

# Promoting Positive Relationships and Sex Education with Boys and Young Men

## Sexual Health Services

Portsmouth, Southampton, Hampshire and Isle of Wight



## During this webinar we will be exploring and discussing:

- Some of the issues and influences, when working with Boys and Young Men
- Encouraging positive attitudes towards them maintaining 'good sexual health'
- Ways to support the reduction of potentially 'toxic' behaviours
- Encouraging participants to look at developing their own practice, within this area of work

# What's So Different About Boys and Young Men?

## *“Boys will be Boys”*

- Boys and young men are a ‘difficult’ group to teach
- RSE needs marginalised in school (especially if LGBTQ+)
- Traditionally RSE focussed on girls and contraception
- Often blamed for causing problems
- Image of boys and young men can be seen as irresponsible
- Don't think about prevention
- Boys and young men learn not to ask for help or seek advice
- They have difficulty admitting they don't know



# Societal and Cultural Influences

**“There is a pressure everywhere to tell you what man you should be.”**

**“How does society let men act? Because of society, the pathologies and powers that exist, men can only act a certain way. If you do not fit into the box, you are not labelled as a male or one of the many labels that we have talked about.”**

*(Focus Group Participant, London, UK Focus Group Participant, Washington, DC, US)*



# Societal and Cultural Influences

For boys and young men, the impact of gender norms on their attitudes and behaviours is evident as they develop and begins from a very early age. The Fawcett Society Commission on Gender Stereotypes in Early Childhood has highlighted that when children are born, they are unaware of gendered expectations and attitudes  
(Culhane and Bazeley, 2019)

However, by the age of two most children are conscious of the social relevance of gender (Martin and Ruble, 2004), and by the time children reach the end of primary school, they have already developed a clear sense of what is expected of boys and girls and how they are supposed to behave  
(Bian and Cimpian, 2017)



# Gender Norms

Gender norms are cultural and social expectations of behaviour/characteristics of defined roles for girls, boys, men and women

## Definition

**The European Institute for Gender Equality definition;**

**“Gender norms are ideas about how women and men should be and act.**

**Internalised early in life, gender norms can establish a life cycle of gender socialisation and stereotyping”**

## Examples/stereotypes

**Women are passive  
Women are weak  
Women are followers  
Women are emotional**

**Men are defenders  
Men are the breadwinners  
Men are leaders  
Men are strong/brave**





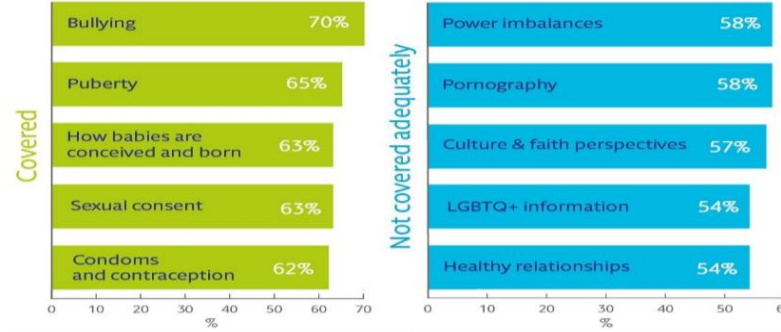
Audio Description: Have a word

# Young People's RSE Poll 2022



“  
Young people know what's needed to mend broken promises on RSE, who will listen?  
”

Topics required by the RSE guidance are often absent from the curriculum



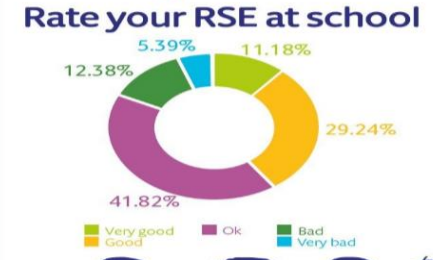
A Poll of **1002** young people

Fieldwork took place between  
02.12.2022  
13.12.2022

Aged 16 & 17 yrs in England

**35%** of young people would have liked more open discussions

**32%** of respondents felt 'My school asked me for my opinions about RSE'



**40%** of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as 'good' or 'very good'

**18%** of respondents rate the quality of their school RSE as 'bad' or 'very bad'

“  
Discussions should be frequent, not just something we speak about once and then push to the side.  
”

“  
Allow lessons where questions are asked and answered and to gather student perspectives.  
”



Pupils are divided on whether or not enough time is allocated

[Young Peoples RSE Poll 2022 - Report.pdf](#)  
([sexeducationforum.org.uk](http://sexeducationforum.org.uk))



# Missing Topics from the 2022 Poll

## Covered Well:

- Bullying
- Puberty
- How babies are conceived & born
- Sexual consent
- Condoms & contraception

## Not Covered Adequately:

- Power imbalance
- Pornography
- Culture & Faith perspectives
- LGBTQ+ information
- Healthy relationships

# Psychosexual Therapy Perspectives

Young boys and men presenting in Psychosexual Therapy with sexual dysfunctions such as rapid ejaculation, erectile dysfunction, delayed ejaculation and loss of desire.

**Why?** (Once medical, pharmacology reasons ruled out or managed)

- Low self esteem
- Unrealistic expectations of self and sexual experience
- Fear of mockery/negative 'report'
- Performance Anxiety
- Relationships Problems
- Fearing their sexual partner will think it's their fault
- Mental Health
- Stress and Anxiety

Psychoeducation, normalising sexual difficulties and discussing realistic expectations can really help boys and young men to have a better understanding and a more positive outlook on their sexual issues and goes a long way to resolving or managing them.

# Real Voices

I will talk to my mum but she has to ask me a few times before I can speak about stuff. I don't find it easy to go to her and say I need something

I talk to my friends but we wouldn't talk about 'soppy stuff'

Everyone is always joking at work and a lot of the time I get picked on as the youngest but sometimes it gets to me and its not funny. Then I keep it all in and end up in a bad mood at home. I cant say anything because that would make it worse



Porn definitely puts more expectation on you to be able to perform like a machine

We broke up and I told everyone it was mutual but I was really gutted. Since then I have just been sleeping with people for the sake of it but I don't actually think I want to have sex with those girls. I have stopped wanting sex. I think there is something wrong with me

I got a bad dick report once so now I take Viagra to avoid that happening again but I don't think I have ED [erectile dysfunction]

I feel alone in my anxieties about performance, with male society so drenched in male bravado, no one chats about this honestly

After we slept together she posted that she had 'trash dick'. I was shaking. It really messed me up

# Research on Porn Exposure

- Children as young as 6 are encountering pornography
- Exposure to porn is frequent in those aged 9-11
- Porn addiction is impacting pre-teens
- Teenagers are learning more from pornography than sex education classes
- Pornography is being used by young people to fill in the gaps in their sex education
- Pornography is confusing the issue of consent
- Pornography use does not always conform to gender stereotypes (i.e., only boys get hooked on porn)
- Porn is the first introduction to sex for many young people
- Porn is stopping young people from connecting in the real world
- Very little is known about the effect pornography is having on young people

Pornography is two clicks away, it's whatever you want whenever you want and it can be done without anybody else



## Key Findings:

- **The Government has updated the statutory Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance to include tackling peer-on-peer sexual harassment and sexual violence.**
- **A lack of compulsory RSHE for young people until they are 18 leaves young people making their first steps in the adult world under-supported and less equipped to navigate potentially harmful and dangerous situations and keep themselves safe and healthy in relationships.**
- **Engagement with boys and young men is crucial for tackling sexual harassment and sexual violence in educational settings.**
- **To develop a specific strategy for engaging with boys and young men in primary and secondary schools on the topics of sexual harassment and gender-based violence.**

## 2023 Women and Equalities Committee report on attitudes towards women and girls in educational settings – The Strategy

**Time critical - by the end of 2023**

- **Design and deliver an RSHE curriculum that places a greater focus on boys and young men**
- **Access learning materials covering gender norms and gender equality**
- **Provide support for students who experience all types of harmful sexual behaviour to come forward without fear of invalidation**
- **A safe, non-judgmental space for students who are responsible for ‘low level’ behaviours to reflect on and talk about their behaviour**
- **Train all teachers how to engage with boys and young men in conversations that challenge prevailing gender norms, ideas of masculinity, and attitudes towards women and girls.**
- **Teachers modelling the respectful behaviour they want children to emulate**

- **Girls are asked disproportionately to boys to send nude images**
- **Girls feeling much more pressure to send nudes and boys overestimating the extent to which girls wanted to receive such images**
- **Not always down to bad intent on behalf of boys but in some cases due to a misunderstanding that needs to be addressed through education**
- **Both boys and girls believed that girls whose nude images were ‘leaked’ beyond their original recipient were more likely to be ‘shamed’ than boys who this happened to. Whereas boys may gain some social status**

[Research report link](#)



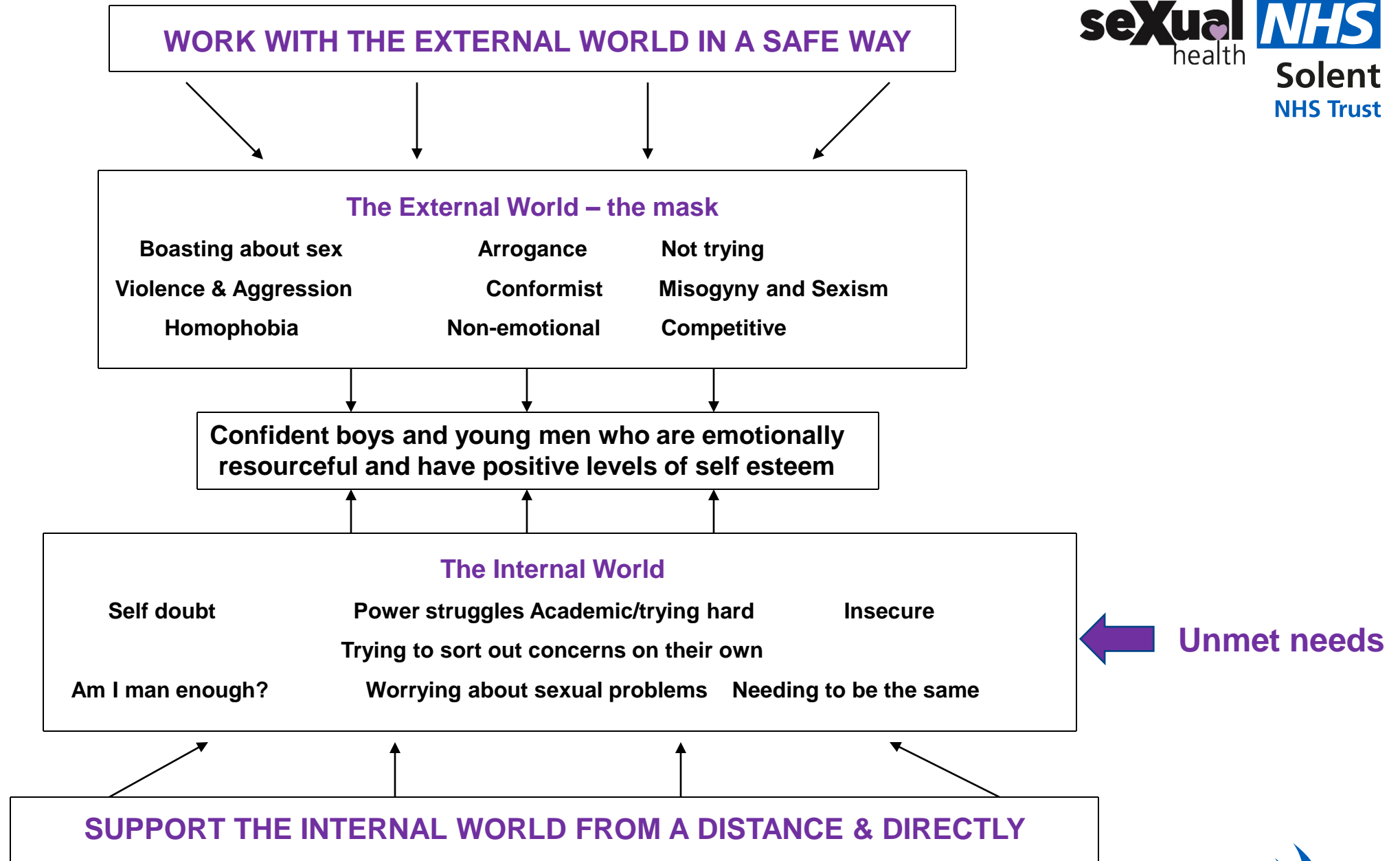
# Engaging with Men and Boys - Communication

- **Safe spaces:** Importance of face-to-face, one-to-one and small group discussions with men and boys which provide a space for reflection on masculine norms
- **Appropriate language & challenging, modelling:** Value of skilled facilitation and trusted professional relationships (involving both men and women where possible and appropriate). This should include listening carefully, respectfully and non-judgmentally to what men and boys have to say, drawing on shared experiences
- **Engagement:** Humour has been identified as a good engagement mechanism
- **Show what's possible/healthy:** Through role models in men and boys' lives questioning dominant and harmful gender norms - and the modelling of this behaviour in society more broadly

## Engaging with Men and Boys (*continued*)

- **Normalisation:** Vital role of schools in challenging gender norms - including in “everyday teaching, conversations with individuals, PSHE lessons and themes in assemblies”
- **Positive opportunities:** Targeting informal settings in which boys and men are likely to socialise (e.g. sports teams) and spaces in which they feel safe, including through the development of support groups for men and boys
- **Creating new possibilities, support:** Potential benefits that having peer-based discussions about these issues can have, to show that men and boys are not alone in their struggles
- **Representation:** Potential role that social media, gaming platforms etc. could play in challenging harmful norms among young men and boys





# Talking To Boys and Men About Sex

- **Share experiences/stories of positive & healthy relationships involving good male role models**
- **Signposting and access to safe spaces/appropriate services**
- **Inclusive Relationship and Sex Education**
- **Importance of communication and negotiation – to help improve relationships/healthy/happy sex lives**
- **Rights, responsibilities & standard setting – confidence and myth busting around condom use/STI testing**
- **Normalise accessing services, asking questions and seeking support/help**

# Talking To Boys and Men About Sex

- **Model language, behaviours, empowerment of voice, choice, responsibility, that consent is for them too**
- **Working together to challenge misconceptions and stereotypes, address insecurities**
- **Accept feelings/emotions, frustration, rejection, heartbreak etc, skills to deal with these in a healthy way**
- **Vulnerability and intimacy can go hand in hand- it's okay to be and show vulnerability in relationships**
- **Most men are good people, celebrate the positives and educate in empowering ways**

[Split Banana blog](#)



# How to Be a Man – BISH UK



[How to be a man video guide](#)

# Kenergy

"Kenergy symbolizes a more fluid, less restrictive expression of masculinity."  
(Spencer-Thomas, Man Therapy)



Ken, in the Barbie film being visual representation of men breaking free of societal expectations and not being afraid to express their emotions and vulnerability, building richer connections with peers, friends, family and in romantic relationships. Challenging traditional, old-school ideas about masculinity and learning self-acceptance and self care.



[Mens Health Online](#)

[Psychology Today](#)

[How Ken in 'Barbie' - Inspiring a male mental health movement](#)



# Sexual Health Promotion Team

**Community and Networking Lead**

[Laura Davies](#)

**Basingstoke, Farnborough, Aldershot & Alton**

[Natalie D'Anna-Brown](#)

**Andover, Eastleigh, Winchester**

[Vicky Rodd](#)

**Southampton & New Forest**

[Lucy Blake](#)

**Isle of Wight**

[Anna Murray](#)

**Portsmouth, Fareham & Gosport**

[Gordon Atkins](#)

**Petersfield, Liss, Bordon, Havant & Alton**

[Claire Wells](#)





# Resources

- [BISH-RSE and Young Men](#)
- [BISH-How to be a man](#)
- [BISH-Relationships](#)
- [BISH-RSE Resources shop](#)
- [The Video Guide to Being a Man - BISH \(bishuk.com\)](#)
- [Bold Voices-Gender Inequality](#)
- [Digital Parenting-Positive Masculinity-Best online role models](#)
- [Video: Chunkz and Yinka talk Nude Pics](#)
- [Tony Porter- Man box- A call to men video](#)
- [ScrewBall Video- 2 young people navigating first time](#)
- [Say Maaate to a Mate | London City Hall](#)
- [TV, Videos & Podcasts - Lifting Limits](#)

## Resources

- [Countering online misogyny in the classroom – Brook](#)
- [We need better Relationships and Sex Education in schools – Brook](#)
- [Gender Stereotypes | Outspoken Sex Ed \(outspokeneducation.com\)](#)
- [The Good Men Project - The Conversation No One Else Is Having](#)
- [Guide for families - Lifting Limits](#)
- [Resources for schools and families - Lifting Limits](#)
- [Resources from other organisations - Lifting Limits](#)
- [Having positive conversations with kids about sex \(Outspoken / Speak Out series\)](#)
- [3-minute speech: tackling male violence | Outspoken Sex Ed \(outspokeneducation.com\)](#)
- [Whole-school approach to sexual violence check list](#)
- [Useful resources for schools on RSE, Sexual violence & trauma informed practice](#)
- [YP resource- tips for digital self-care](#)

# Thank You All !



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