

‘Delivering Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in the Modern World’

‘Delivering RSE in the Modern World’ updates the current SRE Spiral Curriculum which was developed in 2009 by The Wolverhampton Healthy Schools Team, School Nursing Service, PCT and professionals from other agencies and the voluntary sector. The original curriculum was a recommendation of both the Health Scrutiny Panel on teenage pregnancy, (2007) and the National Support Team.

As RSE is ever changing in today’s digital society it was felt that pupils needed sessions around online safety, sexting, impact of pornography and how to keep safe. Rebecca Jennings who works as an independent RSE Consultant through project RAISE (Raising Awareness in Sex Education) was commissioned to work with the Wolverhampton Public Health’s Children and Young People’s Health Improvement Team to provide and update all current session plans and add more topics based on the current needs of young people in Wolverhampton.

With over 15 years working in primary and secondary settings delivering age-appropriate Relationships & Sex Education, Rebecca has designed a range of curriculum packages for teachers, published a range of journals, a resource for primary schools and more recently a sexual consent package for Optimus Education.

The Definition of RSE

Relationships and sex education is learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. Some aspects are taught in science, and others are taught as part of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE).

A comprehensive programme of RSE provides accurate information about the body, reproduction, sex, and sexual health. It also gives children and young people essential skills for building positive, enjoyable, respectful and non-exploitative relationships and staying safe both on and offline.

(Sex Education Forum, SRE in the 21st Century)

Effective RSE is important to ensure that children grow up able to enjoy the positive benefits of loving, rewarding and responsible relationships, to be informed, comfortable with the changes during puberty, sexually healthy and emotionally safe. Schools provide a safe place for children and young people to make sense of the information they have picked up from the media and also playground myth.

(SRE Guidance section 1.3)

New RSE Guidance for Schools

On March 1st 2017 the Government announced that statutory RSE should be delivered in all schools (Primary & Secondary) including Academies and Independent Schools. The content is still unclear, it will be compulsory for primary schools to deliver ‘relationships education’ and secondary schools to deliver ‘relationships and sex education’.

The SRE Guidance 2000 is to be updated and this will give some statutory guidance to schools when delivering RSE.

Amendment NC15 introduces statutory 'relationships and sex education' across all secondary schools, including academies and independent schools; and statutory 'relationships education' across all primary schools.

Amendment NC16 gives the government the right to introduce statutory PSHE at a later date without passing new legislation.

The work to consider content will begin this spring and we expect that it will result in draft regulations and guidance for consultation in the Autumn of 2017. Following consultation, regulations will be laid in the House, alongside final draft guidance, allowing for a full and considered debate. The statutory guidance will be published in early 2018, once the regulations have been passed (and at least one full year before academic year 2019/20).

The RSE Resource

'Delivering RSE in the Modern World' provides schools and other services working with young people with the session plans and resources to effectively deliver age-appropriate sessions in a way that is flexible to both the learners and their timetables or programmes of work.

The updated resource is more flexible in its approach, including both a thematic approach allowing schools to identify sessions appropriate to certain needs whilst also ensuring the materials can be delivered as part of a planned RSE programme.

There are six main topics in this resource, these are colour coded and each links to a specific theme. The six themes are:

- **Relationships**
- **Sex**
- **Online Safety**
- **Diversity**
- **Risky Behaviour**
- **My Body**

Each theme is colour coded and this links to the RSE programme that we are suggesting as good practice to be delivered to year groups 7 to 11. The colour coding allows the user to identify the session topic easily, therefore if schools or professionals would prefer to deliver a certain topic earlier or later than we suggest, or outside of a planned programme, they are able to easily locate a session plan from the thematic approach.

Delivering RSE in Schools

We recommend that these RSE sessions should be delivered as part of your planned PSHE programme to ensure consistent messages are given to young people around keeping safe, healthy relationships and sexual health. The concept of a spiral curriculum (advocated by Jerome S. Bruner 1915-) is 'learning through enquiry, with the facilitator providing guidance to accelerate the child's/young person's thinking'. The teaching of any subject emphasises the grasping of basic ideas/topics, and after that, the curriculum revisits these ideas/topics, repeatedly (each time at a higher level of difficulty and in greater depth). Moving in a circular pattern from topic to topic engages young people when they first become ready to learn something; the others, (the ones not ready either physically or emotionally to learn yet), are picked up, the next time the topic is spiralled round. Readiness to learn is at the core of any spiral curriculum.

The thematic approach was developed to provide support for those providers who work with young people in a variety of non-educational settings (e.g. youth groups) or those who want to tackle one particular theme due to any needs or incidents arising in school or for schools who currently choose to deliver RSE as part of a drop down day where pupils leave the timetable for a day to focus on PSHE subjects.

We acknowledge that each school or setting has a variety of needs and what will suit one may not suit another, therefore the updated curriculum has been developed to be as flexible as possible in terms of use and appropriate content.

(Department for Education Policy Statement)

RSE Policy

Due to the updated topics included in the programme it is important to remind schools that any additional or revised content must be mentioned in your schools SRE/RSE policy. This policy must then be available for pupils and parents to view if they so request. A sample RSE policy and guidance is available for support in completing this review.

Parental Right to Withdraw from RSE

Parents are the key people in:

- Teaching their children about sex and relationships
- Maintaining the culture and ethos of the family
- Helping their children cope with the emotional and physical aspects of growing up
- Preparing them for the challenges and responsibilities that sexual maturity brings

As part of the statutory process parents still have the right to withdraw their children from RSE. Schools should always seek to work in partnership with parents. This is essential to effective sex and relationship education as the delivery of effective RSE should be a partnership between home and school to ensure consistent messages.

Research shows that children and young people want to receive their initial sex and relationship education from their parents and families, with school and other adults building on this later. But many parents find it difficult to talk to their children about sex and relationships. In particular, fathers rarely take responsibility for giving sex and relationship education to their sons.

The teaching of some aspects of sex and relationship education might nevertheless be of particular concern to some parents. Teachers have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils and because teachers therefore act in loco parentis, parents may need to be reassured that the personal beliefs and attitudes of teachers will not influence the teaching of sex and relationship education within the PSHE framework. Teachers and all those contributing to sex and relationship education are expected to work within an agreed values framework as described in the school's policy which must be in line with current legislation.

(DfE Guidance)

Ground Rules

It is important to establish and/or recap ground rules prior to any session delivery. As a practitioner this can often ensure that a safe, positive learning environment is created for all. Young People will want to and will be provided with opportunities to discuss sensitive and controversial issues as part of RSE. It's vital that they do so in a climate of trust, cooperation and support.

A safe learning environment helps students share feelings, explore values and attitudes, express opinions and consider those of others without attracting negative feedback. As well as encouraging more open discussion it also helps to make sure that teachers are not anxious about unexpected disclosures or comments.

Where time allows, ground-rules are most effective when they have been negotiated and agreed with the group, rather than imposed by the practitioner. It is suggested that you use a flipchart/whiteboard for this exercise to ensure the rules are on display throughout the lesson and can be referred to at any time.

If ground rules need to be established or revised with the group, consider including:

- Confidentiality (relate to your school's confidentiality policy and signpost to child protection officers) – any personal things that are said in the room stay in the room. They should not be discussed at any other time.
- Right to Pass
- No personal questions
- Allow everyone to have a turn
- Use of appropriate sexual language and correct names for body parts
- No question is a silly question
- Respect each other and each other's differences
- Challenge ideas/statements – not the individual

- Respect others' opinions
- Have fun and aim to enjoy learning
- Tell the story not the person
- Laugh

Outcomes of 'Delivering RSE in the Modern World'

- To improve the delivery of Relationships & Sex Education in Wolverhampton's Secondary Schools.
- To ensure consistent delivery of a quality RSE curriculum to an agreed standard
- To ensure that children grow up able to enjoy the positive benefits of loving, rewarding and responsible relationships, to be informed, comfortable with the changes during puberty, sexually healthy and emotionally safe.
- To contribute to the City's public health outcomes around teenage pregnancy and STI's, therefore helping to reduce local under 18 conception rates and the prevalence of Chlamydia amongst under 25s
- To increase young people's knowledge about LARC methods of contraception
- To provide information around a range of current topics and to ensure young people are signposted to the national and local agencies for further advice and support.
- To ensure young people keep safe online and raise awareness of the consequences of sharing online images or videos.

Research denotes that comprehensive RSE, linked to accessible contraceptive and sexual health services, helps to address these issues. It also disproves the beliefs of some, that 'relationships and sex education encourages young people to become sexually active at an earlier age'. In fact if young people are able to discuss RSE topics in an open and honest manner they are more likely to understand and make informed choices around sexual activity, relationships and online safety.

Consultation with Young People

Over 300 young people in both key stage 3 and key stage 4 from a cross section of schools were consulted for the original spiral curriculum, with over 70 young people consulted for the new updates. Feedback around teaching and learning styles, topics, and methodology preferences were considered and taken into account when the RSE lessons were planned and written. A focus group of sixth-formers from South Wolverhampton & Bilston Academy (SWBA) also gave valuable feedback on where they felt the gaps may be from year 7 to 11 and what they felt currently worked well. The group gave lots of valuable ideas following discussion around the topics of online safety and FGM which are now included in the new resource.

I think it's really important to talk about where to go for help if you have already taken part on activity online or if you need any further support of where to go for help.

6th Form, Student

Consultation with Professionals

It was paramount that members of staff and professionals currently using the Spiral Curriculum were involved in the update process to ensure they are able to use the resource effectively and to ensure the content is appropriate for their young people. Consultation also took place with a range of local service providers including School Nursing, Embrace and Terrence Higgins Trust.

'Having previously been involved with the development of the Puberty Pack, being part of the working group to design a Secondary Spiral Curriculum seemed a natural pathway.'

'School nurses are key partners in the delivery and support of identified elements of the curriculum. The benefits of the Spiral Curriculum to young people are many. Ultimately it has the potential to enhance their knowledge leading to positive informed decision-making around keeping safe and with regard to their sexual health and future relationships.'"

Sue Watts, Assistant School Nurse Manager

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- ✓ Claire Buckle - Colton Hills School
- ✓ Diane Shepherd – West Midlands Police
- ✓ Tracey Gibbs, Andrew Travers & Patrick Serugga - Terrence Higgins Trust
- ✓ Henry Soulsby & Lorraine Brown - Embrace Sexual Health Services
- ✓ Hazel Hawkins-Dady – School Nurse Manager
- ✓ Susan Watts- Assistant School Nurse Manager

A special thanks goes to Claire Buckle of Colton Hills school for allowing us to use and adapt her presentation around 'Revenge Pornography'. Claire delivers this session to pupils in her school and we felt it was a great resource to share.

Conclusion

In conclusion, 'delivering RSE in the Modern World' aims to deliver just that. An effective and flexible resource for professionals to use to ensure our young people are informed, that they

realise risks and their consequences and more importantly they respect one another regardless of gender, sexuality or relationship status.