

Consultation on draft Statutory Guidance on the Delivery of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) Education in Scottish Schools.

August 2023

Responding to this Consultation

You are invited to respond to this consultation by 23 November 2023.

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation platform, Citizen Space, where you can view and respond to this consultation online. You can save and return to your response while the consultation is open. However, please ensure your response is submitted before the closing date noted above.

If you are unable to respond online, please complete the Respondent Information Form (see the "Handling Your Response" section below) and send to:

RSHP Teaching Guidance Consultation
Area 2B North
Victoria Quay
EDINBURGH
EH6 6QQ

Handling your response

If you respond using [Citizen Space](#), you will be directed to the Respondent Information Form. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be published.

If you are unable to respond through Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form included with this consultation document. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation.

Next steps in the consultation process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public through Citizen Space. If you use Citizen Space to respond, you will receive a copy of your response through e-mail.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so.

Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to:

RSHP Teaching Guidance Consultation
Area 2B North
Victoria Quay
EDINBURGH
EH6 6QQ

Or by e-mail to: personalandsocialeducation@gov.scot

Scottish Government consultation process

Consultation is an essential part of the policy-making process. It gives us the opportunity to consider your opinion and expertise on the proposed area of work.

You can find all our consultations online at Citizen Space. Each consultation details the issues under consideration, as well as a way for you to give us your views, either online, by e-mail or by post.

Consultations may involve seeking views in a number of different ways, such as public meetings, focus groups, or other online methods such as [Dialogue](#).

Responses will be analysed and used as part of the decision making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. We will publish a report of this analysis for every consultation. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise, the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review;
- inform the development of a particular policy;
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals; or,
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented.

While details of particular circumstances described in the response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.

Consultation on, the revised *Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Schools* teaching guidance

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please note, this form MUST be completed and returned with your response.

Are you responding as:

- Individual
- Organisation

Full Name or Organisation's Name

Phone number

Address

Postcode

E-mail address

The Scottish Government requires your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
- Publish response only (without name)
- Do not publish response

Information for Organisations.

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the Organisation Name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your Organisation Name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes
- No

Background

Section 56 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000¹ provides the Scottish Ministers with the power to issue statutory guidance to education authorities on how relationships and sex education should be conducted in Scottish schools.

There have been established principles and aims, provided by previously issued guidance, which set the foundations of good and relevant learning in relationships, sexual health and parenthood education. These have remained central throughout the development of this updated draft guidance. We have sought to ensure learning delivered by our educational practitioners is current and provides children and young people with the knowledge and understanding to ensure they can navigate the World they live in safely and confidently. This is particularly important as our children and young people interact more often online and the added risks this poses through these interactions. The learning and understanding of healthy relationships helps to reduce domestic abuse, gender based violence and ensures that the importance of appropriate boundaries is understood.

Principles

Relationships and sex education could be defined as a lifelong process whereby children and young people acquire knowledge, understanding and skills, and develop beliefs, attitudes and values about their relationships and sexuality within a moral and ethical framework. The suggested key principles are that:

- sex education should be viewed as one element of health and wellbeing education, set within the wider context of health promotion and the health promoting ethos of the school;
- sex education should contribute to the physical, emotional, moral and spiritual development of all children and young people within the context of today's society;
- education about relationships and sexuality should reflect the cultural, ethnic and religious influences within the home, the school and the community;
- sex education should be non-discriminatory and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and needs of all children and young people; and,
- sex education starts informally at an early stage with parents and carers, and continues through to adulthood both within the home and at all stages of school life.

Aims

The key aims of relationships and sex education are to:

¹ [Section 56 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 on the UK Government legislation website](#)

- provide accurate and relevant information about the physical and emotional changes children and young people will experience throughout their formative years and into adulthood;
- establish an awareness of the importance of stable family life and relationships, including the responsibilities of parenthood and marriage;
- provide opportunities for children and young people to develop personal and interpersonal skills that will enable them to make and maintain appropriate relationships within the family, with friends and within the community;
- enable children and young people to develop and reflect upon their beliefs, attitudes and values in relation to themselves and others within a moral, ethical and multi-cultural framework;
- foster self-awareness and self-esteem and a sense of responsibility and respect for themselves and for others;
- provide opportunities for children and young people to consider and reflect upon the range of attitudes to gender, sexuality and sexual orientation, relationships and family life;
- develop an appreciation of, and respect for, diversity and of the need to avoid prejudice and discrimination; and,
- provide information about and skills to access, where appropriate, agencies and services providing support and advice to young people.

In 2014, the Scottish Government published updated guidance for teachers on the conduct of teaching RSHP education². This guidance was developed over the course of 2013 to take account of the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence, where sex education forms part of the broader subject of RSHP education, and the Marriage and Civil Partnerships legislation. More recently, work to embed LGBT inclusive education across the curriculum³ and to review the delivery of Personal and Social Education (PSE)⁴ have both recommended the 2014 guidance be updated. RSHP education is also identified as a key strand in work to prevent and tackle gender based violence and sexual harassment, through support for development of understanding of appropriate boundaries, consent and healthy relationships. These issues have been shown up by the recent work to highlight the experience of sexual harassment and gender based violence in schools and society, highlighted through Equally Safe and Everyone's Invited.

In addition to the recommendations made in critical pieces of work, and given the passage of time and the change in social fabric, the 2014 guidance was becoming outdated in providing suitable guidance for teachers on delivering RSHP education. The availability of a suite of dedicated resources to support teachers to deliver meaningful RSHP education, increased the need for teaching guidance to match the current, relevant and age and stage appropriate resources now available for teachers.

² [Conduct of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in schools: Guidance for teachers on the conduct of teaching relationships, sexual health and parenthood education within the Curriculum for Excellence on the Scottish Government website](#)

³ [LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group: Report to the Scottish Ministers on the Scottish Government website](#)

⁴ [Report on the Review of Personal and Social Education: Preparing Scotland's children and young people for learning, work and life on the Scottish Government website](#)

Context

Within Curriculum for Excellence, relationships, sexual health and parenthood education is part of the Health and Wellbeing Experiences and Outcomes⁵. The intent is that learners develop an understanding of how to maintain positive relationships with a variety of people and are aware of how thoughts, feelings, attitudes, values and beliefs can influence decisions about relationships and sexual health. They also develop their understanding of the complex roles and responsibilities of being a parent or carer.

What is not in the scope of this guidance consultation

This consultation is on the draft guidance on the delivery of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in Scottish schools. It is not a consultation to seek views on the health and wellbeing curriculum on RSHP or on guidance and tools already available to support delivery of RSHP education in Scotland, provided by other organisations. Comments on those matters are outwith the scope of the consultation on the draft guidance and will not be considered.

Actions taken in preparing draft updated guidance

In preparing updated guidance, the Scottish Government brought together a core group of skilled and experienced stakeholders, representing a wide range of interests. The Scottish Government then engaged widely with around 40 key stakeholders and interested organisations on key themes the guidance should look at based on the recommendations received and the following sections set out the areas the Scottish Government and consulting partners focussed on in updating the guidance.

How the guidance document is structured

The draft statutory guidance is structured through four sections. This consultation seeks specific comments, on the draft guidance including the provision of alternative wording where concerns about drafting are raised. Comments should be specific and include the relevant paragraph number in order to ensure accurate consideration of comments.

⁵ [Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes on the Education Scotland website](#)

Section One: Introduction

This section of the statutory guidance explains its basis and application.

Question 1: Introduction
Is the draft introduction clear on the status and application of the guidance? Are there further additions required?

Section Two: – RSHP Education

This section of the statutory guidance explains the purpose of RSHP education. It explains the lenses through which RSHP education should be delivered to ensure a consistent and meaningful approach to learning.

Question 2: Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education
How clear is the purpose of the RSHP education section?

Parents and carers are the primary educators of their children. They should be aware of the content of proposed RSHP education and should continue to have the opportunity to withdraw their child(ren) from RSHP education should they have concerns about the appropriateness of the content of the proposed learning.

The revised guidance has been updated to provide more detailed guidance on how parents' and carers' rights can be honoured as well as the steps that can be taken to fulfil their decision to withdraw their child.

Question 3: Parental engagement and ability to withdraw from RSHP learning
Is the guidance sufficiently clear in relation to the rights of parents and carers; is the process for withdrawing a pupil sufficiently clear?

Section Three: Embedding RSHP Education as a Whole School Approach

The increasing use of the internet and social media by children and young people brings both benefits and difficulties to their daily lives. The PSE Review⁶ also highlighted the issues faced by children and young people as they conduct relationships online in an ever increasing way.

In addition, there have been several other areas where it has been highlighted more detailed guidance is needed for teachers to ensure specific topics are highlighted in a consistent and robust manner. These are set out in more detail below.

Question 4: Embedding RSHP Education as a Whole School Approach
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How effective is the guidance in explaining the key issues to be highlighted to teachers in delivering RSHP education? How does this help bring consistency to learning?
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Question 5: Consent and healthy relationships
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Is the guidance sufficiently clear in supporting consent and healthy relationships having a greater focus in RSHP education?
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Question 6: Faith, belief and RSHP education

Is the guidance sufficiently clear in ensuring faith and belief is accurately captured in RSHP education?

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⁶ [Report on the Review of Personal and Social Education: Preparing Scotland's children and young people for learning, work and life on the Scottish Government website](#)

Question 7: Gender Inclusive Education

Is the guidance sufficiently clear in ensuring gender inclusive language is used to deliver RSHP education?

Question 8: Understanding of Variations in Sex Characteristics (VSC) sometimes referred to as or Differences in Sex Development (DSD) or Intersex

Is the guidance sufficiently clear in explaining and including VSC/DSD/intersex people in RSHP education?

Question 9: LGBT inclusive RSHP education

Is the guidance sufficiently clear in ensuring RSHP education is LGBT inclusive?

Section 4: Key Learning Points for RSHP Education

These are devised as the key learning points teachers should follow in the delivery of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education.

Question 10: Key Learning Points for RSHP Education
Are these key learning points sufficiently clear in explaining the requirements for RSHP education?

Question 11: Pupils with Additional Support Needs
Is the guidance sufficiently clear in explaining the requirement for pupils with Additional Support Needs to have RSHP education?

Section 5: RSHP: Policy, Guidance and Resources

This section of the statutory guidance contains areas of further information for teachers and schools to support their delivery of RSHP education.

Question 12: RSHP: Policy, Guidance and Resources
Does the guidance provide sufficient resources and signposts to support teachers in delivery of RSHP education, if not, which resources do you think are missing?



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