

# Talking about relationships and sex at home

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# Aim of workshop

- To encourage conversations about sex and healthy, safe relationships at home.
- Tips and strategies to help make these as productive as possible.
- To raise awareness the risks of learning about sex online and social media.
- Signposts to other sources of information and support.



# Learning outcomes

By the end of the workshop you should:

- Feel more confident to talk about relationships, consent and sex with your child in an age appropriate way.
- Know more about RSE taught in schools.
- Understand how parents can support this at home.
- Be aware of some of the risks of social media, taking and sharing inappropriate photos and learning about sex from online pornography.
- Feel ready to answer questions at home and know where to go for more information.

# **Relationships and Sex education is changing in the UK**

- From 2020 RSE will be compulsory in all schools in England.
- This will begin in primary and develop as children grow up.
- Requirements will vary for different types of schools.
- Emphasis on positive relationships, not just biology of reproduction.
- Asking parents to support RSE at home.



# Why change it?

- Curriculum has not changed since 2000 so no mention of the internet, social media or online safety, all of which are important today.
- Research shows that young people want sex education to have more opportunities to talk about feelings and relationships.
- They also want it to be LGBTQ+ inclusive.
- 78% of parents said schools should be talking about impact of pornography, body image, self esteem and consent. (fpa 2016)



# Learning the 'facts of life'

- It's normal that children and young people are interested in sex.
- The question is not whether children will learn about sex, rather, how and what do we want them to learn?
- Remember, if you don't talk to your child about it, someone else will.

# Common concerns

‘I don’t want them to think that by talking about sex I’m giving permission to do it.’

‘I don’t want to encourage them to have sex.’

‘It would be too embarrassing for both of us.’

‘I wouldn’t know where to start.’

‘Don’t they learn this in school? Teachers are better at that sort of stuff.’

‘It was never discussed at home when I was young and I turned out fine.’

‘I’ve made it clear that sex is only for married people. Until then there is no need to know.’

‘What if I don’t know the answers?’

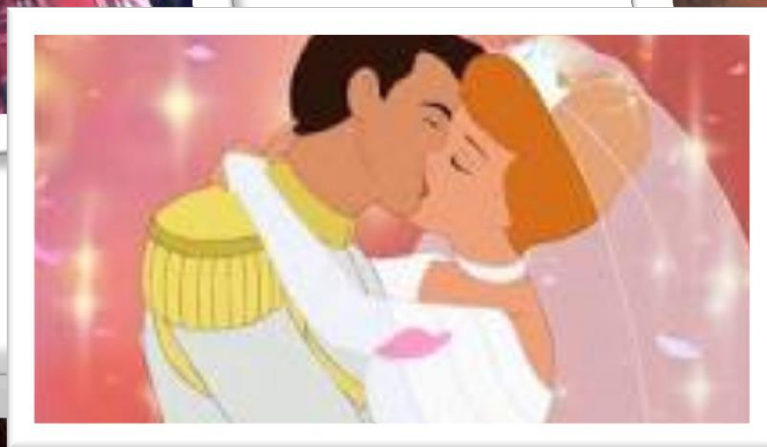


# Whispers, myths & facts





# Love is all around us



# Herts Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire survey

- Nearly half of Year 10 students think it is important to be in a serious relationship before having sex.
- Most Year 12 & 13 students said they are currently not having sex.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  of Year 8 & 10 students feel happy with their life at the moment.
- $\frac{3}{4}$  of young people said that they can usually say no when a friend wants them to do something they don't want to.



# Learning at home

- You are experts in your children.
- You can talk about culture, faith and family as well as the facts.
- Share your views and ask theirs, encourage honesty.
- Explain what you think makes a healthy relationship.
- Encourage them to talk openly.

If they were worried about a relationship problem a quarter of young people say they would want to speak to a parent about it.

Talk soon.

Talk often.



# How do I start?

- ✓ Create a climate at home where it's OK to talk
- ✓ Maintain a calm and non-critical atmosphere for discussions
- ✓ Talk to friends with children of a similar age - you are not alone!
- ✓ If your child is in a relationship encourage open conversations
- ✓ Encourage them to bring them home.

# Tips for positive communication

## Do

- Keep talking
- Respect privacy
- Keep information age-appropriate
- Use anatomically correct names for body parts
- Encourage questions
- Tell them what you think and why
- Ask their opinion
- Stay curious, especially about time spent online

## Don't

- Save it all up for one 'big talk'
- Make assumptions about sexuality
- Ignore it's happening or wait until they are in a relationship
- Overload with information
- Offer opinion as facts
- Use scare tactics



# Initiating a conversation

- Use current events to spark discussion
- Ask about RSE in school
- Use soap opera storylines to discuss what characters should do / not do
- Pose hypothetical questions
- Share something 'someone' told you and ask their opinion
- Use family events e.g. pregnancy, wedding etc to prompt debate.



# Relationship messages

- Happiness comes from within; no one can make you happy.
- Positive relationships are based on trust and mutual respect.
- A positive relationship is one in which you feel respected and valued.
- You can't make someone love you.
- Being alone is better than being with someone who is wrong or damaging for you.



# Talk about values

- Conversations shouldn't be just about the mechanics of sex and how to avoid pregnancy
- Explain what's important to you and why
- Take opportunities to talk about healthy relationships, trust, respect and mutual love
- Listen





# Be honest

- Keep your sense of humour.
- Don't offer opinion as fact.
- If you are uncomfortable, say so. But explain that it's important to keep talking.
- If you don't know, say so.
- Have a look online for sites that you can signpost to.



# Main messages about sex

**Choice** -to have sex or not. Abstinence is a valid choice.

**Consent** - without coercion, peer pressure or force. Any sex without consent is rape.

**Unprotected sex** - at any age, even once, can result in pregnancy and / or a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

**Pregnancy** - is both physically and psychologically risky. Reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancy by using reliable forms of contraception.

**STI's** - a condom is the best way to protect against an STI but it doesn't protect against all. Don't wait, get it checked



# Concerns

According to the HRBQ:

- Just under half of Year 10 students know where they can get condoms for free.
- 86% of Year 10 students did not know there was a special sexual health service for young people in their area.
- Half of Year 12 & 13 students don't know where to get emergency contraception.
- 1/3 of Year 10 students had never heard of Chlamydia.

# Services available in Hertfordshire

- Sexual Health Hertfordshire provides specialist sexual health services across the county, including STI tests, treatment and contraception. There are three main centres in Stevenage, Watford and St Albans.
- Part of the Primary Care GP Contract is to deliver contraception services from 130 community based practices; this includes the contraceptive pill and injection. In addition, HCC commission 93 GP practices to provide long acting reversible contraception (coils and implants), Chlamydia screening and treatment.
- Chlamydia screening and treatment and emergency hormonal contraception (commonly referred to as the 'morning after pill') is available free for people under 25 years from over 80 community pharmacies. These pharmacies also offer Chlamydia Screening and free condoms.
- YC Herts Access Points (previously known as One Stop Shops) provide Chlamydia testing, free condoms and pregnancy testing to young people 19 years and under.
- YC Herts currently deliver one to one and group sessions for young people, covering sexual health and relationships issues.
- Free STI testing kits for HIV, Chlamydia, Syphilis and Gonorrhea are available via on-line services. This service is available to Hertfordshire residents 18 years and over.



# Online risks

- 75% of children aged 10-12 in the UK have a social media account.
- 96% of 13-18 year olds use social media.
- 700% increase in child abuse images being referred to the National Crime Agency (NCA) in the last five years
- NSPCC research shows some children are being groomed online and blackmailed to perform sexual acts in less than 45 minutes from initial contact.



# NSPCC & ChildLine research

**64%** have been asked to send an intimate image or film

**40%** have sent a 'sext'

**89%** would consider sending inappropriate images or films (or intend to do it again)



# What is 'sexting'?

- 'Sexting' is the sending of provocative or sexual photos, messages or videos using a mobile phone.
- Can be flirty or cheeky messages.
- Can be more graphic and involve the making and sharing of nude or semi-naked pictures or videos.



# Why?

1. As part of a romantic or sexual relationship
2. Because they want to
3. Because they trust the other person
4. To get positive comments left
5. Because everybody does it
6. To show someone you fancy them
7. To feel good about yourself
8. Because it's exciting / feels sexy
9. To have fun / joking about
10. To get sent an image back.





# Concerns

1. Many young people are not aware that sexting is illegal and the police may become involved
2. Legal implications should be taken seriously
3. All parties involved can get in trouble
4. Important that parents know the law and pass it on
5. Criminal age of responsibility is 10
6. Parents have some responsibility until children are 18.



# The Law

It is illegal to:

- Incite, force or coerce someone under 18 to make or share intimate photos.
- Take a nude or semi-nude photo of anyone under 18, even if they consent. The sender and receiver could both be charged.
- Take photos or video of an under 18 involved in sexual activity or posing in an indecent sexual manner (or looks like they are).
- Have a naked U18 photo or video on your phone and forward it to someone.

# Messages to reinforce at home

- Think first
- Things can be shared, forwarded and posted very quickly
- Don't do anything you are uncomfortable with
- Take care who you trust
- Is a moment of 'fun' worth a criminal record? Or public humiliation?
- Even if you delete an image there is no telling who has already copied and posted it elsewhere
- If things go wrong don't wait, get help fast.



# Learning about sex and relationships from porn

- Over half of 11-14 year olds admit watching hardcore porn
- 53% of boys and 39% of girls see pornography as a realistic depiction of sex.
- More than a third (39%) of 13-14 year olds say they want to copy sexual behaviour they see in pornography.



# True or false?

- What do you think of these figures?
- Are they higher or lower than you thought they would be?
- Do you think the young people asked can be trusted to tell the truth? Why might some lie?

# Young people and pornography

‘I watch it to learn about sex.’ Annie (14)

‘I watch it because my boyfriend likes it. I don’t but I don’t know how to tell him’  
Citrine (15)

‘I watch it because all my friend’s do.’ Sam  
(13)

‘To be honest some of the things I’ve seen made me feel a bit sick.’ Alfie (14)

‘I watch it every night when my mum thinks I’m upstairs doing homework.’ Zach (16)

‘I’m not going lie, it’s sexually exciting. That’s why people watch it.’ Liam  
(15)

‘We don’t get any LGBTQ sex education so I watched gay porn to find out.’ Max (17)



# What's the problem?

- Distorted views of what constitutes a healthy relationship
- Misunderstanding personal boundaries and what constitutes sexual consent
- Engaging in 'risky' sexual behaviour (e.g. unprotected sex)
- Perpetuating negative stereotypes about gender roles
- Unrealistic body image (their own and others)
- Lack of positive role models for romantic relationships



# If your child has been watching porn ...

- Keep calm.
- Check parental controls and filters on devices.
- Reinforce boundaries and expectations.
- Make it clear that porn sex is not the same as real life intimate relationships.
- If you're worried get help and support.
- Report it.





# If you are concerned

- If you are concerned **don't wait, tell someone**
- You will be taken seriously
- Talk to school
- If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**
- Report to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) <http://ceop.police.uk>



# Useful websites

1. NHS: Talking to your teenager about sex  
<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Talkingaboutsex>
2. FPA website Sexwise.  
<http://sexwise.fpa.org.uk>
3. Hertfordshire County Council  
website [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/sexualhealth](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/sexualhealth)