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 Cork Education and
 Training Board

Document:	Cork ETB Youthreach Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy
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This policy was devised in line with:	Circular M4/95 RSE Circular M11/03 SPHE Education Act 1998 White Paper on Education SPHE Junior Certificate Guidelines for Teachers

	<p><u>NCCA Interim Curriculum Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools for RSE as an aspect of SPHE (1997)</u></p> <p><u>RSE in the Context of SPHE (2007)</u></p> <p><u>RSE Going Forward Together – An Introduction for Parents</u></p> <p><u>RSE Policy Guidelines (1997)</u></p>
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Purpose

All Youthreach centres are required deliver Relationship and Sexual Education (RSE) and Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Youthreach centres are required to have an RSE Policy and RSE is delivered as part of SPHE. This policy was developed to inform teachers and parents as to what material is covered in both RSE and SPHE; how it is delivered, the methodologies adopted, and materials used, in line with the following documents:

Scope

This policy applies all Cork ETB Youthreach staff, students, and boards of management.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/ Guardians

Cork ETB Youthreach Centres recognises that the primary responsibility for the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of the children lies with their parents. Cork ETB Youthreach Centres is committed to creating a tradition of supporting parents in this role. SPHE and RSE delivery is seen as building on this.

At induction parents and students will be informed of the delivery of SPHE and RSE, parents will be asked to permit students to attend these classes. Students will be informed of the policy through their SPHE Class. A full and complete syllabus, core resource materials and policy document will be available in the centre if parents wish to review it. They will be informed of this at induction. Parents will be informed of any substantial changes in the programme made by the Department of Education and Skills.

Role of the Teacher

The SPHE teacher is in a unique position in that s/he has regular contact with the class, in a context that is person-centred rather than subject centred. How a teacher manages the class and the relationship s/he develops with the students is essential for the effectiveness of the learning. Research has shown that greater learning takes place in an environment where:

- Students are respected and valued in their uniqueness
- Students are understood and their views are accepted rather than judged
- Teachers are seen as real and genuine people by the students
- Adequate preparation and planning has taken place prior to the lesson

(cf. SPHE Junior Certificate Guidelines for Teachers, p.27)

It is recommended, that, where possible, the SPHE/ RSE teacher continues with the same class throughout their time in the centre. This helps to solidify the relationship between teacher and student. The teacher accompanies the

student on his/her journey through the centre – sharing in their joys and fears and responding to them in a caring way.

Role of Guest Speakers to the SPHE/ RSE class

The SPHE teacher will consult with the Coordinator in relation to the suitability of guest speakers prior to their invitation to the centre. All guest speakers will be made aware of and requested to comply with the centre SPHE policy. The presentations of guest speakers will be negotiated with the relevant SPHE teacher before delivery to the students. It is advised that teachers may be asked to remain in the classroom while visitors are working with students, in order to answer questions that may arise in the future. Preparatory and follow-up work, where possible, should be undertaken by the class.

Role of Cork ETB Youthreach Centre

Each Youthreach centre will support SPHE by ensuring it is a health promoting centre. A Health Promoting Centre is a centre that is constantly strengthening its capacity to be a healthy setting for living, learning and working, by focusing on all the conditions that effect health. (World Health Organisation 2000).

Centres committed to the health promoting centre process focus on four important aspects:

1. A health promoting physical and social environment
2. A social, personal and health education curriculum
3. Links with families and the community
4. Policies that address health issues

A health promoting centre is one which seeks to promote healthy lifestyles for all in a safe and supportive environment. It will have an organised set of policies, procedures, activities and structures designed to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of staff, students and the wider centre community. Examples of centre health related policies which should be developed are:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Child Safety Statement & risk assessment

Section 1: Definition, Aims, Timetable

What is SPHE?

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a subject that provides students with the unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and others, and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

What is RSE?

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of SPHE and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for students to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework. In particular, it addresses the meaning of human sexuality, relationships, growth and development, relevant to personal and social skills.

Aims of SPHE & RSE programmes in Cork ETB Youthreach Centres

The world we live in presents young people with many opportunities and challenges that affect their health and well-being. A student who has high self-esteem and a sense of security will be better able to meet these challenges and opportunities and will be better able to benefit from what centre has to offer.

The aims of the SPHE programme is to enable students to develop personal and social skills:

- To enable students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities.
- To promote students' self-esteem and self-confidence.
- To enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making.
- To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.

The aims of RSE programme in Cork ETB Youthreach Centres is to

- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and wellbeing of the student.
- To help students to develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships.
- To enable students to acquire an understanding of, and respect for human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- To develop and promote understanding of human reproduction.
- To enable students to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.

SPHE/ RSE Timetable

As recommended by the Department of Education, at least one 40-minute class per week will be dedicated to the delivery of the SPHE and RSE programme for each class group. Additionally, students will benefit from external speakers visiting the centre on a range of SPHE related topics, including sexual health, drug and alcohol awareness, internet safety etc.

Section 2: Guidelines for the management and organisation of RSE in Centres**Offering Advice:**

The centre's function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception - however sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may provide students with education and information about where and from whom they can receive confidential sexual advice and treatment, e.g. their doctor or other suitable agency. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the student.

Explicit Questions:

While it is best practice to answer all questions in a straightforward, factual way, it may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the Coordinator. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the centre and the RSE policy.

Confidentiality:

It is centre policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Coordinator. The Coordinator will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also centre policy:

- a) teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality.
- b) students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Coordinator and possibly to parents if the Coordinator decides that it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents.

- c) teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information.
- d) teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential - the student can then decide whether to proceed or not.

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools state in 4.1.1. and 4.2.1.

4.1.1. If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse he/she should, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that school. A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person. The need for confidentiality at all times, as previously referred to in Chapter 1 Paragraph 1.2 of these guidelines, should be borne in mind. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child.

4.2.1 If the Designated Liaison Person is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation, he/she should report the matter to the relevant health board immediately.

Withdrawing students from the RSE programme:

1. Relevant sections of this policy are made available to parents together with details about the parent's right to withdraw their child from sensitive aspects of RSE – parents will always be provided with a full copy of this policy following a request to do so.
2. What we do if a request for withdrawal from the RSE programme is made by a parent:
 - a) we discuss the nature of the concerns with the child's parent and if appropriate attempt to reassure them. Parents do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but we respectfully invite them to do so - sometimes we can then resolve misunderstandings.
 - b) we consider whether the programme can be amended or improved in a way that will reassure parents - care is taken not to undermine the integrity of the RSE programme and the entitlement of the other students, e.g. it may be appropriate and desirable to have single sex classes for some sections of the RSE programme;
 - c) we attempt to ensure that where a student is withdrawn there is no disruption to other parts of their education,
 - d) we point out that students who have been withdrawn are vulnerable to teasing - we therefore attempt to cause minimal embarrassment to the student and minimal disruption to the programme;
 - e) we also point out that students may receive inaccurate information from their peers;

f) we offer the parents access to appropriate information and resources.

3. Once a parent's request to withdraw is made, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent.

Homosexuality

Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that homosexuality will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning homosexuality is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions, and address prejudice. Discussion of homosexuality should be appropriate to the age of the students.

Contraception

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

Special Needs

Children with special needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up; they may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others.

Section 3: Curriculum, Methodologies, Special Needs, Cross-curricular links, Staff Development, Resources

CONTENT AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

Through participation in the SPHE and RSE Programme the student will encounter a wide range of issues through a variety of experiences. These issues will be addressed in key topics, each of which appears in each year of the two-year Youthreach cycle. The emphasis will be on building skills, understanding, attitudes and values important in all these areas. The curriculum will be informed by the needs of the students.

The ten SPHE topics are:

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| 1) Belonging and integrating | 6) Relationships and Sexuality |
| 2) Self-Management | 7) Emotional Health |
| 3) Communication Skills | 8) Influences and Decisions |
| 4) Physical Health | 9) Substance Use |
| 5) Friendship | 10) Personal Safety |

RSE Topics:

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| 1) Communication Skills | 6) Sexuality and sexual orientation |
| 2) Self-Esteem | 7) Contraception |
| 3) Understanding & Communicating
Boundaries | 8) Sexually transmitted Disease |
| 4) Human Reproduction & Fertility | 9) Healthy Relationships |
| 5) Unplanned pregnancy | 10) Consent |

SPHE/ RSE is primarily skills based and so teaching methods must be of an experiential nature with the emphasis on discussion, reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods will be student centred and appropriate to the age and development of the student. The class atmosphere must be one of respect and privacy of the individual teacher and student hallmarked by sensitivity and care. A respectful code of conduct is expected from all participants. Every class establishes ground rules which are referred to throughout the lessons. Any breach of this may result in the removal of the student from the class.

Teaching Methodologies may include:

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| • Group work | • Debating |
| • Roleplay | • Project work |
| • Brainstorming | • Artwork |
| • Icebreakers | • Multi-media materials |
| • Simulation | • Case studies |
| • Narrative expression | • Visiting speakers |

The Department of Education and Skills recognises that each centre has flexibility to plan the SPHE/ RSE Programme in harmony with the students' needs and centres resources.

Cross Curricular Links

The following subject areas form the cross curricular links with the SPHE:

- P.E. – health and fitness
- Teamworking – cooperation, team support
- Cooking – healthy eating
- Biology – understanding the body
- Work Experience – health & safety
- I.T. – research & project completion

- Personal Interpersonal Skills Development – communication skills, boundaries

Staff Development

Staff delivering SPHE/ RSE will supported in completing PDST SPHE and RSE teacher training. Additional professional development should be offered to teachers when opportunities arise. Likewise, teachers may identify their own training needs and request the facilitation of same.

Resources

There is a vast range of resources available for delivering RSE and SPHE. This list is not exhaustive:

- YouTube videos
- Ted Talks
- PDST resources e.g. TRUST
- Spunout.ie
- B4udecide.ie

SPHE/ RSE Noticeboard

Each Youthreach centre will have a noticeboard dedicated to SPHE and RSE related information and literacy. The noticeboard will display key vocabulary, information about services in the area, helplines etc.