

5 December 2025

Young People's RSE Poll 2025



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Executive Summary

2025 has seen the publication of new Government Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) guidance. This is the first update to the statutory RSHE guidance (2019) that came alongside historic legislative changes that made Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) mandatory in all schools in England.

Sex Education Forum's annual young people's RSE poll has been a key tool for monitoring progress over the first five years of guidance implementation and for highlighting gaps in school provision. The 2025 guidance is clearer that RSE needs to start early in primary school with a strong focus on learning skills for managing feelings and relationships.

Seven guiding principles underpin the new guidance, with 'engaging pupils' top of an impressive list which includes a carefully sequenced curriculum, positivity and skilled delivery. New topics have been added for the secondary curriculum including deepfakes and strangulation.

This responds to the urgency of equipping young people with reliable, relevant information. Schools must implement the new guidance in September 2026 and must be supported so that teachers can address new topics confidently.

Our latest poll includes our familiar questions and fresh lines of enquiry to benchmark the new guidance. To help design the questions we consulted a group of sixth form students at BHASVIC college (aged 16 and 17 years old) and spoke with members of youth charity Sexpression:UK (aged 18+), asking what they were curious to understand better through the poll.

Students highlighted the importance of reliable information and trusted adults, and the value they placed on a non-judgmental approach. Informed by these conversations we devised questions about the qualities of those who teach RSE, took a deeper look at sources of information outside of school and asked young people what they would want from RSE beyond the age of 16.

Poll methodology

We commissioned Censuswide* to carry out a poll of young people aged 16 and 17 years old who live in England. In total, 1001 young people completed the survey.

The fieldwork took place between 15 October 2025 and 6 November 2025. Of the 1001 young people participating:

- 454 were 16 years old and 547 were 17 years old.
- 601 identify as female, 377 as male, 11 as non-binary and 12 prefer not to say.
- 559 identify as White British (English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British), 125 as Asian, 102 as Black, 75 as Mixed Descent and 3 as Arab (these figures provide a summary of the more detailed ethnicity categories used).

- 803 identify as straight, 135 as lesbian, gay or bisexual, queer or questioning, 21 as asexual or aromantic and 42 prefer not to say.
- 89 respondents consider themselves to have a disability, 767 do not, 83 are unsure, and 62 prefer not to say.
- 350 are eligible for free school meals.
- 866 attended state school, 113 attended private school and 22 were home schooled.

The respondents were drawn from all nine regions of England with a mix of urban, small town and rural representation.

*Censuswide abides by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the ESOMAR principles.

Summary of the main findings

Progress has slowed

Findings from the 2025 poll show a considerable slowing down in the year-on-year improvement in young people's rating of RSE quality that we have reported previously. Just over half of respondents (52%) rated their school RSE as 'good' or 'very good', which is up 2 percentage points on the ratings from the previous (2024) poll (50%).

Disappointingly, we have found stagnation in reported coverage of specific RSE topics, with little change between 2024 and 2025 polls in respondents learning all they needed to about crucial topics such as HIV, pornography and sexual harassment. Cultural and faith perspectives on relationships and sex stood out as having a decrease of 10 percentage points between the 2024 and 2025 polls in respondents learning all they needed to about it, possibly indicating an increased appetite from young people to explore these perspectives.

Topics required to be taught since 2020-21 are not yet adequately covered. 53% of respondents learnt either nothing at all or some but not enough about pornography at school, and 52% learnt either nothing at all or some but not enough about how to access local sexual health services.

Less surprisingly, topics added to the updated RSHE guidance 2025 (for implementation from September 2026) have least coverage. 72% learnt either nothing at all or some but not enough about deepfakes, and the same (72%) about the law on strangulation and suffocation. By polling young people ahead of the new guidance being used we hope to provide a benchmark against which to monitor progress.

What are the qualities of RSE?

We asked young people to evaluate their RSE based on the guiding principles introduced in the updated RSHE guidance 2025, which include engaging pupils, relevance, positivity, skilful delivery and careful sequencing. Agreement was highest that RSE experienced at school had been 'safe' (79%) and 'relevant' (69%). Views on RSE having been 'skilfully taught' were more evenly spread (52% agreed). Interestingly, only 37% of respondents agreed that the RSE they received at school was 'enjoyable', a quality that boys were more likely to agree with (47%) than girls (31%).

What are the qualities for teaching RSE well?

In previous polls, young people gave priority to teacher confidence as the key to improved RSE, so we included new questions this year to understand more about teacher qualities. From a list of thirteen possible qualities, young people ranked 'not making students feel judged' highest (54%), followed by 'being comfortable with the topics' (53%). The ways in which teachers engage with and respond to students in the classroom came through as more important than measures such as how many years of experience the teacher has with RSE.

Sources of information

A series of new questions for our 2025 poll sought to compare online, school, parent(s) and carer(s), and friends as key sources of information. Whilst online sources play a prominent role, school ranked highest as the most helpful source of information across most areas of RSE learning including understanding that consent is needed for all types of sexual touch, that violence in relationships is always wrong and that sex and relationships should be enjoyable for all involved.

We asked which online sources young people used most for information about relationships and sex, and found that websites from health and advice organisations (35%) were the most used, followed by TikTok 'For You' page (28%) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) or chat bot (e.g. ChatGPT) (20%).

Reliable, non-judgemental and unembarrassed

To dig deeper into young people's feelings about different sources of information, we asked respondents to select the most and least reliable, judgemental and embarrassing sources. Health professionals were identified as the most reliable and pornography as the least reliable source of information. Health professionals also scored highest as the least judgemental (14%), followed by 'a friend that you mostly know in person' (12%). Parent(s) topped the list for most embarrassing, with a gender divide emerging – dads and male carer(s) being the most embarrassing (chosen by 21%), followed by mums and female carer(s) (14%).

Parents shouldn't be deterred by their status as 'most embarrassing' source of information. We sought young people's opinions about parental involvement through an open question and their feedback is clear: proactive, informative, open and non-judgmental RSE conversations at home are possible and young people would like these to be more common.



Summary of the main findings

Beyond school RSE

With widespread support for extending statutory RSE up to the age of 18, we wanted to know more about the topics young people want to be covered at this stage in their education. From a list of 28 topics, the most popular for inclusion into RSE curricula for 16 to 18 year olds were 'domestic abuse and spotting the signs of abuse in teenage relationships' (29%), 'how to get help if you are sexually abused or assaulted' (27%), 'how to tell if a relationship is healthy' (25%), followed by 'dealing with manipulation in relationships' (25%) and 'pregnancy options' (24%). The responses give a strong mandate for extending RSE to 18 with a focus on issues relevant to teen and adult intimate relationships and the skills for coping with the complexity of relationships as well as sexual health information.

Conclusion

The young people who took part in this year's poll started their secondary education soon after RSE became statutory. Over the past five years we have tracked sustained improvements in RSE quality. Schools and teachers have worked incredibly hard to make changes and improve RSE. We have tracked sustained improvements since RSE became statutory, showing that legislation has made a difference. However, the impetus appears to have slowed. Given the high level of public concern about sexual abuse and violence and the high risk of harmful misinformation online it is not satisfactory that only 52% of young people report their RSE to be 'good' or 'very good', or that topics as relevant as pornography are persistently neglected. Before moving onto new topics it's vital to confront the need for teachers and schools to have adequate training and support to provide the sort of 'skilled delivery' that Government guidance stipulates.

Given the proliferation of online information sources, it is significant that young people voice their preference for trusted adults – particularly teachers, health professionals, parent(s) and carer(s), to provide reliable information about relationships and sex. The atmosphere for learning is just as important – a non-judgemental approach, comfort with the topics and interest in having an open dialogue are key.

Schools, families, health professionals and anyone who cares about young people should take courage from young people's evident desire to discuss these issues with trusted adults and create the best possible atmosphere for quality RSE.

Government must do more than publish updated guidance. We call on Ministers to make a long-term commitment to build a confident RSE workforce. This requires an injection of investment in training and a national strategy to professionalise the teaching of RSE from early years through to age 18. Only then when we have confident skilled teachers delivering RSE will the protective benefits be shared by all young people.

52% of young people report their RSE to be 'good' or 'very good'





Part 1: Rate your RSE at school

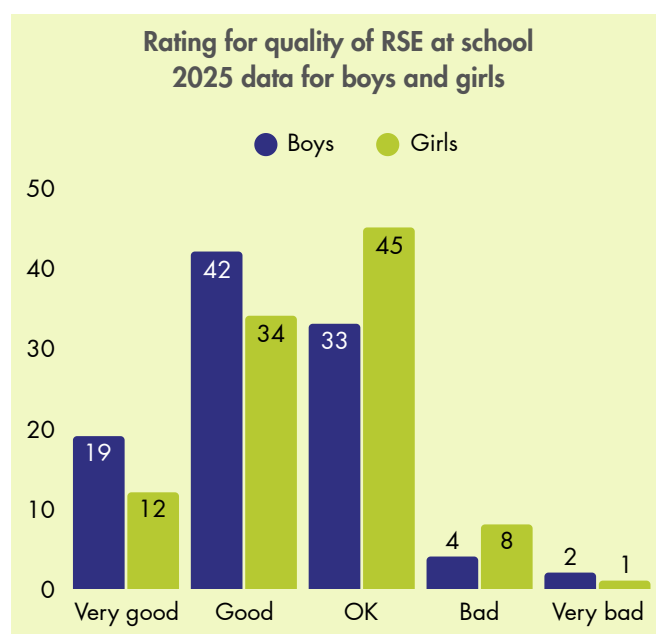
Question A: How, if at all, would you rate the quality of the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) you received at school as a whole?

Table 1. Comparative data from 2025 and Sex Education Forum’s previous polls, 2024, 2022 (SEF, 2023), 2021 (SEF, 2022).

Rating given for RSE	All	Gender			Sexual orientation			Disability	
	2025 Poll	Boys	Girls	Non-binary	Lesbian, gay or bisexual*	Straight	Asexual /aro-mantic	Disability	No disability
No. of respondents	1001	377	601	11	135	803	21	89	767
Good or Very good %	52	61	46	55	38	55	43	48	55
Very good %	15	19	12	18	13	16	10	19	15
Good %	37	42	34	36	25	40	33	29	39
OK %	40	33	45	27	50	38	57	39	38
Bad %	6	4	8	9	11	5	0	10	5
Very bad %	2	2	1	9	1	2	0	2	2
Bad or very bad %	8	6	9	18	13	7	0	12	7

Rating given for RSE	All	Previous polls		
	2025 Poll	2024 Poll	2022 Poll	2021 Poll
No. of respondents	1001	1002	1002	1002
Good or Very good %	52	50	40	35
Very good %	15	15	11	10
Good %	37	35	29	25
OK %	40	39	42	42
Bad %	6	8	12	16
Very bad %	2	3	5	5
Bad or very bad %	8	11	18	22

61% Boys and 46% Girls rate their Relationships & Sex Education as ‘good’ or ‘very good’.





Summary

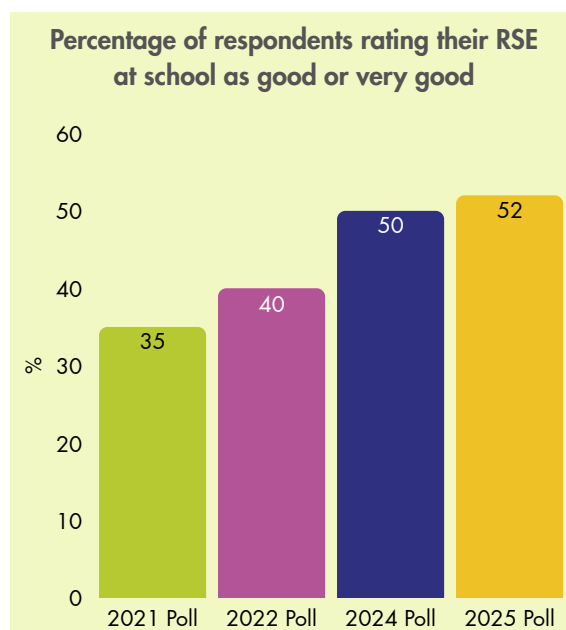
- 52% of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as good or very good – up 2 percentage points on the ratings from the previous poll (the data for which was collected February 2024, published April 2024).
- 8% of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as bad or very bad – down three percentage points on the ratings from the previous poll.
- 61% of respondents identifying as male rated their RSE as good or very good compared with 46% who identified as female.
- 38% of respondents identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual* rated their RSE as good or very good compared with 55% of those identifying as straight.
- 13% of respondents identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual* rated their RSE as bad or very bad compared with 7% of those identifying as straight.
- 48% of respondents who consider themselves to be disabled rated their RSE as good or very good, compared with 55% for those who would not consider themselves disabled.
- 66% of respondents who attended private school rated their RSE as good or very good compared with 50% of those who attended state school. (Not shown in table).

*The full wording was 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning'.

The number of respondents identifying as non-binary (14) and aromantic/asexual (7) provide too small a sample size to give robust comment on this data.

The numbers of respondents from different ethnicity categories were small which means that sample sizes were not robust. The ethnicity groups that had a more robust sample size (> 50 participants) along with the relevant percentage of participants who rated their RSE as 'good' or 'very good' in brackets were: White British (56%), and Black African (53%).

38% of respondents identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual* rated their RSE as good or very good compared with 55% of those identifying as straight.





Exploring the quality of RSE in more detail

Question B: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the quality of your RSE?

Table 2: Data from question B

My RSE at school was....	Agree (net) %	Strongly agree %	Somewhat agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Somewhat disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Disagree (net) %
Inclusive	58	18	39	28	11	3	14
Safe	79	28	50	17	3	1	4
Alarming	30	10	20	32	30	8	38
Relevant	69	23	46	22	7	2	9
Allocated enough lesson time	58	18	40	22	15	4	20
Carefully sequenced*	65	21	44	21	11	3	13
Skilfully taught	52	16	36	29	15	4	19
Interactive	50	15	35	28	16	6	23
Enjoyable	37	12	24	39	17	7	24
Positive	64	18	46	29	5	2	7
Transparent with parents**	46	15	31	32	15	6	21

*The full question wording: Carefully sequenced (it started early enough, and topics were suitable for our age).

** The full question wording: Transparent with parents about what was being taught.



Summary

- 79% of respondents agreed that their RSE was safe. This was the quality on which agreement was strongest.
- 69% of respondents agreed that their RSE felt relevant (70% of straight vs 67% LGBTQ respondents), compared with a previous poll when 42% agreed that their RSE was relevant to them (44% of straight vs 35% LGBTQ respondents) (SEF, 2022).
- 58% of respondents agreed that their RSE was inclusive (64% of males vs 54% of females, and 61% of straight vs 49% of lesbian, gay or bi-sexual respondents).
- 58% of respondents agreed that their RSE was allocated enough lesson time and one in five (20%) disagreed.
- Almost two thirds of respondents agreed that their RSE was carefully sequenced (65%), with agreement dropping to 52% on RSE being skilfully taught and exactly half (50%) agreeing that it was interactive.
- The percentage in agreement that RSE was interactive was the same for male and female respondents (50% respectively).
- Interestingly, only 37% of respondents agreed that the RSE they received at school was enjoyable, while 64% agreed that it was positive. 47% of males agreed that the RSE they received at school was enjoyable vs 31% of females.
- 30% of respondents agreed that their RSE was alarming, with 38% disagreeing.
- 46% of respondents agreed that their RSE had been transparent with parent(s) about what was taught. Note that in the 2024 poll, 40% of respondents would have liked their parent(s) to have been better informed about their RSE.
- Respondents who attended private school were more likely than those attending state school to feel that their RSE was transparent with parent(s) (62% vs 45%) and more likely to agree that RSE was allocated enough lesson time (73% vs 56%).

"I wish they'd been more open about gay sex and relationships - it wasn't very inclusive."

"My school made us do interactive activities during our PSHE class so the whole class is involved and everybody learns."

"Using real-life examples, discussions, and interactive activities would make RSE more engaging. It's also important to include diverse perspectives, honest information about consent and relationships, and a safe space to ask questions without judgment."

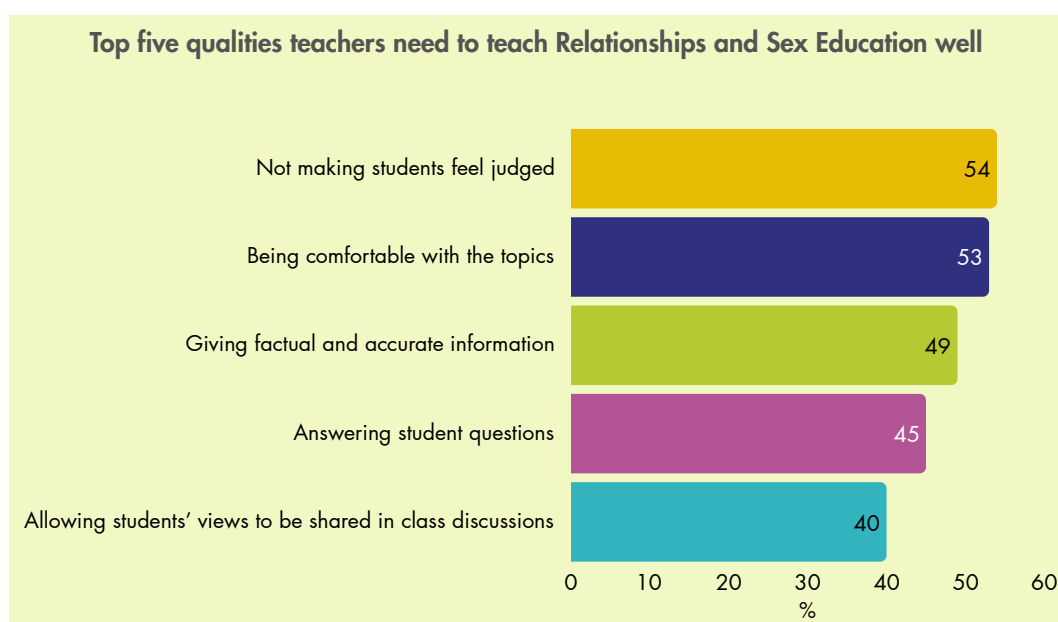


Part 2. Young people's opinions about how RSE is taught

Question C: What qualities, if any, does a teacher need most to teach Relationships and Sex Education well? (Young people were allowed to choose up to 6 qualities).

Table 3: Data from question C

Quality	Percentage of respondents			
	All	Gender		
		Boys	Girls	Non-binary
Not making students feel judged	54	41	62	45
Being comfortable with the topics	53	46	58	36
Giving factual and accurate information	49	42	52	45
Answering student questions	45	40	49	9
Allowing students' views to be shared in class discussions	40	34	42	64
Knowing what young people's lives are really like	35	34	37	45
Being honest if they don't know	34	34	33	18
Using real- world examples and relationship scenarios	32	32	33	27
Managing any disruptive behaviour in the class	30	28	31	27
Making plenty of lesson time for having open discussions	30	28	30	36
Having some years of experience teaching RSE	21	25	18	18
Wanting to teach RSE	17	21	15	27
RSE being their main, specialist subject	11	16	8	27





Summary

- The most frequently selected quality to teach RSE well (selected by 54% of respondents) was **not making students feel judged**, followed by **being comfortable with the topics** (53%).
- **Giving factual and accurate information** ranked 3rd (49%)
- **Answering student questions** ranked 4th from the list of qualities that respondents were offered to choose from followed by **allowing students' views to be shared in class discussion** in 5th place (40%).
- **Not making students feel judged** was more important to girls vs boys (62% vs 41%).
- The quality that came top for boys was **being comfortable with the topics** (46%).
- **RSE being their main, specialist subject** (11%) fell to the bottom of the list of qualities selected for teaching RSE well. **Wanting to teach RSE** (17%) was second to the bottom of the list, with **having some years of experience teaching RSE** third from last (21%).
- Respondents felt that other qualities were more important than the measures of interest, specialism and experience, including **knowing what young people's lives are really like** (35%), **being honest if they don't know** (34%) and **using real-world examples and relationship scenarios** (32%).

Respondents could opt to select 'other', of which seven choose to, and the following qualities were suggested:

"An open-minded person."

"Having an understanding that these topics could have occurred in a students' life."

"Making jokes where appropriate to put students at ease."

"Setting class boundaries."





Part 3. Young people's opinions about being asked their views on RSE

Question D: New Government guidance states that 'engaging pupils' is important as it helps make relationships and sex education (RSE) relevant. This might happen by schools asking pupils for their views, ideas or feedback on lessons. **Did your school ask you or other pupils for their views on Relationships and Sex Education?**

Table 4. Data from question D

Did your school ask you or other pupils for their views on RSE?	Percentage (All)
Yes (please tell us more about what or how you were asked)	40
No (please tell us about what or how you would have liked to be asked)	17
N/A	41

Summary

- At least twice as many respondents answered Yes (40%) than No (17%), to indicate that their school had asked them or others for their views on RSE.
- The high proportion answering N/A (41%) may have been a methodological issue, possibly selected frequently as a way of avoiding answering the open text prompt required if choosing Yes or No.
- Via open text, respondents shared their experiences of being asked for their views on RSE which ranged from anonymous surveys to more informal conversations.
- Those answering No shared suggestions for how they would have liked to be asked (via open text response).



Examples of what or how respondents were asked for their views on RSE

Sixth form council had us scribble anonymous questions on post-its for the PSHE teacher.

During a pupil voice survey, we were asked if we found it effective to be taught in form time.

Was it informative enough? The teacher asked casually after completing the lesson. Was there anything you would have liked to cover more?

My school did try to engage us in RSE by asking for our feedback through anonymous questionnaires after some lessons. This made it easier to share our honest thoughts and helped shape future lessons to be more relevant and age-appropriate.

Answered 'Yes'

We had a student panel to discuss RSE topics.

Our school conducted anonymous surveys through the student portal and held facilitated discussions in tutor groups. This allowed pupils to share opinions confidentially while ensuring diverse perspectives were gathered.

We had an online survey with multiple-choice and open-ended questions about topics we wanted in RSE and how we'd prefer to learn them.

They could have asked us what sorts of things we want to learn about in order to make it more relevant.

I would've liked for an anonymous slip.

Having an open conversation that included pupils would remove the stigma from talking about it, and be more informative.

Answered 'No'

Just asking students in the first place, but also through confidential and anonymous means.

I would've like to have been asked if it was inclusive enough because it wasn't.



Part 4. Which topics were covered at school? What was missed?

Respondents were asked about 27 different topic areas (see table 5) to find out whether they had learnt enough about these topics at school. This question has been asked in previous years. For the 2025 poll, some new topics were included which reflect new content in the Government RSHE guidance (2025).

Question E: At school, did you learn everything you feel you needed to about the following?

Response choices were: **a: Yes (I learnt all I needed to about this), b: Some but not enough, c: I didn't learn about this at all, d: Prefer not to say***.

Table 5: Data from question E

Topics are shown in rank order, with the topic that respondents identified as having learnt the least about (i.e. the largest percentage of b+c) located at the top of the list.

*Between 2 and 4% of respondents chose the answer option Prefer not to say, therefore the sum of percentages shown in columns a, b and c, in the table do not add up to 100%.

	Percentage of respondents			
	a	b	c	b+c
	Yes (I learnt all I needed to about this)	Some but not enough	I didn't learn about this at all	Learnt nothing or not enough
Deepfakes	25	24	48	72
The law on strangulation and suffocation	25	19	53	72
Sexual pleasure	29	29	37	67
Skills for ending relationships or friendships	33	30	35	65
Gillick competence and the legal age for medical consent	34	25	37	62
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	34	27	35	62
Cultural and faith perspectives on relationships and sex	40	32	25	57
Pornography	43	30	23	53
Gender identity, and information relevant to people who are trans and non-binary	43	31	22	53
Power imbalances in relationships	44	33	19	52
How to access local sexual health services	46	31	20	52
Sexual orientation including information relevant to people who are LGBTQ+	51	31	14	46
That sex can and should be enjoyable and positive	51	27	18	45
Feelings and emotions to do with relationships	53	30	14	44
Pregnancy options (including factual information about abortion)	53	32	12	44
How to get help if you are sexually abused or assaulted	54	29	14	43
HIV	55	31	11	42
How to tell if a relationship is abusive (including online)	55	30	12	42
The medically correct names for genitalia (vulva, vagina, clitoris, penis, testicles)	56	30	12	41
How to tell if a relationship is healthy (including online)	57	28	13	41
Sexual harassment (including unwanted sexual attention and unwanted nudes)	62	27	9	36
Periods and menstrual wellbeing	62	27	9	36
Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)	63	26	9	34
Understanding sexual consent	68	22	7	29
Condoms and contraception	69	21	7	28
How babies are conceived and born	70	20	8	28
Puberty	71	22	5	27



Summary

The gaps in RSE topic coverage

- 72% of respondents learnt either nothing at all or some but not enough about the law on strangulation and suffocation. Over half (53%) of respondents learnt nothing at all about the law on strangulation and suffocation.
- 72% learnt either nothing at all or some but not enough about deepfakes. Nearly half (48%) learnt nothing at all about deepfakes.
- More than 6 out of 10 respondents learnt either nothing at all or not enough about sexual pleasure (67%), skills for ending relationships or friendships (65%), Gillick competence and the legal age for medical consent (62%) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) (62%).
- More than 1 in 5 respondents (23%) learnt nothing at all about pornography at school, with a combined 53% learning either nothing at all or some but not enough about pornography.
- 52% learnt either nothing at all or not enough about power imbalances in relationships.
- 52% learnt either nothing at all or not enough about how to access local sexual health services, with 1 in 5 (20%) learning nothing at all about this.
- One in 9 learnt nothing at all about HIV (11%), and 1 in 8 learnt nothing at all about the medically correct names for genitalia (12%), pregnancy options (12%) and how to get help if you are sexually abused or assaulted (12%).

The topics most fully covered

- 71% of respondents indicated 'Yes' they had learnt all they needed to about puberty.
- 70% learnt all they needed to about how babies are conceived and born.
- 69% learnt all they needed to about condoms and contraception.
- 68% learnt all they needed to about understanding sexual consent.

Changes in topic coverage over time

Coverage of topics in the 2025 survey which have been included in previous surveys can be compared to see if there is continuous improvement or decline in satisfactory coverage of the topic. The 2025 poll gives a mixed picture and overall, little seems to have changed. For example:

- Little or no change (no more than 2 percentage points up or down) between 2024 and 2025 polls in respondents learning all they needed to about sexually transmitted infections, how to tell if a relationship is healthy or not, HIV, pornography and sexual harassment.
- Decrease of 10 percentage points between 2024 and 2025 polls in respondents learning all they needed to about cultural and faith perspectives on relationships and sex.

Differences between groups of respondents

- Girls were more likely than boys to say that they learnt all they needed to about puberty (girls 75% vs boys 65%) and periods and menstrual wellbeing (girls 66% vs boys 56%).
- Boys were more likely than girls to say that they learnt all they needed to about the law on strangulation and suffocation (boys 34% vs girls 20%) and deepfakes (boys 31% vs girls 21%).

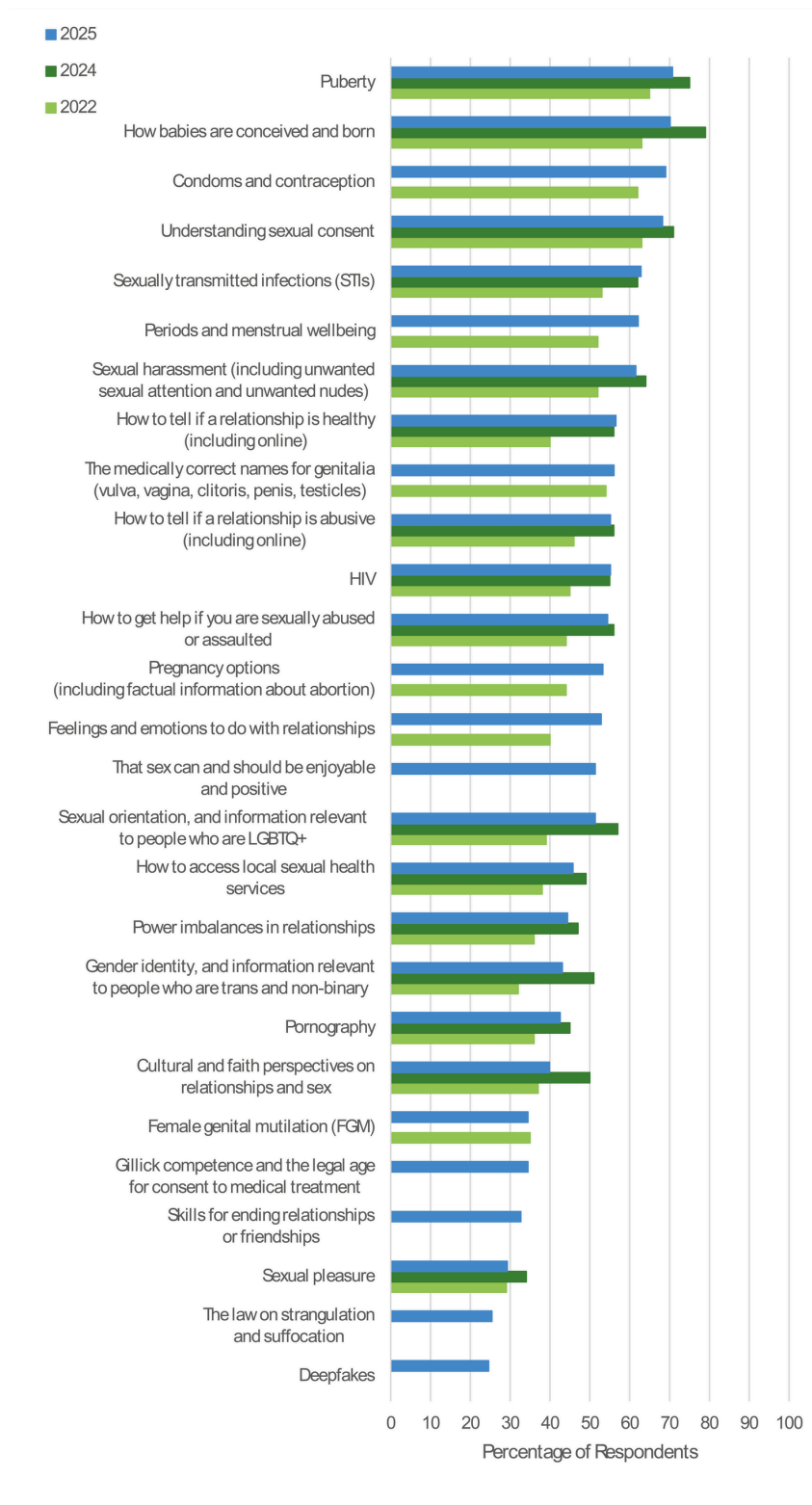
"I think they fairly educated us about the correct things from protection to unhealthy relationships, I just wished it got taught yearly from year 7 as I know of people who actually get into relationships straight out of primary school."

"We didn't do much, but we spoke about contraception."



Chart 1: Comparative data from 2025 and Sex Education Forum's previous polls, 2024 (SEF, 2024) and 2022 (SEF, 2023).

Percentage of respondents answering 'Yes, I learnt all I needed to about this'



"I think sex education is crucial for young people so they can understand the viewpoints of their religion and society on sex and to raise awareness."

"I think schools should talk more about online dating and safety."



Part 5: What RSE would be useful for young people aged 16 to 18?

Currently there are no mandatory topics to cover in Relationships and Sex Education after Year 11. We asked young people what they would most like RSE aimed at 16 to 18 year olds to cover and included a list of 28 topics to choose from and space to describe 'other' if not listed.

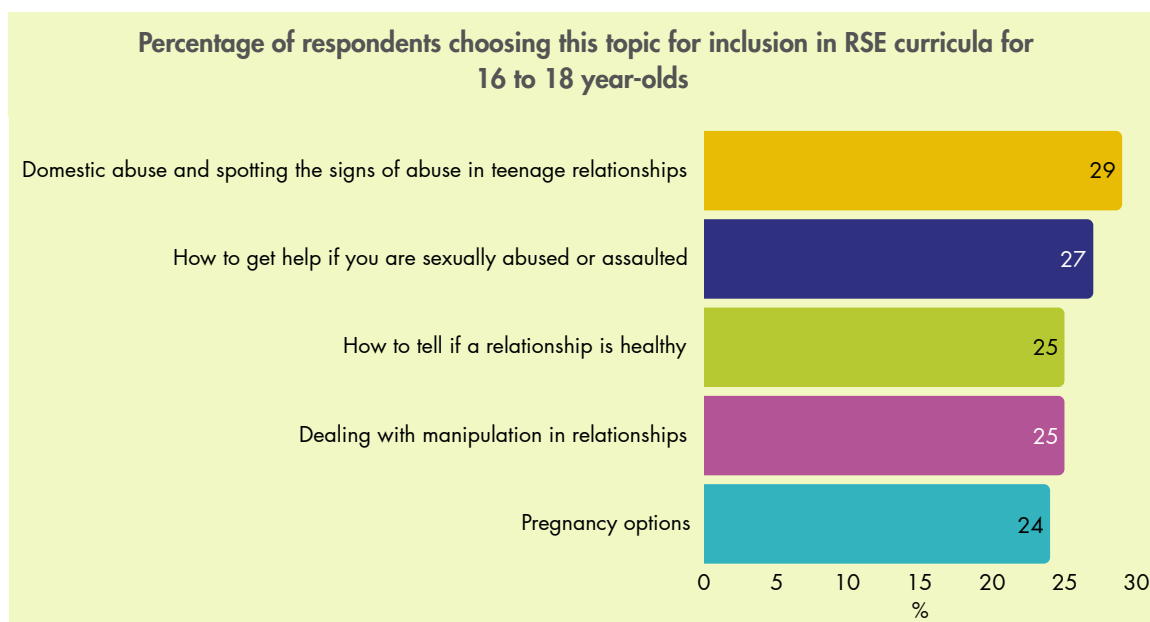
Question F: If you were offered Relationships and Sex Education between the ages of 16 and 18 (e.g. at FE college or sixth form) what topics, if any, would you want to be covered? (Select up to 12)

Table 6: Data from question F. Ranked in order of popularity for all respondents, from most popular to least popular choice

Topic	All	Gender			Disability	
		Boys	Girls	Non-binary	Disability	No disability
No. of respondents %	1001	377	601	11	89	767
Domestic abuse and spotting the signs of abuse in teenage relationships %	29	21	34	18	29	29
How to get help if you are sexually abused or assaulted %	27	20	31	18	20	28
How to tell if a relationship is healthy %	25	22	28	0	18	28
Dealing with manipulation in relationships %	25	20	28	18	20	27
Pregnancy options %	24	18	29	18	21	25
How pornography can impact on sex and relationships %	23	21	25	18	12	25
Skills for starting, sustaining and ending intimate relationships %	23	19	25	27	28	23
The law about sex %	23	20	24	18	19	23
Sexual pleasure %	23	20	24	18	17	24
How to get STI testing and treatment %	22	21	22	27	15	24
Parenting skills %	21	16	25	0	12	23
Sexism, racism and homophobia and what we can do about it %	21	18	23	27	19	23
Sexual harassment online including image-based abuse %	20	16	23	9	20	21
Positive forms of masculinity and femininity %	19	19	20	27	17	20
Managing difficult emotions and feelings, such as rejection, jealousy and hurt %	19	17	21	18	12	20
Contraception %	19	15	22	0	20	20
The risks and law on strangulation (choking) during sex %	19	18	19	27	18	21
How to get safer sex advice and treatment including PrEP and condoms %	19	19	19	9	11	21
Misogyny and how it is spread %	19	15	21	9	20	19
Sexual health information relevant to different sex acts %	18	16	20	9	16	20
Finding reliable information about relationships, sex and sexual health %	17	15	18	36	16	17
Harms of pornographic deepfakes %	16	13	17	18	11	17
Coercive control %	16	11	18	18	19	16
Forced marriage %	15	12	17	0	13	16
Sexual orientation, including LGBTQIA+ identities %	14	14	13	45	21	13
Disability and sex and relationships %	13	14	13	27	22	13
Cultural and faith perspectives on relationships and sex %	12	11	13	9	7	13
Gender identity and expression, including trans and non-binary %	11	13	9	55	15	11
I'm not sure %	8	6	9	0	10	5
There are no specific topics I would want to be covered %	7	8	6	0	3	7

Summary

- The most popular topics for inclusion into RSE curricula for 16 to 18 year-olds were **domestic abuse and spotting the signs of abuse in teenage relationships** (29%), **how to get help if you are sexually abused or assaulted** (27%), **how to tell if a relationship is healthy** (25%), **dealing with manipulation in relationships** (25%) and **pregnancy options** (24%).
- Respondents were least likely to select 'There are no specific topics I would want to be covered' (7%).
- **How to tell if a relationship is healthy** was top of the list for boys, followed jointly by **how to get STI testing and treatment, how pornography can impact on sex and relationships** and **domestic abuse and spotting the signs of abuse in teenage relationships**.
- The topic '**positive forms of masculinity and femininity**' appealed similarly to girls and boys (girls 20% vs boys 19%).
- Respondents identifying as having a disability put **domestic abuse and spotting the signs of abuse in teenage relationships** top of their list, closely followed by **skills for starting, sustaining and ending intimate relationships** (disability 28% vs no disability 23%).





RSE for 16 to 18 year olds

Question G: As well as covering the topics that you would want to be covered, what else, if anything, would be important to make Relationships and Sex Education engaging and good quality for 16 to 18 year olds in college?

A selection of responses to this open question

Address peer pressure head on: both through friendships and in relation to social expectations around personal appearance, sexual activity, and also social media.

Discussing the emotional side of relationships not just the physical.

Talk about mature topics like pornography and dangerous things like paedophilia, there is no need to downplay these topics because we are old enough to handle it now.

Anecdotes to make it actually sound like real life which it is rather than a monotone description of facts.

Keep the behaviour good in the classroom, because other students can be made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe because of words or actions of others and the teachers shouldn't ignore it.

I think it should not just be a one-way lecture by the teacher, but more discussions and activities.

Use real examples from people our age.

Ensure that some topics are not constantly repeated.

Discuss trust and how to build it.

More interactive and having a teacher that is not awkward.

Allow students to facilitate some of the sessions or conversations; their perspectives can be more relatable and powerful.

The program should be culturally responsive, recognizing and respecting the diverse backgrounds and family structures of the student body.

Make them inclusive, a safe zone free of discrimination.

I think the best way to grab the attention of this age group with this topic you should just try making it less embarrassing and more entertaining and engaging for them.

Ask experts to share their experiences.

Part 6: Sources of information about key RSE topics

Question H: Which, if any, people and sources of information and support on relationships and sex do you find most and least helpful? Pick one person or source of information each for the category of 'most' and 'least' reliable, embarrassing and judgemental.

Table 6: Data from question H

Information source	Percentage of all respondents					
	Most reliable	Least reliable	Most embarrassing	Least embarrassing	Most judgemental	Least judgemental
Teacher or school staff	7	4	10	3	12	6
Parent - dad or male carer	4	4	21	4	8	3
Parent – mum or female carer	15	2	14	10	10	11
Parent or carer - does not identify as either male or female	6	2	7	3	5	3
Health professional (e.g. doctor, nurse or pharmacist)	21	1	3	11	3	14
Another adult (any adult that you know who is not your teacher or parent/carers)	3	4	6	2	6	2
Sibling(s) (brother or sister)	3	3	7	5	11	4
A friend that you mostly know in person	7	2	3	15	8	12
A friend that you mostly know online	2	10	3	4	6	4
Romantic or sexual partner (boyfriend, girlfriend, someone you are talking with or dating)	8	2	3	10	4	9
Online sources that you actively search for	7	3	2	8	2	5
Online sources that pop up or are recommended 'for you'	2	9	2	4	2	2
Artificial Intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT or Chat bot	3	9	2	11	2	10
Pornography	1	31	8	2	4	2
Other	0	1	1	1	1	1
Not sure	9	12	8	8	15	10



Summary

- The information source that respondents were most likely to choose as most reliable was health professional (21%) followed by mum or female carer (15%).
- Pornography (31%) topped the list for least reliable information source, followed by a friend that you mostly know online (10%), with 12% not sure.
- The information source that respondents were most likely to choose as most embarrassing was dad or male carer (21%) followed by mum or female carer (14%).
- A friend that you mostly know in person (15%) topped the list for least embarrassing, followed jointly by health professional (11%) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT or Chat bot.
- The information source that respondents were most likely to choose as most judgemental was a teacher or school staff (12%) followed by siblings (11%), with 15% not sure.
- Health professionals topped the list for least judgemental (14%) followed by a friend that you mostly know in person (12%).
- Girls were more likely to select a friend that you mostly know in person as least judgemental (15%) than boys (7%).
- Girls were more likely to select dad or male carer as most embarrassing (27%) than boys (11%).
- Dad or male carer topped the list of most embarrassing for respondents identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning.
- Boys were more likely to select mum or female carer as most embarrassing (19%) than girls (11%).

"[My] Carer provided emotional support when I felt discomfort or anxiety with aspects of RSE and provided me the time, space and listening."

"They should have been more open and less awkward about the topics."

"I appreciated that my dad respected boundaries and let me lead sensitive discussions."



Which sources of information are most helpful for key areas of learning

Question J: Which source of information, if any, has helped you the most with the following?

Table 7: Data from question J

RSE concept	Percentage of all respondents					
	Online	Parent(s) or carer(s)	School	Friends	Another source of information	I had no helpful source of information about this at all
Learning how to find reliable information	28	17	34	7	7	8
Appreciating that other people's views can be different to mine	19	25	28	16	6	6
Expressing my views respectfully	17	30	25	15	5	8
Managing my feelings and emotions in a healthy way	16	30	23	13	7	11
Understanding that consent is needed for all types of sexual touch	13	22	49	7	5	5
Understanding that violence in relationships is always wrong	16	31	36	7	6	4
Being able to recognise what controlling behaviour is	19	19	37	11	6	7
Understanding how hatred towards women gets spread and the harm this causes	31	18	31	8	5	7
Understanding the social pressures on boys and men	25	13	33	10	6	12
Understanding that sex and relationships should be enjoyable for all involved	20	16	36	11	8	9

Summary

- School ranks highest as the most helpful source of information across the majority of areas of learning included in the survey, for example 49% of respondents placed **school** as the main source of information about **understanding that consent is needed for all types of sexual touch**, followed by parent(s) or carer(s) (22%) and **online** (13%).
- School stands out as the most helpful source of information for **being able to recognise what controlling behaviour is** (37%), **understanding that violence in relationships is always wrong** (36%) and **understanding that sex and relationships should be enjoyable for all involved** (36%).
- Parent(s) rank highest as the most helpful source of information about **expressing my views respectfully** (parent(s) 30% followed by school 25%) and **managing my feelings and emotions in a healthy way** (parent(s) 30% followed by school 23%).
- School ranks highest as the most helpful source of information for **learning how to find reliable information** (34%) followed by online (28%), parent(s) (17%) and friends (7%).
- Friends ranked below school, parent(s) and carer(s) and online sources as a helpful source of information, but got higher scores for areas of learning associated with feelings and views.
- 12% of respondents indicated that they had no source of helpful information about **understanding the social pressures on boys and men** and 11% indicated that they had no source of helpful information about **managing my feelings and emotions in a healthy way**.



Exploring online sources in more detail

Question K: Which, if any, online sources do you turn to most for information about relationships and sex? (Select up to 3)

Table 8: Data from question K

Online source	Percentage of all respondents								
	All	Gender			Sexual orientation			Disability	
		Boys	Girls	Non-binary	Lesbian, gay or bisexual*	Straight	Asexual /a-ro-mantic	Disability	No disability
Websites from health and advice organisations (e.g. NSPCC, The Mix)	35	36	35	45	40	35	43	34	37
TikTok 'For You' page	28	23	32	9	26	29	29	21	29
I don't turn to online sources for information about relationships and sex	25	20	28	27	27	24	10	18	24
Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Chat bot (e.g. ChatGPT)	20	27	16	9	12	22	24	17	21
Forums where you can post and reply (e.g. Reddit)	16	22	12	18	18	16	24	11	17
Online books	12	15	10	18	13	12	10	15	12
Videos recommended by friends	10	13	9	18	7	11	14	13	10
Podcasts	9	10	8	9	8	10	19	11	10
Online reality shows	8	7	8	0	5	8	5	11	8
Pornography	7	11	5	9	6	7	19	8	7
Gaming forums (e.g. Discord), typically with voice and/or video chat	7	12	4	9	2	8	10	6	8
Other, please specify	2	1	2	0	4	1	0	3	1

Summary

- Looking at the detail of which online sources are used most by young people for information about relationships and sex, the most commonly used are **websites from health and advice organisations (35%)**, **TikTok 'For You' page (28%)** and **Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Chat bot (e.g. ChatGPT) (20%)**. A range of other online sources are used including **Forums where you can post and reply (e.g. Reddit) (16%)**, **online books (12%)**, **online reality shows (8%)** and **gaming forums (e.g. Discord) (7%)**.
- A total of 13 respondents chose to specify **other online sources** not listed in the poll and their responses include search engines such as Google, YouTube, Flo (a period App) and Wikipedia.
- Boys were more likely than girls to use **AI** (boys 27% vs girls 16%) and are more likely to use **forums where you can post and reply** (boys 22% vs girls 12%) and **gaming forums** (boys 12% vs girls 4%).
- Girls were more likely than boys to use **TikTok 'For You' page** (32%) than boys (23%).

Part 7. Young people's opinions about their parent(s) or carer(s) involvement in their RSE

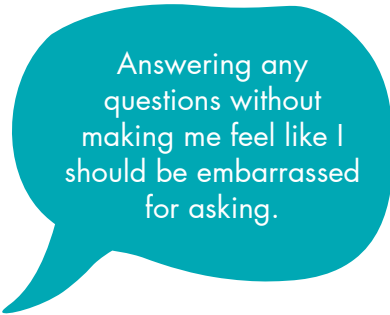
Question L: What, if anything, did your parent(s) or carer(s) do in relation to RSE that was helpful, or what would you have liked them to do to be more helpful?

Summary


Young people were asked to comment on their parent(s) or carer(s) involvement in their RSE via an open text question. There was a wide spectrum of responses, with common themes emerging.

Openness

Many respondents described their parent(s) or carer(s) providing 'open doors' that enabled them to ask the questions they needed to about relationships and sex. It was clear that these young people felt that this had significantly contributed to their own development of skills and understanding around healthy approaches to relationships and sex.



Answering any questions without making me feel like I should be embarrassed for asking.



Mum answered questions honestly when I asked, which built trust between us.





Some young people felt that their parent(s) or carer(s) had tried to offer openness with regard to discussions about relationships and sex but found it difficult not to be judgemental in their responses to questions or concerns, or reached a limit in connecting with their child. As with teaching, a non-judgemental approach was incredibly important to the young people polled.

Be more trusting and calm when explaining things not so judgemental and quick to judge and expect things from me.

My parents created a safe space for questions by using age-appropriate books. I wish they had connected these topics more to real-life emotional situations we encountered.

Timing, pace and being proactive

Young people really appreciated learning about RSE matters early, before they had to deal with these issues 'for real'.

Teach about periods earlier because I was really scared the first time I got mine as I had no prior information.

My parents always listened to my RSE worries without rushing to give answers - that helped a lot.

Let me ask questions and explained at my pace.

I would have valued earlier conversations about consent culture principles.



It depends on the topic

Some respondents mentioned being able to talk with parent(s) or carer(s) about some topics but not others, either because they feared judgement or because their parent/carer(s) had not realised that they needed to know about these issues at that stage in their lives.

I needed more guidance on navigating modern dating dynamics and setting healthy boundaries in relationships.

"I would of liked them to help me understand that it okay for women to also masturbate. As I feel it's looked down upon."

"I hope my parents can listen more to my views on love."

Linking home and school

Some respondents described conversations at home being prompted by lessons at school, and saw value in a link being made between the school curriculum and discussions with parent(s) or carer(s).

My carers attended RSE workshops with me, which helped us talk about it better.

Echoing positive statements about consent when I talked about learning about it at school.

Father asked my views on consent in RSE lessons; we had a good chat and hope to discuss more.

Nothing much was done to help in RSE by parents or carers. it would have been good for them to teach this before school does.

They answered questions that any teacher inside the lesson could not or I felt too uncomfortable to ask.



When there is little or no RSE from parent(s) and carer(s)...

Finally, those young people who had experienced little or no RSE from their parent(s) and carer(s) spoke about their disappointment and the impact it had on them.

Dad has never mentioned RSE. I wish he'd ask about my lessons and share his thoughts.

I am 16 years old and my parents have told me nothing, I feel clueless and embarrassed every time someone makes a joke that I clearly don't understand. I brought up taking the pill to my mum and she dismissed it as unnecessary.

I would like my mum to have actually spoken to me about those kinds of things so I didn't have to find out from my sister telling me.

They didn't do anything. I would have liked them to tell me how to be better in a relationship and treat someone right.

I wish my carers would check in with me regularly about RSE, not just once in a while.



About Us

The Sex Education Forum is the voice of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in England. As a national charity, we promote and protect the physical and mental health of children and young people by improving their access to RSE. We do this by:

- Bringing together our 75+ partners and wider stakeholders to share best practice and research and monitor the provision of RSE in England.
- Working alongside policy makers and engaging with Parliamentarians to raise the profile of RSE and ensure effective delivery.
- Supporting educators with high quality training, resources and a membership scheme, so they can be competent and confident providers of RSE, in partnership with parent(s), carer(s), children and young people.
- Gathering and utilising the international evidence for effective RSE to inform policy and practice and advance understanding of the benefits of RSE.

Working together is central to everything we do. Partners of the Sex Education are organisations or individuals with a strategic interest or specialist expertise in RSE and are in agreement with our shared values and principles for evidence-based RSE.

We believe that RSE should be relevant and meet the needs of children and young people, and actively involve them as participants, advocates and evaluators in developing good quality provision. We are particularly concerned to address the needs of children and young people most at risk of missing out on RSE and of poor sexual health and relationships outcomes. Comprehensive and inclusive RSE provides scope to explore and address numerous equity and diversity issues. Sex Education Forum has consulted with young people frequently throughout our 38-year history.

To find out more and join our RSE community visit:

www.sexeducationforum.org.uk

Published December 2025 by Sex Education Forum