were asked questions about how they were recorded and why smaller statistics mattered).

Long scenarios – we attempted to get the first years to read out the scenarios, which proved very difficult as they were very long, so contribution was lower than desired. The scenarios concerning sharking and spiking had the most engagement.

Legal definitions – the legal definitions of rape and sexual assault are important to know. However, they are not by any means inclusive definitions, so including them in the workshops without any other information may scare people or make them feel invalidated.

Lack of detail – at Catz, we had an additional training session by a member of the Terrence Higgins Trust, which provided us with in-depth information about stereotypical assumptions, rape culture in the media, how to build consent culture etc.

The majority of our facilitators at Catz attended this workshop, and all who did report that they felt much more prepared to facilitate discussion around consent with this training.

The training included:

* Discussion on stereotypes such as heteronormativity and cisnormativity
* Discussion on fetishization and exoticisation
* Training on being trauma informed and survivor-centred approaches
* Focus on intersectionality
* Discussion on behaviours perpetuating rape culture (in the media and every-day life)
* Discussion on how to create a culture of consent
* Issues in legal definitions and reporting bodies
* Practise on how to answer difficult questions as a facilitator

These are all things we attempted to integrate with the SU resources during our workshops but proved difficult due to time constraints. Feedback shows that the first years were highly engaged in discussion around stereotypes and different aspects of legal definitions and reporting bodies.

**Proposal for 2023 workshops**

1. Working with the Terrence Higgins Trust for consent training

The trust offers full training for students to lead consent workshops, with resources included. From my understanding, this does entail a larger time commitment (approximately 2 days in-person) but the training is more rounded and in-depth. They are also commissioned by the Oxfordshire City Council and the NHS, so there would be little-no charge for this service (I am waiting to hear more information from them about full consent training).

I understand that this may not be a feasible option, as facilitators would need to be recruited early and would need to be in Oxford for the training before fresher’s week begins. However, it is still possible to work alongside the trust to develop more in-depth resources and provide facilitators with more information to better prepare them.

1. Shorter scenarios

If the SU wishes to continue developing their own resources, I suggest shortening the scenarios to increase engagement with them. Including more scenarios that are shorter may be a better option to ensure we cover as many issues/topics as possible, instead of having long scenarios where we struggle to cover every discussion topic that it lends itself to.

1. Embed statistics throughout the scenarios

Instead of beginning with a list of anxiety-inducing statistics, it may be better to encourage the facilitators to use specific statistics for discussion on relevant scenarios or place them towards the end of the workshop to open the discussion outside of a university context.

1. Trauma informed training

We were not given any training or information about being trauma informed – as facilitators, we are encountering potential SA survivors, and it is important to know how to look for signs that someone is uncomfortable or being triggered. I propose that this becomes a core part of facilitator training, as well as making content warnings obligatory.

1. Training on leading discussion and difficult questions

I propose that facilitator training includes information about how to make/keep a room engages (different tasks that can be given, questions to ask, etc.) and information about how to approach difficult questions.

I am aware that the SU has a lot on their plate, and next year’s consent workshops are far in the future – however, I believe that these improvements would better the quality of the consent workshops for the first years and would make the student facilitators feel more comfortable and prepared to lead discussion on consent.

Please contact me with any questions or to discuss this further!

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