



Irise International 'Young People in Control'

Background:

The Young People in Control Pilot Project has been developed in recognition that young people in the UK are often not getting the information and support they need from current Sex and Relationship Education (SRE).

Background research revealed that 1/3 of young people were not learning about puberty at school and 10% of girls were receiving no preparation at all before their first period. In addition, a 2013 Ofsted report concluded that over 1/3 of schools were failing to prepare young people for the emotional and physical changes experienced during puberty.

Furthermore, a review in the British Medical Journal concluded that sex education is overly moralistic, not practical enough, perpetuates negative attitudes about gender roles and that young people often want to (but do not) receive education from an external person rather than someone they see daily.

Irise's "Young People in Control" project aims to develop and deliver education sessions that respond to these needs.

Our approach is informed by the work of Paolo Freire who believed that education is not about transferring information into an "empty vessel" but an active, two-way process between two individuals and Augusto Boal's methodology which engages individuals in a process of discovery, critical reflection and dialogue. Practically this means:

- Using the experiences of participants as the starting point for change
- Using a range of interactive activities to explore these experiences
- Creating a safe space for reflection and participatory learning

Summary of how Irise sessions meet identified needs:

- The column on the right lists the key ways in which young people identified that existing SRE needs to be improved. The column on the left described how Irise aims to address it in this project.

Components	How it is addressed in proposed lesson
Rights based (opposed to moralistic)	The sessions have been developed according to the principles that young people have a right to accurate information about how their bodies work and a right to form their own opinions about what they believe is right and wrong. Knowledge imparted in the sessions is rooted in an evidence based approach and information is imparted in a manner that clearly separates fact from opinion. Our trainers receive training on how to separate fact from opinion in order to provide young



	<p>people with unbiased information. All facts are based on literature reviews and reviewed regularly by our team. New questions raised by young people are carefully researched before a model answer is created.</p> <p>The use of interactive activities encourages the participation of young people, building their confidence to ask questions and seek answers. For areas where fact based information is not an adequate response, young people are encouraged to engage in a facilitated dialogue to develop their own attitudes and beliefs. For example, one activity asks young people to list words that come into their mind when they think of menstruation, to discuss what these words tell us about our attitudes to menstruation and to girls and whether these attitudes are positive or negative.</p>
Practical	<p>The sessions briefly cover anatomy and physiology but is focused on the experience of puberty. For example, the description of the anatomy is followed by a discussion of how clitoris, labia and testes vary greatly in size from person to person and that this variation is entirely normal. This is in response to girls and boys reporting that they worry about whether their genitals are normal. Similarly, with physiology an emphasis is placed upon the wide range of healthy variation in menstrual cycles, onset of puberty etc. as young people's primary concern when they enter puberty is whether or not they are "normal".</p> <p>Practical and interactive activities help to emphasise these key points. For example, young people are asked to line up in order of height and this is used to illustrate how there is a wide range of variation in height but that this is healthy, so too with other parts of our anatomy and physiology.</p> <p>The sessions also includes the opportunity to ask anonymous questions. These questions not only give young people an opportunity to voice taboo concerns but also help to inform the development of future sessions.</p>
Positive attitudes about gender roles	<p>The sessions use ground rules to create a safe space and carefully considers how to effectively engage boys and girls, with current learning suggesting that some activities and parts of the session are best delivered separately whereas others should be delivered together. Importantly, teaching girls and boys about the changes both sexes experiences helps to create understanding and respect. Interactive activities actively encourage participants to consider the session in the context of gender norms. For example, one activity asks young people to list what is good about being a girl or boy and what is bad with many participants listing menstruation as a negative part of being a girl. Participants then discuss what their responses tell us about people's attitudes to girls and boys and whether these norms can be changed.</p>



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Delivered by an external person	We are using university students and community champions to deliver the sessions. These individuals are close in age and experience to young people and receive training and support from Irise to deliver the session. They act as role models and young people feel more comfortable raising tricky issues with a person they can relate to but who is not part of their day to day life.
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