Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) – Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

CURRICULUM AND THE LAW	
1. CURRICULUM	**Q. What are the changes to the new Primary curriculum?** From September 2020, Relationships Education and Health Education both become a legal requirement for primary schools to teach and need to be taught alongside the Science Curriculum. **Health Education** • Mental wellbeing • Internet safety and harms • Physical health and fitness • Healthy eating • Drugs, alcohol and tobacco • Health and prevention • Basic First Aid • Changing Adolescent Body **Relationships Education** • Families and people who care for me • Caring friendships • Respectful relationships

	• Online relationships • Being safe **Q. Don't children learn anything else in PSHE other than sex?** The PSHE curriculum is extremely broad and covers many other topics such as: • Financial capabilities • Emotional and mental wellbeing • Healthy eating • Physical activity • The Law
2. THE STATUTORY/ COMPULSORY GUIDANCE AND THE LAW	**Q. Why do we need to teach RSE to children at such a young age?** Children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy. In the new statutory DfE Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Guidance, the Government has made age appropriate Relationships and Health Education compulsory in all primary schools. In Secondary schools, Relationships and Sex Education will be compulsory. Health Education will also be compulsory in all state funded schools. National Curriculum Science remains statutory. **Q; Why has there not been a consultation about these changes?** The Government carried out a public call for evidence which received 23,000 responses from parents, young people, schools and experts. This was followed by a Department for Education (DfE) public consultation, which had responses from over 40,000 people. The DfE have recommended that schools engage with their communities and provide information sharing meetings for parents on the DfE RSE Guidance. **Q. Have faith bodies been consulted in the development of the new DfE RSE Guidance?**

	National consultation was carried out by the Department for Education to produce the new RSE Guidance, including consultation with all the below organisations: 1. Association for Citizenship Teaching 2. Association of Muslim Schools 3. Association of School and College Leaders 4. Barnardo's 5. Big Talk Education 6. Bishop Nazir-Ali 7. Board of Deputies of British Jews 8. British Heart Foundation 9. British Red Cross 10. Brook 11. Career Development Institute 12. Careers & Enterprise Company 13. Catholic Education Service 14. Centre for Social Justice 15. Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse 16. Child Exploitation and Online Protection command 17. Childnet International 18. Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition 19. Church of England 20. Christians in Education 21. Christian Institute 22. Citizenship Foundation

	23. Coram 24. Council for Disabled Children 25. Diana Award 26. Ditch the Label 27. Diversity Role Models 28. End Violence Against Women 29. Equality and Human Rights Commission 30. Everyday Sexism Project 31. Family Lives 32. Family Matters Institute 33. Family Planning Association 34. Fawcett Society 35. Federation of Leaders in Special Education 36. FORWARD 37. Girl guiding 38. Humanists UK 39. Image in Action 40. Independent Schools Council 41. Independent Schools Inspectorate 42. Institute for Strategic Dialogue 43. Interlink Foundation 44. Internet Matters 45. Just Like Us 46. Karma Nirvana 47. Lord Farmer

	48. Lord Layard 49. Lord Singh 50. Marriage Care 51. Men and Boys Coalition 52. Mencap 53. Mentor UK 54. Mumsnet 55. MyBnk 56. NASUWT 57. National Association of Head Teachers 58. National Association of Jewish Orthodox Schools 59. National Children's Bureau 60. National Education Union 61. National Governance Association 62. National Network of Parent Carer Forums 63. National Police Chief's Council 64. Netmums 65. NSPCC 66. NWG Network 67. Office of the Children's Commissioner for England 68. Ofsted 69. OnePlusOne 70. Parent Zone 71. Parentkind 72. Plan International UK

	73. Prevent, Waltham Forest 74. Prince's Trust 75. PSHE Association 76. Public Health England 77. Relate 78. Relationships Alliance 79. Seashell Trust 80. Sex Education Forum 81. St John Ambulance 82. Stonewall 83. Tavistock Relationships 84. Terrence Higgins Trust 85. United Synagogue 86. Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales 87. Voice the union 88. White Ribbon UK 89. Young Enterprise 90. Young Minds **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers (2019)** **Q. Shouldn't parents be able to choose the right time to teach their children about these topics?** Schools have a legal responsibility to fulfil their statutory duty to deliver RSE in an age appropriate manner. Parents are encouraged to further supplement the school teaching at home, in a manner which feels beneficial for their child. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets' (LBTH) position with regards to LGBT content, in the context of different types of families, and

	naming of the scientific body parts, has been very carefully considered. LBTH is recommending that all Tower Hamlets primary schools place LGBT content, in the context of different types of families, and the naming of the sexual body parts into the statutory part of the curriculum in Key Stage 1. Schools are expected to share plans and materials with parents ahead of the lessons starting and provide an indication as to when the sessions will take place. This is so that parents are aware and prepared to support this learning at home. The PSHE Association states that: "In order to keep pupils safe, it is vital that they learn about puberty before it happens. NHS advice states that puberty can begin as early as 8 for girls and 9 for boys. Year 5 is therefore the latest time in the school curriculum when this should be addressed." The NHS advises that it's completely normal for puberty to begin at any point from the ages of 8 to 14. The process can take up to 4 years. It is therefore important to teach pupils about puberty *before* it happens. **Q. If my child has sex education, won't it result in them becoming sexually active at a young age?** All the worldwide research shows that young people are much less likely to put themselves at risk through early sexual experimentation if they have received good relationship and sex education. **(Kirby 2007, UNESCO 2009, NICE 2010)** **In primary schools, how a baby is conceived and born is recommended by the DfE to be taught in Years 5 and 6. However, parents have the right to withdraw their child as these lessons will be in the non-statutory part of the curriculum.**

CONTENT & RESOURCES	The LBTH position with regards to LGBT content, in the context of different types of families, and naming of the scientific body parts has been very carefully considered. With due regard to all relevant evidence, LBTH is recommending that all Tower Hamlets primary schools place LGBT content, in the context of different types of families, and the naming of the sexual body parts into the statutory part of the curriculum in Key Stage 1 (by the end of Year 2).
4. LGBT	**Q. What will pupils be taught about LGBT relationships in primary schools?** Pupils will be taught that there are many different types of families and that all are equally important e.g. a family where the child is being brought up by grandparents, a single parent family, a family with same sex parents and a family with adopted parents. Children will also be given a brief description of what a lesbian is, "a woman who loves another woman" and what a gay man is, "a man who loves another man." **Q. What does the statutory guidance say about LGBT content?** The statutory guidance states that pupils should be taught about LGBT relationships in a sensitive and age appropriate way. The guidance states that children should know that marriage (which in law is available to both opposite sex and same sex couples) represents a formal and legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong'. It also states that children should be aware of how families can look different 'but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care.' **Q. I believe that a family should be a man and a woman. How does this match up with what is taught in schools?** Schools will teach that families are made up of many different forms and can include, for example: single parent families, LGBT parents, families with grandparents, extended families, adoptive parents and foster parents/carers. The most important element of any family is that it provides a loving, stable and nurturing environment for children. **Q. DfE guidance says to talk about marriage and different families. Can't that be done without exposing vulnerable**

	children to LGBT? In line with the DfE, LBTH advises schools to teach pupils about a variety of different relationships, in the context of different families, all of which are equally valued and respected. Under the provisions of the Equality Act, schools must not unlawfully discriminate against people because of their age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation, which are all considered to be Protective Characteristics. To undermine the rights of one of these Protective Characteristics is to undermine the rights of everyone. Relationships Education nurtures tolerance, encouraging children to grow up to be respectful of others. **Q. Why does my child have to know about homosexuality?** Relationships Education prepares children for the world they are growing up in and it is important to teach respect for all other people. This includes respecting people from other religions, ethnic backgrounds or sexual orientations. LBTH is committed to protecting children and families against discrimination, whether knowing or unintentional. This includes discrimination against people's religion, culture or sexuality, to name just a few of the Protected Characteristics in the Equality Act. The statutory guidance strongly encourages and enables schools to teach LGBT content, in the context of different types of families **Q. Surely learning about homosexuality and transgender issues is going to encourage my child to consider this as an option for themselves.** Raising awareness around LGBT issues does not encourage or teach children to become homosexual or transgender. It does however teach tolerance and respect for others. **Q. You say all protected characteristics should be treated equally so why are you are valuing LGBT over faith?** There are nine Protected Characteristics in the Equality Act (2010). All Protected Characteristics are equal and the Equality Act makes clear that no single characteristic is more important than any other. Both religion and sexuality are equally important and LBTH is committed to tackling discrimination against either.

Q. Will all other subjects now start using examples of LGBT? (Eg: maths problem solving questions with 2 mums?)

Schools, working with their Governing Body, will decide the best and most sensitive and age appropriate way to teach pupils. Schools are best placed to decide cross curricular and how to provide a fully integrated education for their pupils.

Q. How can we as parents be sure that the teaching of LGBT issues doesn't become disproportionate?

In primary schools LBTH is recommending that LGBT relationships are taught in the context of same sex families in Key Stage 1. These are very straight forward lessons in the context of a range of different families and are normally only a small part of the curriculum.

Q. How do schools handle a situation where an LGBT family attends the school?

Pupils from a LGBT family would be treated in exactly the same way as a child from any other family

Further information

Public Health England have stated the following:

"We know that LGBT people are at higher risk of suicidal behaviour, mental disorder and substance misuse and dependence than heterosexual people. This gap is even greater for ethnic minority LGBT people and those with disabilities. The most reliable indicators of suicide risk are self-harm, suicidal thoughts and prior suicide attempts. Self-harm remains one of the leading causes of acute medical admissions in the UK, with some of the highest in Europe. Among LGBT youth in the UK, one in two reported self-harming at some point in their life and 44% reported having thought about suicide. These are all young people at risk. LGBT young people are at greater risk for depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation compared with young people in general. 'Ideation' can range from having fleeting thoughts to serious obsession, role playing or actual suicide attempts. This is often because of homophobia at home or in school. A British survey in 2012 found 99% of the LGBT youth surveyed had heard the term 'gay' being used in a derogatory way or heard other homophobic

	language. Within the same survey, 55% reported homophobic bullying. Of those who had been bullied, 44% reported deliberately missing school as a consequence." **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-suicide-lesbian-gay-and-bisexual-young-people** **The DfE FAQ's state:** ***"Will my child be taught about LGBT relationships?*** *Pupils should be taught about the society in which they are growing up. These subjects are designed to foster respect for others and for difference, and educate pupils about healthy relationships.* *Pupils should receive teaching on LGBT content during their school years. Teaching children about the society that we live in and the different types of loving, healthy relationships that exist can be done in a way that respects everyone. Primary schools are strongly encouraged and enabled to cover LGBT content when teaching about different types of families. Secondary schools should cover LGBT content in their RSE teaching. RSE should meet the needs of all pupils, whatever their developing sexuality or identity – this should include age-appropriate teaching about different types of relationships in the context of the law."* **https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-faqs**
5. GENDER STEREOTYPES	**Q. What if my child comes home and says Mum, I want to be a girl or a boy and don't want to be what I am? What will the school do?** Boys and girls are taught about gender stereotypes in school and all pupils are encouraged to take part in all activities, whatever their gender. Some young children may play dressing up games or role-play different jobs as part of imaginative play. As a separate issue, if a child strongly identifies as the opposite gender and it causes them or their parents' distress, then

	parents are encouraged to discuss this further with the school, who can support them via a professional referral. Schools have a legal duty to ensure that all pupils are respected, kept safe and thrive at school as part of the Equality Act. **The DfE Guidance states:** *"31. Schools should be alive to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes and take positive action to build a culture where these are not tolerated, and any occurrences are identified and tackled. Staff have an important role to play in modelling positive behaviours. School pastoral and behaviour policies should support all pupils."* **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers (2019) – pg14.**
6. MASTURBATION	**Q. Will children learn about masturbation?** Primary schools in Tower Hamlets will be advised not to teach pupils about masturbation as part of the statutory/compulsory curriculum. This means that if any schools choose to include this, it will be part of sex education and parents will be able to exercise their right of withdrawal.
7. SEXUAL BODY PARTS	The LBTH position with regards to the naming of the scientific body parts has been very carefully considered. With due regard to all relevant evidence and the statutory guidance, LBTH is recommending that all Tower Hamlets primary schools place the naming of the sexual body parts into the statutory part of the curriculum in Key Stage 1. **Q. Why do young children need to be taught the scientific names of the body parts?** LBTH advises primary schools to teach the correct scientific names of the sexual body parts in Key Stage 1. This is so pupils can report abuse if it happens or so that they can accurately report medical symptoms if they are unwell. The

	following words are recommended to be taught in Key Stage 1: • Penis • Vulva • Breast / nipples • Anus / bottom • Testicles • Vagina Pupils will also be taught about stable, caring, healthy family life and friendships and how to recognise if or when relationships are making them unhappy or unsafe. Lessons will cover staying safe both online and offline, how to identify risks online, harmful online content and contact and how to report it. Pupils will also learn how to seek help and advice from others. **The DfE Guidance states:** *"66. The content set out in this guidance covers everything that primary schools should teach about relationships and health, including puberty. The national curriculum for science also includes subject content in related areas, such as the main external body parts, the human body as it grows from birth to old age (including puberty) and reproduction in some plants and animals. It will be for primary schools to determine whether they need to cover any additional content on sex education to meet the needs of their pupils. Many primary schools already choose to teach some aspects of sex education and will continue to do so, although it is not a requirement."* **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers (2019) – Pg. 23** *106. "At key stages 1 and 2, the national curriculum for science includes teaching about the main external parts of the body and changes to the human body as it grows from birth to old age, including puberty."*

	Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers (2019) – Pg. 39
8. INTERNET SAFETY	**Q. How will teaching about RSE keep my child safe on the internet?** The LBTH and schools have a legal obligation to safeguard pupils and to try and ensure their safety, both online and offline. This can include protecting pupils from grooming, abuse, bullying, extremist views and pornography. Pupils in primary school will learn about cyberbullying, the rules and principles of staying safe online, how to recognise risks, harmful content and how to report any concerns. **The DfE Guidance states:** *"58. The principles of positive relationships also apply online especially as, by the end of primary school, many children will already be using the internet. When teaching relationships content, teachers should address online safety and appropriate behaviour in a way that is relevant to pupils' lives. Teachers should include content on how information and data is shared and used in all contexts, including online; for example, sharing pictures, understanding that many websites are businesses and how sites may use information provided by users in ways they might not expect."* **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers (2019) – Pg19**
9. DIFFERENT TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS	**Q. Are you trying to promote particular types of relationships?** In line with the DfE, LBTH advises schools to teach pupils about a variety of different relationships in the context of different families, all of which are equally valued and respected. **The DfE FAQ's state:**

	"Will my child be taught about LGBT relationships? *Pupils should be taught about the society in which they are growing up. These subjects are designed to foster respect for others and for difference, and educate pupils about healthy relationships.* *Pupils should receive teaching on LGBT content during their school years. Teaching children about the society that we live in and the different types of loving, healthy relationships that exist can be done in a way that respects everyone. Primary schools are strongly encouraged and enabled to cover LGBT content when teaching about different types of families. Secondary schools should cover LGBT content in their RSE teaching. RSE should meet the needs of all pupils, whatever their developing sexuality or identity – this should include age-appropriate teaching about different types of relationships in the context of the law."* **https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-faqs**
10. RESOURCES	**Q. What teaching resources will schools use?** Schools decide which resources they will use. LBTH encourages schools to use diagrams, rather than pictures, and where appropriate and possible to teach single sex lessons and to arrange information meetings to show parents lesson plans and resources.
11. AGE APPROPRIATE	**Q. How do you decide what is appropriate for each age group and based on what facts?** LBTH is advising schools on how best to implement the statutory guidance from the DfE Guidance and what the best ages are to teach certain topics. Schools will use their professional judgement and consult with their Governing Body on the teaching of RSE in their school. Schools are very mindful about teaching in a culturally sensitive and age appropriate manner. LBTH recommends that children are taught in Key Stage 1 about naming of the sexual body parts, as a safeguarding issue. The more children are able to name the sexual body parts and to know about appropriate and

	inappropriate touch, the more they are protected from abuse. LBTH also recommends teaching about LGBT relationships, in the context of different types of families, in order that children coming from same sex families feel welcomed and included in school, from the very beginning of their school career, in Key Stage 1. It is also important in terms of tackling homophobic behaviour and bullying and demonstrates LBTH's commitment to equalities, as outlined in the Equality Act. LBTH also recommends that lessons about puberty begin in Year 4, to prepare children for puberty and menstruation for girls, before it occurs. The Department for Education, Schools and the LBTH are all very mindful of the need for good, age appropriate Relationship and Sex Education and it is very much hoped that we can all work together, with parents, to deliver this for children and young people in a sustained, supportive and professional manner.

PARENTS	
12. PARENTAL WITHDRAWAL	**Q. Can I withdraw my child from Relationships Education, Health Education or Science in Primary School?** There is no right to withdraw from Relationships Education as the Department of Education has said these topics are compulsory. There is also no right to withdraw from Health Education or National Curriculum Science, which covers lessons on puberty and menstruation. However, parents can withdraw from some topics taught outside of these areas and which are purely to do with sex education, for example how a baby is conceived and born.
13. ROLE OF PARENTS	**Q. Can I tell my child's school that I don't want these subjects taught?** Parents will not be able to veto the curriculum content; it has been made clear by the Government that relationships education

	is compulsory and required by law. The DfE FAQ's website states the following: *"Schools will be required to consult with parents when developing and reviewing their policies for Relationships Education and RSE, which will inform schools' decisions on when and how certain content is covered. Effective engagement gives the space and time for parents to input, ask questions, share concerns and for the school to decide the way forward. Schools will listen to parents' views, and then make a reasonable decision as to how they wish to proceed. When and how content is taught is ultimately a decision for the school, and consultation does not provide a parental veto on curriculum content.* *A school's policies for these subjects must be published online, and must be available to any individual free of charge. Schools should also ensure that, when they engage parents, they provide examples of the resources they plan to use, for example the books they will use in lessons."* **Q: Will schools involve me in my child's education in these topics?** Schools are advised and encouraged to hold parent meetings where they can discuss the lessons and share the resources which are to be used. Schools are advised to hold these parent meetings in year groups so parents are clear what their child will be taught, ahead of the lessons starting. This will enable schools and parents to work together in a mutually supportive fashion.
14. FAITH	**Q. Faith is a protected characteristic under The Equality Act. Tower Hamlets has a large Muslim population, why is our faith not being respected?** LBTH schools follow the DfE RSE Statutory Guidance. In line with the Guidance, LBTH wants to ensure that every child is valued, treated equally, equipped with an age appropriate understanding of the world and the knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe. The Equality Act 2010 states that both religion and sexuality are protected characteristics. **Q. How is RSE going to be taught in a culturally sensitive way in Tower Hamlets?** Schools will be advised that where appropriate and, if possible, to sometimes teach single sex RSE sessions, to use diagrams

	rather than photos and to use quality assured resources.
15. PREVENT	**Q. Will my child be referred to Prevent if I don't agree with teaching LGBT relationships or other aspects of the curriculum?** Prevent deals with anti-terrorism issues. It is not there to investigate children and young people who express views which are nothing to do with terrorism related issues. Views of parents and pupils regarding faith and values on sexuality are not viewed as religious extremism.

SCHOOLS	
17. WHOLE SCHOOL	**Q. Is Relationships and Sex Education linked to anything else taught in school?** **DfE RSE Guidance states:** *"112. All of these subjects should be set in the context of a wider whole-school approach to supporting pupils to be safe, happy and prepared for life beyond school. For example, the curriculum on relationships and on sex should complement, and be supported by, the school's wider policies on behaviour, inclusion, respect for equality and diversity, bullying and safeguarding (including handling of any reports pupils may make as a result of the subject content). The subjects will sit within the context of a school's broader ethos and approach to developing pupils socially, morally, spiritually and culturally; and its pastoral care system. This is also the case for teaching about mental health within health education. The curriculum on health education should similarly complement, and be supported by, the school's wider education on healthy lifestyles through physical education, food technology, science, sport, extra-curricular activity and school food.*

	113. Schools should consider how their teaching can help support the development of important attributes in pupils, such as honesty, kindness, tolerance, courtesy, resilience and self-efficacy, as well as how those attributes are also developed by other aspects of the school's provision. The curriculum should proactively address issues in a timely way in line with current evidence on children's physical, emotional and sexual development. This should be in line with pupil need, informed by pupil voice and participation in curriculum development and in response to issues as they arise in the school and wider community." **Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers (2019) – Pg. 40**
18. SCHOOL STAFF	**Q. Are teachers confident to teach these subjects?** LBTH is providing comprehensive training for primary and secondary school staff, briefings for Headteachers and support for governors so that teachers are enabled to teach these topics confidently.
22. TIMELINE	**Refer to LBTH Timeline Document**

Further Information	**DfE FAQ's states:** ***"Where can I find out more information about that will be taught in my child's school?*** *If you want to know more about what will be taught as part of the new subjects, the best thing to do is speak to your child's school. We have also published parent guides, which explain what the subjects are, and parents' rights.* *These subjects are designed to equip your child with knowledge to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships as well as preparing them for a successful adult life. The important lessons you teach your child about healthy relationships, looking after themselves and staying safe, are respected and valued under this new curriculum.*

	Teaching at school will complement and reinforce the lessons you teach your child as they grow up. Your child's school will have flexibility to deliver the content in a way that is age and developmentally appropriate and sensitive to the needs and religious background of its pupils." **https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-faqs**