

## How do I recognise a suspected sexual offence against a minor?

Sexual offences are defined in [Chapter 20 of the Criminal Code of Finland](#). If you are unsure of whether to suspect a sexual offence on a minor, you can always consult the police or ask an expert for advice. You can ask for advice without disclosing the victim'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](http://www.etoleyksin.fi)

You can also find more information on the following website:

- The Finnish police: [Sex offences – advice on crime prevention for young people and adults – poliisi.fi/sex-offences](#)
- The Finnish police and Ministry of the Interior: [Nuoret ja rikollisuus – tietoa lasten ja nuorten kohtaamista rikoksista – nuoretjarikollisuus.fi \(information about crimes encountered by children and young people, in Finnish\)](#)

**You can also use the questions below to help you consider your suspicions.**

### What is the age of the victim?

There are two ages of consent in the law: 16 and 18. The law states that sexual acts may not be performed on a child under 16 years of age. Children under 16 years of age considered to still be undergoing sexual and emotional development and growth, and are in need of special protection.

The age of consent of 18 protects children and young people from sexual violence within the family and from sexual acts committed in a relationship of trust or by someone in a position of authority. People who are in a relationship of trust or position of authority include, for example, a child or young person's teacher, instructor in a recreational or other activity, coach, or assistant. If you suspect a child under the age of 18 has been the victim of a sexual offence, seek advice from the police and child welfare services. A person over the age of 18 may decide for themselves whether to report the matter to the police, even if they were a minor at the time of the act.

Chapter 20 of the Criminal Code of Finland contains a restrictive provision. The purpose of this restrictive provision is to avoid penalising consensual sexual acts between young people when one is over 16 and the other is under 16.

In order for this provision to apply, the young people must have no great difference in their mental and physical maturity, the sexual act must be based on mutual consent, and the acts must not involve pressure, coercion, or violence. On the same grounds, the law also does not prohibit sexual activity between young people under the age of 16.

### What happened?

- a) If you become aware that an adult has had intercourse with, engaged in sexual acts, or attempted such acts with a child or young person under the age of consent, report the offence to the police and submit a child welfare notification.
- b) If the acts below were performed on a child or young person under the age of consent, and the perpetrator is a young person over the age of 15 or an adult, the matter must be reported to the police as an offence and a child welfare notification must be submitted.
  - inappropriate sexual comments, such as jokes or sexually charged remarks or questions about a person's body or intimate private life
  - sexual gestures or expressions, such as making gestures that refer to masturbation
  - inappropriate sexual content on different social media channels, WhatsApp and Snapchat messages, text messages, emails, telephone calls
  - suggestions or demands for intercourse or other sexual acts
  - enticing a child or young person to view pornography, masturbation, intercourse • describing sexually charged acts
  - causing a child to act in a sexually charged manner, such as touching or caressing their intimate areas while the perpetrator watches the child's actions (including online)
  - showing genitals to a child (including online)
  - touching a part of the child or young person's body that is generally considered to be sexually significant: breasts, genitals, buttocks or thighs, kissing
  - enticing a child for sexual purposes face-to-face or in an online environment, grooming

- the possession, display and/or distribution of sexualised images or videos of a person under 18, or material altered to resemble them, as well as the possession and sharing of material that depicts sexual violence against a child or sexualises a child.
- purchasing sexual services from a person under 18, promising compensation for sexual acts, or attempting to do so
- blackmailing someone with self-produced sexual material.

### **What do you know about the incident?**

- The victim's account of a sexual offence committed against them is always sufficient grounds to report an offence. 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. If, however, there is digital material concerning the incident, such as messages or screenshots, this material should be saved for police investigation.
- If, based on rumours, you suspect that a minor has been the victim of a sexual offence, first discuss the matter with the victim and their parents/guardians. However, if the rumours suggest that the child's parent or guardian is the perpetrator of the act, do not discuss the matter with the parents or guardians.
- If the victim is under the age of 18, you can report the matter as an offence and submit a child welfare notification even if the victim is opposed to you doing so. [The persons specified in Section 25 of the Child Welfare Act](#) have a duty to report offences and submit child welfare notifications.
- If the victim is 18 years of age or older, they decide for themselves whether or not to report an offence, even if they were a minor at the time of the incident.