

## **Sex, relationship and HIV education across the UK: current status**

### **England**

#### **Primary schools**

- It is compulsory for all maintained schools to teach some parts of sex education in primary school – in particular the biological aspects of puberty, reproduction and the spread of viruses. These are a statutory as part of the national Science curriculum.
- Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) is non-statutory, but primary schools are legally obliged to have an up-to-date Sex and Relationship Education policy.

#### **Secondary schools**

- There is a statutory requirement for secondary schools to teach about HIV, AIDS and STIs as part of the National Curriculum Science.
- The broader topic of SRE is currently not compulsory but is contained within the non-statutory PSHE – it is strongly recommended within Government guidance. HIV features on the Department for Education's non-statutory guidance for SRE within PSHE.
- Secondary schools are legally obliged to have an up-to-date SRE policy.
- Outside of PSHE, English schools are also required by statute to inform students of HIV as part of sex education within the 'basic' curriculum (separate to the national curriculum) – although there is no detail about how<sup>1</sup>.

### **Summary**

The biological side of puberty and viruses is taught in primary schools, while PSHE is non-statutory. PSHE is also non-statutory in secondary schools (though highly recommended by government), but there is a statutory requirement for secondary schools to specifically teach about the biology of HIV and STIs as part of the Science curriculum<sup>2</sup>. HIV is contained within the statutory 'basic' curriculum in England, but this may not be implemented well as there is no detail or guidance as to how schools must do this.

### **Wales**

#### **Primary schools**

- Personal and Social Education (PSE) is compulsory in Welsh primary schools, although the SRE strand is not. Primary schools must, however, have either a detailed SRE policy, or a written document explaining their reasons for not providing one.

#### **Secondary schools**

- SRE is a compulsory part of the basic curriculum in Welsh secondary schools. As well as providing information on puberty, safer sex and abortion the National Assembly for Wales' detailed guidance also includes teaching on the risks of STIs (including HIV) – it also recommends including information about the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of STIs<sup>3</sup>. The Welsh Assembly recommends that primary schools undertake a graduated programme of SRE tailored to the age and emotional maturity of the children.

<sup>1</sup> FPA. 'Sex and relationship education factsheet', January 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Sex Education Forum: 'Current status of sex and relationships education', March 2011; 'Evidence from the Sex Education Forum for the Select Committee on HIV & AIDS in the UK', 18<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, Personal and social education framework for 7 to 19 year olds in Wales. 2008, page. 21a.

- Non-statutory guidance for the Welsh science curriculum recommends that science is taught in part to “give evidence to **health and well-being, sex and relationships...**” However there is no statutory requirement to teach about HIV as there is in England.<sup>4</sup>

## Summary

SRE within PSE is a compulsory part of the basic curriculum in Welsh secondary schools, in which HIV features as a recommended topic. There is no statutory requirement to teach about HIV in the Science curriculum.

## Scotland

### Primary schools

- SRE is not compulsory in Scotland, but it can be taught within ‘Health and Wellbeing’ section of the curriculum.
- The Scottish government has recently produced extensive guidance on how SRE can be taught from ages 3-18.
- In key stage 1 and 2 (5-11) students are given an introduction to puberty and relationships.<sup>5</sup>

### Secondary schools

- SRE is not compulsory in Scottish secondary schools, and neither is there a statutory obligation to teach about HIV in the Science curriculum. A 2006 study showed that only 22% of Scottish secondary schools taught about HIV as part of science education<sup>6</sup>.
- HIV education does explicitly feature on both the ‘Abstinence Plus Education’ (also known as ‘comprehensive sex education’) and ‘Abstinence Only Education’ models of SRE provision outlined in the Scottish government’s ‘Sexual Health Relationship Strategy’<sup>7</sup> – the Government recommends ‘Abstinence Plus Education (but does not enforce it by statute)<sup>8</sup>. HIV education also features as a key material for secondary school pupils SRE in guidance recommended by the government<sup>9</sup>.

## Summary

SRE is not compulsory in Scotland, although the Government has produced guidance on how it can be taught for both primary and secondary schools – this does feature HIV material as recommended. The teaching of basic HIV biology is not compulsory, and is taught in relatively few schools. Scotland is the only country to have no element of compulsory SRE or HIV education.

## Northern Ireland

### Primary schools

The statutory curriculum states that schools should:

- Compulsory Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (focusing on emotional development, social skills, learning to learn, health, **relationships and sexuality education** and mutual understanding in the local and global community)

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Assembly Government. ‘Science in the National Curriculum for Wales’, 2008, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Learning and Teaching Scotland. ‘Curriculum for Excellence’, Curriculum areas, expectations and outcomes. 2011

<sup>6</sup> Wallace et al. ‘Risk and HIV: Scottish schools’ approaches to HIV education’, *Scottish Affairs*, no. 55, spring 2006, p.111

<sup>7</sup> ‘Sexual Health and Relationships Education for Young People’, *Enhancing Sexual Wellbeing in Scotland: A Sexual Health and Relationships Strategy*, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2003, para 3.19.,

<sup>8</sup> ‘Promoting positive sexual health’, *Enhancing Sexual Wellbeing in Scotland: A Sexual Health and Relationships Strategy: Proposal to the Scottish Executive*, paras 4.5- 4.14.

<sup>9</sup> E.g: McCabe, M: ‘Report of the Working Group on Sex Education in Scottish Schools’, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2000, p.35.

The non-statutory guidance states that Key Stage 2 pupils, ages 8-11 (but not Key Stage 1 ages 5-8) must:

- “Know that **AIDS is a prevalent disease throughout the world** and is a major health issue for many countries.”<sup>10</sup>

### Secondary schools

The statutory curriculum states:

- Explore the implications of sexual maturation, for example, **sexual health**, fertility, contraception, conception, teenage pregnancy, childbirth, etc.
- Explore the emotional, social and moral implications of early sexual activity, for example, personal values, attitudes and perceptions, the Law, **STIs**, the impact of underage parenting, etc.<sup>11</sup>

The non-statutory guidance on RSE states:

“..Teaching about safer sex remains one of the key strategies in combating the spread of sexually transmitted infections in general and of **HIV in particular**.”

“The publicity in public health campaigns and media attention has ensured that most postprimary pupils have some knowledge about HIV. However, pupils need to know that HIV could affect them and not just drug users or gay men. **They should be provided with information about the most common Sexually Transmitted Infections, the difference between HIV and AIDS, modes of transmission, practical hygiene and risky behaviours.** Only those who are sexually active are potentially at risk from getting HIV and sexually transmitted infections.”<sup>12</sup>

With regard non-statutory guidance on sex education, the Northern Irish Department for Education states:

“...at key stages 3 and 4 (forms 1-5), the science programmes of study require pupils to learn about the need for a responsible attitude to sexual behaviour, including interpersonal relationships, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. **AIDS is cited as an example which schools may choose of a sexually transmitted disease, but teaching about AIDS is not compulsory in Northern Ireland.**”<sup>13</sup>

### Summary

Northern Ireland **does have** compulsory SRE/RSE across 'personal development and mutual understanding' (their equivalent of PSHE) in which some education on HIV is highly recommended if not required by statute (as for instance it is in England). SRE and HIV education features in biology, but not by law.

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<sup>10</sup> Government of Northern Ireland. 'The Northern Ireland Curriculum: Primary'. 2007, p.97.

<sup>11</sup>Statutory requirements set out in appendix of non-statutory guidance:

Government of Northern Ireland. 'Personal Development: Key Stage 3 non-statutory guidance for personal development'. 2007, p.23.

<sup>12</sup>Government of Northern Ireland. 'Personal Development: Key Stage 3 non-statutory guidance for personal development, 2007, p.13.

<sup>13</sup> Department for Education, Northern Ireland: 'The Northern Ireland Curriculum', Briefing, c.2005, p.10.

## Further reading

### England

FPA. 'Sex and relationship education factsheet', January 2011. Available:

<http://www.fpa.org.uk/professionals/factsheets/sre#aNh7>.

Sex Education Forum. 'Current status of sex and relationships education', March 2011. Available:

[http://www.ncb.org.uk/pdf/status\\_of\\_SRE\\_March\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/pdf/status_of_SRE_March_2011.pdf)

Sex Education Forum. 'Evidence from the Sex Education Forum for the Select Committee on HIV & AIDS in the UK', 18<sup>th</sup> February 2011. Available:

[www.ncb.org.uk/pdf/HIV\\_and\\_AIDS\\_evidence\\_SEF\\_Feb2011.pdf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/pdf/HIV_and_AIDS_evidence_SEF_Feb2011.pdf)

### Wales

Welsh Assembly Government. 'Science in the National Curriculum for Wales', 2008. Available:

[http://wales.gov.uk/dcells/publications/curriculum\\_and\\_assessment/arevisedcurriculumforwales/nationalcurriculum/sciencenc/scienceeng.pdf?lang=en](http://wales.gov.uk/dcells/publications/curriculum_and_assessment/arevisedcurriculumforwales/nationalcurriculum/sciencenc/scienceeng.pdf?lang=en)

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[http://wales.gov.uk/dcells/publications/curriculum\\_and\\_assessment/arevisedcurriculumforwales/personalsocialeducation/PSE\\_Framework\\_WEB\\_\(E\).pdf?lang=en](http://wales.gov.uk/dcells/publications/curriculum_and_assessment/arevisedcurriculumforwales/personalsocialeducation/PSE_Framework_WEB_(E).pdf?lang=en).

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Chisholm, M. 'Promoting positive sexual health', *Enhancing Sexual Wellbeing in Scotland: A Sexual Health and Relationships Strategy: Proposal to the Scottish Executive*, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2003. Available:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/11/18502/28855>.

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<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/11/18503/28873>

McCabe, M. 'Report of the Working Group on Sex Education in Scottish Schools', 16<sup>th</sup> June 2000. Available:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/158180/0042808.pdf>

Scottish Executive: 'Respect and Responsibility', 2005. Available:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/35596/0012575.pdf>

Wallace et al. 'Risk and HIV: Scottish schools' approaches to HIV education', *Scottish Affairs*, no. 55, spring 2006.

[http://www.scottishaffairs.org/backiss/pdfs/sa55/Sa55\\_Wallace\\_Cree\\_Kay\\_and\\_Tisdall.pdf](http://www.scottishaffairs.org/backiss/pdfs/sa55/Sa55_Wallace_Cree_Kay_and_Tisdall.pdf)

Learning and Teaching Scotland. 'Curriculum for Excellence', 2011. Available:

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/sharingpractice/r/rshp/introduction.asp>.

- Curriculum Areas and lesson organiser  
<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/curriculumareas/index.asp>
- Curriculum Levels  
<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/understandingthecurriculum/howisprogressassessed/stages/index.asp>
- Experiences and Outcomes  
<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/understandingthecurriculum/howisthecurriculumstructured/experiencesandoutcomes/index.asp>  
[http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/all\\_experiences\\_outcomes\\_tcm4-539562.pdf](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/all_experiences_outcomes_tcm4-539562.pdf)
- Interpreting the Guidance  
<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/gettingstarted/usingguidance.asp>

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Department for Education, Northern Ireland: 'The Northern Ireland Curriculum', Briefing, c.2005.

Available: [http://www.deni.gov.uk/the\\_northern\\_ireland\\_curriculum\\_-\\_amended\\_05-2.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/the_northern_ireland_curriculum_-_amended_05-2.pdf)

Government of Northern Ireland. 'The Northern Ireland Curriculum: Primary'. 2007. Available:

[http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key\\_stages\\_1\\_and\\_2/northern\\_ireland\\_curriculum\\_primary.pdf](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key_stages_1_and_2/northern_ireland_curriculum_primary.pdf)

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[http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key\\_stage\\_3/statutory\\_curriculum\\_ks3.pdf](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key_stage_3/statutory_curriculum_ks3.pdf)

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[http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key\\_stage\\_3/areas\\_of\\_learning/non\\_statutory/ks3\\_personal\\_development\\_ns\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/key_stage_3/areas_of_learning/non_statutory/ks3_personal_development_ns_guidance.pdf)

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