



Sexual
Health
West

SUPPORT | EDUCATE | ADVOCATE

PROGRAMME OUTLINE - SENIOR CYCLE WISER RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY EDUCATION

DESIGNED FOR ADOLESCENTS AGED
APPROX. 15-17 YEARS)

WWW.BEWISER.IE

BEWISERIRELAND@GMAIL.COM

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

WISER is a Relationships and Sexuality Education programme for young people, which is based on evidence informed practice. All WISER facilitators strive to ensure our programme is interactive, age-appropriate, inclusive, progressive, comprehensive and fact-based.

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 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.

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

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 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 young people 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.

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):** Building rapport, establishing trust, agreeing on group contract or 'rules', ice-breakers, introduction of facilitators and WISER, our main underpinning themes(**consent, pleasure, protection, communication**), puberty.
- **Session 2 (80mins):** Reproduction, sex, anatomy, contraception, anonymous questions
- **Session 3 (80mins):** STI's, gender, biological sex and sexual orientation, quiz, completion of feedback forms.
- **Other topics which will be discussed throughout:** WISER's four focal themes (listed above in Session 1), pornography, peer pressure, media pressure, body image, sexting/sending nudes and social media, healthy/unhealthy relationships, stereotypes, boundaries, autonomy, sources of further information, etc

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
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)

OUTLINE OF THE WORKSHOPS

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

Workshop 1 (80mins)

Introduction, Puberty & Anatomy (Reproduction and Pleasure)

The workshop begins with the facilitator(s) introducing themselves and building rapport with students through ice-breaker activities and by setting ground rules going forward.

We explore the four key 'sexual competency' learning points that will feature as underpinning themes throughout the sessions; consent, protection, pleasure and communication. As we know that pornography is a significant source of sexual education for young people, we include pornography in our discussions of these terms, for instance in the context of body image, sexual behaviours, pleasure and consent.

This workshop focuses on the physical anatomy of the body and how it works, in relation to pubertal changes and reproduction. Key topics include the menstrual cycle, changes in the physical appearance of the body, masturbation, and emotional challenges. We place an emphasis on the uniqueness of the experience of going through puberty is for each person and that there are both positive and negative aspects to it. We look at genitalia and internal sex organs and their functions relating to pleasure and reproduction. Other ways of reproduction are also discussed (e.g. IVF).

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this session the students will:

- Have an enhanced understanding of the sexual competency points; consent, pleasure and protection, and their importance
- Be able to identify the physical, emotional and social changes that occur during puberty, and acknowledge that this may happen in a different way for everyone
- Appreciate that everyone can feel sensitive about their bodies and that we need to be respectful of each other's feelings
- Be challenged on the images and ideas portrayed in pornography
- Have the correct information about their bodies and how the reproductive system works

Workshop 2 (80mins)

Gender, Sexuality, Contraception & Protection

This workshop explores and disentangles the concepts of gender, sex and sexuality. The development of sexuality is discussed as being unique to each person and that gender identification and sexual orientation fall on a continuum. Concepts such as gender norms, roles and prejudices are explored and challenged.

Examples of the different types of contraception and protection are shown to the students and information is given on how they work. Gender roles and responsibility for one's own sexual health is discussed in the context of the use of protection. The session concludes with a practical condom demonstration which all students are invited to take part in.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this session the students will:

- Understand Sexuality, Gender and Sexual Orientation
- Understand the importance of respect with regards to a person's sexual orientation and gender identity
- Be able to identify the effectiveness and implications of the different types of contraception available in Ireland
- Understand the importance of communication between sexual partners in relation to contraception/protection use
- Know how to safely and effectively use condoms.
- Be aware of their own responsibility to look after their own sexual health



Workshop 3 (80min)

STI's, Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships and Conclusion

This workshop discusses STIs with information on their prevalence, ease of transmission and symptoms, as well as appropriate treatments. An exercise is facilitated on relationships with students recognizing traits/behaviours that would indicate an unhealthy relationship and where they could go for support. The workshop concludes with a quiz which tests the students on the learning throughout the three workshops, and completion of evaluation forms.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this session the students will:

- Be able to identify the symptoms, treatments, risks and implications of the most common STIs in Ireland
- Recognise behaviours within a relationship that may not be healthy and be aware of supports available
- Demonstrate their perceptions and learning on all the content of the WISER programme
- Provide feedback to the WISER team so that they gain an insight into the effectiveness of the content and delivery of WISER.

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.

- 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
- 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.

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 make contact with this member of staff 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.

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.

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.

***“As an organisation that specialises in relevant, evidence-informed 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***

