Department
for Education

Relationships, sex and health education
Implementation of the 2020 curriculum guidance in school

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Authors: L. Adams, M. Agur, S. Johnson, P. Akin-Olugbade, E. Raws IFF Research

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This research report was written before the new UK Government took office on 5 July 2024. As a result, the content may not reflect current government policy.

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1 Executive Summary

Key Findings

The key findings of the research suggest that overall, the theory of change, including the activities, outputs, outcomes, and underlying assumptions, partially align with the actual practices in the schools. Schools have engaged with and implemented the new curriculum using a range of different approaches, adapting the guidance flexibly to the context of their school. So, while the findings suggest that the schools have engaged with the guidance issued by DfE and delivered the new curriculum, they may not have been doing this in the way that was assumed by DfE. The findings from the research suggest that nonetheless, the implementation of the new curriculum appeared to have been successful in terms of leaders' and teachers' satisfaction and confidence in delivering the new curriculum. However, further research may be required to gain a better understanding of how effective the different approaches used by schools were, the barriers that schools were still facing, and possible solutions to address them.

In 2019 the Department for Education (DfE) published Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) statutory guidance, which outlines what schools should teach their pupils about relationships, sex, health and wellbeing. Schools had one year to prepare for implementation before first teaching in September 2020, although because of the pressures on schools during the pandemic, DfE allowed for some flexibility.

This report presents findings from research conducted by IFF Research on behalf of DfE, which explored how the guidance has been implemented in schools, as well as how closely the implementation of the guidance has lined up with the Department's Theory of Change.[1] Findings have been gathered from both quantitative research and qualitative case studies.

The research consisted of a quantitative survey with 2,510 school staff and follow-up qualitative case studies with 14 of the schools that took part in the survey. The quantitative research consisted of three surveys which were conducted in late 2022; one of school leaders,[2] one of RSHE coordinators, and one of teachers. In total, 1,039 school leaders (headteachers, assistant headteachers and deputy headteachers), 953 RSHE

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[1] A Theory of Change (ToC) outlines how and why an intervention is expected to work. The RSHE guidance ToC maps out the expected inputs and activities involved in the implementation of the RSHE guidance, and the outputs and outcomes this is expected to lead to. This can be found in Figure 2.1.
[2] School leaders were asked questions on *behalf of the school,* as opposed to them individually.

coordinators, and 518 teachers took part.[3] Respondents came from a range of education settings:[4]

- 966 mainstream primaries

- 530 mainstream secondaries

- 139 special schools

- 64 alternative providers

- 63 Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

- 216 independent schools

It is important to note that the number of teachers who responded to the survey was below target due to sampling challenges. The fieldwork ran during a busy time in the school year, leading to low numbers of leaders referring staff via the portal. To mitigate this, we opted for an open link format,[5] which did increase the number of teacher responses received, though it was under target.[6] In addition to low base sizes, the open link meant that there could not be within school analysis as we may not have had results from staff across the whole school. This open link was sent out via relevant networks and related organisations, and 57% of teacher responses came from the open link.

For the follow-up qualitative research, qualitative case studies in each of the 14 schools that took part involved interviews with the RSHE coordinator, three teachers involved in teaching RSHE, and up to three pairs of pupils. The 14 schools were made up of seven primaries, six secondaries, and one all-through school, and also included one PRU, one alternative provider, and one special school. It is important to note that this research focussed on the *implementation* of the guidance, as opposed to the impact of the curriculum itself. In addition, schools selected the students and staff who were involved in the case studies, therefore there are implications relating to the representativeness of the evidence, and views may not reflect the student population as a whole. More detail on the methodology can be found in Chapter 2.4.

1.1 Awareness, use and usefulness of the statutory guidance

DfE's Theory of Change assumes that for effective delivery of RSHE schools will need to assess and adapt resources to develop RSHE and provide an adequately timetabled RSHE curriculum, which is tailored to the needs or schools and pupils. DfE developed

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[3] The survey included a screening question to check if teachers were involved in teaching RSHE, either as a standalone subject or as part of other subjects. Secondary teachers were only able to take part in the survey if they were involved in teaching RSHE. All primary teachers were able to take part, and 98% reported that they were involved in teaching RSHE.

[4] Please note, these are the setting that individual respondents came from rather than the total breakdown of setting type.

[5] An open link means that anyone could access the link, as opposed to the original format of sending schools a direct link and asking for school staff to fill it out.

[6] It is important to note the implications of the low teacher response rate. Lower base sizes result in less reliable and robust data and mean that findings are less thoroughly tested.

and provided guidance to schools to inform these processes. This section looks at levels of awareness and engagement with the statutory guidance across leaders, coordinators, and teachers.

For the guidance to support schools to implement the RSHE curriculum effectively, it is critical that schools are aware of it and have read and used it. The survey found that nearly all leaders (99%) and coordinators (98%) had heard of the guidance, and over nine in ten had read it themselves (91% of leaders and 95% of coordinators). Slightly fewer teachers had heard of (86%) or read (69%) the guidance.

The qualitative interviews suggested a similar picture. While most of the coordinators and teachers said they were aware of the guidance, it was in general only the coordinators who had read the guidance in detail. The main reason for this was that teachers generally perceived it as the coordinator's responsibility to engage with the guidance and pass on any useful information.

The guidance has been widely used. Among those who had read it, almost all leaders (96%) and 9 in ten coordinators (90%) had used it to create school policy. This amounts to 95% of all leaders and 89% of all coordinators. Similarly, almost all leaders who had read the guidance (94%, and 93% of all leaders) and 9 in ten coordinators who had read the guidance (91%, and 89% of all coordinators) had used it to guide lesson and curriculum planning.

In interviews, many coordinators spoke about using the guidance to audit how well their existing provision stacked up against the guidance, adding in more time on topics that were not covered or not covered well enough.

That said, 2% of school leaders had neither used the guidance to guide lesson and curriculum planning, nor were planning to do so. There was no evidence to indicate why they have not used the guidance.

Among the 69% of teachers who had read the guidance, around a third (33%) said they had not used it (this amounts to 22% of all teachers), although 16% said they planned to (amounting to 11% of all teachers). Of the teachers who had used the guidance, 70% had done so to develop lesson plans, and 56% to check how well lesson plans met the requirements of the guidance.

This was partly reflected in interviews, where many coordinators and a few teachers spoke of using the guidance to plan lessons and the curriculum, especially in terms of what topics to spend more time on. However, most teachers said they did not use the guidance at all. It was generally viewed as the coordinator's role to read, digest, and implement the guidance through long- and medium-term teaching plans, which teachers used for planning lessons. It appeared that most teachers had little direct engagement with the guidance.

The vast majority of leaders who had used the guidance for the following purposes found it useful:

- To create school policy (97% useful, of which 61% reported it as very useful)

- To audit how well their existing provision meets requirements of the guidance (97% useful, of which 54% reported it as very useful)

- To guide lesson and curriculum planning (93% useful, of which 43% reported it as very useful)

- To know how to consult with parents and communities (92% useful, of which 48% reported it as very useful)

Amongst all teachers, just over 4 in ten (43%) surveyed felt that the guidance was quite or very useful for preparing and teaching RSHE (13% found it very useful). It should be noted that 96% of teachers who had actually used the guidance found it useful, though it was more often described as quite than very useful (68% vs. 28%).

In interviews, coordinators and teachers felt the guidance was particularly useful when it came to identifying gaps in their current RSHE teaching. A few said it was good to have it to refer to if they were unsure about whether the resources or the curriculum, they had bought from a third party were comprehensive enough, and to validate their teaching to parents if any challenges arose.

However, teachers felt that the guidance was not particularly useful for helping them plan the content or delivery of lessons, as it was not detailed enough.

Some coordinators and teachers spoke in interviews about the difficulty of fitting all the teaching required by the guidance into an already stretched timetable. Other challenges mentioned included the guidance being very long and requiring a lot of time to read, it being too focussed on mainstream schools, and a lack of information and advice on how to deal with challenges from students who may have objections to lesson content, such as content on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) topics.

1.1 Conclusion for awareness, use and useful of guidance

Whilst schools all reported high levels of awareness of the guidance and broadly were engaging, there was some variation in the engagement. Engagement with the curriculum appeared to have been primarily done through coordinators, who cascaded the knowledge to teachers, with teachers generally not engaging with the guidance directly. The findings indicated that most schools in our sample used this cascade model. However, the research did not assess how effective this was, and further research would be needed to get understanding of this. In addition, the finding that there were a small number of teachers and coordinators who were not engaging suggests some areas for improvement as this has been statutory guidance since 2020.

Key challenges raised by schools were:

- Lack of time

- Perceived lack of confidence amongst teachers

- Lack of training (either through lack of access or financial challenges)

- A desire for more guidance on how to teach the content

- More support on harder to teach topics

The findings suggest that schools appear to be aware of and were using the guidance, although not in the way assumed by DfE and the Theory of Change. Delivering a tailored RSHE curriculum and pupil engagement

The Theory of Change assumes that for good delivery of RSHE, schools will need to conduct pupil needs assessments, such as consulting students on their views to help deliver a tailored RSHE curriculum. Schools will also need to assess and adapt resources to develop a RSHE curriculum that is suited to the identified pupils' needs. This section explores the delivery of RSHE, and whether schools have delivered tailored curriculums and have adequately engaged pupils to get their perspective.

1.2 Schools' approach to delivery

DfE had a series of underlying assumptions of what needs to happen for the RSHE curriculum to be implemented effectively and for change to happen. These assumptions included that the provision of guidance needs to translate to schools putting in place a well-sequenced, high-quality curriculum which meets their pupils' needs in an age and stage appropriate way, and results in a culture change within the school as the learning is applied by students and reinforced through school values.

Schools delivered RSHE in multiple ways, but most coordinators and teachers interviewed felt that their school took a whole-school approach to teaching RSHE, covering RSHE throughout the school life and not just in RSHE-dedicated lessons. Nearly all schools delivered at least some RSHE through timetabled lessons (97%), and most delivered some via assemblies (83%) and within other curriculum subjects (73%). Almost half (48%) delivered some RSHE via pastoral groups.

The qualitative case studies provided a more in-depth picture of how RSHE is delivered in schools. Some used a pre-made curriculum purchased from an external provider, but delivered by school staff, while in other schools the RSHE coordinator designed the curriculum. Schools drew on plenty of external resources, with the PSHE Association mentioned as particularly useful.[7] Several schools spoke of using a "spiral" or "cyclical" curriculum, where the same topics get repeated in all or several year groups but with

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[7] Please note, the PSHE Association circulated the open survey link to their networks and although we do not have exact figures, we know that many responses were came from these networks

adjusted content. Schools were split between teaching RSHE as a standalone subject or as part of other subjects, although it was slightly more common for schools to teach RSHE as a standalone subject.

The guidance states that working with external organisations can enhance delivery of RSHE subjects. Eight in 10 (79%) secondary leaders and four in 10 (43%) primary leaders indicated that their school has used external experts, partners or consultants to deliver aspects of the RSHE curriculum.

Where primary schools had used external experts, they were most commonly used to deliver content on:

- Being safe (68%)
- Sex education (61%)
- Online relationships (52%)
- Respectful relationships (46%)

For secondary schools, external experts were most commonly used to deliver content on:

- Intimate and sexual relationships (75%)
- Being safe (70%)
- Drugs, alcohol and tobacco (67%)
- Respectful relationships (67%)
- Mental wellbeing (65%)

In primary schools, RSHE was generally taught by the class teacher. Some secondary schools had a small, dedicated RSHE teaching team, while others had all teachers delivering the subject. Coordinators and teachers at schools with a dedicated team were generally positive about this way of teaching. The frequency of RSHE lessons in qualitative case study schools ranged from a few times per week to once per fortnight, and most schools taught boys and girls together, however this was not always the case.

The statutory guidance requires that schools must ensure the needs of all pupils are appropriately met in line with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, which includes sexual orientation and gender reassignment among its protected characteristics. The guidance also states that schools should ensure all their teaching is sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content, and that all pupils are expected to have been taught LGBT content at a timely point. Most teachers (80%) were fairly or very confident that their teaching was inclusive of LGBT experiences (28% were very confident).[8] Confidence was higher among secondary teachers: 87% were confident (51% fairly and 37% very confident), compared with 73% of primary teachers (54% fairly and 19% very

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[8] The question asked of teachers was "How confident are you that the content of your teaching is inclusive of the experiences of LGBT young people?"

confident). In the qualitative case studies, most teachers reported no issues around confidence delivering LGBT content. It should be noted however, that the research did not consider pupils' views on this point. There should be caution therefore in drawing firm conclusions from these findings.

In the survey, most school leaders said that the RSHE curriculum was very well aligned or integrated with their safeguarding policies (88%), pastoral care policies (85%), anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies (79%) and their behaviour policies (77%). From this we can assume that the new curriculum embedded easily within the school culture.

Although schools varied on aspects of RSHE delivery, including frequency of lessons, curriculum content and structure, make-up of the team delivering RSHE, use of external partners and whether the sexes were split, they had similar ideas about what they perceived to be the best way to teach RSHE.

1.2.1 Pupil engagement

Regarding pupil engagement, DfE had a series of underlying assumptions of what needs to happen in order for the RSHE curriculum to be implemented effectively:

- Schools would conduct a thorough pupil needs assessment, including pupil consultation where possible, to understand what their young people want and need from RSHE

- Schools would therefore have a well-sequenced, high quality RSHE curriculum which meets their pupil needs in an age and stage appropriate way

- Pupils would therefore engage with the RSHE curriculum as they trust it will provide them with adequate knowledge and skills for their relationships, health and wellbeing throughout their life

- Pupils would also be well informed about additional sources of support for their RSHE.

In the survey, the majority of leaders (86%) and RSHE coordinators (81%) reported that pupils' views had been considered to some extent in RSHE curriculum design. These numbers were higher in secondary schools (92% of mainstream secondary leaders and RSHE coordinators) and alternative providers (97% of AP leaders). However, the extent to which leaders felt pupils' views had been considered varied: 20% of leaders said pupils had been engaged to a great extent, 43% to some extent, and 23% only to a small extent.

Interviews with schools reflected this finding but also revealed schools' broad interpretation of what constituted pupil consultation and the varied approaches they took. In discussing their approach to pupil consultations, some schools described informal or indirect ways of understanding pupils' opinions, interests and needs. These included creating a welcoming classroom environment where questions were encouraged, having

ongoing conversations with pupils outside the classroom and perceiving pupils' interest and feelings during lessons. Lessons were often adapted based on feedback gathered in this way. Some schools did mention taking a more formal or direct approach to pupil consultation and conducted pupil voice research either through interviews or via online surveys. These were often done at the end of a unit and some teachers mentioned using these as assessment tools. Few schools reported formally consulting pupils ahead of designing the curriculum. It is important to note that different leaders had differing views on what they felt meant a student was 'engaged'. As discussed, schools saw engagement and consultation differently, therefore it effects our ability to reach firm conclusions on how engaged and how well consulted pupils were with the RSHE curriculum.

From most pupils' perspective, their views on what RSHE should cover had not been considered. While pupils confirmed teacher accounts of being encouraged to ask questions and share their opinions of the lessons, pupils did not seem to recognise these approaches as formal consultation, and a few pupils stated that they would have liked to have been consulted. This suggests that teaching staff and pupils had different views on what they consider consultation. Teachers may have viewed informal conversations or obtaining general feedback from pupils as consultation, whilst pupils as appeared to have considered a consultation to be something more formal. Whilst the Theory of Change recognised the importance of pupil consultation, it did not outline the parameters of this, resulting in a wide variety across schools. The effectiveness of the various methods for pupil consultation is something to be considered and may benefit from further research in the future.

Around three in four teachers (76%) felt pupils were engaged with the RSHE curriculum and lessons: 21% felt pupils were very engaged, and 55% fairly engaged. In comparison, 8% of teachers felt pupils were either not very, or not at all, engaged. From pupils' perspectives during the qualitative interviews, RSHE is an important subject and most reported finding the lessons interesting and engaging. Other pupils, however, felt that some of the lessons were boring and repetitive. Some felt that pupil engagement depended on the style of the teacher's delivery and others offered suggestions to make lessons more interactive. Teachers were most likely to report that pupils were engaged (either 'very' or 'fairly' engaged) during lessons on caring friendships (93%), respectful relationships (88%) and intimate sexual relationships (88%). Teachers reported that healthy eating and physical health and fitness were the topics with the least engagement, with two-thirds of teachers reporting that pupils were engaged (64% and 66% respectively).[9]

This was partly reflected in the qualitative interviews. Pupils' views were varied in relation to which topics they found most or least engaging. In line with teachers' survey responses, many pupils mentioned relationships topics as part of their list of favourites. This was mainly because they found these topics more interesting and more relevant to

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[9] 29% of pupils were not engaged for healthy eating and 26% not engaged for physical health and fitness

their lives. However, although not among the topics that teachers reported pupils having the least engagement with online safety was mentioned by a few pupils as a topic they found boring because it had been taught multiple times.

Although the majority of teachers felt that pupils spent the right amount of time engaging in RSHE (63%), over a quarter (27%) felt that pupils did not spend enough time on it. Independent school teachers were more likely to report that pupils did not spend enough time on it when compared with other schools (40%). In comparison, just 1% of teachers as a whole felt that pupils spent too much time on RSHE.[10]

Over four in five teachers were confident that the content of the RSHE curriculum prepared pupils for everyday experiences expected at their age (85%), and that it prepared them for the future (81%). Many of the pupils who participated in the research agreed with this finding, reporting during interviews that RSHE content was useful and relevant for preparing them for life in "the real world". There were a few students, however, who felt that the learning from RSHE was not relevant to them because they were already receiving that education at home. Qualitative interviews also explored teachers' and pupils' views on the impact of RSHE on children and young people's behaviours, as well as pupils' awareness of additional sources of support for their RSHE. Both teachers and pupils reported generally seeing positive changes in attitudes and behaviour. Teachers pointed to the following improvements seen in pupils during interviews:

- **better communication** about issues surrounding RSHE

- more **positive relationships** among pupils

- **improved ability to talk** about feelings and make disclosures of harm, using vocabulary they had been taught during RSHE

- **increased confidence** to identify, avoid and report harmful situations

Pupils were able to give various examples of ways in which the following aspects of RSHE were having a positive impact:

- Pupils reported that **relationships education** helped them distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships, learn how to set boundaries; and communicate better with friends and family

- **Sex education** gave pupils an increased awareness of the sources of support and how to access help when needed; and pupils reported that it helped them develop an understanding of consent; being more confident about supporting friends and family and talking to them about health and reproduction

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[10] The question asked teachers if they think the amount of time pupils spend engaging in RSHE each year is about the right amount of time, not enough, or too much. It is possible that teachers may have interpreted this either as the amount of RSHE delivered by the school, or how well pupils pay attention during RSHE lessons.

- In terms of the impacts of **health education on healthy lifestyles,** pupils reported an awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, but few reported actual changes in behaviour

- **Health education also had an impact on understanding feelings and emotions**, as pupils felt better able to understand their own feelings as well as the feelings of others; as well as having an awareness of useful tools for managing their emotions

Not all teachers and pupils reported seeing the impact of RSHE. Some teachers felt that it was difficult to attribute changes in behaviour specifically to RSHE, while some pupils felt that the lessons had had no impact on their behaviour yet, but that they were reassured by the fact that they had the knowledge for future circumstances when it might be useful.

1.2.2 Conclusions for delivering a tailored RSHE curriculum and pupil engagement

There was a mixed picture when it came to whether the assumed activities in the Theory of Change were happening. There was wide variability across schools and in some cases, activities were not being carried out in the way that was assumed.

There is some indication that schools were taking actions to consider pupils' needs and wants in their development of the RSHE curriculum. However, these have tended to be informal and unstructured in most cases, and in many cases, pupils were not aware how their feedback informed the lesson planning. Future research is needed to fully understand the implications of schools' approach to pupil consultation and to evaluate whether pupils' needs are being fully taken into consideration. Findings also indicate positive action towards producing the output of a well-sequenced, high-quality curriculum. In most schools RSHE was being delivered in a structured way by specified teachers from either an externally sourced or internally designed curriculum, which most schools described as being continuously reviewed and adapted to suit pupils' needs and experiences.

Findings suggest that there has been partial achievement of the outcomes in the ToC. Qualitative interviews suggested that pupils were informed and aware of support available to them regarding RSHE; pupils are generally engaging well with RSHE and recognise the importance it has in their life and future; and teachers and pupils were in agreement that there were positive changes in behaviour, relationships, and awareness of how to avoid harm or where to access help where necessary. In addition, there is some evidence that RSHE learning was being reinforced through school values. However, this fact meant that it was difficult to attribute the positive changes to RSHE, and it is beyond the scope of this research to conclude that there was culture change within the schools.

1.3 Teachers' RSHE training and confidence delivering RSHE

If RSHE is to be delivered effectively, DfE's theory of change assumes that teachers will need to feel supported by their school leaders, be given enough time and resources to plan and deliver the curriculum, and have relevant knowledge, skills and confidence. This section looks at how well teachers are trained and resourced to provide effective RSHE, and how confident and knowledgeable teachers feel.

Two-thirds of teachers (66%) reported that they had agreed with the school how much time they should spend preparing and teaching RSHE. This was more common for primary teachers (76%) than secondary (57%). Preparing and teaching RSHE represented a relatively small part of a teacher's week: a third (33%) said they spent less than an hour per week preparing and teaching RSHE, and two-fifths (42%) spent between 1-2 hours a week on it.

Whilst most teachers (65%) felt they had enough time to prepare RSHE lessons, just over a quarter (28%) did not think this was the case. Similarly, while most (71%) felt they had access to sufficient high-quality resources, one in five (21%) disagreed.

Despite most leaders and coordinators reporting that teachers received high quality and timely training, only around a third (33%) of teachers said their RSHE training needs had been assessed in the last 12 months. Most (60%) had received RSHE training in that time, with this most commonly delivered by their school. That said, in the qualitative interviews some teachers reported never having their training needs assessed, though generally this was due to the small size of the school.

From qualitative research teachers were positive about the usefulness of training, including for improving their confidence, and there was a high level of interest in further training in all RSHE topics. However, during the qualitative interviews some teachers noted challenges relating to capacity for RSHE training and development.

The majority of teachers were confident delivering the various RSHE topics that they taught: 95% or more of those teaching about caring friendships, families, being safe, healthy eating, respectful relationships, online relationships and physical health and fitness felt either 'very' or 'fairly' confident delivering these topics. Confidence was relatively lower when teaching mental wellbeing, basic first aid and intimate and sexual relationships (13%, 12% and 11% reported they were either 'not very confident' or 'not confident' in these areas respectively).

Qualitative findings demonstrated that teachers wanted training in more specific 'difficult' topics, such as topics like female genital mutilation (FGM), LGBT topics, different family types and sexual health. There were also calls for more training for specific types of schools, with PRUs, AP and special schools noting that they needed specific, targeted training on RSHE for their pupil population.

Schools in general had not identified ways for teachers to network outside of their school: a third (34%) of teachers were aware of any networks or groups that provide advice and support for teachers that deliver RSHE. This was reflected in the qualitative interviews, where most teachers had little to no awareness of different RSHE networks. In most schools, only the RSHE coordinator was involved with networks outside of the school. When teachers did engage with support networks, they generally were informal and online, using platforms such as WhatsApp or Facebook to gather and provide information and resources on RSHE.

1.3.1 Conclusions for teacher' RSHE training and confidence in delivering RSHE

There were mixed views on training and confidence when it came to delivering RSHE. Leaders and coordinators felt that teachers were receiving timely and high quality training, whilst teachers generally reported lower levels of receiving training in the last 12 months. Qualitative findings echoed this, though there was appetite amongst teachers for more training, particularly externally delivered training and training on harder to teach topics.

There was limited engagement with support networks and groups, with teachers citing lack of time and knowledge of such groups as their primary reasons for not engaging. However, when teachers did engage with groups (such as online RSHE groups and support networks), they reported that they were useful.

The findings suggest that this element of the Theory of Change was partially met and at a relatively low level.

1.4 Parental engagement with RSHE

This section looks at how well schools are engaging with parents and communities on the RSHE curriculum. Effective parental and community engagement should support the impact of RSHE, and the statutory guidance requires consultation with parents on RSHE policies.

1.4.1 Parents' views on RSHE curriculum

Nearly all school leaders indicated that parents' views were considered in curriculum design (95%), though they were more likely to report parents' views were considered to some extent (47%) than to a great extent (37%). Where parents' views had not been considered, school leaders reported that this was most often due to a lack of time or other priorities (42%), though some also felt that it was the school's responsibility to design the curriculum as opposed to parents (23%), and that COVID-19 had made consultation with parents difficult (20%). During the qualitative interviews, schools generally reported that although they had methods and means to engage with parents on

RSHE, this was often not taken up by parents and had low engagement. However, direct consultation with parents fell out the scope of this research and therefore there is no evidence on parents' direct views. More research, which would include direct research with parents would be needed to comment on this.

1.4.2 Teachers' view of parental support

Seven in ten (71%) teachers felt parents were supportive of their school's approach to RSHE, although only 21% felt they were *very* supportive. In contrast, 6% of teachers felt parents were not supportive. The remainder of teachers were unsure whether parents were supportive or not (23%).

Qualitative findings suggested that schools took a mixed approach in terms of the level of engagement with parents, with some offering the information on their website, or through newsletters, whilst others hosted workshops and consultations with parents. There was a general positive feeling on the necessity of engaging parents with the RSHE curriculum and teachers understood the need for it.

1.4.3 Conclusions on parental engagement with RSHE

The majority of leaders reported that parents' views were taken into consideration for the RSHE curriculum design, though from qualitative findings this consultation was sometimes informal and ad-hoc in nature. Teachers, similarly, felt that parents were broadly well consulted, though reported that parent engagement was generally low. Additionally, there was a high proportion of teachers who were unsure about whether parents were supportive or not, which suggests a level of uncertainty. As the research did not directly consult with parents, more research may be needed on this to understand their perspective.

The findings in relation to whether this element of the Theory of Change was met are inconclusive.

1.5 Conclusions

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the curriculum was broadly working well, and the majority of schools reported being engaged well with the changes. That said, there were some challenges in delivering the curriculum for non-mainstream schools, such as special schools, APs and PRUs. In these cases, participants from these schools said they would have liked more specialised support. There was also limited evidence on the impact on pupils in terms of behaviour change and change in school culture.

The quantitative and qualitative phases of the research explored key elements of the Theory of Change and indicate that whilst some elements of implementation appear to have worked as expected, there is still room for improvement. The findings suggest that parents' and pupils' views were considered, at least to some extent, by most schools,

though more could be done to encourage more systematic and formal processes for this in schools. There is particular disparity between what school staff and pupils consider as consultation, and additional research may be needed to explore this further.

Findings also suggest that schools were adapting resources for their pupils, and that teachers felt pupils were generally engaged with the RSHE curriculum. Most teachers also felt confident about delivering each aspect of RSHE, though reported that they would have liked more targeted training and support on harder to deliver subject areas.

The findings also suggest that it was more common for RSHE coordinators and school leaders to have read and used the statutory guidance than teachers. The qualitative case studies revealed that this was a result of teachers feeling that it was the coordinator's role to engage with the guidance, combined with teachers having an already high workload. Whilst this process of teachers relying on coordinators to engage with the guidance was widespread, the research did not explore the effectiveness of this approach, and therefore, more research may be needed. The findings also suggest that more training might be helpful for some teachers, and that schools have not clearly established ways for teachers to network outside of their school. In most case study schools, only the RSHE coordinator engaged with networks outside of the school.

In terms of parent engagement, whilst leaders and teachers reported that they consulted with parents or took their views into consideration, qualitative findings suggested this was not necessarily a formal process, and therefore more work may be needed to get the perspective of parents on the new curriculum.

2 Introduction and methodology

2.1 The statutory guidance

In 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) made Relationships Education compulsory for all primary schools, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory for all secondary schools, and Health Education compulsory for all state-funded primary and secondary schools. These subjects are known collectively as Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE). The statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education[11] sets out the requirements schools must follow when teaching RSHE. It also provides information to support schools to deliver high-quality RSHE to ensure that all young people know how to be safe and healthy, and how to have happy and positive interpersonal relationships.

The content of the statutory RSHE guidance reflects that children and young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world that looks very different from the way it did 20 years ago when schools were required to follow its predecessor, the statutory guidance for Sex and Relationships Education (2000). The new environment presents many opportunities, but also challenges and risks. Children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal, and social lives in a positive way, including online. The current RSHE requirements focus on updated content, so that teaching is relevant for young people today.

To help school leaders follow the guidance, DfE also published the following non-statutory information:

- An implementation guide to help plan and develop RSHE curriculum

- A series of training modules to help train groups of teachers on the topics within the curriculum

- Guides to help schools communicate with parents of primary and secondary age pupils

In June 2021, Ofsted published a review of sexual abuse in schools.[12] This review recommended a carefully sequenced RSHE curriculum which covers sexual harassment and abuse, including online. It also recommended high quality training for teachers delivering RSHE. DfE noted that these findings were further evidence of the need for effective implementation of the RSHE guidance. In response to the review, DfE is developing non-statutory guidance to support schools to teach about sexual harassment and sexual violence effectively.

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[11] Relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[12] Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

2.2 Project overview

In January 2022, DfE commissioned IFF Research, an independent research agency, to carry out research to explore how the 2020 statutory RSHE guidance has been implemented in schools. Central to the research was DfE's RSHE statutory guidance Theory of Change. A Theory of Change is a description of how a programme or intervention is expected to lead to a desired change. In this case, the Theory of Change outlines how RSHE statutory guidance was expected to lead to higher quality RSHE for children and young people, improving the quality of their relationships, health and wellbeing (see Figure 1 below).

As highlighted below, the Theory of Change anticipated that the introduction of statutory guidance would result in a high-quality, well-sequenced RSHE curriculum in schools, which would meet pupil needs in an age and stage appropriate way. This was expected to lead to greater pupil engagement and teachers who felt more confident and supported to deliver an impactful RSHE curriculum. As a result, the Theory of Change predicted that children and young people would have happier and healthier relationships, and improved health and wellbeing.

This evaluation aimed to test whether the assumptions made in the department's Theory of Change are correct, and the envisaged activities, outputs and outcomes can be expected to follow. The overall aim of the research was to understand what else may be needed to ensure pupils learn in an age-appropriate way about respectful and healthy relationships and was to inform DfE's review of the statutory guidance. DfE wants to support all young people to be happy, healthy, and safe, to equip them for adult life and to make a positive contribution to society.

The research was split across three phases:

- An initial development phase, where the Theory of Change and evaluation framework were developed and refined

- A quantitative phase, which surveyed 1,039 school leaders, 953 RSHE coordinators, and 518 teachers delivering RSHE. Fieldwork took place from 13 September to 25 November 2022. The survey took 20-25 minutes to complete and asked participants to share their views on a range of issues including awareness and use of the guidance, teacher confidence in delivering RSHE, access to RSHE training, and parental and pupil engagement with curriculum design

- A qualitative phase, consisting of 14 case studies examining in-depth how schools are implementing the RSHE guidance. The qualitative research was carried out over the 2022/2023 Spring and Summer terms, with recruitment and fieldwork running between 27 February and 23 June 2023.This included interviews with 14 coordinators, 37 teachers, and 39 pupils

This report highlights the key findings from the quantitative survey and the qualitative case studies.

2.3 Survey design process

IFF Research ran a workshop with DfE in March 2022 to further develop the existing RSHE statutory guidance Theory of Change. Theory of Change is a description of how a programme or intervention is expected to lead to a desired change. In this case, the Theory of Change outlines how RSHE statutory guidance was expected to lead to higher quality RSHE for children and young people, improving the quality of their relationships.

Figure 1: RSHE Theory of Change

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes (short term)	Outcomes (mid-term)	Impacts
One stop page for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams & teachers to access RSHE guidance Guidance on engaging with parents, carers and the local community Curriculum planning resources and learning modules Statutory guidance including sexual harassment guidance	Schools provide a forum for parental and local community engagement on the RSHE curriculum Schools conduct a thorough pupil needs assessment, including pupil consultation where possible, to understand what their young people want and need from RSHE Schools assess and subsequently adapt resources to develop and	Parents feel well informed about the RSHE curriculum, that their views have been considered in the curriculum design and that they are equipped to reinforce the learning at home Every school has a well-sequenced, high quality RSHE curriculum which meets their pupil needs in an age and stage appropriate way Teachers receive timely and high quality RSHE	Teachers know that parents have been consulted and so feel supported to deliver the curriculum Young people are well informed about additional sources of support for their RSHE Pupils engage with the RSHE curriculum as they trust it will provide them with adequate knowledge and skills for their relationships, health and wellbeing, throughout their life	CYP exhibit healthier physical and social behaviours. This means the absence of negative behaviours (e.g. fewer STIs, unwanted pregnancies and abusive relationships) and the presence of positive behaviours (e.g. consent, respect, integrity, honesty, love, kindness and empowered sexual behaviour) CYP have better knowledge, skills, and language to manage all their interpersonal relationships, and their health and wellbeing, including when and how to seek help if needed	CYP have happy, healthy, positive and ethical interpersonal relationships that are consensual, respectful, loving, enriching, and free from abuse. This is sustained into adulthood CYP have better health and wellbeing and are able to identify signs of declining health and wellbeing and know where to go for support. This is sustained into adulthood

| Findings and recommendations from the Ofsted review | adequately timetable an RSHE curriculum tailored for their school and pupils

Schools establish a process to assess and meet teacher training needs

Schools establish ways for teachers to network and share good RSHE practices | CPD tailored to their needs

Teachers engage in informal support networks | There is a culture change within the school as the learning is applied by students and reinforced through school values

Teachers feel supported by school leaders to have the time and resources to deliver the RSHE curriculum

Teachers have the knowledge and skills to confidently deliver an impactful RSHE curriculum | | |

The assumptions underpinning the Theory of Change are outlined below:

- Schools read the guidance and are motivated to implement it and use core funding to pay for training and resources to support delivery of RSHE

- Schools have a designated lead for RSHE or PSHE

- Schools will use the flexibility granted to them to choose RSHE resources and training that meets the needs of their pupils and teachers

- Schools will listen to and take on board what pupils say they need and what is age and stage appropriate for them when designing the curriculum

- The continued professional development (CPD) teachers receive is high quality, they are given time to complete the training and they are motivated to apply their learning in the classroom

- Teachers will be able to access school and/or LA-led networks at a local or regional level, to enable sharing of good practice

- The guidance and resources provided by DfE, and partners are sufficient in content and quality to facilitate the teacher and pupil outcomes

- Teachers are capable, have the capacity to deliver the RSHE curriculum to a high quality, including recognising any of their own biases which may impact on their ability to teach RSHE

- Pupils engage in and apply the learning to their lives and interpersonal relationships and are supported to do this by parents, carers and their community

- Education of young people is enough to see the impacts realised, and society will not put barriers in their way or try to undo the learning

An evaluation framework was developed based on this Theory of Change which mapped the Theory of Change onto 'indicators', which are used to track the extent to which the statutory guidance is producing the expected outputs and outcomes. These indicators were used as the basis for the survey questionnaire design (two survey questionnaires were developed, one for school leaders and RSHE coordinators, and one for teachers). They were also used as the basis for qualitative topic guide design (three topic guides were developed, one for teachers and RSHE coordinators, one for primary pupils, and one for secondary pupils).[13]

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[13] This can be found in Figure 1.

2.4. Methodology

2.4.1 Quantitative phase

For the quantitative survey, a random selection of 1,800 schools was drawn from the Get Information About Schools (GIAS) database, including:

- 600 mainstream primary schools

- 450 mainstream secondary schools

- 150 Alternative Provision (AP) schools

- 150 Pupil Referral Units (PRU)

- 150 special schools

- 300 independent schools

An advance letter was sent to the school informing them about the research and inviting the head to take part. They were then called by the IFF Research field team.

School leaders took part in the research (one per school) and were asked to nominate an RSHE coordinator and three teachers from their school to also take part. RSHE coordinators were then also asked to nominate a further three teachers. The survey was completed either online, or over the phone.[14]

The original intention had been to achieve minimum response rates of 600 leaders, 600 RSHE coordinators, and 600 teachers. Mid-fieldwork, the level of response was lower than anticipated for RSHE coordinators and teachers; a challenge compounded by the lower-than-expected number of RSHE coordinators nominated by school leaders, and of teachers nominated by school leaders and RSHE coordinators. In order to increase responses, an open survey link was then sent out to schools outside the original 1,800 schools sampled, and shared by DfE in November 2022.[15] The link included a few questions at the beginning of the survey to check that the respondent was eligible to take part, for example, by ensuring that their role was an RSHE coordinator or a teacher, and that they worked at a school in England that was included in the GIAS database. Using the GIAS database allowed us to get a larger sample which resulted in more robust findings, however, there are potential biases. These biases include:

- Who responded: generally those who are more engaged with the topic are more likely to respond, which could produce a response bias towards the extreme opinions (other positive or negative). However, this is a limitation of most research

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[14] School leaders and RSHE coordinators could take part over the phone or online, depending on their preference. All teachers completed the survey online.
[15] The open survey link was distributed via the following channels: Sex Education Forum, DfE newsletters, DfE governors' and alternative provision networks, Nasen (National Association for Special Education Needs), PSHE leads and RHSE teacher networks, Jigsaw School Hub, PSHE Association, and DfE social media.

- Our limited ability to understand how dynamics played out within the schools: the move to the open link means we were no longer able to compare within schools as we did not have complete data from leaders, coordinators, and teachers, so were unable to pull apart specific school-level findings

2.4.2 Qualitative phase

The sample of schools for the qualitative case studies was made up of schools where a leader completed the quantitative survey and agreed to be recontacted for a follow-up interview. IFF drew a random sample of 56 schools that were emailed about the research before being called by the IFF Research field team.

Each school that agreed to take part was asked to nominate their RSHE coordinator, 2-3 teachers, and up to 3 pairs of pupils for interviewing. The schools were asked to nominate a range of staff who were involved in delivering RSHE to pupils, either as part of their curriculum or as a standalone subject. For pupils, leaders were asked to invite a range of pupils, but in primary schools to only invite pupils older than 10. Interviews were completed face-to-face during school visits. For a few schools, not all interviews could be conducted on the day, and a handful of interviews were therefore carried out over Teams or Zoom at another time. RSHE coordinator and teacher interviews were up to 45 minutes long while pupil interviews were up to 30 minutes long.

2.5 Responses and profile of respondents

2.5.1 Quantitative phase

In total responses were obtained from 1,039 leaders, 953 RSHE coordinators, and 518 teachers.

Table 1: Responses by school type

	Mainstream primaries	Mainstream secondaries	APs	PRUs	Independent schools	Special schools	Total
School leaders	483	226	58	58	132	82	1,039
RSHE coordinators	459	312	17	17	89	59	953
Teachers	217	186	11	11	42	51	518

Table 2: Proportion of responses via open link and the main survey

	Main survey	Open link	Total
School leaders	736	303	1,039
RSHE coordinators	290	663	953
Teachers	223	295	518

The **1,039 school leaders** were composed of headteachers (53% of school leaders surveyed), assistant headteachers (24%) and deputy headteachers (23%).[16]

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[16] All data presented in this report has been weighted to be representative of the population. Please refer to the section below on weighting for an explanation of how weighting was carried out.

All of the **953 RSHE coordinators** who participated in the survey were personally responsible for coordinating the day-to-day running of RSHE at their school or were part of a group of colleagues responsible for this. Coordinators were mostly qualified teachers on the Upper Pay Range (47%) or the Main Pay Range (24%). About one in four (23%) were leading practitioners.

In around a third of cases (36%), the school leader was also the main RSHE coordinator or part of a group of coordinators at their school. This was more common among leaders in mainstream primary schools (40% vs. 31% of mainstream secondary leaders). Where this was the case, the respondent has been counted as the school leader and not as the RSHE coordinator, in order to avoid double counting. However, in some places in the report we have specified this cohort of leaders as 'both leader and the coordinator' to distinguish them from the other school leaders and from RSHE coordinators, who are not playing the same dual role as them.

The survey findings support the assumption that schools have a designated lead for RSHE or PSHE. Of the 1,039 leaders surveyed, all reported that someone (or multiple people) in their school were responsible for the day-to-day running or coordination of RSHE.

A total of **518 teachers** from 364 schools participated in the survey, fairly evenly split between primary (47%) and secondary teachers (53%). Any primary school teacher was eligible, though eligibility for secondary teachers was that they taught RSHE either as a standalone subject or as part of another subject. This was because primary teachers are more generalist and likely to cover a range of topics within their class, whereas secondary teachers teach more specific subjects and may not cover RSHE as much as others. Among secondary teachers the spread by main teaching subject was as follows:

- 35% Humanities subjects (including English, Geography, History, etc.)
- 21% STEM subjects (including Maths, Science, Design and Technology, etc.)
- 13% RSHE
- 19% other subjects (including PE, Art, Music, etc.)
- 6% multiple subjects

Expanding the survey out to an open survey means that an accurate overall response rate cannot be calculated, as it is not possible to know how many people saw the open link. A response rate can only be calculated for those school leaders contacted directly (i.e. the initial 1,800 schools). This response rate was 41%. This is a limitation of the survey, as response rate is an indication of how representative the respondents were - the higher the response rate, the more representative the survey data will be of schools in general.

2.5.2 Qualitative phase

The aim of the qualitative phase of the research was to conduct 14 case studies with schools that took part in the quantitative survey. The breakdown of these case studies is available in Table 3.

Table 3: Target number of case studies

Phase	Key Stage/s	Ages included	No. of case studies
Primary	KS2	9-11 years	7
Secondary	KS3 – KS5	12-18 years	6
All through	KS2 – KS5	9-18 years	1

The total number of case studies was 14.

In addition, the 14 schools that took part included:

- 1 Alternative Provision (AP) school

- 1 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

- 1 special school

- 6 schools that experienced challenges with implementing the guidance (2 primaries, 4 secondaries)

- 4 faith schools (3 Christian, 1 Sikh)

- A geographic range (2 from East of England, 3 from London, 1 from North East, 1 from North West, 3 from South East, 1 from South West, 1 from West Midlands and 2 from Yorkshire and the Humber)

- A range of FSM proportion (2 with FSM proportion 2, 4 with FSM proportion 3 and 8 with FSM proportion 5)

2.6 Interpreting the findings

Data presented in this report is from a sample of leaders, RSHE coordinators and teachers rather than the total population of each group. While responses were weighted

to ensure the final data was more representative of school type and of the overall teacher workforce,[17] care still needs to be taken in how results are interpreted.

Differences between sub-groups are only commented on in the text if they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, i.e., statistically we can be 95% confident that the differences are 'real' differences and not a result of the fact that the findings are based on a sample of schools rather than a census of all schools.

When interpreting the results, it is important to consider that:

- Due to rounding to the nearest whole number, percentages may not total to exactly 100%

- Where averages are reported, the mean average is used as standard, unless otherwise specified

- It should be noted that, due to initial low response rates and the move to an open link rather than referrals, within school analysis was not possible

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[17] For further information on how the data were weighted, please see Annex A

3 Awareness and use of RSHE guidance

The first key theme addressed by the Theory of Change concerned schools' awareness of the guidance, whether they had used it and how useful they found it.

3.1 Theory of change for awareness and use of RSHE guidance

As illustrated in Figure 2 the main 'inputs' provided by DfE to schools were the curriculum planning implementation guides, Train the Trainer programmes, training modules, the statutory guidance, and recommendations from the Ofsted review. The aim was that these sources of guidance and resources would support schools with assessing and subsequently adapting resources to develop and adequately timetable an RSHE curriculum tailored for their school and pupils. There were no direct outputs or short-term outcomes linked to the inputs and activities relating to the awareness and use of the guidance in the Theory of Change. This element of the Theory of Change is the focus of this chapter.

Figure 2: Theory of Change – Awareness and use of RSHE guidance

Inputs	Activities
Curriculum planning resources and learning modules Statutory guidance including sexual harassment guidance Findings and recommendations from the Ofsted review	Schools assess and subsequently **adapt resources** to develop and adequately timetable an RSHE curriculum tailored for their school and pupils

The findings in this chapter focus on:

- Awareness of the statutory guidance

- Use of the guidance, including usefulness and challenges with implementation

A key assumption held by DfE was that schools would read the guidance and be motivated to use it to support the delivery of RSHE.[18] This section discusses the extent to which the assumption is true by exploring whether respondents had heard of and read

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[18] This could be done in a number of ways such as in developing their curriculum or as a form of 'checking' to see if their curriculum matches the requirements.

the guidance, whether and in what ways they had used it, and how useful they found it, and whether and what challenges were encountered implementing the guidance.

3.2 Awareness of the statutory guidance

The survey asked school leaders, RSHE coordinators and teachers whether they had heard of the statutory guidance and if so, whether they had read it themselves. Nearly all leaders (99%) and coordinators (98%) had heard of the guidance and over nine in ten had read it themselves (91% of leaders and 95% of coordinators).

Slightly fewer teachers had heard of (86%) or read the guidance (69%). Teachers on the Upper Pay Range were more likely to have heard of the guidance (90%), while Early Career Teachers were less likely to have done so (75%). It should be noted, that whilst a majority of teachers had heard of the guidance a substantive proportion of teachers had not heard of the guidance (8%). Considering the guidance is statutory this demonstrates an area where more is needed to make sure that all teaching staff are aware and engaged with the guidance.

The qualitative interviews confirmed these findings, with all coordinators and most teachers stating they had heard of the statutory guidance, but far fewer teachers than coordinators saying they had actually read it in depth. Again, a few teachers had not heard of it at all. All coordinators interviewed said that they had read the guidance, which is positive. However, given the statutory status of the new curriculum the low engagement of teachers requires further consideration.

One key reason why only a few teachers had read the guidance was that teachers perceived it as the coordinator's role to be familiar with policy, rather than theirs. Teachers generally trusted that the coordinator would design an RSHE curriculum that was in-line with the guidance and would pass on anything teachers needed to know to them directly. This was alluded to by one teacher, who explained that staff were usually too busy due to very heavy workloads:

> "If I am not sure about anything, I would ask [the coordinator] …the workload does not give you time to read anything! We are not just dealing with teaching—we are dealing with behaviour, medical issues and so many different things at the same time." - *Primary school teacher in a special school*

Additionally, a few of the schools relied on third parties to supply their RSHE resources, with the understanding that these would cover what was written in the guidance. In these schools, the teachers were less familiar with the guidance. Third parties mentioned by coordinators and teachers included Jigsaw, TenTen, Kapow, Brook, and local councils who had set up schemes or groups to support RSHE education. In some instances, RSHE coordinators admitted little interaction with the guidance due to their reliance on third party support.

"I'm probably a little bit ignorant to it [the statutory guidance]. I haven't really delved into it too much. But because of the [local council scheme] documents that have come from it, people above me have done the hard work. I've just sort of taken their work and run with it. The person who created the [local council scheme] plan, he works within this locality, and we know him directly. So, I can literally ask him anything." - *Primary RSHE coordinator*

3.3 Using the statutory guidance

This section covers how the statutory guidance was used, and reasons why it may not have been used by leaders, coordinators or teachers.

3.3.1 Ways the guidance has been used

Almost all leaders that had read the guidance, or who had a colleague that had read the guidance, were using / planning to use the guidance in the following ways:

- To create school policy (99%)

- To guide lesson and curriculum planning (97%)

- To know how to consult with parents and communities (96%)

- To audit how well their existing provision stacked up against the guidance (96%)

More than nine in ten leaders had already used the guidance to create school policy (96%) and to guide lesson and curriculum planning (94%). Comparatively fewer leaders had already used the guidance to audit their provision (83%), but around one in eight (13%) planned to use it for this purpose.

Figure 3: Ways in which school leaders had used the RSHE guidance

NET: Used or planning to

	Used in this way	Not used, but plan to	No plans to use	NET: Used or planning to
To create school policy	96%*	3%	1%	99%
To guide lesson and curriculum planning	94%	3%*	2%	97%
To know how to consult with parents and communities	89%	8%	2%	96%
To audit how well our existing provision stacks up against the guidance	83%*	13%	2%	96%

■ Used in this way ■ Not used, but plan to ■ No plans to use

Source: D2. Have you or your school used this guidance in any of the following ways, do you plan to, or have you no specific plans to use it in each of the following ways? Base: Leaders who have read the guidance themselves or someone else at the school has read it (1,027).

Relatively high levels of coordinators spoke in interviews about using the guidance in to audit the curriculum, noting how they used the guidance to measure how well their existing provision stacked up against the guidance. This coincides with the quantitative research with leaders where 96% did or planned to use the guidance to audit their existing provision. One school's former RSHE coordinator said they were already doing "about three quarters" of what was outlined in the guidance, but it flagged up some areas they needed to focus on more. These areas included FGM, domestic abuse, marriage, cancer awareness, and menopause.

> "The guidance was useful, because it showed how much we already covered. It was reassuring." - *Secondary RSHE coordinator, alternative provision*

It was also common for coordinators to speak of using the guidance to guide lesson and curriculum planning. Some teachers did this too. They reported using the guidance to see what topics they were missing and what they needed to spend more time on.

The survey data showed that there were differences in the ways that primary and secondary school leaders had used the guidance. Secondary leaders were more likely than primary leaders to have used the guidance for lesson and curriculum planning (98% vs. 93%) and to audit their RSHE provision (87% vs. 82%). Conversely, primary leaders were more likely than secondary leaders to say they had used the guidance to support parent and community consultations (90% vs. 84%). It should be noted that this research did not engage with parents directly, therefore we were unable to confirm this data with parents and/or the community.

In contrast, no such difference came out of the qualitative interviews; coordinators interviewed who said they used the guidance to audit the school's teaching and plan lessons and the curriculum were from a mixture of primary and secondary schools.

Survey findings indicate 2% of school leaders had neither used nor were planning to use the guidance to guide lesson planning and curriculum planning. These leaders were more likely to be from schools in the South East (6% compared to 2% on average), from small to medium sized schools (7% schools with 101-150 pupils compared to 2% on average), and from Christian schools (4% compared to 2% on average).

These findings did not emerge in interviews, and there was no marked difference between regions from the qualitative interviews. Whilst this figure is low, it should be noted that all leaders should be using the guidance for this purpose. The survey did not collect data on the reasons for why leaders were not using the statutory guidance, and further research would be needed to capture this.

Around a fifth of leaders (22%) said they had used the guidance in other ways than the four items they were prompted with (those listed in Figure 3.). Some of these other uses included curriculum planning across other subjects, informing school governance, and for staff training.

One way of using the guidance that was not covered in the survey but was mentioned by a teacher and a coordinator at the same school during the qualitative research was that they used the guidance to compare different RSHE programmes offered by third parties, to choose which to purchase. They ended up picking TenTen because they felt it covered everything that was outlined in the statutory guidance:

> "Bringing in the TenTen programme gave more structure, focus and coverage… TenTen gave us that structure, but we chose that programme because it met DfE requirements. We wouldn't have got TenTen without DfE guidance." - *Primary school teacher, faith school*

At another school, during the qualitative interview the coordinator also used the guidance to assess the comprehensiveness of the curriculum (supplied by the charity, Brook) that they were already using, and decided it was satisfactory.

Furthermore, at a secondary special school, the coordinator said they planned to use the guidance to create assessment objectives for pupils:

> "Next thing for me is creating an assessment criteria using DfE outcomes, [I] need to create a spreadsheet using DfE expected outcomes and then [I'll be] making sure our children are able to access those outcomes." - *Secondary RSHE Coordinator, special school*

3.3.2 Teacher use of the guidance

Among the 69% of teachers who had read the guidance, around two-thirds (64%) had used it in some way, with the remainder relatively evenly split between those who planned to use it (16%) and those who did not (17%; 3% were not sure). This equates to 45% of all teachers having used the guidance and a further 11% planning to do so.

Teachers in schools with the lowest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM were significantly more likely to have used the guidance compared to teachers in schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils (79% vs. 65%). As the case studies were predominantly with the highest proportion of FSM (8 case studies with FSM at quintile 5), we can infer that whilst teachers themselves are often not using the guidance in schools with a high proportion of FSM, there are processes in place to ensure the guidance is used, for example, via the RSHE coordinator or via a pre-made curriculum that the school uses instead. Given that most case studies were high proportions of FSM, the reason why teachers in schools with lowest FSM eligibility were more likely to use guidance could not be adequately explored in the qualitative research.

Teachers that had used the guidance were asked what they had used it for. As shown in Figure 4, most had used it to develop lesson plans (70%) and to check how well lesson plans stacked up against the guidance (56%). Just under half of teachers that had used the guidance (44%) had used it to create longer term curriculum plans (this was more common among secondary school teachers (52%) than primary teachers (36%).

Figure 4: How teachers have used or plan to use guidance

	Teachers who have used the guidance	Teachers that plan to use the guidance
When developing lessons plans	70%	76%
To check how well my lesson plans stack up against guidance	56%	61%
To create longer term curriculum plans	44%	29%
To know how to consult with parents and communities	34%	36%
To gather classroom materials for use in lessons	34%	35%
Staff training and guidance	1%	2%
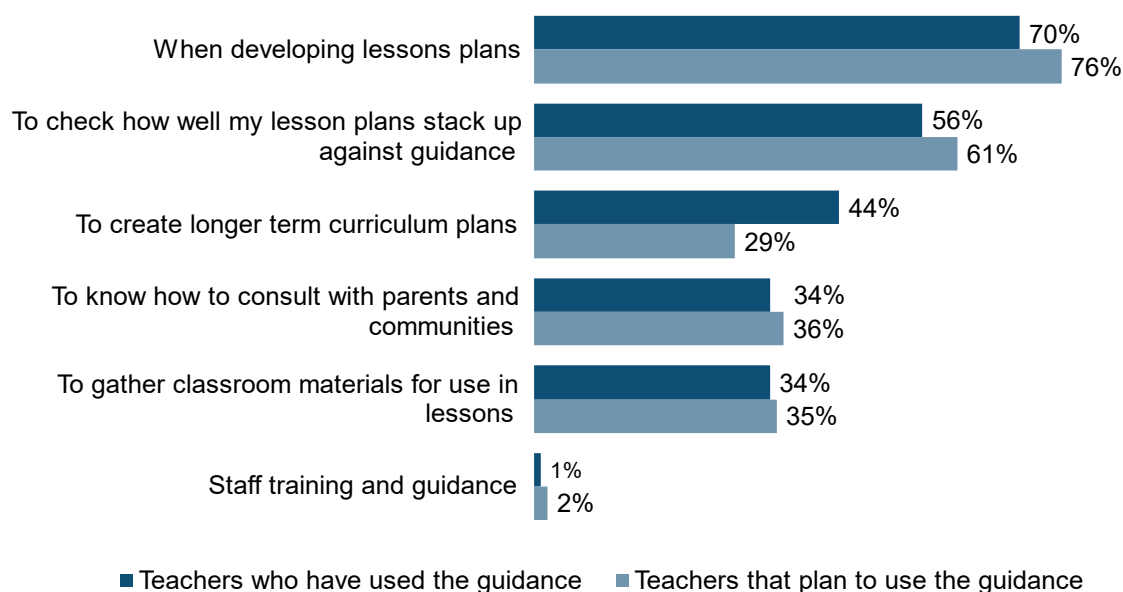
Source: D5_1. How have you used the statutory guidance? Base: Teachers who have used the guidance (235). D5_2. How do you plan to use the statutory guidance? Base: Teachers who plan to use guidance (59).
Caution low base.

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Figure 4 also shows how the 16% of teachers who planned to use the guidance expect to do so. Here also, teachers most frequently mentioned that they planned to use the guidance for lesson planning (76%) or to evaluate their lesson plans (61%). However, the base sizes for this population are small, and therefore these findings should be treated as indicative.[19]

In interviews, most teachers said they did not use the guidance at all. But a few teachers who said they did use it said they used it to guide creating their lesson plans and found that largely helpful.

3.3.3 Reasons for not using the guidance

Teachers who had read the guidance but not used it yet (115 respondents) were asked why this was the case in the quantitative survey. By far, the most common reason was that others in their school had taken the lead on sharing the implications of the guidance on RSHE delivery (70%). A third (34%) said the reason was not having the time to read the guidance thoroughly. Very few said the reason was that they did not find the guidance useful (2%), but some put it down to it lacking practical guidance (7%).

One teacher from a secondary special school said in the qualitative case study that she tried to use the guidance to plan her lessons, but she felt it did not match her expectations and its focus on mainstream schools meant it was not helpful for her.

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[19] A consequence of small base sizes means that the data is less reliable and robust.

Figure 5: Reasons why teachers have not used the guidance

Reason	Percentage
Others in my school have taken the lead on detailing the implications of the guidance for those teaching RSHE	70%
Not had the time to read the guidance thoroughly	34%
What I was teaching already met the guidance	20%
There was not enough practical guidance	7%
I did not find the guidance useful	2%
Don't know	2%
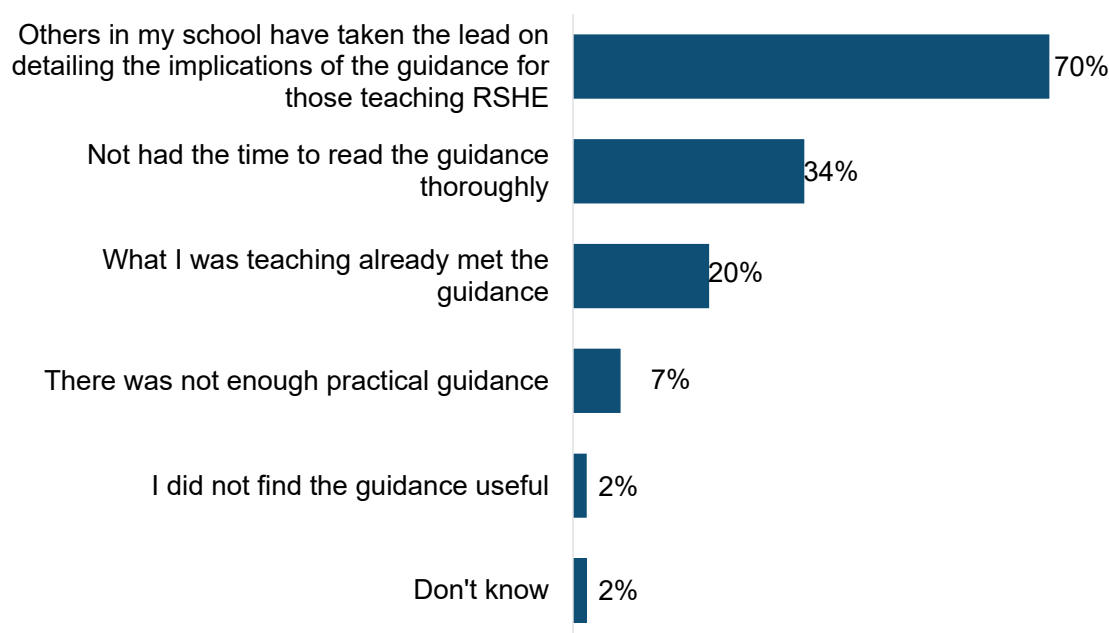
Source: D4. What are the main reasons why you have not used the statutory guidance? Base: Teachers who have read the guidance but not yet used it (115).

3.3.4. Usefulness of the guidance

The majority of leaders and coordinators found the guidance useful. Although a similar majority of teachers also found the guidance useful, they were more likely than leaders to say it was 'quite' rather than 'very' useful.

As shown in Figure 6, nearly all leaders (over nine in ten) reported that the guidance had been 'quite' or 'very' useful where they had used it to create the school policy (97%), to audit how well their existing provision stacked up against the guidance (97%), to guide lesson and curriculum planning (93%), and to know how to consult with parents and communities (92%). In three of these areas, more leaders had found the guidance 'very' rather than 'quite' useful. The exception was where it had been used to guide lesson and curriculum planning.

The interviews largely reflected these findings. Coordinators and teachers felt the guidance was particularly useful when it came to identifying gaps in their current RSHE teaching. A few said it was good to have it to refer to if they were unsure about whether the resources or curriculum, they had bought from a third party were comprehensive enough.

> "It was really helpful to see and get a whole picture of what we were already doing and what we needed to add in or do additionally." -
> *Secondary, RSHE Coordinator*

Additionally, one coordinator and one teacher from different schools spoke independently of feeling reassured that they would be able to use the guidance to back up their teaching of certain topics if there were any challenges from parents, although it was clear from the coordinator that this had not actually happened at their school yet.

> "It's good to have those objectives written, I guess, in black and white. But when you're using a scheme [a third party curriculum], you don't really need to refer to the guidance, because good schemes will cover all of that. Anyway, it's just good as a reference. And it's good if parents did come to us and say, 'why are you teaching my child this?', because we can share that guidance with them. But like we said, we've not had to do that, because no parents have asked for it." - *Primary RSHE Coordinator*

> "I am grateful for the redraft of the rules and that it's statutory now. Before parents could just say that they are not doing that, which left children vulnerable. Now we can openly talk about what grooming looks like, so we are protecting the kids." - *Teacher, all-through, faith school*

Where RSHE coordinators had used the guidance in the ways listed in Figure 6, a similar proportion (nine in ten on average) also found the guidance useful.

Teachers who reported using the guidance were asked about the usefulness of the guidance for preparing and teaching RSHE. The vast majority (96%) had found it useful, though it was more often described as 'quite' useful (68%) rather than 'very' useful (28%) in this regard.

Figure 6: Perceived usefulness of the statutory guidance

NET:
Useful

To create school policy: Very useful 61%, Quite useful 35%, Not very useful 2%, Not useful at all 1% — 97%

To guide lesson and curriculum planning: Very useful 43%, Quite useful 50%, Not very useful 5%, 1% — 93%

To know how to consult with parents and communities: Very useful 48%, Quite useful 44%, Not very useful 6%, 1% — 92%

To audit how well our existing provision stacks up against the guidance: Very useful 54%, Quite useful 42%, Not very useful 1%, 1% — 97%

■ Very useful   ■ Quite useful   ■ Not very useful   ■ Not useful at all

How useful was guidance in helping teachers prepare and teach RSHE?

Teachers: Usefulness of the guidance for preparing and teaching RSHE: Very useful 28%, Quite useful 68%, Not very useful 3% — 96%

■ Very useful   ■ Quite useful   ■ Not very useful   ■ Not at all useful

Source: D5_1-4. On a scale from not at all useful to very useful, how useful have you found the statutory guidance for the following...? Leaders that have used guidance…To create school policy (980); To guide lesson and curriculum planning (971); To know how to consult with parent and communities (885); To audit how well our existing provision stacks up against the guidance (845).
D6 How useful was the statutory guidance in helping you prepare and teach RSHE?
Teachers who have used the guidance (235)

In interviews, the story was different. Teachers said that the guidance was not particularly useful for helping them plan the content or delivery of lessons. They felt there was not enough detail on how to teach topics, what language and vocabulary should be used (particularly when teaching young children), and how to gauge the age-appropriateness of topics for students. One teacher said it felt more like a specification of requirements rather than 'guidance'.

> "Obviously it tells us what you have to cover, but it doesn't tell you how to cover things." - *Primary RSHE Coordinator*

These findings raise an interesting disparity between teachers and leaders/coordinators, in terms of how useful they were finding the guidance. Ultimately the guidance needs to be helpful for and used by teachers, suggesting more should be done to bridge this gap and ensure the guidance addresses the needs of teachers as well as leaders and coordinators.

3.4 Challenges with implementing the guidance

School leaders and coordinators who had either used or were planning to use the guidance were asked which, if any, of a number of challenges their school had faced in implementing the statutory guidance. As shown in Figure 7, most leaders and coordinators reported facing challenges. Only 20% of leaders and 15% of RSHE coordinators said they had not encountered challenges.

- The most common three challenges, all of which were around staff confidence and training, were:

- Lack of perceived confidence among teaching staff (45% of leaders; 52% of coordinators)

- Lack of access to high quality RSHE training or CPD (32% of leaders; 37% of coordinators)

- Costs of training or external support (28% of leaders; 33% of coordinators)

As shown in Figure 7, coordinators were more likely than leaders to report most of the listed challenges. This is likely due to the fact that coordinators have a more 'hands on' approach to implementing the RSHE guidance.

Figure 7: Challenges with implementing the RSHE guidance

Challenge	Leaders	Coordinators
Lack of confidence among teaching staff	45%	52%*
Lack of access to high quality RSHE training or CPD	32%	37%*
Costs of training or external support	28%	33%*
Lack of timetabled time for teaching RSHE	27%*	32%*
Lack of time to consider guidance	21%	27%*
Lack of suitable materials for pupils needs at my school	19%	20%
Lack of access to teaching resources	18%	23%*
Lack of support from parents	12%	10%
The RSHE guidance clashes with local community values	12%*	6%
No challenges faced	20%*	15%

Source: D6. What challenges, if any, has your school faced in implementing the statutory RSHE guidance? Leaders and coordinators of schools that have used or are planning to use the statutory guidance. Leaders (1,025). Coordinators (933). Chart shows all responses given by at least 10% of leaders and coordinators combined. * *Where leader and coordinator responses are significantly different.*

During interviews, several challenges were mentioned by coordinators and teachers. One issue that was frequently mentioned throughout interviews was the difficulty fitting the teaching of all the material required by the statutory guidance into an already stretched timetable. Some coordinators had had to battle with school leaders to get more RSHE lessons into the timetable.

> "I get why it became statutory. It is important. […] But they bring out paper after paper saying, 'you have to teach this' but they don't give you any more time in the day." - *Primary, RSHE Coordinator, faith school*

> "The only change [I would make to the guidance] would be an awareness of time, and recognising how we're meant to fit that in." - *Secondary, RSHE Coordinator*

> "At the time we were hoping we could slot the new statutory elements into our existing curriculum, but it doesn't work out like that. So, of course the statutory guidance is useful, but it creates an awful lot more work to do." - *Primary RSHE Coordinator*

A few spoke about the guidance being very long and how it was difficult to find the time to properly read and digest it.

> "Thinking from other schools' perspectives, someone who's got less experience might find it a bit overwhelming, in terms of the scope of it, and the weight of some of the issues included in it, like FGM. It could do with being a little bit more concise." - *Secondary RSHE Coordinator, alternative provision*

> "As teachers we are quite short on time, it needs to be a lot more concise." - *RSHE Coordinator, all-through school*

Teachers from a special school spoke of the guidance being too targeted at mainstream schools, which was no surprise to them but still significantly limited its usefulness to them. They said they needed appropriate materials provided to assist with teaching, such as models rather than paper handouts. They also needed more support with how to teach topics to children who may have different levels of understanding and knowledge than children who are not disabled.

> "We have the resources, but they are not meeting our needs in special schools. DfE is not doing well for us. We need more sensory and modelling resources rather than paper resources. We have to teach for knowledge rather than tick boxes for DfE. […] We can have guidance but how can we implement it if we don't have the resources?" - *Secondary Teacher, special school*

[Teaching the topic 'Discrimination'] "is a hard enough topic for a child who doesn't have a learning difficulty. Children like mine, teaching them discrimination, that's a challenge. Children who are pre-verbal, teaching them about discrimination, that's a mammoth task." - *Secondary Teacher, special school*

These comments raise an important point about the importance of ensuring that the guidance provides support to special schools and for children with SEND. However, this finding came from the qualitative research only and differences in school type was not highlighted in the survey, which suggests further exploration of this topic may be required.

Finally, a teacher spoke of wishing there was more in the guidance on how to teach and navigate challenges in lessons about the LGBT community. That year, there had been some Year 11 pupils in the school who had refused to be in these lessons. They felt there was nothing in the guidance to help teachers manage situations like this.

In the survey, it emerged that leaders and coordinators in secondary schools were more likely than their primary counterparts to have experienced a number of the challenges:

- Secondary leaders were more likely than primary leaders to report facing challenges around staff confidence (52% vs. 43%) and access to training (39% vs. 29%)

- Secondary coordinators were more likely than primary coordinators to report challenges around the costs of training (40% secondary coordinators vs. 29% primary)

Leaders in schools with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM were also more likely to mention challenges around staff confidence compared to leaders in schools with the lowest proportion of FSM eligible pupils (49% vs. 38%).

3.5 Areas for more detail in any further guidance

School leaders and coordinators who had read the guidance themselves were asked what areas they would like more detail or information on. Almost all leaders and coordinators would like further information about particular aspects of the guidance (93% of leaders and 97% of coordinators). A small minority (7% leaders and 3% coordinators) said there was no further detail needed.

The top two areas for more detail, mentioned by over six in ten leaders and coordinators, were:

- Classroom materials such as videos or posters (66% leaders and 69% coordinators)

- The teacher training that is available (63% leaders and 65% coordinators)

Around half (47% leaders and 51% coordinators) wanted more information on complete curriculum plans suggesting that not all schools were content with their current RSHE curriculum.

Although both groups largely showed a similar trend, leaders and coordinators showed significant differences in interest in these areas:

- Leaders were more likely than coordinators to want more detail on engaging with parents (43% vs. 37%) and delivering RSHE as part of a whole school approach (39% vs. 33%)

- Coordinators more likely than school leaders to want more detail on lesson plans (47% vs. 40%)

Other areas that school leaders and coordinators would like more detail on are outlined in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Areas on which leaders and coordinators would like more detail

Secondary leaders were more likely than primary leaders to say they would like further guidance on classroom materials (76% vs. 63%), teacher training (73% vs. 60%), checking provision against guidance (64% vs. 53%), and complete curriculum plans (61% vs. 43%).

Other sub-group differences based on school size and religious character were:

- Smaller schools (51-100 pupils) were more likely to want more detail on classroom materials (88% vs 66% overall); and

- Non-religious schools were more likely than average to want more detail on classroom materials (75% vs. 66%), complete curriculum plans (57% vs. 47%), and lesson plans (51% vs. 40%). They were also more likely than Christian schools to want more detail on teacher training (67% vs. 55%)

It was clear from interviews that coordinators and teachers wanted more in the guidance on *how* to teach the new curriculum rather than just cover *what* to teach. They mentioned how useful having details like top tips, examples of good practice, and signposts to useful resources would be, as well as more information on content to put in lesson plans.

A few primary school teachers said that they needed more information about what language to use and what vocabulary they should be teaching children. This was often related to language around sexuality and gender.

> "For primary teachers, we need more specificity." - *Coordinator, primary*

Coordinators and teachers also discussed the difficulty of deciding the age-appropriateness of topics, and how having more information about this would be beneficial.

As previously mentioned, one teacher spoke of wanting more information on how to teach about the LGBT community and navigate challenges from students that may arise in or about these lessons, such as students refusing to attend.

3.6 Key findings

This section summarises the key findings in this chapter examining the elements of the Theory of Change concerned with awareness and use of the statutory guidance.

The survey and case study findings suggest that the vast majority of schools had engaged with the key inputs (the statutory guidance and supplementary information), and of those, most said it had helped them assess and adapt resources to develop a suitable RSHE curriculum.

Assumption: *Schools read the guidance and are motivated to implement the guidance, and use core funding to pay for training and resources to support delivery of RSHE*

Key findings

- Nearly all leaders (99%) and coordinators (98%) had heard of the guidance, and over nine in ten had read it themselves (91% of leaders and 95% of coordinators). Slightly fewer teachers had heard of (86%) or read the guidance (69% of all

teachers). It should be noted that a substantial minority (8%) of teachers had not heard of the statutory guidance, which is a concern given its statutory status

- All coordinators interviewed said they had heard of the guidance and had read it. Most had used it to audit and improve their curriculum. Almost all of the teachers interviewed said they had heard of the guidance but only a few had actually read it and fewer had used it to inform their teaching or the content of their lessons

- There were desires from leaders and coordinators for more information on certain aspects of the curriculum (93% of leaders and 97% of coordinators), particularly classroom resources and training for teachers

Conclusion: this suggests that schools were engaging with the guidance, and most were using it to improve the curriculum. However, gaps were mentioned with regards to training and resources for classroom materials and training for delivery of RSHE lessons. This came out particularly for special schools who found that training and resources were more targeted to mainstream schools. Whilst schools appear to be using the guidance and training there is some variation in how useful they found it to be. The assumed activities of the Theory of Change appear to be happening, however there could be more resource and training to support this, which could help schools engage with and deliver RSHE.

Activity: Schools assess and subsequently adapt resources to develop and adequately timetable an RSHE curriculum tailored for their school and pupils.

Key findings

- Almost all schools (97% leaders and 95% coordinators) reported that they were using or planning to use the guidance to guide lesson and curriculum planning, and the vast majority (93% of leaders) said that the guidance was useful for this

- Most teachers had either used the guidance (45%) or planned to do so (11%). However, 11% of teachers had not used the guidance and had no plans to do so, despite having read it. A substantive minority of teachers had either not read the guidance (13%), or not heard of the guidance at all (8%)

- Of the teachers who had used the guidance, 96% had found it useful for preparing and teaching RSHE. It was most commonly used for lesson plan development (by 70% of teachers using the guidance)

- Many coordinators confirmed in interviews that they were using the guidance to develop their school's curriculum. Where this was not the case, it was because school were using a curriculum supplied by a third party that had already been developed using the guidance

- Coordinators and teachers indicated that timetabling could be an issue. Timetables were often stretched already, and a couple of coordinators mentioned having to push hard to get more time for RSHE lessons. It was a challenge to fit all

of the teaching required by the guidance into the time teachers were given. Some said they wished they had more time for it

Conclusion: leaders and coordinators were successfully delivering the RSHE curriculum and ensured it was tailored to the school, with leaders and coordinators generally cascading information to teachers. Whilst respondents did not raise this format as a problem the research did not capture how effective this method was. Further research may be needed to see how well schools are assessing and adapting resources to fit their school. When teachers reported using the guidance there were positive reports, but teachers reported lack of time to fully adequately engage with the guidance. As time was highlighted as an issue, teachers may be more likely to use the guidance if they have more time to do so. The findings suggest that this activity in the Theory of change was met.

Output: Every school has a well-sequenced, high quality RSHE curriculum which meets their pupil needs in an age and stage appropriate way

Key findings

- 27% of schools said that a lack of timetabled time for teaching RSHE was a challenge for implementing the guidance and nearly half (47%) would have liked more information on complete curriculum plans, suggesting that not all schools were content with their current RSHE curriculum and that more time allocated to RSHE lessons could be useful

- In addition to getting more time for RSHE in the timetable, teachers and coordinators said in interviews that more detail on how to tailor topics in an age-appropriate way and assess when students are ready to learn particular topics would be useful. Many teachers also expressed a desire for more detail in general on how to teach each of the topics and – for primary teachers, in particular – what vocabulary to teach and use in teaching

- Teachers also highlighted that they would benefit from more top tips, such as examples of good practice, signposts to useful resources and information on how to put content into lesson plans

Conclusion: time is a consistent problem raised by schools, which may be impacting the quality of the RSHE curriculum delivered. In addition, schools want more detailed best practice and top tips, such as how to tailor topics in an age-appropriate way. With more time available to staff, schools would potentially have the space and resource to be able to develop this but are unable to do this with current capacity constraints. The findings suggest that this output in the Theory of Change has been met.

3.7 Awareness and use of guidance conclusions

The findings suggest that all schools were aware of the guidance and were generally positively engaged with the guidance as a way to help develop and structure their RSHE

curriculum. There was some variance with this engagement across schools, particularly in special schools who reported lower engagement with the guidance. Engagement with the guidance was primarily done through the coordinators, the majority of whom had read the guidance. However, considering that the guidance is statutory, these rates are below expectations. Compared with coordinators, teachers were reportedly less likely to have read the guidance themselves. There was also a sizable minority of teachers who had no engagement with the guidance at all.

More work may be needed to improve teacher engagement with the guidance, as schools where teachers were more aware of the guidance highlighted positive impacts, particularly around planning lessons. However, additional research would be needed to firmly conclude the consequences of teachers' relying on coordinators, as this fell out the scope of this work.

The primary challenge raised by schools was lack of time, which coordinators and teachers felt had an impact on their ability to engage with and implement the curriculum as they would have wanted. Time constraints could be a reason why teachers were not engaging more. In addition, coordinators and teachers highlighted a desire for the guidance to include more content on how to teach rather than simply just what to teach, as well as wanting the guidance to provide more specific support on harder to teach topic areas. The findings suggest that overall good progress has been made in relation to this element of the Theory of Change, and that the assumed activities and outputs have been met, although implementation appear not to have occur in the way that was envisaged. Further research may be required to understand how best to address some of the gaps that were identified in the research.

Delivering a tailored RSHE curriculum and pupil engagement

The second key theme addressed by the Theory of Change was around the delivery of a tailored RSHE curriculum appropriately suited to pupils' needs, in order to have a positive impact on pupil engagement and culture change within the school.

4.1 Theory of Change – Delivery of tailored RSHE curriculum

The aspects of the Theory of Change that cover the elements discussed in this chapter are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Theory of Change – Deliver of tailored RSHE curriculum and pupil engagement

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes (short term)
Curriculum planning resources and learning modules Statutory guidance including sexual harassment guidance Findings and recommendations from the Ofsted review	Schools conduct a thorough **pupil needs assessment,** including **pupil consultation** where possible, to understand what their young people want and need from RSHE Schools assess and subsequently **adapt resources** to develop and adequately timetable an RSHE curriculum tailored for their school and pupils	Every school has a **well-sequenced, high quality RSHE curriculum** which meets their pupil needs in an age and stage appropriate way	Young people are well informed about **additional sources of support** for their RSHE **Pupils engage with the RSHE curriculum** as they trust it will provide them with adequate knowledge and skills for their relationships, health and wellbeing, throughout their life There is a **culture change** within the school as the learning is applied by students and reinforced through **school values**

DfE held a series of underlying assumptions of what needs to happen for the RSHE curriculum to be implemented effectively and for change to happen. In order to achieve the outcomes that DfE is looking for from the new RSHE curriculum, the provision of the statutory guidance, curriculum planning resources, and recommendations of the Ofsted review need to translate into schools putting in place a well-sequenced, high-quality curriculum which meets their pupils' needs in an age and stage appropriate way. DfE's expectation was that this would happen via schools conducting a pupil needs assessment and pupil consultation, which would feed into resources and a curriculum tailored for the school and its pupils. The resulting RSHE curriculum that meets pupil needs should support pupils to engage with it as they trust it to provide them with adequate knowledge and skills. It should also support young people to be well informed about additional sources of support for their RSHE, and result in a culture change within the school as the learning is applied by students and reinforced through school values. This section seeks to test these assumptions. It does not discuss the extent to which schools assess and subsequently adapt resources to develop and adequately timetable an RSHE curriculum tailored for their school and pupils, which was discussed in the previous chapter.

The findings in this chapter explore the degree to which the assumptions held by DfE were accurate. The chapter covers:

- The approach to delivering RSHE, including the parts of RSHE covered, whole-school integration of RSHE and the use of external partners

- Pupil engagement with RSHE, including the extent to which pupils' views were considered, and the confidence that RSHE content is suited to pupils' needs

This chapter also explores the underlying assumption that schools will listen to and take on board what pupils say they need and what is age and stage appropriate for them when designing the curriculum.

4.2 School approach to delivering RSHE

This section explores the extent to which schools have a well-sequenced, high quality RSHE curriculum which meets their pupils' needs in an age and stage appropriate way; and the extent to which there is a culture change within the schools as the learning is applied by students and reinforced through school values.

4.2.1 Integration: A whole school approach

The statutory guidance states that schools should deliver RSHE in the context of a whole school approach, so that RSHE subjects are supported by or aligned with the following:

- Schools' wider policies on behaviour, inclusion, respect for equality and diversity, safeguarding and bullying

- Wider education on healthy lifestyles and wellbeing

- School culture, values and ethos

- Pastoral care

- Staff training

- Schools' work with external agencies

The integrated approach aims to support pupils to be safe, happy, and prepared for their life beyond school.

Findings from the survey suggest that schools believe that this aspect of the guidance was largely being followed, with most schools reporting that the RSHE curriculum was being delivered within the context of a wider whole-school approach. At least nine in ten leaders reported that the RSHE curriculum was very or somewhat integrated with each of the areas they were asked about, listed in Figure 10.

Figure 10: How integrated RSHE was with other areas in the school

| | NET: Very or somewhat integrated | |
	Leaders	Coordinators
Safeguarding policies — 88% / 11% / 1%	99%	99%
Pastoral care — 85% / 14% / 1%	99%	98%
Anti-bullying and anti harassment policies — 79% / 20% / 1%	99%	98%
Behaviour policies — 77% / 22% / 1%	98%	96%
School culture, values & ethos — 76% / 23% / 1%	99%	98%
SEND / inclusion / equality policies — 70% / 28% / 2%	97%	92%
Mental health and wellbeing policies — 69% / 27% / 1%	96%	93%
Your school's work with external agencies — 43% / 48% / 6%	91%	81%
Staff training — 41% / 55% / 4%	95%	85%

■ Very well integrated ■ Somewhat integrated ■ Not at all integrated

Source: F1. How well aligned or integrated do you think the RSHE curriculum is with the following areas at your school? Bar chart shows leader results, base all leaders (1,039). Right hand column shows all coordinators, base (953).

At least three-quarters of school leaders said that the RSHE curriculum was very aligned or integrated with the following areas at their school:

- Safeguarding policies (88%)

- Pastoral care (85%)

- Anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies (79%)

- Behaviour polices (77%)

- School culture, values and ethos (76%)

School leaders were more likely to say the RSHE curriculum was 'somewhat' integrated rather than 'very' integrated with the following areas in their school:

- Schools' work with external agencies (48% 'somewhat integrated' vs. 43% 'very integrated')

- Staff training (55% vs. 41%)

Independent schools were less likely than other school types to report that their RSHE provision was very well integrated with their work with external agencies, such as Local Authorities, police or health authorities (28% vs. 43% overall). Conversely, PRUs were more likely than other school types to have RSHE well aligned with external agency links (72% vs. 43%).

Most RSHE coordinators and teachers who took part in the qualitative case studies felt that their school took a whole-school approach to teaching RSHE. Some examples of the ways in which they felt their school took a whole-school approach to RSHE included:

- That topics were taught within other subjects as appropriate (e.g. healthy eating was covered in science lessons, physical exercise in PE, and internet safety in computing);

- The messages of RSHE tied in with the overall school ethos and culture. A Sikh school mentioned that their Sikh-British values were reinforced in RSHE lessons. Similarly, some of the Catholic schools mentioned that their Catholic values underpinned aspects of the RSHE curriculum, although, as is discussed later in this chapter, there were other aspects of the curriculum that some found to be less well-aligned with their Catholic ethos. Nevertheless, these schools indicated that efforts were being made to align teaching with their ethos;

- Reinforcing of lessons in assemblies;

- Pointing out things that teachers notice outside of lessons, for example friendship conflicts, bullying, or unwanted touching in the playground. Teachers reported that they used these situations to reinforce messages around bodily autonomy, consent, and respect

    "If we see a link in another lesson, we'll point it out. Also, in the playground there is always an opportunity: friendships, people touching others where they don't like it e.g. touching hair. Separately the subjects do not reinforce RSHE learning, it takes staff to determine that the links are there." - *Teacher, primary mainstream, faith school*

4.2.2 How RSHE is delivered

The statutory guidance makes clear that schools are free to determine how to deliver the RSHE content provided that the core knowledge is broken down into manageable units and is clearly communicated to the pupils. The guidance recognises that many schools will choose to deliver RSHE as part of a timetabled programme, while others may choose different methods.

In the survey, school leaders were asked how their school delivered RSHE. The responses showed that RSHE was often delivered in multiple ways within each school. Nearly all leaders reported that their school delivered RSHE through timetabled lessons (97%), and most did so via assemblies (83%) and within other curriculum subjects (73%).

Figure 11 outlines the different methods of delivery mentioned.

Figure 11: Ways in which RSHE was delivered

Timetabled RSHE lessons including lessons as part of timetabled PSHE education	97%
Assemblies and form periods	83%
Teaching RSHE within other curriculum subjects	73%
Pastoral groups	48%
Extra-curricular activities	42%
Drop down days	38%
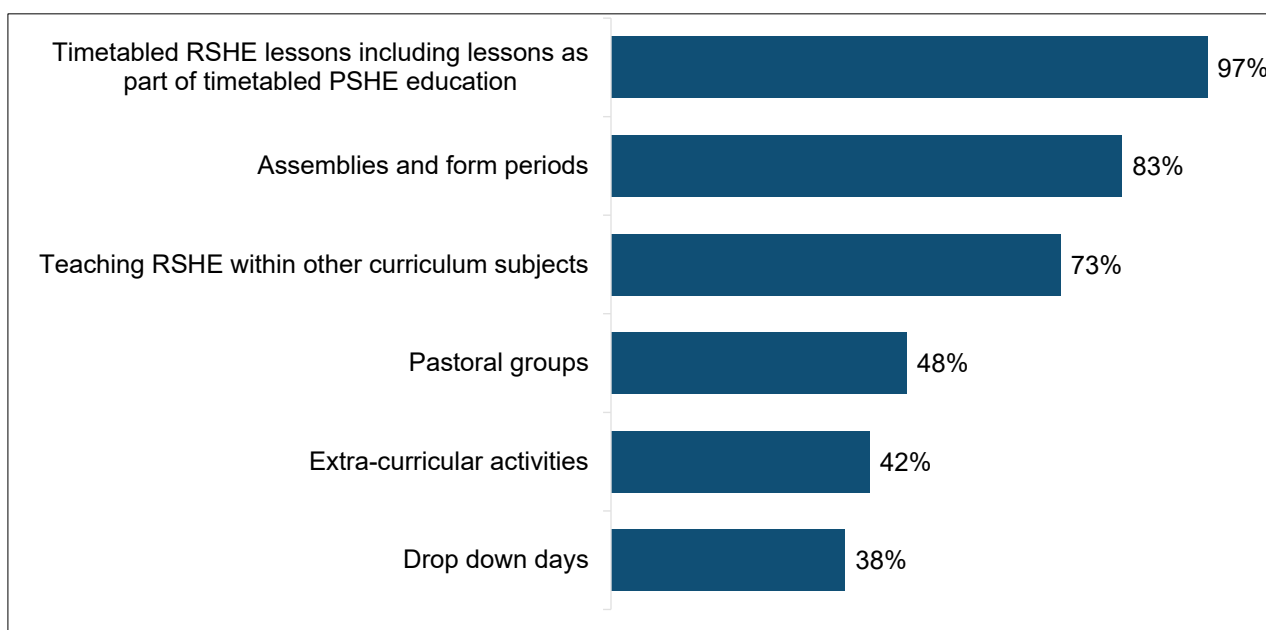
C3. Does your school currently deliver RSHE through any of the following? All leaders (1,039). Chart shows all responses given by more than 2% of school leaders.

Primary schools were more likely than secondary schools to deliver RSHE through timetabled lessons (98% vs. 95%). Other breakdown includes that:

- Mainstream primary schools were less likely than mainstream secondary schools to deliver RSHE through assemblies and form periods (80% vs. 91%) and drop down days (32% vs. 59%)

- Mainstream primary schools were less likely than alternative providers to teach RSHE within other curriculum subjects (70% vs. 89%) and through pastoral groups (44% vs. 81%)

- Mainstream primary schools were less likely than special schools to deliver RSHE through extracurricular activities (37% vs. 60%)

The qualitative case studies provided a more in-depth picture of how schools deliver RSHE. Some schools had purchased a pre-made curriculum, such as Jigsaw, TenTen, Brook, or Kapow. These pre-made curriculums provide entire lesson plans, suggested activities, and resources. Schools differed in how strictly they adhered to the curriculum. One school had asked teachers to stick to the lesson plans provided, while another said their teachers could flexibly choose from a range of resources and ideas for activities. Some treated the curriculum as a "scaffold" for planning lessons, which were then adapted based on the mood of the pupils, what issues they were experiencing, and other factors.

The schools that had bought a pre-made curriculum from an external provider generally made the decision collaboratively, with teachers being offered a chance to look into it before a joint decision was made. Generally, schools still delivered lessons themselves for the most part, with external providers occasionally brought in for specific topics or areas. All bar one of the schools that used pre-made curriculums were primaries, and only one school that used a pre-made curriculum had a leader that reported they had faced challenges with implementation.[20]

For schools that did not purchase a pre-made curriculum, the curriculum was generally put together by the RSHE coordinator. One school with a small team of dedicated RSHE teachers put the curriculum together through a collaborative process.

Schools drew on a variety of resources to design their own curriculum, including:

- PSHE Association resources (mentioned by several schools). Other sources included Redbridge, Solent Sexual Health, Medway Public Health Directorate, and a local PSHE Hub.

- A few schools said that parent consultation fed into curriculum design. A few had also consulted with senior staff or the headteacher when designing the RSHE curriculum, and a few mentioned that they drew on local events and issues (e.g. cyberbullying, drugs, etc.) when planning the curriculum

Several schools mentioned using a "spiral" or "cyclical" curriculum, where the same topics got repeated in all or several year groups, but with adjusted content. In later years topics were covered in more depth or incorporated subject matters not appropriate for younger pupils. This supported age-appropriate teaching, as each year built upon their knowledge from the previous year.

For example, one faith primary school had three modules that were taught every year:

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[20] This finding comes from the survey where one case study school who used a pre-made curriculum also reported challenges to implementation overall, though it is not confirmed if these are linked.

- Module 1 - Body and health, emotional wellbeing;

- Module 2 - Personal relationships;

- Module 3 - Living in the world and charity

Each year focussed on different aspects of these modules, building on what pupils learnt in the previous year, adding more topics or depth, as relevant.

Many schools also reported that their curriculum changed and evolved based on pupil feedback and contextual issues, meaning their curriculum was reactive as well as proactive. For example, an RSHE coordinator at one secondary school said they taught about drugs slightly earlier than the PSHE Association suggests, because cannabis use is higher than average in their area. Another brought in content around cyber bullying because their class was having an issue with bullying over WhatsApp.

> "We write an overview of what we would like to cover, but in terms of how that is taught to the children [that] is down to the teacher. We'll be covering the same learning intentions and looking for the same outcomes, but how teachers go about that is very different on each site depending on the group." - *Coordinator, primary PRU*

Schools referred to RSHE in different ways, including RSHE, PSHE, Life Skills, TenTen (by a school that had purchased the TenTen curriculum), and Health and Wellbeing. The school that called RSHE "Health and Wellbeing" taught other aspects of RSHE in other subjects. One school taught Citizenship and Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (CPSHE), part of which is Healthy Relationships and Sex Education (HRSE), Personal Safety and Healthy Mind and Body. These subjects together covered the RSHE requirements.

Qualitative interviewing highlighted that schools were split between teaching RSHE as a standalone subject or as part of other subjects. It was slightly more common for schools to teach RSHE as a standalone subject, whether this was referred to as RSHE, PSHE, or TenTen. However, several schools taught it as part of another subject, which generally included topics such as community and citizenship or careers education alongside RSHE. For example, Life Skills incorporated elements of citizenship and careers education, as well as PSHE.

4.2.3 Time to undertake the RSHE coordinator role

A key assumption underlying the Theory of Change was that schools would have a designated, senior lead for RSHE with clear responsibility for RSHE and with dedicated time to carry out their role.

The survey findings showed that this role existed in all schools. In around a third of cases (36%), the school leader who responded to the survey was also the main RSHE coordinator or part of a group of coordinators at their school.

However, responses indicated that less than half (43%) of coordinators felt they had enough time available to effectively undertake the coordinator role, with half (50%) reporting they did not have enough time. Coordinators who were also school leaders were less concerned about time, with 59% feeling they had enough time.

Figure 12: Coordinators' perception of whether they have enough time to undertake the RSHE coordinator role effectively
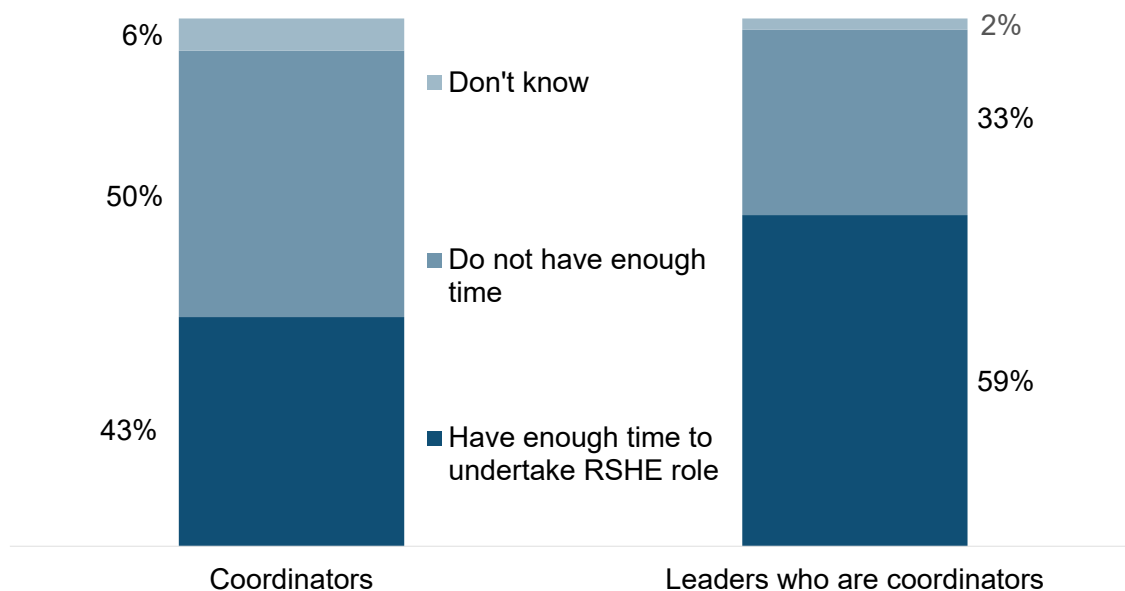
Source: C2. Do you feel like you have enough time to undertake the RSHE coordinator role effectively? Leaders who are also the RSHE coordinators (537). RSHE coordinators (953).

RSHE coordinators in schools with the lowest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM were more likely than those in schools with the highest proportion of FSM eligible pupils to feel they had enough time to undertake the role (54% vs. 41%).

4.3 Teaching of RSHE

When teachers were asked which year groups, they taught RSHE to, primary teachers most commonly reported teaching RSHE to Key Stage 2, while secondary teachers were most likely to deliver RSHE to Key Stage 3. Figure 13 shows which year groups teachers reported delivering RSHE to.

Figure 13: Year groups to which teachers deliver RSHE
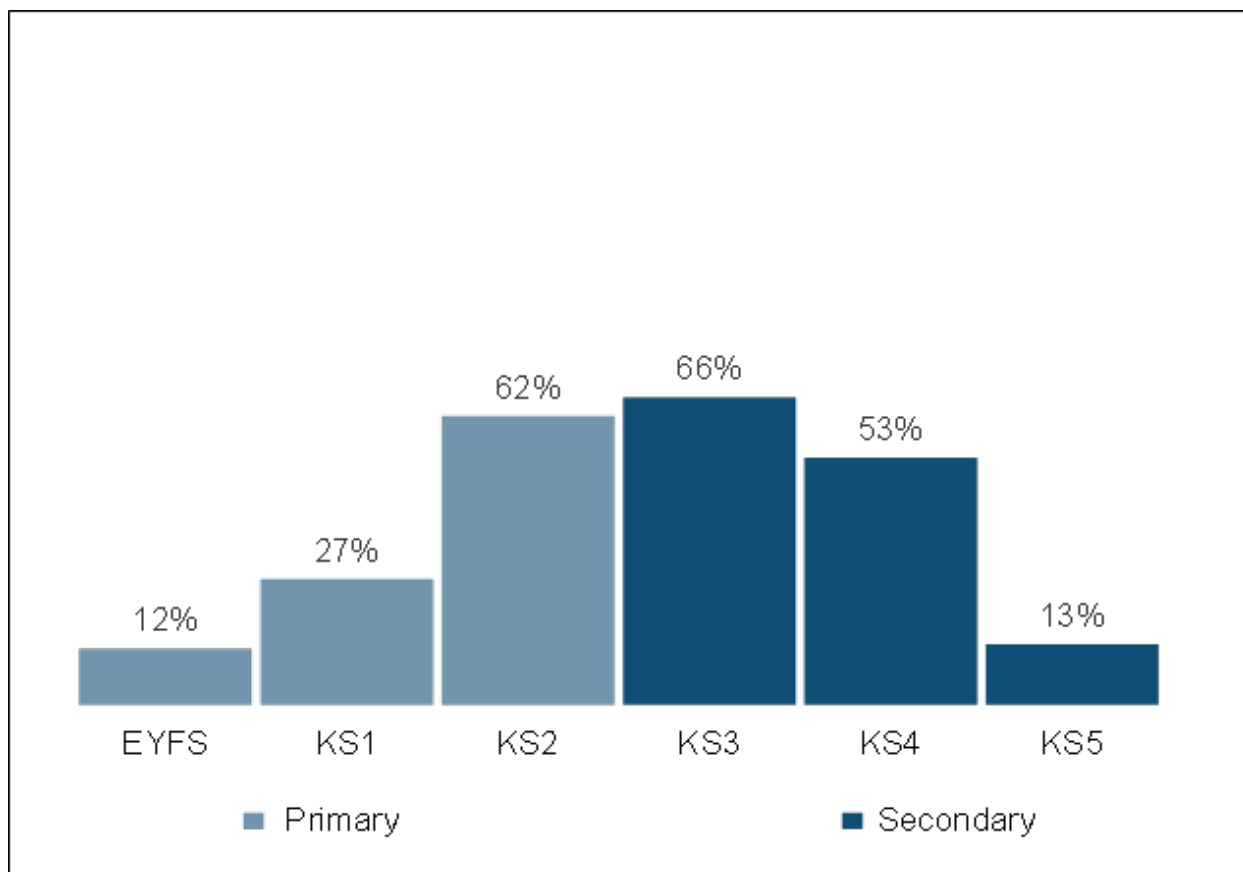
Source: C2. Which year groups do you teach RSHE to. Base: Primary teachers (239). Secondary teachers (279)

A small minority (5%) of primary teachers and around one in ten (11%) of secondary teachers said that they delivered RSHE to all year groups at their school, as opposed to a particular key stage; this proportion was particularly high among teachers in special schools (27%).[21]

The qualitative case studies found that in primary schools, RSHE was generally taught by the class teacher, though there were instances where RSHE was taught by outside providers. One primary school reported that whilst all other RSHE topics were taught by the class teacher, sex education was delivered to Year 5 and 6 classes by the dedicated science teacher. Some secondary schools had a small, dedicated RSHE teaching team, but more commonly a range of teachers delivered RSHE to students. Coordinators and teachers at schools with a dedicated team were generally very positive about it, and felt it allowed them to deliver RSHE to a high standard. They felt it allowed them to dedicate the time and resources necessary to plan and deliver the teaching well. One school appreciated the opportunity this gave their team to quality assure the delivery of the subject.

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[21] Please note, teachers were able to select multiple key stages,

> "We're quite a nice team who teaches the subject and therefore we're the only ones that make sure it is done how we want it to be delivered." - *Coordinator, secondary, faith school*

The frequency of specialised RSHE lessons in case study schools ranged from a few times per week to once per fortnight, and this varied by school and by year group. Generally, teachers and RSHE coordinators agreed that regular, timetabled lessons for RSHE were important.

Schools generally taught boys and girls together. Teachers and RSHE coordinators commented that both sexes need to understand how the other feels and the experiences they may go through. It was suggested that this approach could build empathy between children of different sexes. One faith school separated boys and girls to teach aspects of RSHE, but still taught both boys and girls an identical curriculum (including learning about what each sex goes through during puberty). In a different school, pupils mentioned that they would have preferred learning about puberty separately because they found having both boys and girls together in the class uncomfortable.

> "I'm not splitting them up. I think it's really important that, first of all, we're able to understand what's going on in both sexes. OK, so boys need to understand what happens to girls and girls need to understand what happens to boys. And, actually, let's get over the embarrassment of sitting with a boy and seeing that because, if you can't have these conversations in this room with a teacher there, how are you going to have conversations with a partner?" - *Coordinator, secondary*

> "They always pretend they know more when they are with the opposite sex, but they don't. But you got a better discussion and better honesty out of children when they felt open to ask questions without fear of being judged." - *Teacher, secondary, faith school*

Although the schools that took part in the qualitative case studies adopted varied methods of delivering RSHE, in terms of lesson frequency, subject curriculum, team make-up and whether the sexes were split, generally, they had similar ideas about the best way to teach RSHE. This included:

- Regular, timetabled lessons;
- Having a curriculum in which each year builds on the learning and knowledge from the previous year, as opposed to teaching a topic once and not returning to it again;
- A dedicated team of RSHE teachers in secondary schools;
- The classroom teacher teaching RSHE in primary schools;
- A positive and open classroom environment, where questions are encouraged, and pupils feel safe;

- Clear expectations are set and enforced around pupil behaviour in lessons, including respectful and considerate interaction;

- Pupils are encouraged to ask questions and interact during the lessons, but also given the option to ask questions anonymously (for example, through the use of a "worry box" where pupils can leave a written note with their questions)

It is important to note that these reflect the opinion of teachers in relation to good practice best on their experiences of teaching RSHE. The research did not assess the effectiveness of each of these approaches, and therefore it is not possible to conclude these have been effective, whether any are more effective than others or whether other approached should be considered as well.

4.3.1 Topics covered by schools

Parts of RSHE covered what the guidance says about topics to cover in RSHE. The guidance sets out the topics that schools should focus on in primary schools as well as in secondary schools. Table 4 RSHE topics and whether they are required in primary and secondary schools outlines what topics primary and secondary schools must deliver.

Table 4: Teacher weighting targets RSHE topics and whether they are required in primary and secondary schools

Topics required by the RSHE guidance	Primary School	Secondary School
Families and people who care for me (Primary) Families (Secondary)	✓	✓
Caring friendships	✓	
Respectful relationships (Primary) Respectful relationships, including friendships (Secondary)	✓	✓
Online relationships (Primary) Online and media (Secondary)	✓	✓

Being safe	✓	✓
Mental wellbeing	✓	✓
Internet safety and harms	✓	✓
Physical health and fitness	✓	✓
Health eating	✓	✓
Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco	✓	✓
Health and prevention	✓	✓
Changing adolescent body	✓	✓
Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health		✓
Basic first aid	✓	✓

Sex education in primary schools is not compulsory, however the statutory guidance recommends that all primary schools should have a sex education programme that is appropriate for the age and maturity of its students.

4.3.2 Specific topics teachers delivered

Teachers were asked what parts of RSHE their lessons covered. Findings from the survey show that nearly all teachers covered Relationships (96% of primary teachers and 93% of secondary) and Health Education (98% of primary and 92% of secondary teachers) in their RSHE lessons. Fewer, though still the majority, covered sex education (63% of primary and 87% of secondary teachers). Nine in ten (93%) primary school leaders said that their school covers some sex education.

There were significant differences in trends in teachers' responses in terms of the proportion of FSM-eligible pupils in the schools. Teachers in schools with the highest proportion of FSM-eligible pupils were more likely than teachers in schools with the lowest proportion to deliver the following aspects of the RSHE curriculum:

- Relationships Education (98% of teachers in schools with highest FSM-eligible pupils vs. 90% of teachers in schools with lowest proportion)

- Health Education (97% highest proportion vs. 89% lowest proportion)

Teachers were also asked what specific RSHE topics they personally delivered in their lessons. Primary teachers and secondary teachers were presented with response categories in line with the topics each phase delivered, as presented in Figure 14 and Figure 15. Overall, the distribution of primary and secondary teachers among topics that they personally delivered suggests that there was a good coverage of the RSHE topics set out in the guidance.

Among primary teachers, there was a high incidence of directly delivering all aspects of the Relationships Education curriculum, with around nine in ten primary teachers reporting that they personally delivered respectful relationships, being safe, caring friendships and families and people who care for them.

Figure 14: Aspects of RSHE that primary teachers personally delivered

Aspect	Percentage
Respectful relationships	90%
Being safe	90%
Caring friendships	90%
Families and people who care for me	87%
Online relationships	79%
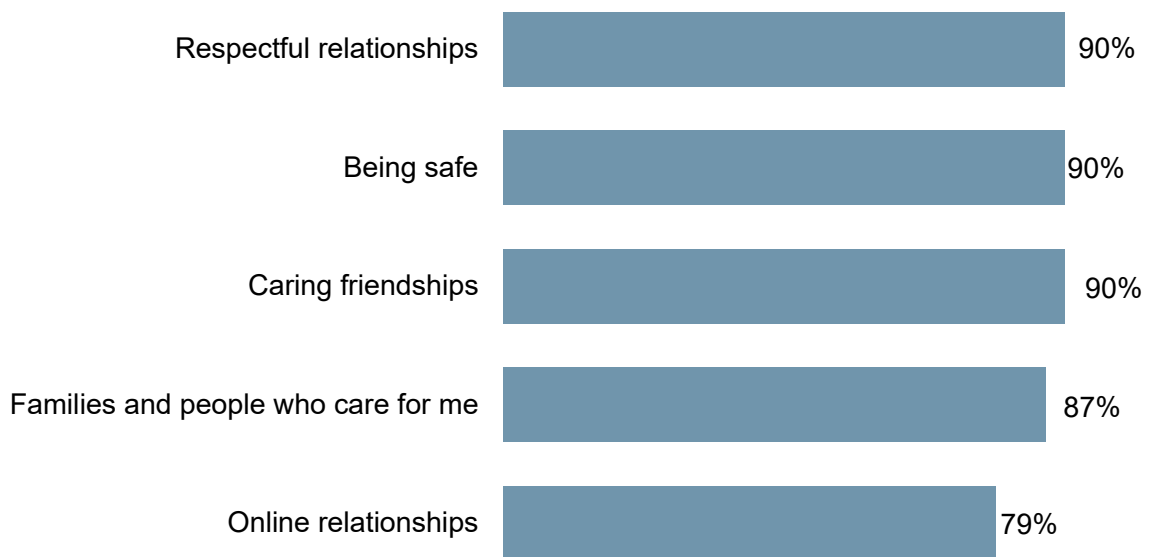
Source: C3. What aspects of RSHE curriculum do you personally deliver? Primary teachers (239)

Among secondary teachers, at least two-thirds taught each key topic area within Relationships, Sex and Health Education, except for basic first aid which was taught by a minority (45%).

Figure 15: Aspects of RSHE that secondary teachers personally delivered

Aspect	Percentage
Respectful relationships (including friendships)	95%
Online relationships / online and media	87%
Mental wellbeing	87%
Being safe	86%
Internet and safety harms	83%
Drugs, alcohol and tobacco	80%
Healthy eating	78%
Families	75%
Physical health and fitness	75%
Intimate and sexual relationships	73%
Health and prevention	71%
Changing adolescent body	67%
Basic first aid	45%
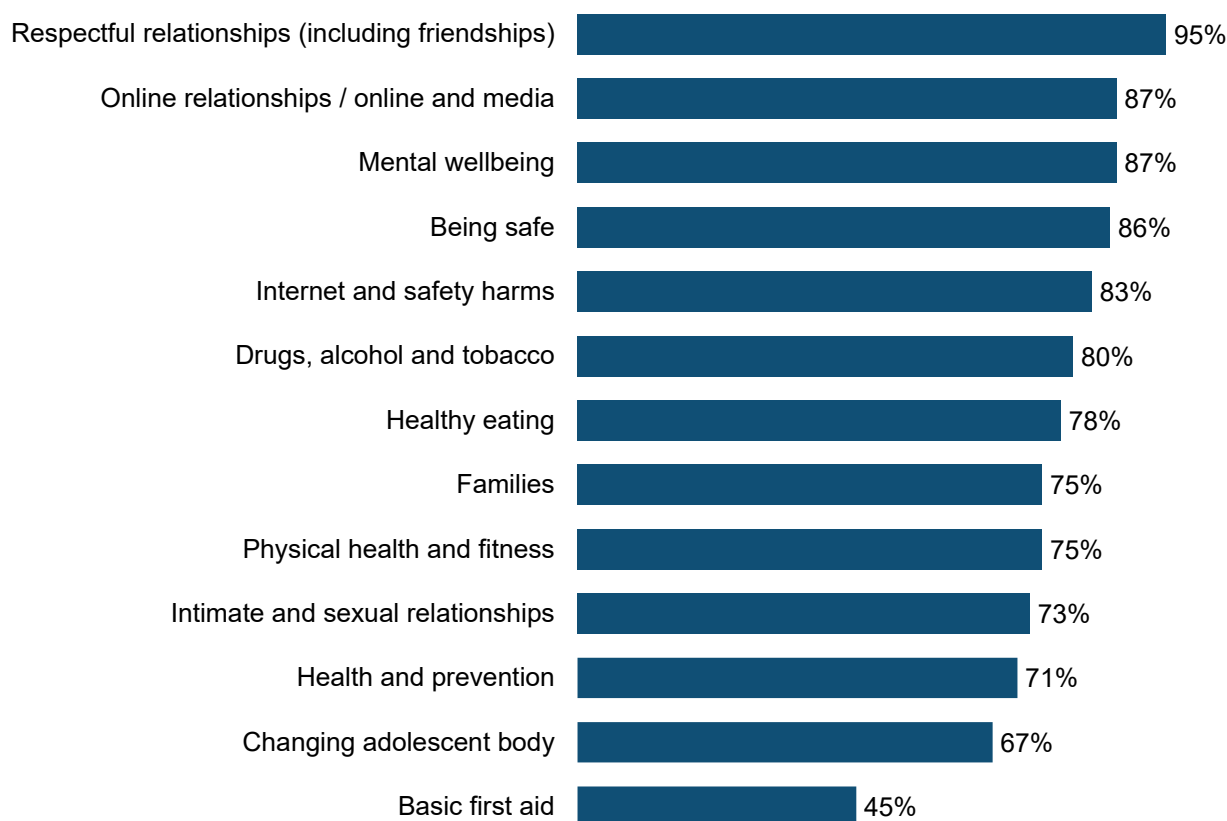
Source: C3. What aspects of RSHE curriculum do you personally deliver? Secondary teachers (297)

4.4 Use of external partners

The guidance states that working with external organisations could enhance schools' delivery of RSHE by bringing in specialist knowledge and engaging pupils in a variety of ways.

Just over half of schools have chosen to work with external organisations, with 52% of leaders saying that their school used external experts, partners or consultants to deliver aspects of the RSHE curriculum. This was more common among secondary schools (79%) than primary schools (43%).

As shown in Figure 16, where primary schools had used external experts, this was most often to deliver content on being safe (68%) and sex education (61%), followed by online relationships (52%) and respectful relationships (46%). In the qualitative case studies, most schools delivered RSHE lessons in-house. Some had external experts come in for specific, often difficult topics such as FGM or abuse, or brought in the police or fire department to talk about topics such as first aid. In one school it was mentioned that bringing in external experts, such as Police Community Support Officers or the Samaritans, was helpful for reiterating messages delivered by teachers.

Figure 16: Aspects of curriculum delivered by external experts in primary schools

> **43%** of primary schools use external experts

Aspect	Percentage
Being safe	68%
Sex education	61%
Online relationships	52%
Respectful relationships	46%
Families and people who care for me	29%
Caring friendships	24%
Health and wellbeing	7%
Drug and alcohol resilience	4%
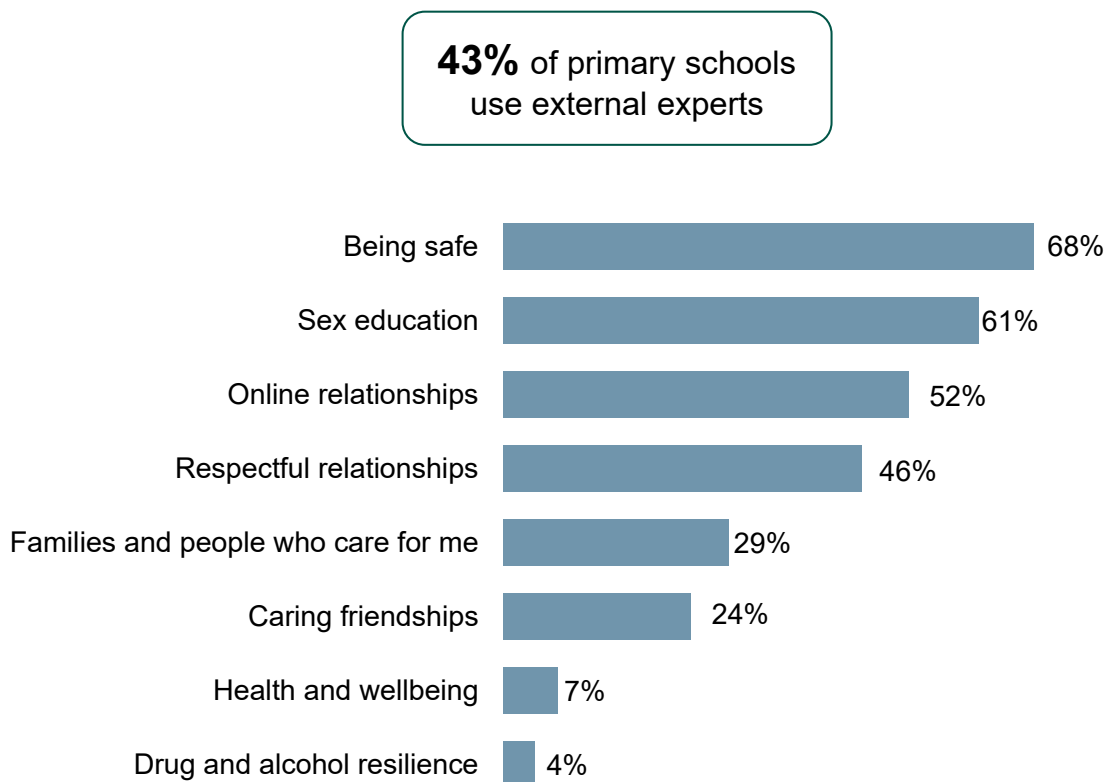
Source: C15. Which aspects of the RSHE curriculum do they help to deliver? All primary leaders that use external experts to deliver RSHE (239). Chart shows responses given by at least 2% of leaders.

Primary schools with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM were more likely than primary schools with the lowest proportion to use external experts to help deliver sex education (74% vs. 50%).

Figure 17 outlines the aspects of the RSHE curriculum delivered by external experts in secondary schools. At least two-thirds of secondary schools using external partners said these external partners had delivered content on intimate and sexual relationships (75%), 'being safe (70%), drugs, alcohol and tobacco (67%) and respectful relationships (67%).

Figure 17: Aspects of curriculum delivered by external experts in secondary schools

79% of secondary schools use external experts

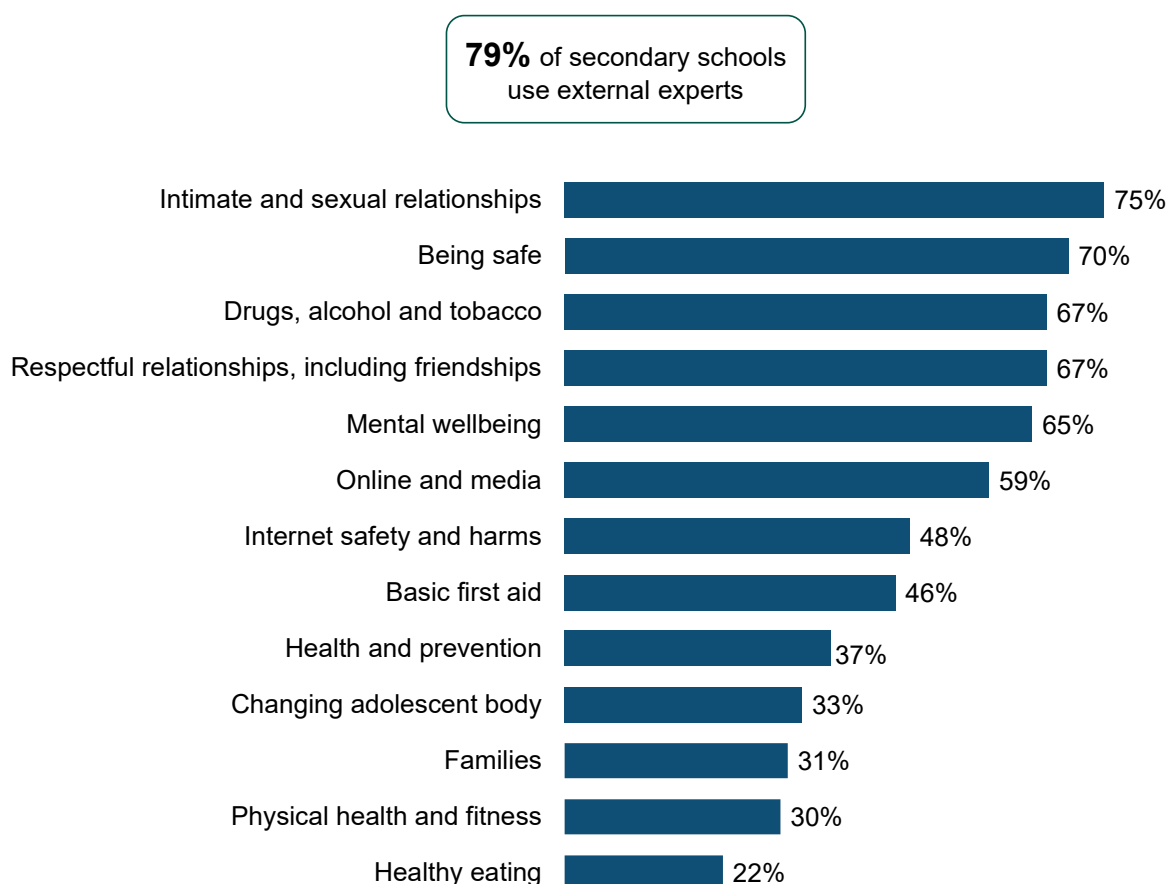| Aspect	Percentage
Intimate and sexual relationships	75%
Being safe	70%
Drugs, alcohol and tobacco	67%
Respectful relationships, including friendships	67%
Mental wellbeing	65%
Online and media	59%
Internet safety and harms	48%
Basic first aid	46%
Health and prevention	37%
Changing adolescent body	33%
Families	31%
Physical health and fitness	30%
Healthy eating	22%

C16. Which aspects of the RSHE curriculum do they help to deliver? Base: All secondary leaders that use external experts to deliver RSHE (366). Chart shows responses given by at least 2% of leaders.

Among secondary schools using external partners, leaders working in PRUs were particularly likely to bring in these experts for teaching on intimate and sexual relationships (97%).

4.5 The number of pupils withdrawn from sex education

The guidance states that parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all sex education. In primary schools, school leaders must automatically grant a request to withdraw. In secondary schools, it is good practice for the process to include a discussion with parents.

Among secondary leaders and primary leaders in schools that taught sex education, six in ten (63%) reported that no pupils were withdrawn from sex education in the last academic year, compared to a third (33%) overall who said at least one pupil had been withdrawn. The number of pupils withdrawn did not differ significantly between primary and secondary schools. Sixty-four per cent of primary leaders and 59% of secondary leaders reported that no pupils were withdrawn from sex education in the last academic

year, while 32% of primary leaders and 36% of secondary leaders reported that at least one pupil had been withdrawn.

In the qualitative case studies, none of the schools mentioned having pupils withdrawn from sex education. Schools were generally positive about the interactions they had had with parents and did not feel that pupils being withdrawn from sex education was a concern for them.

Figure 18: The number of pupils that were withdrawn from sex education in the past year

Number of pupils that were withdrawn from sex education
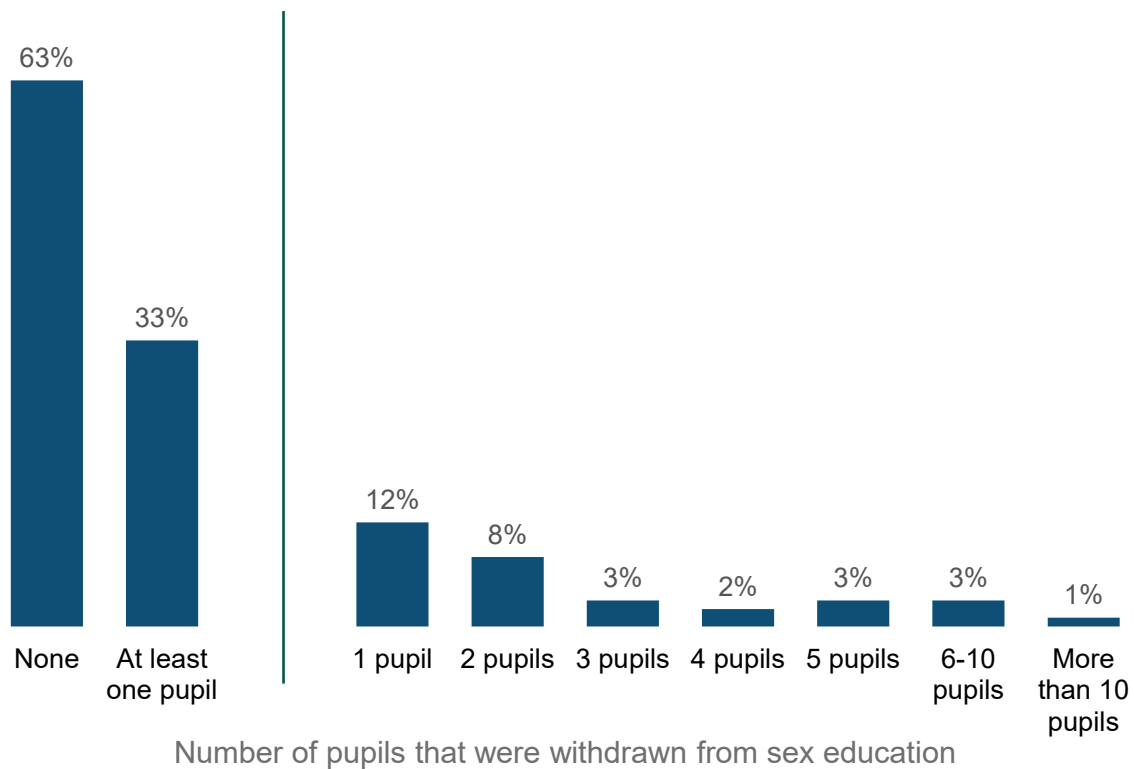
E6: How many pupils withdrew from sex education last academic year? Secondary leaders and coordinators, and primary leaders and coordinators if school teaches sex education: Leaders (998).

On average, across all school types, leaders reported that between 1 to 2 pupils were withdrawn from sex education in the last academic year. There were no significant differences between primary schools and secondary schools.

Schools with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM were more likely to have at least one pupil withdrawn from sex education than schools with lowest proportion of FSM eligible pupils (38% vs. 25%).

4.6 Age-appropriateness

Age-appropriate teaching was felt to be a challenge by some schools in the qualitative case studies. Several teachers mentioned that pupils varied in their individual maturity levels, although it was felt by some that the RSHE curriculum helped to even this out. This was the case in both primary and secondary schools. For example, a secondary teacher mentioned that all her pupils "know what sex is, but for some that's as far as it goes". She felt that RSHE lessons helped to "narrow the gap" by teaching sex education to all pupils.

Generally, the RSHE coordinator was reported to be the ones who were making decisions around age-appropriateness. Some relied on outside support to decide what was age-appropriate content. The PSHE Association was mentioned as particularly useful by several teachers and coordinators across different schools. Schools that used a pre-made RSHE curriculum used this curriculum to guide decisions on what was considered age appropriate. Teachers at these schools generally felt they needed to do less thinking about age-appropriateness, although they were mostly still able to adapt lessons to fit their pupils.

In one school, the coordinator and first principal would make decisions on age-appropriateness. They recently decided to push back teaching about STIs from Year 9 to Year 10, because they felt their pupils were "quite immature". Due to this, they also focussed on relationships early in Year 7 to make sure that pupils learnt about healthy relationships and how to interact with each other. The coordinator felt that, especially in Years 9 and 10 it was apparent that girls were much more mature than boys. For this reason, they would sometimes split boys and girls, allowing the lessons to be slightly tailored. They still taught the same overall content but in separate classrooms to account for the different maturity levels of boys and girls.

Some teachers made decisions on age-appropriateness based on their year group, using their knowledge and experience. A coordinator at one school described their process as assessing the age levels within year groups, what they have been taught previously, and discussing this with staff. If a teacher expresses that one of their classes may not have been ready for a particular lesson or topic, then they would not teach it to them. Because the coordinator felt that the teachers were well-trained and spend all their time teaching RSHE, they were able to make good judgements about what would be appropriate for their classes and what might not be.

> "If they're asking us questions that we might deem a little/too inappropriate, but they're asking us […], then, actually, there's a reason they're asking that so we will do that in a way that we feel is manageable for the whole class." - *Coordinator, secondary*

"Now, I've got a class that I know just wouldn't be able to cope with getting a condom out, so I was like, do you know what, I'm not doing that with this class this year. Next year, if I get them, then yes, we will. But this class unfortunately just aren't at that level. But I know most of my classes are absolutely fine and can deal with it." - *Coordinator, secondary*

4.7 LGBT young people

The statutory guidance requires that schools must ensure that the needs of all pupils are appropriately met in line with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, which includes sexual orientation and gender reassignment among its protected characteristics. The guidance also states that schools should ensure all their teaching is sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content, and that all pupils are expected to have been taught LGBT content at a timely point.

Most teachers (80%) were very or fairly confident that their teaching was inclusive of LGBT experiences. Results are shown in Figure 19 for all teachers, and separately for primary and secondary teachers. Confidence was higher among secondary teachers, who were more likely than primary teachers to report being very confident that their teaching was inclusive of LGBT young people's experiences (37% vs. 19%).

Figure 19: Teachers' confidence that their teaching is inclusive of LGBT experiences
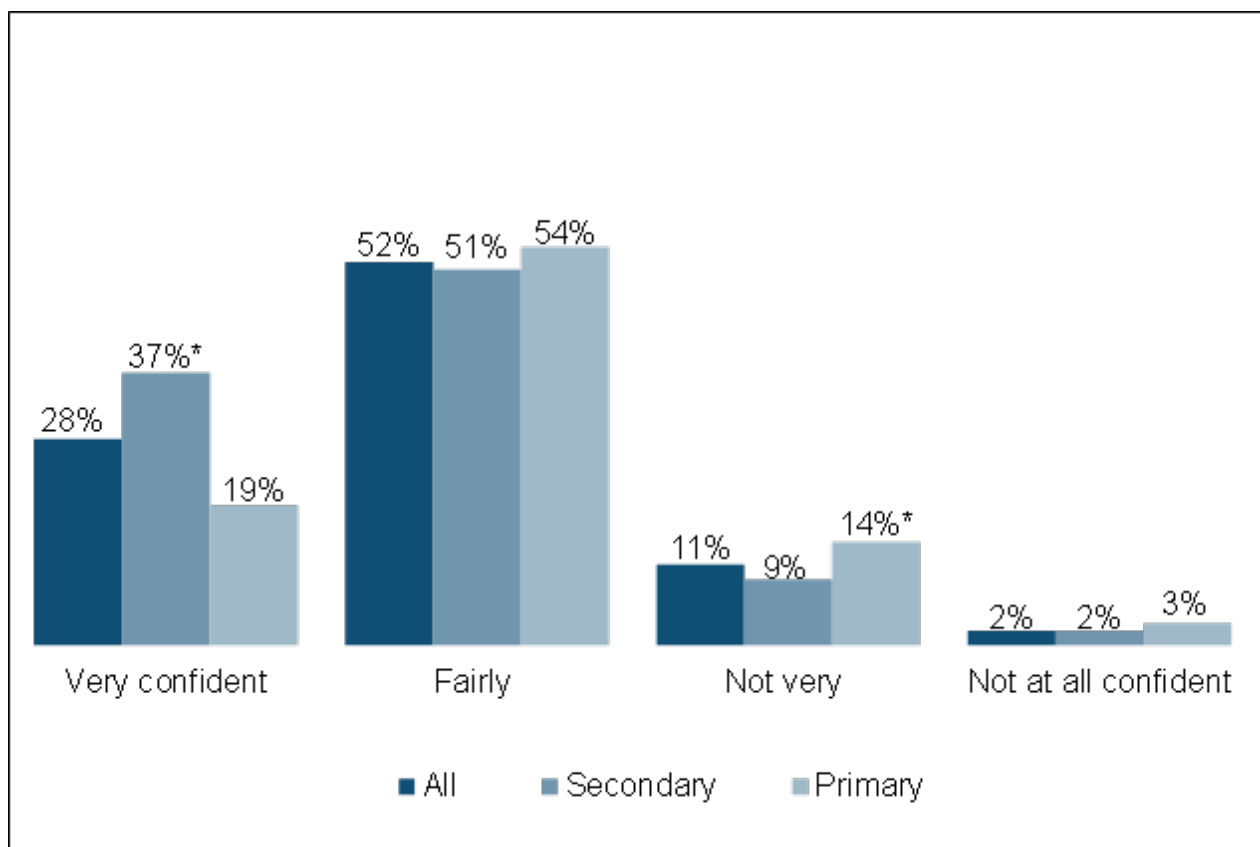
C3a. How confident are you that the content of your teaching is inclusive of the experiences of LGBT young people? All teachers (518). * *Where primary teachers and secondary teachers are significantly different.*

Teachers who had read the guidance were more likely than average to say that they were at least fairly confident that their teaching was inclusive of the experiences of LGBT young people (84% vs. 80% overall).

Around a tenth (11%) of teachers reported that they were not very confident that their teaching was inclusive of the experiences of LGBT young people. Primary teachers were more likely to report this than secondary teachers (14% vs 9%).

The research was unable to explore this finding because, most of the teachers interviewed during the qualitative case studies reported no issues around confidence delivering LGBT content. One teacher would have liked more support, reporting that the pupils they taught often knew more about the topic than teachers did. A coordinator at a Catholic school mentioned that they were currently reviewing how to teach this content to align with their ethos. The message that was taught was that all people and all types of families have value in the eyes of God, but they would not teach explicitly about same sex marriage. This was not the case at other faith schools, which did teach LGBT content and taught about same sex marriage. At one faith school, the coordinator mentioned that while this "is not something that is celebrated" by their pupils' families, they felt that it was a very important topic to teach about.

"Pupils have the right to disagree with things, but they don't have the right to belittle others." - *Teacher, secondary, faith school*

"Rather than stopping the lesson and saying, right, now we are going to talk about sexuality, now we are going to talk about trans, it is constantly being referenced in our resources, in our images that we have on the board, in the names that we use." - *Coordinator, secondary*

4.8 Pupil engagement

The guidance suggests that the RSHE curriculum should address pupils' issues in a timely way and in line with pupil need and informed by pupil voice and participation in curriculum development. The aim was that pupils would engage with the curriculum and be confident that what they learnt in RSHE would prepare them for their future.

This section explores the extent to which findings from the survey and case study visits aligned with the following assumptions held by DfE:

- Schools conduct a thorough pupil needs assessment, including pupil consultation where possible, to understand what their young people want and need from RSHE

- Pupils engage with the RSHE curriculum as they trust it will provide them with adequate knowledge and skills for their relationships, health and wellbeing throughout their life

- Pupils are well informed about additional sources of support for their RSHE

4.8.1 Whether pupils' views were considered

The majority of school leaders (86%) reported that pupils' views were considered or taken into account to at least a small extent in RSHE curriculum design (20% to a great extent, 43% to some extent, 23% to a small extent). In comparison, 13% said pupils' views had not been considered at all.

The following groups were significantly more likely to say that pupils' views were considered or taken into account to any extent:

- Leaders of alternative providers (97% vs. 86% overall)

- Leaders and coordinators of secondary schools (93% leaders and 89% coordinators vs. 83% primary leaders and 76% primary coordinators)

- Leaders and coordinators who had read the statutory guidance themselves (87% leaders and 82% coordinators vs. 74% leaders and 56% coordinators who reported that someone else at the school has read the guidance)

- Coordinators from urban schools (82% vs. 73% rural)

4.8.1.1 How pupil consultation was done

Interviews with teachers and pupils supported the finding that most schools reported consulting with pupils, but it also provided greater insight into how schools varied not only in their approach to pupil consultation but also in their interpretation of what 'pupil consultation' was.

While some schools approached pupil consultation in a more formal and direct way, others mentioned more informal and indirect methods of understanding young people's views. In addition, one school included in their list of 'pupil consultation' activities paying attention to issues in the local community in order to understand pupils' RSHE needs.

Schools that took an informal and indirect approach to consulting pupils did so in a variety of ways including the following:

- Creating a welcoming classroom environment that was inclusive and open and lessons where questions were encouraged. Many teachers pointed to this as part of the approach to considering pupils' views, stating that often these questions asked in class could inform the content of subsequent lessons

  "She warns us about being too silly and asks whether we feel uncomfortable, and that what we say will be respected." *Pupil, primary*

  "Once we open up the discussion [pupils] are given that opportunity to ask questions…We talk about what questions have been brought up. We have that in our heads as a question that has come up for future reference, and might even put in the scheme of work: 'Such questions that have come up in the past are…'" - *Co-ordinator, mainstream secondary, faith school*

  "We obviously have a curriculum that we follow, but their questioning and their comments might lead us on a slightly different trajectory, a different path. Sometimes they might have a comment that you weren't expecting. So, anything that's really important, we address that and talk about that." - *Teacher, primary*

- Having conversations with pupils outside the classroom. Teachers at many schools talked about there being multiple opportunities to speak to pupils between classes, at lunchtime or on the playground. Pupils confirmed that they were encouraged to speak to teachers privately if they did not feel comfortable bringing things up in lessons. Some schools mentioned this as their way of consulting pupils and understanding the young people and explained that, similar to the open questions, these issues may have been addressed in later lessons.

  "If we don't want to ask something in the class, we can talk about it after or during break. She also might talk about it during the next lesson." - *Pupil, mainstream primary, faith school*

- Perceiving pupils' interest or responding spontaneously to pupils' opinions. Some schools spoke about adapting lessons based on opinions pupils expressed during the lesson, while one school talked about having a flexible approach where teachers responded to the atmosphere in the classroom. Teachers in this school could choose to spend more time on a topic that seems to interest pupils more. Teachers at another school explained that their consultation was ongoing and based on knowing their pupils very well

  "We know when a pupil comes in, we know straightaway that that pupil is not feeling right, or that something's worrying them or that they're not acting themselves." - *Teacher, primary*

- Directly asking pupils how they felt about lessons. Where the previously mentioned approaches may be considered to be less formal and structured, some schools pointed to a more direct and formal way of getting to know what pupils thought by asking after the lesson how well they understood the lesson or if they liked the content.

  "My teacher is doing like, he asked us what our favourite lessons are and which we don't like, and what we want to learn in the year. And we can ask the teacher questions either in the class or privately, and I have done that once or twice." - *Pupil, primary*

- Assessing the needs of pupils using behaviour monitoring systems (such as CFL and CPOMS) to record, share and deal with safeguarding concerns that arose within the school. In some schools, when asked about their approach to pupil consultation, coordinators and teachers referred to this as a more indirect way of deciding what was in pupils' interests to address. Teachers explained that they may have addressed a topic based on a safeguarding report or a conflict among pupils

- Paying attention to the local community to understand the issues pupils might face outside the school. Some schools mentioned tailoring RSHE lessons to these topical issues that might affect pupils in or outside the school. They also mentioned introducing external programmes or arranging field trips as a response to these concerns. Examples include knife crime, racist language or behaviour, misogynistic language, inappropriate WhatsApp messages and images

  "We are in a pretty deprived area here, and it's important to adapt the curriculum so we cover local issues. Recently, unfortunately the brother of one of the lads here was stabbed to death, so I put together a lesson on knife crime, and we had a field trip to see the Knife Angel." - *Co-ordinator, secondary AP*

  "We put it out to the year officers that this is what we can do… Self-esteem and personal hygiene sessions for pupils selected based on need by the year officers." - *Co-ordinator, secondary*

Schools that took a direct and formal approach to pupil consultation did so by conducting "pupil voice" surveys, either through formal interviews with pupils or via online surveys.

These were often done at the end of a unit or school year and served as feedback on topics pupils would like to know more about or that they felt should be included in future lessons. Some teachers mentioned using these as assessment tools to track pupils' progress or to explore how well pupils understood the content. One school described how as a department teachers would meet at the end of the summer holidays to discuss the findings from the pupil survey and make adjustments to the topics covered in RSHE.

Whilst some schools described this process of considering the views of pupils as ongoing, few reported directly consulting with pupils ahead of designing the curriculum. Some schools felt that there was already a lot of statutory information to cover, which reduced their ability to consult with students as they had to dedicate available time to the statutory subjects. Two schools reported conducting the consultation a year into the RSHE programme because they felt that in introducing RSHE, following the guidance was the priority.

> "We had a pupil voice survey a year into the programme but not at the start because the new guidance needed to be introduced." - *Coordinator, primary, faith school*

It is important to note that different leaders had differing views on what they felt meant a student was 'engaged'. As discussed, schools saw engagement and consultation differently, therefore it effects our ability to reach firm conclusions on how engaged and how well consulted pupils were with the RSHE curriculum.

4.8.1.2 How pupil feedback shaped lessons

In terms of the extent to which the feedback that teachers gather shaped RSHE content, in most cases it was an adaptation to a lesson, a repeat of a unit or topic, or an addition to a lesson, to address questions.

In some cases, schools mentioned adjusting the teaching schedule so that a particular topic was covered earlier in the school year. This was done based on safeguarding reports or observations that suggested that pupils were struggling with certain issues (such as bullying or racism).

> "For example, this year we had some Ukrainian students joining the school and some of the pupils were discriminating against them, so the department decided that we would move the RSHE lessons on discrimination and diversity up the agenda and teach them as soon as students finished the topic they were currently on." - *Coordinator, secondary*

Formal pupil consultations did not shape the design of the RSHE curriculum in any of the schools we spoke to.

4.8.1.3 Pupils' views on consultation

When asked specifically whether anyone had asked theirs or their classmates' views on what RSHE should cover, most pupils said no.

Pupils did recall some of the approaches mentioned by teachers, such as completing surveys, filling out assessment booklets and being encouraged to ask questions in and out of class. However, pupils' views on how much their voices and opinions were being heard varied, even among pupils in the same school. For instance, during paired interviews of pupils, one pupil recalled completing online surveys to give feedback on RSHE lessons, while the other did not recall this.

This apparent discrepancy between pupil accounts of consultation versus teacher accounts seemed to stem from the following:

- First, what teachers pointed to in terms of consultation, pupils seemed to view as feedback. Many pupils did confirm that they completed surveys but described these as being asked for feedback, while stating that they had not been asked for their views on what RSHE should cover

- Second, the informal approach to consultation was indirect and somewhat outside of pupils' awareness. Pupils did not seem to recognise inclusive classroom environments and informal chats as direct consultation

- Third, in a few schools, staff and pupils seemed to have different perspectives on the role of pupil voice surveys as an RSHE consultation approach. Pupils who did recall completing these surveys seemed to view these as general surveys done at the end of term or year as overall feedback on all subjects rather than a specific consultation about RSHE

  "I think there are a few Google forms that occasionally go out, just like a survey of how we are finding it, but I don't think we have ever properly been asked if there is anything we feel like should be covered that's not."
  - *Pupil, secondary*

  "Teachers occasionally ask for feedback. That's across all subjects. When we have lessons, they are always constantly asking us, how are you finding it, are you struggling." - *Pupil, all through school, faith school*

A few pupils stated that they would have liked to be consulted and, in some cases, shared their views during the interview.

  "I don't think I have ever been asked what I think we should learn…We just know now what comes up in it. But personally, I would like to see more religious education." - *Pupil, secondary*

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"I sometimes would like to have a say. I would like a bit more depth on online safety and how to stay safe from hacking." - *Pupil, primary, faith school*

"As we're growing individuals, we're quite naïve in the world, so us being able to understand that knowledge and being able to express our views on that knowledge can help the teachers understand what we are getting and some things that we are misunderstanding, and they can take that into future topics." - *Pupil, all through, faith school*

This suggests that teaching staff and pupils had different views on what they consider consultation. Whilst teachers may have viewed informal, more ad-hoc conversations, or obtaining general feedback from pupils as consultations, pupils appeared to view a consultation to be something more formal. Whilst the Theory of Change recognised how important pupil consultation was, it did not outline the parameters of this, resulting in a wide variety across schools. The effectiveness of the various methods for pupil consultation is something to be considered and may benefit from further research in the future.

4.9 Engaging young people

4.9.1 Pupils' level of engagement with RSHE lessons

Three-quarters of teachers (76%) felt that children and young people (CYP) were either very (21%) or fairly (55%) engaged with the RSHE curriculum and lessons. However, close to one in ten teachers reported that pupils were not very (8%) or not at all engaged (1%). One in twenty (5%) felt levels of engagement varied too much to say.

Teachers less likely to feel that CYP were engaged with the RSHE curriculum and lessons included:

- Secondary teachers (70% vs. 82% primary teachers)
- Early career teachers (64%)
- Teachers who had not read the RSHE statutory guidance (62%)

From pupils' perspectives, RSHE was felt to be an important subject, and during interviews, most pupils said that they found lessons interesting and engaging. Many pupils agreed that RSHE content was useful and relevant, and some explicitly talked about how it was preparing them for life in "the real world".

"I find it fascinating." - *Pupil, secondary*

"I like it because sometimes you can overhear people from the outside world say words that you don't understand and then, usually, in [RSHE] they'll cover it for you." - *Pupil, secondary*

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"In normal lessons, you don't get a taste of the real world, but in [RSHE], you get taught about real life and things that could happen." - *Pupil, secondary, faith school*

4.9.2 Teachers' view on whether pupils spend the right amount of time engaging in RSHE

Although the majority of teachers felt that CYP spend about the right amount of time engaging in RSHE each year (63%), over a quarter felt that CYP did not spend enough time engaging in RSHE (27%, rising to 40% among independent schools). In comparison just 1% felt that CYP spent too much time on it; 9% were unsure.

During interviews, a few teachers expressed a wish for more time spent on the subject, and one teacher said that in an ideal world, every year group would have a minimum of an hour a week. This view was shared particularly among teachers in schools that delivered RSHE once per fortnight.

4.9.3 Pupil engagement on different RSHE topics

Teachers were asked how engaged CYP were during RSHE lessons when different topics were covered. Teachers were most likely to report that pupils were very or fairly engaged during lessons on caring friendships (93%), respectful relationships (88%), and intimate sexual relationships (88%). Teachers most often reported pupils were very engaged when learning about intimate sexual relationships (42%) and caring friendships (38%). Full results are shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Teachers' perception of how engaged CYP are during different RSHE topics.
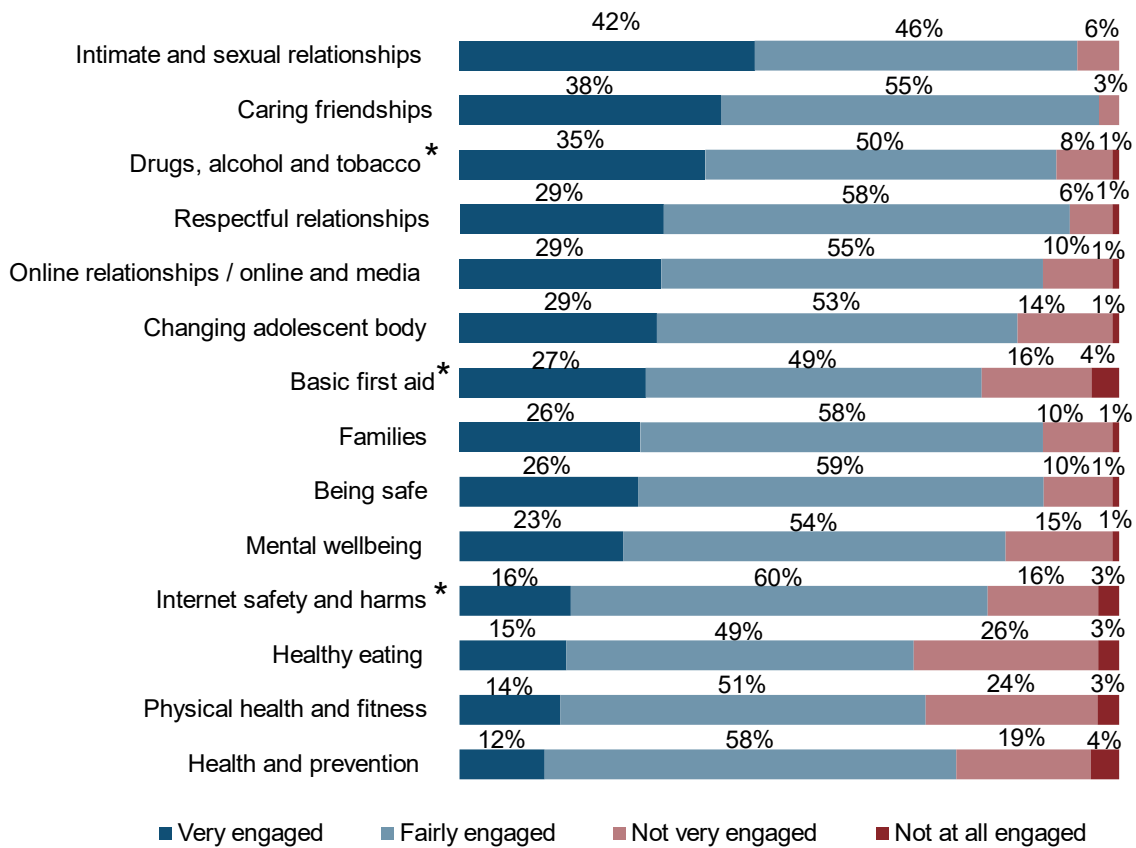
Source: E2: In your opinion, how engaged are your CYP during your RSHE lessons during each of the following topics? All teachers who deliver this aspect of the curriculum: Caring friendships (217), Respectful relationships (482), Intimate and sexual relationships (210), Families (428), Drugs, alcohol and tobacco (222), Online relationships (432), Being safe (459), Changing adolescent body (195), Mental Wellbeing (246), Basic first aid (131), Internet safety and harms (231), Health and prevention (197), Physical health and fitness (215), Healthy eating (224).
* Topics that were not shown to primary school teachers.

There were some significant differences between primary and secondary teachers. Primary teachers were more likely to report that pupils were very or fairly engaged during several RSHE topics, including:

- Respectful relationships (91% vs. 84% among secondary teachers)

- Families (and people who care for me) (94% vs. 74%)

- Online relationships / online and media (89% vs. 80%)

- Being safe (95% vs. 75%)

Interviews with pupils however revealed that different pupils found different topics to be the most interesting and relevant. Favourite topics included:

- healthy choices

- families

- stereotyping and prejudice

- first aid

- puberty

- unhealthy relationships

    "I like learning about healthy and abusive relationships because it's nice
    to be able to talk. Even if it's not a nice experience for you, being able to
    share it with someone and ask questions is nice." *Pupil, primary*

Some topics pupils mentioned wanting to learn more about were:

- Stereotyping

- Prejudice

- First aid

- Boundaries. One pupil suggested that the teaching on boundaries should include
  how to set them

    "Maybe we should try to learn about how to set boundaries, because for
    some people it's difficult to set boundaries. For some people it's much
    harder because they may have attachment issues or fear losing
    someone if they set boundaries. Maybe we should learn how to set
    boundaries and how to slowly progress to setting them. We just learn
    about the boundaries we should set, not how to actually set them." -
    Pupil, all through, faith school

4.9.4 Reasons for lack of engagement

The 41 teachers who said that their pupils were not very or not at all engaged with the
RSHE curriculum[22] were asked what challenges they faced when trying to get CYP to
engage. The most common responses were a large variation of life experiences of CYP
making it difficult to deliver age and stage appropriate lessons, online lessons during
COVID-19, and a lack of timetabled time for teaching RSHE.

However, interviews with pupils revealed different factors affecting pupils' level of
engagement. The few pupils who found RSHE to be boring mainly pointed to repetition of
topics or lessons that were not interactive enough.

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[22] All teachers were asked "In your opinion, how engaged are CYP with the RSHE curriculum and
lessons?" with the answer options very engaged, fairly engaged, not very engaged, not at all engaged, and
varies too much to say.

Online safety was mentioned by a few pupils as a topic that had been repeated multiple times and that they therefore found lessons covering this topic to be boring.

> "I found online safety a bit boring. We've done it every year in school, so it felt a bit repetitive when you are learning about not sharing your information online. Being in Year 6 we know not to share our passwords. I remember doing it in Year 1 and we have done it for six years." - *Pupil, primary*

> "Online safety was a bit boring because I've already had my mum telling me so many times about online safety, she's a teacher. Plus, my Nana was a Year Six teacher…Pretty much everybody in my family line is a teacher so I know about online safety." - *Pupil*, *primary*

In contrast, one pupil described particularly enjoying learning about online safety due to its interactive element.

> "I think the Online Safety ones are quite fun, because we've got to watch like a lot of example videos. Also, there was like lots of scenarios of what could happen and stuff." - *Pupil, primary, Pupil Referral Unit*

Whether lessons were interactive or not was the other main factor that appeared to impact on levels of pupil engagement. In one school, one pupil pair felt that engagement with lessons depended on the ability of the teacher delivering the lesson to make it interactive. They agreed that interactive lessons were much better and stuck in the mind longer.

> "[One year group], they got a condom and blew it up like it was a balloon and putting tons of different things, like sunflower oil or suncream and seeing what would crack the condom. I found that really informative and really interesting. And the fact that it has stayed with me for that long shows it had an impact on me." - *Pupil, secondary*

4.9.5 Suggestions for more engaging lessons

Pupils gave feedback on how they thought their lessons might be made more interesting. Some even offered detailed lesson plan ideas for how to teach topics such as online safety and alcoholism. Others made suggestions around what they would like to see in their RSHE lessons. These included the following:

- Making lessons engaging by incorporating lots of activities

- Allowing pupils to have a say on what topics should be covered

- Letting pupils sit next to someone they feel comfortable with during lessons

- Creating a safe space to ask questions and get answers. (Findings suggest that for some schools, this might include separating the sexes for delivering some more sensitive topics.)

- Having interesting external speakers visit deliver workshops and talks on specific topics

It should be noted that many teachers and coordinators mentioned that their lessons already incorporated the above suggestions, but in some cases, pupils did not perceive this to be the case. This highlights the need for pupil consultation on what is successful in their lessons.

4.10 Confidence in content preparing pupils for life experiences

Over four in five teachers were confident that the RSHE curriculum prepares CYP for everyday experiences expected at their age (85%) and for the future (81%). Many more were 'fairly' than 'very confident' about this, as shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Teacher confidence that RSHE content is preparing CYP for life experiences

Confidence that the content of the RSHE curriculum is preparing CYP for *everyday experiences expected at their age*?

NET: Confidence

Very confident	14%
Fairly confident	71%
Not very confident	9%
Not at all confident	1%
Don't know	5%

85%

Confidence that the content of the RSHE curriculum is preparing CYP for *the future*?

NET: Confidence

Very confident	15%
Fairly confident	66%
Not very confident	11%
Not at all confident	1%
Don't know	6%

81%

Source: E3. How confident are you that the content of the RSHE curriculum is preparing CYP for everyday experiences expected at their age? E5. How confident are you that the content of the RSHE curriculum is preparing CYP for the future? All teachers (518).

Teachers were more likely to feel confident that the RSHE curriculum prepares CYP if they had read the RSHE statutory guidance compared with teachers who had not (91% vs. 78% confident respectively that the curriculum prepares CYP for everyday experiences; 87% vs. 69% confident the curriculum prepares CYP for the future).

4.11 Impact of RSHE on pupils

The qualitative phase explored teachers' and pupils' views on the impact of RSHE on children and young people's behaviours. Both groups reported generally seeing positive changes, but pupils were slightly more certain than teachers of whether actual change in behaviour could be attributed to RSHE.

4.11.1 Teachers' views on impact of RSHE

Teachers felt that there had been positive changes in pupils since the updated RSHE lessons had been introduced. Some of the positive changes that teachers pointed to include:

- Pupils communicating with teachers about RSHE topics and referencing things they have learnt about

   "We have had students realise that they are in coercive and controlling relationships after RSHE."- *Teacher, secondary*

- Positive changes in relationships between students.

- Pupils aware of and using additional resources, such as visiting sexual health nurses, asking teachers for hygiene products or advice.

   "I know there are students who have utilised our student nurse after RSHE lessons." - *Teacher, secondary*

- Pupils more able to talk about their feelings, and during disclosure of harm, able to use the vocabulary they had been taught to fully explain what had happened to them

- Pupils able to identify, avoid and report harmful situations

   "We've talked a lot about grooming etc. Those sorts of things, children are able to now come and see people if they are worried about is this the right thing to do. I would say we have more children through safeguarding who would say something because they were worried, I think this is happening to me, whereas it would have happened at one time." - *Teacher, secondary, faith school*

Teachers mostly relied on observation to determine positive impacts as many schools did not formally evidence or monitor changes in behaviour due to RSHE. A few explained

however that information from the general behaviour monitoring systems was useful to track students' behaviour and to inform areas of RSHE that need to be revisited.

> "We have a system called CFL [Caring for Life]. It's a system that registers bullying, discriminatory language, that sort of stuff. So, our behaviour leads log any of that behaviour. And then we're able to monitor, for example, in spring term one, there were five instances of bullying, five of those were discriminatory language. And then we can reflect on why those incidents happened, what we can do to work with either the one student, or whether it's a school wide issue, and it needs a different approach. So, we monitor it that way." - *Teacher, secondary AP*

Not all teachers had seen an impact. In a PRU for instance, teachers explained that it was particularly hard to monitor the impact of RSHE lessons because of the short time that pupils were enrolled and because the school's general culture already focussed on themes covered in RSHE, such as feelings and relationships.

> "I think it's just part of the setting and how we are. We're constantly talking about playing nicely and being a good friend, and how we fit in. And the fact you're part of this team, but you're also part of your other mainstream school team - there's lots of conversations about that all the time." - *Coordinator, primary PRU*

Some teachers conceded that it could be difficult to link changes in pupil behaviour to RSHE lessons specifically. While there had been a general positive trend in pupils' behaviours, knowledge and physical and mental health, they could not be certain that it was not due to other factors.

> "For example, with regards to children in early relationships…we don't have many children who have pregnancies before they leave. Historically, we would have two or three a year group. That's not happening anymore. It's hard to say that that's a measure of HRSE but it's certainly an improvement that's happened over the last few years." - *Teacher, secondary, faith school*

4.12 Pupils' views on impact of RSHE

In general, most pupils **felt that there were positive changes in behaviour** following RSHE lessons. Some examples included increased awareness of staying safe online, increased maturity in RSHE discussions and reduced bullying. Pupils were more direct in attributing these changes to specific topics, lessons, assemblies or trips related to RSHE.

4.12.1 Pupils' views on the impact of relationships education

Pupils were able to give examples of ways in which **relationships education** was helping them navigate family, friends or romantic relationships. Some examples of what pupils mentioned include:

- A greater ability to identify red flags in a relationship and what a good relationship looked like

    "The first session we had was about how your relationship look like and a lot of girls were like maybe I need to talk to my [partner] about this because this is not how I feel." - *Pupil, secondary, faith school*

- Feeling more comfortable with the fact that everyone had had talks about consent. One pupil talked about how people did not understand what that meant and that after the lessons they seemed to understand it a lot more. Another pupil mentioned learning the importance of boundaries

    "Consent helps you recognise how important a relationship is and peer pressures, especially around sex." - *Pupil, secondary, faith school*

- Being able to better understand when other pupils got angry and to think about why they were getting angry, and what they could do to help diffuse a situation

    "I'm not going to point out names, but in cricket, if this one kid doesn't get to bat, a proper batting go, he'll so get quite angry. So, if that happens I suggest that we go and dunk some basketballs instead." - *Pupil, primary*

- Better communication with friends and family. A few pupils felt lessons gave them a greater understanding about different types of relationships. They mentioned not thinking about friends and families as being relevant to the topic of 'relationships', as they would automatically only think of romantic relationships

4.12.2 Pupils' views on the impact of sex education

The impact of **sex education** from pupils' perspective was largely an increased awareness of the sources of support and how to access help when necessary.

One pair of pupils reported finding lessons on sexually transmitted diseases really useful and had learnt what to do and where to get support.

Another impact of sex education was developing an understanding of consent. One pupil pair explained their understanding of consent as not doing something they did not want to do, as well as respecting other people's opinions and choices.

"I think the more people who understand what it is and the pressure, the better the world would be because it will make people understand that you shouldn't force someone to do something they don't want to." - *Pupil, secondary*

They talked further about how the lessons had made them think about boundaries outside of sex and gave the example of how going through someone else's phone would also be a way of violating their boundaries.

Finally, some pupils talked about how sex education had helped them feel more able to support a friend and being confident enough to talk to them about health and reproduction information.

"I'd feel…more confident talking to them, that I would actually know the correct answer, rather than just saying 'that's nice'…. It helps us have more knowledge on the situation and know how to give them better advice." - *Pupil, secondary*

4.12.3 Pupils' views on the impact of health education

In terms of impacts on **physically healthy habits**, pupils were generally aware of the importance of having a healthy lifestyle, but this did not always translate into living healthily.

A few of the pupils interviewed said that they did not make any changes to their eating habits. Their body language and facial expressions indicated that they knew that this was not the answer they were supposed to give.

A couple of pupils said they already did exercise, like playing outside, before RSHE lessons, so the lessons themselves did not make a difference to how much exercise they chose to do.

"We are already doing the healthy stuff because our parents teach us to do the healthy stuff." - *Pupil, primary, faith school*

About half of the pupils said that they were living a healthier lifestyle. They felt they were more mindful of the impact that "little things" could have on their health and wellbeing – many mentioned the importance of personal hygiene habits like brushing teeth regularly and how important getting enough sleep is.

"So, you need to eat a healthy diet, and going to bed at the right times, those are important. So that's about being happy and that's linking to being healthy." - *Pupil, primary*

A couple of pupils had begun exercising since the new the RSHE lessons.

"They gave us a list of things to try that are more like fun than sports, like, martial arts and trampolining, things we might not have thought about trying, so I tried trampolining and it's brilliant." - *Pupil, primary*

"I did a sponsored event [swim]. We had to do 84 lengths." *Pupil, primary*

Many pupils said RSHE lessons had made them think more about the food they ate. Several said they had made changes to the food they ate since the new lessons– like choosing to eat less chocolate and junk food and trying to eat more fruit and vegetables.

"I do eat more apples than I used to, but I can't really remember all of the stuff about fat and sugar." - *Pupil, primary*

Finally, on the impact on understanding feelings and emotions, many pupils felt they understood their feelings and the feelings of others better, and they acquired tools they could use to help manage their emotions.

While there were a few pupils who felt that this topic had not been covered in much depth, others felt they were better able to recognise and understand emotions in other people and in themselves.

Some said they understood their own feelings better and were better at embracing their insecurities and accepting themselves. Many used tools they had been taught in RSHE lessons to manage difficult feelings, like anger and sadness.

"If something has really annoyed me, I do find it a bit hard to control. I do some meditating. We used to do a bit of meditating with the music on. We would go to our imaginary place." - *Pupil, primary, faith school*

In one primary school for example, pupils talked about using their PSHE booklets and decider skills to help them calm down when angry. The decider skills, they said, helped them think about five things they really liked, which helped them stop and take breaths. Students in the same school were introduced to a metaphor of a car going through a tunnel to conceptualise how bad feelings and situations don't last forever, they always come to an end at some point.

Many pupils said that RSHE had helped them understand that some activities such as going outside and spending time with friends – can help them stay happy.

One student said they had learnt that, if they were feeling upset, they could go inside and do something calming, like drawing, and then return to what they were doing before when they felt ready and happy.

4.12.4 Pupils' views on RSHE having an impact

It should be noted that there were a few pupils who felt that the RSHE lessons had had no impact on their behaviour, stating that they had already learnt most of these topics at

home from their parents. Some of these pupils felt that nevertheless, RSHE was an important subject for other children who might not have had the opportunity to learn about it anywhere else.

Other pupils said that while they did not think that RSHE had made an impact on their behaviour, they were aware that they had the knowledge and could depend on that knowledge if it became necessary. One felt that even if they did not use it, they could put their knowledge to use in supporting others.

> "It educates me, but I don't think it has changed my life or had any influence on what I am going to do. But it may for other people, and I know that I have taken every single bit of information and I have it with me. It can help with the bad signals of an abusive relationship if I ever get into one. I'll be able to help myself better than if I did not have the lessons." - *Pupil, secondary.*

> "For me personally, I have not had to use it [RSHE] quite yet but it does point out the things you are not always aware of, which I think is good because even if you are not using it for yourself, you can look out for those other people that may be experiencing something and cannot speak up or are not aware of it themselves." - *Pupil, secondary*

4.13 Key findings

This section summarises the key findings in this chapter within the context of the elements of the Theory of Change concerned with delivering a tailored RSHE curriculum and pupil engagement.

The survey findings explore the assumptions in these parts of the Theory of Change as follows:

Assumption: *Schools will listen to and take on board what pupils say they need and what is age and stage appropriate for them when designing the curriculum*

Key findings

- The majority of leaders (86%) and RSHE coordinators (81%) reported that pupils' views were considered in RSHE curriculum design to at least some extent

- However, findings from qualitative interviews suggest that teachers' views on what constitutes pupil consultation on curriculum design did not always match pupils' views on having their voice heard. Most pupils felt that they had not been consulted with regards to RSHE content and direct pupil consultations did not shape the design of the RSHE curriculum in any of the schools we spoke to

- Nevertheless, schools adopted varied methods for gathering pupils' opinions, questions, and feedback. This was used to shape RSHE content, including adapting lessons, repeating a unit or topic, changing the sequence of topics in the curriculum or directly addressing questions

- Some pupils reported being asked to complete surveys, filling out assessment booklets and being encouraged to ask questions in and out of class. However, most did not consider this to be consulted and they were not sure how their feedback fed into the RSHE lesson planning

- Age-appropriateness was felt to be a challenge for some schools. Some schools relied on external support, guided either by pre-made curriculum plans or by network groups such as the PSHE Association, which they found helpful. Generally, though, the RSHE coordinator made decisions about age-appropriateness. A few schools described an ongoing process of assessing what was age and stage appropriate and adapting the sequence of topics accordingly. Some reported tailoring specific learning to particular classes based on their maturity

Conclusion: Although schools did not formally consult pupils in the way that was assumed by DfE, they reported an ongoing process of gathering pupils' feedback and adapting RSHE accordingly. Pupils confirmed the existence of these informal approaches but did not recognise them as formal consultation. There is therefore some indication that this assumption in the Theory of Change was partially met, but it is clear that there is scope for schools to do more ensure pupils' views are being fully heard.

Activity: Schools conduct a thorough pupil needs assessment, including pupil consultation where possible, to understand what their young people want and need from RSHE

This activity is linked to the assumption above, therefore many of the key findings are relevant to both.

Key findings

- The majority of leaders (86%) and RSHE coordinators (81%) reported that pupils' views were considered in RSHE curriculum design to at least some extent. However, case study interviews with schools showed that schools varied in their interpretation of what 'pupil consultation' involved

- Schools had a broad interpretation of and varied approaches to pupil consultation. Most outlined a mix of formal and informal approaches to understand what pupils' needs were, and some teachers included in their description of pupil consultation having informal chats, creating an open, inclusive classroom and responding spontaneously to pupils' opinions of and interest in lessons

- While most schools maintained an ongoing process of gathering feedback from pupils and adapting lessons accordingly, direct pupil consultation did not inform

the design of the RSHE curriculum in any of the schools that participated in the interviews

- Many schools had a system of assessing pupils' needs by conducting 'pupil voice' surveys, using behaviour monitoring systems and engaging with the local community

- Some schools used assessment booklets and end-of-unit forms to explore how well pupils understood the content. These were used to inform lesson planning

- Most pupils said no when asked specifically whether their views on what RSHE should cover were considered. Although some recalled the approaches mentioned by teachers, many did not seem to recognise this as direct consultation about RSHE

- Some pupils stated that they would have liked to be consulted and shared their views on what RSHE should cover during the interviews

Conclusion: Findings indicate that this activity in the Theory of Change was not done as assumed, but the approach that was being taken by schools appeared to have produced some positive results. While there is not enough data to conclude that schools conducted a thorough pupil needs assessment prior to designing RSHE content and delivery, it is possible that the variety of approaches described by schools for gathering pupil feedback was effective for understanding pupil's needs. It is also possible that this system is sufficient to inform the ongoing process schools describe of adapting RSHE according to pupils' feedback and experiences. However, future research would need to explore the extent to which pupils' needs have been assessed through these alternative approaches.

Output: *Every school has a well-sequenced, high quality RSHE curriculum which meets their pupil needs in an age and stage appropriate way*

Key findings

- Nearly all schools said they delivered RSHE through timetabled RSHE lessons (97%), and most had also done this through assemblies and form periods (83%) and by teaching RSHE within other curriculum subjects (73%)

- In line with the guidance statement that use of external experts could enhance RSHE delivery, half of schools (52%) reported using external experts, partners or consultants to deliver aspects of the RSHE curriculum. This was significantly more likely among secondary schools (79%) than primary schools (43%)

- Most teachers had delivered a wide range of RSHE topics to their pupils. Nearly all teachers delivered Relationships Education (96% primary and 93% secondary) and Health Education (98% primary and 92% secondary). Fewer teachers delivered Sex Education (63% primary and 87% secondary), but nine in ten (93%) primary school leaders said that their school covers some Sex Education

- Schools varied in their approach to curriculum design. Some purchased a pre-made curriculum, with entire lesson plans, suggested activities and resources while others designed their own curriculum, drawing on external support and staff collaboration

- Schools that had a curriculum in place prior to the guidance being published reported using the guidance to audit and amend their own curriculum

- Several schools described adopting a 'spiral curriculum' approach, revisiting key topics and building on previous learning, as well as a flexible approach, being responsive to pupil's ongoing feedback and circumstances or experiences in and outside of school

- Schools varied on aspects of RSHE delivery, including frequency of lessons, curriculum content and structure, make-up of the team delivering RSHE and whether the sexes were split. However, they had similar ideas about the best way to teach RSHE, including having regular timetabled lessons, a specified RSHE teacher, a positive classroom environment, a 'spiral' curriculum, and an open invitation to ask questions and share feedback

- 63% of teachers felt the time pupils spent engaging with RSHE was sufficient, but over a quarter felt that CYP did not spend enough time engaging in RSHE (27%). This rose to 40% among independent schools. During interviews, some teachers expressed the wish for RSHE to be given more space on the timetable

Conclusion: Findings suggest that overall schools were delivering RSHE in a structured way using either an internally designed or externally sourced curriculum. Many schools described a flexible approach to curriculum design and a process of adapting the curriculum to suit pupil feedback or experiences. However, because this study did not explore the content of schools' RSHE curriculum there is not enough data to make a conclusion on quality. In addition, because the evidence suggests that pupils' needs may not have been thoroughly assessed, it is not clear whether the curriculum fully meets pupil needs. This suggests that this output of the Theory of Change has been partially met.

Outcome: *Young people are well informed about additional sources of support for their RSHE*

- Many pupils reported being aware of sources of support within and outside their school such as pastoral staff they could speak to privately and sexual health nurses and clinics they could attend

- Some pupils reported being confident enough to offer advice and signpost a friend to support where necessary

Conclusion: Qualitative interviews suggest that this outcome in the Theory of Change has been largely met, but it is not clear whether this is represented in the wider population of young people. The young people we interviewed appeared to be informed and aware of

support available to them regarding RSHE. This was particularly reported as an impact of sex education, with pupils expressing an increased awareness of how to access help when necessary. It should be noted however that the pupils interviewed were selected by teachers and therefore these reports might not be representative of wider pupil population.

Outcome: Pupils engage with the RSHE curriculum as they trust it will provide them with adequate knowledge and skills for their relationships, health and wellbeing throughout their life.

- Many pupils felt that RSHE content was useful and relevant, and some pointed specifically to its use for preparing them for life in "the real world". Some pupils however, pointed to certain aspects of RSHE that they did not need to learn as they had already been taught about it in school or at home

- A few pupils reported that they found RSHE to be an interesting subject and that they enjoyed the lessons. Other pupils, however, felt that some of the lessons were boring and repetitive. Some felt that pupil engagement depended on the style of the teacher's delivery and others offered suggestions to make lessons more interactive

- Most teachers felt CYP were engaged with the RSHE curriculum and that it prepared them for the future. Three-quarters (76%) of teachers felt CYP were engaged with the RSHE curriculum / lessons and 81% thought it would prepare them for the future. There were 41 teachers however who felt that their pupils were not very or not at all engaged with the curriculum. The most common challenge they pointed to be the difficulty of planning age and stage appropriate lessons due to a large variation of life experiences of CYP

- Most pupils reported positive impacts from RSHE and generally attributed these changes to specific topics, lessons, assemblies and trips related to RSHE. Even among the few who felt that RSHE had not made an impact on them, there was agreement that having the knowledge was useful as it could have an impact in the future

Conclusion: Teachers and pupils were in agreement that there were positive changes in behaviour, relationships, and awareness of how to avoid harm or where to access help where necessary. In addition, there is some evidence that RSHE learning was being reinforced through school values. Indeed, findings suggest that RSHE was generally well-integrated with other aspects of schools' culture, ethos, policies and pastoral care. However, this fact meant that it was difficult to attribute the positive changes to RSHE. Findings suggest therefore that there is work going on towards this outcome in the Theory of Change but there is not enough evidence to make a firm conclusion. While the majority of pupils were generally engaging well with RSHE and recognised the importance it had in their life and future, there appears to be some scope for improving pupils' levels of engagement. Schools should consider making

lessons more interactive and directly consulting pupils' views on which topics they feel they need to learn and which ones they do not find relevant.

Outcome: *There is a culture change within the school as the learning is applied by students and reinforced through school values*

- Nearly all school leaders reported that the RSHE curriculum was well integrated into their school culture, value and ethos (99%), pastoral care (99%), behavioural policies (98%) etc., indicating a whole school approach

- Most coordinators and teachers who took part in the case studies agreed that their school took a whole school approach to teaching RSHE. Some examples they pointed to were teaching RSHE within other subjects, emphasising the links between RSHE concepts and schools' overall ethos and culture, reinforcing RSHE lessons in assemblies and other aspects of the school day

- Both teachers and pupils reported seeing positive changes within the school, but pupils were more certain than teachers of whether actual changes in behaviour could be attributed to RSHE, pointing to specific lessons, assemblies or trips

- There was less change among pupils in terms of physically health habits. Pupils reported being aware of what healthy habits were and why they were important but admitted that this did not necessarily translate into a change in their habits

- Many teachers described positive changes in pupils, including in their ability and willingness to communicate and express themselves, the relationships among pupils, their ability to identify, avoid and report harmful situations, as well as their awareness and increased use of additional resources and external support. In a few schools, there were also reports of improved personal hygiene

- However, teachers felt that it was difficult to link changes to RSHE lessons specifically as the changes could also be due to other factors including the schools' overall culture and ethos. There were a few pupils who felt that RSHE had had no impact, and some stated that they had already learnt most of the topics at home. Nevertheless, these pupils felt that RSHE was an important subject for other children who might not have the opportunity to learn it anywhere else

- Also, most schools did not formally evidence or monitor the impact of RSHE and teachers mostly relied on observation to determine positive impacts

Conclusion: The findings in relation to this outcome of the Theory of Change are inconclusive. While pupils and teachers reported that RSHE appeared to have been making an impact, and that there were changes in pupils' behaviour and decisions, this was not an unanimously held view. There were a few who reported seeing no impact and teachers were uncertain about the role RSHE played in any changes they had seen. Also, it is not possible to conclude from the data collected in this research that the positive impacts reported mean that there was a culture change within schools. In

addition, pupils views were collected through qualitative research and case study approach. A detailed impact evaluation involving the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods may be required to fully assess the impact of RSHE on pupil behaviour and decisions. As this research was focused on the implementation rather than impact, this was not included.

4.14 Delivering a tailored RSHE curriculum and pupil engagement conclusions

Overall, findings in this chapter indicate that the series of assumed activities of what needs to happen to achieve the outcomes laid out at the start of this chapter have been generally met, although not fully. There was wide variability across schools and in some cases, activities were not being carried out in the way that was assumed.

There is some indication that schools were taking actions to gather pupils voices guide their development of the RSHE curriculum. However, these have tended to be informal and unstructured in most cases, and in many cases, pupils were not aware how their feedback informed the lesson planning. There is some scope for schools to do more to ensure that pupils are directly consulted about their needs, in a structured way, and the results of these consultations should be fed back to pupils. Future research is needed to fully understand the implications of schools' approach to pupil consultation and to evaluate whether pupils' needs are being fully taken into consideration.

Findings also indicate positive action towards producing the output of a well-sequenced, high-quality curriculum which meets their pupils' needs in an age and stage appropriate way. However, findings were drawn from teacher and pupil accounts; the content of schools' curriculum were not reviewed and there is therefore not enough data to state conclusively that the curriculum is well-sequenced or of high quality.

In terms of the three outcomes outlined in this section of the ToC, findings suggest that there has been partial achievement. However, the scope of the research means that is it not possible to ascertain how much this is representative of the wider population of young people. It is also not possible to attribute the observed outcomes directly to the RSHE curriculum.

5 Teachers' RSHE training and confidence in delivering RSHE

DfE held a series of underlying assumptions of what needs to happen in order for the RSHE curriculum to be implemented effectively, and to achieve the outcomes that DfE is looking for from the new RSHE curriculum.

5.1 Theory of Change – RSHE training and confidence in delivering RSHE

Some of these assumed activities related to teacher training and teacher confidence around delivering RSHE. DfE expected that the provision of teacher training would result in:

- Schools establishing a process to assess and meet teacher training needs, and ways for teachers to network and share good RSHE practices

- As a result, teachers would receive timely and high quality RSHE continued professional development that meet their needs, and engage in informal support networks

- This would ultimately lead to teachers feeling more supported by school leaders to have the time and resources to deliver RSHE, and to their confidence in delivering an impactful RSHE curriculum being improved

This can be seen in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Theory of Change in relation to RSHE training / teacher confidence

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes (short term)
Teacher training including the train the trainer model	Schools establish a process to assess and meet teacher training needs Schools establish ways for teachers to network and share good RSHE practices	Teachers receive timely and high quality RSHE CPD tailored to their needs Teachers engage in informal support networks	Teachers feel supported by school leaders to have the time and resources to deliver the RSHE curriculum Teachers have the knowledge and skills to confidently deliver an impactful RSHE curriculum

This chapter will also explore the following assumptions of the Theory of Change:

- Schools will use the flexibility granted to them to choose RSHE resources and training that meets the needs of their pupils and teachers

- The CPD teachers receive is high quality, they are given time to complete the training and they are motivated to apply their learning in the classroom

- Teachers will be able to access school and/or LA-led networks at a local or regional level, to enable sharing of good practice.

5.2 Teachers' delivery of the RSHE curriculum

This chapter covers:

- Preparing and teaching the RSHE curriculum: this includes who is delivering RSHE and the time teachers spend on preparing and teaching RSHE

- Resources used for RSHE: this includes the types of resources teachers are using, access to resources, and the perceived usefulness of these resources.

This section links to the following outcomes of the Theory of Change: teachers feel supported by the school leaders to have the time and resources to deliver the RSHE curriculum; and teachers have the knowledge and skills to confidently deliver an impactful RSHE curriculum.

5.2.1 Time preparing and teaching the RSHE curriculum

The majority of school leaders (88%) reported that most teachers at their school were involved in delivering the RSHE curriculum, with this being much more common in primary schools (97%) than secondaries (61%).

Preparing and teaching RSHE was reported to be a relatively small part of a teacher's week, with most saying they spent either less than one hour per week preparing and teaching RSHE (33%) or between 1-2 hours a week (42%). In comparison, 16% of teachers reported spending up to or more than half a day per week on preparing and teaching RSHE.

As shown in Figure 23 secondary teachers spent relatively more time preparing and teaching RSHE, but overall, the majority of both primary and secondary teachers spent less than 2 hours per week on this. Secondary teachers whose main teaching subject was RSHE were much more likely to report spending 5 days per week on preparing and teaching RSHE than secondary teachers on average (27% vs. 5%).

Figure 23: Average time teachers spend preparing and teaching RSHE a week

Figure 23: Average time teachers spend preparing and teaching RSHE a week

Legend:
- 4-5 days
- 3 days
- 2 days
- 1 day
- Up to half a day
- 1-2 hours per week
- Less than 1 hour per week

Primary:
- 1%
- 1%
- 4%
- 45%
- 36%

Secondary:
- 5%*
- 2%
- 4%*
- 6%*
- 7%
- 39%
- 30%
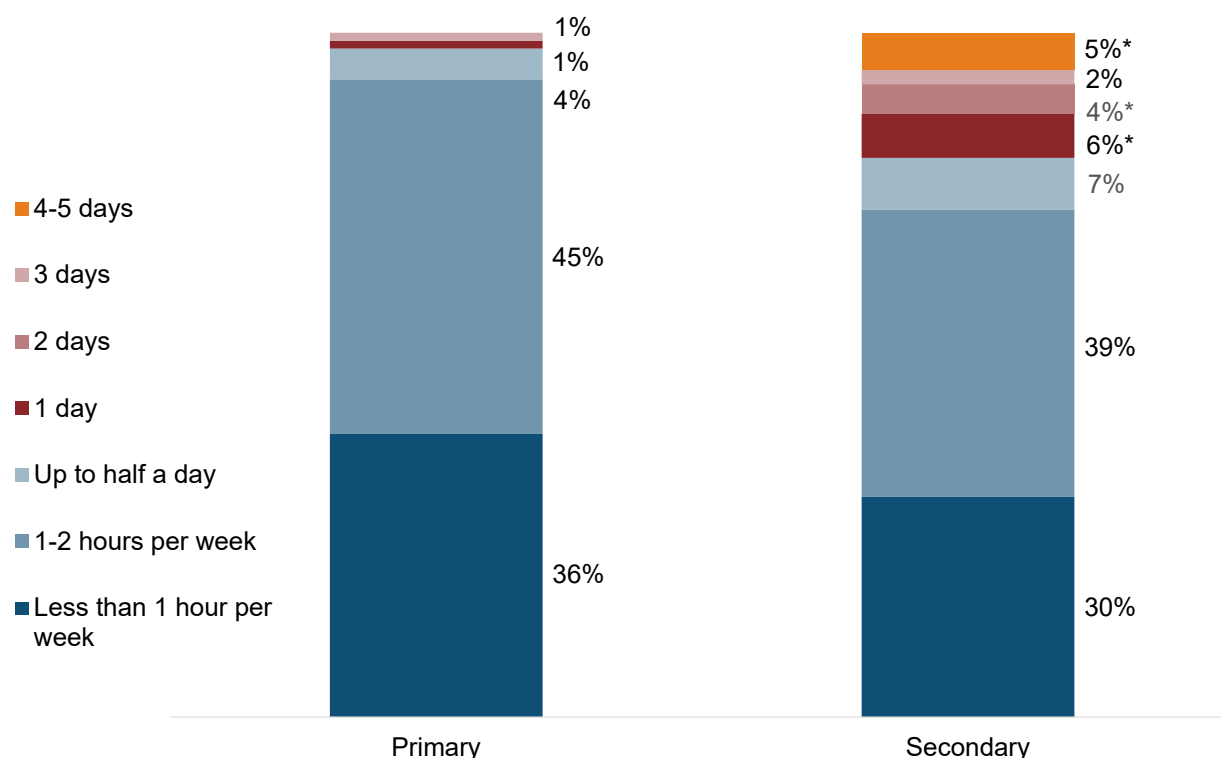
Source: C4. All teachers. Primary teachers (239), Secondary teachers (279)

A key element of the Theory of Change is to ensure that teachers feel supported by school leaders to have time to prepare and teach RSHE. One way in which schools can do this is by outlining an agreed amount of time that teachers are expected to spend on RSHE so that teachers can adequately plan ahead. Two-thirds (66%) of teachers reported that they had agreed how much time they should spend preparing and teaching RSHE (higher among primary teachers (76%) than secondary (57%)), and most of these teachers (74%) were spending those agreed hours on RSHE delivery. However, this shows that a nearly one quarter (23%) of teachers did not have agreed times to spend on RSHE, which is substantially higher amongst secondary teachers (32%). This suggests that this is an area where schools can improve.

A small minority (9%) of teachers reported that the time agreed with their school was not the same as what they actually spent on preparing and teaching RSHE[23], while 17% did not know or felt that it varies too much to say.

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[23] The exact question wording was "Is the time agreed with your school the same as what you actually spend preparing and teaching RSHE?", with answer options "yes", "no", and "don't know / varies too much to say". It is therefore not possible to say whether the 9% of teachers who reported that the time agreed was not the same as what they actually spend on RSHE felt that they spend more or less time than agreed on preparing and teaching RSHE.

Overall, just over a quarter of teachers (28%) did not think they had enough time to prepare RSHE lessons, though this was not explored further in the qualitative research to determine *why* teachers felt that they did not have enough time.

When asked how they would use extra timetabled RSHE time if this was available, just over half (51%) of teachers reported that they would use it to cover content in more detail, and just under one quarter (23%) reported they would use more time to go over new content, though what specific new content they would cover was not explored.

5.2.2 RSHE resources
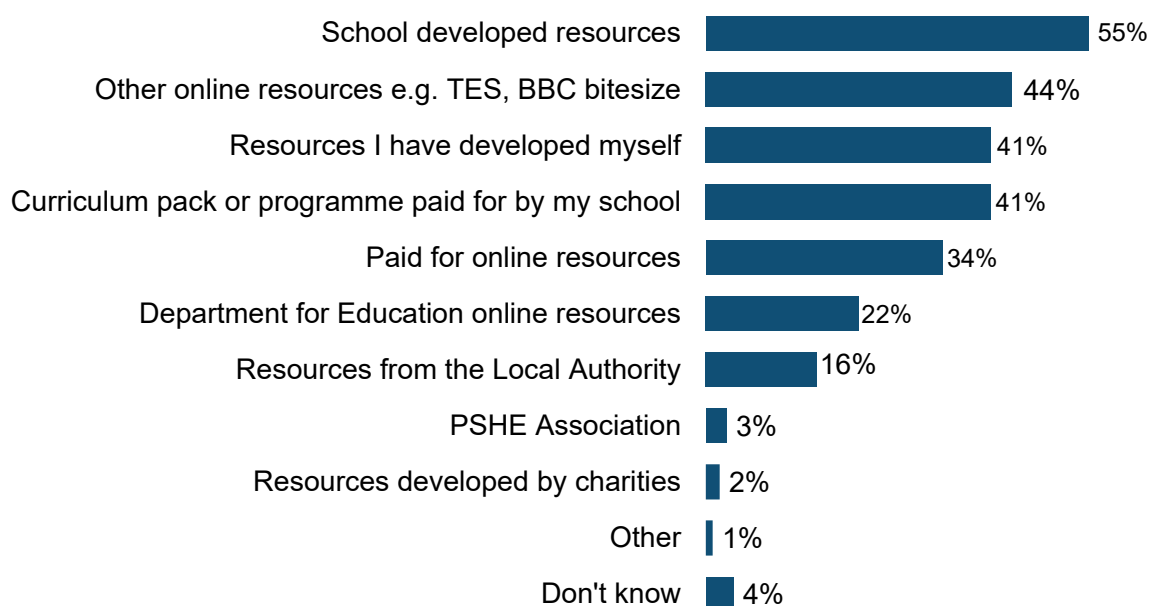
5.2.2.1 Planning materials and teaching resources

When delivering RSHE, most teachers either used existing materials (41%) or a mix of making their own materials and adapting existing materials[24] (53%). Very few planned the materials they use from scratch (3%). Teachers at secondary schools were more likely to use existing materials (72%) than primary teachers (36%). This was echoed in the qualitative findings with teachers and RSHE coordinators more generally using pre-existing materials to support the delivery of RSHE.

The main types of resources that teachers used for preparing for RSHE lessons were school developed resources (55%), non-paid for online resources such as TES, Oak National Academy or BBC Bitesize (44%), resources teachers have developed themselves (41%), or resources from a curriculum pack purchased by the school (41%), as seen in Figure 24. In the qualitative research, coordinators and teachers mentioned a number of different resources used to support teachers in preparing RSHE lessons, some examples of these included:

- PSHE Association
- Twinkl
- Learning Sheffield
- Brook (from Cornwall Council)
- NSPCC resources (particularly the Pants Programme)

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[24] The survey did not ask teachers where these existing materials are from, but some qualitative findings outlined that teachers used resources from other staff or things already in use at the school.

Figure 24: Resources used by teachers for preparing for RSHE lessons

Resource	Percentage
School developed resources	55%
Other online resources e.g. TES, BBC bitesize	44%
Resources I have developed myself	41%
Curriculum pack or programme paid for by my school	41%
Paid for online resources	34%
Department for Education online resources	22%
Resources from the Local Authority	16%
PSHE Association	3%
Resources developed by charities	2%
Other	1%
Don't know	4%

Source: C9. All teachers (518)

There were some differences in the resources used among teachers:

- Those in secondary schools were more likely to be using school developed resources (72%, compared to 36% of primary school teachers)

- Teachers who work at special schools were more likely than average to use resources they had developed themselves (69%)

- Teachers in schools with the highest proportion of FSM-eligible pupils were more likely to report using other online resources (52%)

5.2.2.2 Access to sufficient, high-quality resources

The Theory of Change anticipates that teachers will have access to high quality resources that they can use to deliver RSHE curriculum. The survey found that the majority of teachers (71%) felt that they had access to sufficient high-quality resources. However, one in five (21%) did not think they had access to sufficient high-quality resources. Teachers in schools in the East of England were more likely to report that they had access to sufficient high-quality resources (81%), while teachers in East Midlands were less likely to report this (42%).

When asked about this during the qualitative interviews there were mixed views on the access to high-quality resources. Some teachers found they had access to high-quality resources that could easily be adapted to suit the children's needs,

> "The PowerPoints from [local organisation] are incredibly useful. They're often used as a starting point, they've got links to videos, images, activities to stimulate conversation, other activities that build on the learning objective." - *Teacher, primary*

However, other teachers struggled slightly with finding resources that were up to date but also fit the needs and requirements of the children.

> "The resource we use, it's produced by Channel 4, but it is very old. We have looked for materials that are more modern, the current resource we use have the band Cleopatra who were singing back when I was in school! So, it's quite dated, but we have used it for a number of years, we can't find another one instead." - *Teacher, primary*
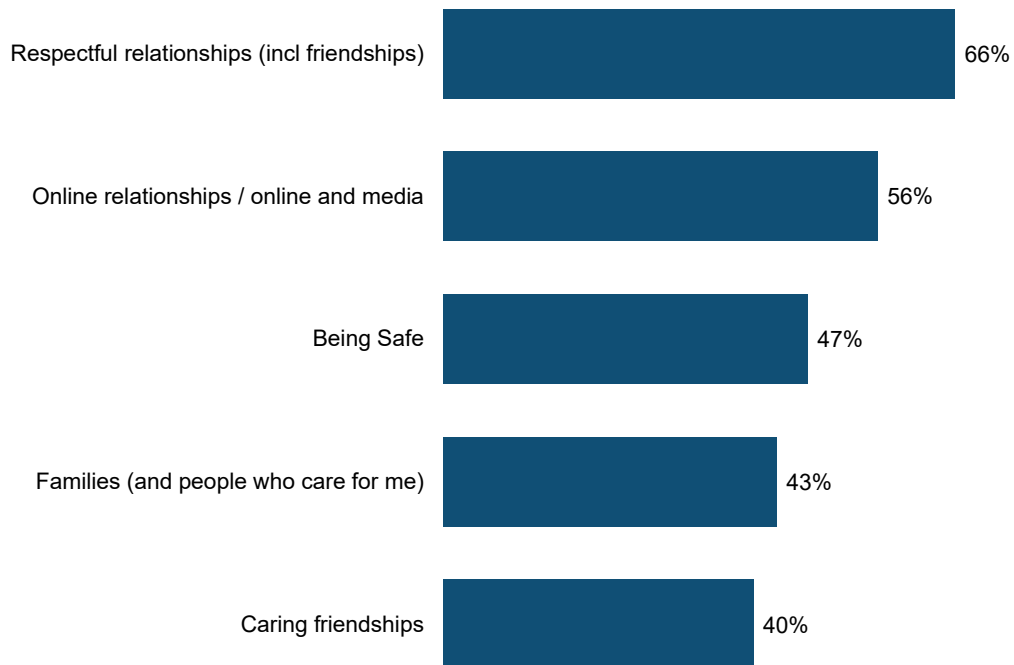
Another issue raised by teachers, particularly from special schools, was the difficulties they faced in accessing resources that were suitable and accessible for the children and young people in their school. Teachers noted that whilst there were resources available, these were generally pitched at mainstream schools and did not consider teaching in special schools with different levels of need. This coincides with the finding that special schools were more likely than average to develop their own resources, though this was not specifically raised in qualitative interviews with staff from special schools.

> "We have the resources, but they are not meeting our needs in special schools. DfE is not doing well for us. We need more sensory and modelling resources rather than paper resources. We have to teach for knowledge rather than tick boxes for DfE … we can have guidance but how can we implement it if we don't have the resources." - *Teacher, secondary, special*

In terms of specific topics, the majority of primary school teachers wanted to see high quality resources developed for the topics 'respectful relationships' and 'online relationships'.

Figure 25 and Figure 26 demonstrate what topic areas teachers would have liked to see resources developed for in further detail.

Figure 25: Topics for which primary school teachers would like to see high quality resources developed

Topic	Percentage
Respectful relationships (incl friendships)	66%
Online relationships / online and media	56%
Being Safe	47%
Families (and people who care for me)	43%
Caring friendships	40%

Source: C12. All primary school teachers (239)

Secondary teachers were most interested in more high-quality resources on 'intimate and sexual relationships' (49%), 'mental wellbeing' (49%) and 'respectful relationships' (46%). Most topics were mentioned by at least a third of secondary teachers.

Figure 26: Topics for which secondary school teachers would like to see high-quality resources developed

Topic	Percentage
Intimate and sexual relationships	49%
Mental wellbeing	49%
Respectful relationships (incl friendships)	46%
Online relationships / online and media	40%
Internet safety and harms	39%
Changing adolescent body	37%
Drugs, alcohol and tobacco	36%
Families	35%
Being safe	34%
Basic first aid	34%
Health and prevention	30%
Physical health and fitness	28%
Healthy eating	28%
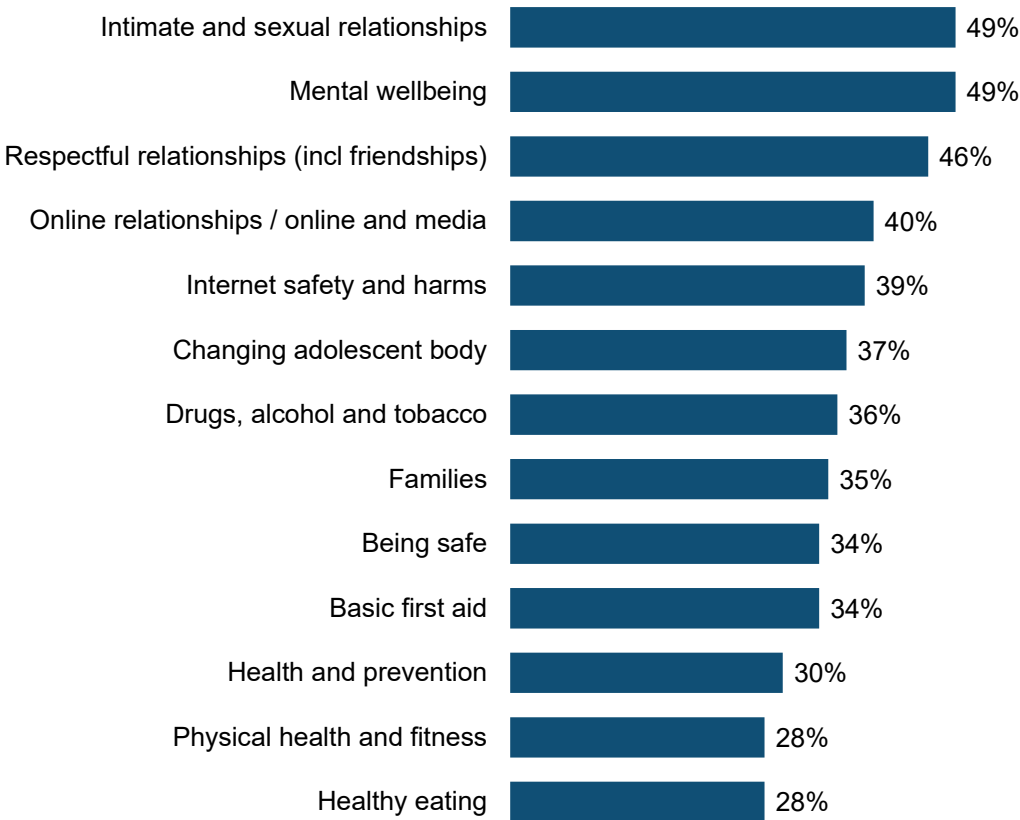
Source: C12. All secondary school teachers (279)

Teachers in primary schools were more likely than secondary school teachers to want high-quality resources in:

- Respectful relationships (66% compared to 46% of secondary)

- Online relationships / online media (56% compared to 40% of secondary)

- Being safe (47% compared to 34% of secondary)

As well as the differences in school phase, teachers from schools with the highest proportion of FSM-eligible pupils were more likely to want resources on being safe (47% compared to 40% overall) and caring friendships (26% compared to 19% overall). Whilst this is an interesting comparison, the research did not delve into the reasoning behind the differences in why areas with different FSM ratings wanted different resources based on topic area. This could be an area for future research.

When thinking about topics, teachers highlighted that there were some areas that they were uncomfortable teaching or felt they needed more support and resources on, but they managed to work around this in the school. These generally were to do with puberty or LGBT content.

"There are teachers that are not comfortable teaching private parts, and we have male teachers who are uncomfortable teaching about periods or showing females how to put pads on. So, we get a female teacher to help. There are females that are not comfortable teaching about male puberty as well. Also, cultural, and religious atmosphere means that some teachers need others to help." - *RSHE coordinator, secondary, special*

5.2.2.3 Usefulness of resources

Teachers were largely very positive about the usefulness of the resources they had used. As shown in Figure 27, at least three-quarters found each type of resource useful, and nine in ten found most of the resources useful to at least some extent. Teachers were most likely to find the following very useful:

- Resources they have developed themselves (70%)

- Resources from a curriculum pack or programme paid for by the school (67%)

- School developed resources (65%)

Figure 27: Usefulness of resources for teachers
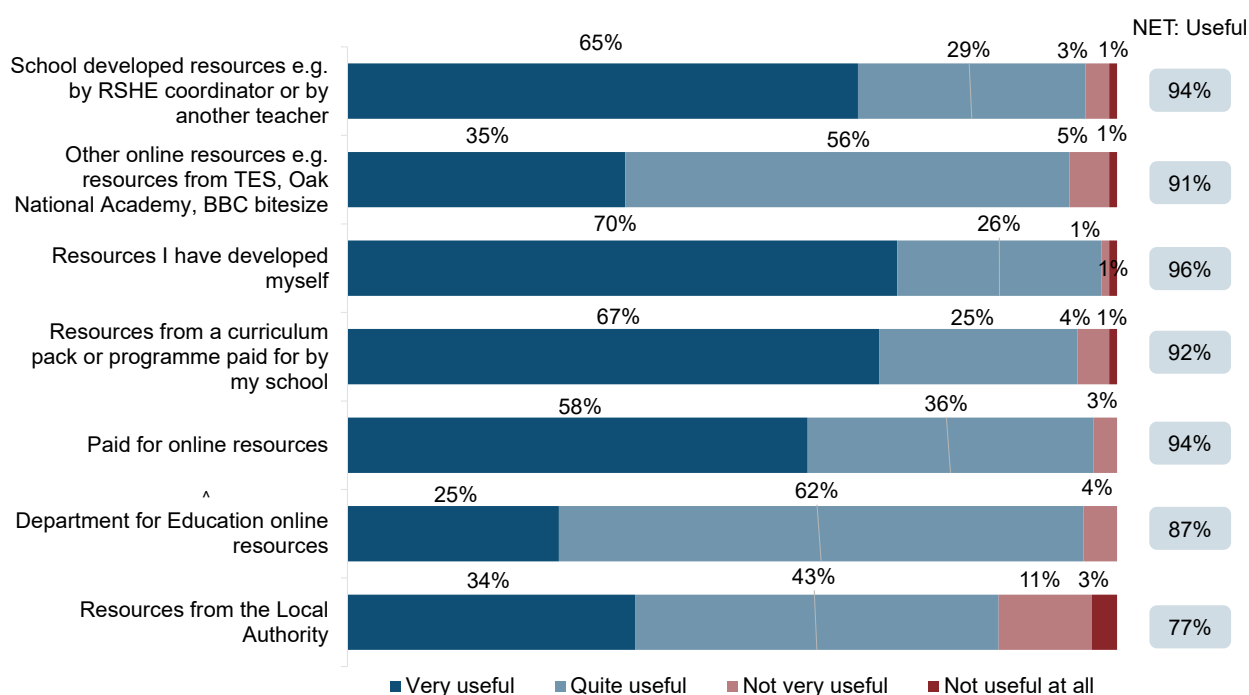
Source: C10. Teachers who have used each of these resources. School developed resources (286). Other online resources (239). Resources I have developed (224). Resources from a curriculum pack (210). Paid for online resources (175). Department for Education online resources (118). Resources from Local Authority (83).

5.3 Training and support

This section links to the following aspects of the Theory of Change:

- Schools establish a process to assess and meet teacher training needs (activity)
- Schools establish ways for teachers to network and share good RSHE practices (activity)
- Teachers receive timely and high quality RSHE CPD tailored to their needs (output)
- Teachers engage in informal support networks (output)

5.3.1 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The Theory of Change highlights the importance of ensuring that schools have a process to assess and meet teacher training needs. In terms of training, 95% of school leaders and 78% of coordinators thought that teachers were receiving timely and high quality RSHE CPD to at least some extent. A very small proportion of leaders (2%) and coordinators (8%) thought their staff had not received any RSHE CPD.

Despite the high levels reported by leaders and coordinators, there was some disparity when teachers were asked about their training needs. In the last 12 months, one third (33%) of teachers reported their RSHE training needs had been assessed, with 9% saying they had not had their RSHE training or CPD needs reviewed in the last 12 months but that this was planned.

Three in five teachers (60%) reported receiving RSHE CPD in the last 12 months, while around one third (34%) said they had not received any training in this time. Teachers who had read the statutory guidance reported slightly higher levels of receiving RSHE CPD (65%). Around half (51%) of teachers reported receiving RSHE training or CPD at least once per year, and 19% reported receiving training at least once per term.

One fifth (21%) of teachers reported that they had RSHE training or CPD planned for the next 12 months, whilst 29% did not, and half did not know (51%).

In discussions with teachers and RSHE coordinators a number of ways that schools assessed their teacher training needs were reported. These were primarily:

- Looking at teachers' lesson plans
- Informal and formal conversations with staff
- Lesson observation
- Teacher surveys
- Tracking spreadsheets

Based on the above examples of assessing teacher training needs, there could be some teachers who did not consider the above as having their training needs assessed, therefore the levels who have had training needs assessed could be higher than the level that was reported in the survey.

There were some teachers who noted that they had never had their training needs assessed, but as was pulled out in the qualitative research, this generally was because they worked in a small or informal school setting and had reported that they could request training as and when needed.

> "We have a very open door here, if we feel we need training on something we can bid for that." - *Teacher, secondary*

> "I think we're very good at talking to each other and I think that if somebody has an issue with, say, the next unit of planning, or wasn't sure how to go about it, they would come to us and if we weren't able to support them in that then we would look further into how we can support that." *Teacher, primary, PRU*

5.3.1.1 Types of training received

Teachers reported a range of types of training and CPD they had received over the last 12 months, but the most frequently reported types of training received were:

- RSHE training delivered by their own school (34% of all teachers)

- Coaching/mentoring (12%)

- Subject leadership in RSHE (12%)

- Non-accredited course delivered by an external provider or consultant (12%)

The split between primary and secondary schools can be seen in detail in Figure 28.

Figure 28: Types of CPD teachers have received in the last 12 months

	Secondary	Primary
RSHE training/CPD delivered by own school	34%	35%
Subject leadership in RSHE	32%*	7%
Non accredited course delivered by an external provider or consultant, either at your school or elsewhere	13%	12%
Coaching/mentoring	12%	12%
PSHE Association training	9%*	3%
Training/CPD provided by wider Multi-Academy Trust/Teaching School Alliance	5%	3%
Local Authority training	5%	3%
Local network group training	3%	3%
Formally accredited CPD (Masters/NPQs)	3%	2%
System leader support	2%	2%
Sex Education Forum	4%*	

Source: F4. All teachers. Primary school (239), Secondary school (279)

When asked in the qualitative interviews, there were many teachers who felt that they still needed more training and some of the teachers who had received training still wanted more. There was a particular interest in external training, as well as training tailored to teachers working in APs, special schools and PRUs.

> "Most training out there is not tailored to our needs. Our type of children tend to be forgotten about." - *Teacher, secondary*

Teachers also noted difficulty in getting suitable training in the right topic areas for them.

5.4 Confidence

Both school leaders and coordinators had high levels of confidence in teachers' ability to deliver RSHE, with 97% and 93% confident respectively. Coordinators in secondary schools reported slightly lower levels of confidence (86% vs. 96% of primary school RSHE coordinators).

Although low base sizes mean results should be treated with caution, findings suggest lower confidence among leaders in all girls schools. Among the 32 leaders from all girls schools 4 were not confident in their teachers' ability, whereas none of the 16 leaders in all boys schools reported that they were not confident in their teachers' ability.

Of the 27 leaders responding to the quantitative survey who were not confident in some teachers' ability to deliver RSHE, the most common reason reported by leaders was that teachers feel uncomfortable when delivering RSHE, or that teachers need more training.

5.4.1 Teachers' confidence in delivering RSHE

Teachers reported very high levels of confidence in delivering almost all topic areas of RSHE. At least 87% of teachers felt confident in each of the subject areas listed in Figure 29.

Nearly all teachers felt confident in delivering lessons on caring friendships (99%), families and people who care for me (98%) and being safe (98%). There were no significant differences in the confidence levels between primary and secondary teachers, except in one topic: secondary teachers were more likely to feel very confident teaching about respectful relationships (53% vs. 44% of primary teachers).

This high level of confidence demonstrates that, at least from teachers' point of view, they are broadly already achieving what is laid out in the Theory of Change, having the knowledge and skills to confidently deliver an impactful RSHE curriculum.

As shown in Figure 29 teachers felt least confident teaching 'mental wellbeing' (13%), 'basic first aid' (12%) and 'intimate and sexual relationships' (11%).

Figure 29: The percentage of teachers delivering RSHE topics and the percentage of these not confident in teaching that subject
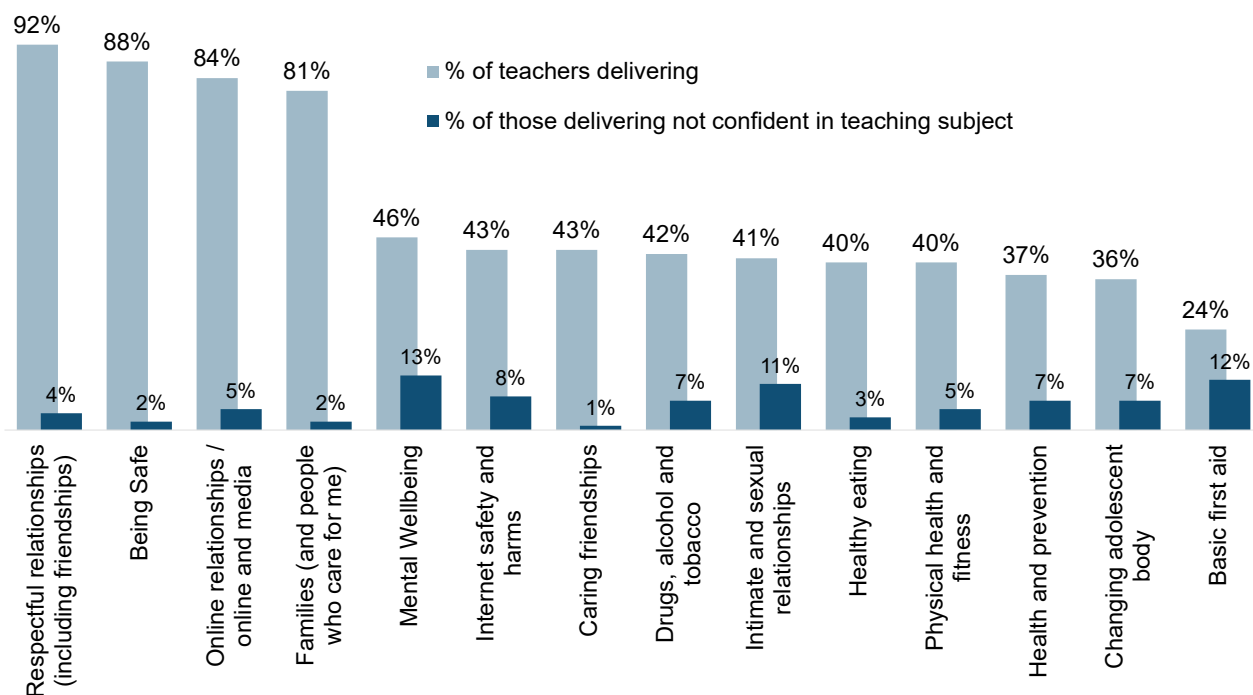
Source. C3. All teachers (518). C13. Teachers who teach this aspect of RSHE: Caring friendships (217), Families (424), Being Safe (459), Healthy eating (224), Respectful relationships (482), Online relationships / online media (432), Physical health and fitness (215), Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco (222). Health and

prevention (197), Changing adolescent body (195), Internet safety and harms (231), Basic first aid (131), Intimate and sexual relationships (210), Mental wellbeing (246)

Generally, teachers also reported high levels of confidence when it came to teaching RSHE, with some even noting RSHE as their favourite topic to teach. Teachers enjoyed or felt confident teaching RSHE because:

- They felt the topic was **essential for students**

- They were **passionate** about the subject

- They knew they could **help students talk to their parents** about topics

- RSHE often had **more interactive, collaborative and less formal styles of teaching** and teachers enjoyed the discussion elements of the lessons

- **Pupils were generally more interested** in RSHE topics

    "The discussions are much better [in RSHE than in lessons on other subjects]. Maybe it's more interesting for them. I think with the nature of the topic, they are suddenly walking in going, 'No I think I need to know about this." - *Teacher, secondary, faith school*

    "I love it. Absolutely love it. It was something I really did feel strongly and passionately about, and I really see the benefit of the subject." *Teacher, secondary*

Whilst there were generally high levels of confidence amongst teachers, there were some areas which teachers wanted more support on, or they felt less confident teaching. These were generally on more difficult or complex topics which included female genital mutilation (FGM), divorce and different types of families, managing questions about LGBT issues, domestic and sexual abuse, pornography, healthy habits, and puberty. Many of these subjects are also areas that teachers wanted additional training in.

    "[FGM is] so foreign to our students, it's so hard for them to understand that this is real life, this does happen, that it's hard for us to get it across to them. And obviously the content is uncomfortable to talk about." - *RSHE coordinator, secondary, AP*
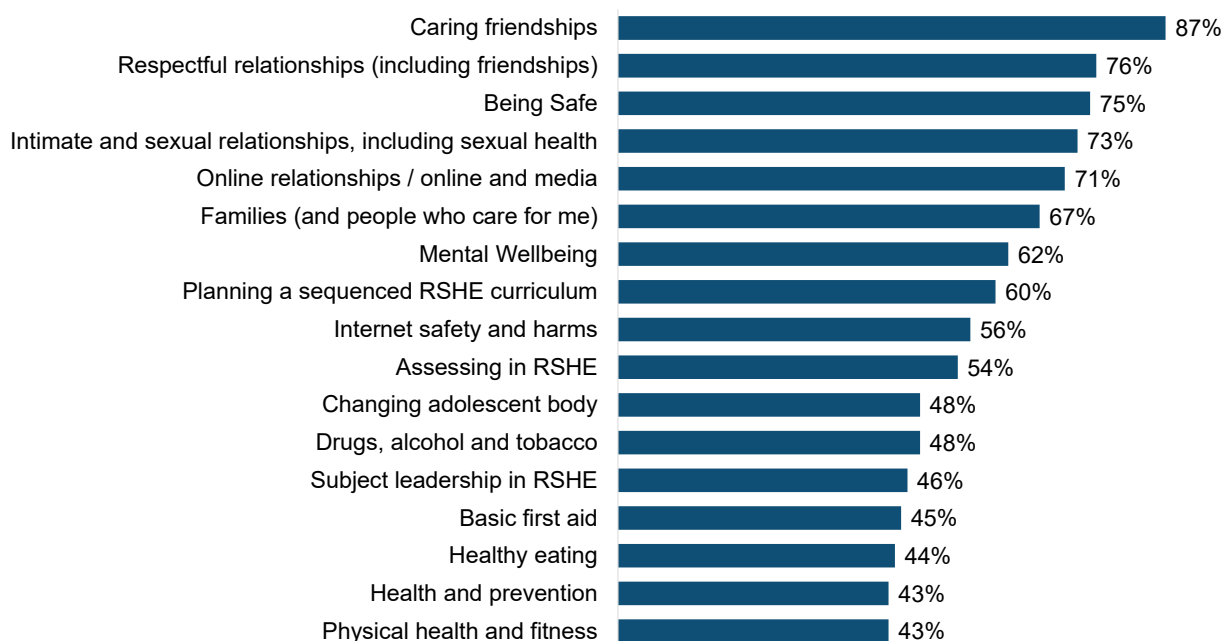
    "Last week, we were talking about changes through puberty. And one of the kids asked about taking HRT if you are trans and it was one of those where it's like, I'm [going to] have to park this for another lesson and come back to you. And it was because I wanted to make sure my answer was age appropriate. But I did say to the class what it stood for, just so they were aware." - *Teacher, primary*

Teachers particularly highlighted that some of these topics were harder to teach during COVID-19 when students were attending virtual school and may be overheard by parents and carers.

5.4.3 Impact of training on confidence

Training has helped teachers improve their confidence in teaching different RSHE topics. As seen in Figure 30, 'caring friendships', 'respectful relationships' and 'being safe' were the three topic areas where training improved confidence the most amongst those delivering these topics.

Figure 30: How much teachers felt that training improved their confidence to deliver aspects of RSHE

Topic	Percentage
Caring friendships	87%
Respectful relationships (including friendships)	76%
Being Safe	75%
Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health	73%
Online relationships / online and media	71%
Families (and people who care for me)	67%
Mental Wellbeing	62%
Planning a sequenced RSHE curriculum	60%
Internet safety and harms	56%
Assessing in RSHE	54%
Changing adolescent body	48%
Drugs, alcohol and tobacco	48%
Subject leadership in RSHE	46%
Basic first aid	45%
Healthy eating	44%
Health and prevention	43%
Physical health and fitness	43%

Source: F6. Teachers who have had training in the last 12 months and deliver this aspect of the RSHE curriculum: Caring friendships (107), Respectful relationships (251), Being Safe (241), Intimate and sexual relationships (114), Online relationships (225), Families (224), Mental wellbeing (135), Planning a sequenced RSHE curriculum (265), Internet safety and harms (109), Assessing in RSHE (125), Changing adolescent body (109), Drugs, alcohol and tobacco (125), Subject leadership in RSHE (265), Basic first aid (72), Healthy eating (120), Health and prevention (112), Physical health and fitness (117)

Teachers from primary schools were more likely than secondary teachers to report an increase in their confidence after receiving training about:

- Respectful relationships (90% vs. 65%)

- Online relationships (89% vs. 58%)

- Planning a sequenced RSHE curriculum (81% vs. 43%)

During the qualitative interviews, teachers and RSHE coordinators highlighted instances where their confidence increased after training.

"I did some [RSHE] training with [local organisation] and it was very much where Key Stage Two stuff should be going. It was very interesting and just gave us some extra guidance and confidence in what to talk about. I used to feel embarrassed, but it showed me how I just needed to take a very different tone, and I'm quite comfortable doing it now." - *Teacher, primary*

"We had the lady from [local organisation] come and spend two days with our RSHE team which was really helpful." - *Teacher, secondary*

5.5 Support networks

The survey identified that one third (34%) of teachers were aware of networks or support groups for RSHE. Awareness was higher amongst secondary school teachers (39% vs. 29% of primary teachers). Teachers who had read the RSHE statutory guidance were more likely to be aware of support networks and groups (43% vs. 18% of those who had not read it).

Teachers aware of support groups or networks were asked what level they engaged with. Secondary teachers were most engaged with national groups, followed by local or online groups. Primary teachers were most likely to attend local groups, followed by national groups and network of schools.

Figure 31: The level of support with which groups or networks that teachers are engaging
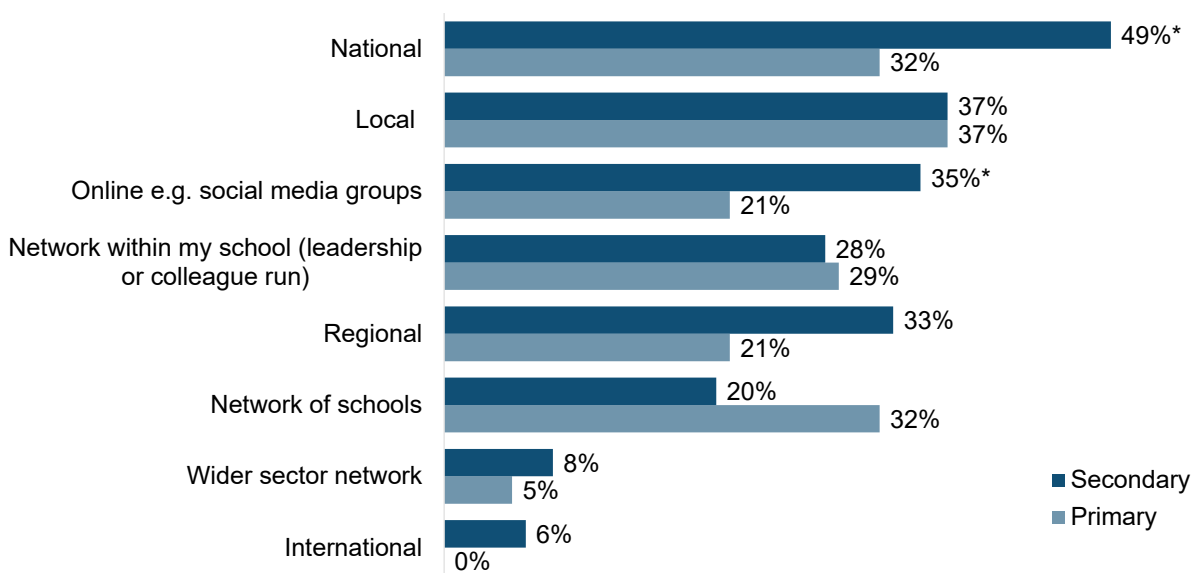
Source: F9. Teachers aware of networks or groups that can provide support. Primary school (69), secondary school (106)

* Indicates a statically significant difference between primary and secondary leaders.

Whilst engagement in RSHE support groups or networks was generally low, teachers who did engage with support networks and groups found them valuable. The majority of teachers who engaged with the networks and support groups found them useful for improving their understanding and ability to teach RSHE (84%). This suggests more work needs to be done to increase teachers' awareness of support groups and networks and encourage their engagement with them.

Findings from the qualitative interviews suggest that RSHE coordinators were more likely to engage with support networks, and then cascade learning to teachers in their setting, whilst teachers were less likely to report engagement in networks. This was often because they were not aware of such groups, or if they were, they felt they did not have the time to engage with them.

> "I think outside organisations – or decent outside organisations – are powerful but difficult to find." - *Teacher, secondary*

Teachers and coordinators also highlighted the issues they faced with finding capacity to engage with RSHE support networks and groups and talked about feeling stretched and struggling with competing demands.

5.6 Key findings

This section maps the key findings discussed in this chapter onto the relevant elements of the Theory of Change. Broadly the evidence suggests that whilst a number of the elements of the Theory of Change were met, there is definite room to improve the assessment of teacher RSHE training needs and establishing ways for teachers to engage with support networks or groups. Whilst the research identified that only a minority of teachers were engaging with support networks, the qualitative interviews unpacked that it was often due to lack of awareness and lack of time.

Assumption*: The CPD teachers receive is high quality, they are given time to complete the training and they are motivated to apply their learning in the classroom.*

Key findings

- The vast majority of leaders (95%) and about three-quarters of (78%) of coordinators thought the training that the teachers received was timely and of high quality, but 35% of teachers who did not receive CPD in the last 12 months felt more training would be useful

- This was echoed by findings from the qualitative interviews, where many teachers reported that they had not had their training needs assessed and some felt that more training would be beneficial

- Generally, teachers reported that they struggled with time for RSHE training and reported that there were often competing needs

Conclusion: staff felt positively about CPD on offer, however, there is still a sizable minority who are not receiving timely CPD. More can be done to improve the availability and accessibility of RSHE CPD, as many teachers raised issues with timing and accessibility of training. The findings suggest that the assumed activity in the Theory of Change were partially met.

Assumption*: Teachers will be able to access school and/or LA-led networks at a local or regional level, to enable sharing of good practice.*

Key findings

- The majority of teachers were not engaging in support networks, with only a third (33%) of all teachers surveyed engaged in support networks. More could be done to enable teachers to access networks

- Of those who engage, secondary teachers were most engaged with national groups, followed by local, online, or regional groups. Primary teachers were most likely to engage with local groups, followed by national groups and network of schools

- Interview findings suggest that teachers needed more time and better awareness of such groups to engage with them

- When teachers did engage with support networks and groups, the majority (84%) of them found them to be beneficial

Conclusion: limited numbers of teachers were engaging with RSHE networks/support groups, with awareness, time and capacity cited as the main barriers for engagement. Given the benefits reported by those who engaged with networks, more needs to be done to give teachers the time and opportunity to engage with such groups. Despite some qualitative findings highlighting that teachers needed more time and better awareness, this research did not specifically address *how best* to engage teachers with support networks or groups, therefore more research may be needed to conclude this. The findings suggest that this assumption in the Theory of Change was partially met at a relatively limited level.

Activity: *Schools establish ways for teachers to network and share good RSHE practices.*

Key findings

- Teachers generally are not networking outside of their school, as only one-third (34%) of teachers were aware of available support networks

- The research itself was unable to establish the role that schools play in establishing ways for teachers to network and share good practice, as teachers were just asked about their involvement with groups

Conclusion: schools could be doing more to publicise or encourage teacher engagement in RSHE networks or support groups. But, as highlighted, the research mostly asked about teacher engagement, rather than the role that schools play in establishing routes for teachers to engage with the groups.

Output: Teachers engage in informal support networks.

Key findings

- A third (33%) of all teachers surveyed engaged in support networks. Of those who engaged with networks, 84% found the networks to be helpful. As mentioned above, schools could be doing more to promote teacher engagement with RSHE support networks. The survey did not specifically ask teachers about "informal" support networks

- When asked about support networks in the qualitative interviews, teachers did not often engage with networks as they reported lack of awareness and lack of time as the barrier which stopped them engaging in such networks

- Teachers who did engage with support networks, reported in the interviews that they often used informal support networks, such as online Facebook groups, to provide and receive RSHE support

Conclusion: The majority of teachers are not engaged with groups, and potentially more needs to be done to publicise and get teachers encouraged to join informal support networks.

Activity: Schools establish a process to assess and meet teacher training needs

Key findings

- A minority of teachers (33%) reported that their RSHE training needs had been assessed in the last 12 months. This was also the case for findings from the qualitative interviews where teachers often reported their training needs had not been assessed recently

- When asked about the type of training, teachers highlighted their desire for external training and training that covers a more complex range of topic areas

Conclusion: this suggests that more needs to be done by schools to ensure teacher training needs are being identified. Teachers wanted more externally delivered training as well as training on more specific and complex topics. The findings suggest that this activity in the Theory of Change was not met.

Output: Teachers receive timely and high quality RSHE CPD tailored to their needs

Key findings

- Six in ten (60%) teachers reported to have received some form of RSHE training in the last 12 months

- The vast majority of leaders (95%) and about three-quarters of (78%) of coordinators thought the training that teachers receive was timely and of high quality, but 35% of teachers, who did not receive CPD in the last 12 months, felt more training would be useful

Conclusion: schools need to provide teachers with more frequent and suitable RSHE CPD. The findings suggest that this output in the Theory of Change was partially met.

Outcome: Teachers feel supported by the school leaders to have the time and resources to deliver the RSHE curriculum

Key findings

- Two-thirds (66%) of teachers reported to have an agreed time to spend on RSHE, and the majority of these (74%) reported that this was the actual time they spent on teaching and preparing RSHE

- While two thirds (65%) believed they had enough time to prepare RSHE lessons, 28% felt they needed more time for this

- The majority of teachers (71%) agreed that they had access to high-quality RSHE resources, a fifth (21%) disagreed

Conclusion: whilst there was a majority of teachers who felt they had enough time to prepare RSHE lessons and had access to high-quality resources, there was still a sizeable minority who felt they needed more time and wanted better resources. The findings suggest that this outcome in the Theory of Change was partially met.

Outcome: Teachers have the knowledge and skills to confidently deliver an impactful RSHE curriculum

Key findings

- Most teachers (around 80%) were confident about delivering most aspects of RSHE, which was echoed with the qualitative interviews

- There were some complex or difficult topic areas which teachers wanted more support and guidance on, such as FGM, LGBT topics, different family lives and sexual health

- However, nearly half of school leaders (45%) reported a lack of teacher confidence as a potential challenge to implementing the RSHE guidance. This difference in view warrants further exploration

Conclusion: Whilst the majority of teachers are confident in delivering RSHE, there is some desire for more specific training on more complex issues. The findings suggest that

this outcome of the Theory of Change was met in relation to some of the topics covered in the new RSHE curriculum but not met in relation to others.

5.7 Teachers' RSHE training and confidence in delivering RSHE conclusions

There were mixed views on training and confidence in delivering RSHE. Whilst leaders and coordinators felt that teachers were receiving timely and high quality training, teachers reported a different story. Only around a third reported having RSHE CPD in the last 12 months, and similarly around a third reported having their training needs assessed in the last 12 months. There was, however, reported appetite for additional training which was echoed in both the quantitative and qualitative findings. Teachers were particularly keen for externally delivered RSHE training, as well as training on more specific and complex topic areas. A key barrier highlighted by teachers was lack of time, noting that there were often competing priorities which made it difficult to access training. The research did not explore the disparity between the sentiment from leaders and coordinators and teachers and this would need further research.

In terms of support networks and groups, teachers were broadly not engaging with groups. Similarly, time was a key issue, as well as lack of knowledge of what was available to them. The impact of support networks *were* considered positive though, and teachers who engaged highlighted the benefits such as improved knowledge and shared best practice. Whilst the research noted that teachers were broadly not engaged in such groups, more research is needed to determine how to increase teacher involvement in support groups and networks.

Leaders cited a perceived lack of confidence amongst teachers as a barrier to RSHE delivery, though this was not supported by teacher responses. Overall, teachers felt confident on delivery of RSHE topics, though some wanted more support on more complicated or sensitive topic areas (such as FGM, LBGT topics, different family lives etc.). Teachers from special schools also wanted more specific support targeted to better support the needs of their students. When asked for barriers to deliver of RSHE, teachers were more likely to report time to access training and time to plan lessons as an area for concern. This suggests that the elements in the Theory of Change were partially met.

6 Parental engagement with RSHE

6.1 Theory of change – parental engagement with RSHE

As depicted in Figure 32, the section of Theory of Change in the 2020 RSHE curriculum guidance provides schools with information and advice on engaging with parents, carers and the local community, with the aim that this would lead to:

- Schools providing a forum for parental and local community engagement on the RSHE curriculum

- Parents feeling well informed about the curriculum, that their views had been considered in the design process, and that they are equipped to reinforce RSHE learning at home, and

- Teachers being aware that parents have been consulted and therefore feeling supported to deliver the curriculum

As research with parents was not within the scope of this study, the second point was not addressed by this research, and therefore cannot be fully addressed in this report. The other two points were addressed by the findings in this section, including the extent to which parents' views were considered by schools in RSHE curriculum design, and the level of parental support as perceived by teachers.

**Figure 32: Theory of Change in relation to parental engagement**

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes (short term)
Guidance on engaging with parents, carers and the local community Curriculum planning resources and learning modules	Schools provide a forum for parental and local community engagement on the RSHE curriculum	Parents feel well informed about the RSHE curriculum, that their views have been considered in the curriculum design and that they are equipped to reinforce the learning at home	Teachers know that parents have been consulted and so feel supported to deliver the curriculum

6.2 Parents' views on RSHE curriculum

This section links to the activity in the Theory of Change that schools provide a forum for parental and local community engagement on the RSHE curriculum.

Nearly all school leaders (95%) reported that parents' views were considered in RSHE curriculum design at their school (37% said they were considered to a great extent).

Figure 33: Extent to which school leaders had considered parents' views in RSHE curriculum design
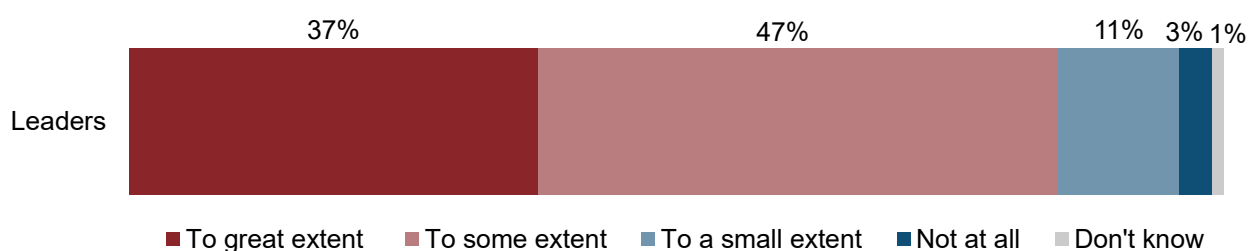
Source: E1: To what extent, if at all, were parents' views considered or taken into account in RSHE curriculum design at your school? All leaders (1,039)

The majority of RSHE coordinators (90%) also reported that parents' views were considered in RSHE curriculum design at their school. Around a quarter (27%) said this had been done to a great extent, lower than found among leaders (37%).

While the level of agreement was very high among all groups, the following groups were significantly more likely to say that parents' views were considered or taken into account at all:

- Primary school leaders and coordinators (97% primary leaders vs. 91% secondary leaders; 92% primary coordinators vs. 87% secondary coordinators)

- Leaders from schools with an Ofsted rating of 'outstanding' (97%) or 'good' (97%) vs. leaders from schools with a rating of 'requires improvement' (92%)

- Leaders and coordinators who had read the statutory guidance themselves, compared with those who reported that someone else at their school had read it (leaders: 96% vs. 88%; coordinators 91% vs. 80%)

In contrast, coordinators working in special schools were significantly less likely to report that parents' views were taken into consideration to any extent (77% vs. 90% among all coordinators). The difference in approach between mainstream and special schools was not specifically explored in the qualitative research with coordinators and therefore may require further exploration.

Leaders who reported that parents' views were not considered at all in RSHE curriculum design were asked why this was (this is a relatively low base of 44 respondents, hence

results are best treated as indicative; for this reason, results are presented in numeric terms rather than percentages). The most common reasons were:

- A lack of time or having other higher priorities (18 leaders)

- Feeling that it is the school's responsibility to design the curriculum (10 leaders)

- The impact of COVID-19 or the belief that online consultations would not work well (9 leaders)

- Concern around getting a negative reaction from parents (8 leaders)

- Not expecting many parents would want to be involved (7 leaders)

6.3 Teachers' views of parental support for school's approach to RSHE

This section links to the outcome in the Theory of Change that teachers know that parents have been consulted and so feel supported to deliver the curriculum.

In terms of parental support for school approaches there were mixed views in how supportive parents were according to the teachers' perspectives. Seven in ten teachers felt that parents were fairly (50%) or very (21%) supportive of their school's approach to teaching RSHE. Almost a quarter of teachers (23%) were unsure if parents were supportive of their school's approach to teaching RSHE, while 4% of teachers felt that parents were not very and 2% not at all supportive. Although it should again be noted that parents were not directly consulted with so there is no data on what parents thought themselves.

Figure 34: Teachers' views of parental support to school's approach to teaching RSHE
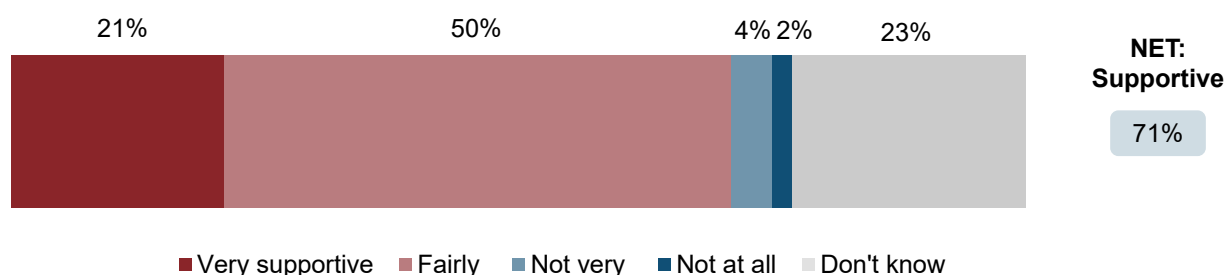
Source: E6: Do you feel parents are supportive of your schools' approach to teaching RSHE? All teachers (518).

More primary school teachers reported parents being supportive (79% very or fairly supportive) than secondary teachers (65%). Secondary teachers were more likely to say

they don't know (31% vs. 14%). A minority of teachers felt that parents were not very (5% of primary, 3% of secondary) or not at all supportive (2% primary, 1% secondary).

Teachers who had read the statutory guidance were more likely to report that parents were very or fairly supportive of the school's approach than teachers who had not (79% vs. 56%), as were teachers in London (82%).

Findings from the qualitative interviews further echoed that there were a mix of levels of engagement with parents from schools. One way schools did this was by informing parents about RSHE through publishing the topics and areas covered in RSHE either through newsletters or on the website. There was an understanding of how involvement with parents can be important in creating an environment of trust with teachers, pupils, and parents.

> "We've got to be open. I'm a parent myself, it's natural that you want to know what's being taught, what materials are being used, given what goes out in the press sometimes I understand completely why some parents are concerned. I'm proud of what we do, and I want parents to be involved because their input is valuable." - *Teacher, secondary*

Other approaches involved having consultations with parents on RSHE topics, including things like dedicated meetings, drop-in sessions, Zoom meetings, 'school-gate' chats, and phone calls with concerned parents.

> "We consult with parents before adding new content to the syllabus. We have consulted with parents throughout. We've had sessions for parents to come in where we explained why we are doing this. We now run an annual refresher for new parents." - *RSHE coordinator, primary, faith school*

There were, however, instances where schools noted a lack of trust or engagement with the RSHE curriculum from parents. More research may be needed to further explore the views of parents and their engagement with the RSHE curriculum, in particular, it would be interesting to note how parents regard consultation on RSHE topics and if the above is considered sufficient (particularly for examples such as 'school-gate' conversations').

6.4 Key findings

This section maps the key findings discussed in this chapter onto the relevant elements of the Theory of Change. The evidence in relation to parts of the Theory of Change relevant to parental engagement are inconclusive.

Activity: Schools provide a forum for parental and local community engagement on the RSHE curriculum

Key findings

- Nearly all leaders stated that parents' views were considered in RSHE curriculum design (95%)

- Nearly all school leaders who had used or were planning to use the RSHE guidance said they would do so to help know how to consult with parents and communities (96%), and 92% of leaders who had used the guidance in this way said it was useful

- Interview findings suggested that parents were consulted on RSHE to differing levels. Some schools used a more hands-on approach in pursuing parents' thoughts, whilst others took a more hands off approach

Conclusion: the findings suggest that whilst some schools are consulting with parents and the local community, there is more work to be done to for more schools to be more active in their consultation. A number of schools considered providing forums in a more informal way such as phone calls and 'school-gate chats', which may not be a formal enough forum. Consideration is needed to be given to the parents' perspective of how well they believe schools are providing sufficient forums, which may be an area for future research. The findings in relation to whether this activity in the Theory of Change was met are inconclusive.

Output: Parents feel well informed about the RSHE curriculum, that their views have been considered in the curriculum design and that they are equipped to reinforce the learning at home

Key findings

- In qualitative interviews, teachers reported that parents were consulted on RSHE curriculum, and that parents have the opportunity to provide their views on the curriculum design, however this was limited as many teachers reported that parents often did not engage with the process

Conclusion: whilst leaders reported that parents were largely being consulted, there is scope for more parent engagement with the RSHE curriculum. It should be noted also that the research itself did not get the perspective of parents, and more direct research may be needed to reach firm conclusions. The findings in relation to whether this output in the Theory of Change was met are inconclusive.

Outcome: Teachers know that parents have been consulted and so feel supported to deliver the curriculum

Key findings

- Most teachers (71%) felt parents were supportive of the schools' approach to RSHE (although only 21% felt they are *very* supportive). Quite a high proportion did not know (23%, rising to 31% among secondary school teachers)

- Teachers were generally supportive of their school's approach to RSHE consultation with parents

Conclusion: broadly, teachers believe that parents were supportive of RSHE teaching and teachers reported feeling this support. However, there were high levels of uncertainty amongst teachers, particularly amongst secondary teachers which suggests a level of ambiguity. The findings in relation to whether this outcome in the Theory of Change was met are inconclusive.

6.5 Parental engagement with RSHE conclusions

There were a range of views on parental engagement with the RSHE curriculum. Whilst nearly all leaders reported that parents' views are taken in to consideration for RSHE curriculum design, qualitative findings with staff suggest this maybe more of 'hand-off' approach in some schools, with some schools believing that having an open-door policy provided sufficient forum for consultation.

Teachers believed that parents were sufficiently consulted, though they did often note that from their perspective there was limited engagement with parents. Specific research directly with parents would be needed to gain full understanding.

The findings in relation to whether this of the Theory of Change was met are inconclusive.

7 Conclusions

As illustrated in this report, the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research have addressed most key elements of the Theory of Change. Overall, the evidence indicates that the activities planned within the Theory of Change are taking place, at least in part, although not always in the way in which it was originally assumed. The findings are summarised below:

The guidance was broadly being used in schools, mostly successfully. The survey found that nearly all leaders and RSHE coordinators had heard of the guidance and the vast majority had read it. Although there appeared to have been low levels of leaders not engaging with the guidance, this is still a concern as the guidance has been statutory since 2020. Teachers were slightly less familiar with the guidance and just over two in three had read it. The qualitative interviews revealed a similar picture - all coordinators reported that they had read the guidance while only a few teachers had done so. Almost all schools reported that they were using or planning to use the guidance to guide lesson and curriculum planning.

The role of RSHE coordinator has been key to implementing the guidance. The qualitative interviews revealed that teachers who have not engaged with the statutory guidance as much as coordinators generally did so because it was viewed as the coordinator's role to read and digest the guidance and feed it back to teachers. Many coordinators used the guidance to design long- and medium-term plans for the school's RSHE curriculum. As teachers generally reported time burdens, having a dedicated RSHE coordinator was perceived to be helpful in reading and distilling the guidance to make it more accessible and actionable for teachers who may not otherwise have had the time. However, the research did not explore the efficacy of this, and despite it being adopted across a range of schools there may need to be further research to explore how effective this approach is in ensuring appropriate engagement with the guidance.

Schools were delivering RSHE in different ways. The qualitative interviews provided insight into how different schools delivered their RSHE curriculum. Most delivered it through timetabled lessons, as also found in the quantitative survey. Schools were split between teaching RSHE as a standalone subject or as part of other subjects, although it was slightly more common to teach RSHE as a standalone subject. Some schools used a pre-made curriculum purchased from an external provider, but delivered by school staff, while in other schools the RSHE coordinator designed the curriculum. Several schools spoke of using a "spiral" or "cyclical" curriculum, where the same topics got repeated in all or several year groups but with age-appropriate adjusted content.

In primary schools, RSHE was generally taught by the class teacher. Some secondary schools had a small, dedicated RSHE teaching team, while others had all teachers delivering the subject. Coordinators and teachers at schools with a dedicated team were generally particularly positive about this way of teaching. The frequency of RSHE lessons

in case study schools ranged from a few times per week to once per fortnight, and most schools taught boys and girls together.

Most teachers reported to have the time and resources to deliver the RSHE curriculum, though there was still scope to improve this. The qualitative case studies found that most teachers felt they had adequate time for delivering the RSHE curriculum, although many raised concerns around their workload and competing priorities. Most had the resources to deliver the curriculum, the main exception being a special school which felt that RSHE resources catering to their pupils with very complex needs were severely lacking. It should be noted, however, that whilst teachers felt that they had enough time to deliver RSHE lessons, this may have been due to coordinators taking the lion share of managing the guidance and curriculum. Indeed, coordinators reported that they were struggling with time to manage all the tasks related to RSHE curriculum.

There were elements of RSHE where teachers were less confident, but teachers generally were more confident than leaders thought. While most teachers in both the survey and the follow up interviews felt confident delivering most aspects of the RSHE curriculum, there were some more complex or difficult topic areas that teachers wanted more support and guidance on. Some topics mentioned in interviews included gender identity, and sexual orientation, domestic abuse, and topics related to families. Interestingly, nearly half of leaders reported a lack of teacher confidence as a potential challenge to implementing the RSHE guidance in the survey.[25] This difference in view warrants further exploration in the future.

Pupil consultation prior to the launch of the new curriculum appears to have been limited. The findings from the quantitative survey indicated that pupils' views were considered by most schools in the RSHE curriculum design. However, the qualitative interviews revealed a mixed picture. It was clear from coordinators and teachers' responses that there was broad interpretation among schools of what constituted pupil consultation. Schools described a mix of informal, indirect approaches, such as having chats outside the classroom, and more formal, direct gathering of feedback such as conducting regular surveys. In most schools these approaches formed part of an ongoing process of gathering pupils' feedback and shaping RSHE content and delivery accordingly. However, none of the schools interviewed mentioned undertaking direct pupil consultation prior to shape the initial design of RSHE.

Pupils' views about how much their voice and opinions are being heard varied, even among pupils at the same school. In some cases, teacher and pupil accounts were contradictory, with teachers saying that they consult pupils and pupils saying that they had not been consulted. It appeared that the informal approaches that teachers

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[25] It should be noted that leaders were asked more broadly about how confident they felt teachers were at teaching all RSHE topics, whereas teachers were asked specifically how confident they felt teaching on individual topics.

described were somewhat outside of pupils' awareness, and the formal approaches that pupils did recall were not recognised by them as direct consultation.

Full consideration of teacher training needs did not always seem to have taken place. Despite high levels of leaders reporting timely RSHE CPD, only a third of teachers in the survey reported that their RSHE training needs had been assessed in the last 12 months, with only six in ten reporting they had received some form of RSHE training in that time period. This was echoed by findings from the qualitative interviews, where many teachers had not had them formally assessed over the last 12 months. These findings may link to the disconnect above that leaders have regarding teachers' confidence, and perhaps a more thorough assessment of training needs would join these two findings. More RSHE training for teachers would be useful, as highlighted by teachers in the qualitative research (particularly around harder to teach subjects). Schools have also not clearly established ways for teachers to network outside of their school. Typically, only the RSHE coordinator engaged with networks outside of the school and teachers had little awareness of opportunities for networking. More research is needed to identify how schools can support teachers to engage with such groups.

Teachers and coordinators generally reported parents were consulted, although the ways in which parents were consulted may have been limited.[26] Nearly all leaders in the survey stated that parents' views had been considered in RSHE curriculum, echoed in the qualitative interviews, and teachers were generally supportive of their school's approach to parent consultation. The qualitative interviews overall did not reveal parents' views as a large issue for schools, with most feeling that parents were supportive of them teaching the RSHE curriculum. In the survey, teachers were more likely to say that parents were *quite* rather than *very* supportive of the school's approach to teaching RSHE. It should be noted that teachers reported generally low engagement from parents in regard to RSHE, and that many of the forums for consultation were more informal in nature, such as drop-in sessions, 'school-gate chats' and having an 'open door policy' to discuss issues. Though as noted below, parents were not participants in the research.

The pupils interviewed were generally positive about RSHE as a subject. Teachers generally felt that they had seen positive changes in pupils since RSHE lessons, though some found it difficult to monitor this or to link changes to RSHE lessons specifically. Pupils often reported that their thinking had changed as a result of lessons, but clear changes in behavior, particularly around developing healthy habits, were less common. It should be noted, though, that there may be some bias in this as we are unsure how schools selected students to take part.

As the research does not involve parents, indicators related to parents' views and opinions are not within the scope of the research and have not been addressed by the quantitative or the qualitative phase of this research. These include indicators such as

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[26] Please note that parent views were not directly gathered as this was not in the scope of the research.

the degree to which parents feel well informed about RSHE curriculum, feel that their voices have been heard in curriculum design, and the perceived ability of parents to reinforce RSHE learning at home.

Other indicators which have not been addressed in this research due to them being more medium or long-term in nature, or simply beyond the scope of this research, include:

- Increased reporting of physical and sexual assault and bullying and over time, reduced instances of these occurring

- Increased instances of pro-social behaviour regarding RSHE (e.g. calling out inappropriate language and actions)

- Reduction in negative stereotyping and increased respect and space for difference

8 Annex A. Quantitative survey methodology

8.1 Significance testing

Z-tests were used on all differences marked in the report. This is the standard type of significance testing used broadly across market research studies. This is because z-testing is generally accepted to be the most suitable for the type of data that we analyse – for example, generally z-tests are thought to be more useful with total base sizes over 30, whereas t-tests would be more useful for lower base sizes. A 95% confidence interval is also used as that is generally accepted as the level that is high enough to make sure that we only focus on trends that are highly likely to be 'real' without being too stringent so as to be unhelpful.

8.2 Weighting

Population figures were obtained from the latest Get Information About Schools (GIAS) data. School leader data was weighted to correct for over and under response as well as purposive over sampling of certain groups.

As shown in Table 5, the school leader data was weighted by school type (mainstream primary, mainstream secondary, special schools, alternative providers, Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), special, and independent schools), and by religious character (Christian schools, Muslim/Islamic schools, other religions, and non-religious schools).

Table 5: School leader weighting targets

	Weighting target
Phase	
Primary	70.4%
Secondary	15.9%
Alternative Provision	0.6%
Pupil Referral Unit	0.7%
Special schools	5.1%
Independent schools	7.3%
Total	100.0%
Religion	

Christian	29.6%
Muslim / Islam	0.3%
Other religion	0.4%
Not religious	16.3%
Unknown / Blanks	53.3%
Total	100.0%

RSHE coordinator data was weighted to the achieved profile of schools where the headteacher was not the RSHE coordinator. This was done by religious character as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: RSHE coordinator weighting targets

Religion	Weighting target
Christian	21.9%
Muslim / Islam	62.0%
Other religion	26.3%
Not religious	12.7%
Unknown / Blanks	15.4
Total	100%

Teachers' responses were weighted to ensure they were representative of the overall teacher workforce. The target population was derived using the 2021 SWC and weighting was applied by school type, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Teacher weighting targets

School type	Weighting target
Primary	43.0%
Secondary	39.8%
AP/PRU/Special	4.8%

Independent	12.4%
Total	100%

8.3 Interpreting the findings

Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement is used as a proxy for deprivation levels at the school. All schools in GIAS were listed in ascending order of the proportion of their pupils that are entitled to FSM. This ordered list was then split into five equal groups (or quintiles). Quintile 1, which is referred to as the 'lowest proportion' throughout the report, represents the schools with the lowest proportion of pupils entitled to FSM. This group thus equates to the schools with the least disadvantaged/deprived pupil population. The proportion of pupils entitled to FSM increases progressively as the quintiles increase. In the report, significant differences tend to be tested between schools with the lowest proportion of FSM eligible pupils and schools with the highest proportion of FSM eligible pupils.

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