

# Talking about sex, sexuality and relationships: GUIDANCE AND STANDARDS: The Standards

For those working with young people with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions

## The Standards



### UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

All young people with a life-limiting or life-threatening condition should expect:

- ◆ To have the right to privacy, dignity and confidentiality
- ◆ To be treated in an age-appropriate way, regardless of their developmental stage and mental capacity
- ◆ To be able to address sexuality, intimacy and relationships with freedom from fear, guilt, shame and taboo
- ◆ To be appropriately supported from vulnerability to risk or harm
- ◆ To have the right to discuss, explore and receive relevant information about relationships, intimacy and sexuality, if that is their wish
- ◆ To have their individual needs and views at the centre of care and support, but with information and support provided to their families too
- ◆ To be able to approach professionals to discuss issues of sex, sexuality and intimacy without being judged
- ◆ To have support relating to sex, sexuality and intimacy throughout their life, including early discussions in childhood, as needs change and at the end of life

## STANDARDS FOR STAFF

All members of staff should:

1. Provide a life-long approach to providing information and education for young people, ensuring that they have access to developmentally appropriate information to enable them to explore and develop their own sexual identity, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation
2. Prepare parents/carers to be able to support young people with their emerging sexuality, intimacy and relationship issues
3. Feel confident about communicating with young people about sexuality and relationship issues, undertaking training as necessary
4. Be informed about practical support that they can safely and legally provide to young people, including the use of technology
5. Be aware of cultural and religious beliefs of young people and how these may impact on young people's sexual development and sexual expression
6. Take professional accountability for ensuring that young people are supported with sexual issues, with awareness that avoidance of this can cause distress for young people
7. Take responsibility for safeguarding young people in their care
8. Adhere to codes of professional conduct

## STANDARDS FOR ORGANISATIONS AND MANAGERS

Organisations and service managers should:

1. Ensure that there are robust clinical governance procedures in place, and that staff are fully aware of them and know how to use them
2. Ensure that staff are providing support that is within the law and principles of safeguarding, and that complies with professional codes of conduct
3. Ensure there is a sexuality policy in place to support both staff and young people, which is regularly reviewed
4. Provide training to enable their staff to support and advise young people and their families safely and effectively in a culture that welcomes open discussion about sexuality

For further information, please see the complete version of **Talking about sex, sexuality and relationships: Guidance and Standards (December 2015)** available from [www.open.ac.uk/health-and-social-care/research/sexuality-alliance](http://www.open.ac.uk/health-and-social-care/research/sexuality-alliance)