

# **‘SEXING UP THE SECTOR’: A PILOT PROJECT THAT BUILDS THE CAPACITY OF YOUTH SERVICES IN NSW TO ENGAGE IN SEXUAL HEALTH**

## **Authors:**

SARAH SMITH<sup>\*</sup>, BRONWYN LEECE<sup>2</sup>, KAGE GOLD<sup>3</sup>, LIMIN MAO<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> HIV and Related Programs (HARP) Unit, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, Sydney, Australia; <sup>2</sup> HIV and Related Programs (HARP) Unit, Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District, Penrith Australia; <sup>3</sup>HIV and Related Programs (HARP) Unit, Hunter New England Local Health District, Maitland, Australia; <sup>4</sup>Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW, Sydney, Australia

\* [sarah.smith2@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sarah.smith2@health.nsw.gov.au)

## **Background/Purpose:**

The ‘Sexing up the sector’ project was developed within the NSW Ministry of Health’s Sexual Health Promotion Framework, a component of the NSW Sexually Transmissible Infections (STI) Strategy 2016-2020.

Youth services are a priority setting in the strategy recognising their role reaching marginalised and at-risk young people. The aim of the pilot was to determine if ‘Sexing up the sector’ is effective and feasible in specialist homelessness and out of home care youth service settings in NSW.

## **Approach:**

‘Sexing up the sector’ provides services with a comprehensive sexual health resource kit, a one-day training and ongoing mentoring and support. The project has been piloted in three local health districts with rural, regional, metropolitan and an Aboriginal specific youth service.

Data from various sources including pre-post organisational audits, pre-post training surveys, semi-structured interviews of youth workers and project records allow for data triangulation.

## **Outcomes/Impact:**

The project has achieved:

- Statistically significant increased knowledge and confidence across all 10 measures in pre-post training surveys. For example percentage strongly agreeing with ‘I have confidence starting conversations’ 11.2% vs 38.3% (p<0.001); ‘I have good knowledge of key sexual health messages’ 3.1% vs 42.6% (p<0.001) pre-post. Sample size ninety-eight pre and ninety-four post.
- Adoption of sexual health policies by three youth services
- Increased frequency of sexual health conversations and inclusion of sexual health in routine client activities
- Increased referrals to local sexual health clinics
- Increased condom distribution
- 

## **Innovation and Significance:**

‘Sexing up the Sector’ will be scaled up across NSW because it effectively builds youth service capacity to engage in sexual health by creating organisation and practice change and increasing knowledge and confidence of youth workers. It is replicable across youth settings in NSW and Australasia and in priority settings accessed by young people such as mental health or drug and alcohol.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

Nil conflict of interests to disclose.

**Acknowledgements:**

The NSW Sexually Transmissible Infections Programs Unit and YFoundations.