

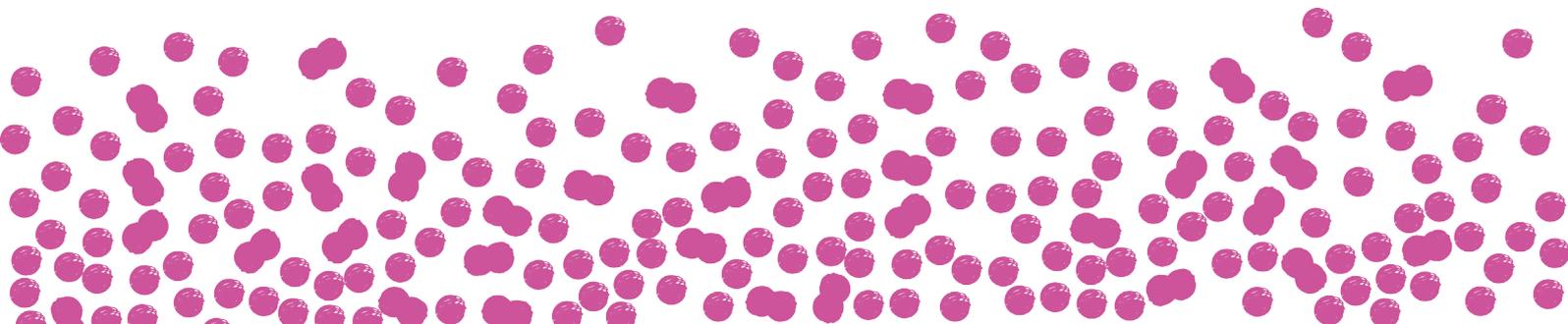
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The Sex Educational Supplement

The consent issue

**Shall we plan
some lessons
together
about
consent?**

YES!



Letter from the editor

The consent issue

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the second edition of the Sex Educational Supplement, in which we launch findings from our survey on young people's education about consent.

I am disappointed but not surprised that 3 out of 10 young people surveyed did not learn about consent at school. Despite the lack of teaching in school, most young people knew that the age of consent is 16, but described the gap in their education as complete absence of discussion about real-life relationship situations and what you would do if 'something happens'.

Data from the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (natsal-3) published last November shows how widespread non-consensual sexual experience is. One in five women and one in 20 men in Britain experience attempted sex against their will. In over half of cases (of completed sex against their will) this is not reported to anyone at all. But there is promise: the younger generation (aged 16-24) is more likely to tell someone else (including the police) than the older people surveyed.

So how, what and when should we be teaching about consent? Asking ourselves and young people what we think consent means is revealing. Does a simple definition like 'Consent = permission to do something' assume that one person will do the asking and the other the agreeing? Is sex something that is 'done' by one person to another person or something that both can agree on simultaneously or mutually? How do we know if 'permission' is given? And does permission last forever?

Lucy Emmerson is Coordinator of the Sex Education Forum, managing policy and practice activities. In 2013 she led a campaign to get puberty included in primary science in the new National Curriculum.



I believe learning about consent starts from age zero. Much is learnt by young children from everyday experiences about whether or not their opinion is valued and if they have any control over physical contact with others.

I like the advice for parents from Kasey Edwards in her blog post '[Stop asking my daughter to give you a kiss](#)' in which she acknowledges that parents automatically comply with social rituals – such as children being told to kiss a relative, friend or even a stranger. Intervening may be awkward, she says, but it is necessary if we are truly to teach children that their bodies are their own and that their instincts should be followed. Suggesting alternatives to the child such as a high-five, a hug, blowing a kiss or a wave put the child in control. If we can't manage to create a culture of consent for everyday physical contact, it will surely be a tall order for sexual situations.

Like all aspects of SRE, having both home and school involved makes it all the more effective. It is intrinsic to any primary school ethos to teach caring for one another. The lesson ideas on page 16 show how this theme can be introduced by thinking about how we care for and touch pets. But the dots have to be joined up. Learning must include the correct names for sexual parts of the body and which parts of the body are private – this is a vital part of safeguarding.

At secondary school young people increasingly want the opportunity to think through real-life relationship situations, which are bound up with gender and power dynamics, emotions and self-esteem. In our survey young people said loud and clear that SRE often excludes same-sex relationships and discussion about gender variance.

A report by the Office of the Children's Commission, "[Sex without consent. I suppose that is rape](#)," provides fresh insight into the pervasive gender norms that write a script in which men 'do' sex to women. If we simply teach young people (or do we mean young women?) to 'say no' we are missing the point. Young people need opportunities to find a shared language for talking about pleasurable and equal relationships.

Using an everyday situation such as the humble handshake (see Lesson ideas) is a safe and effective way to get young people communicating about physical contact and their preferences and learning to negotiate and respect each other. It doesn't have to be difficult – and our quiz will help you brush up on your knowledge of the facts.

Teaching the next generation about consent is not a one-off event. It has to be woven into the fabric of a planned SRE programme and into the way we behave with each other every day.

Lucy Emmerson
Coordinator
Sex Education Forum
January 2014



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Take the quiz

Do you know your stats?

This quiz is designed for teachers and aims to reveal the truth behind some common myths and help you brush up on your knowledge.

Questions

1. What is the difference between forced marriage and arranged marriage?

- a) There is no difference
- b) There is not full and free consent by both parties in a forced marriage
- c) The parents of the bride give consent in an arranged marriage on behalf of the bride

2. Can a child under the age of 16 consent to medical treatment?

3. True or false: Condoms are more likely to be used when sex is non-consensual.

4. What percentage of the most serious sexual offences are committed by someone known to the victim?

- a) 9% b) 50% c) 90%

5. Which UK political party said in their 2010 manifesto: 'To help stop sexual violence before it occurs, we will ensure that the school curriculum includes teaching young people about sexual consent'?

- a) Liberal Democrats b) Labour c) Conservatives

6. Are boys or girls more likely to experience sex against their will?

- a) boys b) girls c) both the same

7. Who said 'I shall assume that your silence gives consent'?

- a) Plato b) David Cameron c) Winston Churchill

8. Whom are young people most likely to turn to for help if they experience physical violence in an intimate relationship?

- a) parents b) other adult c) friends d) siblings e) no-one

9. What is the age of consent to sexual activity in England?

- a) 16 for everyone
- b) 16 for sexual activity between people of the opposite sex and 18 for people of the same sex
- c) 18 for everyone

10. True or False: According to the Sexual Offences Act 2003 men can be raped.

'A person consents if he agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.'

-Sexual Offences Act 2003

Answers

Question 1: b) A forced marriage is a marriage that takes place without the full and free consent of both parties.

Coercion to marry may involve physical threat or emotional blackmail. In an arranged marriage, families take the lead in selecting a marriage partner but the couple have the free will and choice to accept or decline the arrangement. The government's Forced Marriage Unit provides further advice and a list of warning signs. www.gov.uk/forced-marriage

Question 2: Yes. A child under the age of 16 can consent to medical treatment if they are mature enough to understand fully what is involved. The Fraser guidelines are used to assess this. Fraser competence is a measure of the young person's ability to give consent to medical examination and treatment, and more specifically to

contraceptive treatment. The test of competence is that the young person is of sufficient maturity to understand the advice provided, and its implications (Dunphy, 2008). See the Sex Education Forum factsheet on confidentiality (2007) for a copy of the Fraser guidelines.

Question 3: False. Condoms and other contraception are less likely to be used if sex is non-consensual. Successful condom use depends on co-operation from a male partner (Rosen 2004).

Question 4: c) 90%. Government statistics 2013

Question 5: c) Conservatives.

Question 6: b) girls. In Britain 1 in 10 women and one in 71 men report experiencing sex against their will (Macdowall 2013). Young men experiencing violence in intimate partner relationships are less likely to seek help than young women (Barter 2009).

Question 7: a) Plato. The phrase is attributed to the Greek Philosopher Plato and is used proverbially. It can be used as a trigger for discussion to explore whether or not consent must be verbal and what the implications are of being silent or a bystander.

Question 8: c) friends. Young people are most likely to turn to friends for help. In Barter's research (2009) less than 10% told a parent or carer and more than half of boys told no-one. The same pattern of help-seeking was found for young people experiencing emotional and sexual violence.

Question 9: a) 16 for everyone. Although the legal age of consent is 16, the law is not intended to be used to prosecute mutually agreed teenage sexual activity between two young people of a similar age unless this sexual activity involves abuse or exploitation (see FPA 2011). Specific laws protect children under 13, who cannot legally give their consent to any form of sexual activity (Sexual Offences Act 2003).

Question 10: True. Rape is the only sexual offence which can only be committed by a man. A man would commit rape if he intentionally penetrates with his penis the vagina,

mouth or anus of another person of any gender without that person's consent or if they are under 13 (FPA 2011 and Sexual Offences Act 2003). It is a myth that a man must be gay to rape another man. Survivors UK reports that most men who sexually assault other men identify themselves as heterosexual because the assault is about power not sexual attraction.

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Expert interview

Meet Dr Meg Barker

Each issue, we feature an interview with a colleague in the field.

What is your job? I'm a writer, academic, therapist and activist. I'm also a senior lecturer in psychology at The Open University and an accredited psychotherapist. I write books and I blog – and much of my work is driven by an activist agenda around gender and sexual diversity.

Why did you become interested in the topic of consent? When I researched *Rewriting the Rules* I found lots of studies suggesting that people communicate very little about what they enjoy sexually, and where their limits are. At best this leads to mediocre sex, at worst, situations of abuse. So I am keen to encourage people to put consent at the centre of sex therapy, sex education, and everyday conversations about sex.

Why do you think there is a contemporary concern about consent, for example with David Cameron including teaching about consent as a commitment when he came to power? I think that recent news stories about sexual abuse by older celebrity men, and within certain institutional contexts, has raised our awareness of just how common rape and sexual assault are. It is essential to clue kids up about the importance of consent – not just in relation to sex but in their wider relationships. This will help them to know when people are behaving non-consensually with them. However it is sad to see that sex and relationship education seems to have gone down the policy agenda since David Cameron made that commitment. I would like to see relationship ethics (in general, and in relation to consent) and consent be a central element of what kids learn throughout school, as it is a key topic which could be built upon year on year.



Dr Meg Barker is author of the popular psychology book *Rewriting the Rules* and co-edits the journal *Psychology and Sexuality*.

Is it consent we should be 'concerned' about or something else? I think consent is a good central theme through which to consider a number of related topics such as the ethical treatment of other people and open communication (both of which are also vital in sex and wider relationships). I also think that a vital part of this is the social context in which people exist. Consent isn't just something that people can learn how to do and then apply, but rather it is more or less difficult under different circumstances related to social power (for example when the relationship is between an older and younger person, people of different genders or body types). I would very much like to see people being trained in awareness of such issues and how consent conversations can operate to ensure that people are as able as possible to give consent or not (or to withdraw it if situations change for them).

How does the narrative about consent relate to issues about coercion and grooming? It is very important because people need to know what coercion and persuasion look and feel like in order to know that they are being coerced and groomed. At the moment coercive practices are quite commonplace in everyday lives unfortunately, from friends and family

members kissing and cuddling kids when they don't want that to happen; to friends and family trying to persuade each other to engage in social events that they don't want to go to through guilt and manipulation; through to the problematic power dynamics present in many schools and workplaces. It would be good to have a wide ranging and open conversation on consent across the board if we are realistically to expect kids (and adults) to recognise non-consensual behaviour and to engage in consensual practices themselves.

'Consent is not about just avoiding what will get you into trouble legally.'

Is 'consent' a widely understood word or are there other words that are useful in discussions about 'what we agree to do or not do in intimate relationships'? I think 'consent' is a useful one personally, but 'communication', 'coercion' and 'power' are also useful terms to mention.

In your research, have you found patterns about how different people understand consent? I've found that understandings are shifting in the communities that I'm studying. Consent used to be understood as one person initiating something sexual and another person being able to say 'no' if it wasn't something they wanted. The shift has been to recognise that we need to have collective cultures in which consent is encouraged (and coercion discouraged) in order for individuals to be able to consent. Also there is a shift to the idea of ongoing negotiation about what we enjoy (rather than people simply saying 'no' to what they don't enjoy).

Young people have told us that they generally get taught 'what is right and wrong' and they know legal facts but they want a more nuanced approach. Is there a spectrum? Legal understandings of what is and isn't counted as abusive are important of course, but consent is not about just avoiding what will get you into trouble legally. Rather it is about ensuring that people you are having sex with – or are in relationships with – are free enough to know what they want and able to

communicate that to you, and to trust that it will be respected. That involves a more nuanced understanding of how to talk about these things, and about power dynamics that can make it more or less possible to consent.

Is the idea of 'informed consent' helpful? Definitely. If somebody doesn't have enough information about what is being proposed then they aren't really consenting, so it is great to open up discussions around what kind of information is needed, and how we will know when we have enough of it.

What is meant by 'enthusiastic consent'? This is the idea that it is not enough just to know that partners can say 'no' or 'stop' if they don't like something, rather we need to know what they – and we – actively do want and are enthusiastic about. Knowing what turns you, and the other person, on is a much better starting point for sex than just knowing what the 'hard limits' are (although the latter is also important of course).

What can schools do to improve young people's competence to consent? Provide far, far more education about this in an environment that is itself consensual so that pupils can raise their own concerns, consider possible scenarios and come back to these issues at each stage with more complexity added as they go through.

Is it just about lessons in school or how staff and pupils behave in everyday school life? Very much everyday life. We can't really expect people to model consent during sex if their wider relationships are not consensual. Equally we can't expect them to be consensual if the environments at home and school do not model this. It would be great to see wider conversations open up about developing consensual classrooms, consensual schools and consensual families. We need to move towards a 'consent culture' (as many in my research have termed it), otherwise people will continue to struggle to recognise non-consensual behaviour and also struggle to engage in consensual practices themselves.

Thanks, Meg. You're very welcome.

Voices of young people

Consent and SRE survey

What young people told us about consent and SRE

The Sex Education Forum ran an online survey in October 2013 about consent and sex and relationships education. The aim was to find out if young people have learnt about consent, their rights and the law in relation to sex and relationships and whether or not their SRE in school met their needs – not just for legal facts but also for developing the skills to cope with real life situations. The questions were also designed to complement some soon to be published qualitative research about the legal barriers to young people's access to sexual and reproductive health services, which was commissioned recently by the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

In our survey, 890 young people took part, 61% identified themselves as 'female', 37% as 'male', and 2% of respondents chose the 'I do not identify as either male/female' option. Most participants were aged 16, 17 or 18, the maximum age was 25 and a small number of under-16s took the survey. The survey was disseminated via social networks to a range of organisations that work with young people such as schools, further education colleges and the British Youth Council. The majority of respondents were educated in England (96%) and the small number that went to school in another country were excluded from the analysis reported below, except where data is disaggregated by age.

The findings show good levels of factual knowledge relating to consent, but that managing real life practicalities is a grey area and SRE has further to go to meet young people's needs.

Findings Part 1: Knowledge about the law, rights and getting help

Higher levels of knowledge about the law and sexual offences

Questions about the law and sexual offences were answered with the highest level of accuracy; 93% of respondents recognised that there could be female sex offenders and 84% knew there could be male victims of rape. The majority (96%) of young people knew that 16 is the age when you can legally have sex. Most young people (93%) thought it was illegal to send a text message picture of a fully naked 13 year old and only 2% thought it was legal. The remaining 5% were unsure.

We get taught what is right and wrong but not what to do should something happen.
- young woman aged 18

Unsure how to get help, advice and treatment

The survey included questions about getting help in the event of sexual assault and also finding local sexual health services. Respondents were much less confident answering these questions compared to their knowledge of the law. One in three young people either 'didn't know' or were 'unsure' where to get help if they or a friend were sexually assaulted'. There was even less confidence about where to find a local sexual health clinic with over 40% either not knowing or 'unsure'. Knowledge about finding a local clinic was highest for those aged 18 with just under three-quarters knowing where to go.

Rights for under-16s are a grey area

Responses to two questions about sexual health rights showed uncertainty about whether or not young people under 16 were entitled to get confidential contraceptive and STI treatment. Less than half were confident that a 15 year old could get an HIV test without a parent or carer being told. Some respondents were confused about whether or not a 14 year old could get contraception confidentially. Only a third knew that this was possible in some cases and around a third were unsure. One in 20 said they were certain that this was never possible.

Findings Part 2: Sex and relationships education

The survey asked young people to think about the SRE that they had at school, and to rate it. The results show that the quality of SRE remains very inconsistent. A quarter of young people said their SRE was either 'good' or 'very good', but slightly more (27%) said their SRE was 'bad' or 'very bad'. The remainder (48%) rated their SRE as 'OK'. This range is very similar to the responses in a Sex Education Forum survey in 2011 in which 28% described their SRE as 'bad' or 'very bad'. In the recent survey, there is some indication that SRE has improved over the last few years because respondents aged 19-25 were more likely to rate their SRE as bad or very bad (40%) whereas only 20% of 16 year olds rated their SRE as bad or very bad (the average across all ages was 27% rating their SRE as bad or very bad). This may partly reflect changing attitudes to the adequacy of SRE provision as people get older and become more aware of gaps in what they learnt. Males and females gave very similar answers to this question. SRE was rated worse than average by the small sample of young people taking the survey who did not identify as either male or female.

No learning on consent at school for 3 in 10 young people

Government guidance states that secondary SRE should include teaching about consent, but 30% of respondents said

they did not learn about consent at school and a further 7% were 'unsure' if they had or not. Just over half (54%) of young people said that what they learnt about consent in school had covered all that they needed.

Less than half of young people learnt 'what is good and bad in a relationship'

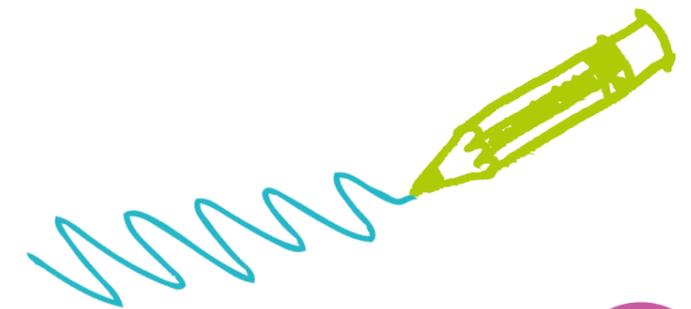
Young people were even less likely to have learnt 'what is good and bad in a relationship' than about consent. Only 43% of young people said this topic had been covered at school. There was a high level of dissatisfaction about this gap with over half (53%) of young people stating that learning had not covered what they needed.

Sexting

A little over half (57%) of 16 year olds responding to the survey had learnt about sexting at school and this was less likely to be part of school learning with older respondents. This shows that teaching has changed to respond to current issues, but coverage is still far from consistent – and does not always provide sufficient depth or detail – since 39% of 16 year olds said that they had not learnt all they needed to about sexting.

Sexual health clinics

More than half (51%) of young people had not learnt about 'sexual health clinics and how to use them' with a further 11% 'unsure' if they had learnt this. Young people's need for better education about accessing sexual health services is also demonstrated by 6 out of 10 young people stating that they did not learn all that they needed to about sexual health clinics and how to use them.



Voices of young people

Discussion

The high level of knowledge about legal facts is a positive finding from the survey. The majority of young people surveyed know what is classified as a sexual offence and recognise that males and females can be both perpetrators and victims of sexual offences. Young people are clear that the age of consent is 16. Most young people have grasped the legal implications of a relatively new activity: sexting.

However, knowledge about young people's legal rights to use a sexual health service is much less secure, and there was considerable uncertainty about rights to confidentiality. The survey also shows that around half of schools are failing to teach young people about sexual health clinics and how to use them. This is a very serious gap in knowledge given that around 3 in 10 people will first have sex aged under-16 (Mercer 2013). There is also fresh evidence from the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles that people for whom school was the main source of sex education are less likely to experience an unplanned pregnancy (Wellings 2013).

We knew what an abortion was and debated the morality of it in RE, but not how to get one or where to go. Again I think we all just assumed 'Go to your GP and beg them for help' for any of this."

– young person aged 20-25

I didn't know anything about the implant till I had it put in as school didn't teach us that.

– young woman aged 16

Young people commented that they have been taught 'right' from 'wrong' but that SRE can be improved by teaching about the practicalities of what to do 'if something happens'. Sexual assault is something that a significant minority of young people experience: one in five women and one in 20 men in Britain experience attempted sex against their will

(Macdowall 2013) and this is more likely to happen to young men and women. The level of reporting of incidents of sexual violence is very low. The levels of knowledge about local services – both for sexual health and support in the case of sexual assault were lower than knowledge of legal facts. This suggests that school SRE is failing to signpost young people to local services and therefore is unlikely to pay attention to nurturing the health literacy, skills and confidence needed to use a service.

Don't rush your partner into a sexual relationship because that can be classed as sexual assault.

– young man aged 16

Young people had wide ranging suggestions about how teachers could handle relationships education better. More needed to be said about emotions and handling real life relationships. One young woman said "there wasn't any suggestion that we might want to have sex" and several comments called for recognition that sexual relationships should be pleasurable. Two comments suggested that teaching more about female and male anatomy and physiology would be a way in to talking about orgasm, sexual response and also the damage done by sexual assault. Remember that over half of the young people responding had not learnt 'what is good and bad in a relationship' in school.

You can't consent to sex when you are drunk, boys should be taught that it is rape.

– young woman aged 17

Teaching about consent was described as needing to be part of a continuum of learning about how to deal with emotional pressure, sexual assault and rape. The open text comments referring to consent and assault showed awareness of gender stereotypes and the need to challenge these.

Although none of the question in the survey asked how well LGBT issues were covered in SRE this was a major theme in response to the open question 'how can SRE be improved'. Participants described the damage caused to them by feeling invisible in SRE.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and their relationships: I've done nothing on that so far and my brother is gay and I think we need to know about it.

– young man aged 11

Discussion on sexual diversity was so poor I did not even know such things as bisexuality existed, making my adolescence far more confusing, and exposing me to lots of torment.

– young person aged 20-25

More information about same sex relationships how to be safe about them.

– young man aged 16

Top tips from young people for better SRE

1. Treat LGBT issues better

Are you using scenarios that include LGBT young people?

2. Explain pleasure

Does teaching about the body include discussion about sensuality and the sexual response including masturbation and orgasm?

3. Teach us the practicalities of health and services

Have you contacted the school nurse and local sexual health service and asked how they can contribute to SRE?

4. Go into more depth about consent, assault and rape

Do your lessons challenge victim blaming and rape culture?

Have you discussed what coercive behaviour is and how to recognise it?

5. More about emotions and relationship realities, please

Have you used distancing techniques like role play, scenarios, advice columns, and pictures to explore people's different points of view and feelings in relationships?

6. Keep technology and the law in balance with other things we need to learn

Have you asked pupils to prioritise topics they want to learn more about?

For resources to help you put these ideas into practice see pages 16 - 23.

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What if... ?

Disclosures

What if a pupil discloses that they have been raped, sexually assaulted or abused?

Worries about pupil disclosure shouldn't stop schools from teaching fully about consent. In fact SRE lessons can be a trigger for disclosure and reporting abuse and this is all the more reason to have a well planned programme, delivered by competent staff and supported by appropriate school, college and Local Authority policies.

Good classroom management

In the classroom, the aim is to strike a balance between helping pupils to feel respected, safe and able to participate fully and openly while still protecting privacy and safeguarding welfare. Effective teaching and learning in SRE actively encourages pupils to share thoughts and voice opinions, but some boundaries are needed and pupils need to know what will happen to any personal information they might disclose in the classroom.

Investing time in setting up ground rules for SRE will help protect pupils from disclosing personal experiences to the full class. Examples of ground rules include: listening to each other, respecting our rights to share different views, taking care with information we share about ourselves and other people, and not to ask personal questions. Pupils may need examples of what is too personal and what is okay. Explain to pupils that the classroom is not a confidential space. At the same time the teacher should make it clear to pupils that they can come and seek help one-to-one either from the teacher after the lesson or from other staff at the school such as a counselor or school nurse.

Using distancing techniques, such as role play and puppets also helps avoid disclosures to the full group. The use of a question box also allows children to ask questions anonymously. Think in advance about the material covered in a lesson and if it may be a

trigger for distress or disclosure for pupils and staff. Prepare pupils by saying 'the material we will look at in our next lesson includes and could be upsetting because.....' and then give pupils a chance to approach you individually and plan what support they need.

It can take a while for a child to trust an adult enough to make a disclosure and in the lead up they may test out the adult e.g. teacher, school nurse or teaching assistant to see how they respond and if they feel they can be trusted.

Regularly refer all pupils to sources of further help and support

It is impossible to be certain when and if a child or young person might need help, so regularly remind pupils about a variety of sources of confidential help and advice. Suggested organizations are listed below and it is really important to include information about local services too and to keep this information on display in the school. Listing local agencies in pupil planners or diaries works well.

Young people say that SRE often fails to teach about the practicalities of getting help, so plan activities to build skills and confidence to get help and advice. For example, use role-play to practice going to a local sexual health clinic or ringing a help-line and try asking pupils to write a dialogue in text message style between two friends in which one young person discloses non-consensual sexual activity to their friend.

What to do if there is a disclosure

Ground rules make it less likely that a disclosure will happen in class, but they are not a guarantee. So that teachers and other staff are prepared to deal with disclosure wherever or whenever it happens it's essential to be familiar with the safeguarding and confidentiality policies and know who the child protection lead is. It will be supportive to the child if the

adult who hears a disclosure is non-judgmental, doesn't act embarrassed, shocked, or disbelieving and listens to what the child wants to happen – even if they cannot do what they want. It is important that the adult says clearly what they will do next and when. For example, 'I will tell the member of staff who is the child protection lead for the school today. We will tell you by the end of the day what we will do next.'

Sharing gender and sexual identity

If a pupil shares their sexuality or gender identity this is not in itself a child protection issue. An issue could arise where the child was not safe at home or school due to bullying or abuse related to their sexuality or gender identity, and this would then become a disclosure. Sharing a child's sexuality or gender identity when the child has neither asked you to, asked for help, or reported bullying or a safeguarding issue is a breach of privacy. Pupils may appreciate a referral to a local LGBT youth group; this organisation's contact information should also be displayed in school.

Disclosure about sexual activity

The information below is taken from the Sex Education Forum factsheet '[Confidentiality: promoting young people's sexual health and wellbeing in secondary schools](#)' (2007) and gives further guidance about the law on sexual activity and young people. The factsheet is free to download and includes a flow chart for dealing with disclosures.

The law: under 13s

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, a child aged 12 or under is not capable of consenting to sexual activity, and penetrative sex is classified as rape.

So, if a child under the age of 13 discloses penetrative sex, or other intimate sexual activity, the member of staff should always talk to their designated child protection lead, who should fully document discussions, including detailed reasons where a decision is made not to share information. A referral to social services is likely, based on the presumption that there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

The law: 13- to 15-year-olds

The legal age for sexual consent is 16. Staff may believe that sex under 16 is too early, but the law does not wish to criminalise young people who are in a mutually consenting sexual relationship. So, if a young person aged 13 to 15 discloses underage sex, it may be appropriate, although it is not a legal requirement, to assess whether there are any serious consequences for the welfare of the young person. If a teacher is concerned or in doubt they should discuss it with the school's designated child protection lead, and subsequently with other agencies if required. During these discussions, the young person need not be named or identified so confidentiality can be maintained. The child protection lead can then assess whether or not child protection procedures should be invoked and carefully document discussion and any action taken, including where a decision is taken not to share information.

The law: 16- to 17-year-olds

Although consensual sexual activity involving 16- or 17-year-olds is unlikely to involve an offence, discussion with the school's or college's child protection lead and subsequent action may be appropriate if staff suspect serious harm or the risk of serious harm. For example, it is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship with a 16- or 17-year-old if they hold a position of trust or authority in relationship to them – so in a case of this nature there is a risk of serious harm.

Finally, remember to cover your confidentiality and child protection policy when planning an input to your SRE programme from an external visitor. See the Sex Education Forum guide to '[External visitors and sex and relationships education](#)' which is free to download.



Sources of help and advice for children and young people

Brook give confidential advice to young people. You can telephone 0808 802 1234 from 11 am - 3 pm Monday to Friday. You can also text 07717 989 023 (standard SMS rates apply), or visit the Brook website: www.askbrook.org.uk

The Hideout is a space to help children and young people to understand domestic violence, and how to take positive action if it's happening to you. You can visit their website: www.thehideout.org.uk

Childline is a free and confidential helpline for children and young people, no problem too big or too small. You can contact Childline by telephone 0800 1111 (calls do not show up on phone bills), by email or webchat, or by visiting their website: www.childline.org.uk Childline's website also includes [specific advice about sexting](#).

Rape Crisis National Helpline is a free, confidential helpline for young women aged over 14 who have experienced sexual violence or abuse. The helpline is open twice daily between 12 - 2:30 pm and 7 - 9:30 pm (calls do not show up on phone bills) and the number is 0808 802 9999. You can also visit their website: www.rapecrisis.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline is a free helpline that offers support and information to women and children experiencing domestic violence. It is open 24 hours a day and the number is 0808 2000 247 You can also visit their website: www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Survivors UK has a helpline for those who want to talk about male rape or sexual abuse. The helpline is open Monday & Tuesday 7 pm - 9:30 pm or Thursday 12pm - 2:30 pm and the number is tel 0845 122 1201. You can also visit their website: www.survivorsuk.org

Sources of advice for staff

NSPCC and ATL have produced a [checklist and safety plan](#) for schools on responding to relationship abuse between young people.

Teaching unions provide advice and support for adults dealing with disclosures. All schools should have a chain of supervision, where anyone who receives a disclosure can speak confidentially to the named child protection officer or another named person responsible for staff wellbeing or supervision.



Training Opportunities

Tender: Working with young people to address violence in teenage relationships

This practical and hands-on training day will equip participants with a clear understanding of the key issues of abuse and violence in relationships and actively examine how drama techniques can be used to engage young people in these issues whilst unlocking meaningful dialogue around them. Tried and tested in a range of youth settings including schools, youth centres and pupil referral units, these exercises have proven to be an extremely successful method to reach young people. The course will be held in London on 20 March 2014. The cost is £150 and is CPD Accredited. For more information please email rebecca@tender.org.uk

Centre for HIV and Sexual Health: Pleasure pursuits and young people

This course looks at how to raise the issue of sexual pleasure appropriately with young people. It includes discussion about blocks and barriers to talking about sexual pleasure with young people, the physiology of pleasure and identification of practical strategies and activities for addressing sexual pleasure in education work with young people. The course is held in Sheffield and the next course is on 8 April 2014. The cost is £125 for participants from organizations outside the Sheffield area. Email Liz Wilson for further information liz.wilson10@nhs.net

FPA: Non-consensual sexual activity, young people and teenage pregnancy

This one day training course from FPA aims to enable participants to support young people with issues around decision making and consensual sexual activity. Participants look at research and the law around non-consensual sexual activity as well as their own attitudes and values, and discuss the links between consent, young people and teenage pregnancy. Participants try out activities and develop strategies and sessions plans for supporting young people around consent, decision making and safer sexual activity. The next course is on 23 January 2014. The cost is £120. For further information email training@fpa.org.uk

Further Reading

'0-18 years: Guidance for all doctors', General Medical Council UK. (accessed 10 December 2013)

Beckett, H and others (2013) *"It's wrong but you get used to it": A qualitative study of gang-associated sexual violence towards, and exploitation of, young people in England*, University of Bedfordshire for the Office of the Children's Commissioner (accessed 10 December 2013)

Berelowitz and others (2013) *"If only someone had listened" Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, Final Report*, Office of the Children's Commissioner, London. (accessed 10 December 2013)

'Brook's position statement on consent', Brook. (accessed 10 December 2013)

Coy, M and others (2013) *"Sex without consent, I suppose that is rape": How young people in England understand sexual consent*, Office of the Children's Commissioner, London. (accessed 10 December 2013)

Edwards, K (2013) *Stop asking my daughter to give you a kiss*. Role/Reboot. (accessed 10 December 2013)

Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare (2011) *Service Standards on Obtaining Valid Consent in Sexual Health Services*. UK: Clinical Standards Committee. (accessed 10 December 2013)

Family Planning Association (2009) *Factsheet: Under 16s: consent and confidentiality in sexual health services*. London: Family Planning Association. (accessed 10 December 2013)

Forced Marriage Unit. www.gov.uk/forced-marriage

General Medical Council (2008) *Children and young people's rights at the doctor: a poster*. London: National Children's Bureau (accessed 10 December 2013)

Hancock, J (2013) *Consent innit*. UK: Bish Training. (accessed 10 December 2013)

Hancock, J (2013) *Consent, Sex Ed and Young People*. UK: Bish Training. (accessed 10 December 2013)

PSHE Association (forthcoming 2014) *Good practice on teaching about consent*.

Lesson ideas

For Key Stages 1 and 2

Key Stage 1

Children experience lots of everyday situations where their 'will' is either respected or ignored. Teaching about consent at Key Stage 1 (and in the early years) can help children to identify their likes and dislikes, opinions and feelings - and that these matter. This is balanced with learning to respect others and knowing what to do if others disrespect them - including about abuse.

A lesson about caring is a good way to explore physical and emotional needs. To open the lesson, ask the class to stand in two lines facing each other - they are the brushes in a car wash. Ask for a volunteer to go through the 'car wash'. As they walk through, everyone pats them gently. Once they reach the end they join a line and another pupil goes through the wash. Ask the volunteers how it felt:

Was it a nice feeling?

Did people pat them carefully?

Ask the 'patters', 'How did you know if the volunteer was happy with your pat?'

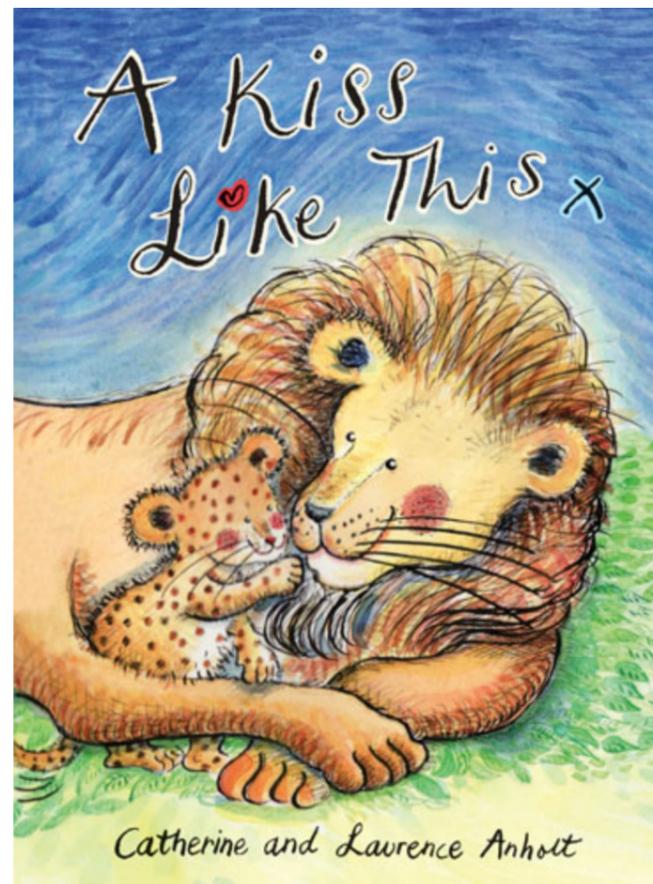
Follow this with a discussion activity about caring for a pet. Using a real pet or a picture of a pet, ask the children, 'How do we care for a pet?' Discuss the different needs and include physical, social and emotional needs. Discuss individual likes of pets, for example not all cats like to be cuddled. How do you know this? Now ask the class to think about people. How do people care for us? And who are the people who care for us? (From 'Caring' in the [Sex Education Forum resource: Laying the Foundations](#)). Posters and stickers depicting 'Different Families - Same Love' are free to order from Stonewall and can be used to support this activity.

Storybooks and puppets are ideal resources for thinking about consent and physical touch at KS1, for example whether or not we want to kiss a friend or relative or hug someone. The questions 'When is it okay to let someone touch me?' and 'How can I say 'no' if I don't want someone to touch me?' can be raised through reading a story such as *A Kiss Like This*.

Clare Blackhall, SRE and PSHE Advisor from [3Di Associates](#), explains how:

'The story tells of a loving relationship between a lion and his cub. They share kisses, tickles and cuddles, clearly showing a close bond. The contented lion cub then takes a walk through the jungle, meeting various animals who, like his father, also find him very cute. They too kiss, cuddle and tickle the cub, and he enjoys the attention... until a 'snippy, snappy' crocodile tries to do the same. Uncomfortable with this, the lion cub is frightened. Fortunately, his father has been watching. He scares the crocodile away. Then he tells his son that kisses and cuddles are fine from parrots, if you're a baby parrot. They're even fine from a crocodile if you're a baby crocodile.'

'If a teacher or a parent wants to explain the importance of being safe from inappropriate touches then this is an excellent way to do it. Sharing a picture book is comforting, and can reiterate an important point without being explicit and abrupt. I've used it in class to deal with inappropriate touches between children as well as making younger children aware that they shouldn't tolerate any touches that makes them feel uncomfortable.'



A Kiss Like This, by Catherine and Lawrence Anholt

Having established some basic language about touch and consent, the foundation is laid to discuss key issues:

'Which parts of my body are private?'

'Who should I tell if someone wants to touch my private parts?'

'What makes me feel good?'

'What makes me feel bad?'

'How do I know how other people are feeling?'

Laying the Foundations includes a lesson plan on 'Setting personal boundaries'. Pupils make girl and boy body outlines and identify 'safe touch', 'unsafe touch' and 'unwanted touch' and how to respond to them.

'Feelings' is another route to learning about consent. Key questions to explore are 'What makes me feel good?', 'What makes me feel bad?' and 'How do I know how other people are feeling?'. The 'Keeping safe' lesson from 'Laying the Foundations' also uses a body outline. Pupils are given scenarios (e.g. someone being unkind to them, getting lost, going somewhere or doing something they don't want to do) and draw on the physical signs of feeling unsafe (heart beating fast, wobbly knees, butterflies in the tummy, heavy feeling, hunched shoulders). Discussion follows about how to respond to these warning signs.

Primary school teacher Melonie Syrett says:

'I give children scenarios to look at such as how to respond if 'your aunty gives you a big sloppy kiss that you don't like'. We look at how to get support, be persistent and the kinds of words and facial expressions to show when they do not like something.'

As well as talking about touch, KS1 is an ideal time to talk with children about likes and dislikes and to learn that their opinion matters and that people like and dislike different things.



Lesson ideas

KS1 and KS2 continued

Key Stage 2

Learning about consent at KS2 can look at a range of situations that involve physical, social and emotional dynamics that children may experience with adults and other children. The following questions from the [Sex Education Forum curriculum design tool](#) can be a starting point for a lesson:

When is it good or bad to keep secrets?

What do I do if someone wants me to do something dangerous, wrong or makes me feel uncomfortable?

How can I say 'no' to someone without hurting their feelings?

What should I do if my family or friends don't see things the way I do?

What should I do if someone is being bullied or abused?

What are the important relationships in my life now?

Can some relationships be harmful?

Lessons at KS2 should build on earlier learning about caring, feelings, safety and touch. Lessons about friendships, influences and assertiveness from [Laying the Foundations](#) can be used at KS2 to build on earlier learning.

A set of picture cards such as the [Growing Up Safe cards from Big Talk Education](#) can be used to structure discussion about potentially risky situations which infringe/undermine consent such as grooming, being exposed to pornography, being photographed inappropriately or being subjected to inappropriate touching. The cards tackle some very serious issues in a way which is gentle as children like the cartoon characters and can easily relate to the pictures.



Growing Up Safe cards from Big talk Education.

Lynnette Smith, who created the cards, shares:

'With KS1 pupils it's a very clear issue of OK/Not OK, but with the older ones (KS2), the situations on the cards give them triggers for discussion.'

The NSPCC ['The Underwear Rule'](#) campaign resources are also useful in this context and are ideal to encourage parents to talk to their children about bodily boundaries at home too.

Teacher Melonie Syrett says:

'By Year 6, the focus is on assessing and dealing with risk. I use scenarios such as 'your friend offers you a cigarette' and 'a friend is trying to persuade you to meet someone from an internet chatroom'. Pupils discuss the scenario in pairs or small groups to consider the 'best' and 'worst' things that a child could do when faced with such a situation. They also explore what might stop someone making the best decision in such a situation.'

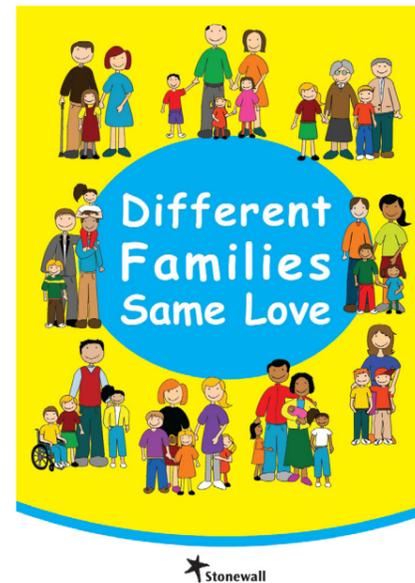
Melonie explains that an important part of these discussions with pupils is working out what to do if a problem is still not resolved, even after taking action. This allows the teachers to include information about helplines and support organisations.

Resources for use with Key Stages 1 and 2

[A Kiss Like This](#): this story book by Laurence and Catherine Anholt is published by Frances Lincoln and costs £6.99.

[Curriculum design tool](#): lists SRE questions that young people want to explore at age 3-6, 7-8 and 9-10. Free to access from the [Sex Education Forum web-site](#).

[Different Families – Same Love](#): free posters and stickers from Stonewall.



Stonewall's Different Families Same Love campaign.

[Growing up safe](#): set of picture cards from Big Talk Education. Costs £19.99

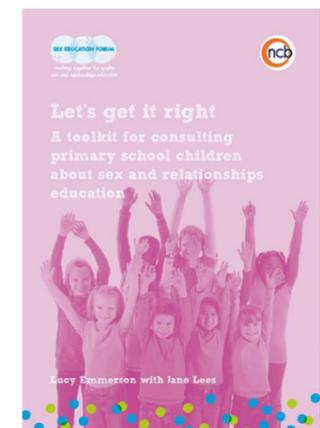
[Laying the Foundations; A practical guide to sex and relationships education in primary schools](#): This Sex Education Forum resource provides a complete SRE course for primary schools. The Second edition (2013) is available from the NCB online bookshop for £23.99. It includes lesson plans under 5 themes: My body, Life cycles, Relationships, Feelings and attitudes, Keeping safe and looking after myself, and People who can help me.

[Underwear Rule](#): campaign from NSPCC to support parents and teachers to talk to children about bodily boundaries. The campaign resources include video and audio clips, a child friendly guide and ['PANTS'](#) which has 5 messages to spell out the word 'PANTS' starting with 'privates are private'.



The Underwear Rule and 'PANTS' mnemonic from the NSPCC.

[Let's Get it Right](#): This Sex Education Forum toolkit includes practical activities to consult children about what they learn in SRE, how it is taught and how it could be improved, complete with photocopiable resources and a checklist for reviewing SRE provision in a primary school. £12.99 from the NCB online bookshop.



Let's get it right, from the Sex Education Forum.

Lesson ideas

For Key Stages 3 - 5

Key Stages 3 - 5

Learning about consent is integral to good quality relationships education that includes teaching about the law and rights, skills and understanding for positive, healthy, pleasurable relationships. Consent can be equally relevant in a lesson or unit of work focused on gender, friendships, peer influence, relationship and inter-personal skills such as communication. The Sex Education Forum [curriculum design tool](#) suggests 'questions to explore' at KS3,4 and 5 to go into more depth on these themes.

At KS3 relationships education can start to explore:

What makes a relationship happy or unhappy?

Do you have to have sex to show someone you love them?

Do different genders have different expectations in relationships?

What should I do if I feel I am being pressured into having sex? Is everybody doing it?

How do I know when I am ready to have sex/be intimate with my boyfriend/girlfriend?

What is acceptable touching and behaviour amongst my peers?

Try introducing the term 'consent' by asking pupils if they think consent is a helpful term and what they think it means. Pupils could write their ideas down individually or discuss first in pairs/small groups and report back to class. This provides needs assessment by gauging pupils' knowledge and attitudes.

Here are some examples, definitions, and thoughts on consent from Year 9 and 10 pupils at Forge Valley Community School in Sheffield:

"It's like a rule of what you can/can't do but people still do stuff"

"Sometimes it's as simple as yes or no, and sometimes there are conditions"

"Consent = permission to do something"

"'Consent' makes it sound too harsh/scary"

"It's a serious word, connected to rape, sex, medical stuff and euthanasia"

Pupils' ideas from this activity can be used to develop statements for a values continuum activity, or real-life relationship/friendship scenarios to discuss. The 'Expect Respect' resource from Women's Aid includes scenarios and these can be adapted; for example, try reversing the gender of some of the characters and see if pupils respond differently. Challenge homophobic responses.

The Year 10 'Expect Respect' activity uses a set of cards with behaviours such as 'expecting me to wait in for calls' and 'making me feel really special'. Pupils can work in pairs or small groups to sort the cards under three headings 'Supportive', 'Abusive' and 'It depends'. The activity could be further developed by using blank cards and asking pupils to add their own ideas to the three headings – or to build up a class 'picture' of a 'Supportive' relationship and putting this on display. Make sure relationships education resources include LGBT relationships.

Thinking about consent in public and non-sexual situations is helpful with teenagers as well as younger children. Justin Hancock of Bish Training suggests a 'Handshake'

activity to get young people or adults thinking about the power dynamics of social greetings – and then about sexual consent. Justin's instructions are as follows:

1. Ask people to shake hands by saying 'I really want you to shake hands'. Mostly people shake hands in the way that you might imagine. Then ask them a few questions about their handshake:

How was the handshake on a scale of 1 - 10?

How did you know what to do? (seen it before, learnt from experience, watching)

Were you the shaker or the shakee or was it mutual?

Why did you shake hands (or why didn't you, sometimes people don't shake hands)?

Was it because someone in power asked you to?

2. Then say that you would like them to do it again, if they want to. But this time you'd like them to negotiate the handshake: which hand, how hard, how long, up and down or side to side. Or negotiate something else instead of a handshake: fist bump, shoulder bump or high five.

3. Hold a discussion comparing the two handshakes:

How was that handshake compared with the first? On a scale of 1 - 10 how was it?

What was better about this one (more negotiation, more fun)?

What was better about the first one? (less awkward, get it over and done with, you know what to do, no fear of rejection, not a big thing)

Was it because someone in power asked you to?

Justin's advice is to explain that the first handshake was the 'script' about how we are expected to shake hands and the second was what happens when we think about what we and the other person want and communicate about it. If we think about this as an analogy for sex then there are

scripts about how we 'should' have sex, what 'counts' and what is 'normal.' This might mean that we may have sex which might be more about what is expected of us than what we want (and thus not necessarily consensual). However in taking a more 'second handshake' approach to sex and relationships we may face more difficulties, awkwardness and fear of rejection. These are all barriers to getting consent as well as giving it, and lie at the heart of any meaningful discussion about sexual consent.

The handshake activity raises questions about power dynamics including gender, and whether or not everyone is equally free to consent. Discussion can follow about what we can do to maximize our, and other people's capacity to consent. For example, pupils can reflect on how they communicated about the handshake: What did they say or hear, do or observe that was assertive?, What methods of communication are useful when a message feels 'difficult' to give (e.g. texts, emails, whispering, non verbal)?

The activity can be developed to explore cultural and religious diversity in social greetings, physical contact and gender norms. How does culture influence our behavior? It could even be linked to how alcohol impacts on consent. What kind of handshake happens if one/both people are drunk? ...and try doing the handshake wearing 'beer goggles' (see resources on page 23).

Note that religion may be a factor in pupils' actions and discussions about shaking hands. For example, the [Muslim Council of Britain's Information and Guidance for Schools \(2007\)](#) advises "it is part of Muslim etiquette for people of the same gender to shake hands" and that "most Muslims do not usually shake hands with a member of the opposite sex" (p58).



Lesson ideas

KS3 - KS5 continued

Consulting young people about what is important in SRE

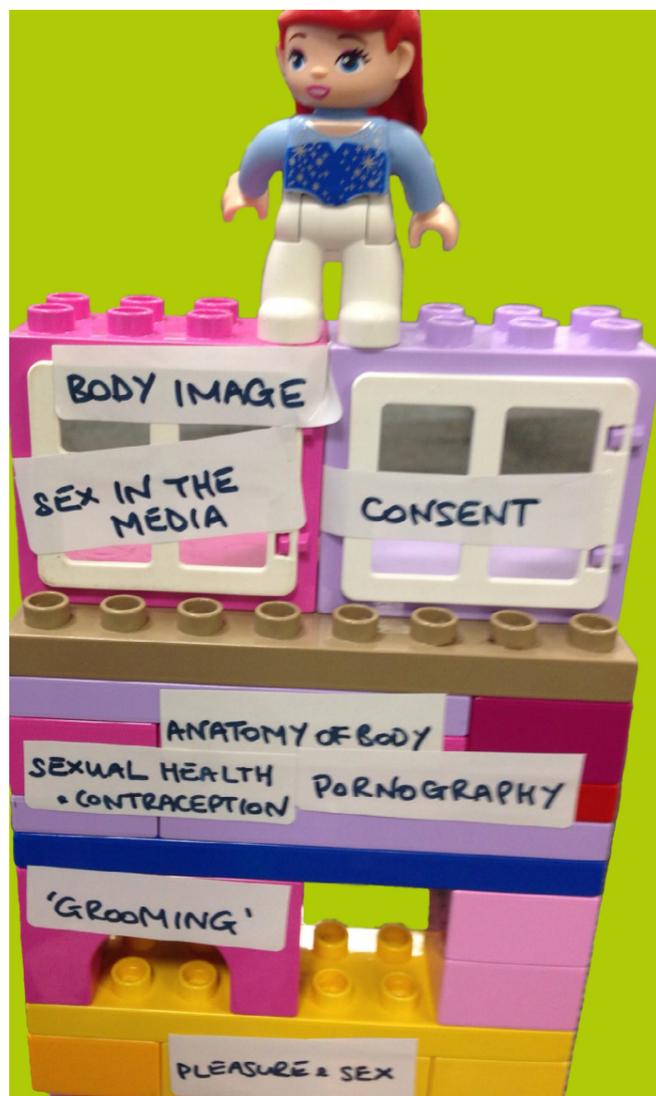
Young educators working with the Sex Education Forum worked in groups of three and discussed a range of SRE related topics which were written on stickers. They discarded topics of little interest, added new ones on blank stickers and then created a building block structure to represent how the topics relate to each other and which are the most and least important.

This activity was created especially for young people helping us design an SRE programme targeted to young people at high risk of exploitation.

The activity is a variation on the 'Diamond 9' topic prioritization activity for Key Stages 3 and 4 which is explained in the Sex Education Forum resource: *'Are you Getting it Right?'* A Key Stage 1 and 2 version of this activity is included in *'Let's Get it Right'* – see resources page 19.



This group described consent as the foundation for all other topics and so labeled the green platform 'consent'.



A window was chosen to represent 'consent' by this group as it was thought to be a way of seeing other topics.

Resources for use with Key Stages 3, 4, and 5

Curriculum design tool: lists SRE questions that young people want to explore at age 11-13, 14-16 and 16+. Free to access from the Sex Education Forum website.

Are you getting it right?: This toolkit ensures that young people inform the process of reviewing SRE provision in a secondary school. Free to download from the Sex Education Forum web-site.

Drunk in charge of a body: a teaching resource which prompts participatory learning about alcohol and its effect on personal and sexual relationships. Costs £30 from Brook.

Drunkbuster impairment goggles: by simulating the effect of being drunk, the goggles can be used to explore the impact of alcohol on sexual behavior and especially in relation to consent. Pupils can try out practical tasks such as putting a condom on a model. Costs £57.95 from FPA.

Expect respect: a set of lesson ideas from Year 1-13 from Women's Aid based on themes that have been found to be effective in tackling domestic abuse. Free to download from Women's Aid.

Going Further: an SRE course from Image in Action which is useful for teachers working with young people with moderate learning disabilities or autistic spectrum disorders at KS5. It includes 12 sessions, including one specifically on consent and keeping safe in intimate relationships. Free to download from Image in Action.

Sex Explained: a real and relevant guide to sex, relationships and you: Featuring consent, sexual readiness, assertiveness, negotiation and communication tips and the different kinds of sexual activity which people may want to have rather than what they feel they should have. It's available to preview for free at Bish, or to buy from £2 per copy.

"Sex without consent: I suppose that is rape": How young people in England understand sexual consent': This report from the Office of the Children's Commissioner (2013) includes scenarios which can be used as a starting point for exploring attitudes to consent. The scenarios were originally used in an online survey and the survey questions (see p17 of the report) can be used as prompts for discussion. Each scenario includes the identity and age of the young person plus a core narrative. 'Check the 'What if...' article in this magazine to make sure pupils are prepared and supported before using a resource such as this which is potentially triggering.

Josh, 15: Young man has sex with his girlfriend at a party whilst she is passed out/sleeping upstairs

Chelsea, 16: A homeless young woman who accepts the offer of a sofa to sleep on, but then is later expected to have sex as 'payment'

Monique, 17: Young woman at a club, cannot remember what happened, thinks her drink was spiked and knows someone has had sex with her

Sabrina, 13: Young woman sends a young man whom she fancies sexual photos and he later has oral sex with her

Kate, 14: Young woman meets young man whom she fancies, two of his friends arrive, they tease and play games and all have sex with her

Gavin, 15: The above scenario from the perspective of one of the friends who regrets his involvement

Joey, 16: Young man exploring his sexuality who goes to a gay club, and an older man has oral sex with him in a toilet

Kelly, 14: Young couple 'getting hot' with each other, they decide not to have sex

Where to get contraception: a five minute video explaining where young people can confidentially get contraception. Free from NHS Choices.

About this magazine

The Sex Educational Supplement is the termly e-magazine for teachers and other professionals involved in sex and relationships education. It is optimised for web viewing. It is a free benefit for members and can be purchased by non-members from the [NCB online shop](#) for £4.99. If you would like to contribute editorial for future editions, please contact the editor, Lucy Emmerson: lemmerson@ncb.org.uk.

This magazine was produced with advice from Jane Lees, Chair of the Sex Education Forum and was designed by [Chella Quint](#), who also provided additional editorial support. Thanks also to NSPCC and FPA for advice on the 'What if...' section, and to Boo Spurgeon for sharing examples of pupils' understanding of consent. The Sex Educational Supplement is a product of the Sex Education Forum and published by NCB. Members of the Sex Education Forum do not necessarily endorse the content in full.

More support with SRE

Network+ membership will enable you to join discussions with other SRE professionals about issues such as teaching about consent. Membership will also ensure that you are up to date with SRE news, can access our trouble-shooting service, and that you will receive future editions of this magazine. Annual subscription is £37.50+VAT (£45 inclusive) per school or individual and three year membership can be purchased for £99+VAT (£118.80 inclusive). Members benefit from a 20% discount on all of our publications. Joining details can be found at www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/members

For free updates about the latest SRE resources, email us at sefnetworks@ncb.org.uk with the subject heading 'free updates'.

About the Sex Education Forum

The Sex Education Forum is a unique national collaboration of organisations and practitioners committed to improving sex and relationships education for children and young people.

Follow us: on Twitter [@sex_ed_forum](#) and [Facebook](#). Visit us online at www.sexeducationforum.org.uk.

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