

# The Parents' Guide to **Relationships, Sex & Health Education**

**2024-2025**



## **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- What's taught in schools
- RSHE at home
- Talking to your teen
- Where to get support
- Your rights as a parent

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# The Parents' Guide to Relationships, Sex & Health Education

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# Introduction

**Relationships, Sex and Health Education “RSHE” is designed to help students stay safe and healthy. It aims to support teens in managing their personal and social lives positively, empowering them to make decisions with informed understanding.**

RSHE covers a wide range of topics. This includes looking after mental and physical health, recognising healthy and unhealthy relationships, understanding how to stay safe online and facts about potentially

harmful substances. The curriculum explores how these issues can affect current and future relationships.

Some parents feel uncertain, and in some cases uncomfortable, with the topics covered in RSHE. In this guide we’ll take a close look into the course content, why it’s relevant and where you can go to find out more from reliable sources. Importantly, we’ll give advice on how you can support your teen at home by providing a safe place for them to talk about things they may be struggling to understand.

## Subscribe to our parent newsletter:

If you’re interested in regular updates about other ways you can help your teenage children, click here and join our online community.







# How is RSHE relevant to my teen?

**Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) is an essential part of the school curriculum because it equips young people with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate the complexities of modern life.**

By learning about topics like healthy relationships, consent, and personal safety, young people are empowered to make informed decisions about their own wellbeing and relationships.

## Promoting mental and emotional wellbeing

RSHE promotes mental and emotional wellbeing by providing young people with strategies to manage stress, build resilience, and seek support when needed. The aim is to create a supportive environment where young people feel comfortable addressing their concerns.

## Modern challenges

In today's world, where technology and social media play a significant role in young people's lives, RSHE also addresses important issues like online safety, sextortion, bullying and the impact of social media on relationships.

This education helps students understand the risks and challenges they may encounter in an increasingly online world and prepares them to respond appropriately.

## Preparing for adulthood

Encouraging positive values, such as kindness, empathy and respect, helps teens identify how they want to live their lives and interact with others. This leads to healthy behaviours that support them in creating the future they want to experience.



# Relationships, Sex and Health Education "RSHE" - course content

RSHE covers a wide range of topics. This includes looking after mental and physical health, recognising healthy and unhealthy relationships and being safe online.

## Health:

- Physical health
  - Food choices
  - Dental health
  - Exercise
  - Personal hygiene
  - Sleep
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing
  - Signs and symptoms
  - Coping strategies
  - Resilience
- Basic first aid and emergency life saving skills

## Teenage wellbeing



## Relationships and sex:

- Family and friendship
- Healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Bullying
- Intimate/sexual relationships
- Consent
- Assault, harassment and the law

## Safety:

- Online safety
- Street safety
- Harmful substances
- Media influence
- Consent and the law
- Parties and festivals

For a detailed list of content and objectives see pp 64 to 69



# How is RSHE taught?

**Schools can choose how they teach RSHE. They cannot change the units that are covered (i.e. the content) but they can teach the units in any order they feel appropriate. This allows schools to bear in mind sensitivities within their own unique communities and assess the best fit for their students within the national curriculum subjects they offer.**

This is why, if you compare two secondary schools, each one might be teaching RSHE in a different order. This can be confusing for parents who have teens at different schools, because their children may learn parts of the RSHE course at different times of the year, or even in different year groups. It doesn't mean that one of the schools is doing it wrong. You can always speak to senior member of school staff if you have concerns or want to understand more.

## When lessons take place

Many schools teach RSHE in timetabled lessons during the school day as part of their Personal, Social, Health and Economic programme "PSHE". PSHE also includes economic wellbeing and careers. Some schools may

also offer lessons, workshops and talks outside of the regular timetable. These may take place after school, or in assemblies and form-time activities throughout the year.

Classes are led by school teachers or external specialists (accompanied by school teachers).

## External specialists

External speakers or organisations are sometimes invited to speak on specific areas that fall outside the expertise of school teachers. These might include local police officers, environmental activists, psychologists or representatives from drug or sexual health charities. External specialists are always vetted before being invited to present.



## Inclusivity

To foster understanding, acceptance, and respect for different relationships from an early age, schools will use resources that depict a wide range of families and relationships, including those where individuals identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+).

## Special Educational Needs

Certain pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are more susceptible to exploitation, bullying,

and other difficulties. In special schools and for some SEND pupils in mainstream schools, adjustments may be required to ensure that RSHE is tailored effectively to meet their distinct needs and abilities.

This might include adapting the pace and structure of lessons, adjusting when specific topics are covered, revisiting certain content more frequently, focusing on the practical application of skills, and designing opportunities to embed the skills they learn.





## RSHE in other lessons

### RSHE and the national curriculum

The RSHE curriculum covers many areas which are touched upon in other subjects. Schools will consider what is taught within the national curriculum (such as citizenship, science, computing and PE) to make sure RSHE lessons tie in with learning.

Timing is a key consideration. RSHE units may go into greater depth than what is covered in national curriculum lessons, so it may be better if students experience the less detailed coverage first.

### A whole school approach

The teaching of RSHE may also be integrated into other subjects to reinforce key concepts. For example:

- **Physical Education** focuses on physical health, teamwork, and the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
- **Biology** covers human biology, reproduction, health, and how lifestyle choices affect the body.
- In **Politics or Citizenship**, students explore rights, responsibilities, ethical decision-making, and democratic values within society.
- **Religious Studies** explores moral and ethical questions, offering insights into different cultural perspectives on relationships, family, and sexuality.
- **Art** allows students to express their emotions and perspectives on personal and social issues, including identity and self-esteem.
- **Information Technology** teaches online safety, digital communication, and the impact of social media on relationships.
- In **English and Drama**, students study books and plays to explore themes like relationships, identity, and personal growth.
- **History** classes look at historical examples to understand social issues and their impact on communities.



## TV Shows and films addressing relationships and sex for teens

Using TV and film is a great way to talk about sensitive issues because it shifts the focus from your teen to imaginary characters, making it much easier for them to express opinions without feeling it's personal and about them. Here are some recommendations to get you started:

### TV Shows:

- ✓ **Educating Yorkshire (Channel 4) - Suitable for 12 and older** - This documentary series follows the lives of students and teachers in a Yorkshire school, addressing various issues including relationships and personal development.
- ✓ **EastEnders (BBC One) - Suitable for 12 and older** - This long-running soap opera often explores issues related to relationships, sex, and the challenges faced by young adults.
- ✓ **The Sex Education Show (Channel 4) - Suitable for 12 and older** - This educational series discusses various aspects of sex education in an accessible and informative manner.
- ✓ **Big Mouth (Netflix) - Suitable for 15 and older** - An animated series that humorously explores puberty, sexuality, and relationships.

### Films:

- ✓ **Inside Out 1/2 (2024) - Suitable for all ages** An animated film depicting the emotional journey of a 13-year-old girl going through puberty, highlighting feelings of embarrassment, envy, ennui, and notably, anxiety.
- ✓ **To All the Boys I've Loved Before (Netflix) - Suitable for 12 and older** - A romantic comedy film about a high school girl whose secret love letters are unexpectedly mailed out, leading to new relationships and self-discovery.
- ✓ **Love, Simon (2018) - Suitable for 12 and older** - A romantic comedy-drama film about a teenage boy navigating his sexuality while trying to keep it a secret from his family and friends.
- ✓ **The Fault in Our Stars (2014) - Suitable for 12 and older** - A romantic drama based on John Green's novel about two teens with cancer who fall in love and navigate their challenges together.
- ✓ **Easy A (2010) - Suitable for 15 and older** - comedy-drama about a high school student who becomes the center of gossip after fabricating a lie about losing her virginity, exploring themes of reputation and relationships.

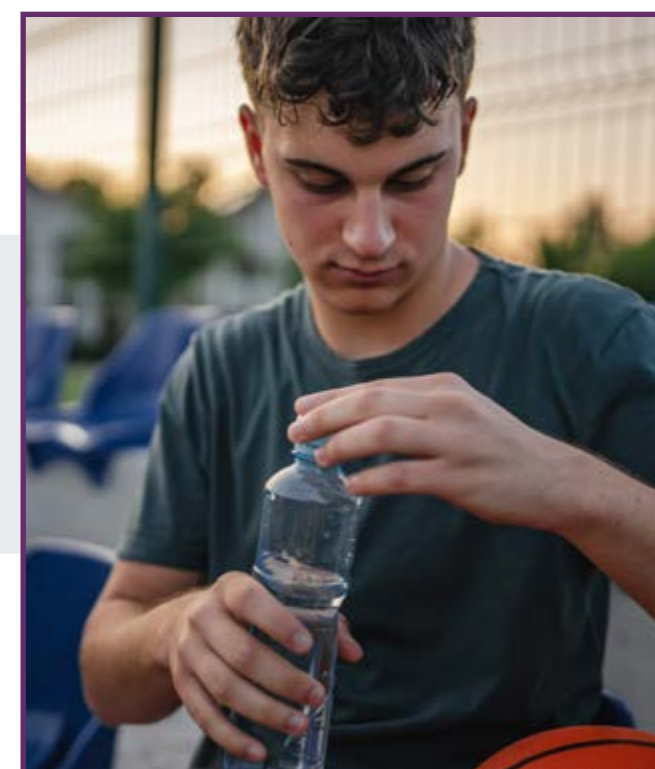


# Parent resources

The internet offers a lot of help and support on RSHE topics, but it can be confusing to know where to start.

Here, we've provided key advice on important topics and our top website recommendations for more information.

Click the relevant header below to go to the right section.





# Sex and relationships




Having conversations about sex and sexual health with your teen is an important part of parenting that requires sensitivity and openness.

## Start early

Starting these discussions early lays the groundwork for ongoing conversations and ensures your teen receives accurate and reliable information. Begin by introducing age-appropriate information about the body, relationships, and

boundaries during childhood.

As your teen matures, gradually expand these conversations to include topics like puberty, sexual attraction, contraception, STI prevention, and the emotional aspects of sexual relationships.

	Organisation	Contact
	<b>Brook</b> <i>Provides advice and resources on sexual health, relationships, and consent for teens, with a focus on promoting healthy, respectful relationships.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>Childline</b> <i>Offers support and advice on relationships, sex, and consent, helping teens navigate friendships, romantic relationships, and peer pressure.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>Family Lives</b> <i>Provides information for parents on how to talk to their teens about relationships and sex, including tips on discussing consent, sexual health, and managing relationships.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>

	Organisation	Contact
	<b>FPA (Family Planning Association)</b> <i>Offers resources for parents and educators on relationships and sex education, with guides on topics like contraception, STIs, and healthy relationships.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>NHS Live Well (Sexual Health)</b> <i>Provides advice on sexual health, including information on contraception, STIs, and healthy relationships, with resources tailored to teens and young adults.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>Relate</b> <i>Offers counselling and support for young people navigating relationships, with resources on communication, dealing with breakups, and building healthy romantic and family relationships.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>Respect Yourself</b> <i>Provides information and resources on relationships, sex, and personal wellbeing, encouraging teens to make informed, respectful choices.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>Stonewall (LGBTQ+ Relationships)</b> <i>Provides support and advice for LGBTQ+ teens on relationships, coming out, and navigating their sexual orientation and gender identity in a supportive environment.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>The Mix</b> <i>Offers free, confidential advice on sex, relationships, and dating for young people, with resources to help teens navigate everything from first relationships to sexual health.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>



# LGBTQIA+

LGBTQIA+ is an inclusive term that encompasses people of all genders and sexualities. It includes:

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- Questioning
- Queer
- Intersex
- Asexual
- Other

Each letter represents a specific group of people, but the term covers the entire spectrum of gender fluidity and sexual identities.

## Why it matters

Teaching your teen about LGBTQIA+ issues helps promote a culture of inclusivity and acceptance. It ensures that your teen understands and respects people of all genders and sexual orientations, reducing the likelihood of prejudice and discrimination.

Even if a child does not identify as LGBTQIA+, understanding these issues can help them become allies. Allies play a crucial role in advocating for and supporting LGBTQIA+ individuals,

contributing to a more equitable and supportive society. It can also help reduce bullying in schools.







## What if I suspect my teen is LGBTQ+?

Until your child tells you they are, or might be, there is no way of knowing for sure. Avoid making assumptions and let them come to you in their own time.

You can help your child feel comfortable talking to you by creating a supportive environment at home. You can achieve this by positively representing LGBTQ+ people when they appear on TV or in the media, discouraging negative comments about LGBTQ+ individuals in your child’s presence, and subtly integrating discussions about diverse sexual orientations into everyday conversations.

## Approaching the subject

Some children may feel upset if you ask them if they are LGBTQ+ without them bringing it up first, while others may feel relieved. The key is to show unconditional love and support regardless of how they identify or express themselves.

	Organisation	Contact
	<b>Brook</b> <i>Offers sexual health and relationship advice with specific resources for LGBTQIA+ young people, including information on sexual health, consent, and safe practices.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>Ditch the label</b> <i>Provides support and resources on a range of issues including LGBTQIA+ identity, mental health, and bullying, with a focus on empowering young people through peer support and advice.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>Gendered Intelligence</b> <i>Provides support and resources for transgender and non-binary young people, including educational resources, peer support, and advice on navigating gender identity.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>Stonewall</b> <i>Provides support, resources, and information on LGBTQIA+ issues, including educational resources for schools and families, and advice on coming out and navigating LGBTQIA+ identities.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>The Proud Trust</b> <i>Supports LGBTQIA+ young people through resources, support groups, and educational programs, with a focus on promoting understanding and inclusion.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>Youth Stonewall</b> <i>Focuses on supporting young LGBTQIA+ people through educational resources, advocacy, and support services, aiming to create safe and inclusive environments for all.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>



# Drugs, alcohol and nicotine

In British culture, exposure to drugs, alcohol, and nicotine is common. This makes it essential to start conversations about these substances early. Younger children are generally more open to hearing your views and accepting your rules compared to teenagers.

## Talking to younger children

With younger children, it's easier to discuss these topics before they feel the pressure to drink, smoke, or take drugs. If your child asks a question about smoking, alcohol, or drugs, use this as an opportunity to start the conversation.

## Approaching teenagers

Teenagers may believe they already know everything about these topics, so finding the right moment to talk can be more challenging. Look for opportunities when watching TV shows that depict drug use, drinking, or smoking. Ask your teen what they think about these portrayals, which can be easier than trying to have a formal discussion. Additionally, discuss the risks and ways to stay safe if they are attending parties or events.

## Addressing current behaviours

If you discover that your child is drinking, smoking, or taking drugs, use this as a chance to have an open conversation.

It's crucial to understand your child's perspective, so listen carefully to find out what they know, what their friends are doing, and how they feel about these substances.



## Discussing the risks

Your teen needs to understand the risks associated with alcohol, smoking, and other drugs. However, avoid over-exaggerating these risks, as your child may dismiss your concerns. Acknowledge that many young people experiment with these substances without experiencing serious harm, but also emphasize the potential for very real and sometimes tragic consequences.

## Balancing perspectives

While discussing the dangers, also ask your child what they might find

appealing about alcohol, smoking, and other drugs. Follow this by asking them to consider the negative aspects. This balanced approach can help them think critically about their choices.

## It's not too late

Remember, it's never too late to start these conversations. The key is to build a trusting environment where your teen feels comfortable opening up to you. This way, you can support them without shutting down communication.





## Vaping

In recent years, the number of young people vaping has increased significantly. This trend is worrying, especially given conflicting information about its long-term risks.

## Why is vaping so popular?

Many teens are drawn to vaping because of the wide range of flavours such as chocolate or vanilla, and the perception that it is safer than traditional forms of nicotine use, such as smoking. However, it's important to note that vaping is not risk-free, and its long-term health effects are still being studied.

## Recognising vaping devices

Vaping devices come in various shapes, from pens to larger customisable systems. They often resemble USB drives or pens, making them easy for teens to hide. Knowing these devices can help you identify if your teen is vaping.

## Talking to your teen about vaping

Start by educating yourself on vaping trends, risks, and why your teen might find it appealing. Approach the topic calmly and without judgment, asking open-ended questions and actively listening to their responses.

Share information about the health risks and misconceptions associated with vaping (you can research this together if you're not sure). Clearly communicate your expectations and values regarding vaping, setting clear boundaries. If your teen is vaping or experimenting, offer support without anger or punishment.

If you suspect your teen is addicted to nicotine, consider seeking help from healthcare professionals or counsellors.

	USEFUL RESOURCE	Contact
 <a href="http://be.drinkaware.co.uk">be.drinkaware.co.uk</a> <a href="http://be.drinkaware.co.uk">be.drinkaware.co.uk</a> <a href="http://be.drinkaware.co.uk">be.drinkaware.co.uk</a>	<b>Drinkaware</b> <i>Offers information about alcohol consumption, including guidelines for safe drinking, the effects of alcohol, and advice for young people on understanding and managing alcohol use.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>Frank (National Drugs Helpline)</b> <i>Provides clear, up-to-date information on drugs, including their effects, risks, and how to get help if needed. Includes resources for parents and teens about drug use and prevention.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training (NCSCT)</b> <i>Offers resources and information on smoking cessation and the risks associated with nicotine use, including guidance on supporting teens in quitting smoking or vaping.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>NHS Live Well (Smoking and Vaping)</b> <i>Offers guidance on quitting smoking and vaping, including information on the health risks and benefits of cessation for teens and young adults.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>The Mix</b> <i>Offers free, confidential advice on drugs, alcohol, and smoking for young people, including information on the effects, risks, and support available.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>Young People's Health (by YoungMinds)</b> <i>Provides advice on the impact of drugs, alcohol, and smoking on mental and physical health, with resources for teens and their families to understand and manage substance use.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>
	<b>With You</b> <i>Offers support specifically for young people struggling with substance misuse, including drugs, alcohol, and nicotine, with resources and advice for managing and seeking help.</i>	<a href="#">Website</a>





## Final Words

Relationships, sex and health education “RSHE” covers a wide range of topics, including looking after mental and physical health, recognising healthy and unhealthy relationships and being safe online – all of which centre on wellbeing. Some of these subjects can feel tricky to talk about. It can be uncharted territory for you and your teen, so it’s important to approach these discussions with empathy and patience, acknowledging that your teen may feel awkward or embarrassed too.

You might worry about saying the “wrong thing” or not having all the answers. Don’t worry! You don’t need to know everything. By listening carefully and validating their feelings, you can foster a sense of trust and openness that encourages ongoing dialogue as they mature. What’s crucial is that you guide your teen towards developing positive and healthy values, such as kindness and respect towards others.

Talking about relationships, health and safety shouldn’t happen as a

one-off “sit down talk”. By regularly referencing or talking about RSHE topics at home you will help to take away some of the stigma by making it part of the everyday. TV dramas can help with this, as they’ll often give you the chance to talk about these issues from the context of the characters, rather than making it personal and directing conversations towards your teen. Maintaining open communication creates a supportive environment where your teen will feel comfortable asking questions, seeking advice, and discussing their concerns.

These conversations also give you the chance to share your values as a parent with your teen. It’s an opportunity to discuss what you believe is important in relationships and healthy choices.

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