



Youth Work Ireland

# YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONSULTATION ON POSITIVE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

## Guidelines and Activity Pack for Youth Workers

[www.youthworkireland.ie](http://www.youthworkireland.ie)

An Poinn Leanaí  
agus Gnóthai Oige  
Department of  
Children and Youth Affairs

  
National  
Lottery

# Positive Sexual Relationships

We are at a unique moment in history when there is an open dialogue about consent, coercion, reproductive health and healthy sexual behaviour happening all around us because of various national and global movements. Youth Work Ireland's year of work will provide young people with a safe place and space, to have their voices heard on all issues relating to positive sexual health and healthy sexual relationships.

Youth work and youth workers are uniquely placed to have honest, open and non-judgemental conversations with young people about healthy sexual relationships outside of the school and the home context. Adult youth workers are often in a position of respect and influence and can deliver healthy sexual relationship advice more effectively. Their involvement will result in better policies, better understanding and better services for young people.

## SECTION 1: Introduction, Guidance & Preparation

### 1.1 Why hold a Consultation on Positive Sexual Health?

**We are working on this topic for two reasons:**

In 2018 Youth Work Ireland will be working on the theme of Positive Sexual Health. This topic was chosen through a consensus process in 2017 which included regional and national workshops, a national survey, online campaign and finally a vote at our national conference. Also, current legislative, policy, social media events in Ireland and the world related to sexual health require a coordinate and effective response from youth workers, youth work services and Youth Work Ireland.

**What will be the result of the consultation?**

Youth work's role in responding to the broad issues of sexual health, as stated by HSE Sexual Health & Crisis Pregnancy Programme **B4udecide**, tells us *"youth work has an important role to play in addressing many of the sexual health issues of young people and is young person centred, through direct work with them. It also has a role to play in influencing factors at contextual and policy levels through advocacy, participation, partnerships and policy development."*

**In order for Youth Work Ireland to provide an effective, youth centred response with and for young people, we need to know:**

- A.** What issues, topics, problems and opportunities in the area of sexual health / healthy sexual relationships do young people want to **LEARN MORE ABOUT?** By knowing this, we will be better able to develop and provide learning opportunities and resources, appropriate training and supports to youth work staff and young people.
- B.** What issues do young people want to **BE HEARD ON?** *e.g. be part of a national awareness campaign* or **CHANGE/HAVE INFLUENCE ON** *e.g. be involved in decisions to affect a change.* By knowing this, we will be better able to support young people to engage in advocacy, participation and policy.

### 1.2 Holding a Safe Consultation on Positive Sexual Health

If you have received support from NYCI, or the HSE to develop a sexual health policy and staff capacity in this area, you may already be aware of the steps to take to ensure this consultation is a safe space for young people. However, you may wish to read **Appendix One** at the back of this resource (pg 7) for additional guidance and to best consider how to support young people in the area of sexual health. There is also additional supports on Youth Work Ireland's website [www.youthworkireland.ie/what-we-do/positive-sexual-relationship](http://www.youthworkireland.ie/what-we-do/positive-sexual-relationship)

### 1.3. Preparing for the Activity

- This activity should be facilitated by 2 people who are either experienced youth workers, or very highly skilled and experienced volunteers, with the knowledge and support of the youth work team in the youth service.
- This activity is designed to take 50 minutes to deliver. This allows for at least 10 minutes for an ice breaker or energiser of your choosing to form and settle the group.
- Facilitators should allocate 30 minutes approx. to prepare, plan for and consider the introduction, guidelines and procedures prior to delivering the activity. This includes any time required to check in with senior managers and arrange notice to parents if deemed necessary. The facilitators should also be familiar with the Child Safe Guarding Policy and should have consulted with senior management about how any related issues will be addressed.
- Be aware that in addition to these guidelines and the accompanying poster, the Youth Work Ireland website provides the following supports for staff and services:
  - Additional information about sexual health issues
  - Listings of support services and agencies.
  - Consent form for parents/guardians of young people under 18 years.
  - Information letter for parents/guardians providing additional information on the consultation.
  - Additional guidance for staff for developing and providing a supportive environment for sexual health.
  - Good practice guidelines for developing, implementing and evaluating a Sexual Health Policy in youth organisations
- This activity may require follow up to support help-seeking behaviour of young people or to address any issues arising.
- In addition to the provided pack, you will require markers, writing materials and a flipchart.

### 1.4 Poster Materials

There are two posters to accompany this activity. They are the **Roadmap of Positive Sexual Relationships Youth Consultation** (image 1) and the **Positive Sexual Relationships Umbrella poster** (image 2).

Both posters have been included with this activity, should you need additional copies please contact Gina in Youth Work Ireland @ [ghalpin@youthworkireland.ie](mailto:ghalpin@youthworkireland.ie)

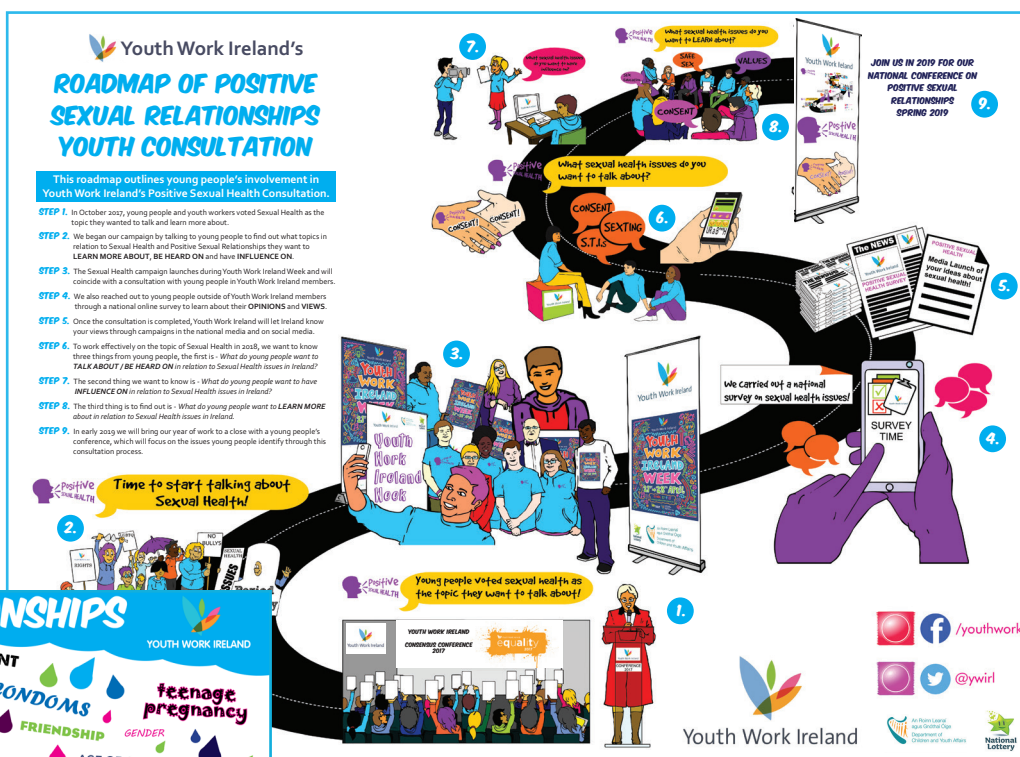


Image 1: Youth Work Ireland's Roadmap of Positive Sexual Relationships

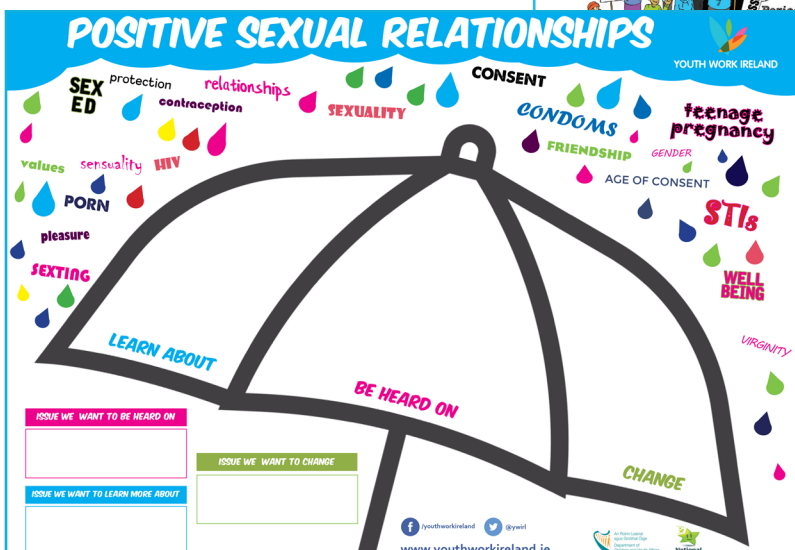


Image 2: Positive Sexual Relationships- Umbrella Poster

# SECTION 2: Implementing the Activity

## 2.1 Summary outline

| CONTENT   | MATERIALS  | TIME       | PREPARATION  |
|---|--|------------|--|
| Introducing the activity to the group.<br><br>Icebreaker<br><br>Introduce the Roadmap poster<br><br>Outline the pictures depicting the steps. | Youth Work Ireland's Roadmap of Positive Sexual Relationships<br><br>Youth Consultation Poster | 10 minutes | Read pack and guidelines in advance.<br><br>Parental consent & information letter - if deemed necessary.<br><br>Check with management regarding any clarifications or policy requirements. |
| Group contract  | Flip chart & markers   | 5 minutes  | Read the guidance on developing the contract.  |
| Introducing positive sexual health to the group.  | Flip chart, markers, definition of sexual health & umbrella poster                             | 15 minutes | Read the pack and guidance in advance.   |
| Brainstorm topics in relation to sexual health.   | Flip chart, markers & umbrella poster  | 15 minutes | Read the pack and guidance in advance.   |

## 2.2 Introducing the Consultation to the Group

**Materials Needed:** Roadmap of Positive Sexual Relationships Youth Consultation

**Preparation:** Pre-read of pack and guidelines and check in with management and parents where necessary.

**Time:** 10 Minutes

### Procedure:

**Icebreaker:** If you feel it to be helpful, starting with an icebreaker or energiser activity of your choosing may be useful depending on the group.

**Introduce the Roadmap Poster:** When the group is ready to start, introduce the poster depicting 'Youth Work Ireland's Roadmap of Positive Sexual Relationships Youth Consultation'. Explain that this road map shows the plan of work from beginning to end that Youth Work Ireland, its member services, young people and youth workers will follow to address the topic of positive sexual health. Emphasise that we are at the beginning of the plan of work and can't move forward until we hear from young people about the positive sexual health topics they want to **LEARN MORE ABOUT** e.g. listen to speakers / experts at the conference, hear case studies on this issue, **BE HEARD ON** e.g. be part of a national awareness campaign and **CHANGE/HAVE INFLUENCE ON** e.g. be involved in decisions to affect a change. Point out pictures depicting the steps in the Roadmap poster, with the following supplementary information:

**STEP 1:** At our 2017 national conference young people voted sexual health as the topic they wanted to talk about.

**STEP 2:** Our campaign began by talking to young people about sexual health issues and positive sexual relationships.

**STEP 3:** Our campaign will launch during Youth Work Ireland Week and will coincide with this national consultation taking place across Youth Work Ireland Member Services.

**Step 4:** We also carried out an online survey on healthy sexual relationships with young people.

**Step 5:** Once the consultation is finished we will announce the findings through national & social media campaigns.

**Step 6:** Young people identify what issues they want to **BE HEARD ON** in relation to sexual health & relationships.

**Step 7:** Young people identify issues they want to have **INFLUENCE ON** in relation to sexual health & relationships.

**Step 8:** Young people identify issues they want to **LEARN MORE** about in relation to sexual health & relationships.

**Step 9:** In 2019 we will hold a national conference to focus on the issues identified through this consultation process.

**Engage the group in a very short discussion to establish their understanding about what the consultation is about and if they have any questions on what will be done with their input and feedback.**



## 2.3 Group Contract

**Materials Needed:** Flip chart/markers

**Preparation:** Pre-read of pack and guidelines

**Time:** 5 minutes

### Procedure:

Explain that in the next session, young people will be exploring topics related to sexual health and relationships to establish their opinions and views. This means that at times they may talk personally about things that are important to them, **but will not at any time be talking about their own experiences, or telling stories about the experiences of other individuals.**

To have this conversation in a comfortable way, we need develop a set of ground rules which will make it possible for young people to speak, be heard and to think about sexual health in today's world, in a setting where they feel safe.

Brainstorm possible rules. To get this process going, you could ask questions such as “*What would help to make you feel comfortable participating in this group?*” and “*What might make this group uncomfortable for you and prevent you from participating?*”. List suggestions on a flipchart sheet and negotiate a set of the most important suggestions.

**The following rules need to be established:**

- **I will not tell my own story or others' stories - When young people are speaking about sexual health it should focus on what young people as a collective in Ireland are facing.**
- Being here and listening to others' views is a very important contribution, I do not have to say anything or talk if I don't feel like it. I can just listen.
- I will take responsibility for what I say.
- I will respect others' opinions even when they are different from mine.
- I will not put others down or slag them off.
- I will be honest in what I say.
- I am okay with the youth worker providing clarification.
- I understand that what people say is confidential and is not up for discussion outside of this space.

*(Even though young people are not discussing their personal experiences, they may not be comfortable discussing their personal opinions in relation to these issues outside of this safe space)*

*(It is necessary for the workers to highlight the safeguarding policy of the organisation and the possible impact it may have should there be a disclosure regarding child sexual abuse, underage sexual activity and consequences arising out of involvement in 'sexting', etc).*

## 2.4. Introducing Positive Sexual Health to the group

**Materials Needed:** Flip chart/markers.

**Preparation:** Pre-read of pack and guidelines

**Time:** 15 minutes

### Procedure:

Ask the young people how they would define sexual health. You can provide an overview of the generally accepted definition which is “*a state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence*”. World Health Organisation ([http://www.who.int/topics/sexual\\_health/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/sexual_health/en/)). Ask the young people what they think of this and whether there should be other issues included.

**Some prompts could include:**

- Feeling good about ourselves and our bodies, and being able to express ourselves in the way we choose.
- Knowing our bodies and how they work and being able to take care of our bodies and stay healthy.
- Being able to negotiate safer sex.
- Having enjoyable friendships with other young people.
- Being able to discuss concerns about health and sexuality with a knowledgeable adult.
- Feeling able to challenge beliefs about how males and females should behave with and towards each other.

## 2.5 Brainstorming Topics Related to Positive Sexual Health

**Materials Needed:** Flip chart, markers, art supplies and the Umbrella poster.

**Preparation:** Pre-read pack and guidelines, you may wish to print off additional information and resources from the Youth Work Ireland website [www.youthworkireland.ie/what-we-do/positive-sexual-health](http://www.youthworkireland.ie/what-we-do/positive-sexual-health).

**Time:** 15 minutes

### Procedure:

Present the group with the umbrella poster with 3 blank panels. Ask them to brainstorm some possible topics or issues in relation to Positive Sexual Relationships / Sexual Health, which they want to **LEARN ABOUT, BE HEARD ON** and **CHANGE/HAVE INFLUENCE ON**. In each of the assigned panel ask them to write, draw or decorate the main things they associate with that issue. These can be their concerns, words, ideas, questions, suggestions or solutions.

If the young people are unable to identify topics or are having trouble starting, we have identified some of the main areas of sexual health from our discussions with sexual health experts. These can be used to prompt the groups and can be found at [www.youthworkireland.ie/what-we-do/sexual-health-issues](http://www.youthworkireland.ie/what-we-do/sexual-health-issues)

## 2.6 Agreeing the Topics and Writing up the Results

**Materials Needed:** Umbrella poster, markers and camera phone to capture the identified topics.

**Preparation:** Pre-read of pack and guidelines

**Time:** 5 minutes

### Procedure:

Ask the group to feedback on what they think the main issues that are important to young people collectively in Ireland today in relation to positive sexual relationships / sexual health and ask them to select issues they want to **LEARN MORE ABOUT, BE HEARD ON** and want to **CHANGE / HAVE INFLUENCE ON**. Write the most important in each of the boxes. There is a need for the second worker to record the main points of the discussion so that what is recorded on the poster can be understood at a later stage. The workers should also email the accompanying notes taken on the session to [ghalpin@youthworkireland.ie](mailto:ghalpin@youthworkireland.ie)

**Finally... take a photo of the poster ensuring all the text is shown in the image and either post it to Youth Work Ireland's Facebook page - [www.facebook.com/youthworkireland](http://www.facebook.com/youthworkireland) or email it to [ghalpin@youthworkireland.ie](mailto:ghalpin@youthworkireland.ie)**

## SECTION 3: What Happens to the Feedback

Throughout the year there will be opportunities for young people to get involved in campaigns on the topics raised in these consultations, so their opinions really do matter. All the feedback from the consultations will be collated and the main topics will form the basis of an awareness campaign, conference and supports for young people.

This pack is available as a PDF download from our website.

**To keep up to date with the Positive Sexual Health campaign check out Youth Work Ireland's website and social media pages.**

[www.youthworkireland.ie](http://www.youthworkireland.ie)

[www.facebook.com/youthworkireland](http://www.facebook.com/youthworkireland)

[www.twitter.com/ywirl](http://www.twitter.com/ywirl)

# Appendix One

## Guidelines on Holding a Safe Consultation on Sexual Health

### 1. THE SAFETY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IS PARAMOUNT

The purpose of this consultation is to encourage young people to share their views, ideas and opinions on positive sexual health. This activity is safe, in that it is about identifying the issues most relevant to young people in general, rather than sharing individual issues and experiences.

At the outset of this consultation activity, it is vitally important that the group collectively make a contract to establish that the workshop is not a place for telling personal stories or experiences. This could cause harm to the young people themselves or to others as a result of hearing those stories.

The comfort and security provided in the youth work environment may naturally encourage young people to share or divulge personal experiences, however, the sharing of such stories must be gently, but absolutely discouraged. It is wisest to say that if a young person wants more information on issues that have been brought up, they can come and speak to the youth worker afterwards, and we have listed additional services, supports and information provisions further in this pack. The limits of confidentiality should be made clear to the young person in this instance. Young people should also be reminded about the age of consent.

### 2. CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Youth workers should be familiar with their organisation's safeguarding policy and procedures that may be called upon to address safeguarding issues should they arise. Workers should be mindful of their reporting responsibilities in relation to underage sexual activity, 'sexting', sexual assault and any other sexual health issues which could impact a young person's health and welfare.

### 3. PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT/ INFORMATION

Parental consent will be accessed for those young people under 18 years participating in the consultation. A parental consent form is available from Youth Work Ireland's website. As part of this process, parents will be informed about the content of the consultation and will be provided with an opportunity to examine any associated materials or ask any questions they might have. Parents will also be informed that at no point in this consultation will young people be asked to talk about their sexual behaviour, nor will they be given information inappropriate to their age.

### 4. ADDRESSING MISINFORMATION

Youth workers deal with sensitive issues in young people's lives – good youth work practice will provide the basic principles for engaging in discussions. This includes challenging and addressing misconceptions and, in turn providing age appropriate information. If young people make factually incorrect statements about sexual health issues, it is important to address these using the information provided. In some instances, this may involve the delivery of a number of sessions in relation to sexual health following on from the consultation.

### 5. LANGUAGE

Workers should consider and understand the overall approach to defining and entering conversations about sexual health. The World Health Organization tells us that positive sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach. Language, attitudes and the general tone of group discussions should be positive and respectful. This tone and attitude is firstly established by the youth worker. The group contract should address the issue of language and outline what the group deems to be appropriate and respectful.

### 6. GROUP SIZE AND AGE RANGE

Due to the nature of some of the issues that may arise during this consultation, it is important for the safety and care of the young people taking part, that groups are of an appropriate size, i.e. be between 8 – 12 young people in each group, with an appropriate age range in each group as follows: 12-14 years / 15-16 years / 17-18 years.

This will help ensure that discussions taking place are age appropriate. Young people under and over the age of consent (17 years) should not participate in the same group. Workers should use their own judgement as to the gender makeup of the group. The critical issue is that young people feel comfortable with each other.

Additional resources & information to support this consultation can be found on Youth Work Ireland's website at:

[www.youthworkireland.ie/what-we-do/positive-sexual-relationship](http://www.youthworkireland.ie/what-we-do/positive-sexual-relationship)





Youth Work Ireland

# YOUTH WORK IRELAND WEEK

21<sup>ST</sup> → 28<sup>TH</sup> APRIL

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