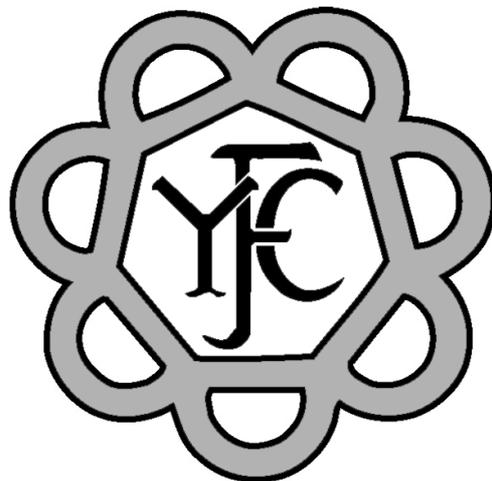


Yorkshire Federation of Young Farmers Club

Sexual Health Policy



Approved by Executive Committee
..... 2019

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Introduction

The Yorkshire Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (YFYFC) is a caring organisation committed to the welfare of its members whose ages range from 10 to 26 years.

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 harmful consequences; rates of teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections are high in young people under the age of 25.

From September 2020 relationships education (ReEd) in primary and relationships and sex education (RSE) in secondary will be taught in schools as a statutory subject. As a youth organisation YFYFC can complement RSE. We can support and build on members' knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, and skills in managing emotions in order to 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 YFYFC members and those associated with the organisation to take up this important area of work at Club, District, and County level. It sets a framework that supports good practice and gives clear boundaries on what should be done. It will enable 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 YFYFC we support young people and acknowledge their right to:

- Have their sexual development acknowledged as a part of their personal development

- Access 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 and Adult Safeguarding guidelines)
- Access local sexual health services
- Not be subjected to personal attitudes and beliefs of leaders that 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
- Support from the county team (Officers and staff)
- Training coordinated by the county (using qualified sexual health services) on how to put these guidelines into practice, using partner organisations where applicable
- Information on local child protection procedures and adult safeguarding procedures

YFYFC will:

- Ensure that sexual health promotion/education is included in YFYFC 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
- Encourage and develop partnerships with other bodies that can help with this work.

What is meant by sexual health?

It is useful to look at definitions for sexual health, sexuality and RSE as they all inform each other.

Sexual health - "Sexual health means enjoying the sexual activity you want without causing yourself or anyone else suffering, physical or mental harm. Making positive choices about contraception and sexual health is important not just for your physical health, but also for your general well-being." FPA (Family Planning Association)

Sexuality - "Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships.

Age of consent

The legal age for young men and women to have sex is 16 years whether they identify as straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning or any other sexual orientation. The legal age of consent is also the same for young trans women and men. 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 mean there is no defence of mistakenly believing the child to be 16 as there may be in cases of sexual crimes involving 13-15 year olds.

However the Government has been clear that 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

An offence exists to protect those under 18 years of age from abuse of trust in the form of inappropriate sexual relationships. The offence applies to teachers, social and youth workers, carers and others in a position of trust, including leaders of YFC groups, even when they are of a similar age to the young person in the sexual relationship. More information on the Abuse of Trust Act can be found in the Safeguarding Children and Young People's Policy.

Working with under 16's in sexual health

Working with under 16's in this area of health can often cause concerns however research shows that accurate, high-quality information about sex, relationships and contraception does not encourage sexual activity.

Helping young people develop their knowledge, skills and values will equip them to make informed decisions when they decide to engage in 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

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 identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning and/or trans. It is important to create an atmosphere and culture of acceptance and support. Challenge any discrimination or insults based on someone's sexual orientation or gender 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.

'Queer' is an umbrella term for all sexual and gender minorities that some young people may use to describe their sexual orientation and/or gender. It is important to note that the term remains offensive if someone uses it to harass, bully, or as a put down to another person. 'Trans' is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not fit in with the gender that they were assigned when they were born. Some young people may use the term 'transgender' or 'trans'.

YFYFC 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 person's 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 person's physical and mental health would suffer
- The young person's 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. YFYFC 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?

Under 13s are viewed in law (the Sexual Offences Act 2013) as not being able to consent under any circumstances and therefore if a staff member is aware of an under 13 year old who is sexually active they should follow safeguarding procedures.

Young people, explicit images and pornography

It is important in any RSE work with young people that they understand different aspects of the law concerning sex and sexual activity. YFYFC should let young people know, as part of the activities that you are planning, that in law someone is a child until s/he is 18. This means that if they take, send or receive naked images on a webcam, phone or camera which, for example, show the breasts or genital area of someone who is under 18 then they could be charged with a sexual offence of taking, possessing, distributing or publishing indecent images of children. This could apply even if someone aged under 18 takes a photo of their own breasts or genitals, never intending to show them to anyone, and the police arrest them for some other reason and find the images on their phone/other device.

Young people should be informed that the law concerning pornography is quite complex. While some pornography showing adults having sex is legal, there is some pornography that is illegal to view in the UK.

When working with young people around these issues then the following link from Brook might be helpful:

<http://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/staying-safe-online>

What is clear is that explicit images in any form showing any of the following are illegal:

- Those showing children (anyone under 18), or
- Anyone who appears to look like a child (regardless of their age), or
- Any image created by computer or otherwise which looks like a child

It is important to remind young people that if someone sends them a photo or clip that might seem funny at the time, it could contain content like the above that is illegal. So they should not open anything if they are unsure what it contains and they should consider deleting without opening anything that does not say what it contains and they were not expecting. It can always be sent to them again if turns out to be something that they want.

In 2017 the government introduced a new offence of disclosing private sexual images with the intent to cause distress that includes sending pornographic images of people as revenge when a relationship breaks up. Young people

should also be aware that this is an offence, even when the images were sent to them with consent. Further advice and guidance on these issues is available in the YFYFC Policy for the safeguarding of children and young people.

Young people and social media

The ways in which young people communicate with each other have changed a lot in recent years due to rapid advances in technology and this has meant that young people have increased opportunities for contact that can decrease social isolation and them feel connected to each other, especially if they live in remote or rural areas. However, some young people have reported that they have received unwanted messages, sometimes of an explicit nature, and that sometimes they are bullied online, including sexual bullying.

It is important that your RSE programme includes information and advice for young people about how to deal with these issues.

The following link from Brook might be helpful If you are working with young people around these issues. <http://www.brook.org.uk/your-life/staying-safe-online>. There are also some suggested resources from CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) listed at the end of this document.

Confidentiality

It has been established that young people under 16 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. If you have concerns about underage teenage sexual activity and you are unsure whether abuse or exploitation may be taking place, or you are unsure whether or not you should keep something confidential, then you should not keep this to yourself as you will need further advice from YFYFC safeguarding officer.

If a 10, 11 or 12 year old member discloses that they are sexually active, this information must be shared with safeguarding, to protect the young person, even if they are at no immediate risk of harm. You do not have to inform the parents. 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. If you believe someone 18 or over is at risk of significant harm, or of harming someone else then you will need to follow local adult safeguarding 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. Be aware that you are in an influential position and that anything you say should be within the values framework of this policy and other relevant YFYFC policies.

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 as part of YFYFC activities. 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 YFYFC equal opportunity policy. If your YFC members are thinking about introducing relationships and sex education into the club programme, then careful consideration should be given to the content. Ask for advice from relevant authorities if unsure.

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, Social and Health Education Curriculum so it is useful to be familiar with what it sets out for the different learning stages.

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.

Working with individuals who have additional learning needs

Some of the young people we work with have additional learning needs. They also have a right to information about relationships, sex and sexual health but they may need this information in a clear, accessible format. We should try and provide this information in a way they can understand. If we cannot find accessible information organisations such as FPA or Brook might be able to help.

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 aim to 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.

Useful information:

www.brook.org.uk

www.fpa.org.uk – (Family Planning Association)

Signed:

Date:.....

Review Date:.....