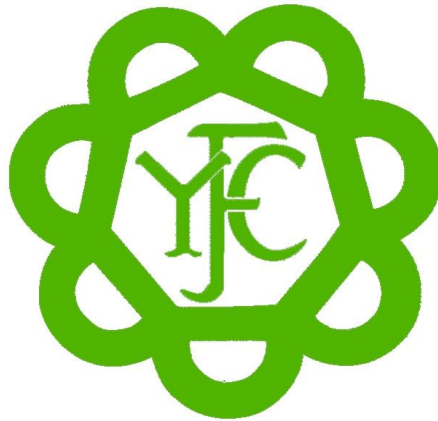


# **National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs'**



## **Sexual Health Policy and Guidelines**

**Adopted October 2008**



# National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs' Sexual Health Policy and Guidelines

## Introduction

The National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC) is a caring organisation committed to the welfare of its members whose ages range from 10 to 26 years. We actively support the Every Child Matters agenda and the 5 national outcomes for young people: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and economic well-being. Through our varied programme of activities, the Federation is well placed to make a significant contribution towards these outcomes and help members gain social education. As an organisation we have a responsibility to raise important issues that affect our membership. Sexual health is one of these issues. Many young people will engage in sexual experimentation while they are still of school age, sometimes resulting in negative consequences; rates of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections are very high in the under 25's.

Although sex and relationships education (SRE) is taught in schools it does not always cover everything young people need to know or are concerned about, also some individuals may have missed this provision. As a youth organisation the NFYFC can compliment statutory SRE. We can support and build on members' knowledge and help them to stay healthy and safe by making sure that key messages around sexual health are addressed and promoted. This can be done in two ways:

- A planned proactive approach dealing with issues that are of interest and relevance to members
- And a more reactive response to individual situations through fostering a climate where members feel they can safely ask for specific help and advice.

The intention of this policy and supporting guidance is to encourage the NFYFC to take up this important area of work at Club, County and National level. It sets a framework that supports good practice and gives clear boundaries on what should be done. It will enable NFYFC leaders, workers and others to act in the knowledge that their position is supported and that they are following correct guidelines.

## Sexual Health Policy Statement

As a Federation, we take sexual health seriously and recognise that sexuality is a core aspect of identity and a person's self-perception. Adopting a positive attitude towards young people's sexuality and relationships is the foundation of promoting positive sexual health. Sexual health issues should be approached from the basis of empowering young people to make informed choices, explore what is right and wrong and explore their own attitudes and values. At NFYFC we support

### Young peoples right to:

- Have their sexual development acknowledged as a part of their personal development
- Information, education, guidance and support that will help them in their sexual development, identity and relationships
- Protection from exploitation and abuse
- Have their personal information kept confidential (within Child Protection guidelines)
- Access local sexual health services
- Not be subjected to personal attitudes and beliefs of leaders which go against these guidelines
- Be surrounded by role-models who demonstrate qualities of kindness, mutual respect and trust

### Leaders have the right to:

- Information on where they stand on the law and the rules under which they must work

- Their own opinions and attitudes about relationships, sex and sexuality, as long as these are not expressed to members in ways that go against these guidelines
- Advice and support from managers and colleagues
- Training on how to put these guidelines into practice
- Information on local child protection procedures

**NFYFC will:**

- Ensure that sexual health promotion/education is included in NFYFC provision
- Ensure that all work in this area is inclusive and addresses diversity
- Support this work with appropriate resources and current, relevant and up to date information
- Provide training and support for leaders and workers to take this work around sexual health forward
- Ensure that the policy is consistent with the law and supports the welfare of young people
- Encourage and develop partnerships with local and national bodies who can help with this work

## **What is meant by sexual health?**

It is useful to look at definitions for both sexual health and SRE as they inform each other.

### **Sexual health**

Sexual health is the capacity to enjoy and express sexuality without exploitation, oppression, physical or emotional harm. **fpa**

### **SRE**

“SRE is lifelong learning about sex, sexuality, emotions, relationships, sexual health. It involves acquiring information, developing skills and exploring attitudes and values. It helps young people to understand themselves, negotiate and take responsibility for their relationships and to neither exploit others, nor be exploited themselves. It builds young people’s self-esteem and confidence, and creates a values framework that will guide young people’s decision-making and behaviour. SRE also helps to develop a positive view of sexuality and sex and supports sexual self-acceptance. It aims to meet the needs of all young people”

Sex Education Forum (2006) *Sex and relationships education with young people in non-formal setting* (Fact sheet 36).

In the NFYFC our emphasis will be on sexual health promotion. However all initiatives must be carried out with a clear understanding of the scope of sex and relationships education, support its aims and meet the needs of all members. Boys as well as girls: those who are heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual: those with physical, learning or emotional difficulties: those with a religious or faith tradition – everyone whatever their background, community or circumstance.

Planned needs led programmes of sex and relationships education may well be delivered in clubs but only if there are leaders and workers interested in taking this forward and most importantly if they have been fully trained in the delivery of SRE and the use of effective evidence based methods (See Implementation). This does not preclude bona fide outside providers with these skills, being invited into clubs to deliver a programme if at a local level these partnerships have been well established and members are keen.

## **Summary of the law (England and Wales)**

The Sexual Offence Act of 2003 updated the law and clarified what constitutes sexual crimes against children, young people and adults. It brought in a new group of laws to protect children under 16 making it easier to prosecute people who pressure or force others into having sex they don’t want. Both men and women can be prosecuted for all sexual offences

with the exception of rape, which remains the only male perpetrated offence for which young men of 10 years upwards can be prosecuted.

Below are some key points. (For more detail please see the Further Help section)

### **Age of consent**

The legal age for young men and women to have sex is 16 years whether they are straight, gay or bisexual.

Young people under the age of 13 are unable in law to give their consent to sexual relationships. Rape, assault by penetration and causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity all carry the maximum life sentence. These are absolute offences, which means there is no defence of mistakenly believing the child to be 16 as there is in cases of sexual crimes involving 13-15 year olds.

However there is no intention that the law should be used to prosecute mutually agreed teenage sexual activity between young people of a similar age where there is no evidence of exploitation or coercion.

### **Trusted adult**

A new offence has been created to protect those under 18 years of age from abuse of trust in the form of inappropriate sexual relationships. The new offence applies to teachers, social and youth workers, carers and others in a position of trust.

### **Working with under 16's on sexual health**

Working with under 16's in his area of health can often cause concerns however research shows that accurate information about sex, relationships and contraception does not encourage sexual activity. Giving young people the information and skills before they need it equips them to make informed decisions when they do.

The law protects those providing information and support to under 16's if their purpose is to:

- Protect the child from sexually transmitted infections
- Protect the physical safety of the child
- Prevent the child from becoming pregnant
- Promote the child's emotional well being by the giving of advice

NFYFC leaders and workers can give members, including those under 16, general information about:

- Contraception
- STI's, and other sexual health issues including the importance of using condoms
- Details of where to find local services offering contraception and sexual health services
- Help a member to make contact with a sexual health service

### **The Fraser guidelines**

The Fraser guidelines are an accepted tool for working with under 16's First outlined in 1985 they are a set of legal criteria for health and other professionals when giving contraceptive advice to young people under the age of 16, without parental consent. Health professionals use them to establish a young persons' competency to consent to contraceptive and other treatments, including abortion.

They state: A health or other professional can proceed without the parents' knowledge and consent provided it is established that all of the following criteria are met:

- the young person will understand the advice
- the young person cannot be persuaded to inform their parents
- the young person is likely to have sex anyway
- the young persons physical and mental health would suffer
- the young persons best interests require it.

These guidelines, slightly modified, are now also widely used as a good practice structure for anyone working in the field of sexual health promotion. NFYFC personnel should use them in this way by considering:

- Is this young person likely to begin or continue having sex with or without contraception?
- Is it within their best interest to get some advice or condoms from you?
- Have they understood the information and advice you have given them, including the consequences of their choices?
- Can they be encouraged to inform their parents or a guardian about the advice they are seeking?

An example would be for instance when directing an individual member who is under 16 to contraceptive and sexual health services. They should be encouraged to get support from their family but parental permission is not needed if the individual can understand the issues and appreciate the consequences.

Source Sex Education Forum Fact sheet 36 (2006)

## **Confidentiality**

It has been established that young people under 16, including those under 13, have a right to confidentiality and it must be respected. YFC members should feel safe and in no doubt that they can ask for confidential support. Sexuality is a private matter and any information you have about someone else should not be discussed casually. Parents (or anyone else) do not have to be informed if you know about or suspect any sexual activity even if it is under the age of consent or breaks the law in any other way. If there is no abuse or exploitation then keep it confidential.

When a young person comes to talk to you, listen, allowing them to lead the way. Your role is to support them. If what they confide is serious and you know you must break their confidentiality be absolutely clear with them. Make sure that they know why and how their confidentiality is to be broken, and are supported through whatever happens next.

If you believe someone under 18 is at risk of significant harm, or of harming someone else you must follow local Child Protection referral procedures.

## **Personal beliefs and values**

Your beliefs and values belong to you, and you have a right to them. However in the arena of sexual health it is very important to be aware of any strong views you hold and the potential to make assumptions and judgements based on these.

As a leader or senior your attitudes can have a strong effect on how members feel about themselves, their sexuality and their behaviour. Your messages must be consistent with young people's rights, showing respect for their individuality and cultural, religious, moral and ethical beliefs. Make a conscious effort to consider how you express your attitudes and the messages you are giving.

If you are uncomfortable with any aspect of sexual health education ask for further training or seek support.

## **Disclosing information about yourself**

Information about your own relationships and sex life should not be disclosed. Keeping boundaries emphasises the importance of privacy and encourages respect for self and other others. Use the third person to illustrate discussions and explore fictional problems rather than real ones.

## Keeping parents informed

There is no legal obligation to seek parents' permission for young people to participate in sexual health education. It is considered good practice to inform and involve them in planning. Most are pleased that their young people are getting education and information about sexual health from a variety of sources. Some parents and members may have concerns about sexual health education and how it will be delivered because of religious and ethical beliefs. All sexual health promotion should be delivered in accordance with the NFYFC equal opportunity policy.

## Responding to individuals

There are different levels of advice and information giving. Work within the limits of what you know and what you have been trained to do. Remember we are not health professionals and should never give individual advice on which method of contraception to use apart from general condom promotion.

Some members may need more specialised counselling or therapy. It is not our role to counsel, get help from others if you do not know where to refer someone.

Always consider Child Protection issues with everyone under 18. If under-16s ask for advice about sexual matters, make sure you check that the Fraser Guidelines conditions apply (See above).

## Opportunities for promoting sexual health

Below are some opportunities and ideas for promoting sexual health however, members themselves will have good ideas and consultation is to be encouraged so that initiatives are needs led.

### Condoms

NFYFC supports the distribution of condoms. Encouraging their use to those who are sexually active and familiarising those not yet ready for sexual relationships is an important sexual health promotion strategy. Condoms are an effective way to prevent sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancies and cervical cancer.

There are a variety of opportunities to promote condom use in the NFYFC. For instance:

- At major events
- On 'big night outs'
- Through local partnerships and clubs becoming part of Condom card schemes (Many areas of England and Wales have well established condom distribution schemes operated by Primary Care Trusts Local Health Boards, Teenage Pregnancy Partnerships).

The provision of condoms should:

- be given out by trained workers with access to on-going support and supervision
- refer to the Fraser Guidelines – young people under 16 should be encouraged to discuss issues with their parents
- be supported by verbal or written information on the use of condoms, pregnancy and STI's
- supply a variety of quality condoms, within their expiry date, displaying the British Kite Mark and EC standard
- have their correct use demonstrated (and get the young person to practice this)
- give advice on how to access emergency contraception
- advise a young person to visit a doctor or local clinic in order to obtain the best possible contraceptive advice and service and give information on services
- and wherever possible be supported by a wider programme of education, addressing for instance resisting peer pressure to become sexually active.

Original source Teenage Pregnancy Unit (TPU) 2001

### **Sexual health information**

Sexual health information can be imparted in a number of fun ways for instance:

- Discussion groups
- Quizzes that test knowledge and opinions
- Drama based activities
- Competitions
- Art based activities which use sexual health themes e.g. risk-taking

### **National Campaign Days and weeks**

National campaign days and weeks can provide a great focus for sexual health promotion. The targeted ones such as World AIDS Day, Contraceptive Awareness Week, Sexual Health Week and Condom Week all have publicity and promotion material associated with them and a plethora of ideas and activities for engaging young people.

More generic events like Youth Week can also be used as a focus to highlight issues that are relevant to members.

### **Give positive messages**

Make sure that members know they can get confidential support. You could display a confidentiality policy

Most groups of young people will contain at least one member who is gay, lesbian or bisexual. It is important to create an atmosphere and culture of acceptance and support. Challenge any discrimination or insults based around sexuality and encourage open discussions about attitudes and difference. Ensure that information about appropriate support groups, help lines and useful resources is on offer to all young people.

Couch sexual health messages in the positive e.g. the majority of young people intend to use condoms.

### **Making local services known**

Encourage members to seek advice from local health services:

- Gather and display relevant up-to-date information. This should include a list of local services with opening times and phone numbers, and any special young people's clinics.
- Sometimes individual members will need urgent help, for example about emergency contraception, an infection or for a pregnancy test. It is important that you refer to the right places and in the right way. Find out about your local clinics and health services, when young people would be welcome and whether they need appointments. Different clinics and centres offer different services. If in doubt, ring ahead.
- Arranging for health professionals to come and talk to the young people will help them get to know each other and break down barriers. Support young people to phone services to find out information and make appointments. This will prepare them for accessing services on their own.
- In some areas young people have undertaken 'mystery shopper' visits to services to check out how good they are and reported back to peers and the service providers.

### **Developing partnerships**

It is essential to work within the wider sexual health policy framework of your County. Developing partnerships with for example the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership, Children's Services (schools and youth services) and Public Health will mean YFC's are linked into developing local strategies, joint work, local agreements and training.

Drawing on partnerships with other agencies in the field can be very beneficial, particularly if leaders are uncomfortable with the subject. There are many agencies and who are trained in the delivery of SRE programmes.

## **Education about sex and relationships**

If you are going to deliver planned programmes of sexual health or invite others in to do so, trained personnel who are confident and comfortable with the subject must carry out the work. They should be competent in group work skills and active learning methods.

Programmes should complement schools' Personal and Social Education curriculum, so it is useful to be familiar with what it sets out for the different learning stages.

Your work should:

- Encourage individuals to value themselves and all aspects of their sexuality, mental and physical health and well-being
- Provide education and information about the processes of growing up, reproduction, and contraception; and explore aspects of healthy sexuality, relationships and parenthood
- Provide opportunities for learning interpersonal skills and positive attitudes, which will help young people to manage their lives
- Promote positive and caring relationships, linking these in with development of good self-esteem and self image
- Encourage young people to be aware of positive and negative health consequences

Plan a programme that is appropriate to the age, understanding and varied needs of the young people you are working with. It should provide content on morals and the law, and examine self-worth, body image, assertiveness and decision-making. Present factual information in a balanced manner, and focus on positive messages. Include sexual responsibility, the benefits of stable relationships and the responsibilities of being a parent. Include exploration of issues such as gender, sexuality, disability, race and culture.

Some of the young people you work with may be sexually active, but do not assume that all of them are. Emphasise the benefits of friendships. Make sure that being choosy about a sexual partner and waiting until the time is right are affirmed as positive options. Some young people in every group will have suffered sexual abuse, so plan your sessions sensitively with them in mind.

## **Policy Implementation**

Training is crucial for the implementation of this policy. Staff, management committees and all those in a position of responsibility should be aware and receive training on general sexual health issues.

Those who have a particular interest in sexual health and wish to work with YFC members to lead sexual health promotion initiatives or provide programmes of education must also be aware of the policy and have successfully completed appropriate training e.g. on condom distribution, sexual health information/support and the effective delivery of Sex and Relationships Education.

## **Some sources of help**

[www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)

As well as young people's sexual health services Brook provides information, outreach, resources and training courses for young people and working with young people.

[www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

The Sex Education Forum, part of the National Children's Bureau, provides a range of supportive fact sheets on specific issues

The NCB publishes a range of books, and information on personal health and social education

[www.teenagepregnancyunit.gov.uk](http://www.teenagepregnancyunit.gov.uk)

Has downloads on guidance, examples of good practice and evaluations of condom schemes.

[www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)

For information leaflets, including a young persons series, resources and fact sheets on different issues. Also a provider of accredited training for sexual health and SRE and a basic skills course for youth workers.

[www.thesite.org/](http://www.thesite.org/)

TheSite.org, produced by YouthNet UK, allows users to find local advice centres within a chosen postcode area. The user can search for advice centres that deal with specific issues including: general health, drugs, alcohol, sexuality and sexual health.

[www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk)

for information a range of issues including SRE

[www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)

For national training schemes and resources

[www.peer-support.org.uk](http://www.peer-support.org.uk)

Provides support and advice to all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning young people (LGBTQ) aged under 25. The Peer Support Project offers a range of interventions that provide direct support to LGBTQ young people as well as providing packages of holistic health based support that can complement agencies existing work with young people. We also offer commissioned training, research and consultancy that aims to enable organisations to effectively meet the needs of LGBTQ young people.

[www.ruthinking.co.uk](http://www.ruthinking.co.uk)

This website provides young people under the age of 18 with information on sex, relationships and contraception. The site also gives information on the Sexwise helpline, local information and links to other relevant websites. Sexwise helpline: 0800 282930 (Textphone for people with hearing impairments: 0800 328 1651). Open from 7am - midnight.

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

For information on the sexual offences Act 2003.

[www.dfes.gov.uk/sreguidance](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sreguidance)

For *Sex and Relationship Education Guidance*, issued by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The guidance offers support for head teachers, teachers and school governors on how to deliver effective sex and relationship education. It is linked to the personal, social and health education framework and the National Healthy School Standard.

[www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

For SRE guidance, youth and sexual health strategy

Contact Local PCTs, LHBs and county websites for information about what's happening locally and links into other services

## **Policy Review Date September 2009**