

# Guidance on teaching consent - FAQs

## What is the consent guidance?

The Home Office Action Plan, [A Call to End Violence against Women and Girls](#) (2014)<sup>1</sup>, calls for more to be done to “promote the teaching of sexual consent and the importance of healthy relationships in schools”. In response, we have produced this guidance for teachers working with pupils at key stages 3 and 4.

The guidance is split into two parts: the first is general advice for schools on teaching about consent, outlining key concepts like ‘healthy relationships’, including the legal definition of consent so that teachers are clear about it themselves. It also provides guidance on how to ground lessons in real life contexts, while encouraging pupils not to talk about personal circumstances.

The second half provides 8 lesson plans on different elements of consent, including avoiding assumptions relating to consent, the right to withdraw consent, the capacity to consent (including the impact of alcohol on consent) and some of the myths relating to consent (pupils are asked to challenge these myths).

This guidance was developed by the PSHE Association with assistance from leading organisations and individuals in the sector and funded by the Department for Education.

## Where can I get it?

It can be downloaded here for free from the PSHE Association website: [www.pshe-association.org.uk/consent](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/consent)

## How do I teach it?

The guidance should be covered in the context of a comprehensive PSHE programme.

The guidance itself offers some suggestions on how it can be implemented but if you are a [member\\* of the Association](#) please do contact us with queries or to discuss additional training needs.

Our annual conference in [London on the 25<sup>th</sup> June and Leeds of 2<sup>nd</sup> July](#) will also contain a session on putting this guidance into practice. Read more and book your place [here](#).

If you are a local authority or academy chain you may wish to contact us to discuss training for your staff or the schools you work with on using the guidance and implementing effective PSHE more broadly. More information can be found [here](#).

\*Please note we are a membership association, so preference will always be given to practitioners who are current PSHE Association members.

## What age group are the lesson plans intended for?

The guidance in section 1 is relevant for all teachers but the lesson plans in section 2 are intended for use in key stages 3 and 4, covering age group 11 -16. The lessons are designed to be used flexibly across key stages 3 and 4. The first two lessons introducing the concept of consent should always be included and the baseline assessment activities in lesson 1 will help teachers decide how to select the best lessons for the age and maturity of their pupils, although most schools will probably choose to teach the later lessons from upper key stage 3 onwards.

## Why are there no lesson plans for key stages 1 and 2?

Teaching about consent needs to be part of a spiral PSHE education programme, building developmentally from early years, through key stages 1 to 4 (or 5 where PSHE provision exists). The PSHE Association's [Programme of Study for key stages 1 to 4](#), sets out the learning in key stages 1 and 2 that lays the foundations for this. This includes simple rules for staying safe online, not keeping adults' secrets, only surprises, who and how to tell if they are worried or uncomfortable about something, recognising what kinds of physical touching is acceptable and unacceptable.

Whilst acknowledging the vital importance of this early learning, feedback from teachers indicated that within the limited scope of this document, the aspects of teaching about consent with which they wanted most support were those around consent in sexual situations and relationships, the effects of alcohol and drugs on the capacity to consent, the effects of pornography on the concept of consent and challenging myths and assumptions about sexual assault. We felt this would be most appropriate to cover at key stages 3 and 4.

## Is it compulsory that I teach these lessons?

The Education Secretary stressed the importance of teaching about consent in her recent [piece for the Sunday Times](#) as well as her desire to see PSHE "at the heart of" the school curriculum. The National Curriculum states that all schools 'should' teach PSHE education.

PSHE remains a non-statutory part of the curriculum however, despite [the growing momentum of support for this to change](#). Until that time, though all schools are strongly encouraged by the DfE to use this guidance, they are under no obligation to do so.

## Following the Education Secretary's comments, am I expected to teach this straightaway after the Easter holidays?

The guidance is designed to be used as part of a planned programme of PSHE education and can be implemented when the PSHE education lead sees fit. There is not an expectation on schools to drop everything else to suddenly include these lesson plans, but the guidance should form an important part of a school's PSHE programme, with the lessons built in at an appropriate time and stage for the school.

## If parents are concerned about some of the topics covered – what should I tell them?

As mentioned above, the guidance provides advice on how to select the best lessons for the age and maturity of your pupils, but there are some elements of the guidance - such as references to the way consent is depicted in pornography - which you will probably choose to cover with older pupils.

Learning about consent should however begin before young people are sexually active, otherwise it is too late. As part of learning about consent, pupils must learn that the law is clear that sexual activity is illegal for young people under the age of 16. We know, however, that some young people are sexually active before 16 and learning about healthy relationships is crucial to keeping them healthy and safe from abuse and exploitation.

Recognising that some young people will be sexually active before the age of 16 does not equate to encouraging underage sexual activity. Furthermore, the key learning set out in this guidance – about respecting the rights of others, communication, negotiation and considering the freedom and capacity of others to make choices – is crucial in a range of situations young people will encounter in their lives.