

# FORUM FACTSHEET 8

## Guidelines on the effective use of outside visitors in school sex education

Many schools are responding to encouragement given in DFE Circular 5/94 to draw upon help and guidance from other sources in their sex education programme. This help may include using outside visitors. This factsheet provides guidelines and checklists to help teachers and visitors negotiate an effective contribution to school sex education. The process described may well be relevant to other areas of the curriculum and could, for example, be used when negotiating a visit regarding drugs education.

### Who is a visitor?

A visitor is any person who comes into a school to take part in the delivery of sex education. Individual visitors such as the school nurse, a family planning nurse, a youth worker or a representative of a sanitary protection company may have specialist knowledge or skills. Another type of visitor is someone who may have a personal experience to share, such as a parent talking about having and looking after a baby, or someone talking about their experience of living with HIV.

### What are the benefits of using visitors in school sex education?

Visitors are appreciated by pupils and teachers. A visitor can:

- bring a new perspective to a subject;
- offer specialised knowledge, experience and resources;
- make the topic less embarrassing because the visitor is a 'safe stranger';
- form a friendly link to the community and make local services more accessible;
- add variety to the curriculum;
- give support to teachers.

### What is good practice in sex education?

A visit should always complement the current programme and should never substitute or replace teacher-led sex education. Sex education should have clear aims, guided by curriculum orders and be based on young people's needs. It should be delivered within the framework of a sex education policy.

Each unit of work or series of lessons in a sex education programme should include three basic elements:

- *The acquisition of knowledge.* This may be achieved by giving a brief presentation, using quizzes/worksheets and reading leaflets.
- *The exploration and clarification of values and attitudes.* This enables pupils to apply their learning to their own lives and circumstances and can be achieved by using role play, discussion, case study work, and circle time;
- *The development and practice of social skills.* This requires active pupil participation such as role play, simulation games, communication exercises in pairs or small groups. Active learning methods that involve pupils in their own learning are the most effective. All teaching must be done in a way which protects the confidentiality of staff, visitors, pupils and families.

### Some legal issues

Both visitors and teachers should know the basic legal framework for school sex education.

### Policy and background

- Schools are required by Section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988 to develop a school curriculum which:
  - a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and of society; and
  - b) prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.
- Section 24 of the Education Act 1993 develops this by requiring: schools to 'take such steps as are reasonably practical to ensure that sex education be provided in a manner which encourages regard to moral considerations and the value of family life.'
- All county controlled and maintained schools, including special schools, must produce a written sex education policy which

describes the content taught, the way in which it is taught, the resources used, the values framework in which it is taught and who will teach it. The governing body is responsible for the development and review of the policy and governors are expected to work and negotiate with teachers, parents, pupils and those involved in the wider school community.

- All schools are required to have a child protection policy and to work with other professionals in the wider community to protect children from physical and sexual abuse.
- DFE Circular 5/94 suggests that governors should also have a policy – informed by consultation with parents – on whether and how to use outside speakers on particular topics. 'That policy should include the steps to be taken to ensure that any contributions by such speakers are consistent with the governor's overall policy, with statutory requirements and with good educational practice. It should cover the degree of explicitness of content and presentation, and arrangements for the presence or intervention of teachers as appropriate.'
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from any sex education taught outside of the National Curriculum.
- At secondary level schools are required to provide additional sex education outside of the National Curriculum which must include HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.
- At primary level the governing body must decide whether to provide additional sex education beyond that provided by the National Curriculum.
- Special schools are required to deliver sex education and develop policy as outlined above. In all-age special schools separate arrangements will need to be made for primary and secondary age pupils.

### Classroom practice

- Some sexual and reproductive biology is covered in National Curriculum Science and is mandatory for all pupils.
- Whether or not a teacher stays in the classroom, he or she is still responsible for pupils during the visit. Schools will need to know what a visitor will offer in the classroom, and the teacher will want to be in the classroom or nearby. Many schools have found a team teaching approach helpful. This means the visitor feels supported and can still have access to the pupils in small groups.

### Lesbian, gay and bisexual issues

- There is no legal restriction on teaching about lesbian and gay issues in the classroom. Circular 5/94 confirmed the guidance offered by the Department of Environment in Circular 12/88 which states: 'responsibility for sex education continues to rest with school governing bodies by virtue of Section 18 of The Education (No 2) Act 1986. Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 does not affect the activities of school governors, nor of teachers. It will not prevent the objective discussion of homosexuality in the classroom, nor the counselling of pupils concerned about their sexuality'.

### Confidentiality issues

- Teachers are not bound by law to either maintain or break confidentiality with a pupil. They are advised to comply with school policy and/or the head teacher's instruction, and to use their professional judgement. It is considered to be good practice:
  - for schools to develop an agreed policy on confidentiality;
  - to ensure that all staff, pupils and their parents understand the policy;
  - to not promise a pupil absolute confidentiality;
  - to not break a pupil's confidence without first informing him or her;
  - to ensure that a pupil does not have to repeat a disclosure and thus cause unnecessary distress.

### Professional guidelines

Nurses, doctors and counsellors work within professional guidelines when working individually and more personally with a patient or client. It is generally agreed that a visitor to a classroom should work within the school sex education policy regarding confidentiality but should work within their own professional guidelines when working individually with pupils. Visitors or visiting organisations may want to negotiate alternative arrangements directly with the school.

### Checklist for teachers organising an effective visit

You should know, and understand, your school's sex education policy, especially how it

relates to visitors. If the policy does not adequately clarify the procedure for using a visitor, agree a procedure with your PSE Coordinator and suggest a review of the policy.

Before making contact a teacher should consider:

- Why do we, or the pupils, need a visitor?
- What are the aims of the visit? How do these fit within the school's overall sex education programme and the young people's needs?
- Will the visitor require a fee or expenses?
- What type of person/experience/professional background is wanted, and where can we find the right person? (The local health education coordinator, PSE advisor, school nurse or Health Promotion Unit may be able to suggest organisations or individuals).
- How do we involve pupils in planning the visit, welcoming the visitor and evaluating the session?
- What questions will I need to ask the visitor?
- What joint planning session will be needed?

### Checklist for the visitor

Some organisations, as a matter of good practice, have developed guidelines or a policy for working in schools. These are made available to teachers, governors, pupils and parents. Giving teachers your annual report or inviting them to your organisation has also proved helpful.

Some experienced visitors may be able to take on complete responsibility for organising and running a classroom learning activity and maintaining discipline. Don't worry if as a visitor you feel unable to do this – you can still support the teacher by answering questions, sharing an experience or demonstrating something. Before making contact with a teacher a visitor should consider:

- Why am I visiting this school?
- What role will I, or am I able to play in the classroom?
  - Do I have the skills to take a teaching role in the classroom?
  - Do I want to act as a resource or support to the teacher? If so how will I ensure that the teacher will take responsibility for facilitating the pupils' learning and maintaining classroom control?
- Can I work within the school's values framework?
- What joint planning session will be needed?

### Some questions and answers

*The girls love having the 'tampon lady', think she's really funny and like the free samples. I am worried that some of her values are different from the school's. We try to respect all the individual pupils here so I feel uncomfortable when she says 'All modern women use tampons nowadays.' What shall I do? (Teacher)*

You could explain to the visitor that the school sex education policy requires the session to cover all forms of sanitary protection in an objective way. You could use the checklist and clarify what values you want to encourage and foster, as described in the school's values framework, the equal opportunities policy and the sex education policy. Can she work within them? Is there a way you and she could work together on one or two sessions to test out a different approach? If you can't solve this problem by negotiating and working together, then you should consider not using the 'tampon lady' any more.

*The school nurse says that she must work within UKCC guidelines which require her to uphold the confidentiality of young people at all times. What shall I do? (Teacher)*

When working with a pupil individually for instance in a drop-in health session, a school nurse can give personal and confidential advice and work within her professional guidelines. However, when she is delivering sex education in the classroom she must work within the sex education policy of the school. This policy should include guidelines on confidentiality. Ensure that both the school nurse and the pupils understand this policy.

Sex education should be delivered in the classroom in a way that protects confidentiality. Talk with the nurse about using distancing techniques: for instance, always asking the pupils to work with case studies rather than from their own experiences. This protects them from exposure to others and is a more appropriate method in the classroom. Make sure that pupils have access to information about confidential sexual health services in the community.

*I ran a session last week in a mixed Year 10 class on local sexual health services. Afterwards one of the pupils followed me to the car park. He told me he had seen me at a local gay pub, and that he is having his first relationship with another boy. He asked me whether I thought they should use condoms. Although I gave him safer sex information and advised where he could get further help, I felt worried and vulnerable. He is underage and I am gay. What should I have done? (Sexual health outreach worker)*

You were right to give him information on safer sex and local sexual health services. Despite your personal concerns you are in the same situation as the school nurse above. Individually you can give personal and confidential advice and work within your own professional guidelines, but you must work within the school's sex education policy when delivering sex education in the classroom. It is important that organisations sending staff into schools have clarified their policy on confidentiality and giving advice, and offer their staff clear guidelines.

*I have been asked to give a talk on contraception to half of Year 10 (about 60 pupils) at a local school. I have wanted to work in this school for ages, because we see a lot of pregnancies among their pupils. I only ever work with small groups and I do not feel I can do the session properly with 60 young people. What shall I do? (Family planning nurse)*

Check with the teacher or the PSE coordinator what they want the pupils to learn from this session. Explain that it is more effective to work in smaller groups. If he or she still doesn't want to change the format, you could suggest breaking the group down into smaller ones and using some teachers as facilitators. Or you could ask some nursing colleagues to support you by facilitating a small group. Alternatively, offer the teachers an INSET or twilight session (3.30 to 5.30pm) where you train them to undertake contraception education themselves in the classroom. If all else fails, you may have to make a hard decision. You could refuse the request, on the basis that working with 60 pupils does not enable you to deliver an appropriate standard of teaching. Or you could agree to do it, on the basis that you are willing to start from the level that the school is at, in the hope of then being able gradually to encourage them to change.

*I was doing a lesson on HIV for a Year 9 class and the teacher kept interrupting me. Unfortunately she gave the pupils some inaccurate information about how the virus is transmitted and quoted some misleading statistics. I tried not to contradict her too much but judging by the pupils' questions they were obviously confused and some of them became unnecessarily anxious. What should I do? (HIV outreach worker)*

There are two issues here. First, the lack of agreement as to who is running the session, and secondly, the inaccuracy of the teacher's information (though the two issues may be linked). If someone is very uncomfortable with something they may choose to believe misinformation which supports their discomfort or prejudice. However, in both cases, you will need to discuss the situation with the teacher. Share some of the literature and statistics on which you base your information, ensure that you agree beforehand who is running the session both in terms of methodology and classroom control. Be sure of the accuracy of your own information by checking it against well regarded research and statistics.

There is an advice section in *Sex Education Matters*, the quarterly magazine produced by the Sex Education Forum. Contact the Sex Education Forum if you have any further questions or need clarification on these issues.

## Further reading

*Good Practice in Sex Education: A sourcebook for schools* offers further advice and examples regarding the use of the wider community for sex education. It also includes guidance on good practice with regards to teaching methods; ensuring a safe environment for sex educa-

tion and teaching about sexuality. It is available from the Booksales Department at the National Children's Bureau, 8 Wakley St, London EC1V 7QE. *Good Practice in Sex Education: a sourcebook for schools* (1995) Ray, C. and Went, D. (eds.) National Children's Bureau. ISBN 1 874579 64 4 Tel: 0171 843 6028/29.

## Negotiation checklist for visitors and teachers

Once contact between the teacher and the visitor has been made they could use this checklist to clarify how they are going to work together. The visitor should be given a copy of the school sex education policy prior to the first meeting. Some visitors' organisations may have developed a schools' policy which should be given to the teacher before the meeting.

### Planning checklist

#### What are the aims/objectives of the session?

1/ \_\_\_\_\_  
 2/ \_\_\_\_\_  
 3/ \_\_\_\_\_  
 4/ \_\_\_\_\_  
 5/ \_\_\_\_\_

#### What have the pupils already done related to this topic?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

#### How will the visitor work within the school's values framework?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

#### What materials or resources will the visitor use or give to pupils?

(These should be viewed by the teacher beforehand.)

1/ \_\_\_\_\_  
 2/ \_\_\_\_\_  
 3/ \_\_\_\_\_  
 4/ \_\_\_\_\_

#### How will the session be followed up?

For pupils? \_\_\_\_\_

For teachers? \_\_\_\_\_

For the visitor? \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment:**  Fee **Date of session:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expenses \_\_\_\_\_

**Time of session:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Number of pupils:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Meeting point:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Classroom location:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### Room layout:

#### Equipment to be supplied:

- by the teacher: \_\_\_\_\_  
 - by the visitor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Classroom control:** who will be responsible for this? \_\_\_\_\_

## Record of visit

The success of any visit depends on careful planning and liaison between the visitor and the school. It is good practice to keep a record of each session, the activities used and the outcomes. The form below gives one suggested way of doing this. List each activity planned for the session, for example, brainstorm, quiz, or presentation. Record the estimated timings for each activity along with who will be responsible for each part of the session. Each session should be evaluated by both the teacher and the visitor. This evaluation is useful when planning future sessions.

### The session

Visitor/organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of session: \_\_\_\_\_

Year group: \_\_\_\_\_

Aims for the session (brief): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Activity	Time	Responsibility
1/		
2/		
3/		
4/		

### Visitor/teacher evaluation of the session\*

#### What went well?

1/ \_\_\_\_\_

2/ \_\_\_\_\_

3/ \_\_\_\_\_

4/ \_\_\_\_\_

What went less well? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

To what extent were the aims met? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How could we do it better next time? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\* This section could be adapted for use with pupils, for example: what did you learn from this session? What did you find least useful? How could the session be improved? Do you have any questions you would like answered as a result of this session? What further sessions would you like?

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