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BELFAST

If I Were a Dad: A Relationship and Sexual Education Intervention for Young Incarcerated Men

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Background

Young Incarcerated Men [YIM] are a disadvantaged group often lacking quality relationship and sexuality education [RSE] and in need of it. Evidence shows heightened risk for adverse sexual health outcomes, relationship difficulties, and difficulties with parenting roles among young men leaving prison (Barlow et al., 2011).

The aim of this research is to develop an intervention for YIM to encourage and empower young men to have *healthy relationships* and to prepare them for *future fatherhood*.

Design

The design of this study and intervention is grounded in the *Theory of Planned Behaviour* and follows *Participatory Action*, *Gender Transformative*, and *Rights-Based* principles in development and application. These approaches meant we developed the programme and materials in collaboration with users with a focus on applying human rights to everyday interactions an relationship to address issues of gender inequality.

This work produced an computer-based application comprised of an interactive video drama which young men felt was realistic and applicable to their lives, and a collection of interactive activities and discussions. These activities confront issues around safe and healthy relationships and fatherhood raised by the video dramas, and guide and empower young men to make positive changes to their behaviour.



Research In Action

Delivery of the *If I Were a Dad* programme is currently being trialled in it's full form at two Young Offender Institutions; Hydebank Wood College (NI) and Polmont (Scotland) in collaboration with Barnardos as delivery partners.

Stage 1, *Initial Development*, previously took place at these sites, having young men collaboratively develop this new intervention with service providers and prison staff. The results of this stage showed the intervention and design and methods to be appropriate and appealing to YIM. Barnardos facilitators and prison staff also supported the programme and continued application.

The resulting output of this research is an evidence-based and informed RSE intervention suitable for YIM, and fit for continued delivery.

What is *If I Were a Dad*?

If I Were a Dad is an eight session intervention designed to encourage more positive sexual health, relationships, and preparedness for future fatherhood among YIM. The programme is informed by extant evidence and work with YIM at intervention sties and addressees the following themes:

Being a Man

Aiming to examine and challenge gender stereotypes faced by young men. The intended outcome is improved knowledge and attitudes about gender-based issues.

Being a Partner

Aiming to examine pressures faced by young men and issues around conflict and sexual health with a goal of empowering young men to have healthy sexual and interpersonal relationships.

Being a Father

Aiming to explore issues around parenting and partnership. The intended outcome is greater knowledge of children's health and potential issues around parenting with or without a partner and how one might deal with these.

Future Fatherhood

Encouraging young men to share what they have learned to promote positive attitudes toward masculinity and fatherhood in the prison environment.

