

## THE BENEFITS OF YOUTH WORK

Youth work offers and strengthens opportunities and educational relationships that improve life chances, reduce inequalities, including illiteracy, and improve the potential for change for many young people. The provision in a non-formal environment enables workers to reach young people in an environment where they feel safe, but where risk-taking and potentially harmful behaviour can also prevail. Youth workers are often best placed to reach marginalised young people who may have slipped through mainstream education in schools and who have little access to other services.

### LINKS AND RESOURCES ⓘ

- [sexuality](#) ➔
- [sexual education](#) ➔

Youth workers who get involved, work from where young people are, in their “natural environment” such as clubs, drop-ins, schools or streets, gardens, nightlife, build trusting relationships. This relationship of trust is the basis for their non-formal approach to education in order to strengthen children, youngsters and young adults.

***This approach is invaluable when informing, involving and supporting young people about several aspects of their lives – including sexual education.***

## NON-FORMAL APPROACHES FOR SEXUAL EDUCATION

As ONU and UNESCO refer “Sexual education provides young people with the knowledge, skills and efficacy to make informed decisions about their sexuality and lifestyle”.

*Is it possible that youth work does not make this kind of education one of its main goals?*

I would say it already does, even if it may not know.

***It is therefore up to youth workers to develop implementation strategies together with young people; to know that sex education is lifelong learning about sex, sexuality, emotions, relationships and sexual health.***

About the outcome ...

# SEXUAL EDUCATION IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH WORK

1. **Sexual Education includes acquiring information, developing skills and exploring attitudes and values.**
2. **It helps young people understand themselves, negotiate and take responsibility for their relationships, and neither exploit others nor be exploited themselves.**
3. **It builds the self-esteem and self-confidence of young people and creates a framework of values that will guide them in their decision-making and behaviour.**
4. **Sexual education also helps to develop a positive view of sexuality and sex and supports sexual self-acceptance.**
5. **It aims to meet the needs of all young people.**

Through non-formal education youth workers can discuss with young people about healthy relationships and consent, about the strength to make the right decisions for themselves and find their views matter.

## EFFECTS OF SEXUAL EDUCATION PROVEN BY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Evidence has shown that **sexual education that is scientifically accurate**, culturally and age-appropriate, gender-sensitive and life skills-based, can **provide young people with the knowledge, skills and efficacy to make informed decisions about their sexuality and lifestyle.**

Research points to the fact that Sexual Education **can effectively delay sex among young people**, even as it **increases condom and overall contraceptive use among sexually active youth.**

Research during the last two decades has also shown that sexual education does not increase rates of sexual activity among teenagers but **does increase knowledge about sexual behaviour and its consequences.** It also **reduces risk taking behaviours among those who are sexually active.**

When young people are provided with accurate and relevant information, when they have developed decision-making, negotiation, communication and critical thinking skills and have access to an educational relationship that is impartial and affordable, they are more likely active and empowered citizens. **And this is the most important goal for a youth worker.**