

Summary of the Draft Statutory Guidance on the Delivery of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) Education in Scottish Schools

The Scottish Government have released a [Consultation on draft Statutory Guidance on the Delivery of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood \(RSHP\) Education in Scottish Schools](#). Members of the public are invited to respond to the consultation by the 23rd of November, 2023.

The [Draft Guidance](#) is long, and likely not very accessible to many parents who don't have knowledge of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Scottish educational policies or discrimination law. It is 24 pages long without the fifth section, which contains links to various resources. The 'Quick Read Version' is unfortunately not very informative. This summary will hopefully offer some assistance for parents or other members of the public that have an interest in responding to the consultation.

It may be helpful to start by reading lists of the **principles and aims** of RSHP, found in the '[Consultation on draft Statutory Guidance on the Delivery of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood \(RSHP\) Education in Scottish Schools](#)'.

Section 1 - Introduction

- The new guidance replaces the 2014 guidance, and applies to anyone teaching RSHP as part of a local authority's provision within Curriculum for Excellence in any setting fully or partially funded by the Scottish Government, local authorities or other public agencies
- Delivery of RSHP education should be rights-driven and child-centred per the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its provisions
- Lays the groundwork for the significant emphasis throughout the guidance on inclusion and equality through discussion of the Equality Act 2010, and the findings of the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group's report.
- Highlights recommendation from 2017 review of Personal and Social Education (PSE) that emphasises need to ensure pupils receive age and stage appropriate education about consent

Section 2 - Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) Education

Learning and Teaching RSHP Education (2.1 - 2.8)

- RSHP is part of the Health and Wellbeing (HWB) curricular area
- RSHP aims to equip pupils with knowledge, understanding and skills to make informed decisions.
- Pupils have right to learn about relationships, sexual health and their developing bodies, and that this helps pupils to understand healthy relationships and develop resilience
- Pupils encouraged to use a 'bystander approach' to support and challenge peers in a safe way as a 'preventative tool' for reducing domestic abuse and gender based violence, and help pupils understand 'appropriate boundaries'
- RSHP is part of a whole school approach that promotes the ethos of the school
- All school staff have a responsibility to support and promote Health and Wellbeing (HWB) (including RSHP)
- In the case of RSHP, this is focused on relationships, meaning staff should promote positive relationships in the school community, model good behaviour, and foster a learning environment where pupils feel safe and included

Engagement in Learning (2.9 - 2.12)

- Encourages involvement of both parents/carers and children in the development of the RSHP delivery
- Parents should be given opportunity to view lesson materials in advance and ask questions
- Pupils have right to learn, and to freely express and have their views considered, in accordance with their age and maturity level

Withdrawal from RSHP education (2.13 – 2.15)

- Parents may withdraw children from the 'sexual health elements' of RSHP education
- Must be balanced with the child's right to an education, so pupils must have access to alternative activities that meet curricular aims
- Should also be mechanisms in place for appeal (e.g. to local authority) if parents/pupils are not satisfied with outcome after consulting school
- Flow chart (page 9) to demonstrate process

Monitoring, Tracking and Assessment (2.16 – 2.17)

- Teachers should use HWB Experiences and Outcomes and PSE Benchmarks to track, monitor and assess pupils progress

Section 3 – Embedding RSHP Education

Consent and Healthy Relationships (3.1 – 3.7)

- Consent education should include digital consent and discussion of the impact of negative behaviours on others
- Pupils should be aware of laws on consent and other relevant laws, such as those about sending intimate images
- Schools should provide 'safe spaces' that enable pupils to discuss sensitive issues like harassment, gender based violence or LGBT equality without being judged or ridiculed
- Schools should be aware of unique vulnerabilities to abuse, harassment or violence as a result of personal characteristics (such as gender or disability), and put measures in place to ensure safety
- Information for teachers on disclosures and safeguarding

Faith and Belief (3.8-3.9)

- Teachers should be aware of and sensitive to the faith and belief backgrounds of pupils, and such pupils should feel included, accepted and represented in their learning
- Discussion of beliefs, practices and traditions should be viewed as a learning opportunity for all pupils, and may promote understanding
- Schools should develop links with local belief groups
- Learning about relationships should allow for discussion of a range of views and values and opportunities should be provided for parents/carers and young people to contribute

Gender Inclusive Education (3.10 – 3.11)

- Classroom work and activities should not be gendered, and all pupils should be encouraged to participate in a range of activities.
- Images used in the classroom environment should include equal representation (e.g. don't exclusively show pictures of female nurses and male firefighters)
- Stereotypes (including stereotypical language) should be challenged, and children should have 'opportunities to explore gender through, for example, free play'

Inclusion of understanding about Variations in Sex Characteristics(VSC) sometimes referred to as Differences in Sex Development(DSD) or Intersex (3.12 – 3.17)

- Highlights that these terms should not be confused with sexual orientation and gender identity
- Offers basic information about these conditions and their prevalence
- Emphasises that pupils with these conditions want to be included and acknowledged, but not as 'special' topic; for example, teachers should avoid generalisation about body development

LGBT Inclusive Education (3.18 – 3.21)

- The guidance emphasises that LGBT young people (like all young people) should feel included and accepted, which includes content reflecting diverse relationships and family types
- RSHP Education should make young people aware of the prevalence of prejudice-based bullying toward LGBT young people, and the impact this has on wellbeing and education
- Young people should also be made aware of specific health and wellbeing issues for LGBT young people, such as higher risk of HIV for gay and bisexual men, and high risk of abuse in relationships for trans people
- Teachers should be aware of and respect privacy concerns regarding pupils' sexual orientation and/or gender identity, as they may not be 'out' to everyone
- Should be emphasis on interdisciplinary learning (e.g. through Languages, RME, Social Studies, etc.), which means age and stage appropriate LGBT content should be taught across curriculum

Section 4 – Summary of Key Learning Points

- Building the Curriculum 5 states that 'the curriculum must be inclusive, must be a stimulus for personal achievement and must, through broadening of experience, be an encouragement towards informed and responsible citizenship' (note: the guidance mistakenly omits the phrase 'must be inclusive', which is the main point of including this quote)

Children and young people who require additional support (Section 4.3 - 4.6)

- Challenges misconceptions that pupils with ASN are not, and will not be, sexually active, and makes it clear that pupils with ASN must also receive RSHP education, and co-design their learning where appropriate
- Teachers encouraged to account for additional barriers and use various methods such as signing, objects, visual supports, etc. to ensure clear communication
- Consent should also be emphasised due to research suggesting that young people with ASN are at higher risk of sexual exploitation

Consent and Healthy Relationships (4.7 – 4.9)

- National review of Personal and Social Education (PSE) recommended that the focus on sexual consent in RSHP education could be improved
- With support of the [Equally Safe strategy](#) and the [Key Messages for Young People on Healthy Relationships and Consent](#), RSHP education aims to ‘help prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls’ by teaching pupils to develop safe and healthy relationships, and to ‘challenge unacceptable behaviour using a bystander approach’
- According to [research](#), learning about topics like healthy relationships and consent may contribute to delay of sexual activity and other positive outcomes
- Suggested use of resources from Education Scotland National Improvement Hub on friendships and relationships

Faith and Belief (4.10 – 4.11)

- Some repetition from previous Faith and Belief section
- Schools should consult with parents and respond respectfully to their views
- Religious authorities (presumably like the Scottish Catholic Education Service) will provide additional/complementary guidance for denominational schools

Inclusivity (4.12)

- Children and young people should develop ‘skills in using inclusive language when referring to or addressing individuals’, allowing them to ‘discover and express their own identity’
- This helps to improve gender equality and create positive ethos that reduces potential for racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination

LGBT Inclusive Education (4.13 – 4.14)

- Mainly repetition of previous points
- Further info found in [How Good Is Our School 4](#)

Understanding Variations in Sex Characteristics(VSC) sometimes referred to as Differences in Sex Development(DSD) or Intersex (4.15)

- Repetition of previous info