

Scouts to Launch National Relationships and Sexual Health Programme

- Local leaders to run programme educating Explorer Scouts aged 14 - 18 about relationships and safer sex
 - Programme called “My Body, My choice”
- Resource supported by sexual health charity Brook

5th April: The Scout Association is today launching a national relationships and sexual health programme for the first time.

Explorer Scout Leaders, now have educational material that can be used in a relaxed and informal environment to help young people learn about relationships and sexual health issues with their peers and trusted adults.

The Scout Association first introduced formal guidance for Leaders who were asked about sex and relationship related matters by youth members in 2008. This new resource follows up on this initial guidance and reflects the increasing demand from adults and young people within the Movement who have been asking for this type of support.

Health Protection Agency figures show the UK has the highest rate of STIs and teenage pregnancies in Europe. Furthermore, STIs in the UK are most prevalent in under 25s [1]. Scouting believes these worrying statistics are most likely to be reversed if young people are given clear information about safe sex as they approach adulthood and allowing them to make informed decisions that are right for their circumstances.

Leaders will receive a resource pack from The Scout Association providing guidance on how to approach the relevant issues. The resource offers a range of activities designed to help young people make informed decisions. Activities include an “Any Questions, Any Answers” game, where Explorer Scouts will be able to anonymously write down any questions they want answered about sex.

The Scout Association recognises that this is an important and sensitive topic for young people and their families. Participation in the scheme is therefore voluntary for parents, young people and local Leaders. Leaders will also exercise discretion on whether the new scheme is suitable for their Explorer Scout Unit. Parents will be informed well in advance if their local Unit will be holding a session on sexual health.

Simon Blake, Chief Executive of Brook, said:

“We welcome the introduction of this type of no nonsense material. The material is clear and simple and is the type of information young people tell us they need to help them understand how their bodies work and to help them make informed decisions about these matters”

Bear Grylls, Chief Scout, said:

“This programme is about getting the right information to young people to help them make smart decisions about their relationships” He added “We want to help young people become confident, clued up and aware. My message is – make your own mind up and don’t let others do it for you. We only get one body – so respect it - and people will respect you.”

Alex Williams, a Scout Leader from Merseyside said:

“This new guidance means that the young people who we work with will be supported in making informed decisions about their health and well being. For some time now leaders like me have been asking for support with these issues and this material helps me support young people with this issue. We are providing a resource which will deliver advice to young people at a crucial stage in their lives covering topics of Sexuality, STI’s and abstinence”

ENDS

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Notes to editors:

The resource has been produced with support from Brook and an educational grant from Durex.

[1] Source

- The UK has the highest rates of STIs and teenage pregnancies in Europe
- Almost one in five girls say they have been pregnant at least once by the age of 18
- Just under half (46%) decided to keep their babies, while more than a third (36%) had abortions
- Those under 24, particularly young women, continue to be the group most affected by STIs in the country
- Almost half a million new STI diagnoses were reported from sexual health clinics across the UK in 2009 – 12,000 more cases than in the previous year
- Last year, two-thirds of new STI diagnoses were in women under 25
- The peak age for an STI in women is between 19 and 20 years old and in men, between 20 and 23
- Of all the under 24s diagnosed with an STI last year, around one in 10 will become re-infected within a year

Health Protection Agency August 2010/Office for National Statistics July 2010

About Scouting

- The Scout Association was founded on 1st August 1907.
- Adventure is at the core of Scouting, and the Association passionately believes in helping their members fulfil their full physical, intellectual social and spiritual potentials by working in teams, learning by doing and thinking for themselves.
- Over 200 activities are offered by Scouting around the UK, made possible by the efforts of 100,000 voluntary adult leaders. This has helped make Scouting the largest co-educational youth Movement in the country.
- There are half a million members across the UK (400,000 young people supported by 100,000 adult volunteers). Worldwide Scouting has 28 million members both male and female and operates in nearly every country in the world.
- There are 200 Scout activity and challenge badges. These require participants to achieve a level of understanding and skill determined to be realistic for their age group.