

Section

3

Making Professional Learning Matter

*an innovative approach to in-service
Relationships and Sexuality Education*

***Preparing
teachers for
the new RSE***

***Core
workshop
activities***

***Teacher
reflections***

A bespoke programme preparing teachers for the new RSE in Wales



In 2018 Professor Renold and Dr. McGeeney were invited by Central South Consortium to design and deliver a series of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) professional learning workshops, to support teachers to prepare for the new RSE statutory curriculum and guidance in Wales.

The three-day professional learning programme has now been running since 2018 and we have expanded into other areas and consortia across Wales.



The programme consists of an initial two day workshop in which teachers are introduced to the new RSE curriculum and learn about key issues and research case studies relating to RSE.

Teachers are also supported to design their own RSE creative audits in which they use creative methods to gather the views of children, young people, teachers, parents and governors about how RSE is being provided in their schools. One further workshop follows, at which teachers share the learning from their creative audits and are supported to use this learning to bring about changes to the RSE curriculum in their school.

From 2018 – 2022 the new RSE leads have collectively engaged with over **4500** children and young people and over **1400** members of staff amounting to a large scale RSE participatory inquiry project across Wales.



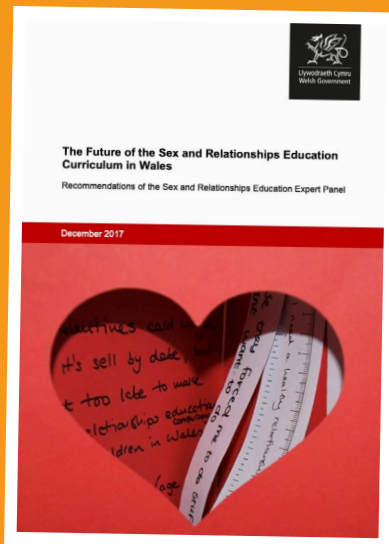
"Professional learning is a key requirement for the realisation of high quality RSE, and should occur at a school, cluster, regional and national level"
(Welsh Government 2022, RSE Guidance)

An innovative approach to in-service RSE: creative and critical pedagogy

The programme is research-driven, participatory and creative, modelling promising practice in RSE and providing the opportunity for teacher-participants to put their learning into practice through carrying out a participatory inquiry project at their school.

This innovative approach to professional learning in RSE is based on the findings and recommendations of the expert RSE panel that was convened in 2017 to make recommendations to the Welsh government informing the development of a new RSE curriculum (Renold and McGeeney 2017a, 2017b).

The programme is underpinned by the eight core principles for RSE that were recommended by the panel, and now feature in the statutory RSE curriculum.



Why creative and critical pedagogy?

Creative pedagogy uses arts-based methods to enable a wide range of expression and discussion so that ideas can take-off and new connections can be made.

It often involves learning to unlearn what we think we know. This makes space for us to be curious about what really matters to ourselves and to others.

Creative pedagogy can also support the creation of safe and inclusive environments to feel, think, question and share sensitive, sensitive or difficult issues. Working in the creative mode can encourage new responses to familiar or unfamiliar feelings, ideas, movements, concepts or situations.

However, it isn't a matter of anything goes. The pedagogy that we use is critical as well as creative. It keeps a check on power relations and social norms and works to understand and transform how these power relations, norms and inequalities play out (e.g. how gender, sexual or racialized stereotypes are reinforced, questioned or challenged).

For more on what it means to 'be creative' see www.agendaonline.co.uk/be-creative



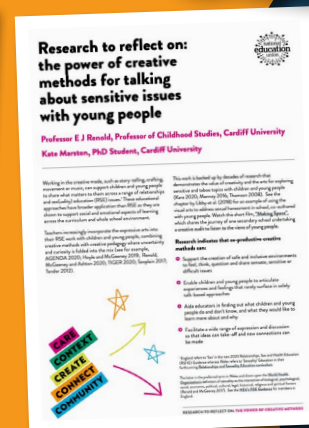
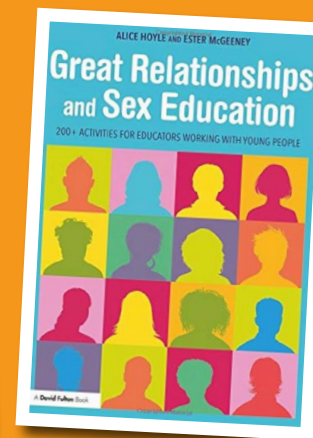
Whilst there is a wealth of international research on RSE, very little is known about how RSE is delivered in Welsh schools, in particular in primary and special schools. There is a lack of research internationally about teacher training in relation to RSE (Renold and McGeeney 2017).

Summary of the RSE professional learning programme

- 1 Re-imagining RSE:** Two day workshop for teachers to introduce the core principles underpinning the forthcoming statutory RSE in Wales through a series of creative and interactive activities, including: fielding fears and building confidence; over-turning assumptions with research crush cards; mapping current and future practices with the three thematic areas across the RSE Code; making voice matter with creative and critical pedagogy.
- 2 Conducting a creative audit:** Teachers carry out a creative RSE audit mapping the views and needs of young people, staff, governors and parents.
- 3 Darta Cwrdd:** Teachers share and interact with the darta collected from the creative audit; darta analysis; and next steps for further inquiry.
- 4 Making RSE Matter:** Teachers design and implement how they are attuning to and acting upon the learning from their creative audits (e.g. additional creative audits; policy development; participatory inquiry projects taking forward one core principle or theme).
- 5 Sharing and Supporting:** Some of our programmes have an additional day where teachers share the findings of their progress and critically reflect on their learning journey so far, including what further support they need and can offer each other.

Each year teachers from previous cohorts come along to support the new cohort and share their RSE journeys so far.

Each workshop was underpinned by a selection of key readings to engage with before the programme began to give participants time to engage with the key debates about RSE and prepare for the initial workshop. Key readings included:



What is Darta?
Go to page 30 to find out

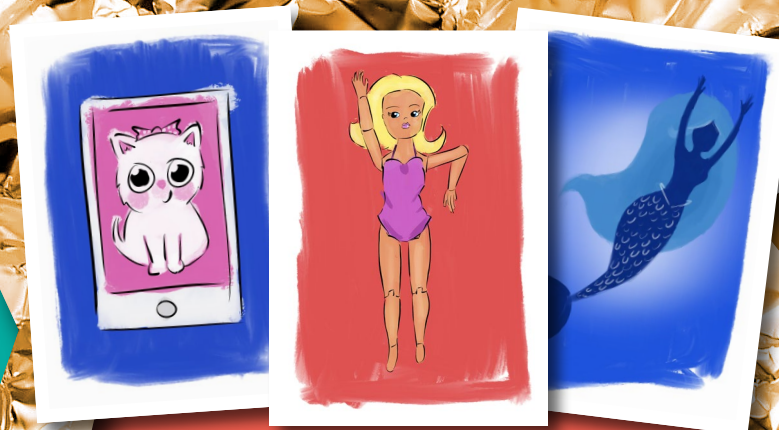


For further resources see the section, 'Becoming Resourceful'.

Core workshop activities

What Jars us about RSE?

Fielding fears and building confidence



Mapping with UNESCO

Towards holistic and inclusive RSE



Crush Cards

Towards relevant and developmentally appropriate RSE

What Jars us about RSE?

Fielding fears and building confidence

RSE is a specialist area of the curriculum that addresses sensitive issues that can arouse feelings of anxiety, embarrassment and vulnerability among teachers, students and parents.



Without specialist training schools may either avoid covering sensitive or challenging topics altogether or provide RSE in a way that fails to adequately support and safeguard children and young people.

Addressing these issues head on, the Professional Learning Programme, invites participants to voice their own concerns about RSE using the 'What Jars you?' exercise.



Each teacher is given a jar and asked to write down on pieces of paper what 'jars' them about RSE in their schools. Teachers often fill the jars with their (anonymous) fears and concerns about RSE.

Meeting resistance

A key concern for teachers is how to engage the wider community of staff, learners and parents to support RSE provision. They often express concern over how to tackle staff resistance, increase confidence and find time to train and co-ordinate staff to ensure consistent high quality provision.

Meeting pupil needs

Another set of concerns include how to develop an appropriate and meaningful RSE curriculum that meets pupils needs, especially those with additional needs.



Meeting discomfort

A third common key theme in teachers responses is about how to manage the embarrassment and discomfort of staff and pupils when teaching and learning about RSE.



The What Jars You? Activity has proven to be popular with teacher-participants, not only as a way of enabling them to reflect and share their concerns about the new RSE curriculum but as a creative method for enabling children and young people in their schools to later share their views about RSE.

Jump to the end to read their **reflections** on some of these early anxieties.

Crush Cards

Towards relevant and developmentally appropriate RSE

Research Matters

There is a big gap between children and young people's lived experiences and the content of the RSE curriculum. Research shows that RSE often fails to address children and young people's questions and concerns and that many children struggle to find themselves and their experiences reflected in the RSE curriculum. To address this gap we created the CRUSH CARDS that can be used with teachers, and can be adapted for use with children and young people.

Participants took part in a card sort activity that was designed specifically for the workshop to bring children and young people's experiences of relationships, gender and sexualities to the forefront and to challenge and overturn teachers' assumptions about children's lives and experiences.

Outing our categories

The Crush Cards contain a bold image on one side such as a wedding dress, a pair of lips, a tampon or a gun. Participants work in groups and are asked to sort the cards into categories. Unlike in most card sort activities (a technique commonly used in RSE) participants are not given the categories but asked to create their own. This enables participants to explore whatever themes are important to them and to set the pace and tone of the discussion. Participants repeat this exercise three times, creating new categories each time.



Click here to explore the Crush Card resource



Over-turning our expectations

In the final part of the activity participants turn the cards over to reveal a case study on the back of each card. Each case study is drawn from research with children and young people and offers a snapshot into their lives. The images are related to the case studies, but sometimes in unexpected ways. For example, on the back of a card containing an image of a white wedding dress is the story of 13 year old Nazera and her views on intimacy before marriage, dating, her decision to wear the hijab and her admiration of the non-binary singer Sam Smith. On the back of an image of pair of red lips is the account of five year old Matilda's experience of kiss chase in the school playground and behind the image of the tampon is 17 year old Indiah's story of having sex with a partner whilst on her period.

Teachers often comment upon on the value of these case studies for bringing children's experiences into the classroom and offering a fresh perspective on familiar RSE topics such as internet safety and sexual health. Instead of trying to fix a 'problem' or offer a moral stance on an issue. These case studies open up opportunities to discuss situations that children and young people may experience in their relationships and everyday lives and expand what counts as RSE.

Crush Cards (continued)

Crushing age-appropriateness

We also invite participants to choose one of the crush-stories and use the Brook Traffic Light Tool to explore the story. This is a tool that helps professionals working with children and young people to understand what healthy sexual development looks like. The tool lists red, amber and green sexual behaviours for children of all ages to help professionals identify, understand and respond to children and young people's sexual behaviours.

At the professional learning programme we asked teachers to identify any red, amber or green behaviours in the stories. This generated discussion on how we come to know what is age or developmentally appropriate as we explored the following questions:

How do notions of childhood innocence shape notions of age or developmental appropriateness?

How might reflecting on social, cultural and historical dimensions of experience help?

Does the CRUSH-story you selected complicate the way the Traffic Light Tool-kit has coded the behaviour in the story as green, amber or red?

Developmentally appropriate pedagogy is being responsive and flexible to the issues that may arise when curriculum content creates an interactive platform that welcomes children's own curiosity and knowledge (Renold and McGeeney 2017, p.62).

Schools should include learners' perspectives to ensure relevant and responsive RSE and provide increasing opportunities for learners to help direct their learning as they progress. Learners' views about what, how and where they learn should be taken into consideration so that the RSE curriculum can truly reflect the experiences that children and young people encounter in society.

(Welsh Government 2022, RSE Guidance)

Teacher comments

Developmentally appropriate RSE...

IS...
inclusive and
accessible

IS NOT...
one size
fits all

IS...
fluid

IS NOT...
a linear
approach

IS...
building a
relationship with
the children
in your care

IS NOT...
easy to
get right

IS...
thinking about
what is important
to and for our
children

IS NOT...
age
specific

Mapping RSE Across the Curriculum

The content of the new RSE is imagined in two ways. Firstly as a set of six themes that have been developed by teachers based on the UNESCO International Sexuality education guidance and secondly as three thematic strands. During the early workshops participants were introduced to the UNESCO guidance and the six key themes for RSE set out in the revised draft 2019 RSE guidance. Since the publication of the RSE Code in 2022, participants are now introduced to the core content across three thematic strands, and across the three phases (from age 3, from age 7 and from age 11).



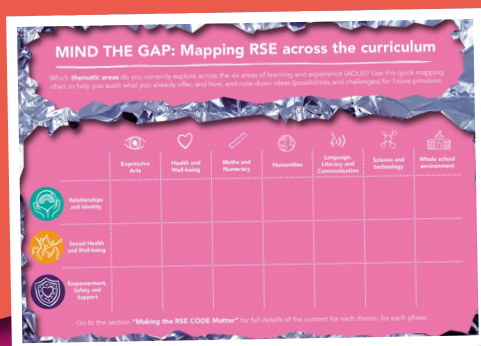
**RELATIONSHIPS
AND IDENTITY**



**SEXUAL HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING**

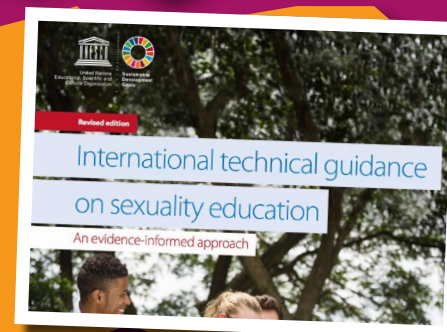


**EMPOWERMENT,
SAFETY AND RESPECT**



Go to the **Mind the Gap** section for a helpful mapping chart!

UNESCO provides a set of learning objectives for each age category (5-8, 9-12, 12-15, 15-18+)



RSE in Wales is a cross-cutting theme.

In the workshops teachers are invited to map current practice at their school across the thematic areas and across the curriculum.

A strength of this activity is that it enables teachers to expand their understanding of RSE and to think holistically about RSE as an inter-disciplinary subject. It also helps teachers to identify strengths and gaps in current practice.

In discussion, teachers reflected that they are covering the theme of Relationships well and some teachers were able to map this theme across the curriculum.

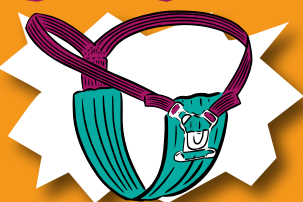
One teacher noted that relationship diversity is visible across the AoLEs. For example, in French learners look at the family tree, in geography learners look at equal marriage as an indicator of development, in Spanish learners look at the history of Lorca and study his texts and in media studies they analyse magazine covers that include gay couples.

Another strength of the UNESCO framework is that it helped teachers to expand their understanding of Relationships and identify gaps within their provision, such as long term commitments and parenting, or inclusion and respect.

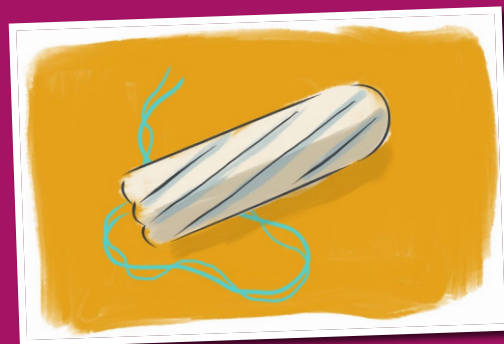
Mapping RSE Across the Curriculum (continued)

A holistic and inclusive approach to menstruation

A personal skills-based lesson on menstruating bodies can be explored in relation to the human body's changing medical, cultural and social historical journey (e.g. rites and rituals of menstruation or sanitary product inventions through the ages).



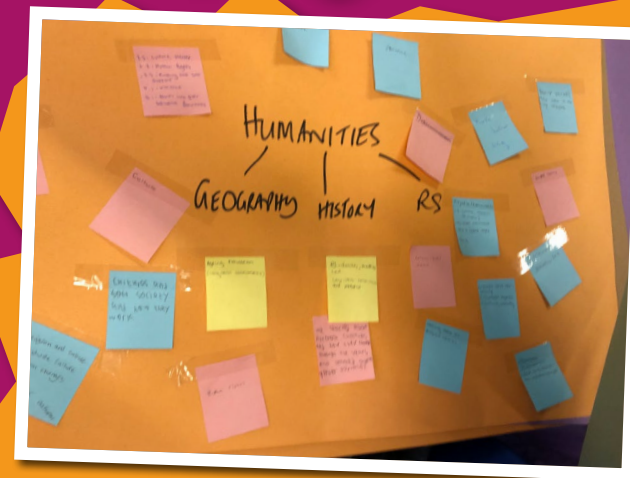
What is a Hoosier sanitary belt?
www.mum.org/hoosier.htm



They could be explored through economics and geography (e.g. the tampon tax, or the un/availability of sanitary products across the world). Doing so, might enable a rich discussion of gender equity and rights, provide some deeper understanding of why shame and stigma endure for many girls and women, and what people, including children and young people, are doing to address this.

"RSE is a broad, interdisciplinary and complex area that includes biological, social, psychological, spiritual, ethical and cultural dimensions. This means that each Area of the curriculum and the range of subject disciplines within them each have a unique contribution to learning in RSE. RSE should draw on all Areas to allow learners to make connections between their learning in RSE and the wider curriculum, understanding historical, cultural, geographic, physical, political, social and technological perspectives and influences on RSE issues. This also helps avoid a 'single issue' approach where each lesson covers a different RSE issue, isolated from other learning. Schools should consider what each Area can authentically bring to an understanding of RSE. This should be meaningful and should avoid superficial or tenuous links"

(Welsh Government 2022, RSE Guidance)



Taking the mapping exercise back to school

Several teachers repeated this exercise with staff and pupils, using it as a way of mapping practice whilst also introducing their schools to the expanded definition of RSE as a holistic and cross-curricular area of learning.

One teacher created images for each of the UNESCO topics to enable younger children to engage in the exercise. As further discussed below this has enabled schools to start to consider key areas where there are gaps in the RSE curriculum, providing useful starting points for creating a new curriculum.

For teachers who felt overwhelmed by the task of creating a new curriculum the UNESCO framework has proved useful as a way of focussing activity around one key concept, with a view to building capacity across other areas in the future.

The Creative Audit: towards a co-produced and empowering RSE

The creative audit is a tool that enables teachers to co-produce the RSE curriculum. It offers teachers a template that they can adapt and use to engage children, young people and staff in creative activities designed to help share their views and experiences of RSE. Teachers are encouraged to work with pupils and colleagues to create darta*, to analyse it and to find creative ways of sharing the experiences that it captures across the school and the wider community and to use these experiences as the starting point for designing their RSE curriculum.

Audit (noun)

From the Latin *auditus*:
a hearing, a listening, to perceive

Why a creative audit?

Creative methods can support you to create safe and inclusive environments where all children and young people are listened to. By using a wide range of expression you can create spaces for children to feel, think, question, and share sensitive or difficult issues, without revealing to much of themselves.

As a tool it is grounded in article 12 of the UNCRC and the core principles for RSE as set out by Welsh Government (2020).

ARTICLE 12: You have the right to say what you think in all matters affecting you and for your views to be taken seriously

WHAT IS DARTA?
Generating views and experiences
using arts-based methods
Data + Creativity = DARTA

* Darta refers to data that are created using arts-based methods. It is a concept that helps teachers think differently about 'data', which is usually understood as referring to statistical data, or to qualitative data that is only discursive – containing words and quotes rather than objects and materials that capture experience through engaging in creative activities (see **Renold** 2018)

Making Darta

The creative audit is central to the professional learning programme design. It enables teachers to apply the learning from the initial workshops and to find out more about RSE in their schools. At the initial workshop teachers are given time and support to design their creative audits. The programme design meant that teachers were able to try out some creative methods and approaches as part of the initial workshop, before having the opportunity to adapt these and put them into practice in their schools.



What JARS you about RSE in your school?

Run(a)way ideas for a rights-respecting school

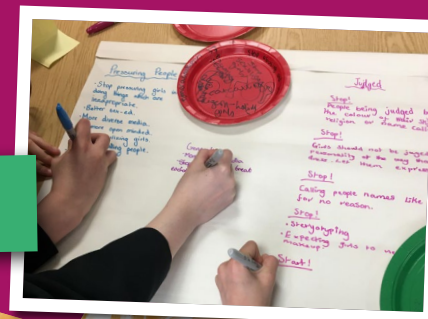


Many of the teachers used activities from the initial workshop (e.g. **RSE Runway; Stop/start plates; Jars**), although others also designed their own or adapted activities to meet the learning needs of their pupils. Most teachers also engage staff in their creative audits, with some also reaching out to parents and governors.

Sometimes teachers report feeling initially apprehensive about doing a creative audit at their school and overwhelmed by the task of building a new RSE curriculum, or adapting their existing programme of work.

Sharing ideas and darta with teachers and workshop facilitators often gives many a confidence boost and on-going support.

What needs to stop or start to make RSE better in your school?



The creative audit (continued)

Sharing Darta

When follow on workshops are possible, teachers have the opportunity to share their darta and their analysis of the findings from their creative audits.



These 'follow on' workshops can provide the opportunity for teachers to share and discuss any concerns or difficulties arising from their projects with each other and with the workshop facilitators. Teachers are able to gather ideas for resources, activities and approaches that they could use and adapt in their schools. See the Teachers' **Run(a)way Reflections** for a summary of teachers' views about their learning journey.



Turning darta into dartafacts: making article 12 come to life!

In the workshops teachers are encouraged to consider what's doable about who and how they want to share the findings of their creative audit with. The aim here is to provide an environment where the whole school and wider community can interact, learn together, ask questions.

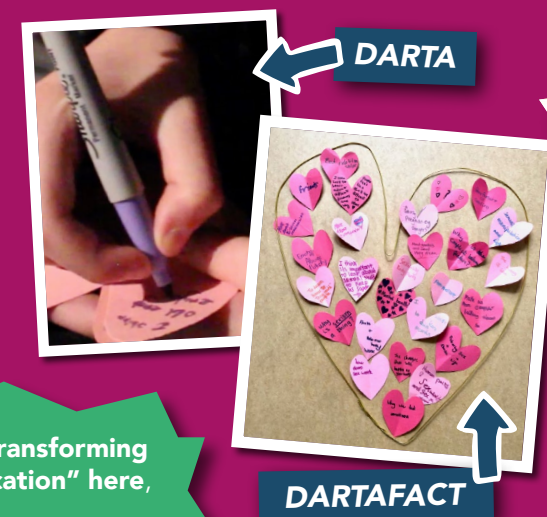
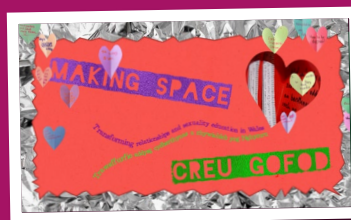
Some teachers have used the darta at an INSET day to inform teachers and governors about what children and young people were learning about and/or wanted the school to provide on RSE topics.

One teacher created a film about what they had implemented from their creative audit. The film not only shared how the school is listening, responding and acting upon children and young people's views, it also operated as a catalyst for further creative audits with different year groups.

Darta become Dartafacts when they leave the environment they were created in and are reassembled in new ways for new audiences to interact with.

Another teacher adapted the JARS activity. She invited 120 Year 7 students to privately and anonymously post in their RSE JARS what they would LOVE to learn about in their RSE lessons.

The LOVE-RSE hearts included almost every aspect of the new RSE, from one word statements such as "RELATIONSHIPS", "BABIES", "LGBTQ" and "EMOTIONAL ABUSE and PUBERTY" to longer descriptions, "I would love to learn about different genders and why people feel like they are different to others", "I think it's important to learn about sexual stuff to keep us safe", "I want to learn about how to get a girlfriend".



Watch the film "**Making Space: transforming relationships and sexuality education**" [here](#), to see this activity in action!

The creative audit (continued)

WHAT

RSE issues have
you learned about?

"Sex organs
and sex"

"I have learn that
people's body
image changes
through the years"

"I know your body changes
how babies are made. Also the
three main topics of gender
and how some people are
transgender. Also some people
can be born with female sex
organs and male sex organs"

"I know what gay means because
I live with someone who is gay
and I respect it. I don't joke
about it like people do"

WHAT, IF AND HOW?

One teacher created a display based upon their collection of primary school children's views (age 10-11) on the suggested WHAT, IF and HOW activities from the creative audit workshop.

HOW

did you learn
about RSE?

"I have learnt from my mother, films and
the school nurse. My mother tells me
about pregnancy and you don't have
your period (then)."

"the films like Twilight have sex in it
and that's how I know. The nurse told
me about puberty"

"I learnt about
these things from
my sisters"

"with films and TV
programmes like
F.R.I.E.N.D.S."

"I found out young and when I shouldn't
of. But I have also had some lessons in
school. My mum gave me a book about
everything that is changing for me.
We also watched a film in school"

IF

you could design your school's
RSE, what things would you stop
or start? What would you want to
know more or less about?

"I think people should talk about
gender and what the sex organs
can do in Year 5, periods and
puberty in Year 6 and how babies
are made in Year 9"

"I would like
to know more
about sex"

"If I got taught in a
younger age, I think we
would be immature"

"What if I did not learn
about it, I would not
have a clue about it!"

"Could you teach
us how to put a
condom on"

"Ask questions that are
a bit embarrassing and
I will like an answer"

"Transgender"



Teacher reflections

At the end of the programme, teachers are invited to participate in a series of creative activities that allow them to reflect upon their learning journey. This section shares some of their thoughts and experiences.

In summary, the professional learning programme increased teachers confidence to prepare for the new RSE curriculum throughout their schools. This was a shift from the beginning of the programme when teachers felt concerned about potential embarrassment and resistance they may experience from staff, parents and pupils to the changes that were coming.

The creative audit provided teachers with an opportunity to put the learning from the initial workshop into practice and to receive expert support in designing and delivering a programme of work in their schools, as well as the opportunity to share practice with others.

Teachers valued the flexibility of the programme, the level of support from the facilitators during and in-between workshops and the opportunity to learn about and share best practice and experiment with new ways of working with a more holistic and co-produced curriculum.



FEEDBACK RUNWAY

Teachers were invited to think up their own questions to answer. Our only steer was that each question should allow them to anonymously share and evaluate their learning journey.

What was your favourite part?

- "The group was a safe space. I always felt comfortable talking and sharing views"
- "Seeing what others had done have done and being inspired"
- "The audits! Conducting the audit and it going well. Empowering!"
- "Hearing about others' audits and seeing the darta"

How has/will the course made a difference?

- "Inspiring and empowering. Ready to make changes"
- "Forces a whirlwind of ideas, thoughts and processes that would have been lower on priority list"
- "I feel well-informed and able to lead RSE in my school"

What would you do differently?

- "Meet with pupils more and get parents involved in the audit earlier"
- "The old toolkits just don't work anymore. Bin them."
- "Make more time and prioritise the RSE inquiry."

What advice would you give to someone starting the programme?

- "Be open to ideas and share. Listen to your learners"
- "Do what is right for your school. Get inspiration form others in the group, but don't compare what you have done/not done"
- "Have a subject lead. Meet with your senior leadership team first"

What was your least favourite part?

- Time! "Lack of it!"
- "Presenting our findings"
- "Time restraints"

What support do you need to move on?

- "Resources"
- "Support from SLT, governors and class teams"
- "Mapping across the curriculum"

What do we have now that we didn't have before?

- "Buckets of confidence and a vision"
- "A way forward, ideas, guidance and correct documentation"
- "A support group and network - collaboration"

Other

- "Thank you for giving us so much time, resources and support. I feel confident learning RSE in my school"
- "Thank you! I didn't know I was so interested and passionate about RSE and its potential"
- "I am so grateful for being part of this training – it is inspirational and achievable. THANK YOU!"

STOP, START and CONTINUE

We also asked teachers to write what they would like to **STOP** (red plate), **START** (green plate) and **CONTINUE** (purple plate) in relation to how they were now approaching RSE in their school.



OUR UNICORN MOMENT

We asked teachers to write down one moment that had previously been unthinkable or undoable before they participated in the professional development programme.

How engaged
and positive
pupils responses
would be.

Collecting data!
Staff Support!

Developing a
ALN sow with
other ALN
professionalls

Talking seriously
to a fellow group
of professionals
about RSE in my
school - presenting
this made me
appreciate the
progress made even more.

I never thought...
the pupils
would enjoy
as much as
they would!

Positive reactions
of both pupils &
parents about
content so far.

Begun
to envisage
the shape of
RSE
for the future

CUSHIONING COMMENTS FOR FUTURE COHORTS

Finally, we asked teachers to write on reflective strips one message that they wanted to share with the future cohort of teachers participating in the professional learning programme that would support their journey.

