



Sexual  
Health  
West

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SUPPORT | EDUCATE | ADVOCATE



## PROGRAMME OUTLINE - JUNIOR CYCLE WISER RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY EDUCATION

DESIGNED FOR ADOLESCENTS AGED  
APPROX. 13-15 YEARS)

[WWW.BEWISER.IE](http://WWW.BEWISER.IE)

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## INTRODUCTION

WISER is a Relationships and Sexuality Education programme for young people, which is based on evidence informed practice.

The two overarching aims of this programme are;

- to give young people **the knowledge and skills they need to make informed choices about their non-involvement or involvement in sexual activity that will support their happiness, health and well being**
- to build **responsible and respectful attitudes** towards gender and sexuality.

The programme is based on evidence informed practice as developed by UNESCO (2009; 2018) and data gathered from Irish young people relating to their sexual health education needs. The workshops are interactive and participatory with discussions and quizzes, as well as practical activities. This creates varied sessions which hold the interest of the young participants and increase their ability to integrate the learning.

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***All WISER facilitators strive to ensure our programme is interactive, age-appropriate, inclusive, progressive, comprehensive and fact-based.***

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Towards the end of each session we ask the students to write down any anonymous questions they have and put them in a bag. This is a good way to complete the learning in each session. **The content of these are instrumental in the decision of facilitators to address and elaborate on certain topics. They are a useful tool in gauging the level of knowledge of the students.** Often students are embarrassed to ask a question in front of the class. It also has the added benefit of allowing the facilitator time to reflect on how to answer the students' questions which will be answered during the following session. There is a clear distinction within this programme outline between content

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which is *in* the WISER workshops and topics that *may* arise from the anonymous questions.



We strongly believe that although explicit terminology/phrases may arise in this context it is much better for us to explain briefly what they are and to de-normalise these behaviours, rather than the child/children searching the term online and likely coming across distressing content. If there are any concerns raised in the questions the WISER facilitators will follow child protection procedures immediately.

**The workshops are age appropriate with materials and exercises being adjusted in order to meet the developmental stage, educational ability and needs of the participants. It also compliments the RSE component of SPHE already provided in schools.**

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR DELIVERY**

We have found that the following conditions must be in place to optimize engagement and learning during WISER sessions;

1. No more than 20 students per group
2. Spacious room with chairs in a circle and tables against the wall
3. A space to write on (whiteboard, blackboard or flipchart paper & stand)
4. A safe space to leave WISER kit/teaching material during breaks (e.g. locked classroom)
5. Roll call completed at beginning of every session by a teacher

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6. A teacher present (ideally sitting behind circle of students) if a WISER facilitator is facilitating alone, or a teacher close by (e.g. in adjacent room, or working in hallway) if two WISER facilitators are present (SNAs are welcome in any session but another teacher would also need to be present)
  7. A clear plan in place in case a WISER facilitator needs to ask a student to leave due to disruptive behaviour (this is uncommon and a last resort, but is sometimes necessary)
  8. A clear plan in place in case a student requests to leave (e.g. they feel ill) the session
  9. A 'no phone' rule must be in place for WISER sessions. Absolutely no recording or taking photos during session. Students can step outside if they urgently need to make phone call, if the school allows this.
  10. Adequate time for sessions, as highlighted above – usually three sessions of 80mins each. Alternatively, workshop 1 and half of workshop 2 can be completed in 120min (2hrs) and the second half of workshop 2 and full workshop 3 can be completed in 120min (2hrs)

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## THEMES AND CONTENT

The structure and order may change slightly depending on time available, breaks required, size of group, level of engagement (questions!) etc.:

### **Session 1 (80mins)**

**Introduction & Ice-Breaker, Sexual Competency, Puberty Cards exercise and Puberty Bag exercise. building rapport, establishing trust, agreeing on group contract or 'rules', and introduction of facilitators and WISER.**

Our main underpinning themes are; consent (making participants aware of the legal age of consent in Ireland; brainstorming what helps consent; what hinders consent and discussing the clearest ways of communicating consent is through verbal communication); protection (brainstorming the risks associated with sex: unplanned pregnancy, STI transmission, emotional hurts such as rejection, peer pressure/partner pressure/porn pressure); pleasure: that sex should be something good and positive and not something people should regret or wish they hadn't done; and communication (the importance of reading verbal and non-verbal cues and the essential need to continuously 'check-in' – communicate - with you partner). The topic of puberty is introduced by doing the puberty card exercise where participants talk through each of the stages of puberty. The last exercise in session one is the puberty bag 'luck-dip' where participants get to explore different things that may make puberty easier such as a hot water bottle for cramps, tampons/pads, soap, razors, deodorants. The session ends with the participants being able to write down an anonymous question.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Understand 'Sexual Competency' i.e. having an enhanced awareness of the meaning of consent, protection, communication and pleasure
- Be able to identify the physical emotional and social changes that occur during puberty
- Have the correct information about their bodies, masturbation, etc. and appreciate that everyone can feel sensitive about their bodies and that we need to be respectful of each other's feelings

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- Be challenged on the images and ideas portrayed in pornography (this normally comes up when discussing puberty as the students discuss different body types they have seen, but will also be a topic discussed throughout the programme).

## **Session 2 (80mins)**

### **Anatomy (Sexual Intercourse, Reproduction and Pleasure), Contraception and Gender/Sexual Orientation.**

The session begins by answering the anonymous questions from the previous session. This session outlines the stages of human reproduction and sexual intercourse. The session provides participants with the correct terminology and information for human anatomy and function, respectively. Although there is an emphasis on human reproduction the exercise is inclusive of the various types of family formation and family types. The topic of contraception and protection is introduced. Although, explicit detail about the different forms of contraception is not outlined there is an emphasis on the importance of both protection and contraception in future sexual relationships. Participants are then given a practical condom demonstration which all students are invited to take part in and are made aware of how STI's are transmitted. Participants discuss the topic of Sexuality, Gender and Sexual Orientation, participants discuss the difference between the concepts, challenged stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity and the difference between these, gender expressions and sexual orientations. The session ends with the participants being able to write down an anonymous question.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Understand how the human body works when it comes to reproduction
- Have explored the different methods of conception (IVF, Surrogacy, Adoption) and how family units are formed in many ways
- Understand Sexuality, Gender and Sexual Orientation
- Understand the importance of respect with regards to a person's sexual orientation and gender identity
- Challenge stereotypes
- Have a greater understanding of contraception
- Know how to use a condom

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- Be aware of the transmission of STI's.
  - Critique sexualized images portrayed on social media

### **Session 3 (80 mins):**

#### **Healthy/Unhealthy Relationships Exercise, Sexting Exercise, Group Quiz, Completion of Feedback Forms.**

The session begins by answering the anonymous questions from the previous session and whether there are any other questions students would like answered as this is their last session. Participants are then asked to identify relationships that are 'healthy' and ones that are 'unhealthy'. This is followed by a facilitated discussion on the qualities that they look for in a healthy relationship be that a friendship or more intimate relationship, and what they can do if they (or a friend) are in an unhealthy relationship. The sexting exercise begins by setting out the law regarding the sharing of sexually explicit images. The exercise then explores the reasons why people may send sexually explicit messages, why people would share (to a third-party) a sexually explicit message and what they can do if they (or a friend) need help. The session finishes with a group quiz and an evaluation of all of the material covered in the programme.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Have explored the vital role of respect, communication and trust within friendships, more intimate relationships and be able to recognise an unhealthy relationship
- Have reflected on the qualities of a healthy relationship and the time it can take for these qualities to develop.
- Be aware of the personal and legal consequences of sexting
- Integrate the knowledge from previous sessions through a sexual health quiz.



## WISER Procedures & Policy During Facilitation

### STUDENT FEELS ILL OR FAINT

Sometimes a student is ill regardless, but sometimes a student may feel overwhelmed if they are squeamish or uncomfortable with what is being discussed. We try our best to be sensitive to this, and we want everyone to feel comfortable in our sessions. This does not happen frequently, but it does occur from time to time. Because of this and following best practice guidelines it is of vital importance that a teacher/staff member is present during all sessions.

- Sometimes the student will need to put their head between their legs for a few moments and will then feel better. The facilitator will offer them the choice to take an accompanied walk outside with a facilitator/teacher/student or get a drink. They can then decide if they want to rejoin the group. A student who feels ill may choose to sit near an open window or door. **(it is of vital importance that a school teacher/staff member is present during all sessions)**
- The student will always have the option to leave whenever they feel unwell. A teacher or WISER facilitator will escort them outside or to the bathroom if needed for a break, or to reception if they wish to leave.
- If a student faints or is sick, a teacher or facilitator will attend to them immediately, and take them out of the room once it is safe to do so. The student can then decide to rejoin if they wish.
- If a student faints, is sick, or leaves due to feeling ill, the WISER facilitator will complete an Incident Form and leave a copy with the school. All teachers and facilitators present during incident will sign the form.

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## **STUDENT VERBALLY ASKS QUESTION WHICH CAUSES CONCERN**

We have a policy of providing an age-appropriate answer to every question, within reason. We strongly believe that although some questions might be considered 'explicit', e.g. related to various sexual acts, it is best practice for us to provide a factual answer and possibly de-normalise these behaviours (if appropriate), rather than the young person searching for a term online and likely coming across distressing or graphic content.

However, sometimes we are asked a question which evokes concern for the student and their wellbeing.

- The limits of confidentiality are explained at the beginning of Session 1, and students will be reminded of this at the beginning of each session.
- If asked during the group, the facilitator will ask the student to come and speak to them privately after the session.
- When the facilitator and student speak privately, the facilitator will thank the student for entrusting them with the question and will again explain the steps that must be taken in the interest of their wellbeing.
- The student will be asked to identify a member of staff that they would feel comfortable talking to about the situation.
- The facilitator will contact this staff member and explain the situation. The facilitator will also fill out an Incident Report Form and give a copy to the school, notify the principal, and the manager of Sexual Health West. A plan will be made on what to do next to help the student.
- The facilitator can meet with the student again if requested. It is essential however that the designated child protection officer / school staff member is also present at this meeting. The designated child protection officer will then take the lead on any child protection investigation & future reporting.
- If the school and Sexual Health West deem it necessary, Tusla and/or the Gardaí will be contacted.

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*The safety, health and wellbeing of young people is of the highest priority to WISER Educators. We work collaboratively with teachers, parents and young people themselves to ensure any young person who needs help is adequately supported.*

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## **STUDENT ANONYMOUSLY ASKS QUESTION WHICH CAUSES CONCERN**

The opportunity for young people to ask questions anonymously and have them answered is an integral part of the WISER programme. We often get 'joke' questions, but if the question is in any way concerning regarding the wellbeing of a young person, we treat it seriously.

- The WISER facilitator will tell the class that there was an anonymous question written that has concerned us, and that we want to help and support whoever wrote it. It will not be read out word for word, but the topic will be mentioned.
- The facilitator will ask that the student make themselves known in some way to a facilitator or member of staff, and that it will be treated with as much confidentiality as is possible (i.e. other students will not be made aware). The facilitator will ask that the student either write down their name on this weeks' post-it or approach a facilitator or teacher privately, who will make themselves available, or contact us through our WISER website.
- Step 3 and onwards in the above section will be followed once a student has come forward and confirmed their question.

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***“As an organisation that specialises relevant, evidence-based, positive sexual health education, it is incumbent upon us that we provide all schools, parents and students with our explicit assurance that our work is in line with current Department of Education Circulars and SPHE & RSE Best Practice Guidelines for Post Primary Schools”***  
***- Lorraine O’Connell WISER Coordinator***

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