

[Classroom-based sex education programmes largely ineffectual, but incentives to stay at school can help](#)

This research – a review of eight trials testing sex education interventions across three continents – is being interpreted by some as evidence that sex education doesn't work, but one of the paper's authors wrote to us to clarify what the research can tell us.

On 23rd November 2016 Amanda Mason-Jones wrote:

'It is important to mention that the review highlights gaps in our knowledge in terms of **research**. We need to know what kind of sexual and relationships education works best, for whom and when it needs to be introduced to young people. We also need to be clear what we want to change and to measure it appropriately.

The outcomes measured in this review were 'biological' meaning that they were from tests, or records and the only studies included were randomised controlled trials. This may well mean that in practice many good programmes are running which are having incredible success but they are not being published or evaluated to the standard appropriate for this review.

So the findings from the review do not suggest that sexuality and relationships education should not be delivered, but rather we need to find out more about what works using appropriate methodologies and not to be complacent, particularly about the challenges of implementing programmes in schools. Many young people are still not getting access to the information they need to really make a difference and to improve their relationships, health and wellbeing. Many teachers or school nurses still report feeling too uncomfortable to talk about sexuality in the classroom and some parents also feel very unprepared to answer questions.

So there is a need for more collaboration, more working together, young people, parents, teachers, nurses, lobby groups, third sector organisations, policy makers and researchers. Many young people both in the UK and other countries are dissatisfied with the current SRE provision. Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights are mentioned specifically in the Sustainable Development Goals, to which the UK is a signatory so we need to ensure that we are up to the challenge in the coming years and take the action on the ground that is required urgently.'