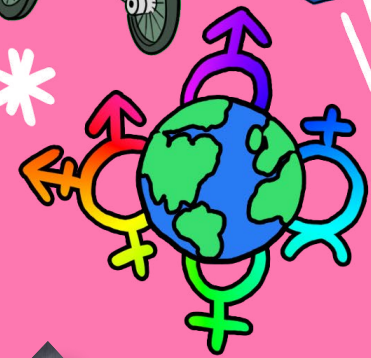
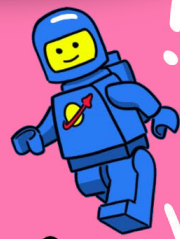


RELATIONSHIPS AND IDENTITY



What's in the RSE Code?

This strand focuses on:

- the range of relationships that human beings have throughout their lives
- how identity can be shaped by our relationships and sexuality
- the importance of human rights in securing healthy, safe and fulfilling relationships in an inclusive society"

Learners need to develop the understanding and behaviours that will support them to develop and maintain healthy, safe and fulfilling relationships throughout their lives. Learners need to be supported to recognise and value different types of relationships, including families and friendships, as well as the diversity within different types of relationships, including LGBTQ+ diversity, and that these can change over time. Developing empathy, compassion and communication skills are critical to learners' relationships now and the relationships they will form in the future. This will also support respect, understanding and equitable treatment for others, whatever their sex, gender, sexuality, faith or belief.

Learners also need to develop both their sense of self and their sense of everyone being unique. Over time, learners can explore how relationships, sex, gender, romantic and sexual attraction and personal experiences may shape and inform a person's identity and individuality. This supports learners to understand how identity, relationships and sexuality are informed by biology, technology and social, cultural and religious norms and that these may change over time. By engaging with these aspects, learners can recognise both positive and harmful behaviours and norms and have the confidence to speak up for themselves and to speak out and advocate for the rights and respect of others.

This strand also recognises how rights can support and underpin equitable, respectful relationships, as well as a fair and inclusive society.

Welsh Government 2022

What's in the RSE Code?

Friends, Family & Communities

Valuing difference and diversity

Compassion, communication and advocacy

Gender, sexual and relationship norms

Laws, rights and advocacy

Sex, Gender and Sexuality Equalities

Sense of self

Relationships and Identity Strand Mandatory Content

Phase 1 (from age 3)

Kindness, empathy and compassion in interactions with others immediate to them including family, friendship and peer relationships.

An awareness of how to communicate wants and needs in relationships, and begin to respect those of others.

Awareness of how needs relate to rights.

Phase 2 (from age 7)

Ability to form and maintain relationships which are equitable, respectful and kind with a range of others.

How understanding and use of effective communication, decision-making, managing conflict and refusal skills are part of ensuring your own and others rights and part of friendships and relationships.

Phase 3 (from age 11)

Understanding the positive and negative characteristics and healthy or unhealthy aspects of a range of relationships including family, friendship, romantic and sexual.

Ability to develop and understand the importance of equity, mutual respect, and affection in relationships with others.

Understanding and use of effective communication, decision making, managing and resolving conflict, and refusal skills in a range of different contexts and types of relationships, offline and online, including intimate relationships.

Understanding how to speak out about harmful behaviours directed at them or others.

Relationships and Identity Strand Mandatory Content (continued)

Phase 1 (from age 3)

Awareness of the diversity of families and relationships, including friendship and peer relationships, and why these are important.

Developing a sense of themselves, in the context of families, friends and communities.

Recognising how people value different things and have different families, friends and communities.

Phase 2 (from age 7)

Recognition of the characteristics of different families, friendship and peer relationships and the diversity of these.

Understanding positive behaviours in relationships and what can happen when relationships breakdown.

An awareness of how families, relationships and parenting are shaped by social and cultural norms and laws that have changed over time.

Recognising how people's relationships with others shape who they are and their happiness.

An awareness of how identity can be expressed in different ways.

Phase 3 (from age 11)

Understanding how the diversity of relationships including marriage, and all types of civil partnership, has changed over time, and how relationships are positively and negatively impacted by social and cultural norms and laws in different ways around the world.

Understanding how rights need to be balanced in a diverse society; the characteristics, benefits and challenges of living in a diverse society; and how and why attitudes have changed and are changing including towards gender and sexuality diversity.

Relationships and Identity Strand Mandatory Content (continued)

Phase 1 (from age 3)

Experiencing inclusive behaviours, language and role modelling that show respect for others, whatever their gender.

Recognising learners' rights to be treated fairly, kindly and with respect.

Phase 2 (from age 7)

Valuing and recognising the contributions of everyone; and the importance of sex and gender equality.

Recognise and know how to safely respond to and challenge gender and sexual stereotypes and unfair behaviour.

An awareness of how positive and negative social and cultural norms regarding sex, gender and sexuality influence relationships and behaviours.

Phase 3 (from age 11)

An ability to advocate for and advance the rights of all and understand and respect all people in relation to sex, gender and sexuality.

Understanding how the law and human rights secure freedoms around sex, gender and sexuality and how these can differ in other countries and over time.

Ability to critically explore and understand how a range of social, cultural and religious norms and influences about relationships, sex, gender and sexuality can shape perceptions and our wellbeing and can be both positive and harmful.

Welsh Government 2022

View the full RSE code [here](#)

How are children and young people living and learning about relationships and identities?

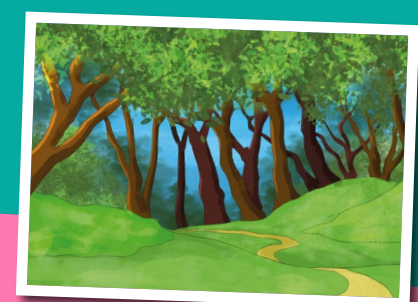
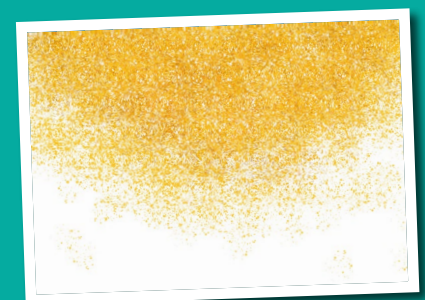
Closing the gap

There is a big gap between children and young people's lived experiences and the RSE they experience in school. 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** to use with teachers in our professional learning programme. They can also be adapted by teachers for use with children and young people.

Each card contains a bold image on one side and a case study on the back. Each case study or quote is drawn from research with children and young people and offers a snapshot of their lives.

All of the stories and images on the next few pages relate to the theme of **Relationships and Identity**.



Choose one of the stories on this page to read and:

Ask: Are you surprised when you turn over the card?

Consider: What norms or expectations are over-turned when you explore what or how young people are learning about RSE?

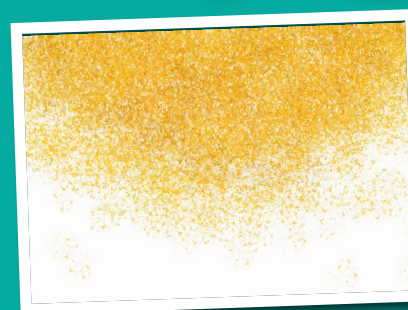
Reflect: How do you feel about what you have read? What more do you want to know?

For more ideas about how to use the CRUSH cards in professional learning workshops see the **StARTing Out** case studies in this resource.



Nia and Ally (age 15) talk about “what we’ve learnt about relationships” in school. “But it’s not really relationships”, Ally says, “it’s like.... it’s extreme, so it’s how to recognise, like, emotional abuse and physical abuse, stuff like that. It’s not... like, the basics! We’ve got all the extremes, but none of the basics!”.

Ally says: ‘I feel like there’s so many different sides, I feel like... I feel like during lockdown it was Tik-Tok and stuff like that, which I have found out so much about, like, LGBTQ and feminism and stuff like that, just through social media”



Mia, Isabella, Safa and Imogen (all aged 12) are a newly formed group of Year 7 friends, who call themselves ‘The Weirdos!’. The group take part in a number of extra-curricular school activities,

giving them a reputation for being ‘superstars’ by their teacher. With their peers however, being so helpful earns them the derisive title of the ‘Sparkle Committee’, due to their love of glitter.

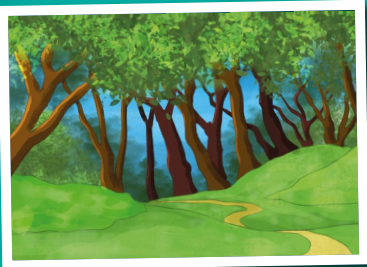
Describing themselves as ‘weird people through and through’, they often assert that there is ‘no such thing as a normal person, because every person is different!’. They speak animatedly in favour of gender equality, race equality and LGBT rights, and critique the everyday sexist practices they witness at school around gendered uniform policies and gender segregated P.E lessons.

Dating and talking about crushes is associated with popularity at their school, but they routinely dismiss and trivialise the topic. Safa once sent a YouTube video on ‘How to Talk to Your Crush’ to ‘The Weirdos’ WhatsApp group chat but said that she thought it would ‘just be really funny just to laugh at!’ and whispered ‘I don’t have crushes’. Nevertheless, they reveal that they asked the Amazon virtual assistant Alexa ‘who she had a crush on’ and Safa shared how the Apple virtual assistant Siri had told her ‘a love story’.



Sasha, Carla and Aisha walk proudly in a line around the nursery in their princess costumes. Their princess line snakes in and out of the different zones; the wendy house, the shop, the red truck, the reading corner. One boy, Tommy, reaches into the dress-up box and slips on a princess dress. He then proceeds to chase the princesses, roaring loudly, “I’m a homo”. The girls are all screaming with laughter as they are chased around the nursery floor.’

(age 3-4)



"Mine's called Dave, she's a girl" says Alys, one girl, in a group of Year 6 (age 10-11) girls who call themselves the misfits. They are all drawing avatars to explore the pressures of body image. As they do so, they share experiences of what it feels like to look, move, act and desire in non- normative ways. They talk about supporting each other to "be themselves" in a world that both punishes and celebrates "being different". Alys is particularly vocal about this double-bind.

Alys has "short hair", "loves to wear all things black", and "go out to the forest to climb trees and play with the hay bales and dogs". While most family members encourage her "freedom of expression", there are compromises and judgements. Her "short hair" isn't as short as she would like, "because dad doesn't like it", so she wears it a little longer but "short enough not to have to brush it". She enjoys experimenting with what her body can do. "Sometimes, coz I can contort (my body), when I put my leg over my head my Nan goes, "Start sitting like a lady".

In Year 5 (age 9) Alys "realised" she could "love both sexes". She "came out as bisexual" to her friends, and then to her mum and her family: "I feel like I've made a difference in my family cause I'm first at being in the LGBT plus community. At school, however, her peers are not so accepting. Alys compares how "people used to make fun of my disability" but since coming out as bisexual, it is her sexuality that is now targeted. She talks about being pressured not to 'like' or 'date' one of the girls in their class:

Zofia: yeah. So erm this girl um Maya who used to go out with Alys. Her (friendship) group weren't happy...

Alys: Yeah they weren't very happy about us going out.

Zofia: So me and Megan were trying to tell the girls...just let them do it what they want to do. In the end the popular girls got their way...they got their way and convinced Maya to stop going out with Alys.

Alys: Yeah. But Megan!

Megan: What happened with me?

Alys: You went EEEEEEEEEK (shrieks)

Megan: Oh yeah. I screamed when I found out. I, I'm very positive towards, like, girls being with girls.

Alys: She made me this banner.

Megan: yeah I made this banner...I made her a little banner saying what she's like and why she's different and it was just a really colourful rainbow and she really liked it.

I got called strange, by boys in the old school. Me and this girl named Alice used to always hang out ... so in the end ... we made up a lie that we were cousins, and that lasted for like a year before we told anyone. And then to make it even more obvious, when it was her birthday, I'd get like Happy Birthday Cousin, and then I'd give it to her in school.

(Jared, age 11)

Boys will say, "well go out with me or I will hate you" and the girl will get scared and they will go out with them

(Maisy, age 10)

The (playground monitors) go, 'the more the boys hit you and chase you the more they love you'

(Kayley, age 10)



Starting out with relationships and identity

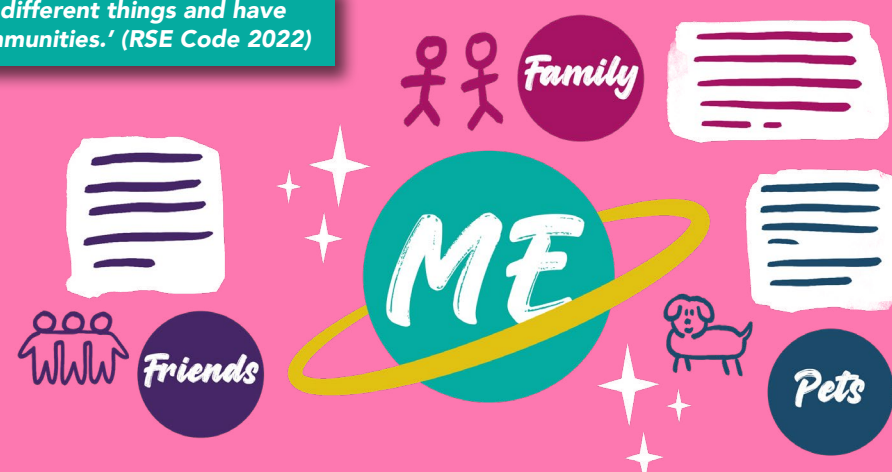
This section shares some of the ways that teachers in Wales are getting started with engaging children and young people with learning about the theme of relationships and identity. All of these teachers have taken part in our intensive RSE professional learning programme.

Relationship Wheels

As a warm up activity, one year 6 teacher created *Relationship wheels* to explore the question 'who is important to me?'. In the central circle the children put the people who were the most important, then in the next circles people who are less important, but still important. Children then talked about their wheels if they wanted to.



'Recognising how people value different things and have different families, friends and communities.' (RSE Code 2022)



Personal Universes

A secondary school RSE lead hosted a year 9 health and wellbeing day called *Keeping it real*. As part of this, students explored personal relationships. Young people were all given a large sheet of paper and coloured pens and asked to create their own personal universe, showing who and what is important to them in their lives.

"I learnt so much about my kids from doing this. It was really surprising. Some of them who I would have expected to put a father, or another family member, deliberately left them off because they clash with that person, or because they can be violent towards them. It was really valuable. Although it was planned as a warm up activity, I'm actually going to recommend that every teacher does it with their class at the beginning of each year. You get such a good insight into your pupils and what and who is important to them."
(Year 6 teacher)

'Developing a sense of themselves, in the context of families, friends and communities.' (RSE Code 2022)

"We loved this activity"
(RSE lead)

Recognising how people value different things and have different families, friends and communities. (RSE code 2022)

Relationships through Art

One primary school teacher used art to explore relationships and identity with children who have a language impairment in Years 3-6. Children studied Welsh artist Keith Haring to look at different relationships and create a docupage. Next, they conducted additional research to compare Haring and artist Martin Evans to explore lifestyles in the valleys and subways.



Awareness of the diversity of families and relationships, including friendship and peer relationships, and why these are important. (RSE code 2022)

'Recognition of the characteristics of different families, friendship and peer relationships and the diversity of these.' (RSE Code 2022)

Diversity Street

One primary teacher developed an activity called Diversity Street to explore relationship diversity with children in Year 6.

She started by introducing the group to the themes of diversity and difference using adverts and film clips. Next, she asked children to imagine the most diverse street in the world. Who would live there? What would their home be like?

Other teachers have adapted the activity with children in Year 1 - Year 6 to explore similarities and differences between families, to celebrate diversity in their community and to explore relationships and emotions.



"I rolled out a long piece of paper and asked the children to design a street that housed as many family and relationship variations as they could think of. They cut out pictures from catalogues and drew their own houses and families to create the sheet and I was amazed by the diverse identities and relationships that they chose to include". (Year 6 teacher)

A learning walk

Several teachers in primary and secondary schools have invited children to carry out a learning walk around their schools to map what children are learning about relationships and identity and to consider how safe, inclusive, equitable and diverse the school is for its learners. This has involved looking at *WHAT'S ON THE WALLS* around the school (e.g. posters, awards, school-work) and *HOW SCHOOL SPACES SOUND AND FEEL* for children as they move through the school.

Experiencing inclusive behaviours, language and role modelling that show respect for others, whatever their gender. (RSE Code 2022)

Recognising learners' rights to be treated fairly, kindly and with respect. (RSE Code 2022)

Valuing and recognising the contributions of everyone; and the importance of sex and gender equality. (RSE Code 2022)

An ability to advocate for and advance the rights of all and understand and respect all people in relation to sex, gender and sexuality (RSE Code 2022)

CRUSHING harmful gender norms

Several teachers have used the CRUSH card activity to explore gender stereotypes with children and young people in Years 5 - 8.

Young people put themselves into friendship groups and each group is given a set of blank CRUSH card images.

Groups are asked to categorise the cards three times, using different categories each time. Teachers often find that children and young people use the activity to share their feelings about gender norms and gender inequality and discrimination. To explore this further, one secondary teacher asked learners to choose one card that represented something that mattered to them about gender norms and write something on the back of the card. Once everyone had written and shared their statements (if they wanted to) the teacher led a discussion with the class to unpack some of the statements further, such as:

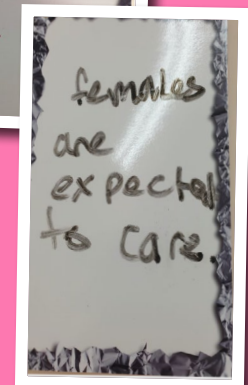
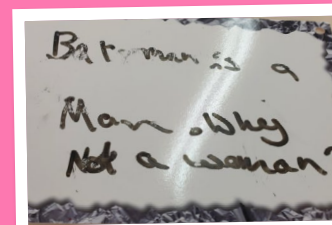
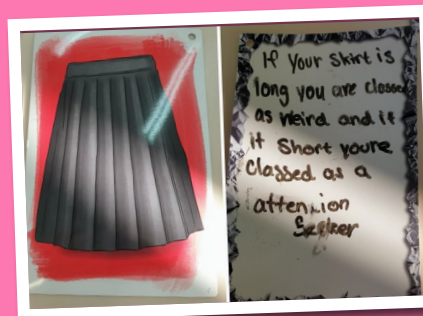
"If you have a boy then they have to learn to play football"

"Computer games are just for boys"

"Boys are really judgy about girls who wear skirts and if you don't wear a skirt then the boys won't like you"

"I asked a lot of 'why questions. Why is that?

With computer games, is that down to how the manufacturer is promoting them? Or a wider issue? I often started a question with 'I wonder if...'. This enabled discussion to flow and pupils engaged freely (...). The activity helped us unpick quite a lot and I found it very interesting as they often mentioned things that I did not even consider". (RSE lead, Secondary school)



Recognise and know how to safely respond to and challenge gender and sexual stereotypes and unfair behaviour. (RSE Code 2022)

An awareness of how positive and negative social and cultural norms regarding sex, gender and sexuality influence relationships and behaviours. (RSE Code 2022)

Valuing and recognising the contributions of everyone; and the importance of sex and gender equality. (RSE Code 2022)

Becoming resourceful

To read more about how teachers are getting started with the theme of Relationships and Identity, read one of the CRUSH Starting Out case studies.



All of the case studies explore themes in Relationships and Identity in different ways across primary, secondary and special school settings.

We love RSE: Primary school (Foundation phase)

Inside Out: Primary school (Key stage 2)

In the Mix: Secondary School (Key stage 3)

Hearts and Minds: Secondary School (Key stages 3 and 4)

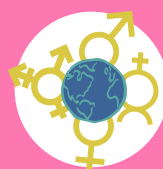
Shaking things up: Secondary School (Key stages 3,4 and 5)

Re-making RSE: Primary school (Key stage 2)

RSE: Canvassing voice: Special school (3-19)

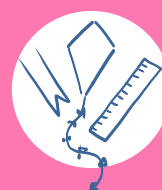
Mapping our RSE: Special School (11-19)

For more ideas on how to get started with this theme, have a look at the following case studies from the resource **Agenda: supporting children and young people in making positive relationships matter**. This is a free bilingual resource to help children, young people and educators explore relationships creatively. To find out more about the resource, go to: neu.org.uk/agenda. This includes a recorded 2 hour online professional learning session for teachers.



ALL OF US

Exploring gender and sexual equalities and rights across the curriculum, from petitions to philosophy



WHAT IF #THISISME?

Making gender justice matter with rulers, ribbons and kites



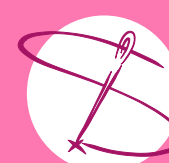
SMASHING COMMERCIAL SEXISM

Challenging commercial sexism with Year 6 students in a lego workshop



GRAND THEFT EQUXITY

A gender equalities research project into sexism and sexual harassment in online gaming



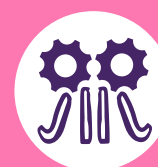
CRAFTING EQUALITY

Stitching our rights to make a safe, fair and more equal world for all



THE ROTIFER PROJECT

Educating staff about gender diversity through a game of gender-snap pairs and a muffin challenge



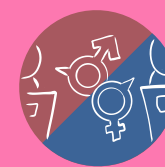
RECLAIMING RELATIONSHIPS

Transforming materials from a motorbike salvage yard to make a positive relationships sculpture



DIGITAL DIVERSITY CLUB

Supporting and celebrating gender and sexual inclusivity in school and online



GENDER STEREOTYPES ARE DEBATABLE

Exploring how gender norms shift and change over time and around the world

There are many organisations and resources that can support you to get started with the theme of Relationships and Identity. To help you assess the quality of any resource you come across, go to the **Choosing and Using Resources** section. This section hosts a toolkit that has been developed using the key principles for RSE outlined in the Welsh Government RSE Guidance (2022).

