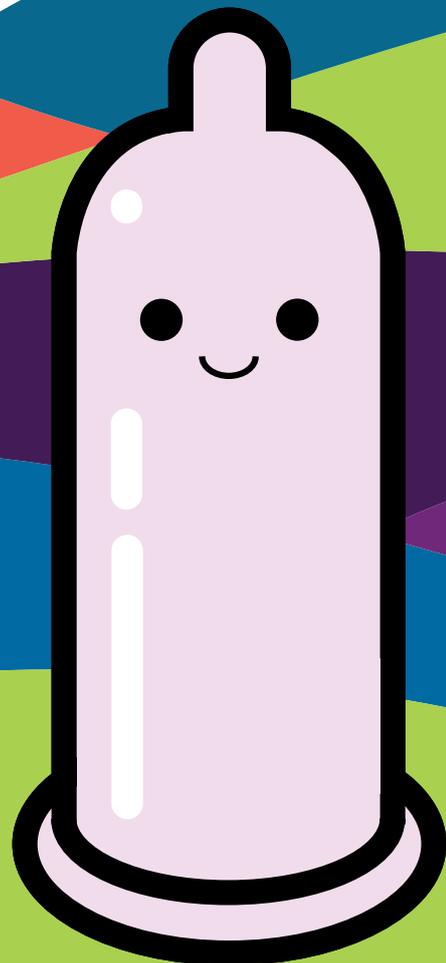




wave
sexual health matters

What Young People Want

**Understanding the Sexual Health and
Relationship Education experiences and
needs of young people in Highland**



Provided by
Waverley Care
making a positive difference

About Wave

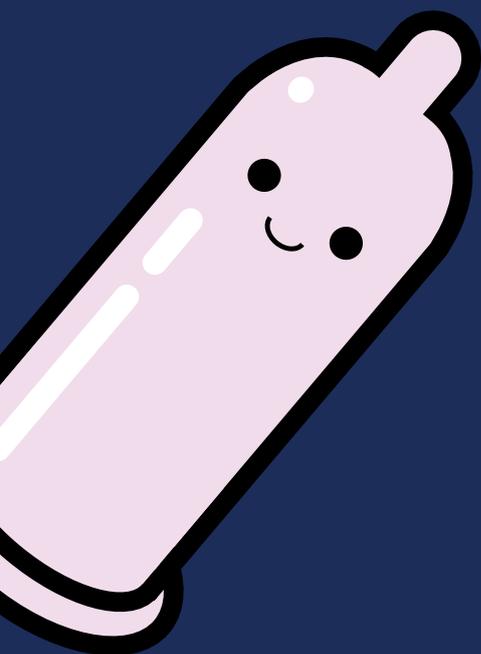
Wave is a sexual health and relationships education service for all young people aged 24 and under living in the Highlands. The service is provided by Waverley Care.

We know that sex and relationships can be awkward and sometimes embarrassing things to talk about, but we also know that they don't need to be. We're here to provide information and give under 25s the confidence to make choices that are right for them. We aren't here to judge, and aim to help young people to protect themselves and enjoy their sexual health safely.

We deliver education programmes to groups within schools and within the community, as well as providing Highland-specific information online. We also provide information to help young people find services that can support them with a wide range of topics.

"Have experts come in and talk to us"

"Make it a subject that is taught in a relatable manner, not a stuffy conversation with an awkward teacher"



Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the young people from across Highland who participated in the survey and all the professionals that helped and encouraged them to take part.

1. Background and Approach

In April 2017, NHS Highland commissioned Waverley Care to develop a sexual health education and health promotion service for young people in the North Highland area of Scotland.

The contract gave us a broad scope to develop a new service, that would provide education and information that was relevant to the diverse youth population across the region.

Our initial priorities were:

- creating a distinctive brand that young people could identify and engage with
- ensuring delivery of education sessions within all secondary schools in Highland by developing a new programme for large groups
- creating a comprehensive, Highland-specific website for young people, carrying key sexual health messages and signposting young people to existing services such as GPs, pharmacies, and support services

It was decided early on that consultation with young people was vital to ensuring the development of a relevant and engaging service, and we are very proud to say that everything from our branding to our programme content has been shaped by input from young people from all areas of Highland.

To inform the content of our resources, we wanted to conduct an anonymous 'needs assessment' type consultation, asking young people what they thought about the Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenting Education (RSHPE) they receive, what they actually want to be taught about and how they would like to be taught.

A survey was developed and distributed online, and paper copies were distributed in various locations including secondary schools, youth groups, further education colleges and youth sexual health clinics. The survey ran from June to October 2017.

- 1,195 young people responded
- Participants aged 12-24 took part
- There was representation from all council ward areas of Highland among the participants
- There were 1,104 secondary school aged participants, representing approx 8% of the school roll in Highland in 2017/18

This report outlines our key findings from consulting under 25s as to what RSHPE they actually want and how they want to learn it.

“Consent was never covered - it's something that I felt unsure about until very recently, despite being sexually active for around 10 years”

2. Findings

2.1. Demographics

The survey asked young people to share their gender identity, chosen from a range of options.

Of the 1,195 participants, 590 (**49.4%**) identified as female and 515 (**43.1%**) as male. A further 8 participants identified as transgender and 12 as non-binary. 70 young people (**6.4%**) identified as something other than the above options, or preferred not to state their gender identity.

Responses were received from young people across the full age range targeted by the new service (12-24). Based on the curriculum levels determined by Education Scotland, 505 participants were at third/fourth level (aged 12-14/S1-S3); 599 participants were at senior phase (aged 15-18/S4-S6) and 91 participants were aged 19-24.

The North Highland area of Scotland covers a vast geographic area including urban, rural and remote communities. Survey responses were received from individuals living within every Highland Council ward. Feedback in the subsequent sections was found to be similar among participants from urban and rural areas.



“I feel like the majority of my sexual health education has come from online”



“I feel the basics were done but not much else was covered”

2.2. Experience and expectations of relationships, sexual health and parenting education

The survey responses have helped to highlight some of the perceived shortfalls that young people associate with RSHPE. Only one in four participants (**24.9%**) believed that young people receive enough RSHPE in school and the same proportion (**24.2%**) would find it easy to talk about sex and relationships with school/educational staff.

There was also a strong indication that young people want sex education to start earlier. **36.6%** of participants believed that RSHPE should start in S1, while a further **37%** believed it should start in primary school.

When asked what young people **should** learn about in RSHPE, topics ranking highest included: puberty (**83.2% of respondents**); condoms (**81%**); STIs (**80.1%**); pregnancy and abortion (**79.9%**); sex and the law (**79.7%**); periods (**78.1%**) and sexual abuse and violence (**76.8%**).

Similar responses were received when asked what young people would **like** to learn about. Highest ranking topics included: STIs (**52.3% of respondents**); contraception (**49.6%**); sex and the law (**49%**); condoms (**47.3%**); pregnancy and abortion (**46.1%**); sexual abuse and violence (**44.9%**) and puberty (**44.9%**).

Other topics that participants ranked highly as topics that young people should learn about included: contraception (**76.2% of respondents**); where to get help and advice (**75.9%**); online safety (**74.6%**); consent (**74.1%**); good and bad relationships (**73.6%**); sexuality (**70.5%**); are you ready?/pressures (**70.4%**); sexual body parts (**69.5%**); being a young parent (**69.2%**); vaginal, anal and oral sex (**67.3%**); sexting (**67.1%**); what is sex? (**66.2%**) and gender identity (**65.9%**).



"I've learnt a lot about sex from porn but I know in reality sex isn't like porn"

We asked young people in Highland to tell us about their experiences and expectations of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenting Education (RSHPE).

1,195 young people aged 12-24 participated, from all Highland Council wards.

Only a quarter (24.9%) believed that young people get enough RSHPE in school.

36.6% of participants believed that RSHPE should start in S1, while a further 37% believed RSHPE should start in primary school.

Participants told us that providing sexual health training for teachers and support workers

(36.2%)

and providing accurate and up-to-date information online

(56.7%)

were good ways for Wave to support them.



“Sex education needs to be LGBTI inclusive”

“Start this education early enough and make it compulsory”



Two thirds
(65.7%)

of participants told us that a sexual health expert should teach RSHPE, with only one in four

(24.9%)

young people stating they would find it easy to talk to school staff about sex & relationships.

“We need to feel comfortable talking about the things like porn, pleasure, masturbation or abortion.”

Participants told us that young people should learn about these topics:

Puberty	83.2%	Sexual body parts	69.5%
Condoms	81%	Being a young parent	69.2%
STIs	80.1%	Vaginal, anal & oral sex	67.3%
Pregnancy & abortion	79.9%	Sexting	67.1%
Sex & the Law	79.7%	What is sex?	66.2%
Sexual abuse & violence	76.8%	Gender Identity	65.9%
Contraception	76.2%	Real sex vs. Expectations	63.9%
Where to get help & advice	75.9%	Masturbation	62.2%
Online safety	74.6%	Talking to your partner about sex	61.7%
Consent	74.1%	Confidentiality	61.1%
Good & bad relationships	73.6%	Porn	57.2%
Sexuality	70.5%	Pleasure	53.7%
Are you ready? / Pressures	70.4%		

“Let a sexual health worker teach us in a casual manner”

“It should be based upon the age you are at and not all about “when you get older.”



2.3. Context for delivery of relationships, sexual health and parenting education

Almost half (**49%**) of participants told us they would prefer to learn about sex and relationships in mixed gender groups. Meanwhile, **14.5%** expressed a preference for single gender learning groups and **34.9%** said they weren't bothered either way.

When size of learning group was considered, **45.8%** said they would like to learn about sex and relationships in class-sized groups. **30.6%** said they would prefer small groups, **15.7%** large groups (for example, year groups) and only **3.8%** one-to-one learning.

When it comes to seeking help and advice about issues around sexual health, half of participants (**50.7%**) told us they would find it easiest to talk to friends. Other sources of support included parents/carers (**32.5%**), sexual health experts (**12.5%**) or medical professionals (**12.5%**).

Only one in four young people (**24.2%**) would find it easy to talk to school/educational staff about sex and relationships.

Two thirds (**65.7%**) of participants told us that an expert in sexual health should teach RSHPE. The next most appropriate people identified were guidance teachers (**19.5%**), or youth workers (**6.6%**).

Alongside education in schools, participants told us the best way to support young people with their sexual health was via online information (**56.7%**) and through training for teachers and support workers (**36.2%**).



3. What we did

We were blown away by the number of responses we had to our survey and the valuable data it provided us with. We looked at our priorities and started to use the survey data to shape our content.

We put together a programme called Wavelength that caters for whole year groups at a time, while also allowing learning in small groups as requested by young people.

Resources within the programme have been shaped by what young people told us they should learn about, particularly the highest ranking topics such as condoms (**81% of respondents**); consent (**74.1%**); contraception (**76.2%**); online safety (**74.6%**); sex and the law (**79.7%**); sexual body parts (**69.5%**); STIs (**80.1%**) and where to get help and advice (**75.9%**).

As well as activities focused around specific topics, we have also taken other subject areas and made them key themes that are promoted throughout all parts of the programme. These themes are consent, LGBTI+ diversity and inclusion, and being able to identify and build positive relationships.

“Learn about it more and not just skipping it some years”

“Teach about different sex with different gendered partners”

We have also developed a comprehensive sexual health information website (www.wavehighland.com), covering all the topics young people said were important, alongside a sexual health service finder based upon postcode search to help young people find services local to them.

Between the survey consultation with young people ending in October 2017 and the school year ending in July 2018, the Wave team travelled **1,297** miles to deliver our Wavelength programme to **867** young people in **14** schools across Highland.

Feedback from evaluation forms tell us that **81.1%** of participants rated the programme as ‘good’ or ‘brilliant’ and **87.8%** stated they had learned something new.

72.9% of participants informed us they were ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’ to remember the information they had learned and **63.4%** stated they were ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’ to use the information they had learned.

We aim to deliver the programme to all remaining secondary schools in Highland during the 2018/19 school year. We will continue to use consultation and evaluation feedback to develop and improve Wavelength content, making sure it remains relevant to the young people we work with.

4. Recommendations

Following the completion of our survey, and subsequent work to develop and deliver the Wave service, we have identified the following recommendations:

- Survey results show that young people’s needs and expectations of RSHPE were relatively consistent across both remote and rural, and urban areas of Highland. Similarly, consistent results were observed across age ranges. Young people want consistency when it comes to sexual health education – lessons should cover a broad range of themes equally and not just cover the basics in S3/4. Learning should commence in primary school and continue throughout school life.
- RSHPE should be taught either in class-sized or small groups, with young people preferring to learn in mixed gender lessons. All information should be delivered in an inclusive manner that recognises LGBTI+ preferences and avoids bias towards teaching heterosexual/gender normative issues in isolation.
- Educators need to have appropriate skills and knowledge to teach RSHPE effectively and engage young people, accessing sexual health training events and updates when possible. Teaching by unqualified staff can make sessions awkward or ‘cringey’ for all involved!
- Schools and organisations that work with young people should recognise that young people want information they can trust. Part of that trust is based on who delivers education work, with findings demonstrating a strong preference for sexual health experts. Where possible, professionals should involve local services in delivery of RSHPE to improve outcomes for young people.
- Young people should be included in RSHPE. They should be consulted, have their opinions, values and needs considered during planning, their questions answered without judgement and their feedback used to continually update and improve delivery. Peer education is also a valuable tool and should be incorporated where possible.

Engaging and involving young people has helped to shape Wave’s work and sits at the heart of our ethos. We will continue to consult and work with young people to ensure that any new or existing programmes and resources are relevant, useful and make learning about sex and relationships enjoyable for young people across Highland.

We will also continue to provide accurate, trustworthy information online to support both young people and professionals, particularly in remote and rural locations where access to services is limited.

“All resources should be new and up-to-date, not old fuzzy video clips”

“Stop being so serious when you’re teaching it”





To make an enquiry about Wave services or to book a programme, please contact **hello@wavehighland.com**



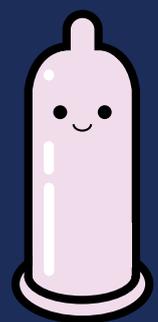
Waverley Care is Scotland's HIV and Hepatitis C charity

To find out more about other Waverley Care services, including professional training, visit

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