

## **Public Health Where the People Are: A Community-Based, Creative Model of Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

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Background/Purpose:

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is frequently delivered through information-based approaches that do not always translate into meaningful or sustained change. Shame remains a significant barrier to engagement, limiting people's ability to access, understand, and apply sexual health knowledge. There is a need for approaches that are grounded in relationships, culture, and the realities of daily life. This practice-based model responds to this need by embedding sexual health education within community-based public health practice, aligning with broader sexual health and rights frameworks that recognise sexual health as inseparable from agency, autonomy, and lived experience.

Approach:

Developed through sustained, on-the-ground delivery alongside community, this model integrates creative expression, participatory methods, and embodied learning to reduce shame and strengthen engagement. Activities include visual arts, tactile modelling, movement-based learning, and facilitated discussion, supporting participants to build foundational knowledge of anatomy, bodily function, and body autonomy. These approaches create safe and inclusive spaces where curiosity is normalised and stigma is reduced, enabling exploration of consent, relationships, identity, and sexual health. Delivered across education and community settings, the model prioritises trust, repetition, and practical application, supporting learning that is embedded within everyday life rather than delivered as one-off interventions.

Outcomes/Impact:

The model has demonstrated strong engagement, reduced shame, improved body literacy, and increased confidence among participants to understand their bodies, assert autonomy, and navigate relationships. Creative and embodied approaches support deeper understanding and retention of knowledge, while strengthening people's ability to recognise and respond to both safe and unsafe situations. The work also strengthens connections between services, education settings, and community, contributing to environments that support safety, respect, and wellbeing.

Innovation and Significance:

This model contributes to contemporary CSE practice by demonstrating how creative, community-based approaches can effectively address shame as a structural barrier to sexual health. It offers a practical, transferable example of how public health can be delivered in ways

that are relational, culturally responsive, and grounded in lived experience. Building on practice that has gained national recognition within the sector, this approach has relevance for broader application across diverse settings in the creation of safer and more connected sexual health communities.