

Draft RSHP education guidance: *Responding to the consultation*

The Scottish Government is consulting on new Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) education guidance. This briefing gives ideas for responding to the key questions in the consultation. **It is very important to use your own words – duplicate responses carry much less weight.**

RESPONDING

The consultation closes on 23 November 2023.

The consultation is at www.bit.ly/rsHP23consult

The draft guidance is at www.bit.ly/rsHP23guidance.

The easiest way to respond is online at www.bit.ly/rsHP23respond (This guide is based on the online form)

QUESTIONS

1. IS THE DRAFT INTRODUCTION CLEAR ON THE STATUS AND APPLICATION OF THE GUIDANCE?

We suggest answering 'No'.

Please make some of these points, *in your own words*:

- The guidance correctly says: "Parents and carers have the right to have their children educated in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions" and RSHP education "should be presented in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner". But the guidance needs to be clear that covering only 'progressive' views on issues that touch on parents' conscientious beliefs is not "balanced".
- Contentious issues relating to religious and philosophical convictions must only be taught to children old enough to critically examine the arguments.
- The guidance only recommends consultation with parents as "good practice". There should be a clear expectation that schools consult parents on RSHP content to ensure it is "in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions".
- The guidance reflects the recommendations of "the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group's report". This group included a number of activist organisations. Education on sex and relationships should not be used as a platform to promote lobby groups' political agendas or encourage pupils to adopt their views.

2. HOW CLEAR IS THE PURPOSE OF THE RELATIONSHIPS, SEXUAL HEALTH AND PARENTHOOD (RSHP) EDUCATION SECTION?

We suggest answering 'Unclear'.

Please make some of these points, *in your own words*:

- The guidance says "the relationships aspect" of RSHP is "the responsibility for all" and will be delivered "predominantly" through Personal and Social

Education (PSE) and Religious and Moral Education (RME). This could open the door to contentious issues being taught across the curriculum.

- The guidance should say that parents must be told when RSHP is taught in other curriculum areas and must be able to use the right to withdraw.
 - The guidance should require RSHP information provided to pupils by third party organisations to be published, accurate and evidence-based.
 - If schools work with organisations that give one perspective on a contested political issue, additional teaching should be given to ensure pupils receive an objective and balanced presentation of views.
- 3. IS THE GUIDANCE SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR IN RELATION TO THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS AND CARERS AND IS THE PROCESS FOR WITHDRAWING A PUPIL SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR?**

We suggest answering 'Unclear' for both.

Please make some of these points, *in your own words*:

- The guidance states that parents are the "primary educators" and promotes a "collaborative partnership" between parents and schools. This is welcome. Pupils are to be educated "in accordance with the wishes of their parents" (Education (Scotland) Act 1980, s.28).
 - There should be a clear expectation that schools consult with parents on the content of RSHP before they finalise their curriculum. This includes RSHP topics delivered in different subjects.
 - It is essential that parents are "given advanced opportunity to view key teaching materials". The guidance should specify that parents have the right to see all such materials, including those produced or delivered by external groups.
 - The guidance should state clearly that parents are the guarantors of their own children's rights. Parents' rights exist to enable them to ensure their children's rights are respected. Pupils' views must not be pitted against the rights and duties of parents.
 - The right to withdraw should be absolute unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as safeguarding concerns, which mean the school thinks the child must receive this education.
 - The guidance should specify that the right to withdraw applies to all RSHP education, regardless of where in the curriculum it is delivered.
- 4. HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE GUIDANCE IN EXPLAINING THE KEY ISSUES OF A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH ALONGSIDE A POSITIVE SCHOOL ETHOS AND CULTURE ARE HIGHLIGHTED TO TEACHERS IN DELIVERING RSHP EDUCATION?**

We suggest answering 'Not Effective'.

Please make some of these points, *in your own words*:

- The guidance states that teachers should present RSHP "within a framework of sound values", but does not say what these are. This does not provide clarity for teachers. Pupils should learn about the

characteristics of healthy relationships, such as love, respect and commitment.

- There should be a clear expectation that pupils learn about marriage and its importance for family life and the bringing up of children.
- The guidance should state that RSHP teaching must cover and uphold the law concerning the age of consent for sexual activity.
- The guidance does not protect against the use of inappropriate materials and the presentation of radical ideologies.
- The guidance must clarify that teaching on contested issues, including gender and LGBT relationships, must reflect that they are contested. Presenting only an LGBT-affirming view is one-sided.
- The guidance should reassure teachers they will not be required to express or endorse views that they disagree with.

5. IS THE GUIDANCE SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR IN SUPPORTING CONSENT AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS HAVING A GREATER FOCUS IN RSHP EDUCATION?

We suggest answering 'No'.

Please make some of these points, *in your own words*:

- Pupils should learn about consent in an age-appropriate way. But consent is not the only consideration for an intimate relationship. Pupils should also learn about the importance of love, respect, commitment and the significance of marriage.
- The guidance only mentions the age of consent in relation to child protection cases. Pupils should be taught the law regarding the age of consent and abuse of positions of trust in a clear and factual way.
- Pupils should also be taught about the benefits of delaying sexual activity. Abstinence is still the best way to avoid STIs and unwanted pregnancy.

6. IS THE GUIDANCE SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR IN ENSURING FAITH AND BELIEF IS ACCURATELY CAPTURED IN RSHP EDUCATION?

We suggest answering 'No'.

Please make some of these points, *in your own words*:

- The paragraphs on "Faith and Belief" in the guidance are broadly welcome.
- The guidance should clearly expect schools to consult with parents in order to understand more about the "belief and faith backgrounds present".
- The guidance states that teaching should be "respectful of" different "belief and faith backgrounds". This is essential to ensure RSHP teaching does not marginalise those who hold religious views.
- The guidance should contain stronger requirements that teaching is not partisan on contested issues and that pupils' free speech is not restricted.
- The guidance should clarify that faith perspectives are appropriate wherever RSHP is taught, not just in RME.

7. IS THE GUIDANCE SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR IN ENSURING GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IS USED TO DELIVER RSHP EDUCATION?

We suggest answering 'No'.

Please make some of these points, *in your own words*:

- Biological reality must be upheld in schools. Terms like "gender inclusive" should not be used to erase words

based on biological sex. It is entirely appropriate to address pupils as 'boys' and 'girls'.

- The guidance refers to addressing "unconscious bias", which stems from a disputed political ideology. The guidance must include safeguards to stop contested ideas on gender being presented as fact.
- The guidance should stop pupils being exposed to gender ideology, which sidelines biology and is based on and promotes restrictive gender stereotypes.
- The guidance states pupils should learn to use "inclusive language when referring to or addressing individuals". There must be a clear statement that no pupil may be forced to address another person as if they have truly changed sex.

9. IS THE GUIDANCE SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR IN ENSURING RSHP EDUCATION IS LGBT INCLUSIVE?

We suggest answering 'No'.

Please make some of these points, *in your own words*:

- The guidance states that LGBT content "should be age and stage appropriate". But teaching young children about "diverse sexual and gender identities" will confuse them with ideas they are not ready for.
- The guidance should clearly state that "LGBT inclusive education across the curriculum" is not mandatory. The recommendations of the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group are not binding on schools.
- Embedding teaching on "diverse sexual and gender identities" across all subjects politicises the curriculum. Pupils' attention should be focussed on learning in core subjects.
- The guidance should be clear that involving parents is key to safeguarding. Schools must not conceal information from parents to enable a child to 'socially transition' secretly.
- The guidance states RSHP should "reflect healthy relationships within diverse sexual and gender identities". This language comes from highly politicised gender theory that is not appropriate for younger pupils and must not be taught as fact at any age.
- Schools must address all forms of bullying. The guidance should say that disagreeing with LGBT ideology is not a hate crime or discriminatory. Pupils should be able to discuss differences of opinion respectfully.

11. DOES THE GUIDANCE PROVIDE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES AND SIGNPOSTS TO SUPPORT TEACHERS IN DELIVERY OF RSHP EDUCATION, IF NOT, WHICH RESOURCES DO YOU THINK ARE MISSING?

We suggest answering 'Insufficient'.

You could make the following points in the 'What resources should not be included?' box, *in your own words*:

- The guidance directs teachers to Stonewall Scotland, a political lobby group. This risks teachers bringing LGBT activism into the classroom and encouraging pupils to support Stonewall's political aims.
- Teachers are pointed to resources from LGBT Youth Scotland that present gender ideology in an uncritical way. This risks confusing young people and encouraging them to question their gender.

In the 'What resources are missing?' box, you could suggest that the resources of Lovewise (lovewise.org.uk) should be included.