

Sexual Health and Relationships Policy

This should be read in conjunction with the Guidance document

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 NDCS wants every deaf child and young person to achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle. This means they need:
- information appropriate to their age and developmental stage
 - the motivation, awareness and personal skills necessary to understand and act on such information
 - to be able to access the relevant services when they need them
- 1.2 Research has shown that more than a quarter of young people are sexually active before they reach 16. Young people under 16 are the group least likely to use contraception and concern about confidentiality remains the biggest deterrent to seeking advice. (Wellings, K., et al. (2001) Sexual Behaviour in Britain: early heterosexual experience. Lancet 358: 1843-50).
- 1.3 This policy seeks to set the context for a consistent approach to addressing the relationship and sexual health needs of deaf children and young people, within a legal framework, striking a balance between their right to privacy and independence and their physical and emotional wellbeing. A visual diagram is given in Appendix D.
- 1.4 All relationships and sexual health work should:
- a) Ensure that the welfare of the child or young person is paramount
 - b) Be an integral part of ongoing work and not the subject of one-off interventions.
 - c) Whilst we recognise the majority of our contact with deaf children and young people will be one-off, it is important that any intervention is continued/followed up where possible e.g. via Family Officer, and/or the CYP team.
 - d) Be inclusive and respect diversity, including same sex relationships.
 - e) Encourage the development of personal skills and attitudes that promote healthy relationships.
 - f) Help deaf young people access appropriate information and services.
 - g) Empower young people to make informed choices based on independent and unbiased information.
 - h) Provide opportunities to challenge attitudes and values in a positive environment.
- 1.5 This policy applies to all NDCS activities and events. NDCS policy is based on government guidance and is very similar to that adapted by local authorities, so this should not prove to be a problem for staff and volunteers who are called to work in different settings.
- 1.6 All action taken by staff and volunteers must be commensurate with their level of training. At present (2014) it is anticipated that for most staff and volunteers their main role will be to signpost deaf children and young people to the most appropriate source of local advice and services and to help young people access them. This must be in accordance with the guidelines on confidentiality and child protection outlined below.

- 1.7 Delivering relationship and sexual health education and providing an advisory/counselling service must only be conducted by staff who are trained and experienced. They also need to be aware of potential cultural issues and how certain cultures and religions deal with sex and sex-related issues.

2. Entitlements

2.1 NDCS believes that deaf children and young people should:

- a) Have access to information that suits their needs. It must be up-to-date, accurate, age appropriate and presented in an accessible style and format
- b) Have access to services that suit their needs
- c) Be involved in service development and have regular opportunities to contribute their views
- d) Receive support that enables them to access the services they need
- e) Have confidentiality explained clearly to them and be told about services where different levels of confidentiality exist
- f) Be respected and taken seriously
- g) Have access to interesting, engaging, relevant and responsive education on relationships and sexual health
- h) Have support from adults who are appropriately trained

3. Policy and Practice

- 3.1 NDCS will seek to ensure, through the work of our policy and campaigns directorate, that sexual relationships, education and sexual health services provided or commissioned by the statutory sector meet the needs of deaf children and young people. However, currently NDCS (2014) does not have sufficient expertise or capacity to deliver specific education programmes on relationships and sexual health or to operate an advisory/counselling service. We do have a Social Care Policy advisor and a growth in our children and young people services team to support vulnerable young people but this will support an informed signposting role at the most.
- 3.2 This is an area of work NDCS may wish to develop in the future. Meanwhile there is a need to:
- Ensure NDCS can help deaf children and young people access good relationship and sexual health advice and services
 - Have a policy that enables NDCS staff and volunteers to respond to questions from deaf children and young people regarding their sexual health in such a way that is helpful to the young person in maintaining their sexual health and well-being

3.3 NDCS policy and procedures need to:

- a) ensure approaches and practices are consistent
- b) provide a framework that enables staff and volunteers to assist in the development of relationships and sexual health in a way that is commensurate with their role and training and in keeping with legislative guidelines
- c) reflect holistic approaches to relationships and sexual health
- d) support deaf children and young people's rights to positive relationships and sexual health
- e) ensure deaf children and young people's rights to confidentiality are maintained within child protection guidance

3.4 NDCS staff and volunteers engaging with children and young people should:

- a) Receive training that is commensurate with their role
- b) Know what to do if a deaf child or young person asks for advice
- c) Have a clear understanding of the requirements of confidentiality and the relationship with child protection policy
- d) Have opportunities to express their views or concerns about any aspect of relationship and sexual health work with deaf children and young people, including practice and policy development
- e) Have access to advice and support from their manager and the designated manager for child protection or the designated officers
- f) Should know that this policy exist

4. Guidance

The legal contexts

4.1 The legal framework in **England** and **Wales** is established by the **Sexual Offences Act (2003)**. The aim of the Act is to protect the safety and rights of young people and make it easier to prosecute people who pressure or force others into having sex they do not want. Forcing someone to have sex is a crime (see Appendix A for further details).

4.2 Scotland

The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 and the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005 describe very similar offences in Scotland.

4.3 Northern Ireland

The Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008 describes very similar offences in Northern Ireland.