

YouthLink Scotland Statement on Healthcare Improvement Scotland - Draft Sexual Health Standards



1.

As the National Agency for youth work in Scotland, YouthLink Scotland understands that access to sexual health care is an imperative for young people and is an essential part of improving the health and well-being of the country. We therefore welcome the opportunity to comment on the Draft Sexual Health Standards. This statement is informed by the work of the youth work Health & Wellbeing Network. The group has had a recent focus on the sexual health and well-being of young people. We are aware that some of our key partners have contributed to the on-going engagement and consultation to get the draft standards to this stage.

2.

YouthLink Scotland supports all the 10 standards^[1] and their rationale. However, the youth work sector has specific interests and experience around Standard 2 – Information and Supported Decision Making, Standard 3 – Education and Training and Standard 7 – Services for Young People. It is through these Standards our statement is focused.

3.

We are satisfied that the principles underpinning the Draft Sexual Health Standards are founded on human rights and that this approach provides better outcomes for more young people. In order to improve the quality of care received by young people, youth work practitioners have long advocated for the necessity of information, treatment and support to access services.

4.

We are supportive of standards that will help services to identify areas for improvement and outline the benchmark for what constitutes good sexual health care. In so doing, youth workers will be better equipped to assist and signpost young people to specialist services. This will help reduce harm at the earliest opportunity and ensure young people are treated with compassion and respect, and experience services free from stigma.

^[1] [210627 - Draft-Sexual-Health-Standards-March-2021.pdf](#)

5.

We emphasise the need for local community partnerships. This ensures youth workers - who are often the first port of call for young people on issues related to sexual care - are in the best position (as part of a network of preventative healthcare professionals) to deliver in their locale. This enables young people to get the support they need to obtain good sexual health and well-being. This is needed more than ever, as young people have the combined stress of navigating key transitional points in their life in the midst of a global pandemic. This compounds the need to support a focus on the role of multidisciplinary working and co-ordinated care and support for people in need of sexual health care.

6.

There will be value in continuing to share the learning of youth work practitioners and also continued awareness raising of the renewed standards. However, we must also ensure that there is adequate service provision available to support the needs of children and young people in our communities. Otherwise, we run the risk of raising awareness, supporting greater identification of sexual health matters, but not increasing the capacity of services to which children and young people require.

7.

For youth workers, identifying, recording and responding to risk and vulnerability is an ongoing learning process. Therefore, we look forward to continued work alongside key partners and Healthcare Improvement Scotland to support the strengthening, interpreting and disseminating of the final Sexual Health Standards. We will be receptive to proposed involvement in any multi-agency workshops, or active consultation within statutory and non-statutory agencies on specific areas of the guidelines.

ENDS

EDITOR'S NOTES