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[Relationships and Sex Education and Personal, Social, Health and Economic education consultation - Girlguiding response](#)

About Girlguiding

i. Girlguiding is the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK, with over 500,000 members. Thanks to the dedication and support of 100,000 amazing volunteers, we are active in every part of the UK, giving girls and young women a space where they can be themselves, have fun, build brilliant friendships, gain valuable life skills and make a positive difference to their lives and their communities. We build girls' confidence and raise their aspirations. We give them the chance to discover their full potential and encourage them to be a powerful force for good. We give them a space to have fun. We run Rainbows (5-7 years), Brownies (7-10 years), Guides (10-14 years) and The Senior Section (14-25 years). Registered Charity No 306016. www.girlguiding.org.uk

About our evidence

ii. Girlguiding's submission focuses on evidence from our annual Girls' Attitudes Survey - the largest survey of girls and young women in the UK - which gathers the views and opinions of over 1,900 girls and young women throughout the country aged 7 to 21, from inside and outside guiding. For more information and data on the latest and previous reports please see www.girlguiding.org.uk/girlsattitudes

iii. Our response includes quotes from members of our youth panels. Our Advocates are a group of 18 Girlguiding members aged 14 to 25 who lead the direction of Girlguiding's advocacy and research. Our British Youth Council (BYC) delegation has 10 members aged 14 to 25, who work with other BYC delegates to campaign for change and improve young people's lives.

iv. Our submission also includes evidence from a questionnaire we did with 37 girls and young women aged 14-21 in April 2017 on the content they would like to see in quality, age-appropriate Relationships and Sex Education.

Overview

v. We welcome the government's consultation on the RSE guidance and statutory PSHE. As the leading UK charity for girls and young women, we are experts in their lives and know what matters to them. We therefore know how important this issue is to girls - both inside and outside guiding. We call for a curriculum that not only builds resilience, but tackles the unacceptable gendered pressures facing girls and young women that can cause and contribute to low wellbeing.

After calling for it since our [2014 Girls Matter Campaign](#), we were delighted when Relationships and Sex Education was made statutory last year. It's vital that it includes all the elements young women have told us are crucial if it is to help all young people make informed decisions and stay safe. We also call for the government to use the power it took



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through the Children and Social Work Act to make PSHE statutory, as we believe all children should receive support for their emotional as well as their physical wellbeing and ensure schools are providing young people with the life skills they need for their futures.

Whether RSE becomes part of PSHE or the subjects are delivered separately, RSE must be comprehensive and high quality and include the aspects girls tell us matter to them - see response to questions 1 and 2 - so that it meets the needs of young people, helps keep them safe and well and tackles the specific issues girls and young women face.

Within this response, we have included quotes from our youth panel members where relevant. However, to more fully represent their views, we have also included these - along with views from young people in our wider membership - in an accompanying response to the call for evidence for young people (see appendix at the end of this document).

In the first two questions, relating to the content of RSE, we've based our top 3 priorities on the aspects girls have consistently told us matter to them throughout our Girls' Attitudes Survey research and consultation for our 2014 *Girls Matter* campaign. These are:

Gender equality, stereotypes and violence against women and girls (VAWG)
Sexual consent and healthy relationships
LGBTQ relationships

These priorities are supported by what girls have told us in our Girls' Attitudes Survey. For example, in 2014:

- 59% of girls aged 13-21 faced sexual harassment the previous year
- Of girls aged 13-21, 38% said they had received information relevant to same sex couples and 31% to transgender people in SRE
- 44% aged 13-21 think people their age clearly understand what sexual consent means
- In 2016 86% of girls aged 11-21 said people who are LGBT should not be discriminated against

In addition, 48% of young women aged 13-16 said that in relationship and sex education they are given information relevant to same-sex couples girls aged (compared to 27% of those aged 17-21) / relevant to transgender people (41% aged 13-16, compared to 20% of young women aged 17-21). Although the higher number of girls at secondary school age who had been taught about these suggests this has improved, it's still unacceptable that less than half had learnt about these aspects.



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'Improving young people's understanding of sexual consent will make young people feel less vulnerable. As a young person I hear of too many situations where people don't understand the concept of consent and it causes distress purely from ignorance.' (Girls' Attitudes Survey participant, 17-21).

vi. Consultation questions

1. Thinking about relationships education in primary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught for different age groups/key stages and why. Please include any considerations or evidence which informed your choices.

Gender equality and stereotypes

Friendships and relationships (including different kinds of families and relationships - e.g. LGBTQ)

Emotional wellbeing

To cover these effectively, RSE should include:

- **Self-esteem and wellbeing**
 - 5-7 (respecting yourself and others)
 - 8-10 (healthy lifestyles, self-worth, body confidence)
- **Emotions and feelings**
 - 5-7 (different feelings, expressing feelings)
 - 8-10 (emotions and puberty, coping with change/difficult feelings)
- **Body parts, growing up and sexual reproduction**
 - 5-7 (body parts, what's private)
 - 8-10 (as above, sexual reproduction basics, puberty)
 - 64% of girls aged 7-10 said they'd learned the names of all their body parts (2016).
- **Friendships/relationships**
 - 5-7 (respecting others, valuing difference, recognising positive and negative friendships/relationships, dealing with bullies)
 - 8-10 (as above, understanding empathy, healthy boundaries, dealing with conflict)
- **Asking for help**
 - 5-7 (who to ask if worried)
 - 8-10 (as above, signpost to helplines)
- **Keeping safe**
 - 5-7 (what is acceptable/unacceptable - secrets/surprises; who to tell if you feel uncomfortable)



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- 8-10 (as above, recognising risks, resisting peer pressure, judging acceptable/unacceptable contact)
 - **Families**
 - 5-10 (families including different types)
 - **Consent**
 - 5-7 (asking permission, sharing, listening)
 - 8-10 (as above, giving permission)
 - **Online safety**
 - 5-7 (keeping safe, what to do if uncomfortable, inappropriate content)
 - 8-10 (as above, grooming, adult content, recognising risks, getting help)
 - **Inclusive**
 - 5-7 (different types of families/relationships)
 - 8-10 (as above, different identities)
 - **Gender identity and stereotypes**
 - 5-10 (What it means to be a boy/girl, feelings about gender and positive ways to be in your gender)
 - 8-10 (challenging gender stereotypes)
2. Thinking about relationships and sex education in secondary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught for different age groups/key stages and why. Please include any considerations or evidence which informed your choices.

Girls want to learn about:

Gender equality, stereotypes and VAWG
Sexual consent and healthy relationships
LGBTQ relationships

To ensure these are taught effectively, RSE should include:

- **Self-esteem and wellbeing**
 - 11-13+ (As per 5-11, supporting yourself/others' mental health)
- **Emotions and feelings**
 - 11-13 (expressing/managing difficult emotions, making informed decisions)
 - 13+ (mental health/ wellbeing more broadly)
- **Body parts, growing up and sexual reproduction**



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- 11-13 (what bodies do, change and puberty, sex and reproduction, accessing advice on contraception and choices in pregnancy; STIs, managing emotional aspects of pregnancy and abortion)
- 13+ (as above, sexual pleasure, masturbation)
- **Friendships/relationships**
 - 11-13 (As per 5-11, identifying support networks; family relationships; coercion and control; sexual harassment, online abuse, FGM, rape)
 - 13+ (as above, when might be right to have sex, negotiating/communicating, resisting peer-pressure, difficult conversations, pleasure, gender equality in the context of RSE - e.g. gendered pressures/experiences/expectations)
- **Asking for help**
 - 11-13+ (what to do if you see/experience coercive relationships, abuse, harassment)
- **Keeping safe**
 - 11-13+ (As per 5-11)
- **Families**
 - 11-13+ (respecting/valuing different families, understanding/coping with parents' divorce?)
- **Consent**
 - 11-13 (giving and receiving consent, changing your mind, legal age of consent)
 - 13+ (Pleasure, alcohol, rape and sexual violence)
- **Online safety**
 - 11-13 (sexting, sharing pictures, harm of pornography, grooming, 'revenge porn')
 - 13+ (impact of pornography/adult sexualised imagery, dealing with exposure to adult content, reporting and getting help)
- **Inclusive**
 - 11-13+ (different experiences - e.g. around sexual orientation, gender identity, disability)
- **Gender identity and stereotypes**
 - 11-13+ (As per 5-11)

3. Are there important aspects of ensuring safe online relationships that would not otherwise be covered in wider Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education, or as part of the computing curriculum?

The online world cuts across all areas of children and young people's lives. Many of the areas we've covered should be considered in terms of children's online lives - such as keeping safe, friendships/relationships and asking for help. Support should include the positive aspects of being online - such as speaking out on issues, connecting with others and getting support - to avoid young people disengaging.



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The issues we'd like to highlight around online safety (to be addressed in RSE and PSHE) are:

Exposure to unwanted violent or graphic imagery

In 2017:

- 54% of girls aged 11-21 said they've come across unwanted violent or graphic images online that made them feel upset or disturbed
- 50% aged 7-10 were worried about seeing rude pictures online

Gender stereotyping

In 2017:

- 47% aged 11-21 had seen stereotypical images of men and women on social media that made them feel less confident to do what they want
- 65% see or hear gender stereotypes on social media often

Cyberbullying, harassment and abuse and online pressures

In 2016 80% aged 11-21 said more should be done to tackle sexism and abuse online.

Parents' role

Parents must be given information to help keep their children safe online and understand their experiences. In 2017 only 47% of girls aged 11-21 thought their parents understood the pressures they face online. 22% aged 7-10 said their parents posted pictures of them without their permission, which made 21% feel embarrassed.

For more information, please see our [response](#) to the government's Internet Safety Strategy inquiry.

4. How should schools effectively consult parents so they can make informed decisions that meet the needs of their child, including on the right to withdraw? For example, how often, on what issues and by what means?

Members of our youth panels expressed their concern about parents' right to withdraw their children from RSE (with 71% saying they disagreed with this). As the right to withdraw is not up for further consultation, it's vital that schools take responsibility for ensuring parents/carers understand the value of RSE and the risks to their children if they don't receive it. This information - along with all information provided to families on RSE - should be accessible and clear to ensure that parents/carers can access and understand it easily.

It's also important that children and young people's views are heard - and given equal weight to their parents' - on what they think parents should learn. As this was missing from the young people-friendly consultation, we have added thoughts from our youth panel members here and in the appendix:



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“Parents should receive a letter from school outlining what their child will be learning that year. If more detail is required, there should be a consultation evening at the start of the year detailing the lesson plans to enable parents to ask questions and contribute their ideas so teachers are aware of parental input. If a parent is considering withdrawing their child from lessons, they should be told exactly what that child will miss so they can make an informed decision.” (Kim, Advocate, 16)

5. Thinking about PSHE in primary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught and why? Please include your reasons for choosing each subject area or evidence to support your suggestions.

We believe PSHE should provide young people with the life skills they need to thrive. This curriculum should help to build girls’ resilience and wellbeing, and challenge the unacceptable pressures that cause and contribute to poor wellbeing. Some of the key aspects we think it should include are:

Wellbeing - both physical and emotional
Gender equality and body confidence
Economic and political education

Girlguiding believes that all children and young people should receive support at school for their emotional as well as their physical wellbeing, through statutory PSHE. This should support young people to build resilience and learn about gender equality and body confidence and challenge sexism, narrow beauty ideals and sexual harassment and abuse.

In our 2016 Girls’ Attitudes Survey, girls aged 7-10 said they wanted to learn about:

- How to deal with bullying (54%)
- First aid (48%)
- Online safety (48%)
- Fairness between women and men (38%)
- Playing a part in the community (33%)
- Body confidence (27%)
- Names of body parts (22%)

Although, as with all topics, political and economic education should be simple enough to be at an age-appropriate level, it’s important that children have the opportunity to learn about these aspects from an early age.

6. Thinking about PSHE in secondary schools, what do you believe are the three most important subject areas that should be taught and why? Please also include your reasons for choosing each subject or evidence to support your suggestions.



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As discussed, we believe PSHE should both help to build girls' resilience and challenge the unacceptable pressures that cause and contribute to poor wellbeing. Some of the key aspects we think it should include are:

Wellbeing - both physical and emotional
Gender equality and body confidence
Economic and political education

As per question 5, we believe all children and young people should receive support at school for their emotional as well as their physical wellbeing. PSHE should support young people to build resilience, understand their mental health and get support. It should also teach them about gender equality and body confidence and challenge sexism, narrow beauty ideals and sexual harassment and abuse.

Girls support wider political and citizenship education in schools. Our 2014 Survey showed 62% aged 11 to 21 think schools should have to teach gender equality and 55% support more political education in schools and mandatory teaching about citizenship, democracy and human rights (54%). These subjects could form part of the PSHE curriculum.

Our 2016 Girls' Attitudes Survey showed that of girls aged 11 to 21:

- 81% say the Government should ensure PSHE is taught in all schools
- 63% say their school should do more to tackle gender stereotypes
- Just 41% say they have learned about feminism at school

As the PSHE Association identifies¹, PSHE also has an important role to play in supporting young people's economic wellbeing, employment and social mobility.

7. How much flexibility do you think schools should have to meet the needs of individual pupils and to reflect the diversity of local communities and wider society in the content of PSHE lessons in schools?

Although it's important schools are able to use reasonable adjustments to meet individual needs, this mustn't lead to children from different groups being excluded from receiving any part of PSHE (or RSE). For example, it shouldn't be assumed that a child with SEND wouldn't understand PSHE. Instead, lessons should be adapted so they can access them. It would also be unacceptable for a religious school to adjust the curriculum to exclude content - e.g. about LGBTQ relationships.

As opposed to certain schools teaching more about issues - like FGM - assumed to be more common in their local communities (which could be stigmatising), all teachers and schools should be trained and skilled in delivering all parts of the curriculum.

¹ PSHE Association, *A curriculum for life - the case for statutory PSHE education*, 2017



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Girls also tell us they want the delivery of lessons to be considered as well as the content. Our 2017 Survey showed that 62% aged 11-21 want some RSE to be taught by outside professionals, not just teachers. Schools must ensure visiting teachers have relevant safeguarding checks and are appropriately trained to teach the sensitive topics covered.

We'd also recommend a mixture of teaching in mixed and same-sex groups, as our 2017 Survey shows that 48% of girls aged 11-21 want some RSE taught in groups with just girls and just boys. Boys and girls should receive the same information - as opposed to only girls being taught about periods, for example - but girls should also have the chance to learn and ask questions about sensitive subjects in an environment that feels comfortable to them.

For more information, please contact Alex Webber, Policy and Public Affairs Officer
alex.webber@girlguiding.org.uk

Appendix 1

Young people focussed sessions: Help us learn more about how we can improve the teaching of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) and PSHE

What is the name of the organisation and facilitator?

Girlguiding - Alex Webber

What is the organisation's email address/postal address?

Girlguiding

17-19 Buckingham Palace Road,

London

SW1W 0PT

Contact email for consultation: alex.webber@girlguiding.org.uk

The Local Authority Area(s) in which your organisation operates?

Girlguiding operates across the UK.

What are the ages of the young people taking part in the response? (Please tick the relevant category or categories)

Key Stage 1 - 4-7

Key Stage 2 - 7-11

Key Stage 3 - 11-14

Key Stage 4 - 14-16

Key Stage 5 - 16-18



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What is the gender of the young people taking part in the response? (Please tick the relevant category)

Male

Female

Mixed

How many young people are taking part in the group session?

5. We also included responses from 37 girls who we consulted in April 2017 in anticipation of this consultation.

Any other relevant information about the group:

Our main group (who we consulted in January 2018) was made up of girls and young women from our youth panels. Our Advocate panel is a group of girls aged 14-19 who lead the direction of Girlguiding's campaigns and research.

Our British Youth Council delegation comprises of 10 members - including the Chair - aged between 14 and 25 from across the UK. Delegates learn how power and politics work and how they can use their voices and connect their views with other young people to create positive change.

We believe it's vital that girls are given the opportunity to speak out on the issues that affect them and so have also included their views on questions from the main consultation - on consulting parents and schools' flexibility to deliver PSHE - which do not appear in this document.

Date: 1/2/17 (consultation took place between Monday 22nd and Monday 29th January 2018 and previous consultation took place in April 2017)

Questions

1. Thinking back to your lessons in SRE so far, can you pick out any subject areas which you think have been particularly important for you to have learnt about, and say why you felt they were important?

Although not all of their experiences of SRE were positive, the girls we spoke to were able to give a number of positive examples about aspects covered in their lessons. These included topics such as consent, contraception choices and LGBTQ relationships.

"The most important subject areas I have learnt about in SRE have been about safe protection and prevention of STIs, and consent. This is because learning about safe protection can prevent unwanted pregnancies and diseases in the future, and consent is vital in order for a safe and loving relationship for all parties involved."
(Izzy, Advocate, 17)

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“One aspect that was very important for my peers and I was learning about consent as it taught us all about what it consists of and hence empowered us in the choices we will make in the future.” (Caitlin, BYC delegate, 17)

“Learning in detail about the pros and cons of different types of contraception was invaluable, as a doctor or pharmacist would never have as long to discuss this as a teacher would, and not all parents are aware of methods other than the one they may use. We also had a lesson on different types of LGBTQ+ identities, which was really useful, as it opened our eyes to the existence of more complex sexualities than “straight”, “gay” or “lesbian”. Again, this is something parents will tend to be less knowledgeable about than their children.” (Juliet, Advocate, 18)

“The different forms of contraception and how they work/where to find them/how successful they are because it is important to know that the only options aren’t just the pill or male condoms - as these aren’t always the most effective and women react very differently to the pill.” (Kim, Advocate, 16)

“My SRE really wasn’t great, but it was better than what some other people had. All I can really remember doing was being shown very gruesome pictures of STIs and being told repeatedly that the only method of contraception that was 100% effective was abstinence. We did get a brief talk about the different types of contraception and put condoms on model penises. We were also told that we should carry condoms with us, even if it made us seem “promiscuous”. We also had a lesson on the age of consent and how that applied to different circumstances (e.g. two sixteen year-olds, a sixteen year-old and an over 18, queer sex, etc.).” (Liddy, 20)

“I’ve always had a really positive experience and I think this is in part due to the open minded and specially trained teachers I’ve had, the fact that it has been in all-girls space, often the teachers let us run the lessons and explore the issues that we really want to deal with, as well as regularly having external speakers come in who we can have open conversations with without the element of a normal teacher/student relationship” (Age 16, South West England)

“I’ve had very good SRE at school - I’ve had external speakers come and talk about body confidence as well as more practical lessons with school nurses explaining contraception and how to put on condoms (to both girls and boys).” (Age 16, Scotland)

“Some good things I have learnt are emphasis on healthy & consensual relationships, lessons inclusive of different orientations and gender identities, genuine discussion of what to do if you are pregnant and where to go (Age 15, London)



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“My school was brilliant at covering age-appropriate material and having difficult conversations.” (Age 17, Staffordshire)

2. Are you aware of any subject areas in SRE, which you have not covered which you would like to know more about? If so, please say what those subject areas are. (It may be that your teachers plan to cover these areas later, but please still answer this question).

Girls had had varying experiences of SRE and highlighted different aspects that they would like to know more about - including consent, STIs and issues that were typically taught to only boys (such as condoms) or only girls (such as periods). This highlights the need for consistent high quality RSE across all schools and the importance of not excluding children from learning about an issue because of their gender.

“One thing I believe could be important to learn about in the wake of the #MeToo movement would be what counts as sexual assault and rape and how people can escape situations that make them particularly uncomfortable, as well as respecting people's rights to ‘say no’.” (Izzy, Advocate, 17)

“I think I have been relatively lucky in the topics covered but what is actually covered in the topics could be improved to be more relevant and preparative for young people. For example, in learning about STIs we have learnt about the biological aspects of them but not so much on the ways in which we could seek medical support if we were to contract one.” (Caitlin, BYC, 17)

“I had sex education lessons in a class of all girls, and issues seen as relevant only to boys were studiously avoided. Condoms got only a brief mention, while when someone asked in an anonymous questions box what masturbation was, the teacher refused to answer (we were 15 at the time). Conversely, and perhaps even more worryingly, boys I've spoken to who were taught SRE in single-sex classes had little understanding about periods, or about methods of contraception. Yet surely, to be able to support the women in their lives, they need to understand these issues.” (Juliet, Advocate, 18)

“Topics which cover HIV/AIDS because we only learnt the very, very basics about this and it wasn't at all enough. There is a lot of stigma and confusion/ignorance surrounding HIV and AIDS and having proper education on these topics would be very beneficial not only to inform young people, but also to reduce the stigma.” (Kim, Advocate, 16)

“We did absolutely nothing on the emotional side of relationships - nothing about what constitutes a healthy relationship, how to respect other people or the importance of consent. Also something covering LGBTQ+ sex and relationships would

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have been really useful, as well as being taught more generally about sex-that-isn't-just-penis-in-vagina-sex". (Liddy, Advocate, 20)

"In secondary school form tutors taught (SRE)... Some were great while others were terrible. Teaching needs to be at the same high standard across the board as it can be just as important as STEM subjects." (Age 15, North East England)

"I was in Y6 we had one day of sex ed - boys got taught about masturbation, girls got taught about periods." (Age 19, Midlands)

"My SRE has been very poor. It has consisted of being told about STIs and a lot of scaremongering against having sex." (Age 17, Herefordshire)

3. Thinking back to your lessons in PSHE so far, can you pick out any subject areas which you think have been particularly important for you to have learnt about, and say why you felt they were important? (Please provide a summary of the different responses and highlight any key points)

Girls' experiences of PSHE also varied, with some highlighting topics that were taught in an engaging way and others feeling that what they were taught wasn't very useful to them. It's important that PSHE covers issues relevant to children and young people - such as mental wellbeing, gender equality and body confidence, and political and economic education (see full response).

"The most important issues I've learnt about in PSHE have been SRE and political education, but most of what I had learnt in PSHE was covering 'basics'." (Izzy, Advocate, 17)

"In PSHE learning about managing money/bank accounts/ student loans was really useful. These were really relevant because they were given by outside speakers, who gave us very pragmatic and helpful advice." (Caitlin, BYC, 17)

"I have tended to find that PSHE has not been very useful, or seemed important." (Juliet, Advocate, 18)

"Topics surrounding gender and sexual orientation, because we had speakers from the local university who went round schools educating young people on gender and sexual orientation. Learning from people who were very knowledgeable about this topic was very helpful, because we learnt about the different genders, the different sexual orientations and the fact that both of these things are a spectrum. It was very insightful and told in a very helpful and educational way." (Kim, Advocate, 16)

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“We had “beer goggles” which was a really fun and engaging lesson on the dangers of drinking too much alcohol. For drugs education we watched the film Junk over a few lessons - it wasn't that great. This was the year I had a really good PSHE teacher; she didn't try and dumb stuff down for us and was very honest about her own experiences (I'm not sure whether this was strictly school policy but it vastly improved the quality of PSHE I had). I thought a lot of my PSHE was a bit pointless (we spent a whole half term talking about advertising??) and I think if we'd only learnt about important issues, it would have been taken a lot more seriously.” (Liddy, Advocate, 20)

“We had one teacher who was trained in PSHE and was really good at myth-busting - she very firmly told a boy he was wrong when he said you had to shave before sex and then explained why. But I was withdrawn for a lot of PSHE (which included SRE) as I was doing an extra GCSE, so I was told I didn't have to do it.” (Age 19, Midlands)

4. Are you aware of any subject areas in PSHE, which you have not covered which you would like to know more about? If so, please say what those subject areas are. (It may be that your teachers plan to cover these areas later, but please still answer this question if you have something to say on this).

Youth panel members told us they would like to learn about issues such as online safety, political education and mental health in lessons.

“One thing I believe would have been important to learn about would have been heightened online safety and recognising what to do with cyberbullying and indecent images online, particularly as Generation Z have been the first to grow up with the internet boom and the increasing blur between reality and the online world.” (Izzy, Advocate, 17)

“We have done very little about politics/our voting rights as well as our rights in relation to the law.” (Caitlin, BYC, 17)

“Mental health issues aren't mentioned enough in PSHE so really should be given particular focus. Nor is citizenship, and the information needed to vote (which is now excluded even from the acronym).” (Juliet, Advocate, 18)

“Mental health would have been great. We had one assembly where we did some meditation and that was supposed to cure us of all our worries. Two of my friends dropped out of sixth form because of mental illness, and still school didn't really see a need to do anything. Politics would also have been really useful, particularly when it got to the point where we could vote and a lot of people still didn't know anything about the political system - my best friend, for example, thought David Cameron was the leader of the conservatories.” (Liddy, Advocate, 20)

5. If there are any other important points you would like to make on either subjects which have not been captured by these questions, please write them below.

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Youth panel members gave their views on various issues not covered so far within the consultation, including the questions relating to consulting with parents and schools' flexibility to deliver PSHE from the main call for evidence.

"I think the fact that the UK education system is very exam-based is a massive hindrance to good RSE. So much importance is based on results that schools won't teach RSE and will use the time as extra exam prep instead. Even if RSE is being taught, often pupils aren't interested and would rather be revising, particularly in older years." (Liddy, Advocate, 20)

In relation to Q4 of main consultation:

How do you think parents should be consulted about Relationships and Sex Education? What do you think they should know so they can make informed decisions that meet the needs of their child? What do you think they should know if they're thinking of withdrawing their child from these lessons?

"I think parents should know the extent of what their children are learning through class and how valuable these can be, perhaps through an online agenda." (Izzy, Advocate, 17)

"I think they should be informed about the importance of preparing their children for the future, with an emphasis on making informed choices. To an extent, I think that parents shouldn't have the right to withdraw their children from lessons because this is denying their children the opportunity to be ready for the future." (Caitlin, BYC, 17)

"They should understand that lessons will be taught in an age-appropriate way, without any expectation that pupils will already have experienced the issues discussed." (Juliet, Advocate, 18)

"Parents should receive a letter from school outlining what their child will be learning about in PSHE that academic year. If this requires more detail than what is conventional to put in a letter home, then there should be a consultation evening at the start of the year detailing the lesson plans for PSHE as this would enable parents to ask questions and contribute their ideas so teachers are aware of parental input. If a parent decides to withdraw their child from any lessons, they should be told exactly what that child will miss in order for parents to make an informed decision." (Kim, Advocate, 16)

In relation to Q7 of the main consultation:

How much flexibility do you think schools should have to teach Relationships and Sex Education/ make it different depending on the needs of different pupils or what area the school is in?



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“Although I think there should be a core curriculum for all schools, I think some flexibility should be allowed due to the individual circumstances and the difference between each child.” (Izzy, Advocate, 17)

“I think that there should be relatively strict syllabus in terms of what topics are covered but there could be flexibility in understanding different beliefs, in faith schools for example. However, the faith element shouldn't undermine or change the actual content being taught. It is important all young people are, as much as possible, equally prepared.” (Caitlin, BYC, 17)

“I think that it's really important that, while the way in which schools in different areas teach the subject may be different (e.g. pupils from certain cultural backgrounds may feel more comfortable being taught in single-sex classes), the basic issues discussed should be the same everywhere. Arguably, if there are some areas where pupils are less likely to discuss issues relating to RSE with parents at a young age, there will be an even greater need for these discussions to happen at school in these areas, so it's really important for schools not to be too influenced by local parents' attitudes.” (Juliet, Advocate, 18)

“I think there should be a core curriculum that schools have a duty to teach. My mum works at a faith school that teaches very little RSE, but that has a very strong no-sex-outside-marriage view. However, even if the school doesn't believe it, there'll still be pupils who need to know how to have sex safely and have healthy relationships.” (Liddy, Advocate, 20)

For more information, please contact Alex Webber, Policy and Public Affairs Officer, alex.webber@girlguiding.org.uk