**Education For Choice: UK Medical School project**

**Purpose of project**

To deliver evidence-based workshops on pregnancy decision-making and abortion to school students, which comply with best practice and support key public health objectives

**Ethos - good quality abortion education:**

* is evidence-based
* promotes key public health objectives including prevention of unintended pregnancy; informed decision-making about unintended pregnancy; prevention of abortion stigma; timely access to appropriate abortion or ante-natal services for those who are pregnant; access to contraception following childbirth or abortion
* recognises young people’s rights to access accurate information that will enable them to make and act on informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health
* values the bodily autonomy of individuals and their right to make decisions about their lives
* challenges stigma associated with abortion and teenage parenthood
* is inclusive

**Practice - good quality abortion education:**

* is delivered as part of Relationships and Sex Education within a broader programme of Personal Social and Health Education
* provides evidence-based information on pregnancy prevention and contraception, and signposts young people to reliable sources of information and confidential services
* explores the different options available to someone in the event of an unintended pregnancy
* facilitates discussion about the factors which impact on a person’s decision to continue with or end a pregnancy
* provides evidence-based information on abortion including referral routes, methods, and outcomes and signposts young people to reliable sources of information and confidential services
* actively promotes participation by boys and young men in the discussion about pregnancy prevention, pregnancy options, abortion and contraception
* acknowledges that unintended pregnancy can impact LGBT+ people directly and indirectly

**Medical student volunteers in the project must be** **committed to:**

* Exploring honestly their own attitudes and values in relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights
* Supporting women’s autonomy, and their right to make and act on informed decisions about their own pregnancy
* Empowering young people with accurate, evidence-based information from reliable sources
* Providing a non-judgmental space to encourage discussion of views and values
* Delivering workshops/lessons in line with the ethos of the project, the training given, and the lesson plans and information provided
* Working within the parameters of schools’ and UCL’s safeguarding policies

**Volunteers will need to:**

* Attend a half or one day training session on a weekend or evening
* Work with a fellow student/co-facilitator to deliver workshops in local schools
* Complete feedback and evaluation processes
* Attend update sessions/read material updates as required

**Benefits - participating in this project will provide students with:**

* A greater understanding of young people’s knowledge about and attitudes to sex, relationships, contraception and abortion
* A greater understanding of the causes and context for abortion; the ways in which people make decisions about abortion; the abortion referral process; abortion methods and outcomes
* Transferable skills including understanding and experience of workshop planning, workshop facilitation/classroom practice, and evaluation.

**What’s wrong with current abortion education?**

When abortion is addressed in school in the context of Religious Education/Religious Studies it can often be debated as an abstract moral issue rather than something that is a common experience for ordinary people.

The focus may be on the formal teaching of a religion, ignoring the real life experiences of religious and non-religious people. This approach can reinforce the taboo surrounding abortion in some communities and perpetuate stigma and shame experienced by the many women of faith who do access contraception and abortion.

Sometimes speakers from anti-abortion organisations are invited in to schools to explain the moral case against abortion. These speakers may employ misinformation to make the case against abortion, and are often connected with – and direct young people to – crisis pregnancy centres[[1]](#footnote-0) which often misinform, frighten and manipulate clients who are seeking objective information on abortion, or who are seeking an abortion referral.

1. Report highlighting misinformation, bias, and poor quality practice in independent pregnancy counselling centres in the UK <https://www.brook.org.uk/images/brook/professionals/documents/page_content/EFC/CPCreport/crisis_preg_centres_rept_10.2.14-2hiFINAL.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)