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**Stronger together for sexual health**

**July 2012**

## **FPA and Brook joint response to DCMS consultation on: Exemptions to the Video Recordings Act**

### **About FPA**

FPA is one of the UK's leading sexual health charities. Our mission is to help establish a society in which everyone has positive, informed and non-judgmental attitudes to sex and relationships; where everyone can make informed choices about sex and reproduction so that they can enjoy sexual health free from prejudice or harm.

We do this through providing a comprehensive sexual health information service for professionals and the public, running community based sex and relationships education programmes, training professionals on a range of sexual health issues, and campaigning to ensure that high quality sexual health information and services are available to all who need them.

To find out more about FPA and the work we do please visit our website:  
[www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)

### **About Brook**

Brook is the UK's leading provider of sexual health services and advice for young people under 25. The charity has over 45 years of experience working with young people and currently has services in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Jersey. Our mission is to ensure young people can enjoy their sexuality without harm.

Brook services provide free and confidential sexual health information, contraception, pregnancy testing, advice and counselling, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and outreach and education work, reaching over 300,000 young people every year.

To find out more about Brook visit: [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk). Ask Brook helpline for young people 0808 802 1234.

Brook's Sex:Positive campaign aims to challenge society's negative attitudes about sex: [www.sexpositive.org.uk](http://www.sexpositive.org.uk)

## **Introduction**

FPA and Brook believe that children and young people should receive high quality, comprehensive sex and relationships education (SRE) through all key stages of school. International evidence has demonstrated high quality school based SRE can lead to young people starting to have sex later, especially when linked to confidential advice services and we believe SRE gives children and young people the information and skills to grow up making healthy choices and having healthy relationships and helps to protect them from harm.

In some schools, videos and DVDs are used as educational tools to support the teaching of SRE to children and we are concerned that this review has failed to take in to account the importance of these resources in this consultation.

We do not believe the consultation document on exemptions to the Video Recordings Act (VRA) offers enough evidence or research to justify a change in the law for educational materials. In the absence of an option to retain the status quo, we do not believe it is possible to make an informed assessment of which of the options may be best.

The current guidance on SRE (DfEE, 2000), which we expect to be updated soon by the Department for Education, clearly states that schools should consult with parents when producing their SRE policy; and that any issues that arise with materials used in SRE should be consulted with parents on also. It is the responsibility of individual schools and governing bodies to ensure that their SRE programme and the resources they use are consulted on with parents to ensure they best meet the needs of their pupils.

### **Exemptions to the Video Recordings Act (VRA)**

Although the consultation does not specifically comment on arguments around sex and relationships education (SRE) materials in relation to an exemption to the VRA – any changes to the legislation would affect these educational materials, yet the document contains no evidence or research on the need for any change with educational materials or what impact a change would have on educational materials.

We note that the consultation document does state that a number of MPs have “recently raised concerns about un-rated DVDs aimed at educating children about human sexual relationships.” The role of these resources has been misunderstood. Their aim is teaching children about differences between people, growing up and puberty and how babies are made as part of a comprehensive sex and relationships education programme. Decisions should not be made on these DVDs without a full understanding of their content.

We are deeply concerned that delivering important information to young people, who may have already started or are about to start going through puberty, about how their bodies work and what they can expect as they grow up, may be compromised if change are made without a proper impact assessment. These educational DVDs are not about promoting or glamourising sex; they are about teaching children and young people about their bodies, differences between individuals and different relationships.

We note that the Government favours Option 2 in looking at changes to make to the VRA. Point 5.46 on page 31 of the consultation document states that the same definitions that will be used for video games could be applied to music, sports, religious and education genres. However it contains no detail about how these definitions may be decided upon.

Due to the lack of evidence around any need to change the exemption for educational materials we don't feel that we can make a fully informed assessment of all the options offered by the consultation document and we urge the government not to damage young people's education and health by acting too swiftly in this regard.

**For more information please contact:**

Clare Laxton  
Policy and Parliamentary Manager  
50 Featherstone Street  
London  
EC1Y 8QU  
Email: [clarel@fpa.org.uk](mailto:clarel@fpa.org.uk)  
Tel: 020 7608 5258

