

## **What to say? Guidance for Clinics on Having Conversations about Sexual Health with Young People at Clinic.**

**Amanda Ely: July 2015.**

These guidelines on Having Conversations about Sexual Health were provided by young people living with HIV as part of the “Treat me like this” Youth Guidelines Group Project.

Make sure you hold a general conversation about health and life more broadly as an opening to a conversation. Try to establish an informal and relaxed conversation.

It is helpful if YP feels they can bring the topic up. It is important to recognise that this is a private conversation. You can provide a “topic sheet” which outlines a range of topic choices, the young person can then tick the topics they would like to discuss at that appointment. **(Today I would like to talk about...)**

Remember this is **their clinic consultation**, and not yours.

Health professionals need to be knowledgeable and confident in holding a conversation about sexual health with a young person. If you feel uncomfortable or unconfident in your sexual health knowledge you are not well placed to hold this conversation.

Accept that a young person may not want to talk about sex with you. It can be helpful to depersonalise a conversation. Rather than asking “are you thinking of having/in a sexual relationship?” You can link the conversation to their PSHE education at school. “Perhaps you can tell me what you have learnt about sex and relationships at school”. You can then fill in the gaps in relation to HIV and sexual relationships.

Offer information in different ways. For example use websites and leaflets. Provide an opportunity for the young person to see a different health professional to talk about their sexual health. Young people suggested sending information to their phones, or having a phone call as other options of providing information.

### **Make sure you:**

Avoid holding a conversation about sexual health with a parent or carer present.

Do not launch into a conversation about sexual health by asking immediately whether a young person is sexually active.

Avoid linking HIV with sex as something negative and fearful.

For example in a conversation about HIV transmission and sex.

It is important to convey positive messages about young people and their sexual relationships, whilst given them the information they need for safer sex.