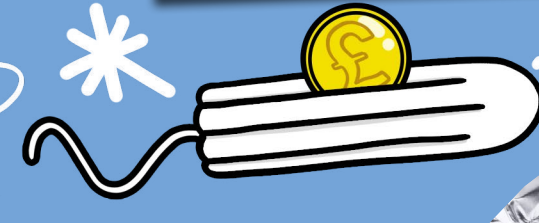
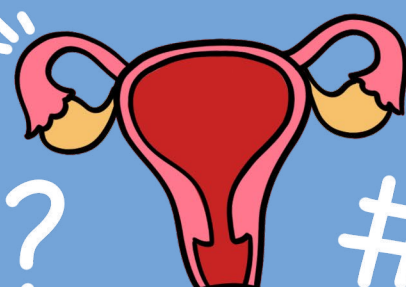


SEXUAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



What's in the RSE Code?

This strand focuses on:

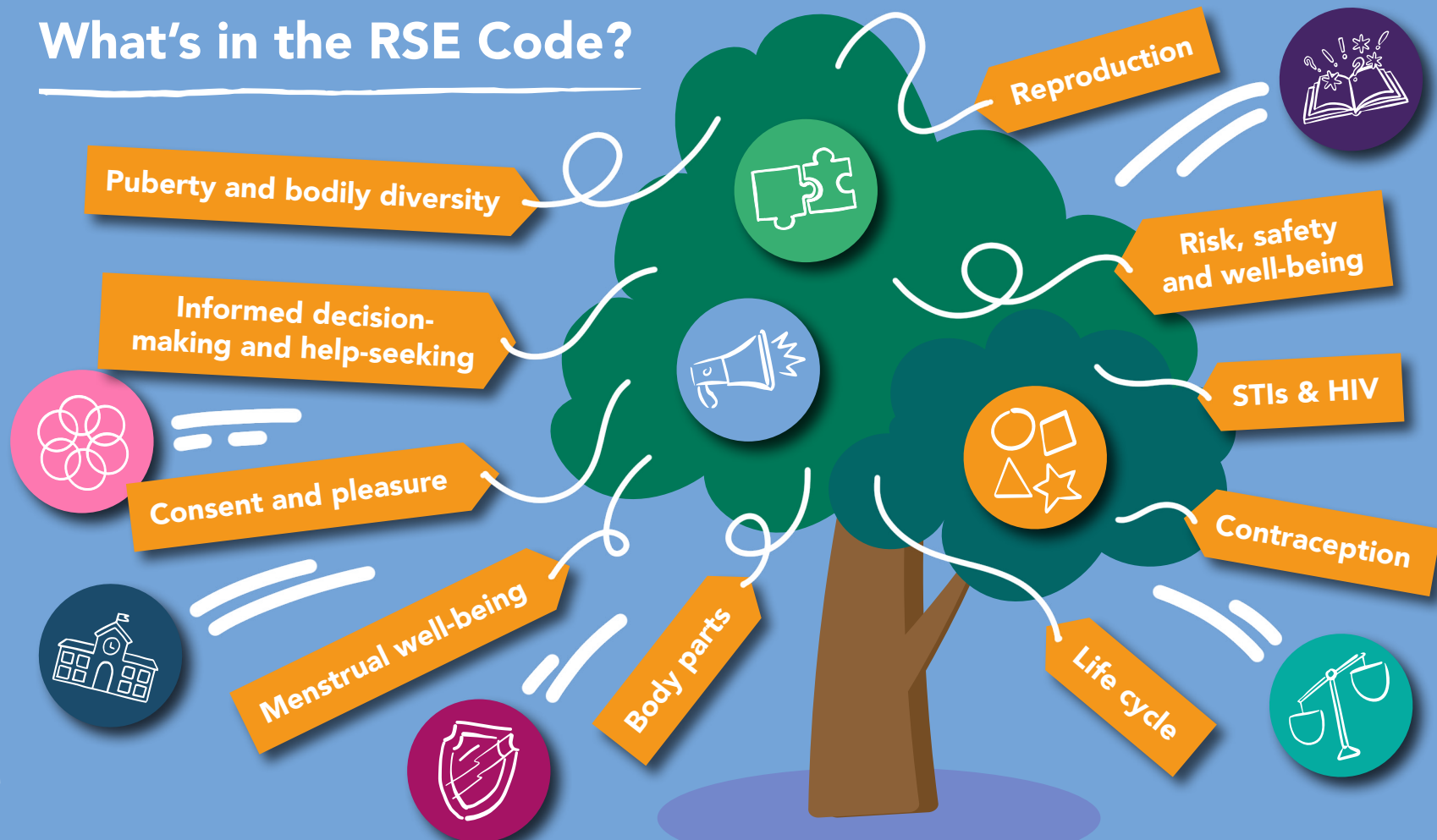
- learning about how living things grow, reproduce and have a life cycle
- developing an understanding of the human body, including people's feelings about their bodies and how these can be represented
- the health issues related to relationships and sexuality
- an understanding of how sexuality and sexual health affects our well-being.

In early development, learners need to experience contexts for understanding the importance of maintaining personal health and well-being, including hygiene, and how this impacts on themselves and others. This progresses to applying broad principles of health and hygiene within sexual health.

As learners develop, teaching and learning needs to include focus on exploring how physical changes have an impact on well-being and relationships ensuring the representation of LGBTQ+ experiences and lives. Learning also focuses on menstrual well-being and conditions which can affect the reproductive system; as well as developing understanding of the possible outcomes of the decisions made relating to sexual health and relationships. All of this learning will focus on recognising the diversity of human body types, how perception and understanding of the human body is shaped by society, the law, science and technology and the impact of this on well-being.

Welsh Government 2022

What's in the RSE Code?



Sexual Health and Wellbeing strand mandatory content

Phase 1 (from age 3)

The use of accurate terminology for all body parts.

An awareness of the human life cycle and that reproduction is a part of life.

Phase 2 (from age 7)

Knowledge and understanding of how reproductive organs develop in a human body. This includes understanding fertility and the processes of reproduction, including what supports menstrual health and well-being.

Recognising the process of pregnancy and birth.

Phase 3 (from age 11)

Understanding how fertility, sexual function and menstrual health and well-being can change across the life course and how to find information and support when needed.

The knowledge and understanding of how hormones continue to affect emotional and physical health throughout adulthood.

Understanding how contraception can assist with reproductive choices, including awareness of abortion.

Awareness of how human bodies change as they grow.

The knowledge and understanding of how people experience significant physical, emotional, social and cognitive changes during puberty.

Understanding of good sexual and reproductive health, including the range of risks and outcomes from sexual experiences and the knowledge needed to support informed decisions about sexual activity and about reproductive choices.

Sexual Health and Wellbeing strand mandatory content (continued)

Phase 1 (from age 3)

An awareness of the importance of personal self-care and hygiene.

A recognition that everyone's body is unique and special to them.

Phase 2 (from age 7)

The knowledge and skills needed to manage personal self-care and hygiene, including the importance of menstrual well-being.

An awareness that there are many different sources of information offline and online that help us learn about our bodies and affect how we feel about our body and other people's bodies.

Phase 3 (from age 11)

The knowledge and understanding of the causes, symptoms and impact of conditions connected to sexual and reproductive health and to fertility, including sexually transmitted infections, HIV and reproductive cancers.

Understanding and skills needed to minimise risks and seek help.

Critically engaging with positive and negative representations of a diversity of bodies, including through various forms of media and understanding that these can be unrealistic and harmful.

Sexual Health and Wellbeing strand mandatory content (continued)

Phase 1 (from age 3)

Awareness of the different feelings one can have, recognising other people's feelings and how these may differ to your own.

Recognising trusted adults who can help them and whom they can talk to and ask questions of, especially when they feel unhappy or unsafe.

Phase 2 (from age 7)

Awareness of how people can feel attracted to others as they mature and how this can lead to emotional and physical responses.

Be able to identify trustworthy sources of information and able to raise issues and questions with trusted adults.

Phase 3 (from age 11)

Understanding how all are entitled to safe and pleasurable relationships and recognising the role consensual sexual activity plays within healthy relationships.

Understanding the legal age of consent.

Recognise and be able to use a range of support services to access information and support around relationships, health and well-being and safety.

Welsh Government 2022

View the full RSE code [here](#)

How are children and young people living and learning about sexual health and wellbeing?

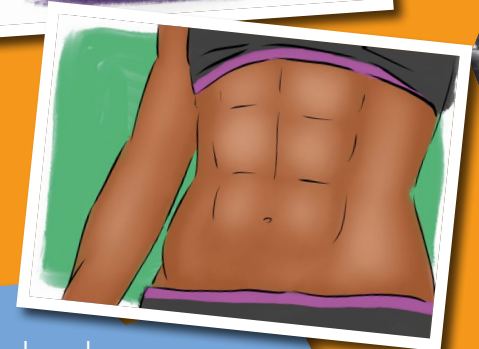
Closing the gap

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 **Sexual health and wellbeing**.



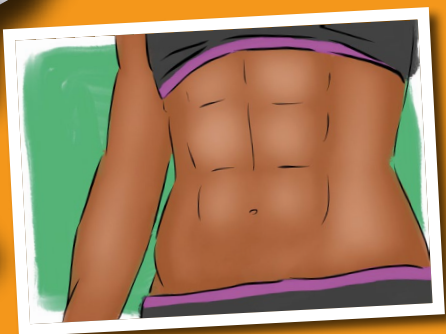
Choose one of the stories on this page to read and:

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.



Tessa: This boy called Caden, his profile pictures him like?

Myra: Oh yeah, with a massive six-pack.

Researcher: Is he your age?

Tessa: Yeah ... boys are like called gay if they do that.

(age 12)

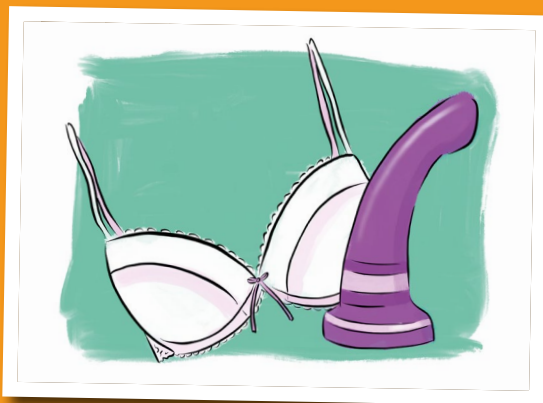
Izzy, Ria, Karina and Cassy talk about padded bras as they dress up a fictional body outline in party clothing. Izzy says, that her body 'needs a padded bra so people look at her boobs'. Ria swiftly interjects, 'she needs a padded bra to hide them!'. Karina says that padded bras help protect her nipples which are sometimes sore now they are growing.

Later, Cassy draws a big dildo onto the body. "She needs one of those". They all fall about laughing.

Researcher: Why does she need one?

Izzy: Because she's a girl!

(age 11)



Casey: I cried when I got my first period, I cried because I thought I'd never be able to wear, like, regular underwear forever, and I thought I had to wear pads for, like, the rest of my life.

Researcher: Can I ask how old you were?

Casey: Ten.

Rhian: Yeah, we'd only done it in science and not PSE (...) like, we got... we got... we got one in like the last week or something (of primary school).

Casey: Yeah. And then they take the girls away for when they're talking about periods (...) but I think everyone should have been in attendance because, like, it's important for everyone to know about that stuff, because most of the boys don't have much knowledge.



Tambara and Leila (age 13) are talking about vaginas and vulvas, and the difference between them, following a conversation about sex education lessons in primary school.

Tambara: I'm... I'm just too bored to differentiate (between vulva and vagina). I know they're different. I know they're different, I just use ... vagina ... it's more widely used.

Leila: Hmm.

Tambara: Some people don't even call it a vagina as well, they like... I remember in primary school they had, like, all different names for it (...)

Leila: Vajuju. That's what my friend used to call it (...) and Vajayjay!

Tambara: Yeah. So, like, people don't actually know, it's like it's a normal body part, like any other part and I feel like we need to know from a young age.

Leila: Yeah. But then people would say penis, so...

Tambara: I know, people say that... people say that and then, like, well...

Leila: Yeah.

Tambara: VAGINA!

Leila: People are more, like, grossed out.

Tambara: There's way more stigma around vaginas than there are penises.



Fay: "I've got one of those 'When you grow up' books and on masturbation it said, 'When you do something that makes you feel good' and that was the description of it. And I was like, 'okay anything I do that makes me feel good - that's masturbation!'"

Shanon: You weren't to know!

Fay: Exactly! I was nine. So I looked, and it wasn't an explicit description. It was like when you do something that makes you feel good. So I was like, 'so everything I do that I enjoy, that's masturbation'. That was what I was thinking about it and my brain was like, 'no'. I was like 9.

Shanon: My mum got me one when I was 12. She bought me three books: one about puberty, one about periods and one about body image. I only read half of one. One talked about cancer, and I got scared.

(age 14)

Starting out with sexual health and wellbeing



This is me

Several teachers have created a fingerprint tree with children in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 in primary and young people in Key Stage 3 in a special school. For this activity, children and young people drew a tree and filled the trunk and branches with their fingerprints. They used a magnifying glass to look at their fingerprints in detail and talked about the fact that they are all similar but unique. In older year groups, young people also made notes around the tree about things that are similar and different between them as a group. In the younger year groups, children listed what makes everyone unique and listened to the song 'This is me' from 'The Greatest Showman'.

A recognition that everyone's body is unique and special to them. (RSE code 2022)

What is love?

A few primary teachers have explored relationships and feelings with children in Years 1 and 2. Working in small groups children explore the question, WHAT IS LOVE?. They write their answers on sticky notes and put them on large sheets of paper. In one year 1 and 2 class children wrote things like, Mam a dad, Teulu/family, Ffrindiau/Friends, Boy or girl who loves boy or girl.



Next the children explored the question *HOW DO PEOPLE FEEL WHEN THEY ARE IN LOVE?* And they said things like, *Cyffrous/excited, Hapus/happy, Trist/sad, Enbaras/embarrassed, Cenfigennus/jealous*. They discussed some of these feelings and the children explained that you can feel jealous if you love someone and they don't love you back and they love someone else. Or that you can feel embarrassed if someone likes you or loves you and you don't want them to. At the end of the session, the children made pipe cleaner hearts and hung them on the pear tree outside the classroom, **"just to remind them as they passed everyday about the love around them"**. (Primary teacher).

Awareness of the different feelings one can have, recognising other people's feelings and how these may differ to your own. (RSE code 2022)



Stories for exploring life cycles, relationships and change

A primary teacher read the book *Tadpole's Promise* with Year 4. This is a story about a caterpillar and a tadpole who fall in love. When the tadpole turns into a frog and the caterpillar becomes a butterfly, their relationship changes. In the end, the frog eats the butterfly. As well as using the story to talk about relationships, this was also the starting point for the class learning more about the lifecycle of the butterfly and the human.

"The children are mortified when the frog eats the butterfly! But we use the story to talk about the fact that sometimes relationships don't work out, sometimes things go wrong and that people and relationships change. It makes for really good conversations."
(RSE lead, Primary school)

An awareness of the human life cycle and that reproduction is a part of life. (RSE code 2022)

Exploring language and body parts

A secondary school teacher asked a class of Year 8 students to explore the language used for talking about genitalia. Young people worked in small friendship groups. Each had a large piece of paper and wrote down all the words for the vulva and all the words for the penis that they could think of. As a class they found that there were more words for the vulva, than the penis and that many of the words for the vulva were derogatory and used as insults. This led to a whole class discussion about language, gender and misogyny. At the end the class and teacher agreed on what terms they would use in future lessons, which were focused on puberty and anatomy.

"I found this lesson really inspiring as a teacher." (RSE lead)



Critically engaging with positive and negative representations of a diversity of bodies, including through various forms of media and understanding that these can be unrealistic and harmful. (RSE code 2022)

The use of accurate terminology for all body parts (RSE Code 2022)

For more ideas about how to explore vulva and vaginal health and anatomy in secondary schools, have a look at the PSHE Association's **Truth Undressed** guidance and lesson plans for years 7 - 11 [pshe-association.org.uk/canesten-the-truth-undressed](https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/canesten-the-truth-undressed). Or take a look at Brook's free **Different is normal** microsite aimed at educating young people about the vulva.

For primary age children, see the Eve Appeal's **Know your body** programme which includes lesson plans, powerpoints, activity resources and top tips for primary educators working with children in year 3 upwards. www.knowyourbodylessons.org

To explore this area using an interdisciplinary approach, download the free **Sex and History education resource pack** and see how you can use historical objects such as a chastity belt or a Roman pendant to explore a range of sexual health and wellbeing topics, including genital and body norms. Lesson plans are designed for secondary schools.

Health Gloves

A special school teacher wanted to introduce learners to a range of contraception methods. They passed around different examples from a contraceptive tool kit, giving young people time to touch and look at each method and ask questions confidentially if they wanted to.

Next they asked each learner to draw round their hand and write the four main aspects of personal health on the fingers - emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual - and to write physical on the thumb. Next learners looked at which aspects of their personal health contraception could protect against and cut off the 'fingers' of the glove that it couldn't protect against. They were left with only the thumb. They tried doing this with a latex glove and wearing the glove with all but one of the digits cut off. As a class, this prompted a discussion about the emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual consequences and outcomes of sex and helped the class to explore more holistically what makes sex safe or unsafe.



Understanding of good sexual and reproductive health, including the range of risks and outcomes from sexual experiences and the knowledge needed to support informed decisions about sexual activity and about reproductive choices. (RSE code 2022)

Understanding how contraception can assist with reproductive choices, including awareness of abortion (RSE code 2022)

For accessible information, graphics and animated videos on each method of contraception see Brook's contraception guide: www.brook.org.uk/topics/contraception Also see the bilingual contraception handout on contraception / atal cenhedlu and condoms / CONDOMAU www.brook.org.uk/resources

Mirror, Mirror

One secondary school teacher explored body image with a group of young people. She gave every learner a paper mirror and asked them to design their own message for what they would like people to see reflected when they look in the mirror. Afterwards, they framed the best designs and messages and hung them around the school. Secretly, the teacher wrote some of the messages on the school toilet mirrors so that all learners could read these affirmative messages across the school.

Critically engaging with positive and negative representations of a diversity of bodies, including through various forms of media and understanding that these can be unrealistic and harmful (RSE code 2022)



Becoming resourceful

To read more about how teachers are getting started with the theme of Sexual Health and Wellbeing read the following CRUSH case studies:



We love RSE (Foundation phase)

Re-making RSE (Key stage 2)

RSE: Canvassing voice (Special school)

Branching Out (Key stage 2)

Hearts and Minds (Secondary school)

Shaking things up (Secondary school)

To access free online training for educators go to Brook Learn. You will find free courses on a range of sexual health and wellbeing themes including abortion, contraception, pleasure, puberty and STIs. learn.brook.org.uk

 **brook LEARN**

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 our bodily 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.



EveryBODY Matters

Feeling Difference and Diversity with Movement, Sound and Image



BODY (RE)FORMING

Creating textiles, sculptures and maps to spark conversations about how beauty standards impact our bodies and communities



WE MOVE

Using the power of dance and sisterhood to celebrate black cultural history and challenge misogyny.

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

