

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

August 2023

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Quick Read Version

Introduction

This guidance applies to everyone delivering RSHP education to children and young people in Scotland. Delivery of RSHP education should be done in a way that encompasses Getting It Right For Every Child as well as reflecting the wider agenda to progressing children's rights in Scotland.

Further detail at: [Introduction](#).

RSHP Education

RSHP education complements other aspects of a child and young person's learning and makes an important contribution to their development. It supports learning and understanding of healthy relationships and personal resilience. It helps reduce domestic abuse, gender based violence, and ensures the importance of appropriate boundaries for all children and young people are understood. Making links to relevant services is important in helping to support children and young people's understanding of how to use these services for themselves.

Parental engagement, as well as effective monitoring and tracking of children and young people's progress in RSHP education, is also key to effective learning and teaching.

Further detail at: [RSHP Education](#).

Embedding RSHP Education as a Whole School Approach

RSHP education has a central role in promoting the ethos of a school by helping bring pupils together and creating a sense of community. A whole school approach enables children and young people to build positive relationships.

Five specific topics are outlined in this guidance to help support a holistic learning and teaching experience.

Further detail at: [Embedding RSHP Education as a Whole School Approach](#).

Key Learning Points for RSHP Education

RSHP education encourages all practitioners and relevant professionals to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner within the framework of curricular values and an awareness of Scots Law. RSHP education supports all children and young people to explore the values of strong, loving relationships and recognises the diversity of families in Scotland.

As with the whole school approach, five specific topics are outlined in this guidance as key learning points for RSHP education.

Further detail at: [Key Learning Points](#).

RSHP: Policy, Guidance and Resources

Further information on policy, guidance and resources that may sit within RSHP education is included in this guidance.

Further detail at: [RSHP: Policy, Guidance and Resources](#).

1. Introduction

1.1. The updated statutory guidance now contained in this document is issued under section 56 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000¹. It replaces the earlier guidance, *Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Schools*, issued in December 2014².

1.2. Local authorities must have regard to this guidance in discharging their statutory functions relating to provision of this education within Curriculum for Excellence, in line, for example, with the experiences and outcomes for health and wellbeing³.

1.3. This guidance applies to local authorities' delivery of RSHP education in the schools and settings they manage.

1.4. Alongside educational practitioners, this guidance is applicable to all professionals delivering RSHP education to children and young people, including youth workers, residential care staff, nurses including school nurses, health improvement staff, and specialist and generic third sector agencies.

1.5. Furthermore, the principles set out in this guidance are equally relevant to informal education activity or information (oral and/or written) developed with and for children and young people looked after by local authorities in residential settings. It further applies to children and young people in youth clubs or groups which are funded, in whole or in part, by local authorities, the Scottish Government or other public agencies.

1.6. Local authorities, as any public authority, have a duty to act in a way which is compatible with the human rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights. This applies to the rights of parents and carers as well as the rights of children and young people. Parents and carers have the right to have their children educated in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions. This is why RSHP education should be presented in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner within a framework of sound values and an awareness of the law, and teachers should work closely with parents in its delivery, by discussing proposed lessons and resources with them in advance.

1.7. The delivery of RSHP education should reflect the drive towards improved awareness, understanding and realisation of child rights across Scottish public policy, public services and society as a whole. The incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an important part of the context of progressing children's rights in Scotland.

¹ [Statutory guidance covering provisions under the Education \(Scotland\) Act 2016 which amend the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 on the Scottish Government website](#)

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

1.8. Aspects of the UNCRC's main provisions in relation to rights to education are already reflected in sections 1 and 2 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000⁴. However, it is important to read the UNCRC in its entirety and pay special attention to the four General Principles when planning RSHP education, thus ensuring children's rights are effectively embedded across the curriculum.

1.9. The four General Principles assist in interpreting all the other articles and play a fundamental role in realising all the rights in the UNCRC for all children and young people. The four General Principles are:

- for rights to be applied without discrimination (Article 2);
- for the best interests of the child to be a primary consideration (Article 3);
- for the right to life, survival and development (Article 6); and,
- for the right to express a view and have that view taken into account (Article 12).

1.10. All children and young people have a right to privacy, safety, dignity and respect. In line with Getting It Right For Every Child, children and young people should be central to decision making. Chapter 1 of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Technical Guidance for Schools in Scotland⁵ provides an overview of the schools provisions of the Equality Act 2010, including what may be lawful, unlawful and whether exceptions may be available.

1.11. The Equality Act 2010⁶ places a legal duty (known as the 'General Equality Duty') on public authorities, including education authorities, managers of grant-aided schools and proprietors of independent schools, to prevent unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in their schools and advance equal opportunities for all children and young people. The protected characteristics of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation apply in relation to schools, protect individuals from unfair treatment and promote a fair and more equal society. In considering these requirements, education authorities should have due regard to the three needs of the General Equality Duty below:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

1.12. Since the publication of the 2014 guidance, the Scottish Government announced the national review of Personal and Social Education (PSE), in

⁴ [Section 56 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 on the UK Government legislation website](#)

⁵ [Technical guidance outlining requirements of the Equality Act 2010 for schools on the Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#)

⁶ [Equality Act 2010 on the UK Government legislation website](#)

March 2017, including the role of pastoral care and children and young people counselling services, conducted as part of the Mental Health Strategy 2017 to 2027⁷. Following the review, the Scottish Government identified 16 recommendations to improve the delivery of Health and Wellbeing and PSE in Scotland. Recommendation 7 outlined the need for updated teaching guidance in respect of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) education:

“The Scottish Government, working with key partners in local government and the third sector, will ensure that the forthcoming review to update the existing guidance available to schools 'Conduct of Relationships Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Schools (2014)' includes appropriate guidance to ensure that consent education is age and stage appropriate and reflects the issues that are facing children and young people, especially from online influences.”⁸

1.13. The LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group's report⁹ to the Scottish Ministers recommended the Scottish Government develop National Guidance outlining their expectations regarding LGBT inclusive education while signposting practitioners to supporting resources. This links directly to this Working Group's recommendation that “*Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health, and Parenthood Education in Schools' (2014)*¹⁰ is updated. Furthermore, recommendation 8 advises that the updated guidance uses a 'thematic outcomes' based approach. These thematic outcomes should cover various themes related but not exclusive to LGBT equality and inclusion, including:

- terminologies and identities;
- the impact of social prejudice and the history of social rights movements;
- the equality of people, families and relationships represented in an inclusive manner; and
- how to recognise and respond to prejudice within school and wider society while respecting individual rights and privacy.”

1.14. This guidance reflects those recommendations.

⁷ [Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027 on the Scottish Government website](#)

⁸ [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](#)

⁹ [LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group: Report to the Scottish Ministers on the Scottish Government website](#)

¹⁰ [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](#)

2. Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) Education

Learning and Teaching RSHP education

2.1. Curriculum for Excellence positions all learners at the heart of education, supporting them to develop the four capacities:

- successful learners;
- confident individuals;
- responsible citizens; and,
- effective contributors.

2.2 RSHP education sits within one of the eight curriculum areas, Health and Wellbeing (HWB). The development of skills and knowledge in HWB sits at the very centre of all learners' educational experiences, from age 3 to 18.

2.3. Inclusive RSHP education, as part of the HWB curriculum, is a key priority in equipping all children and young people with the knowledge, understanding and skills to make informed decisions and consensual choices about all aspects of their health and wellbeing.

2.4 The Scottish Government considers that RSHP education complements other aspects of a child and young person's learning and makes an important contribution to their development. This helps fulfil their right to learn about their growing bodies, relationships (including online relationships), sexuality, sexual health and parenthood, as set out in [paragraph 4.7](#) below. It supports learning and understanding of healthy relationships, develops personal resilience and can encourage a bystander approach, where individuals are not looked on as potential victims or perpetrators but as empowered and active bystanders with the ability to support and challenge their peers in a safe way¹¹. It can be used as a preventative tool to help reduce domestic abuse, gender based violence, and ensures the importance of appropriate boundaries for all children and young people are understood.

2.5 While in school settings, RSHP education will predominantly be delivered through Health and Wellbeing / PSE and Religious and Moral Education (RME). RSHP education should also have a role in promoting the ethos of a school by bringing pupils together and creating a sense of community. Schools are therefore encouraged to inform parents and carers of their ethos to help support their whole school approach.

2.6. Along with literacy and numeracy, health and wellbeing is one of the three core areas that are the responsibility of all staff in the school. Health and Wellbeing / PSE assists educational practitioners to establish open, positive, supportive relationships across the school community. Children and young people will feel they are listened to and feel secure in their ability to discuss sensitive aspects of their lives. This includes promoting a climate in which children and young people feel safe and secure and modelling behaviour which promotes health and wellbeing and encouraging this in others. Educational practitioners can do this through a whole

¹¹ [Blog on the Mentors in Violence Prevention project on the GLOW Scotland website](#)

school approach using learning and teaching methodologies which promote effective learning and by being sensitive and responsive to the wellbeing of each child and young person. When delivering learning and teaching in RSHP education, the responsibility for all, in this case, is the relationships aspect of this topic.

2.7. Schools and teachers should refer to their own school's context, using people and places in their local area, or the individual interests of classes and pupils, to choose topics to focus on when developing learning and teaching in RSHP education. Actively involving children and young people in the co-design process will help make lessons more relevant and therefore more rewarding for them.

2.8. Using community-based partners, such as school nurses, drug and alcohol education workers, sexual health clinicians and specialist third sector agencies can enhance, but must not replace, the delivery of RSHP education by teachers/educational practitioners in schools. Making links between education and relevant services, such as youth work and sexual health services, is essential in helping children and young people learn about local services first hand and which, in turn, can help build confidence if young people need to use a service in the future. This can also build their self-confidence to help make informed and responsible decisions for themselves as part of growing up.

Engagement in learning

2.9. Parents and carers play a key role in all aspects of their children's education; they are their primary educators. Therefore, the collaborative partnership schools have with parents and carers should be a key element of RSHP education delivery. It is good practice for schools to regularly involve parents and carers in discussions on curriculum content, including RSHP education, in line with the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006¹².

2.10. Parents and carers should be given advanced opportunity to view key teaching materials and to ask questions about any aspect of the RSHP education programme. Evidence indicates, where this has happened, parents and carers feel more confident about speaking to their children at home and answering their questions, for example, on sexual health, relationships and physical development.

2.11. Children and young people have a right to learn about their growing bodies, relationships (including online relationships), sexuality, sexual health and parenthood. Therefore, schools should work collaboratively between children and young people, as well as parents and carers, when developing their RSHP education programme. This can help fulfil the requirements of UNCRC Article 12¹³. The programme should be founded on full and frank information, and include sharing the curricular materials with parents and carers within appropriate and clear communication mechanisms.

¹² See also paragraph 6 of Schedule 1 of the Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012: [The Education \(School and Placing Information\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012 on the UK Government legislation website](#)
[Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act 2006 on the UK Government legislation website](#)

¹³ [The Convention on the Rights of the Child: The children's version on the Unicef website](#)

2.12. Under Article 12 of the UNCRC, every child and young person who is capable of forming their own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, with those views being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child and young person. Schools should include children and young people in decisions about their school experience, ensuring their views are taken into account. Doing so would be in line with section 2(2) of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 and help to demonstrate compatibility with this article as well as contributing to the other articles in the UNCRC.

Withdrawal from RSHP education

2.13. Having given parents and carers the opportunity to view the key teaching materials, they can decide to withdraw their children from participation in the sexual health elements of RSHP education. This option should be made known to parents and carers and their views respected. Parents and carers should be provided with sufficient information on which to base a decision about choosing this option. The option of withdrawal should be balanced with the child's right to education.

2.14. Where a child or young person is withdrawn from RSHP education, suitable arrangements should be made, in conjunction with parents and carers, and the child or young person, for them to participate in an appropriate alternative activity, that aligns with the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence, and does not impact on their comprehensive and holistic education. The diagram below outlines some of the areas of consideration for parents and carers seeking to withdraw their child or young person from RSHP education. However, while schools should do their best to accommodate, it is acknowledged it can sometimes be a significant challenge for them to put a suitable alternative in place, in addition to existing curriculum design. Any potential negative impacts on the curricular progression of the child or young person or their right to an education should be conveyed to parents and carers.

2.15. Mechanisms for prompt appeal regarding withdrawal or suitable alternative arrangements at local authority level should be provided in cases where a parent, carer or young person remains dissatisfied after consultation with the school. The school handbook should set out the arrangements around consulting parents, carers and young people and the way in which their concerns can be raised, whether that be informally or through more formal processes, such as the local authority's complaints process.

Share RSHP education material in advance of learning.

Meet any parent/carer concerned about planned RSHP education.

SUGGESTIONS:

Things to cover in meeting:

- What are the main areas of concern?
- How would you like to see your concerns addressed?
- What alternative learning, ensuring a comprehensive and holistic approach and curriculum, should the child/young person receive as an alternative?

Ensure referral pathways are clear should parent/carer wish to take their concerns further.

Parents/carers or child/young person would still like to be removed from RSHP education.

Arrangements should be made for alternative positive educational provision.

Ensure parents/carers and child/young person are aware that alternative provision will be made.

Monitor impact of removal on child/young person to ensure they are not exposed to bullying or harassment from peers and their learning remains on par with their peers.

Parents/carers or child/young person are content to continue to receive RSHP education as outlined by the school.

Consider what adjustments may be required to learning intentions on the back of concerns raised.

- Review withdrawal at appropriate points throughout the year, do not assume it should continue. Ensure balance of the best interests and rights of the parents/carers and of the child/young person remain at the heart of decision-making.
- Children and young people with a learning disability or who require additional support may require more bespoke learning activities and this should always be discussed with parents/carers and children/young people.

Monitoring, Tracking and Assessment

2.16. Provision of age and stage appropriate RSHP education for children and young people helps equip them with the values, skills and attitudes required to develop resilience as well as healthy, respectful emotional and sexual relationships.

2.17. [Health and Wellbeing Experiences and Outcomes](#) clearly articulate a set of statements for learning and progression in RSHP and should be used in conjunction with the [Personal and Social Education Benchmarks](#) by all practitioners and relevant stakeholders to effectively plan and assess children and young people's progress. In addition to supporting professional judgements to monitor and track progress in learning, the Experiences and Outcomes in tandem with the Benchmarks promote consistency in the delivery of RSHP education and ensure children and young people receive progressive, comprehensive and holistic learning and teaching in this aspect of health and wellbeing.

3. Embedding RSHP Education

3.1. RSHP education has a central role in promoting the ethos of a school by helping bring pupils together and creating a sense of community. A whole school approach enables children and young people to build resilience and positive relationships as they grow older and should be presented in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner within a framework of sound values and an awareness of the law, including that on sexual behaviour. A whole school approach should also develop a positive ethos and culture – where everyone feels they belong. It involves partnership working with families and making sure the whole school community is welcoming, inclusive and respectful¹⁴. The *Health and wellbeing: responsibility of all*¹⁵ resource places an emphasis on the relationships aspects of RSHP education in supporting a whole school approach.

3.2. When delivering learning and teaching in RSHP education in general, and around the areas mentioned specifically below, it is good practice to ensure there are sufficient supports in place should a child or young person make a disclosure during learning. This includes consideration of relevant child protection procedures or referral to pastoral care staff.

Consent and Healthy Relationships

3.3. The existence of close, healthy, positive relationships in children and young people's lives can give them a purpose and sense of belonging. Best practice in learning and teaching should include discussion of digital relationships and digital consent when defining healthy relationships.

3.4. Some of the key benefits of teaching children and young people about healthy relationships, including consent, include the positive impact this can have on reducing instances of sexual harassment and gender based violence, fostering respect and tolerance, as well as helping instil an understanding of the impact any negative behaviours can have on others. Older children and young people benefit from regular and relevant discussions of laws, particularly in relation to unwanted sexual behaviours such as the increasing prevalence of sharing of intimate images, as well as the importance of consent.

3.5. The age of consent in Scotland is 16, as set out in the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009. The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland¹⁶ describes some of the responsibilities and expectations of everyone who works with children, young people and their families in Scotland, and reflects current practice developments. The National Guidance on Under-age Sexual Activity¹⁷ provides protocols that can be developed to ensure early identification and support, and help ensure that in cases where there may not be a child protection issue, needs are still met appropriately. Whilst not all cases where young people are sexually active raise child protection concerns, the National Guidance suggests child protection concerns arise when the impact of under-age sexual activity could cause significant harm. Assessing risk and agreeing actions to ensure a child or young person's safety and

¹⁴ [Information on Whole-school approach on the Mentally Healthy Schools website.](#)

¹⁵ [Information on Health and wellbeing: responsibility for all on the Education Scotland website](#)

¹⁶ [National guidance for child protection in Scotland on the Scottish Government website](#)

¹⁷ [National Guidance on Under Age Sexual Activity on the Scottish Government website](#)

wellbeing is a matter for professional judgement, supported by national and local guidance.

3.6. It is crucial for children and young people to be advised, in advance of them potentially disclosing information they want kept confidential, how their personal information may be shared with the support networks they have contact with and what the limits to that sharing might be. It is essential to have a worked-through confidentiality policy which addresses this issue. Children and young people have the same right to confidentiality as adults, namely personal and private information disclosed during RSHP education should not be shared without consent. It should be ensured that children and young people are informed from the outset that confidentiality is not absolute, and that every reasonable attempt will be made to discuss with them beforehand if information needs to be shared. Prior to disclosing information, attempts should be made to gain consent to passing on information. However, in individual cases it may not always be appropriate to seek consent where there is justification to share without it – for example, if not disclosing information might result in harm coming to the individual in question or compromise a subsequent police investigation.

3.7. Further guidance on consent and healthy relationships can be found in the document Key Messages for Young People on Healthy Relationships and Consent¹⁸.

Consent and Healthy Relationships: Whole School Guidance

- By providing safe spaces¹⁹ to foster honest and open discussions about healthy relationships, schools can help facilitate sensitive discussions on topics that can sometimes impact healthy relationships, such as gender based violence, sexual harassment or LGBT relationships in the context of equality of status and rights. This will enable children and young people to explore their thoughts and behaviours in a manner that will provide them with a factual response to any concerns they may have. Doing this in a class based exercise provides an opportunity for children and young people to learn together, maximising inclusivity.
- It is widely accepted in Scottish culture that individuals should be treated equally but in order to keep children and young people equally safe, it is important to recognise this does not always mean treating them the same. Some attitudes and behaviours children and young people experience put them at greater risk of abusive relationships, sexual harassment and violence than other children. These inequalities may arise from, but are not limited to, a child's gender, gender identity, disability, ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation. Some children may experience inequality on account of more than one of these characteristics, giving them unique experiences and vulnerabilities to abusive relationships, sexual harassment and violence. Being aware of this and putting measures in place to ensure vulnerable children and young people are safe (including an awareness of

¹⁸ [News release on national guidance for professionals giving advice and support to young people on healthy relationships and consent on the Scottish Government website](#)

¹⁹ Safe spaces are environments where pupils feel the freedom to make mistakes without lasting judgment or ridicule and where they can engage in critical, honest, civil, and challenging discussions about sensitive topics.

consent), is a necessary component of facilitating safe and healthy relationships for children and young people.

- Research suggests children and young people with additional support needs are at greater risk of being sexually exploited. Teachers who work with pupils with additional support needs should ensure the concept of consent is a core part of their learning to ensure they are made aware of their rights.

Consent and Healthy Relationships: Whole School Resources and Signposts

CELCIS Various Resources on tackling Child Sexual Exploitation

<https://www.celcis.org/knowledge-bank/spotlight/child-sexual-exploitation/>

Education Scotland: Safeguarding – Child Sexual Exploitation learning resource

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/safeguarding-child-sexual-exploitation/>

Education Scotland: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) learning resource

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/>

Education Scotland: Safeguarding – Identify, understand and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours in young people learning resource

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/safeguarding-identify-understand-and-respond-appropriately-to-sexual-behaviours-in-young-people/>

Key messages for Healthy relationships and consent

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/key-messages-young-people-healthy-relationships-consent-resource-professionals-working-young-people/>

<https://www.gov.scot/news/healthy-relationships-and-consent/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/key-messages-young-people-healthy-relationships-consent-resource-professionals-working-young-people/>

National Guidance on Under Age Sexual Activity

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2010/12/national-guidance-under-age-sexual-activity-meeting-needs-children-young/documents/0108880-pdf/0108880-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/0108880.pdf>

NSPCC Guidance on Protecting children from sexual exploitation

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/>

Scottish Government: Child Sexual Exploitation: a guide for health practitioners

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-sexual-exploitation-guide-health-practitioners/pages/10/>

Scottish Government Child Sexual Exploitation: definition and practitioner briefing paper

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-sexual-exploitation-definition-practitioner-briefing-paper/>

Stop It Now

<https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/scotland.htm>

The "Reducing the Impact of Sexual Exploitation" (RISE) Project: An Implementation evaluation

<https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/handle/1893/29366#.XUFaNLpFzcu>

Under Pressure

<https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/under-pressure/>

UK Home Office Child Sexual Exploitation Disruption Toolkit

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-exploitation-disruption-toolkit>

Harmful Sexual Behaviour by children and young people Expert Group report

[Harmful sexual behaviour by children and young people: Expert Group report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/harmful-sexual-behaviour-by-children-and-young-people-expert-group-report/pages/1-10.aspx)

Engaging in risky online behaviour: initial findings on prevalence and associated factors

[Engaging in risky online behaviour - prevalence and associated factors: initial findings - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/engaging-in-risky-online-behaviour-initial-findings-on-prevalence-and-associated-factors/pages/1-10.aspx)

Faith and Belief

3.8. Educational practitioners should ensure learning and teaching is planned and delivered sensitively, being respectful of the various belief and faith backgrounds present in their learning community. Knowledge and understanding about the traditions, beliefs and practices of different religions, faiths and belief groups supports children and young people to develop respect and understanding. To facilitate this, themes can be devised so individuals can interact and learn alongside those who may have different beliefs and values to them, leading potentially to increased understanding.

3.9. Schools have a key role to play in providing an educational experience that is inclusive for all, regardless of the beliefs and values they hold. With inclusive RSHP education, children and young people, where religion and/or belief plays a role in their identities, should be able to feel included and accepted within their school and community. When children and young people can see themselves represented in what they learn, it helps them feel like they belong and that their identity is valued. This helps them to better engage with education. It also supports all children and young people to understand equalities and rights, and to recognise the impact of prejudice and stereotypes.

Religion, Faith and Belief: Whole School Guidance

- Schools should build links with local belief group representatives who can often help with understanding the concerns of members of their community – though schools should satisfy themselves that such representatives are indeed representative of the community they align with.
- Learning about relationships should be inclusive and enable multiple views and values to be discussed. Learners can feel excluded from learning if only one set of values or a theme has dominated learning, while their own beliefs, values and views are excluded. It is important, therefore, to ensure intended learning and teaching reflects the diversity of all learners in the school community.
- Practitioners should be open to discussion and incorporation of the various perspectives on relationships found within their community, including those within religious, belief and faith groups. Providing opportunities for parents and carers, as well as children and young people, to contribute to discussions and offer perspectives can help support an inclusive learning experience.
- Many people consider their beliefs, practices and traditions can be linked to the promotion of mental wellbeing and a healthy lifestyle, it can be helpful to include these understandings in learning and teaching.
- Relationships impact children and young peoples' welfare, their physical, mental and, for some, their spiritual wellbeing and this can also be highlighted during learning and teaching. In addition, practitioners should be sensitive to the possible range of perspectives around modesty and inclusivity.
- Delivery of RSHP learning in a school should retain an emphasis on diversity, inclusivity and the freedom of expression for all.

Faith and Belief: Whole School Resources and Signposts

Church of Scotland

https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/children_and_youth

Equalities and Human Rights Commission: guidance on religion or belief in the workplace

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/publication/religion-or-belief-and-workplace-acas>

Humanist Society Scotland

<https://www.humanism.scot/what-we-do/education/>

Interfaith Scotland

<https://interfaithscotland.org/resources/youth-and-schools>

Muslim Council of Scotland
Glasgow Central Mosque

<https://centralmosque.co.uk/resources/>

Scottish Catholic Education Service
<https://sces.org.uk/health-relationships/>

Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office
<https://www.scpo.scot/about-scpo/>

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
<https://www.scojec.org/resources/education.html>

Sikh Sanjog
<http://www.sikhsanjog.com/our-services-for-stakeholders-and-organisations/>

Gender Inclusive Education

3.10. Children can receive and internalise gender stereotyped messages about what they can and cannot do from a very early age. It is widely understood there is no inherent difference between individuals based on their gender alone which should limit their interests, capabilities or ambitions. However, it is recognised that subject choice, and many subsequent work and life choices, can be highly gendered. Taking a whole school approach²⁰ helps tackle the root causes of gender inequalities, in a sustained and embedded way. By reflecting and making small adjustments to everyday practice, educational practitioners can start to make a difference in providing equality of opportunity.

3.11. Throughout Curriculum for Excellence, all children and young people are given ongoing and sustained opportunities across the curriculum to reflect on gender stereotypes, and to recognise and help address unconscious bias²¹.

Gender Inclusive Education: Whole School Guidance

- All children and young people should be treated in the same way and one group should not be favoured over another. If they are given jobs to do in the classroom, decide carefully who does what, for example, ensure tasks such as heavier lifting type jobs and tidying up are shared equally.
- Where the learning content and outcomes of an activity are gendered, you can change, remove or replace the gendered expectation of this work, for example resources and the subtexts they carry and/or restriction of colours or types of material.
- Ensure the learning environment is accessible to all and there is an equal representation of diverse images. Ensure all children and young people are equally challenged to interact within the classroom environment. If there is bias towards certain kinds of information or activities, ensure these are addressed.

²⁰ [Equally Safe at School website](#)

²¹ [Improving Gender Balance and Equalities resources and research for practitioners on the Education Scotland website](#)

- Plan learning activities which challenge stereotypes and ensure children and young people are given opportunities to explore gender through, for example, free play. Challenge gender restrictive language or assumptions, such as “girls can’t do that, boys don’t cry”, among other children and young people as well as staff. In a similar vein, consider how children and young people are addressed.

Gender Inclusive Education: Whole School Resources and Signposts

Gender Equality in ELC and on the National Improvement Hub

[Gender Equal Play in Early Learning and Childcare](#)

Improving gender balance and equalities 3-18

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/improving-gender-balance-3-18/>

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

3.12. The United Nations Human Rights Office, Global Campaign against Homophobia and Transphobia says *“Intersex people are born with sex characteristics that don’t fit typical definitions of male and female. In many countries, intersex children are subjected to repeated surgery and treatment to try to change their sex characteristics and appearance, causing terrible physical, psychological and emotional pain – and violating their rights. Intersex children don’t need to be “fixed”; they are perfect just as they are!”*²².

3.13. DSD and VSC are umbrella terms that bring together a range of around 40 biological conditions which affect sex-linked chromosomes, sex-linked hormones (i.e.: testosterone/oestrogen) and/or the development of the genitals and the reproductive organs. These terms relate to biological sex and are not to be confused with sexual orientation or gender identity. Just under 0.02% of the population are born with such a condition.

3.14. Sometimes people talk about ‘intersex’ and also use a much broader definition that relates to lived experience. When including Late-Onset CAH (Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia, which some describe as similar to Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome) to the above conditions this affects up to 1.7% of the population.

3.15. Many people with these conditions do not like the terms Intersex, VSC and DSD or are totally unfamiliar with them. Most will only use the specific name of the condition they have.

3.16. Prevalence varies widely between conditions. It also depends on how the condition is defined. Some conditions are not diagnosed until puberty or may never

²² [Information on intersex awareness on the United Nations Free and Equal website](#)

be diagnosed. This includes conditions such as: MRKH (Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser syndrome), Klinefelter's Syndrome and Turner Syndrome.

3.17. A focus group for young people with conditions noted how some variations need close medical management whereas others do not. Some of those not needing regular medicines or emergency treatment felt their variation was 'private business'. Others were unclear about whether schools knew or not. Most concerns of young people were related to their healthcare, the lack of peer support, and the way their conditions are reported in the media.

Variations in Sex Characteristics (VSC) sometimes referred to as or Differences in Sex Development (DSD) or Intersex: Whole School Guidance

- Having a DSD or VSC can impact on school life in many different ways and will depend on what the underlying condition is or how old the child or young person is. Young people with such conditions are clear²³ they:
 - Wanted to be included in sex education classes;
 - Wanted to be treated like everyone else;
 - Wanted their variations to be part of the curriculum, but not as a 'special' topic, just acknowledged; and,
 - Wanted teachers not to generalise – everyone is a unique individual who is entitled to live their life in a way they see fit, and not everyone will develop in the same way.
- The points outlined above will be the key learning experiences teachers should consider when delivering learning on this topic. This should be achievable in a whole school approach, which acknowledges and celebrates the diversity of the whole school community while balancing individuals' rights to privacy.
- Care should be taken in approaching discussions as children and young people, and their families, may not have had psychological support with their condition. Often they will not have had an opportunity to meet other children and young people with similar conditions.
- Ensuring children and young people have a route to support groups was highlighted as a key resource for everyone.

Variations in Sex Characteristics (VSC) sometimes referred to as or Differences in Sex Development (DSD) or Intersex: Whole School Resources and Signposts

CAH (Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia)

www.livingwithcah.com/Forums/index.php

d sdfamilies (Differences of Sex Development)

www.dsdfamilies.org or www.dsdteens.org

²³ [Findings from consultations with children, young people and families living with different sex development on the dsdfamilies website](#)

https://www.dsdfamilies.org/application/files/9915/9223/5625/Info_for_Schools-dsdf.pdf

dsdfamilies: 'Listen to us': Consultations with children, young people and families living with different sex development

<http://dsdfamilies.org/application/files/8015/5447/3715/reportdsdf-2019.pdf>

Hypospadias UK

www.hypospadiasuk.co.uk

Klinefelter Syndrome Association

www.ksa-uk.net

Scottish Differences of Sex Development Managed Clinical Network

www.sdsd.scot.nhs.uk/support

Turner Syndrome

<https://tss.org.uk/index.php/map>

LGBT Inclusive Education

3.18. Schools have a key role to play in providing an educational experience that is inclusive of LGBT people. When RSHP education is inclusive, LGBT young people are more likely to feel included and accepted within the school community. When young people see themselves reflected in what they learn, it helps them feel like they belong and that who they are is not wrong, therefore increasing their engagement in learning. It also supports all young people to understand equalities and rights, and to recognise the impact of prejudice and stereotypes.

3.19. As with all learning, content regarding LGBT inclusive education should be age and stage appropriate and linked to the Experiences and Outcomes within Curriculum for Excellence. To enable LGBT inclusive education across the curriculum, there should also be an emphasis on the importance of interdisciplinary learning, including but not exclusively, through Expressive Arts, Languages, Literacy, Health and Wellbeing, Numeracy, Religious and Moral Education, Sciences and Social Studies

3.20. In addition to confidentiality for young people as outlined in [paragraph 3.6](#), recognition should be given to particular issues of confidentiality for LGBT young people. Schools should be alert to safeguarding duties, and the fact that some young people may not have told everyone in their lives about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and unnecessarily sharing personal information about them with others ('outing'), such as through social media, could cause direct and needless distress.

3.21. A young person 'coming out' as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender is not in itself a safeguarding or child protection concern. However, circumstances related to their 'coming out' or additional information shared by the young person could be, such as experiencing bullying and the emotional impact it is having, or

individual mental health concerns. In these and similar circumstances, schools should follow their standard safeguarding procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person.

LGBT Inclusive Education: Whole School Guidance and Signposts

- LGBT inclusive RSHP education is particularly important in the context of wider health and wellbeing, to support learning which informs children and young people that:
- LGBT young people face disproportionately higher levels of prejudice-based bullying in school and this has a detrimental impact on their educational experience as well as their mental health and wellbeing;
- Evidence demonstrates young gay and bisexual men in Scotland are at higher risk of HIV as a consequence of having poor knowledge about HIV transmission;
- Information regarding sexual health for LGBT women and trans people is often missing or is highly sexualised online; and
- 1 in 4 LGBT people will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. Data has also indicated that transgender people have a high risk of experiencing abuse within relationships.
- RSHP education should embed LGBT inclusion within learning related to the context of relationships and families. For example:
 - Understanding different families, including those with LGBT parents and recognising the context of same-sex relationships and the Marriage and Civil Partnership Act (Scotland) 2014.
 - Bullying and prejudice-based bullying as outlined within Respect for All, Scotland's national approach to anti-bullying, which explicitly notes the experiences and impact on LGBT people.
- Appropriate follow up and support should be put in place for any child or young person who needs it should they make any disclosures during learning, such as referral to pastoral care staff.

LGBT Inclusive Education: Whole School Resources and Signposts

LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group: report to the Scottish Ministers
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/lgbti-inclusive-education-working-group-report/>

LGBT inclusive education teaching resources and teacher training modules
<https://lgbteducation.scot/>

LGBT Youth Scotland research
<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1354/life-in-scotland-for-lgbt-young-people.pdf>

LGBT Youth Scotland curriculum guide
<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1585/lgbtys-curriculum-inclusion.pdf>

LGBT Youth Scotland anti-bullying resource

<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1299/addressing-inclusion-2020.pdf>

Stonewall: The School Report 2017

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/school-report-2017>

TIE Icons

<https://www.tie.scot/primary>

<https://www.tie.scot/secondary>

Supporting transgender young people in schools: guidance for Scottish schools

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-transgender-young-people-schools-guidance-scottish-schools/pages/1/>

4. Summary of key learning points

4.1. RSHP education is intended to support all children and young people to build positive relations as they grow older. It encourages all practitioners and relevant professionals to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner within the framework of curricular values and an awareness of Scots Law. RSHP education supports all children and young people to explore the values of strong, loving relationships and recognises the diversity of families in Scotland.

4.2. [Building the Curriculum 5](#) positions inclusivity at the heart of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence. It states "*the curriculum must be a stimulus for personal achievement and must, through broadening of experience, be an encouragement towards informed and responsible citizenship.*". It is therefore relevant to outline how this is promoted and embedded within RSHP education.

Children and young people who require additional support

4.3. All children and young people, including those who require additional support, should co-design the RSHP education they receive, where appropriate. Every pupil, including those who require additional support, will have differing needs and teachers/practitioners will need to effectively differentiate resources and approaches to suit individual learning needs. RSHP education content for learners who require additional support should be considered as a similar curricular entitlement for all children and young people.

4.4. There are some misconceptions that children and young people who require additional support are not, or will not, be sexually active. As with all children and young people, those who require additional support, including those with a learning disability, must be included in RSHP lessons so they have the same opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding of healthy, safe, respectful and loving relationships²⁴. Some children and young people who require additional support are at a greater risk of being drawn into perpetration of harmful sexual behaviours, and relevant and meaningful RSHP education can support them to avoid those particular behaviours.

4.5. Each individual is unique, and to ensure effective practice in the delivery of RSHP education, teachers/practitioners will need to be creative in finding ways to adapt the curriculum to meet the individual learners' educational needs, ensuring they receive an age appropriate education in line with their peers.

4.6. When supporting learners who require complex additional support to access their RSHP education, it is important for practitioners to take account of the additional physical, communicative, sensory and cognitive barriers to learning which learners may experience. For example, some learners may have limited or no verbal language. Practitioners will need to employ a range of strategies to support and enable understanding and communication such as use of on-body and/or manual

²⁴ [Additional note for practitioners protecting disabled children from abuse and neglect in the child protection guidance on the Scottish Government website](#)

signing, sensory cues, objects of reference, song signifiers and visual supports such as photographs and symbols to enable learners to understand and respond.

Consent and Healthy Relationships

4.7. The thematic inspection of HWB/PSE carried out by Education Scotland²⁵ reported that improvement was required across all education sectors to ensure an appropriate focus on the issue of sexual consent. Allied with the Equally Safe strategy²⁶, the aim is to work collaboratively with key partners to support development of safe and healthy relationships that help prevent and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls. This is supported in part by the Key Messages for Young People on Healthy Relationships and Consent²⁷, a resource for professionals which aims to help provide consistent messaging to young people to support their learning of healthy relationships, giving them more confidence to speak out and challenge unacceptable behaviour using a bystander approach²⁸.

4.8. All children and young people have a right to learn about their growing bodies, relationships (including online relationships), sexuality, sexual health and parenthood. This must be done in ways that are appropriate to their age and stage of development to ensure children and young people's knowledge and understanding of healthy relationships and consent progresses as they navigate through the levels of the curriculum. Children and young people who receive learning and teaching about these issues are more likely to delay the onset of sexual activity and experience positive outcomes, such as safer, enjoyable, fulfilling, and respectful sex, when they do enter into sexual relationships²⁹, whether in person or online.

4.9. To assist teachers/practitioners with lessons, widely available teaching resources that contain lesson plans on relationships³⁰ and friendships³¹ can be utilised. Some of these resource also collate and map lesson plans across all levels of Curriculum for Excellence to help exemplify progression in learning, from an early age to Senior Phase. Information and advice that can be sent home to parents and carers to inform them of proposed lessons is also available. This can support them to follow up and reinforce learning at home.

Faith and Belief

4.10. RSHP education should be inclusive of all faiths and beliefs. In embedding a rights-based approach, schools should provide children and young people with an opportunity to express and share their beliefs and values as well as their right to identify and express their own educational needs in RSHP education. In preparing

²⁵ [Report on the thematic inspection of Personal and Social Education on the Education Scotland website](#)

²⁶ [Equally Safe strategy to eradicate violence against women and girls on the Scottish Government website](#)

²⁷ [News release on national guidance for professionals giving advice and support to young people on healthy relationships and consent on the Scottish Government website](#)

²⁸ [Blog on the Mentors in Violence Prevention project on the GLOW Scotland website](#)

²⁹ [Article on Sex and HIV Education Programs: Their Impact on Sexual Behaviors of Young People Throughout the World on the Journal of Adolescent Health website](#)

³⁰ [Resources on relationships on the Education Scotland National Improvement Hub](#)

³¹ [Resources on friendships on the Education Scotland National Improvement Hub](#)

programmes, it is good practice for schools to consult with parents and carers, as well as children and young people. Practitioners should use their professional judgement to ensure they respond respectfully to their views as well as their beliefs and values, to use the opportunity of inclusivity to positively support their learning activity. This ensures RSHP education reflects the diverse experience and needs of all children and young people in the school or educational setting, such as youth work settings.

4.11. It is further recognised that religious authorities with a role in education provide additional and complementary guidance on RSHP education for denominational schools.

Inclusivity

4.12. Through effective learning and teaching, children and young people develop their skills in using inclusive language when referring to or addressing individuals. This will allow them to discover and express their own identity and will support the potential to tackle gender stereotypes, ultimately improving gender equality in and outside the classroom. This will also help to set a positive ethos both in the classroom and wider school, reducing potential for racism, sexism and homophobia as well as other forms of discrimination.

LGBT Inclusive Education

4.13. Addressing diversity during planning, delivery and evaluation of RSHP education, with regard for equalities characteristics, can support schools in working towards meeting their duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This includes matters related to sexual orientation and gender reassignment, in addition to sex, race, disability, religion or belief, among other characteristics. RSHP educational content should also reflect healthy relationships within diverse sexual and gender identities, and family types. RSHP education must acknowledge hate crime, discrimination and bullying and harassment in Scotland.

4.14. The thematic outcomes related to LGBT inclusion, awareness, and equalities in RSHP education are contained in the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group's report³². Further information can also be found in the Quality Indicators of How Good is Our School 4 (HGIOS4)³³, particularly QI 3.1, as well as Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub³⁴.

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

4.15. A focus group of individuals with variations, not linked to the development of this guidance, discussed their school experiences and were clear they wanted to be treated like everyone else but not as a 'special' topic, just acknowledged. They did

³² [LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group: Report to the Scottish Ministers on the Scottish Government website](#)

³³ [How Good Is Our School self evaluation framework on the Education Scotland website](#)

³⁴ [Resources on LGBT inclusive education on Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub](#)

not want teachers to generalise – everyone is a unique individual, not everyone will menstruate or be able to have their own biological children and all bodies are different. This is reflected in the recognition of a need for an inclusive whole school approach.

5. RSHP: Policy, Guidance and Learning and Teaching Resources

Policy and Guidance

ASN

[Additional support for learning: statutory guidance 2017](#)

[Scottish Council for Learning Disabilities: report on relationships](#)

[Scottish Council for Learning Disabilities: Safe and Healthy Relationships](#)

Child Protection

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021](#)

Consent

[Healthy Relationships and Consent: key messages for young people](#)

General

[Developing a positive whole school ethos and culture: relationships, learning and behaviour](#)

[A summary of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood \(RSHP\) resources](#)

LGBT

[Supporting Transgender Young People in Schools: Guidance for Scottish Schools](#)

Menstruation / Periods

[Period Products \(Free Provision\) \(Scotland\) Act 2021 Guidance – Sept 2021](#)

Pornography

[Young people, sex and relationships: The new norms \(2014\)](#)

Pregnancy / Parenthood

[Pregnancy and Parenthood in Young People Strategy](#)

Protected Characteristics

[Equality Act 2010](#)

Safeguarding

[Safeguarding – Child Sexual Exploitation](#)

[Safeguarding – Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\)](#)

[Safeguarding – Identify, Understand & Respond Appropriately to Sexual Behaviours in Young People](#)

[Children and Young People’s Participation Equally Safe at School](#)

[Getting It Right For Every Child](#)

[National Trauma Training Framework](#)

[Mentors in Violence Prevention](#)

[Respect For All: ‘The National Approach to Anti-bullying for Scotland’s Children and Young People’](#)

[Review of Personal and Social Education: preparing Scotland's children and young people for learning, work and life](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Bill – Policy Memorandum](#)

[Addressing Inclusion – Effectively Challenging Homophobia, Biphobia & Transphobia](#)

[Gender Equalities](#)

Learning and Teaching RSHP education

ASN

[RSHP Online Teaching Resource: ASN section](#)

[RSHP Online Teaching Resource: Complex Needs section](#)

[Choice Support: Supported Loving Toolkit](#)

[CKUK Common Knowledge](#)

[Mencap](#)

Body Image

[Teacher resources – Dove Self-Esteem Project](#)

Consent

[Consent - Let's Talk about It \(letstalkaboutit.nhs.uk\)](http://letstalkaboutit.nhs.uk)

[NHS | What is Consent?](#)

[PANTS resources for schools and teachers | NSPCC Learning](#)

Digital

[Index of Online Harms | Internet Matters](#)

<https://www.childnet.com/resources/star-send-toolkit>

Gender Equality

[Mentors in Violence Prevention \(MVP\)](#)

[Equally Safe in School](#)

LGBT

[LGBT Resources](#)

[LGBT Mapping Across Curriculum for Excellence](#)

[Stonewall Scotland](#)

Menstruation / Periods

[Period Inequality](#)

[Hey Girls](#)

Puberty

[Primary School Puberty Teaching Resources](#)

RSHP

[A summary of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood \(RSHP\) resources](#)

[RSHP Website](#)

[RSHP Teaching Guidance \(2014\)](#)

[Gods Loving Plan](#)

[Called to Love](#)

[Real Love Rocks](#)

Professional Learning

Child Exploitation
[Think U Know](#)

[How Safe are our Children?](#)

Equality and Diversity
[Equality & Diversity: A Guide for Teachers](#)

Gender Equality
[Improving Gender Balance](#)

[Gender Stereotypes](#)

[Woman's Health In School](#)

[Improving Gender Balance & Equalities My GTCS Webinar](#)

[Zero Tolerance](#)

LGBT
[The Experience of a Transgender person](#)

[Tackling Sexuality and Gender Identity Bullying](#)

[Time for Inclusive Education](#)

[LGBT Education](#)

Healthy Relationships
[Promoting healthy relationships in schools | NSPCC Learning](#)



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This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83521-237-0 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, August 2023

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1341262 (08/23)

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