



# Personal Relationships & Sexual Health Policy February 2024

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This document outlines the role and responsibilities of Youth Leaders in the application of The Hub@Henley Community Centre CIO's Personal Relationships and Sexual Health Policy as well as stating the policy itself. It is unacceptable for a Youth Leader at The Hub not to be aware of its contents and understand the implications of the policy for their work in the club.

## **2.0 ROLE OF YOUTH CLUB LEADERS**

It is the responsibility of the Youth Activities Manager to ensure that all Youth Leaders are fully familiar with this document.

Youth Leaders have a responsibility to raise awareness and discuss personal relationships, sexual health and sexuality issues with young people who they are working with. This forms part of the Youth Work curriculum.

Youth Leaders will also be offered training to support them in their sexual health promotion role. Youth Leaders may provide sexual relationships education (SRE) in a variety of ways and in a range of contexts such as:

- a response to a question or comment from a young person;
- as part of a planned personal and social education programme offered individually or in groups, e.g. to prepare a young person for the onset of puberty; to inform young people of the consequences of unprotected sex;
- an occasional campaign e.g. World AIDS Day, National Condom Week;
- facilitating a discussion after watching a relevant video or television programme;
- through partnership working with other agencies; and
- maintaining an up-to-date information service for young people giving information on local services and helplines.

## **3.0 APPLICATION OF THE POLICY – SPECIFIC ISSUE STATEMENTS**

The following information summarises the key requirements of this policy. Further detailed information on these specific issues together with details of local services is available from the Youth Activities Manager.

### **3.1 Accompanying a Young Person to Access Sexual Health Services**

Youth Leaders can accompany a young person to access a sexual health service.

Respect Yourself guidance for Youth Leaders recommends that if staff accompany a young person to a service that they:

*“..... need to ensure that the young person can see the health professional on their own so that confidentiality is maintained, unless the young person specifically requests that they are accompanied during the consultation.”*

## **Terminations**

There is no specific legislation that provides guidance to Youth Leaders on this matter except as regards child protection issues. This is a highly sensitive matter and one which youth workers need to do everything possible to encourage the young person to discuss the issue with parents/carers. They may also support the young person to make their own arrangements for an appointment. Youth Leaders need to work closely with the Youth Activities Manager on this issue. They should keep detailed records of these related discussions and the necessary follow-up and support work. ONLY after this work and dialogue should a Youth Leader consider supporting a young person in the travel arrangements to attend / collect from a termination appointment. (see appendix one)

### **3.2 Age Appropriate Information**

Youth Leaders should use the following as a guide when delivering Sexual Relationships Education. Young people should be given accurate, easy to understand information about:

- Abuse
- Being a parent
- Contraception
- Dealing with regretted sexual activity
- Different relationships
- Health and hygiene
- How to access confidential advice and services
- How to avoid and resist unwanted sexual pressures, including peer pressure
- Masturbation
- Relationships
- Reproduction and birth
- Rights and responsibilities
- Sex and gender
- Sex and the law
- Sexual development
- Sexual orientation
- Sexual response and desire
- Sexuality
- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS and safer sex
- Terminations

Young people should be given opportunities to:

- Develop their inter-personal skills
- Explore their own attitudes to themselves and others
- Understand the importance of relationships, responsibilities and respect for self and others
- Be able to understand and express their emotions and behaviour

### **3.3 Condoms**

Youth Leaders can provide young people with a single condom as part of an educational intervention. ONLY staff who have been trained will be permitted to issue condoms to young people.

All Youth Leaders should encourage young people to access contraceptive advice and services from the local Sexual Health and Contraception Services.

### **3.4 Contraception**

This policy endorses the Teenage Pregnancy Unit (TPU) Guidance that Youth Leaders can and should give young people (including under 16s) information on sexual health and contraception and details of where and how to access local services. A key role of Youth Leaders is to provide information on contraceptive methods and the importance of using condoms to protect against Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD). Youth Leaders are not health professionals so they should not give advice on which method of contraception to use. As is consistent with TPU guidance, young people needing to make a contraceptive choice should be encouraged and supported to visit a local contraceptive service. There is a duty to encourage young people to speak to their guardian / parent if possible.

### **3.5 Disabilities and Learning Disabilities**

Young people with disabilities and learning disabilities have the same rights of access to information as other young people. They will however face additional barriers when doing so. There are many myths surrounding the sexuality of young people with disabilities and learning disabilities – e.g. a denial of their maturation leads to a denial to acknowledge sexuality. It is important that the sexuality of young people with disabilities is acknowledged and that Youth Leaders must ensure that they are afforded the same rights to access appropriate sexual health information and services. Any information provided will need to take account of an individual's communication strengths and needs.

### **3.6 Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues**

Same sex relationships will be valued and negative attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are not appropriate and should be challenged.

All Youth Leaders need to ensure the safe development and provide a safe environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people. They need to be sensitive to their feelings about same sex relationships. Personal views should not be imposed on young people and care should be taken with language and behaviour.

Homophobia must be challenged by all staff. The vulnerability to bullying and discrimination of young people in these groups should be recognised.

Youth Leaders should be aware of local support services. Information on these services should be provided alongside other information produced for young people.

### **3.7 Outside Agencies**

All young women should be offered guidance and support to enable them to make informed choices about their future and the future of their child. Youth Leaders should:

- Ensure impartiality when looking at options and not make assumptions about the young woman's decision. The worker is there to highlight the choices available NOT to guide them with their decision;
- Assist young women in confirming their pregnancy as soon as possible (see practice guidance);
- Make arrangements for young women to discuss options available to them with a health professional (continue pregnancy, adoption or termination);
- Make information available on pregnancy options, ante-natal care and caring for a baby,
- Reassure young women that they will be supported with their decisions according to their individual needs,

Youth Leaders have the same responsibility in supporting young fathers.

### **3.8 Pregnancy Testing**

If a young person suspects that they are pregnant it is preferable for them to have a pregnancy test at a local Sexual Health and Contraception service. However, if they refuse, Youth Leaders can support them with a home pregnancy test.

### **3.9 Confidentiality/Reporting Sexual Activity**

A case of sexual activity involving an under 13 year old is a safeguarding matter.

Sexual activity with a child under 16 is also an offence. Where it is consensual it may be less serious than if the child were under 13, but may nevertheless have serious consequences for the welfare of the young person. Consideration should be given in every case of sexual activity involving a child aged 13-15 as to whether it is a safeguarding matter. All cases should be carefully documented including where a decision is taken not to share information.

The considerations in the following checklist should be taken into account when assessing the extent to which a child (or other children) may be suffering or at risk of harm, and therefore the need to hold a strategy discussion in order to share information:

- the age of the child. Sexual activity at a young age is a very strong indicator that there are risks to the welfare of the child (whether boy or girl) and, possibly, others;
- the level of maturity and understanding of the child;
- what is known about the child's living circumstances or background;
- age imbalance, in particular where there is a significant age difference;
- overt aggression or power imbalance;
- coercion or bribery;

- familial child sex offences;
- behaviour of the child i.e. withdrawn, anxious;
- the misuse of substances as a disinhibitor;
- whether the child's own behaviour, because of the misuse of substances, places him/her at risk of harm so that he/she is unable to make an informed choice about any activity;
- whether any attempts to secure secrecy have been made by the sexual partner, beyond what would be considered usual in a teenage relationship;
- whether the child denies, minimises or accepts concerns;
- whether the methods used are consistent with grooming; and
- whether the sexual partner/s is known by one of the agencies.

### **3.10 Young Women/Girls and Terminations**

There is no legislation to support Youth Leaders with this decision except guidelines around whether or not it is a child protection issue. If the young person concerned refuses to share with their parents or guardians then this should be seen as a safeguarding issue.

Youth Leaders should not accompany a young person for a termination.

### **3.11 Recording Sensitive Information**

Detailed information regarding a young person's sexuality, sexual behaviour or sexual health should not be recorded by Youth Leaders unless there are concerns that they are at risk of harm or harming someone else.

### **3.12 Religion, Culture and Sexual Relationships Education (SRE)**

Religious and cultural differences may affect how SRE is provided and delivered. This does not mean that young people should be denied the benefits of such information. This information should be provided in accordance with the moral and values framework of this policy.

Youth Leaders should talk to young people at the earliest opportunity about their religious and cultural views and values.

If Youth Leaders are uncomfortable delivering SRE as a result of their own religion or culture, they must notify the Youth Activities Manager so alternative arrangements for delivering SRE can be made. It is not appropriate for Youth Leaders to present sexual health information to young people in line with their own cultural / religious beliefs if this goes against the morals and values framework of the policy. It is not appropriate for Youth Leaders to impose their own individual moral beliefs or personal views when addressing sexual health issues.

### **3.13 Sexual Exploitation through Prostitution**

All children and young people subjected to sexual exploitation should be seen as victims of sexual abuse and at risk of physical and emotional abuse.

All Youth Leaders are encouraged to be aware of the potential for young people to become sexually exploited through prostitution. Guidance has been issued by the Department of Health as a supplement to “Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023”. If there are concerns that a young person is involved in or at risk of sexual exploitation through prostitution Local Safeguarding Children’s Board Child Protection Procedure, must be followed.

Youth Leaders should ensure that young people are made aware of the methods of grooming used by paedophiles and where to access support.

### **3.14 Sexually Explicit materials including Pornography**

Material that gives stereotyped, distorted or exploitative view of men, women, boys and girls may be particularly damaging to young people, particularly those who have been sexually abused. As with other discriminatory behaviour, the viewing of such material by young people should be challenged in line with the Hub’s commitment to eliminating discriminatory practice.

If a young person is found in possession of legal pornographic material they should not be reprimanded. They should be informed that many people find this type of material distasteful. It may be appropriate to have further discussions about pornography and explore the young person’s feelings and attitudes towards it. If the young person wishes to retain such information, it should be stressed that this should only be viewed in private so that other children are not offended or influenced by its content. Depending on the age and understanding of the young person it may be appropriate to remove the material.

Under Section 160 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 as amended by Section 84(4) of the Criminal Justice Public Order Act 1994, it is an offence for a person to have an indecent photograph or pseudo-photograph of a child in their possession. Any young person in possession of this type of pornographic material should be referred to appropriate child protection procedures.

In venues where young people have access to the internet, Youth Leaders must ensure that the internet policy is observed.

### **3.15 Use of Resources**

When selecting resources, Youth Leaders must consider age appropriateness and the ability of young people to understand the information provided and whether they are up to date. Where appropriate, materials and leaflets used for Sexual Relationships Education will be made available in other languages and formats e.g. Braille. Efforts will be made to ensure all materials used are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Resources will be selected on the basis that they do not promote ethnic, cultural or religious stereotypes.

### **3.16 Gender Issues**

Youth Leaders have a responsibility to provide Sexual Relationships Education which meets the needs of young men and young women.

### **3.17 Working with Groups**

When working with groups of young people it is important for Youth Leaders not to make assumptions about the life experiences of the young people and their families.

### **3.18 Working with Parents**

It is good practice to inform parents of planned SRE courses. However, if the young person does not wish their parents to be consulted, and is of sufficient age and understanding, their wishes should be respected.

### **3.19 Working with Young Parents**

Youth Leaders have responsibilities in supporting young mothers and fathers. Up to date referral information is available to Youth Leaders through the local Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

Youth Leaders should:

- Liaise with appropriate advisors to ensure young parents receive a holistic package of care e.g. housing and benefits;
- Encourage young parents to access appropriate health services e.g. specialist midwives and health visitors, and refer accordingly;
- Keep up to date with the local Teenage Pregnancy referral guidance to ensure young parents are effectively referred to any appropriate local facilities e.g. family centres;
- Explore options around continuing/accessing education, employment and/or training and support the young parent with their chosen option;
- Promote childcare funding and support the application where appropriate;
- Promote, wherever possible, inclusion in activities by providing appropriate child care arrangements;
- Enable young parents to have the opportunity to access information on contraception choices after having a baby, ideally through a community midwife or health visitor.

## **4.0 PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES AND SAFE PRACTICE**

Youth Leaders must maintain a professional relationship with the young people they work with (see the National Youth Agency code of ethics). It would therefore be inappropriate to share personal information / experiences around personal relationships and sexual health with young people.

Under no circumstances should Youth Leaders persuade young people to become involved in any sexual relationships.



## **5.0 SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION**

Support will be provided to Youth Leaders through their line management arrangements.

## **6.0 POLICY REVIEW:**

February 2027