



Safeguarding
Young People in Care

Let's talk about

Addressing sex and sexuality in residential and foster care



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Amsterdam University
of Applied Sciences





What are we going to do?

- Presentation part on background of the project: \pm 30 min.
- Split up into three groups
- Workshop part: take a closer look at the online course, the summerschool and the materials for lecturers, \pm 60 min.





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Background

- Concerns about sexual abuse of children and young people in care
- From the 1980s: evidence from research
- Last two decades: increasing political attention & national investigations and reviews



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Background

- Abuse by carers and peers
- Important conclusion: professionals lack knowledge, skills and attitude (competencies) to address sexs and sexuality, assist young people's healthy sexual development and safeguard them from abuse.
- Social work education should prepare (future) professionals





Products

- An international summer school on the subject of sex and sexuality, for social work students.
- An online course on the subject of sex and sexuality for professionals working in residential care or working with foster parents.
- A website with materials for (European) lecturers who teach future social workers on the subject of sex and sexuality.
- A reflection instrument as a tool for on-the-job training on the subject.



<http://www.amsterdamuas.com/safe>



Research based

- Two steps:
 - Interviews/focusgroups
 - professionals working in residential care or with foster carers + young people living in residential care
 - Review of publicly available materials (online)
- Two goals:
 - Competencies: what knowledge, skills & attitudes do professionals need?
 - Examples (cases), core literature (e.g. sexual rights approach on sexuality education in Europe based on WHO document 'Standards for Sexuality in Europe')
- details: <http://www.amsterdamuas.com/safe/about/research/products/products.html>



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Sexual development and needs of young people in care



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Method

13 interviews and 8 focus groups professionals
Input young people - student projects BE & NL (20)

Data collection

- March – August 2016
- Interviews and focus groups in native language (Dutch, Danish)

Analysis

- Verbatim transcription
- Qualitative data analysis in Maxqda





Main topics interviews

1. Characteristics of young people in care
2. Needs of young people in care
3. Examples of sexuality education 'in daily life'
4. Difficult situations – cases
5. Talking to colleagues or parents about sexuality
6. Organisational preconditions
7. Special competencies required





Characteristics of young people in care

- In general more vulnerable
- Unsafe family environment
- Insecurely attached
- Lack of positive role models

- Growing up in more than one residential group and/or foster family
- Different standards and values concerning sexuality in all these places
- No clear norms and values concerning sexuality

- Low self-esteem
- Little knowledge about (healthy) sexuality
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Unhealthy choices regarding sexuality





Needs of young people in care

- healthy sexual development
- a safe environment
- support from professionals
- autonomy
 - Develop their own norms and values
 - Opportunity to have positive sexual experiences

Young person:
“becoming aware of one’s limits and
daring to say ‘no’”



Professionals should:

- Act as a positive role model
- Set limits
- Help young people gain self-confidence
- Provide care and upbringing on this topic
- Dare to talk about sex and sexuality



Conclusion

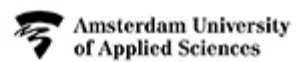
- *Dare* to talk about sexuality
- Address sexuality in a pedagogical way, as part of daily life
- Keep the special needs of young people in care in mind and act accordingly



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Core competencies for addressing sex and sexuality in residential and foster care



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Review online materials

- Overall: coding 14 guidelines and policy documents, 7 interventions, 1 training program for professionals, 1 educational program, 5 tools & instruments and 3 websites.
- Long list of items on important knowledge, skills and attitudes
- Work sessions to understand each others input
- Exclude (38) more general competency items
- Prioritise 99 items with 47 people in four countries (questionnaire)
- Selection most important 61 -> work sessions to re-organise



5 core competencies

- Discussing sexuality
- Supporting young people's needs concerning sexual development
- Dealing with sex and sexuality in a professional way
- Dealing with differences in values and cultures regarding sex and sexuality
- Recognizing and responding to harmful sexual behavior

Example: discussing sexuality

The carer, social worker or other professional has knowledge of healthy sexual development

- Uses correct information
- Applies knowledge of the special needs of this group

The carer, social worker or other professional talks about sex and sexuality in a calm and positive way

- Uses neutral (non-accusatory) expressions
- Uses open and non-concealing (explicit) language
- Is visibly comfortable when talking about sexuality
- Normalises the experiences of young people

The carer, social worker or other professional uses existing methods and materials

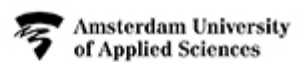
- Uses methodologies
- Uses games
- Uses materials
- The professional chooses the right moment for this use



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Discussing sexuality

1. The carer, social worker or other professional has knowledge of healthy sexual development ?

- Uses correct information
- Applies knowledge of the special needs

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

2. The carer, social worker or other professional talks about sex and sexuality in a calm and positive way ?

- Uses neutral (non-accusatory) expressions
- Uses open and non-concealing (explicit) language
- Is visibly comfortable when talking about sexuality
- Normalises the experiences of young people

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

3. The carer, social worker or other professional uses existing methods and materials ?

- Uses methodologies
- Uses games
- Uses materials
- The professional chooses the right moment of use

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9



I. Discussing sexuality

1. The carer, social worker or other professional has knowledge of healthy sexual development

- *Uses correct information*

Explanation: Uses correct information on sexual development in different age groups when talking to young people, colleagues or (foster) parents. For example, when explaining that playing doctor is healthy behaviour for four-year-old children.

- *Applies knowledge of special needs*

Explanation: Applies knowledge of the special needs of vulnerable young people concerning sexual development when talking to young people, colleagues or (foster) parents. For example, understanding that young people who have experienced sexual trauma can sometimes exhibit sexualized behaviour.

2. The carer, social worker or other professional talks about sex and sexuality in a calm and positive way

- *Uses neutral (non-accusatory) expressions*

Explanation: For example, instead of saying 'oh wow, and you're not even in a relationship,' you say: 'Oh, would you like to tell me more about that?'

- *Uses open and non-concealing (explicit) language*

Explanation: For example, by asking about penetration and oral sex when the situation demands you know exactly what transpired.

- *Is visibly comfortable when talking about sexuality*

Explanation: Is visibly comfortable when talking about sexuality (is not emotional or red-faced), including the topic of harmful sexual behaviour.

- *Normalises the experiences of young people*

Explanation: Reacts in a calm and comforting way. For example, when a young person expresses regret about consensual oral sex with a classmate.

3. The carer, social worker or other professional uses existing methods and materials

- *Uses methodologies*

- *Uses games*

- *Uses materials*

- *The worker chooses the right moment of use*

Explanation: Was it appropriate at that time, was it planned, was it to use specific goals, did you think about these goals beforehand?



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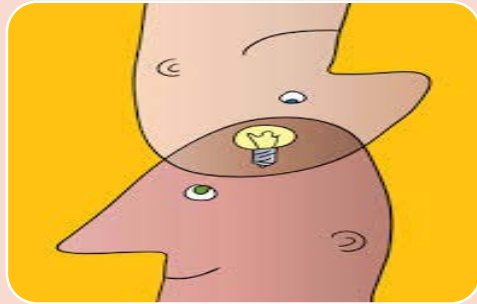


5 central themes

1. Values, rules and regulations
2. Knowledge about sexual development
3. Sexual identity & diversity
4. Sexual harmful behaviour
5. Talking about sexuality with clients



Development educational materials



DATABASE

Materials for
education and
inspiration

Small scale pilot by
asking input
colleagues



SUMMER SCHOOL

For students

Pilot one week in
Antwerp
Sept. 2017



ONLINE COURSE

For professionals

Pilot online, 22
organisations
Early 2018



Let's work with it!

- [Website](#)
- 3 subgroups:
 - Green = Gitte = online course = front
 - Yellow = Iddegien = summerschool = left corner
 - Blue = Wim & Gwendy = lecturers = right corner



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