

# ReAL Bodies

I N H E R T S

EVERY BODY **FOR** EVERYBODY

**‘Real Bodies in Herts: Every Body for Everybody’** is a positive body image campaign, which has been co-produced with young people in Hertfordshire.

In engagement discussions with Hertfordshire students, a clear theme that emerged was the importance of establishing groups within education settings. Body image groups in schools/colleges can enable and support the embedding of a culture and environment in which all pupils can feel positively about the way they look.

This short guide provides five steps for how you might be able to introduce a group within your own setting. It also provides some ideas for the kind of projects and activities the group may wish to focus on.



[justtalkherts.org/realbodies](https://justtalkherts.org/realbodies)



**0808 196 2228**



Young people, parents/carers and professionals can call First Steps ED for free with any body image questions or concerns they have.

## 1. Appoint positive body image champions

One of the most effective ways to start establishing a positive body image group is to identify some champions - ideally consisting of a professional/s within the school, and some pupils. It's important to include pupils in this as a campaign or project run by students is likely to have a greater impact on other students than one run only by teachers.

Champions don't have to be an expert on the issue, they just have to be interested in it and willing to take a lead in developing a group that will address how your school or college can best promote a positive body image for all students. The champions might also play a role in finding useful resources to share with others, organise training or speakers, and develop campaigns.

## 2. Ensure the group is representative of your pupils

Wherever possible, it is extremely helpful for any group that is set up to be representative of all pupils within your school or college.

Any group set up within the school should consider how the issue of 'body image' can affect people in different ways, and this will be easier to do if pupils from a range of backgrounds and perspectives are involved.

For example, it may be important to do some focused work with LGBTQ+ students, and students from different ethnicities and backgrounds. Practising inclusivity in this way enables other members of the group to really understand how the issue of body image affects everyone and identify what more can be done to help them to develop a more positive body image.

## 3. Set some ground rules for the group

It is important that everyone in the group is clear on the ground rules and is involved in agreeing and setting these rules out. Other important steps will be to agree how long the group will meet for and how often. The group could also work together to agree a mission statement.

Here are some example ground rules, but it is really helpful for groups to develop their own:

- Listen when others speak
- Treat each other with kindness and respect
- What is said in the meeting, stays in the meeting (confidentiality and a safe space)
- Everyone is responsible for ensuring these ground rules remain enforced

## 4. Make sure meetings run smoothly

It is important that pupils feel that meetings are useful in order for them to stay engaged. Here are some tips for running a great meeting:

- Have clear start and finish times
- Meet in a quiet and comfortable location (check group members are all happy with the location)
- For new groups it can be useful to do a short icebreaker activity
- Agree the purpose and aims of meetings beforehand or at the start of the meeting
- Identify someone willing to facilitate or lead discussion, to make sure everyone is included in discussions
- Revisit group ground rules whenever needed (these can also be changed or added to whenever the group thinks it would be helpful to do so)
- Identify someone to take notes and to write down any actions agreed at the meeting
- Agree how the actions will be taken forward and when the group will meet again

## 5. Provide pupils with the support and time they need

Enable pupils to develop projects and campaigns by providing them with time and opportunity to do so.

Think about where there are opportunities to tie the activities of the group in with the curriculum, or alternatively, how the activities could work best as extra-curricular.

For example, if a group thinks the school would benefit from a campaign, campaign development or activities could be planned within lessons, e.g. Media studies, PSHE/RSE/Health and Wellbeing/ PE lessons, or as an extra-curricular activity, e.g. in tutor time

If the group will be meeting without the input of a teacher/professional from the school/college, make sure there is a clear process for them to run their ideas past someone and to get sign off for any actions they want to take forward.

It is also important to ensure every group member knows where to access support should they need it. Just Talk have some useful self-help resources on their website, as well as a range of information on further services young people can access if they need additional support.

## Claim your reward!

All of this takes work and passion, so the Just Talk network would like to reward schools and colleges that are committed to supporting and promoting positive body image with a 'Real Bodies in Herts' electronic school badge. You can use the badge on your stationery, website and other materials, to highlight your school's achievement with your community. We will also be able to provide physical badges for your school/college champions. To be awarded your badges, please tell us what your school/college is doing to promote positive body image, and how many positive body image champions you have by emailing us at [justtalk@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:justtalk@hertfordshire.gov.uk)



## Activity ideas

Young people from Hertfordshire have suggested that the following activities could be useful areas of focus for a Positive Body Image group / Positive Body Image Champions:

1. Use the school/college website and/or social media to post positive messages/videos to support people that may be struggling with their body image.
2. Create a 'safe space' for people to talk about body image issues they may be facing. Make sure support information is available in case anyone needs it: [Mental Health Support for Hertfordshire's Children and Young People \(justtalkherts.org\)](http://MentalHealthSupportforHertfordshire'sChildrenandYoungPeople.justtalkherts.org)

It's also useful to promote any support that may be available within your school.

Note: Some people may not feel confident enough to join a group or ask for support directly. Think about how you can use display boards, anonymous post boxes, and/or your school website to enable pupils to anonymously share concerns or worries they are having about their body image, creating a mechanism to share answers to those concerns and positive messages (this could be done in partnership between teachers and pupils).

3. Older pupils e.g. sixth formers could talk about body image to younger pupils – body image messages can be more meaningful coming from younger people. The Positive Body Image Champions or Just Talk Ambassadors may be well placed to do this.
4. Set up a campaign within the school. Appendix A provides a detailed checklist of how your Positive Body Image group may go about developing a campaign.
5. Signpost to other community services and youth groups either within or outside of the school/college setting.

Some existing youth groups that work to promote positive body image:

BeeZee bodies [www.beezeebodies.com/programs/byouth/](http://www.beezeebodies.com/programs/byouth/)

Services for young people [www.servicesforyoungpeople.org/support-for-young-people/youth-projects-in-your-area/youth-projects-in-your-area](http://www.servicesforyoungpeople.org/support-for-young-people/youth-projects-in-your-area/youth-projects-in-your-area)



## Appendix 1: How to develop a campaign

As part of the Real Bodies in Herts Campaign, you'll have seen campaign resources and information within your school and community to promote a positive body image.

Now we're challenging you to create your own campaign to share the messages about positive body image that YOU feel are most important, within your own school or college.

There are lots of different ways that you could choose to run your campaign - For example, your campaign could be a project for your class or the school council, or a specific group that is focussed on championing positive body image.

### Where should you start?

The hardest bit with campaigning, is knowing where to begin. It can be really useful to find out what other students in your school or college think is meant by 'positive body image' and what they feel the issues in relation to it are. This could be done through a survey or discussions at school council for example. This will help you decide what message/s your campaign will communicate.

For example, do you need to remind people what it means to have a positive body image, remind them that everyone should be able to feel positive about the way they look, or remind everyone that we should celebrate diversity? You could use the ideas listed below as starting points.

- Whatever type of body you have, you are good enough
- Do not compare yourself to others
- We are all unique/that's what makes us special
- Recognise and celebrate your positive qualities. e.g. recognise and value the skills we have e.g. if we are good at a subject at school, at making people laugh, or our hobbies

From your early research, you may find there are particular worries among the students in your school, such as feeling pressured to share and compare photos on social media. Think about how you could address these worries to make your campaign effective.

## Communicating your message/s

When you've agreed your message/s, plan how you are going to communicate this around your school and/or local community. This is an issue that affects everyone in your school, but may affect them differently, so make sure you use different ways to communicate your message so you reach everyone. Take care if you are planning to use images in your campaign. Make sure any images celebrate diversity and do not use unrealistic beauty ideals (such as airbrushed models).

You could create leaflets or posters, and/or a short film or presentation to share in assemblies. Here are some things to consider:

- Keep information brief and accurate. People will be more likely to read something if it's short and sweet!
- Keep messages simple and clear to make them as effective as possible.
- Think carefully about where to display leaflets or posters, and how to make sure they are eye-catching
- Check with a teacher before you share resources as they will also be able to provide advice

### Other ideas for your campaign

Could you make use of your school website or newsletters? Ask your teacher if there is a place on the school website or in parent or pupil newsletters where you can put information about your campaign. Keep the information short and use sub-headings to break it up and make it easier to read.

Older students may choose to use social media in a positive way as part of their campaign. The hashtag #RealBodiesinHerts has been created to allow students and teachers to share their work on social media. However, any social media campaign must comply with your school's policy on IT and online safety and it should not target students younger than 13 years old. It is important to make sure the campaign is checked by staff before it is launched, to make sure the information and messages used in the campaign are correct, safe and appropriate.

Assemblies can be a useful way to share information about your campaign. You could create a presentation or even develop some kind of short play to get across your key messages.

For more information about body image, visit [www.justtalkherts.org/realbodies](http://www.justtalkherts.org/realbodies)

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