



Faculty of Public Health

of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom

Working to improve the public's health

Sexual Health Special Interest Group

Newsletter 2—July 2017

Welcome

Since our last newsletter, the Sexual Health SIG has had a change of chair. Patrick Saunders has stepped down after working hard to establish the SIG. Our new chair is Jackie Cassell.

Professor Jackie Cassell studied medical sciences and English literature at the University of Cambridge, before completing her medical degree at the University of Oxford. She worked as a junior doctor in North Wales and East London, then took a degree in philosophy at the University of Sussex while working part time as a family planning, sexually transmitted infections and blood transfusion doctor.

Having established her interest in sexual health and infectious diseases, Jackie trained as a specialist in genitourinary medicine (sexually transmitted infections and HIV) and in public health medicine. Alongside her higher medical training, she developed a programme of research in sexual health as a Wellcome Trust Health Services Research Training fellow at University College London. She was a member of Council at the University of Sussex 2010-2014, and in January 2014 took on the role of Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange for Brighton and Sussex Medical School.

We would like to thank Patrick for his hard work in establishing the SIG , and his continued input to our action plan.

We would always welcome new members, no matter your experience or expertise. Please feel free to contact us through the Faculty or my emailing our acting coordinator, Megan Harris at meganharris@nhs.net.

SIG Poster

The SIG has produced a poster which was accepted for the Faculty of Public Health's conference in Telford 20-21 June. We hope to be able to display the poster at conferences or seminars for information and to attract new members. If you are holding an event you think it would fit, please contact Megan Harris (meganharris@nhs.net) for details.



Sex and Relationship Education

Simon Walker, Public Health England

So it has happened. After years of lobbying and some lament, discussion and debate, came [The Children and Social Work Act](#) in April this year making Relationships Education in primary schools and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in secondary schools statutory. An amendment to Children and Social Work Bill introduced statutory RSE across all secondary schools in England, including academies and independent schools; and statutory relationships education across all primary schools in England. The same legislation also provides Government with the opportunity to introduce statutory Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) at a later date.

Faith schools will retain entitlement to teach these subjects according to the tenets of their faith, whilst remaining consistent with the requirements of the Equality Act. These schools will have scope to exercise flexibility over how to teach a topic, not whether to teach it. The Church of England and Catholic Education services have both supported statutory status. The parental right of withdrawal from lessons will remain in secondary school RSE, but there will be no right of withdrawal from relationships education lessons in primary schools. Consultation is due to be undertaken on the age at which a young person may have the right to make their own decisions concerning their withdrawal.

The recent General Election outcome will not affect the introduction of statutory relationships education and RSE as The Children and Social Work Act has now gone through both houses of Parliament and received Royal Assent.

The Government is currently drafting regulations and guidance, and will consult widely with education and young people's sectors in autumn 2017 to determine content. Final regulations and statutory guidance will then be published in early 2018. Schools will be expected to deliver in line with these regulations and statutory guidance from the academic year 2019-2020.

The Sexual Health SIG welcomes the introduction of statutory Relationships Education and RSE. However, the Sexual Health SIG recommends schools should not wait until 2019, but to continue to make improvements to the quality and delivery of relationships and sex education now. When introduced legislation will initially be most effective when it builds upon existing good practice. A range of resources are available to support current development including supplementary advice for schools [‘Sex and Relationships Education for the 21st Century’](#) and the [Sex Education Forum curriculum design tool](#).

The SH SIG has just completed a professional briefing on Sex and Relationship Education, it will be uploaded onto the website soon.

Front Line View of Sex & Relationship Education

Jim McManus, Director of Public Health, Hertfordshire County Council

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 has made education about relationships in primary and secondary schools in England a statutory requirement. Great. The two biggest national faith education systems – The Catholics and the Church of England – have supported that. Even better.

Now the real work starts - we need to make sure is that we don't snatch defeat from the jaws of the victory for good health this legislation represents. I believe in Sex and Relationships Education. I also believe it has sometimes been done very badly and has been a place where ideology has been in danger of outstripping evidence.

As a psychologist, the evidence convinces me that education for relationships must be set in a lifecourse context. Public Health professionals should be advocating for this. We need to teach children what it means to be them, to accept themselves as basically good, to have a healthy regard for their own dignity and specialness, and to have the same for others. The mental health implications of this are profound if we get it right. Sex needs to be seen in the context of healthy (inter)personal development. If we don't do that, we fail our children.

It is a fundamental insight, and a commonplace in LGBT psychology that coming to an integration of one's identity is work to be done across the lifecourse. I suggest that for our present purpose, the fundamental insight of all lifecourse psychology now being drawn from this work is that where sex and relationships are concerned, the person must work out who they are and how they will relate to others, whether in intimate friendships, the workplace or sexual relationships.

Skills to be in relationships of all kinds, with good healthy regard for self and other, are essential components of healthy personhood through life. That must provide the context for education about sexual behaviour and choices. Whatever the gender or sexuality of a young person, they are going to have to work at relationships and choices: which ones do they want, what kind of sexual life do they want, and what does that mean for them in the context of their moral and social worldview? Sex has a context, and the individual who discerns, shapes and integrates that into their life as they grow has a better chance of feeling good about that than the often embarrassed ill-informed efforts of days gone by or the sometimes overly mechanical focus on bits of more recent years. Neither seems to have struck the right balance. Providing a context for making decisions about sex needs to respect the person and their worldview.

As public health professionals surely we want the best possible outcome for our children- to become emotionally healthy, self-respecting, other-respecting, resilient young people and adults. If all we do is describe sexual behaviour without why we'd be doing it in the first place, and how to get the desired good while avoiding harm to self and others, we fail.

This raises the issue of faith schools. I for one am pleased the faith schools retain entitlement to teach subjects according to the tenets of their faith. The debate on sex

education and faith schools has often been marked by heat on all sides and light on few. I say that as an ex governor of a Catholic school which was one of the most LGBT friendly places I've ever seen. Whether or not we agree with what individual faiths teach on different aspects of sex, we are a society where faith matters so much to a substantial proportion of the population who pay their taxes, and as a principle of equity, have rights about how their children are educated. We have to work constructively and respectfully with that. The new framework, which means faith schools must teach all aspects, enables a new start on this fractious debate. It's time for a fresh start.

PrEP Update

On 10th April 2017, The Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) approved the provision of PrEP on the NHS. This is the first UK nation to do so. SMC chairman Dr Alan MacDonald said: "[Prep] when used together with safer sex practices may help to reduce the spread of HIV, which is an ongoing priority for the Scottish government."

Despite the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group advising against PrEP on cost-effectiveness grounds, the Welsh Government has approved the use of PrEP as part of a three year trial on 28th April. Health Secretary Vaughan Gething has announced that during the research period "those for whom the drug is clinically appropriate can access it". The trial will begin in the summer.

The PrEP Programme Oversight Board in England is continuing work to introduce the PrEP Impact trial in England. The Board has shared its protocol, financial impact and measurement of results with the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) for their input to ensure the robustness of the trial. A pre-tender procurement event was held in April 2017 and a Prior Information Notice was published on May 30 in the Office Journal of the European Union. The PrEP Board are due to meet again in July 2017.

FPH Conference Update

The Faculty of Public Health held its annual conference on 20-21 June in Telford, the theme was Public Health Beyond Borders: Driving Change with Evidence. The Plenary sessions looked at the role of evidence in public health reform, Planetary Health, global health, public health leadership in local communities, and finished with a question time session. There was one parallel session on sex relationships and reproductive health.

The session heard from FIGO on their post-partum IUD project in 6 developing countries. The project seeks to address the 18% of the 8777 million women who want to avoid pregnancy but have no access to contraception, and to promote the positive outcomes of birth spacing. It seeks to provide choices for women in developing countries. The second presentation was by Lois Murray on her SRE qualitative research in Warrington with teachers and schools nurses, the research results emphasised the pivotal role of relationships in mental, emotional and sexual health. Joia de Silva outlined the work undertaken at SH:24 to develop online STI testing of asymptomatic clients, and Victoria Evans on the development of Teen Health Guide which provides information for 13 to 16 year olds around 5 core sections of Mind, Body, Fuel, Fitness and Sex.

Letter for FSRH & RCOG on DUP

Printed on 14th June, 2017 in the *Times* newspaper on the potential coalition between the Conservative Party and The Democratic Unionist Party

“Sir,

The DUP has consistently held a regressive anti-abortion stance. These views must not be allowed to have an impact on our abortion policy, should the Conservative Party govern with the support of the DUP. We oppose any attempt to use existing abortion rights in the UK as a bargaining tool in negotiations with the DUP.

Working with the DUP, this government has a unique opportunity to make progressive changes to abortion law, so that all women across the UK—including those in Northern Ireland who have among the most restricted access to abortion in Europe—have equal access to safe, high-quality services. Improving access to contraception, as well as honouring the Conservative Party’s pledge to introduce comprehensive sex and relationship education in all schools, will ensure that young people have the tool they need to make responsible health choices.

Professor Lesley Regan
President Royal College of Obstetricians
& Gynaecologists

Dr Asha Kasliwal
President, Faculty of Sexual &
Reproductive Health”

Conferences and Seminars



Annual Scientific Meeting for Wales is being held on 5th July 2017 at the Medical Institute, Wrexham Maelor Hospital

<https://www.bashh.org/events/training-courses-and-meetings/the-annual-scientific-meeting-for-wales-bashhfsrh-2017/>



A joint FSRH/FPH conference is being held on 22nd September 2017 on “Sex as a Public Health Issue—Navigating the Public Health Landscape working Together Effectively” in London

<http://www.fsrh.org/events/fsrh-and-fph-joint-conference-sex-as-a-public-health-issue/>



Society of Sexual Health Advisers is holding its annual conference on 23rd September 2017 in Cardiff

<http://ssha.info/ssha-conference-2017/>



4th Annual Trans Health Matters Conference by CliniQ is being held on 17th October in London

<https://www.bashh.org/events/training-courses-and-meetings/4th-trans-health-matters-conference-by-cliniq/>