



National Cancer  
Control Programme



SunSmart



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,  
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíocht agus Óige  
Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth

# Consultations with young people on on skin cancer prevention behaviours

Prepared by

Deirdre Fullerton (Insights Health and Social Research)

Sheena Mc Grellis (Independent Consultant)

National Cancer Control Programme – Cancer Prevention Function

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

# Executive Summary

Cancer prevention is a cornerstone of the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 (NCS) as it offers the most cost effective, long-term approach for cancer control<sup>1</sup>. Just under 13,000 cases of skin cancer are diagnosed annually<sup>2</sup>. This is twice the number compared to 10 years ago and is projected to more than double again by 2045<sup>3</sup>. Addressing this rising incidence of skin cancer, recommendation 3 of the NCS prioritises the need to develop and implement a National Skin Cancer Prevention Plan 2019-2022<sup>4</sup>.

Action Area 3.3 of the National Skin Cancer Prevention Plan specifically outlines engaging children and young people in initiatives that affect them, stating 'Include children and young people in the development of resources and implementation of programmes in which they are key stakeholders'<sup>4</sup>.

The NCCP worked in partnership with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and the National Participation Office to design and implement consultations with young people. Online interactive consultations were held with young people aged 12-18 years between October-November 2021 to inform the development of initiatives to engage children and young people in skin cancer prevention behaviours. Additional face to face consultations were held with young people from the Traveller community as research with Irish Travellers has found significantly different views in relation to the use of sunbeds.

Common themes identified from the online consultation are outlined below.

## What prompts young people to protect skin in the sun

- Family member advises young person to use sunscreen or to wear a hat
- Having fair skin and previous experience of sunburn
- Ageing effects of the sun on skin

## Ways to encourage young people to follow 5 S's messages

- Simple messaging
- Information on different types of protection
- Promotion via social media (e.g., TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram)
- Credible sources (e.g., doctors/dermatologists)
- Have SPF in all moisturisers
- Have sunscreen available in the schools
- Make social media videos more fun – have someone going through the process of following the 5 S's
- Reminder from parents

### **Ways to encourage young people to wear protective clothing and seek shade**

- More images that are clear and easy to understand
- More emphasis of consequence of not using protection (the negatives)
- Create a video on the consequences of sunburn
- Workshops with NCCP or HSE in schools
- Free or low-cost sunscreen

### **Best ways to get information to young people**

- TikTok, Snapchat, Spotify, Instagram,
- Youtubers or Irish Social Media Influencers
- Forced social media adverts
- School (counsellors and SPHE, homework activities or links to videos, workshop for older pupils in secondary school e.g., transition year students)
- Cosmetic professionals talking about skincare
- Video on correct way to apply sunscreen
- Parent campaign

Common themes identified from the face to face consultation with young members of the Traveller community are outlined below

### **Who is the best person to get health information from?**

- Parents (for younger age group)
- Health professionals

### **What is the best way to get information to young people?**

- Word of mouth
- Facebook (mixed views, not trusted by all) Internet
- Social media (but only through reliable sources)
- Radio (for older age groups)
- Personal stories on social media

### Reasons for using sunbeds

- To tan or colour
- To be attractive to opposite sex
- For positive self-image
- For self-confidence or self-esteem
- To feel happy
- Good for mental health
- Preparation for sun tanning or sun holiday

### Reasons for not using sunbeds

- Skin damage (moles/burning/heat rash/skin peels/ dries out skin)
- Ageing effects
- Health risks (skin cancer)
- Cost
- Not allowed

## Next steps

Further findings and details are provided in the detailed report.

This report will be used to inform the development of resources and programmes to engage young people in skin cancer prevention behaviours. It will inform how best to reach this population to increase the awareness of sun protection, the messages and the medium of messages.

The information from this report will also inform the development of more targeted health promotion for young people within the Traveller community. The report will be shared with organisations working in the area of skin cancer prevention to help to inform their work in skin cancer prevention projects and initiatives for young people.

1 Department of Health. National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026. Dublin: Department of Health; 2017

2 National Cancer Registry of Ireland Cork: updated 2021; Available from: [www.ncri.ie](http://www.ncri.ie)

3 National Cancer Registry. Cancer incidence projections for Ireland 2020-2045. Cork: NCRI; 2019

4 Department of Health, 2019. Skin Cancer Prevention Plan 2019-2022. Dublin: Department of Health. Available from: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4655d6-national-skin-cancer-prevention-plan-2019-2022/>

National Cancer Control Programme,  
An Clár Náisiúnta Rialaithe Ailse,  
King's Inns House,  
200 Parnell Street, Dublin 1  
Website: [www.hse.ie/cancer](http://www.hse.ie/cancer)  
T: 01 8287100