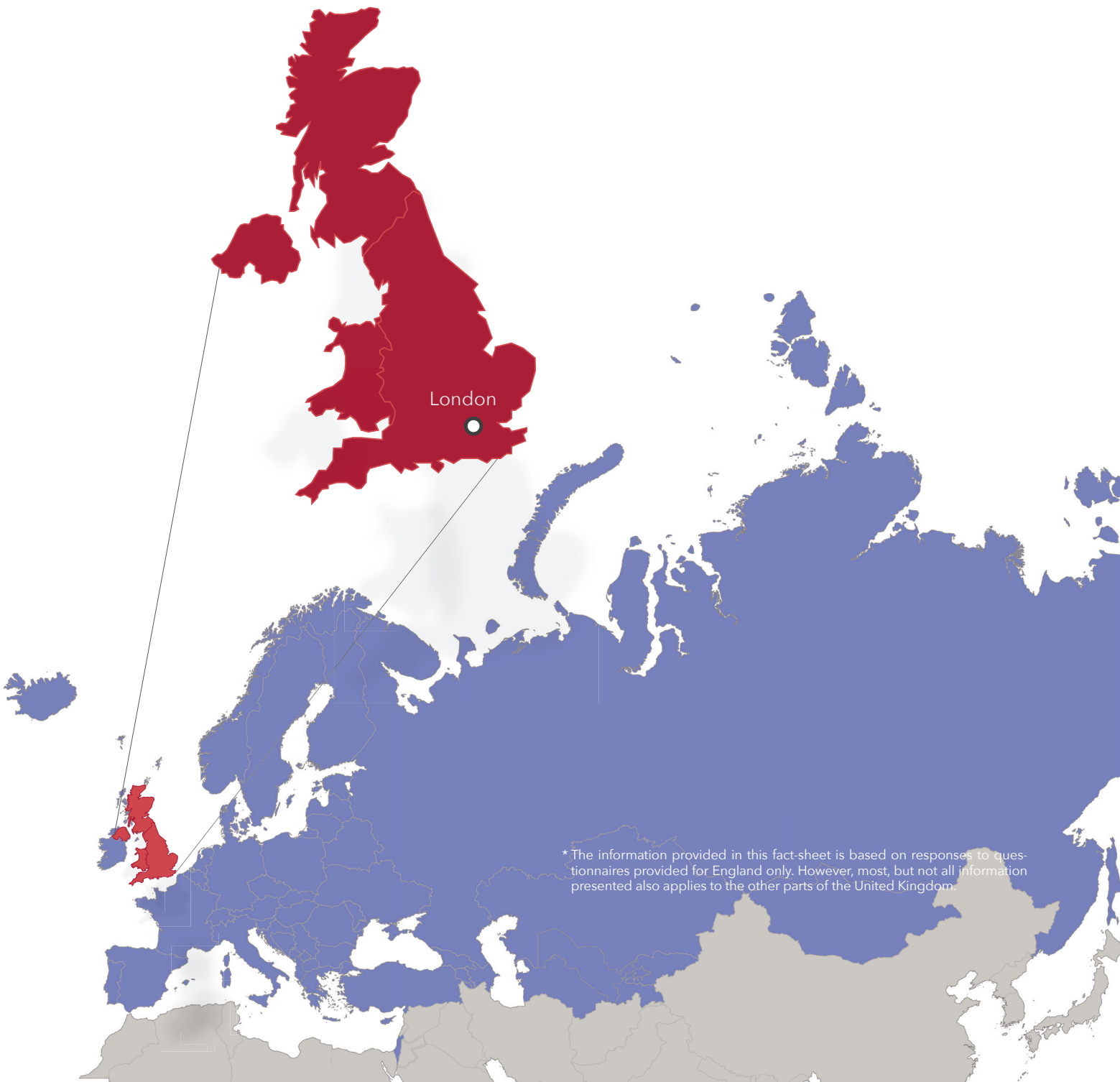


Sexuality Education in the WHO European Region

THE UNITED KINGDOM* (England)



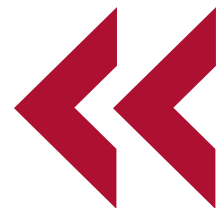
*The information provided in this fact-sheet is based on responses to questionnaires provided for England only. However, most, but not all information presented also applies to the other parts of the United Kingdom.

THE UNITED KINGDOM



Status of sexuality education

Since 1996, 'sex and relationship education' has been compulsory in public (local authority-run) schools in the United Kingdom, but not in private schools. It is integrated into other subjects and mainly taught in science and personal, social, health and economic education classes. It focuses mostly on the prevention of unwanted pregnancy and STIs/HIV. In 2017, after persistent pleas by many organisations, the government decided to make sexuality education 'statutory', and as a result, it will become mandatory in all types of schools in 2019.





Laws and policies

The Education Act of 1996¹ stipulates that some sex and relationship education is compulsory in public (local authority-run) schools from the age of 11 years onwards. In the year 2000, the Department for Education and Employment (now the Department for Education) published sex and relationship education guidance² on the delivery of sex and relationship education through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) framework. This Guidance states that ‘sex and relationship education should be firmly rooted in the framework for PSHE’. It aims to help schools to plan policy and practice, and includes teaching strategies, working with parents and confidentiality.

In March 2017, the Government announced that sex-uality education will become statutory from 2019 on. This means that it will be mandatory not only in all public (local authority-run) schools, as at present, but also in all other schools as well.

Implementation of sexuality education

The Department for Education is responsible for the strategic management of the national curriculum, which is taught to learners aged about 12–16 years. Schools are primarily responsible for translating the curriculum into specific lesson plans. Besides this, religious organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can provide input for the school curriculum.

Schools have the freedom to decide on the sexuality topics to be included in classes. The focus (for those schools that follow the 2000 Guidance) tends to be on physical aspects and prevention of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV. However, schools may also teach only the required minimum (STIs and HIV prevention).

Some NGOs, such as the young people’s charity ‘Brook’, provide lessons in schools. ‘Sexpression’, a student-led independent charity, provides close-in-age peer mentoring and lessons.

Training of teachers on sexuality education

Schools are responsible for ensuring that teachers are appropriately prepared to deliver sex and relationship education. There is no national teacher training programme for this, but a number of NGOs provide information, resources and training for teachers.

Educational materials are often developed by NGOs, including the Family Planning Association (FPA, IPPF member association) and Brook. Durex (a condom manufacturer) has convened an expert advisory group to produce resources for teachers. The Department for Education has also endorsed supplementary guidance produced by Brook, the Sex Education Forum and the PSHE Association. All of these materials reflect a comprehensive view and participatory teaching approaches.



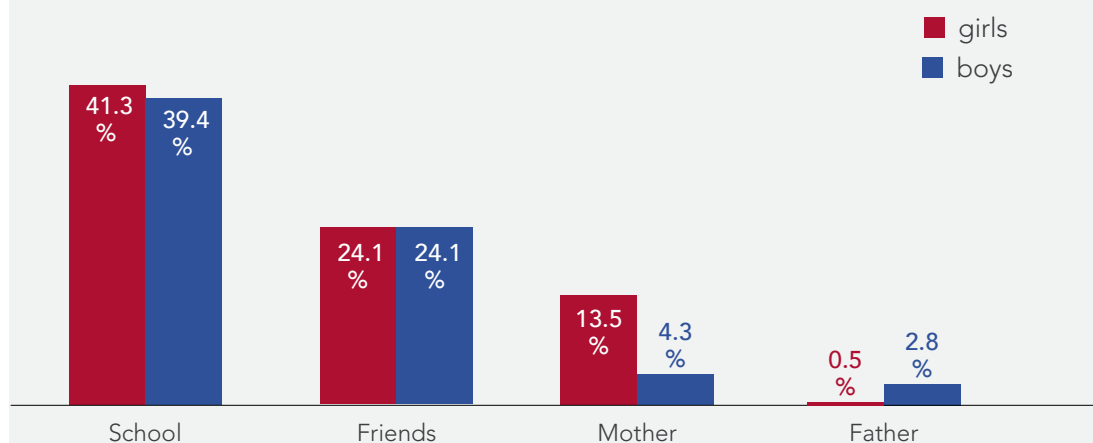
Sexuality education outside the formal school setting

Up to 2011, Channel 4 television broadcast a sexuality-education programme, with episodes that are still available online. FPA and other charities provide online resources about sex and relationships. FPA works directly with people with learning disabilities in schools, colleges, day centres and homes, where they offer sexual and reproductive health education and training to young people, their support staff, parents and carers. FPA, in collaboration with the National Youth Agency, delivers a course for youth workers, which covers information on contraception and STIs. Brook runs clinics around the United Kingdom, offering free and confidential sexual-health advice and contraception to young people aged under 25.

Challenges

There is no significant opposition to sexuality education in the United Kingdom. However, field experts have made a few suggestions: update the guidelines for sex and relationship education from 2000; improve teacher training; ensure that sexuality education is open and inclusive for all children and young people, recognising and meeting the needs of young people of different gender identities and sexual orientations, minority ethnic groups and those with physical or learning disabilities.

Main source of information on issues related to sexuality³



Data from the third British National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (2010 – 2012)



The United Kingdom

Country facts

Total population ⁴	64 308 000
Population aged 15–19 years (% of 15–19-year-olds in total population) ⁴	3 864 000 (6 %)
Government expenditure on education (% of GDP) ⁵	5.7
Youth unemployment rate (% of labour force aged 15–24 years) ⁶	15.1
Gender Inequality Index rating ⁷	0.131
Births per 1 000 women aged 15–19 years ⁸	14
% of 15-year-olds who have had sexual intercourse ⁹	boys: 18 % girls: 23 %
Average age of mother at birth of first child ¹⁰	28.3

For references go to last page

References / Definitions

- 1 Education act 1996 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 2 Sex and relationship education guidance. London: United Kingdom Department for Education and Employment; 2000 (<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130403224457/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DfES-0116-2000%20SRE.pdf>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Learner:** a child or young person who is enrolled or attends classes in school, including primary (basic/elementary), secondary (middle) and high school.
- 3 Mercer CH, Tanton C, Prah P, Erens B, Sonnenberg P, Clifton S et al. Changes in sexual attitudes and lifestyles in Britain through the life course and over time: findings from the National Surveys of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal). *Lancet*. 382;9907:1781–94 ([http://thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(13\)62035-8/fulltext](http://thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(13)62035-8/fulltext), accessed 25 March 2017).
- 4 Population by age, sex and urban/rural residence, 2016 [online database]. New York: United Nations Statistics Division; 2017 (<http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=POP&f=tableCode%3A22>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 5 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Government expenditure on education:** current, capital and transfer spending on education, expressed as a percentage of GDP. Range in the region is approx. 2.0 – 8.5.
- 6 Human development data, 2015 [online database]. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2017 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/data#>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Youth unemployment rate:** percentage of the labour force population aged 15 – 24 years that is not in paid employment or self-employed, but is available for work and has taken steps to seek paid employment or self-employment.
- 7 Human development report 2016: human development for everyone. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- Gender Inequality Index:** a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. It varies between zero (when women and men fare equally) and one (when men or women fare poorly compared with the other in all dimensions).
- 8 Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1 000 women ages 15 – 19). Washington (DC): World Bank; 2016 (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 9 Growing up unequal: gender and socioeconomic differences in young people's health and well-being. HBSC 2016 study report (2013/2014 survey). Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2016 (<http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/growing-up-unequal.-hbsc-2016-study-20132014-survey>, accessed 25 March 2017).
- 10 Women in the EU gave birth to their first child at almost 29 years of age on average. Luxembourg: Eurostat; 2015 [2013 data] (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6829228/3-13052015-CP-EN.pdf/f7e9007fb-3ca9-445f-96eb-fd75d6792965>, accessed 25 March 2017).