

Policy name: Inclusive Protection and Sexual Health Education

STUDENT COUNCIL FACTS:

- Covid-19 and the resulting lockdown has shown a decrease in young people in Northern Ireland accessing sexual health services¹. It is currently being reported that many students that have progressed through secondary school during the peak Covid period of 2020-2021 have received diminished sexual health education, compared to previous cohorts².
- This has resulted in some students beginning their university experience without vital sexual health education and understanding.
- Council also notes that many Northern Irish secondary schools do not adequately teach and encourage safe sex practices among LGBTQ+ people and this presents a significant gap in knowledge. This is evidenced by the research commissioned by the Department of Education which found that 90.4% of young LGBTQ+ people indicated that LGBTQ+ relationships had not been discussed as part of Relationships and Sex Education³.

STUDENT COUNCIL BELIEVES:

- Student council believes that it is essential for Students' Unions to not only provide students with free STI protection, but to also ensure that students are educated on safe sex practices. It is essential that a broad range of education is provided to ensure inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community.
- Student Council believes that the "C Card" scheme is valuable but not inclusive or accessible enough. The provision of condoms alone is simply not adequate and the location restrictions on the scheme render it inaccessible to many students.
- Student Council believes that, given the impact of the pandemic on the sexual health education of students, these gaps in knowledge need to be tackled. Information and guidance need to be provided to supplement the knowledge students currently have.
- Abstinence focused sexual health education is not conducive to positive relationships and therefore, any material and information provided should be centred around a sex positive approach.

¹ <https://sti.bmj.com/content/96/7/473>

² <http://www.srhm.org/news/adolescents-and-sexual-education-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-and-beyond>

³ <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/education/dup-hits-back-at-attempts-to-impose-compulsory-sex-education-on-department-of-education-by-department-of-communities-3168157>

STUDENT COUNCIL RESOLVES:

- UUSU (Ulster University Students Union) should provide condoms and dental dams with exploration of other appropriate, relevant protective measures to supply to students, free of charge, at key points in the year.
- The provision of inclusive protection is to be supplemented with inclusive information and guidance education. These will be distributed in physical, printed format but also with an online option for ease of access.
- UUSU will also promote Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) testing to students and engage with the university, local charities and organisations that encourage safe sex practices.
- UUSU to run a Sexual Health and Guidance week in collaboration with USI (Union of Students in Ireland) to promote this policy and the work being done to tackle these gaps in knowledge.

Name of Proposer: *Student Executive*

Name of Seconder: *Sarah O'Keefe*