

INFORMING  
CHOICES NI



# Guess what I was asked today?

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Supporting confident parent-child communications  
around sexuality and personal relationships

# What is Speakeasy?

Speakeasy is a community education programme funded by the Public Health Agency (PHA). The aim of the programme is to encourage parents and guardians to engage confidently with their children and young people about a wide range of issues directly linked to sexuality and personal relationships. It is delivered free of charge to any group of parents and guardians (including grandparents and foster-carers) living within the **Belfast or South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust areas**. The programme is underpinned by:

- Personal development strategies;
- Family and relationships theory;
- Human rights values;
- A pro-choice ethos.

# Why Speakeasy?

Speakeasy has been running in Northern Ireland for over 20 years and recognises the crucial role that parents and guardians play in the development of young people's sexuality and identity. Many parents and guardians strive to be a positive influence and the go-to person in their children's lives; however, it is our experience that this often is not the reality. Coupled with our modern world of online technology, teaching, and ensuring age-appropriate discussions can be a challenge. Speakeasy aims to increase confidence and self-assurance in parent-child communication and provides opportunities for parents and guardians to explore and discuss solutions that are relevant to them.

# How young, is too young?

We are often asked by parents and guardians, if Speakeasy is appropriate to attend if their children are under the age of 5. The answer to this question is YES! It is our experience that the values and attitudes we learn at an early age, particularly about our bodies, personal space, and boundaries, have a life-long impact on how we engage with ourselves and others, especially in personal and sexual relationships.

# What topics are addressed within Speakeasy?

Whilst Speakeasy is delivered on a needs-led basis, the following topics are key themes:

- Understanding of boundaries, private space, and confident body-knowledge with young children;
- Transparent and permission-based family communication;
- Imbedding consensual-focused values and attitudes;
- Creating nurture-based relationships and life choices – both online and physical world;
- Understanding our child's online relationships – what are they actually viewing?
- Role of media influencing – on human relationships, sexuality and family lifestyles, and the impact of artificial intelligence on human relationships and family dynamics;
- Puberty changes and body-knowledge;
- Menstruation – from first to last period;
- Sexual orientation and gender affirmative work;
- Reproductive system, contraceptive rights, and pregnancy choices;
- Sexuality and stigma.

## How does Speakeasy work?

Speakeasy sessions are designed to be flexible and needs-led. Programmes are usually delivered over a period of four to six weeks. Some available options for Speakeasy are:

- Coffee-morning chats (especially useful for parent and toddler groups);
- School-information sessions (especially useful for parent teacher associations, Board of Governors or to support parent-teacher dialogue);
- Full Speakeasy course (especially useful for community and voluntary sector organisations);
- 1:1 Speakeasy information sessions (especially useful for parents and guardians who require additional support with a specific issue).

## What parents say about Speakeasy

*"I thought my kids were way too young for me to be thinking about talking to them about sex. I didn't realise how much more there was to it than that. I'm so glad I came along to this group. I'm starting to talk to them just about their bodies and about their choices."*

## What teachers say about Speakeasy

*"Today, more than ever, parents and guardians are crying out for support around Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). When our school advertised that we would host two Speakeasy programmes, both were filled within an hour. Parents and guardians are sometimes nervous and anxious about RSE but the Speakeasy programme supported them with understanding how to talk to their children in an age-appropriate way and helped to reassure them that others are in the same boat as them. The parents and guardians grew in confidence and their anxieties and fears were substantially reduced."*

## Contact us

**Roisin Flanagan**  
**Speakeasy Project Officer**

Informing Choices NI  
3rd Floor, Ascot House  
24-31 Shaftesbury Square  
Belfast, BT2 7DB

Mob: **07395 085 965**

Email: [roisin.flanagan@informingchoicesni.org](mailto:roisin.flanagan@informingchoicesni.org)



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