

# Sexual Health Key Strategies



Youth Work Ireland conducted this review because we identified that young people were concerned about sexual health safety. We wanted to highlight key strategies and issues that youth workers and young people need to be aware of to create relevant programmes and make educated decisions, respectively.

French, S. E., & Holland, K. J. (2013). Condom Negotiation Strategies as a Mediator of the Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Condom Use. *Journal Of Sex Research, 50*(1), 48-59. doi:10.1080/00224499.2011.626907

This article outlines a study conducted to discover if condom use self-efficacy of college students affects condom negotiation strategies. The results concluded that condom use self-efficacy predicted five out of the six condom negotiation strategies. Furthermore, the ability to effectively use condom negotiation strategies proved to be more important than condom use self-efficacy. This source underlines the importance of not only instilling confidence in young people but teaching them pertinent skills and how to apply them in reality. The findings of this study will be advantageous when creating workshops and education packs for young people.

Halpern-Felsher, B. L., Kropp, R. Y., Boyer, C. B., Tschann, J. M., & Ellen, J. M. (2004). ADOLESCENTS' SELF-EFFICACY TO COMMUNICATE ABOUT SEX: ITS ROLE IN CONDOM ATTITUDES, COMMITMENT AND USE. *Adolescence, 39*(155), 443-456.

This study found that adolescents are more likely to have safer sex if they are able to discuss sex with their parents or peers. Furthermore, adolescents are more comfortable discussing sex with their peers as opposed to their parents. This data proves the importance of empowering young people with accurate information and tools to make positive sex decisions themselves as well as ensure that the information shared among peers is valid.

Melchert, T., & Burnett, K. F. (1990). Attitudes, Knowledge, and Sexual Behavior of High-Risk Adolescents: Implications for Counseling and Sexuality Education. *Journal Of Counseling & Development, 68*(3), 293.

This article outlines a study of the sexual behaviour, knowledge and attitudes of high-risk adolescents. The results of the study show that general sexual health knowledge does not predict reliable use of birth control. Furthermore, the adoption of high-risk attitudes towards sex correlates with unreliable use of birth control. The researchers conclude that sexual health education needs to include broader topics associated with sex such as "intimacy, communication, assertiveness, gender role expectations, values clarification, problem solving and life planning". Teaching these broader topics at a younger age may increase the chances of

reliable use of birth control and help adolescents make more informed decisions. This study validates the need for comprehensive sexual education and helps Youth Work Ireland conceptualize its role in creating improved teaching methods.

Moya, C. (2002). Life Skills Approaches to Improving Youth's Sexual and Reproductive Health. *Advocates for Youth*. Retrieved from <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/lifeskills.pdf>

This document provides a summary of a review done by UNICEF regarding the life skills approach in educating youth about health-related issues as well as a few examples of the life skills approach in practice around the world. It further explains how the life skills approach is advantageous in improving young adult's sexual and reproductive health through shaping their attitudes and developing their interpersonal skills. This source also identifies lessons learned from life skill education programs that can be useful in creating Youth Work Ireland's positive sexual relationships campaign.

Schalet, A. (2009). Subjectivity, Intimacy, and the Empowerment Paradigm of Adolescent Sexuality: The Unexplored Room. *Feminist Studies*, 35(1), 133-160.

In this article, Schalet explains the empowerment paradigm, an alternative to abstinence only education that emphasizes the experience of sexuality, instilling adolescents with agency. The empowerment paradigm provides young people with an awareness of their own sexual desires and boundaries outside of social and cultural forces so that they can make informed sexual decisions of their own. Youth Work Ireland's theme for its sexual health campaign is empowerment. This source helps define exactly how Youth Work Ireland aims to encourage young people to take ownership of their sexual health journey.

Young, H., Burke, L., & Nic Gabhainn, S. (2018). Sexual intercourse, age of initiation and contraception among adolescents in Ireland: findings from the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Ireland study. *BMC Public Health*, 18(1). Retrieved from <http://link.galegroup.com.libproxy.utdallas.edu/apps/doc/A531297475/HRCA?u=txshra cd2602&sid=HRCA&xid=5df3595b>

This article analyzes data from The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) to extrapolate sexual behaviours of kids aged 15-18. The results show that Irish children are being initiated into sex younger than the legal consent age of 17. The results also reveal certain knowledge, attitudes and behavior that lead to this early initiation of sex as well as young people not using reliable forms of contraception. This source is of high importance to Youth Work Ireland due as it addresses the sexual behaviours of young people.

### **Actionable learning**

Youth workers should:

- Design programmes that reach beyond basic knowledge and teach practical skills

- Create an environment where young people feel they can speak freely about topics surrounding sexuality
- Incorporate lessons that are not directly related to sexuality but help build agency in youth such as intimacy, communication, assertiveness, etc.

Young people should:

- Feel comfortable with their sexuality and talking about their sexuality before engaging in sexual intercourse
- Know their options when it comes to reliable birth control
- Have the confidence to ask their partner to use reliable birth control or protection and the ability to walk away if their partner refuses (i.e. negotiation skills)
- Develop life skills not directly related to sex such as problem solving, effective communication, healthy coping strategies, empathy, and self-awareness

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