

SEED Sponsored Research

Sex Education in Primary School in Tayside

An Evaluation of Sexuality and Relationships Training for
Primary Teachers
February 2007

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Executive Summary

- This study sought to evaluate the impact of the Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary Teachers on the capacity of schools within Tayside to effectively deliver sexual health promotion; and to map the provision of sex and relationship education in Tayside's primary schools.
- The research involved a questionnaire that was sent to all 177 primary schools in the three Tayside local authorities (a response rate of 66.7%), a questionnaire filled in by all teachers (n=43) before completing the Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers and semi-structured interviews with 39 teachers who had completed the training. The research began in September 2004 and finished in July 2006.
- The majority of schools started their sex and relationship programme in either nursery or primary 1 and involved all classroom teachers in delivery. SRE also tended to be embedded throughout the curriculum. However, a number of teachers interviewed suggested that the teaching of SRE varied between schools and within a school depending upon how comfortable staff were in delivering this part of the curriculum. Teachers who are uncomfortable discussing topics in SRE may leave it to the end of the year and only quickly deal with the issues whilst those that are more comfortable discuss issues as and when they come up. Providing training on the delivery of SRE to all teachers may be a way of reducing variations in delivery.
- Both the questionnaires and the interviews indicated that the vast majority of parents were comfortable with teachers taking an active role in teaching their children about sex and relationships. Those parents who were concerned about the introduction of SRE were normally reassured through the school's consultation process. However, not all parents could be placated and a significant minority of schools were forced to withdraw at least one child from SRE classes.
- Although there was widespread consultation with parents concerning the content of sex and relationship education, relatively few schools consulted with their pupils. The failure to consult with pupils was even more pronounced when parents and guardians had requested their child be withdrawn from sex and relationship education. Schools clearly found it difficult to balance the need to respect the wishes of parents or guardians whilst at the same time taking the child's views into account.
- It is clear that despite parental concerns, the primary school pupils thoroughly enjoyed SRE and after initial giggles handled the subject in a mature manner.
- Each Tayside Local Authority had recently rolled out an extensive SRE programme based around the *Living and Growing Videos* and although some schools are still engaged in the process of implementing this policy,

the difference between what schools taught and to what age group was still surprising. This was especially the case given the extensive guidance given by the Scottish Executive outlining what should be taught at each level of primary school (Scottish Executive 2001).

- No one topic was taught by every school, although, certain subjects were taught by nearly every school such as 'the Family and Other Special People that Care for them', 'Being Part of a Family' and 'Dealing with a Bullying Situation'. Only two schools do not teach the 'way bodies change and grow' whilst three schools surprisingly did not teach the 'family and other special people that care for them'.
- The 'awareness of sexually transmitted infections' was the least covered topic followed by 'Parenting Roles' and 'Contraception & Family Planning'. Perhaps more surprisingly, given the Scottish Executive's guidance that schools should promote "relationships based upon love and respect...the value of stable family life, including the responsibilities of parenthood and marriage" (Scottish Executive 2001:6), was that 35 schools (29.6%) did not teach 'Permanent and Responsible Relationships'.
- The teachers interviewed overwhelmingly believed that the provision of sex and relationship training was a very important aspect of their role and on the whole teachers were happy with the SRE curriculum in each Local Authority and the content of the *Living and Growing* programme. However, certain aspects of the programme caused concern amongst many teachers, particularly the use of the word 'clitoris' in the material. These concerns led many schools to tippex the word 'clitoris' out of the worksheets or even abandon those worksheets that mentioned it. One interviewee suggested that such concern may stem from the belief of some teachers that primary school pupils did not need to know a part of the body whose sole function was women's sexual pleasure.
- Other issues that caused concern included homosexuality and contraception. In these cases, the concern stemmed from not wanting to get into the 'nitty gritty' aspects of sex. Most teachers said they would be happy to answer questions about homosexuality but would say little more than it was a same sex couple that loved each other. Contraception, it was believed, was simply unnecessary knowledge at this age, although some teachers recognised that some children were engaging in sexual activity at a young age. One interviewee actually believed there should be more on contraception in the programme but this was very much a minority view.
- Nearly three-quarters of those schools that responded to the questionnaire had teachers with some SRE training. It is clear from both the questionnaires and the interviews that there were a number of important benefits of attending the *Sexuality and Relationship training for Primary School Teachers*. The benefits included increased knowledge on both sexual health and the SRE curriculum, guidance on delivery and instilling teachers with the confidence to effectively deliver SRE.

- Unfortunately, as one interviewee noted, increased confidence is not easily cascaded down to the other teachers in the school and therefore it would seem to be sensible to ensure that all teachers had the requisite training to help them effectively deliver SRE or that one or two teachers who had attended the training were assigned to teach SRE within the primary school.
- The *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* was considered by the majority of participants to be both beneficial and enjoyable, even if it was seen as challenging. One of the aspects of the training that teachers most enjoyed was the opportunity to chat to other teachers in a similar situation and to find out how other schools were handling the SRE curriculum. A number of interviewees believed that follow-up sessions that offered the teachers an opportunity to catch up with each other and discuss their experiences of teaching SRE would be very helpful.
- The one aspect of the training that was almost universally disliked by interviewees who had only recently completed the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* was the twilight sessions. In the past the training has been delivered in three or four day long sessions but in recent years one or two full days had been augmented by twilight sessions. Participants felt that such sessions did not offer them adequate space to discuss the issues raised by the training in enough depth.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Practitioners have identified a real need for sex and relationship guidance in primary schools that would enable young people to make informed choices about sexual relationships and practices (Scottish Executive 2003). To meet this need primary school teachers are increasingly expected to act as sexual health promoters in the classroom even though the vast majority of teachers have not received specific training on sex and relationship education either as part of their teacher training or subsequently as part of their continuing professional development. The training and support of teachers is vital to the effective promotion of sexual health and well-being, especially given the sensitivity of the issues involved and the anxieties that many teachers experience in delivering this part of the curriculum.

The delivery of sex education in Scottish schools has been described as 'patchy' (Scottish Executive 2000a) and despite a range of initiatives supporting sexual health promotion in schools and the wider community, such as the SHARE (Sexual Health and Relationships: Safe, Happy and Responsible) programme that focused on 13-15 year olds, the extent to which schools are meeting the Scottish Executive's expectations on sex and relationship education remains unclear. Nonetheless, education practitioners and health promotion specialists have recognised that there is a compelling need to provide advice and guidance on sexual health and relationships in primary schools to enable young people to make positive and informed choices about sexual relationships and practices (Scottish Executive 2000a). The Scottish Executive in recognising this need, and following the publication of the McCabe Report (Scottish Executive 2000a), provided specific guidance on the content of SRE curriculum to local authorities and schools (Scottish Executive 2000b) and also published a leaflet for parents and carers outlining what their child would be taught as part of the SRE curriculum (Scottish Executive 2001).

In January 2005 the Scottish Executive published its Sexual Health Strategy in *Respect & Responsibility: Strategy & Action Plan for Improving Sexual Health*. The sexual health strategy is premised on the belief that "sexual relationships are best delayed until a person is sufficiently mature to participate in a mutually respectful relationship" and that the purpose of sex and relationship education is "to delay sexual activity" (Scottish Executive 2005:15). The strategy underlines the important role that teachers and schools have in improving the sexual health of young people in partnership with parents and health professions:

Schools have a crucial part to play in fostering healthy attitudes towards relationships, sex and sexuality in young people. All schools are expected to provide sex and relationships education. High-quality sex and relationships education should be delivered in an objective, balanced and

sensitive manner by professionals who are trained for this role and who are able to support and complement the role of parents and carers as educators of children and young people. (Scottish executive 2005:15)

Respect & Responsibility reiterated the Scottish Executive's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the McCabe Report and affirmed that the delivery of SRE should be "consistent with the principles and aims of national guidance on the conduct of sex education issued by the Executive in 2001" (Scottish Executive 2005:15). With Scotland having high rates of sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancy compared to other western European countries, the Scottish Executive has recognised that the promotion of better sexual health is in part dependent on the delivery of a successful sex and relationship programme to young people throughout their educational career. The Scottish Executive has suggested that the characteristics associated with a successful sex and relationship programme include flexible delivery in a variety of formats delivered in conjunction with a range of both statutory and voluntary providers in the locality with well supported and trained teachers at its core:

Supporting teachers is key to the successful delivery of sex and relationship education, and the Executive is committed to ensuring that teachers receive appropriate training and continuing professional development, as well as knowledge about service delivery. Teachers will also benefit from being part of an integrated team delivering school-based sex and relationships education which receives clear policy direction regarding roles and responsibilities and whose work complements that of parents and carers, who will also be informed and supported as educators in sex and relationships.(Scottish Executive 2005:16)

Although the Scottish Executive has emphasised the importance of delivering age appropriate sex and relationship education throughout primary and secondary school, the limited research in this area has tended to focus on the incorporation of sex education in secondary schools. There is little evaluative data for primary schools. This may be a reflection that a greater proportion of sex education is taught in secondary schools and the assumption that primary school children do not need this information because of their sexual 'innocence'. Clearly, the issue of childhood sexuality is controversial not only because many people believe that childhood is 'a period of asexual innocence' (Weis 1999:91) but also because of a growing fear concerning the sexualisation of children which rests upon the assumption 'that childhood should be devoid of sexuality' (Weis 1999:93). Such assumptions make conducting research into childhood sexuality fraught with difficulties since references to sex and sexuality may be viewed as having a corrupting influence. However, a strong argument has been made that sex education should start in primary schools in order to provide 'positive information about sex and sexual health' (Scottish Executive 2000a) and lay the groundwork for addressing sexual health challenges with young people in secondary schools (Wallis and Vanevery 2000). Nevertheless, despite calls from public health

specialists¹ for sexual health promotion to begin in primary schools, and the Scottish Executive's (2005: 24) direction to local authorities that SRE should be "*based on health guidelines and built upon throughout primary school as part of 5-14 health guidelines*", we know very little about what is actually being taught and how this varies between schools and local authorities.

However, the SHARE data would indicate that in Scottish secondary schools, at least, the content and time allocated to personal and social education programmes varies widely between local education authorities, schools within a particular authority, and even within a school itself (Buston, Wight and Scott 2001). The SHARE analysis also found that teachers find talking openly about sexual health and relationships 'difficult', yet the support and training available for teachers in the delivery of sexual health promotion is currently limited, varies across education authorities, and lacks statutory status (Buston, Wight and Scott 2001). Given the Scottish Executive's recognition of the need for teachers to be both well trained and supported, it is imperative that training programmes such as Tayside Health Promotion's *Sexuality & Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* are evaluated in order to assess how far they are able to meet teachers' support needs.

1.2 Tayside Health Promotion's *Sexuality & Relationship Training For Primary School Teachers*

Tayside has a long-standing interest in promoting sexual health amongst young people and has for some years offered training on sexual health and relationships for primary school teachers on a voluntary basis. As sexual health promotion becomes a formal aspect of teachers' work in primary schools the establishment of such training will become a vital component ensuring consistency in the delivery of SRE. However, there is no published evaluation literature on the impact of such training on the effectiveness of delivering sexual health promotion in the primary classroom. Tayside Health Promotion has been working alongside primary teachers across the three local authorities within its boundaries for a decade and has produced training programmes and materials that support the delivery of sex education in the primary curriculum and draws upon national resources such as the *Living and Growing* programme (Forrest, Souter and Walker 1994). The new emphasis on the promotion of positive sexual health across the curriculum and throughout the wider community by the Scottish Executive provides a valuable opportunity in accord with the aim of both *Enhancing Sexual Wellbeing in Scotland* and *Respect & Responsibility* to evaluate the impact of a particular training programme on the support of SRE delivery within a specific local community.

1.3 Aim & Objectives of the Research

The aim of this study is twofold: to evaluate the impact of Tayside's *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary Teachers* on the capacity of schools to effectively deliver sexual health promotion; and to map the provision of sex

¹ 'Sex Education should begin in Primary School' letter to the BMJ 1999, 318:57.

and relationship education in Tayside’s primary schools. The primary focus of this research is the extent to which such training enables primary school teachers to become sexual health promoters and to deal with challenging issues in an appropriate, effective and sensitive manner. This is essential given that many teachers feel uncomfortable discussing issues related to sexuality with pupils (Buston, Wight & Scott 2001).

The research had four main objectives:

- To establish an overview of sex and relationship education provision in Tayside’s primary schools.
- To evaluate the impact of interventions such as Tayside Health Promotion’s *Sexuality and Relationships Training for Primary Teachers* on their ability to become effective sexual health promoters in the classroom.
- To identify teachers’ support needs in the context of the relationship between local authority policies and primary school practices.
- To consider ways of enabling local authorities and their partners to achieve this support.

1.4 Methodology

The research used both qualitative and quantitative research techniques and was conducted in three phases starting in September 2004 and finishing in July 2006 (see table 1).

Table 1: Research Timetable

<p>Phase One (Review)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Review of relevant legislation, guidance and research – Analysis of the ethos, programme & materials of Tayside Specialist Health Promotion Service’s Young People’s Programme. – Design of survey instrument and interview schedules 	Sept. 2004 – Jan. 2005
<p>Phase Two (Data Collection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Questionnaire Survey of all Primary Schools in Tayside in order to map the provision of sex and relationship education (head teacher survey) – Before Training Questionnaire for teachers currently completing the Sexuality & Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers – Interviews with head teachers and teachers who had attended the Sexuality & Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers – Transcription of teachers’ interviews 	Jan. 2005 – Sept. 2005
<p>Phase Three (Analysis)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Questionnaire data entry & analysis using SPSS – Interviews ‘ analysis – Report writing 	Sept. 2005 – July 2006

During the first phase of the project the researchers reviewed the relevant legislation, guidance and the small amount of research that could be found on sex and relationship education in primary school. Through discussions with Priscilla Webster from Tayside Specialist Health Promotion Service’s Young

People's Programme, who is also lead trainer for the *Sexuality and Relationships Training for Primary School Teachers* and a review of the course materials the researchers gained an overview of the training materials and the structure of the course. This phase, therefore, provided important background information that was necessary for the development of the research instruments which was the other major task completed during this phase.

Phase two was the data collection phase. Four types of data have been collected:

- Questionnaire survey of all head teachers of the 177 primary schools in the three Tayside local authorities in order to map the actual provision of sex and relationship education.
- Questionnaire survey of teachers' views of SRE and how comfortable they felt about teaching it before completing the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers*. The questionnaire was completed by all teachers and school nurses (n=43) from Angus (n=15), Dundee (n=17) and Perth and Kinross (n=11) who were completing the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* during the 2004/2005 school year.
- Interviews with a sample of teachers (n=18) from each of the three local authorities who had just completed the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers*.
- Interviews with teachers (n=21) who had completed the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* before this research was conducted.

All the interviews were fully transcribed during the second phase, except for two interviews, in these cases the interviewee would not allow the interview to be recorded. Originally, the research team had also planned to interview 6 head teachers (2 from each local authority), however, given the high number of head teachers and depute head teachers on the training and who were subsequently interviewed it was decided that no more useful information would have been obtained by having this extra sample of head teachers.

The third phase was the analysis phase during which all the questionnaires were inputted into SPSS, a dedicated social scientific statistical package and then analysed. The interviews that had been transcribed during the second phase were thematically analysed and focused on the teachers' view of sex and relationship education, their experience teaching SRE and dealing with parental concerns and the impact of the training and the extent to which it has helped them overcome their anxieties about delivering sex education to primary school pupils.

Chapter 2: Mapping School Provision

2.1 Introduction

In order to map the actual provision of sex and relationship education in Tayside's primary schools a survey of all head teachers in the 177 primary schools in the region was conducted. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to explore the extent to which the Scottish Executive Guidance on sex and relationship education (Scottish Executive 2000b) in primary schools was being implemented by the schools themselves and the differences between schools within Tayside. The survey also sought to ascertain the experience of schools dealing with parental concerns and how they handled situations where a parent or guardian wished to withdraw their child from the sex and relationship programme. There were also questions on whether teachers in the school had had specific training on delivering SRE and whether the school believed that they had received adequate guidance from their Local Authority.

2.2 The Sample

The questionnaire was sent to all primary schools in Angus, Dundee and Perth and Kinross. In total 118 schools out of the 177 primary schools in the Tayside region completed the questionnaire, a total response rate of 66.6%. Of the Tayside Local Authorities, Angus had the highest response rate of 76.2%, followed by Perth and Kinross with a 66.2% response rate and then Dundee with 51.2% response rate (see table 2).

The lower response from schools in Dundee is largely the result of a very poor completion rate from the Catholic schools. This had a greater adverse impact on Dundee because it had the highest number of Catholic Schools in the region. Only 3 of the 12 Catholic schools in Dundee (a response rate of 25%) returned a completed questionnaire and in total only 5 Catholic schools in the Tayside region returned the questionnaire (a response rate of 27.7%). The response rate of non-denominational schools in Dundee was a much healthier 72.4%.

Table 2: Response Rate by Local Authority

	Frequency	Percent of all schools	Percent of Local authority
Angus	45	38.1	76.2
Dundee	21	17.8	51.2
Perth & Kinross	51	43.2	66.2
Missing*	1	.8	
Total	118	100.0	

* School's name and address withheld

2.3 Delivering Sex and Relationship Education

The majority of schools started their sexual health and relationship programme in either nursery or primary 1. However, in 9 schools (7.6%) the programme began in Primary 4 and in 11 schools (9.3%) it began in Primary 6

(see table 3). As indicated in some of the interviews, it may be that those schools beginning the programme in later years were simply in the process of rolling out the programme a year at a time and would eventually begin SRE in Primary 1.

Table 3: Years involved in the sex & relationship programme

	Frequency	Percent
Nursery-Primary 7	77	65.3
Primary 1-7	9	7.6
Primary 4-7	9	7.6
Primary 6-7	11	9.3
Missing/Not Applicable	12	10.2
Total	118	100.0

In most schools all teaching staff and the school nurse are involved in the delivery of sex and relationship education (see table 4). This reflects the Scottish Executive's wish to embed health issues throughout the curriculum and the central role that it envisages for teachers as health promoters. For example, the recent Scottish Executive publication *Respect & Responsibility: Strategy and Action Plan for Improving Sexual Health* places considerable emphasis on the role of teachers and the school in promoting good sexual health:

Schools have a crucial part to play in fostering healthy attitudes towards relationships, sex and sexuality in young people. All schools are expected to provide sex and relationship education. High-quality sex and relationship education should be delivered in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner by professionals who are trained for this role and who are able to support and complement the role of parents and carers as educators of children and young people. [Scottish Executive 2005:15]

Table 4: Staff involved in the delivery of SRE

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of Cases
Delivered by head teacher	35	15.4%	30.2%
Delivered by designated teacher(s)	29	12.8%	25.0%
Delivered by all teaching staff	88	38.8%	75.9%
Delivered by School Nurse	75	33.0%	64.7%
Total	227	100.0%	195.7%

2.4 Consulting with Parents and Pupils

Given the sensitive nature of sex and relationship education, the Scottish Executive has emphasised the importance of schools consulting with parents over the content of the SRE curriculum. However, despite the imperative to consult, six schools in our sample had not done so. Of those that had consulted nearly 80 percent sent parents information about the SRE curriculum, whilst 62 percent had a parents' evening and 56 percent had a workshop where they allowed parents to view the educational materials used in these lessons (see table 5).

Whilst the overwhelming majority of schools did consult with parents over the proposed SRE curriculum, only a quarter of schools (n=31) sought the views of pupils. For those that did, consultation normally took the form of class discussion or suggestion/question box. It is clear from the interviews that those teachers who had been on the *Sexuality and Relationship training for Primary School Teachers* were particularly enamoured with the use of a question box. Not only did it provide pupils with the opportunity to ask questions that they would not like to verbalise publicly but also, if considered inappropriate, the teacher could ignore these questions.

Table 5: Consulting Parents

	Frequency	Percent	Percent of Cases
Parents Sent Information	87	31.2%	79.8%
Parents' Evening Held	68	24.4%	62.4%
Information contained in School handbook/Prospectus	46	16.5%	42.2%
Workshop held where material used was on display	62	22.2%	56.9%
Q&A booklets	6	2.2%	5.5%
Survey to Ascertain Parents' views on sexual health and relationship programme	10	3.6%	9.2%
Total	279	100.0%	256.0%

The failure to consult with pupils was even more pronounced when the purpose of the consultation was to ascertain their views on their sex education needs when a parent or guardian had requested to withdraw them from SRE. Despite clear guidance that schools had a duty to consult the child, in our survey only 3 (11.1%) of the 27 schools where a parent or guardian had requested a pupil to be withdrawn from sex education classes had the school actually consulted with the pupil themselves. More surprisingly only a quarter (n=7) of these schools explained the impossibility of removing a child from all the classes where sex and relationships may be discussed (See table 6).

Table 6: Response of Schools to a Request to Withdraw a Pupil from SRE

	Frequency	Percent of Cases
Meet with parents to alleviate Parents' concern	27	100.0%
Ascertain how parents & guardian would meet the sexual health & relationship needs of their child	13	48.1%
Consult with child	3	11.1%
Explain it would be impossible to remove their child from all classes where sexual health and relationships would be discussed.	7	25.9%

The Scottish Executive and Local Authorities have rightly emphasised the importance of consulting with parents and giving parents the right to have their views heard, and if necessary the right to withdraw their child. However, the heavy emphasis in favour of parental rights does not sit easily with the right of the child to have their views taken into account. This issue was raised by one interviewee who believed that to ask the child's view when the teacher knows that the parent does not approve of the programme seemed to be a bit 'cheeky':

I know that probably that is what you are meant to do, but when I think of it, it just seems a bit cheeky. I think if you know if a parent is coming in and you've spoken to the parent and they are making it quite clear that they do not want their child to participate and giving you all the reasons

why and then you say well actually we've got to ask your child. I don't feel confident enough to confront a parent and say I'm going to ask your child's opinions because I think that could be construed as a bit cheeky. (Teacher Primary 1-7, Perth & Kinross)

2.5 Sex and Relationship Education Training

Nearly three-quarters of schools had teachers who had received some training on delivering SRE (see table 7). This extremely high percentage is in part the result of the long established agreement between Tayside Health Promotion and the three Tayside Local Authorities to make available for their teaching staff the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* course.

Table 7: Schools with Staff that have had SRE training

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	88	74.6
No	28	23.7
Total	116	98.3
Missing	2	1.7
Total	118	100.0

Those schools who had had teachers attend the Tayside Health Promotion course found the training very useful. For example:

*3 members completed SH& R course @EDS run by P. Webster and K. Lochrie. Course very useful especially in area of breaking down barriers giving teachers more confidence in delivering lessons. Course presenters very good, supportive and helpful
(Head Teacher, Dundee)*

*Very useful but only one member of staff went on specific training. We all benefited from Priscilla Webster's visit.
(Head Teacher, Angus)*

*Tayside Health Board Sexual Relationships 2-3 days. Very good for teachers' confidence to teach this subject.
(Head Teacher, Dundee)*

It is clear from both the interviews with teachers having been on the training and from the school's questionnaire that one of the greatest benefits of attending the course is the confidence that it gives teachers to be sexual health promoters. Unfortunately, a couple of interviewees suggested that the skills and information provided by this training is not easily cascaded down to the other teachers in the school (See 4.10 & 4.14). If this is the case, then it would seem to be sensible to ensure that all teachers had the requisite training to help them effectively deliver SRE.

2.6 Local Authority Support

The majority of schools felt that they had received adequate support from their Local Authority to deliver the sex and relationship education curriculum in their school. The introduction of a full sexual health programme, the employment of sexual health tutors and the provision of the Tayside Health Promotion's *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* were all cited as examples of the good support the schools have received.

Angus council is extremely supportive. We have been issued with information packs and a variety of resources. Our health staff tutor is very helpful and enthusiastic and happy to support staff, pupils and parents. (Head Teacher, Angus)

Well-constructed programme of study for health education with a very clear and comprehensive section on sex and relationships. (Head Teacher, Angus)

Yes, designated staff tutor & Tayside health board have been very helpful, giving of time to attend parents' meeting and speak to class. (Head Teacher, Perth & Kinross)

The authority has provided an extremely detailed programme to facilitate sexual health and relationship programme. (Head Teacher, Dundee)

Although some schools, despite the materials that have been provided, remain concerned about how to deal with sensitive issues.

Much has been provided and this has been very helpful in the main. However, there needs to be a clearer city policy on what should be covered especially around "sensitive" issues. (Head Teacher, Dundee)

Although the majority of respondents were from the non-denominational schools, five Catholic schools did respond to the questionnaire. These schools do not use the material provided by their Local Authority but use approved material provided by the Diocese of Dunkeld for Roman Catholic Schools. It is unclear how much other support is available to these schools. One of the few catholic schools that responded to the schools questionnaire was clearly unhappy with the level of support that they had received and the difficulties that they had experienced balancing the need to deliver a sex and relationship programme with the views of parents and the Church.

No - issues with parents, church and what is and is not considered suitable and appropriate. (Head Teacher, Dundee)

2.7 Sex and Relationship Education Curriculum

Given the extensive SRE programme that each of the Tayside Local Authorities have initiated and the clear Scottish Executive guideline (Scottish Executive 2000b) outlining what should be taught at each level of primary school, there does seem to be considerable differences between what different schools actually deliver. What is particularly surprising is that no one

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topic is taught by every school. This could, however, simply be due to the fact that a couple of schools indicated that they were only now developing their sex and relationship education programme.

However, as illustrated by both tables 8 and 9, certain subjects are taught by nearly every school. For example, in Primary 1 through to Primary 3 the overwhelming majority of schools cover 'the Family and Other Special People that Care for them', 'Being Part of a Family' and 'Dealing with a Bullying Situation'. Only two schools do not teach the 'way bodies change and grow' whilst three schools surprisingly did not to teach the 'family and other special people that care for them'.

Table 8: SRE Topics by Year of Delivery

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Year(s) not specified
Way Bodies Change and Grow	57 48.3%	55 46.6%	53 44.9%	51 43.2%	64 54.2%	58 49.1%	56 47.4%	7 5.9%
Uniqueness of their body	58 49.1%	54 45.7%	59 50.0%	58 49.1%	66 55.9%	53 44.9%	54 45.7%	7 5.9%
Where Living Things Come From	61 51.6 %	68 57.6%	64 54.2%	45 38.1%	44 37.2%	47 39.8%	45 38.1%	7 5.9%
Family & Other Special People that Care for them	83 70.3%	86 72.8%	80 67.8%	52 44.0%	46 38.9%	44 37.2%	46 38.9%	7 5.9%
Exploring Changes in the body	27 22.8%	29 24.5%	26 22.0%	39 33.0%	67 56.7%	68 57.6%	61 51.6%	7 5.9%
How Human Life Begins	13 11.0%	16 13.5%	18 15.3%	26 22.0%	42 35.5	76 64.4%	69 58.4%	7 5.9%
Being Part of a Family	76 64.4%	82 69.4%	74 62.7%	60 50.8	58 49.1%	58 49.1%	55 46.6%	6 5.0%
Dealing with Bullying Situations	70 59.3%	71 60.1%	76 64.4%	80 67.8%	87 73.7%	82 69.4%	80 67.8%	7 5.9%
Physical & Emotional Changes at Puberty	2 1.7%	2 1.7%	2 1.7%	15 12.7%	48 40.6%	77 65.2%	71 60.1%	7 5.9%
Body Image & Self- Worth	29 24.5%	30 25.4%	33 27.9%	41 34.7%	52 44.0	73 61.8%	84 71.1%	6 5.0%
Understanding of Own Developing Sexuality	3 2.5%	3 2.5%	4 3.4%	10 8.4%	22 18.6%	60 50.8	84 71.1%	6 5.0%
Developing an Awareness of Gender Identity	22 18.6%	22 18.6%	25 21.2%	37 31.3%	38 32.2%	49 41.5%	68 57.6%	6 5.0%
Changing Nature of Friendship	26 22.0%	27 22.8%	30 25.4%	43 36.4%	60 50.8%	76 64.4%	72 61.0%	6 5.0%
Dealing with Sexual Feelings	-	-	-	2 1.7%	13 11.0%	42 35.5%	75 63.5%	6 5.0%
Menstruation	-	-	-	11 9.3%	48 40.6%	67 56.7%	74 62.7%	7 5.9%
Pregnancy and Birth	4 3.4%	4 3.4%	4 3.4%	10 8.4%	22 18.6%	69 58.4%	82 69.4%	7 5.9%
Skills Required to Maintain Friendships & relationships	56 47.4%	56 47.4%	59 50.0%	67 56.7%	80 67.8%	80 67.8%	81 68.6%	7 5.9%
Gender Stereotypes, Equal Opportunity & Discrimination	28 23.7%	28 23.7%	30 25.4%	44 37.2%	52 44.0%	67 56.7%	82 69.4%	7 5.9%
Permanent & responsible Relationships	8 6.8%	8 6.8%	8 6.8%	12 10.2%	22 18.6%	53 44.9%	69 58.4%	4 3.4%
Parenting Roles	12 10.2%	12 10.2%	12 10.2%	13 11.0%	18 15.2%	31 26.2	44 37.2%	5 4.2
Contraception & Family Planning Issues	-	-	-	-	19 16.1%	19 16.1%	50 42.3%	4 3.4%
Awareness of Sexually transmitted Infections	-	-	-	-	4 3.4%	12 10.2%	37 31.3%	4 3.4%

The 'awareness of sexually transmitted infections' was the least covered topic. Fifty seven percent of the 118 primary schools that responded did not teach about sexually transmitted infections (STIs). 'Parenting Roles' and 'Contraception & Family Planning' were not taught in 55 (46.6%) and 53 (44.9%) schools. Perhaps more surprisingly, given the Scottish Executive's guidance that schools should promote "relationships based upon love and respect...the value of stable family life, including the responsibilities of parenthood and marriage" (Scottish Executive 2001:6), 35 schools (29.6%) did not teach 'Permanent and Responsible Relationships', whilst 'Dealing with Sexual Feelings' was not part of the school's SRE curriculum in 25 (21.1%) schools (see table 9).

Table 9: Least Covered Topics in SRE

TOPIC	Number of Schools	Percent
Awareness of sexually transmitted Infections	68	57.6%
Parenting roles	55	46.6%
Contraception & family planning	53	44.9%
Permanent & responsible relationships	35	29.6%
Dealing with sexual feelings	25	21.1%
Developing an awareness of gender identity	22	18.6%
Understanding of own developing Sexuality	16	13.5%
Gender Stereotypes, equal opportunity and discrimination	15	12.7%
Changing nature of friendship	12	10.1%
Body image and self-worth	11	9.3%
Uniqueness of their Body	8	6.7%
Skills required to maintain friendships and relationships	8	6.7%
Pregnancy and birth	7	5.9%
Dealing with Bullying situations	6	5.0%
Where living things come from	5	4.2%
How human Life begins	5	4.2%
Being Part of a family	5	4.2%
Menstruation	5	4.2%
Family & other special people that care for them	3	2.5%
Exploring Changes in the body	3	2.5%
Physical & Emotional Changes at Puberty	3	2.5%
Way Bodies Grow & Change	2	1.6%

For the majority of SRE topics there were no major differences between schools in the different local authorities. However, schools in Angus were less likely to teach 'permanent and responsible relationships', 'parenting roles', 'contraception and family planning' and an 'awareness of sexually transmitted infections' than schools in Dundee and Perth and Kinross (See Table 10).

The survey of head teachers also found that Catholic Schools were less likely to cover topics such as the 'awareness of sexually transmitted infections', 'contraception and family planning' and 'gender stereotypes, equal opportunities and discrimination'. However, the very small number of Catholic schools (n=5) who completed the questionnaire makes any meaningful comparison difficult.

A few schools also indicated that they taught other subjects that had not been included in the questionnaire such as 'hygiene', 'body science', 'safe place and safe people', 'girl and boy talk', 'loss and grief', 'media and peer

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pressure’, ‘costs of having a baby’ and ‘restrictions on mums’ such as less opportunities for socialising with friends, as well as, ‘legal responsibilities’.

Table 10: Topics Not Taught by Schools by Local Authority

Topic		Angus	Dundee	Perth & Kinross
Way Bodies Change and Grow	Count	0	0	2
	% within Local authority	.0%	.0%	3.9%
Uniqueness of their body	Count	0	0	7
	% within Local authority	.0%	.0%	13.7%
Where Living Things Come From	Count	0	0	5
	% within Local authority	.0%	.0%	9.8%
Family & Other Special People that Care for them	Count	0	0	3
	% within Local authority	.0%	.0%	5.8%
Exploring Changes in the body	Count	0	0	3
	% within Local authority	.0%	.0%	5.8%
How Human Life Begins	Count	0	1	4
	% within Local authority	.0%	4.7%	7.8%
Being Part of a Family	Count	1	0	4
	% within Local authority	2.2%	.0%	7.8%
Dealing with Bullying Situations	Count	12	5	8
	% within Local authority	26.6%	23.8%	15.6%
Physical & Emotional Changes at Puberty	Count	0	0	3
	% within Local authority	.0%	.0%	5.8%
Body Image & Self Worth	Count	4	0	7
	% within Local authority	8.8%	.0%	13.7%
Understanding of Own Developing Sexuality	Count	6	2	8
	% within Local authority	13.3%	9.5%	15.6%
Developing an Awareness of Gender Identity	Count	10	3	9
	% within Local authority	22.2%	14.2%	17.6%
Changing Nature of Friendship	Count	5	2	4
	% within Local authority	11.1%	9.5%	7.8%
Dealing with Sexual Feelings	Count	12	5	8
	% within Local authority	26.6%	23.8%	15.6%
Menstruation	Count	1	1	3
	% within Local authority	2.2%	4.7%	5.8%
Pregnancy and Birth	Count	2	2	3
	% within Local authority	4.4%	9.5%	5.8%
Skills Required to Maintain Friendships & relationships	Count	4	0	4
	% within Local authority	8.8%	.0%	7.8%
Gender Stereotypes, Equal Opportunity & Discrimination	Count	6	2	7
	% within Local authority	13.3%	9.5%	13.7%
Permanent & Responsible Relationships	Count	17	5	12
	% within Local authority	37.7%	23.8%	23.5%
Parenting Roles	Count	27	8	19
	% within Local authority	50.0%	38.0%	37.2%
Contraception & Family Planning Issues	Count	27	6	19
	% within Local authority	60.0%	28.5%	37.2%
Awareness of Sexually transmitted Infections	Count	33	10	24
	% within Local authority	73.3%	47.6%	47.0%

Chapter 3: Pre-training Questionnaires

3.1 Introduction

The pre-training questionnaire was devised to ascertain teachers' views of sex and relationship education before completing the *Sexuality & Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* run by Tayside Health Promotion. The questionnaire explored the extent to which teachers felt comfortable delivering SRE, why they chose to attend the training and how important they believed it was for primary school pupils to receive sex and relationship education.

3.2 The Sample

Three cohorts, one from Angus (n=15), Dundee (N=17) and Perth & Kinross (n=11), of teachers and school nurses attending the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* during the 2004-2005 school year were surveyed to ascertain how comfortable they were teaching SRE and why they chose to come onto the course before they started their training. Forty-three questionnaires were completed.

3.3 Teachers' Views on Delivering Sex and Relationship Education

Although many of those who completed the questionnaire felt 'fairly comfortable' or 'reasonably comfortable' (n=26), only a few said that they were totally comfortable (n=6). Those that indicated that they were fairly comfortable still had concerns, such as, how much information should they provide to pupils, how to deal with difficult questions and dealing with concerned parents.

Comfortable with 16+ as have previously done so. New area below this and whilst do not feel uncomfortable have some concerns regarding determining what material may be acceptable to schools and parents. (School Nurse, Perth & Kinross)

Fairly comfortable dealing with issues when and as they arise. Not sure how far to go with information and what is deemed appropriate/inappropriate. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

Fairly comfortable. Concerned about concerns of parents (ethnic minority & Jehovah Witnesses). (Teacher Primary 6, Dundee)

Nine respondents indicated that they were not comfortable at all delivering the SRE part of the curriculum.

Not very comfortable. I find it awkward discussing most aspects of sexual health. (Teacher Primary 6, Angus)

Not comfortable - would like to have it established exactly what and how it can best be promoted throughout school. Parent's rights and views clarified. (Teacher Primary 5-7, Angus)

Not very comfortable to deliver alone. (School Nurse, Perth & Kinross)

One of the respondents felt that there were “many problems” with delivering SRE to the upper primary years because he was male and he therefore “passed the main area for P5,6,7 to nurse”. Whilst another respondent was concerned about the possibility that one of their children had been subject to sexual abuse.

3.4 Reasons for Attending the Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers

The most cited reasons for choosing to attend the *Sexuality & Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* were to increase knowledge and get guidance on best practice in delivery (See table 11).

Table 11: Reasons for attending Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers.

	N	Percent
Attended training to increase confidence	11	25.5%
Attended training to increase knowledge	21	48.8%
Attended training for guidance on delivery	20	46.5%
Attended training to learn how to deal with parental concerns	6	13.9%
Was asked to attend	5	11.6%

To boost confidence was specifically mentioned by 11 of the 43 respondents (25.5%), however, this seems to be a surprisingly low number given that nearly all of the post-training interviews cited increased confidence as the most important benefit of the training (see Chapter 5). This may have simply been an unexpected benefit of attending the training or be a reflection of their greater concern with increasing their knowledge of the SRE curriculum and guidance on delivery when they completed this questionnaire. The quotes below are typical of those written responses that cite ‘confidence’ as one of the primary reasons for attending the course.

To be comfortable in the delivery of the programme and feel confident in my ability to answer children's questions. (Teacher Primary 1-7, Dundee)

To boost confidence and gain an insight into the depth in which this aspect of the curriculum should be delivered. (Teacher Primary 7, Angus)

As I will need to teach sex education - any knowledge of curriculum expectations and delivery methods will be helpful. Also need to feel confident that I am delivering information of an appropriate level. (Teacher Primary 5-6, Perth & Kinross)

It would appear that whilst many teachers may feel reasonably confident about delivering the programme, they remain concerned with the potentially difficult and unexpected questions that children may put to them. Children’s questions were also raised by the post-training interviewees, and from these

interviews it is clear that many teachers are grateful for the techniques that they learned on the course (See chapter 5).

For some of the teachers surveyed, the training happened to coincide with them starting to teach the sex and relationship curriculum.

The course came just before I need to start teaching sex ed for the first time. (Teacher Primary 3-7, Perth & Kinross)

About ready to begin sex ed programme in P4-7 class (April-June). (Teacher Primary 1-7, Perth & Kinross)

A number of respondents attended the course because they were either the Depute Head teacher or Head teacher and therefore felt that it was important to have an overview of the whole programme. For example:

As head teacher of the school, an overview of the whole programme is required and the need for working with parents and how to do this satisfactorily. (Head Teacher Primary 1-3, Angus)

Need Knowledge on whole school P1-7 (I'm headteacher also!) Need further knowledge on upper school programme content. Need knowledge about what I should do/inform parents of. (Head Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

As DHT have responsibility for P4-7 and health programme in school. (Head Teacher Primary 1-7, Angus)

3.5 Importance of Sex and Relationship Education

Respondents were also asked how important they believed it was to promote sexual health in primary school. On a five point scale with '1' being 'very important' and '5' being 'not important at all', nearly 70 percent of respondents indicated that they believed it to be 'very important' while another 18% scored it as a '2'. No one indicated that they believed that sexual health promotion in primary school was 'not important at all', although one person scored it as a '4' and three respondents scored it as '3' (See table 12).

Table 12: Importance of promoting sexual health

	Frequency	Percent
1.00 Very important	30	69.8
2.00	8	18.6
3.00	3	7.0
4.00	1	2.3
Missing	1	2.3
Total	43	100.0

Chapter 4: Post-Training Interviews

Q. *Do you think it would be helpful for other teachers perhaps to go on it (the training programme)?*

A. *I would make it compulsory!*

(Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)

4.1 Introduction

The post-training interviews were carried out with a sample of teachers from Angus, Dundee and Perth and Kinross in order to explore the impact of the *Sexuality & Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* on participants' ability to effectively deliver sex and relationship education. The researchers were particularly interested in the way in which the interviewees believed that the training had helped them in the classroom as well as the aspects of the training that they had most and least enjoyed. These semi-structured interviews also elicited information on how SRE was delivered in their school, their experience of teaching it, parents and pupils' reaction to the introduction of SRE into the curriculum and any concerns that they had about the topics included.

4.2 The Sample

39 interviews were carried out with teachers who had attended Tayside Health Promotion's *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers*. 16 interviewees worked in Angus, 16 worked in Dundee and 7 worked in Perth and Kinross. 13 interviewees from each Local Authority would have been the ideal; however, despite considerable effort the researchers were unable to recruit a larger sample from Perth and Kinross. Extra interviews were, therefore, carried out with teachers from Angus and Dundee. All but two of the interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Two interviewees did not wish to have their interviews recorded and in these cases hand-written notes of the interviews were taken. A technical problem resulted in three other interviews not being recorded properly.

18 interviewees had just recently completed the *Sexuality & Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* and had completed the 'before training questionnaire'. The other 21 interviewees had completed the training between 1997 and 2003 and therefore had not completed the 'before training questionnaire'.

Initially it had been proposed to interview thirty teachers who had been on the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* and then six head teachers. However, such a large proportion of our teacher interviews were with head teachers who had been on the training that it seemed unnecessary to conduct separate head teacher interviews.

4.3 Schools' Sexual Health Programme

As Angus, Dundee and Perth and Kinross had all recently rolled out a new sexual education curriculum, it was therefore not surprising that all schools either had a sexual education health policy and programme or were in the process of constructing the programme. However, it was clear from both the questionnaires and the interviews that some of the schools were more comfortable teaching the new curriculum and that some schools were only just beginning the process of implementing their Local Authority's sexual health strategy.

*I mean obviously we have curriculum development but there are just so many others to be dealt with as well, which is why our sexual health isn't in our school development until next year. When it is in our school development plan that's when we really will develop that area of curriculum. We will put strategies in place, policies in place. Obviously we do have a policy in place at the moment, but it is obviously going to be renewed once it comes under our school development plan next year. And that's when it will be looked at much more closely. In all stages not just at the primary 7 stage but in all the stages as well. So it's not a case of we don't look at it, but it hasn't a place in our timescale of things.
(Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)*

*That is a city-wide policy. The schools don't have an option on that, it is city wide that that's part of the curriculum.
(Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)*

*Well since the training, I've been doing it since then. We actually were a fore runner I was actually on the working group for Dundee City Council and we wrote a sexual health programme for the whole of Dundee Schools. And that went out to schools and I had piloted it in this school. And the new health programme took that one and 'tweaked' it around a bit and that is now current. So I've been doing it since then.
(Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)*

For some of those interviewed, completing the *Sexuality and Relationship training for Primary School Teachers* was an important starting point for beginning their own sexual health programme. For example, one school that had used the Glaswegian group *Positive Steps* to deliver the programme took the training when they had made the decision to deliver the curriculum themselves:

In years gone by we used a group from Glasgow called Positive Steps, who came out and they basically did the sexual health programme over a series of 4 weeks and we would develop this, but gave the children an overview of sexual health, very much in the context of a loving family, very much that kind of scenario. And we were left with worksheets and topics to discuss and various things to do before they come back. So that was always done. But is very much led by them and supported by us. And then we felt that if there were any gaps that they hadn't covered, we would either try to approach the subject ourselves or we would use the school nurse to cover all the health. Then we decided not to go down the road of using Positive Steps again because it was costly. That was

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something that would have to tackle ourselves anyway, that's when we were sent on this 4 day course. To see really what should be taught and some ideas of how it could be taught. But because it is not in our school development at the moment, I know we haven't fully tackled it. We have had the idea to go on the course, but we haven't fully implemented everything that the course was suggesting.

(Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)

Increasing confidence and knowledge were important reasons why many of the interviewees chose to attend the training.

I volunteered to go on it because I was new ... and I knew that I would probably have responsibility for it...and I felt, I needed something to help me with my confidence and to know what I should be teaching. (Teacher, Dundee)

The majority of interviews suggested that in their school SRE was embedded in other subjects. This was particularly the case in the earlier primary years:

It depends on the stage and exactly what it is you are teaching, down at the Primary 1 to 3 stage it's very easy, it comes into your personal/social development it would come into time and all those kind of areas as well I wouldn't specifically be doing it as a subject but as a sexual health in relationship to further up the school I've done, a topic, if you like. (Head Teacher, Angus)

Even though many of the teachers interviewed indicated that, particularly in Primary 5, 6 and 7, there may be specific sex and relationship classes, simply because they are taught separately does not mean that they are taught in isolation:

That's now beginning to shift. Back in 2001 or 1999/2000 it was very much a separate course, but since then we have had the new health programme given by Dundee City Council and the sexual health in relationships section and indeed there is an expectation that that will be covered from primary 1 through to primary 7, like all good teaching you will find that we will use the contexts wherever they lend themselves, but when we get to the primary 5 6 and 7 components they tend to be organised around other people like the school nurse. So it would appear to be in isolation but there is a whole lot gone on around it to kind of promote it in the first place.

(Head Teacher, Dundee)

The way sex and relationships is taught in a school is in part dependent on how comfortable the staff within a particular school feel about delivering this part of the curriculum. Teachers who are uncomfortable discussing sex and relationships may leave it to the end of the year and only quickly deal with the issues whilst those that are more comfortable discuss sex and relationship issues as and when they come up. One interviewee suggested that even within a school there could be considerable differences:

I would suggest that that is still quite variable from class to class because of the way each individual teacher feels about it. And in my teaching it

definitely is embedded because I did the course. And it's amazing how often it comes up. There are still members in the school who are very 'iffy' about the whole thing and I would suggest that it is done at the end of the year with a grudge in a small package, which I don't think is the best way to do it.

(Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)

In schools where the classroom teacher is not responsible for the delivery of sex and relationship teaching or in rural schools where composite classes may mean that it would be inappropriate to discuss a particular subject with the whole class because of the age differences within the class, then sex and relationship teaching is more likely to be delivered in stand alone blocks:

We do stand alone. It is just the way we manage it within the school to stand alone. It's highly adult intensive, there are three of us that go into the classroom at a time.

(Head Teacher, Angus)

Well for me personally, I'm teaching as separate. Because obviously I'm going into each class and I'm being their health teacher, so the sexual health I would be taking on and I'm doing that, so none of the other teachers are doing that. Although it does impinge in some other projects, for instance, with the wee ones we do, things we have done through other topics as well, it probably does at times. But basically I've got the sole responsibility. I report on it on the report card.

(Teacher Primary 1-7, Perth & Kinross)

No I think we covered everything. I'm happy enough with it. It's difficult in a composite situation, I'd like to maybe say that, particularly in Primary 1-3, the way I've worked it it's the one lesson I could do the same activity. For the primary 1s I expect less. It's differentiated, in as much as it is the same worksheet, but I expect less. But for the Primary 4-6 and 6-7 if you are having to do them at the same time, I found that very tricky. Because I do a lesson with the 4-6 then when I set them down to their work I call the 6-7 in who have taken part in the lesson anyway as a kind of a refresher, then I call them out and I do a bit of work them. And that's a heavy day, especially if I have just been in the 1-3's just after that. It's like overkill. So I think working in a rural school with composites is more tricky than if you were doing a straight Primary 6 or Primary 7. And I'm sure that people will argue that you get all sorts of levels of understanding in a class, but if you are going from P4 to P7 those levels of understanding are huge.

(Teacher Primary 1-3, Perth & Kinross)

The school questionnaires clearly indicate that the majority of schools involve all teachers in the delivery of SRE. Involving the classroom teacher is a central plank of the health promoting school policy and the promotion of healthy living.

...the class teachers are primarily responsible for it. But I've done some work with them to go over what we should be teaching and how we should be doing it and the things that are important. And also there is a person that they will feedback to should they need support or advice or

how do they do this or they are feeling uneasy about this bit, how would they envisage teaching that. For some of them who have felt uneasy, I have gone into lead the sessions and they are there for the support and they have all felt that they could do it again themselves this year. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

It is also clear from the interviews that the school nurse plays an important support role for the teachers, and in some schools delivers aspects of the syllabus that the teachers feel unqualified or uncomfortable to teach:

The nurses are great. And it's good that the nurse comes in, because she is able to answer technical things and she knows the answer to questions, to health questions. I would tell the children but it might not be right. I think it's better too because the nurse doesn't know the children. Sometimes it's easier when somebody comes in and does a lesson with them and talks about something that might be easier for them. (Teacher Primary 6, Dundee)

One interviewee suggested that in their school it is actually the School nurse that runs the programme and discusses issues such as menstruation, intercourse and contraception.

Yes the nurse will actually run the programme, for example, primary 5's it will be talking about body parts and menstruation and giving out like sanitary pads and talking to the children about how they are used and what they are used for, the primary 6 /7 curriculum she actually will talk about the intercourse, think contraception is primary 7, so that will actually be discussed this year. (Depute Head Teacher, Angus)

Whilst for another interviewee working with the nurse to deliver SRE at the beginning gave her the confidence to deliver the programme later by herself.

Having the nurse come in and be with me at the beginning in a way as a role model how she taught it in a way at the beginning so it was quite good to see that and I felt more confident after that talking to them. I think the nurses are invaluable to have some input especially, I mean there an awful lot of teachers who are very wary of it. (Teacher, Perth & Kinross)

A couple of interviewees also raised the appropriateness of a male teacher teaching certain parts of the SRE syllabus. One interviewee suggested that not only is the teacher himself uncomfortable teaching one or two things but that parents would also be uncomfortable with him teaching these aspects of the curriculum:

Primary 5 6 and 7 there is a scheme of work that we have to go through and rigidly stick too, but again I would say it depends very much on the teacher how that works. And we've got a male teacher as well in that area, who is absolutely fantastic but I work along side from the girls' point of view, and he often comes in and takes my boys and I'll take his girls, so it works very well in that respect. But he just feels slightly uncomfortable with one or two of the things he has to teach at the level, which I don't think there is anything wrong with. I think parents would feel uncomfortable with him teaching it as well. So we just team teach. And it

helps me as well because he is very good with the older boys. (Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)

A similar situation arose in another school where a male teacher who was responsible for Primary 7 felt uncomfortable dealing with 'girl issues'. In this case, initially the school nurse was used to answer these girls' questions but more recently this role has been carried out by a female colleague who now teaches the girls separately for this part of the curriculum:

We have a male teacher in Primary 7 and he has used the nurse a lot because he felt uneasy with some of the girl issues. But I did the girl issues this year, so and he spoke about the male sexual body parts with everyone, with the whole class, boys and girls. Then I took the girls separately. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

Although in the above case separating the class into single-sex groups was the result of a male teachers discomfort in addressing issues, such as menstruation, it is clear from a number of other interviews that some schools separated boys and girls to discuss certain issues. It has been suggested that either girls are reticent to ask questions about issues that they find embarrassing or very personal in front of the boys or that generally pupils were more likely to ask questions from a same sex teacher than one of the opposite sex:

We do it as a class first of all, then we take the girls out, because they just want to ask their personal questions. And quite often then that would be when somebody would have the girls and I would stay with the boys and that's the time for the boys to talk and ask any questions. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

That tends to be. I think one of the areas he does is births, conception and periods and he says he is fine doing the basic with that, but when the girls start asking more questions, he doesn't feel comfortable. So we change classes. Maybe two or three times during the area that he is doing it in more as a question and answer section because the girls aren't as free in asking questions of the male teacher as they are with me. I get deluged with questions. And the same with my boys, they ask him a lot of questions they wouldn't ask me. (Dundee Teacher Primary 7)

In some cases, separating the girls and boys had been the traditional way of teaching SRE, however, increasingly it would seem from these interviews that schools are keeping the boys and girls together throughout the programme. Concern that mixed groups may be intimidating for some pupils and stop them from asking questions has been overcome in a number of schools by the use of question boxes that ensure that no one needs to be embarrassed by asking a question:

The nurse we have engaged her services, she's been in it more or less from the beginning. She did body changes, traditionally, and chose to do it with the girls separately to the boys. I didn't share that view...Because I feel it should be something that could be spoken about more openly and I do understand the sensitivities around mixed sex group but I think there

are other ways of overcoming that, like a wee questions box if there is something that they really would rather not be identified as having put forward. And we have done that. (Head Teacher, Dundee)

Oh well, I've changed my ideas about that. I used to split them up... normally and what used to happen was, that if there was like I used to be able to give somebody else the boys for instance and I would take the girls but sometimes the way it works out just with numbers, it's just impossible so one year I just decided just to keep them all together and see what happens and it actually worked just as well. I don't think there was much problem. I think the problem would come if they didn't want to ask questions but I give them a chance to write questions down and they like putting questions in the box so if there's any questions that they do have and the girls maybe don't want to ask or the boys don't want to ask then they just put the question in the question box so I've kind of got round it that way, so quite good in a way because children that wouldn't normally ask questions or that would be a bit embarrassed ask questions still put questions in the box. Sometimes you get a lot of questions in the box. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

Another interviewee suggested that there was considerable difference in the behaviour of girls and boys during SRE. Girls are more serious and want to learn about the subject much more than boys, although she does recognise that some boys do take it seriously.

The girls are very sensible, very good...even girls that are sometimes quite silly very much want to know about this. Some of the boys as well as, that was not all my boys, there were boys that were very sensible and there was even some boys who really wanted to know it. (Teacher Primary 5-6, Perth)

However, several interviewees also pointed out that the boys are fascinated with topics like menstruation, they see tampons advertised on TV but no one explains what this is all about.

Yes. Boys are fascinated when you bring sanitary towels out, they have never seen these things, obviously not supposed to look at them, they are advertised on TV and they think what's that about and now they know what they are used for. And we did demonstrations putting tampons in water and they could see how it works. (Teacher Primary 3-7, Dundee)

4.4 The Reaction of Parents to the Introduction of Sex and Relationship Education

Both the schools' questionnaire and the interviews with teachers would suggest that the majority of parents were generally happy with the SRE programme that had been rolled out across all three local authorities. Although a small number of parents objected to the content of the programme, relatively few went as far as removing their children from the SRE classes.

We've had no objections and the only thing we have had was good feedback from parents saying, you know, it's helped me speak to my

child kind of thing. But we don't get much of anything. We don't get objections, but we don't get much feedback at all. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

No. I think everything has been really good. We have always put a letter out giving parents options to view materials and I think the principal teacher was saying from this year she was hoping to get much more parental involvement beforehand. We have little workshops and things for them. But there has been nobody objected, nobody wanted to take their children out. They have all been very supportive. (Teacher Primary 7, Angus)

The majority of schools held a special parents' evening or workshop during which they could watch the *Living and Growing* videos that are used by the schools and the accompanying worksheets. Where parents were concerned by the initial introduction of sex education, these concerns were often easily dispelled by offering the parents the opportunity to see the programme and the materials that would be used. Even those most opposed can often be brought around after discussion with the teaching staff or head teacher; relatively few actually withdraw their children.

*Every year after the beginning of the year, we usually do it either between October and Christmas or just after Christmas we have a parents afternoon for parents with children in primary 5, 6 and 7. We invite them in. We show them the material we are going to use and we show them 'snippets' of the *Living and Growing* videos. And we don't look for the nice bits we show them the 'real' bits and it is really hilarious. We had a granny last year who had me...laughing. She kept saying 'oh my goodness', 'oh my goodness', but by the end of it she said 'I wish I had got this when I was younger'. So I think if it done openly and properly most parents are quite happy about. We have had a couple of parent who are very 'anti' it but to go back to our original question it was culture. That was a problem. In all these cases, after they had a long conversation with the Head Teacher, did allow the children to continue. So we have never had anyone withdrawn. (Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)*

However, not all parents could be placated. The schools questionnaire identified that a significant minority of schools were forced to withdraw at least one child from SRE classes. There were various reasons why these parents insisted that their child should be withdrawn from simply being too young to religious objections to cultural objections.

As I say there was only one parent, even after seeing all that, refused to have her child in class. Now they didn't go in for the actual teaching of health, but then a lot of the follow up work referred back to issues that were raised, so this child I felt, will get the wrong information in the playground, they will get all the playground gossip. These children who are getting the teaching in the class are going to come out and discuss it and your child is going to get second-hand information. But the parent was quite adamant. They felt it wasn't suitable for their child, they were too young. But that was the only one. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

...a couple of travelling children of Primary 5/6 two boys whose mother came in. She wasn't wanting them to participate and we invited her in, the class teacher and myself, showed her the planner, outlined what we would be covering with them, but she said, at the end of the day they are travellers are very protective of their children and they do their thing their own way at their own time and she said if it had been a daughter she would have allowed it but because it was boys she said no, that she felt they were too immature and she would find it embarrassing if they were coming home and saying everything at the tea table. We did try to say that they were going to hear about it in the playground and we would rather that they would hearing things proper, but at the end of the day the head teacher said we have to respect her wishes. So they were removed at that time. (Teacher Primary 1-7, Perth & Kinross)

The very first year we had a problem with a religious family. It wasn't ethnic it was Christian family but a 'sect'. We got over the problems by sending the videos home so that the parents could watch it with the children prior to it happening at school. So that happened for about 2 parts of the programme and the third time the children were strangely absent on the day it was being done. But at least we got two out of three. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

Although a small minority of parents were clearly unhappy with the introduction of SRE into the curriculum, for other parents the issues raised in SRE classes provide them with a good opportunity to discuss these issues with their children.

We've had no objections and the only thing we have had was good feedback from parents saying, you know, it's helped me speak to my child kind of thing. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

The level of parental involvement in discussing the SRE curriculum, coming to parents' evenings or actively engaging in curriculum design varied considerably between schools. Some schools experienced a high level of parental concern whilst in other school parents did not take the opportunities offered to them by the school to see materials used to teach SRE. For example, one interviewee discussed the difficulties that they had in their school in getting any parents to come and look over the programme and view the materials and in the end had to simply send out a leaflet before they started SRE.

We did that when it came into force in Dundee and we had to start teaching it from this year, well that year we sent a letter home and the parents were allowed to come in and view the videos, I've got to say we didn't have a good response, we had 3 families come in, that was all. We don't have a big parent involvement. A PTA is non-existent. Not a great parent involvement in this school. So they had the opportunity to see the videos and a leaflet goes home just before they are away to start it, usually. (Teacher Primary 3-7, Dundee)

The reasons for this are unclear; although the above school was described by the interviewee as urban and working class experiencing high levels of social exclusions amongst those living in this community. However, though many of

the schools with considerable parental involvement were more middle-class suburban or rural schools, other schools described as being predominantly working class also experience considerable parental concern. Therefore, it would be overly simplistic to see class as the key variable in determining parental involvement; other factors must be important and would need to be explored in further research.

4.5 The Reaction of Pupils to the Introduction of Sex and Relationship Education

One of the big concerns voiced by parents is that their children are not old enough for sex and relationship education. However, the interviews with teachers clearly demonstrate that the children were extremely interested, or as one interviewee suggested “amazingly ‘gung-ho’ about it” (Head Teacher, Angus) and after the initial giggles acted in a very mature manner. Only a very small number of children seem to react negatively to the introduction to SRE. One teacher interviewed discussed a small boy that fainted during one of the classes in which they watched the *Living and Growing* videos and had to leave during another class where they were watching the birth of a child. Similarly another interviewee also said that they had had a young boy who could not cope with childbirth and had to leave the class.

Nope. We had a wee lad that when we started he was in Primary 6 and then 7 he was really uncomfortable. He was sick and he was a really anxious wee lad. He just popped out and in the lessons as he felt able. Childbirth he couldn't cope with. (Head Teacher, Angus)

Such cases were, however, extremely rare and need to be considered in the light of other children who experience body changes without knowing what is happening to them. For example, one interviewee discussed a girl in P5 who being totally ignorant of menstruation believed that she was dying when she experienced her first period.

...there are so many of the young girls are reaching puberty at such a younger age, I think it was about 3 or 4 years ago, I had a little girl, she was Muslim in the class, well-built girl, primary 5, who started her period in the school, didn't know anything about it, thought she was dying. Came running out of the toilets screaming. If you can get rid of that kind of fear and panic from children then you are definitely helping them feel more secure in themselves. (Depute Head Teacher, Angus)

The majority of children are excited about the prospect of SRE although all the teachers interviewed said that there was some embarrassment and giggling at the beginning.

Some of them are very very embarrassed, some of them cover up their embarrassment with the giggles...I think they are genuinely embarrassed and there are others that are very matter of fact about it. (Teacher, Dundee)

The level of embarrassment could very well be related to how old the children are when they start SRE. A number of interviewees indicated that younger children simply accepted the use of words such 'penis' 'vagina' and 'clitoris' where as older children are liable to experience a greater level of embarrassment.

(Primary) 3's just accept it. 3's just go right that's a penis that's a vagina, that's a clitoris. No big deal, a bit giggly to begin with, that's it. (Teacher Primary 3-7, Dundee)

According to a teacher, from one of the very few Catholic Schools that participated in the study, not only were her pupils 'very enthusiastic', but there was also a really healthy interaction between the teachers, pupils and parents. This interviewee also had a very clear idea of who amongst her pupils were the most embarrassed and the reasons for their embarrassment.

They are very enthusiastic. They really enjoy, they are very open. They take home what you are saying, they come back and there is a good interaction with parents at home doing it. There is sometimes one or two whose heads are down, and they are ones who are very sexually aware. I have two in this class and it's quite interesting. Even last year they were ones who were paper shuffling and wouldn't meet your eye and wouldn't ask any questions. And you know because of what they are like in the playground and the things they sometime say to the girls, that they are actually potentially more sexually aware and they are embarrassed. And found that quite consistently, the ones who are a bit more streetwise a bit more aware are the ones who are embarrassed whereas the ones who are coming more naturally to it ask you any kind of questions and they are not embarrassed. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Perth & Kinross)

It would seem that most children actually act in an extremely mature manner during sex and relationship education. Several interviewees discussed how the children reacted favourably to being treated as 'young adults' and acted accordingly.

Pretty mature actually. I have not had anything that you could classify as seriously stupid, with one exception. (Teacher Primary 5, Dundee)

It usually starts off being a bit silly and then the greatest of respect that they are being treated as young adults. And I believe that we should go a long way to setting the scene for instance I don't like children to be sitting on the floor when we are having that kind of question/answer. We all make sure the janitor brings in chairs because there is something more grown up about sitting on a chair in a circle than sitting on the floor. So I think you do prepare youngsters for the kind of work they are doing. It's privileged because I also say that to them that this is privileged information this is not the kind of thing we want repeated in the playgrounds, and told to young children who are not ready to receive it, so it is, and they rise to the occasion. (Head Teacher, Dundee)

Once you get over the giggly, they respect the fact that they are talking about what they consider 'grown up' and be able to say words that they feel that probably would never have been able to say to the teachers.

And I think some of them want to show off all their knowledge that they have. I have found that they have been very confident about it and once over the giggly, we have our rules set out for how they are going to behave in class, they enjoy it. (Teacher Primary 1-7, Perth & Kinross)

However, at the same time the teachers recognise that they have to balance needs of children who are at different levels of maturity and who have different levels of sexual knowledge. Children with a greater sexual knowledge, may raise issues that the rest of the class is not yet prepared or at a stage where such knowledge is not appropriate.

I had one girl who could have taken the sex ed. class, she almost knew more than I did. Because we have our strict policy and must stick to it, I had to watch how much I let them say, or her say. (Teacher Primary 3-7, Perth & Kinross)

4.6 Teachers' Concerns with the SRE Curriculum

Even though the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* clearly made many teachers aware of the necessity of a good SRE programme, several aspects of the Living and Growing videos and the SRE curriculum still caused considerable unease amongst those we interviewed. The cartoons depicting sexual intercourse were widely commented upon by teachers, some of whom, while they believed that children should know where babies come from, did not believe that they needed to have a visual representation of the act.

Possibly showing the children the actual sex act with cartoons is possibly something, maybe Primary 6/7. I don't think that it is all that necessary. They might know how it happens but I don't think they need to physically see the act...Now if that's in a TV programme what do you do. If the rest of the TV programme is fine. Even some of the cartoon bits are fine but some of it is not as necessary, as they seem to think. I do want them to know how it happens, but I'm not sure about the actually physically showing the act. (Head Teacher Primary 1-3, Perth & Kinross)

Teachers were particularly unhappy with the naming of the 'clitoris' and to a lesser extent the subjects of 'contraception' and 'homosexuality'. Concern about the use of the word 'clitoris' led many schools to decide to tippex out the word from the worksheet the children use or to not use the sheet that contains the word.

We were talking about the clitoris. We took that out of the little ones, we tippexed over it then photocopied the sheets, then we glazed over it here. That wasn't my decision, that was the head teacher. (Teacher Primary 3-7, Perth & Kinross)

...the staff were not keen on some of the elements, and part of their problem was that it wasn't their responsibility to do that, and there were bits of it that they think some of the words they feel are not appropriate, bit about the clitoris etc, they just think that nonsense that you have to go

on about that, and they think it's all very well talking about parts, but that isn't a part that you can see. I actually had to have wiped it out because otherwise I would have had a riot on my hands. They were prepared to accept the rest of it but not that. So that was wiped out. (Head Teacher Primary 1-3, Perth & Kinross)

(The Staff) Weren't happy about it all, I didn't think there was a need when they were only in primary to be talking about the clitoris and I know that against what I've been saying that they take all for granted and so on but there is a bit of me says it will just go over their head if they are not ready to accept that word, but I can see where the staff are coming from and the staff that brought that up they had little ones of their own and don't want them to be saying look mummy I have got this or I can feel good when I give this a rub. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

To be perfectly honest I still don't feel the need for it (the clitoris), although, I can see they might investigate their bodies and think there is something freakish about them if they discover this extra bit and don't know what it is, but I just personally think it's just too young. I just don't think they need to know that at that stage. And I know before I took over this year, they had missed out that worksheet that had that on it, so this year when I taught it, I missed it out as well, this was before I had the course. And it was only after listening to what other people thought, Ok. (Teacher Primary 1-7, Perth & Kinross)

One interviewee suggested a possible reason why both teachers and parents were unhappy with the inclusion of the word 'clitoris' was that its sole purpose was sexual pleasure. This interviewee's experience was that parents had a particular problem with explaining the idea of sexual pleasure to young children.

The main things that came from the parents and the one thing that we have removed from the programme is clitoris. That was a major issue with the parents...how do you explain sexual pleasure to a young child. I don't think it is appropriate. However I did not take that to the parents. I did not put my views on to the parents, if the parents were happy with that because that was the programme we would have to run with it. But the parents were not happy with that. They asked me the reason it was in, they could understand everything else and I explained that it was in because it was the only part of the sexual body that was purely for sexual pleasure and they were not happy with that. So we edited that out of the video at the moment. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

However, one interviewee suggested that in future the 'clitoris' may come to be accepted recognising that in the past teachers did not use the word 'penis' but would normally use euphemisms such as 'wee man'.

Well half of me, I can understand where the staff are coming from, I don't actually have a problem with it. But it also depends on where the parents are coming from as well. I mean for example years ago nobody would have talked about the word penis, no primary 1 teacher would have mentioned be careful going to the toilet boys. Some of them haven't had a zip on their trousers so the teachers are saying now be careful with

your zip that you don't catch your penis. Make sure it is tucked away safely. That would never have been said before it was always the 'wee man' etc. So I don't know if clitoris is going to be one of these words in the future that is talked about in the same frame as penis or the vagina. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

Homosexuality also caused some discomfort. Although many of the interviewees said that they were comfortable telling their class that homosexuality was when two members of the same sex loved one another, they were uncomfortable and did not feel it was appropriate for it to be discussed in any greater depth.

We do deal with the two girls as partners, same sex relationships. Quite happy to discuss that is the path some people choose, not going into any 'nitty gritty', but I'm quite happy to discuss that it exists and they are classed as a couple the way that a man and a woman are classed as a couple. They are in a loving caring relationship, I am quite happy to go down that line. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

I think for me if one of the children asked me about it, I would answer it. Really just the same as anybody else to a consenting adult loving relationship the only difference being is it is of the same sex. I don't see anything wrong with that. But again it is a personal thing some people are really dead against. I wouldn't go into any of the 'nitty gritty' what they did together, but I think if they ask then yes. (Teacher Primary 5-6, Angus)

Another interviewee felt that the image of two men kissing in the *Living and Growing* video was unnecessary.

...living and growing videos which they are 98% good then you get this image that crosses the screen and you are left looking sideways thinking have I just seen what I thought I saw. And that's exactly jarred for my parents when I showed them the primary 5 material. They could just not quite take the two 'butch guys' kissing. (Head Teacher, Dundee)

Another school also edited out the image of two men kissing from the *Living and Growing* videos, however, this was for a most surprising reason. The head teacher would not allow this image to be shown because of section 28, even though section 2a (as it was known in Scotland) was repealed in 2000. It is very surprising given the widespread publicity concerning the repeal of Section 2a, including the campaign against the repeal, that a head teacher would not be aware that it was no longer on the statute books and would be using it as an excuse to edit out an image of a gay couple.

I did have a problem with the head teacher. She felt I think that as a bill, Section 28, that was making her a bit nervous, and the bottom line was that the buck stops at her door, so she had to be happy with what was going on in her school and she wasn't happy about that, so that was cut out of the videos. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

The heterosexist nature of schools as an institution has been well documented elsewhere (Buston and Hart 2001) and therefore we should not

be surprised at schools being reticent to discuss same sex relationships on an equal footing with heterosexual relationships. However, the danger of this is that schools can unintentionally promote homophobic attitudes and this could result in some children being bullied. Although none of our interviewees had to deal with pupils who had self-identified as gay or lesbian, a number of teachers recognised that they had children in their classes who were being raised by a same sex couple and that for them it was important to discuss same sex relationships.

Well I've had children in my class whose parents were of the same sex. And we have talked about these things you have to talk about these things because for those children that's really important that's their way of life and their friends know that. (Teacher Primary 6, Dundee)

Contraception was another area that many teachers did not believe was particularly appropriate for primary school pupils. Like homosexuality most teachers indicated that if they were asked a question they would answer it but not go into any detail.

I didn't do much on contraception I must say...I try to sort of, I don't steer away from it. I mean if somebody asked me I would answer the question but I don't actually bring it up. As I say, I do mention that you know there are ways of avoiding pregnancies but then I also say, well, you're only ten and you shouldn't really be having sex until you're 16 according to the law etc so I bring a bit of law in as well so speak about ways and choices and that kind of thing. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

At this stage they shouldn't be thinking of conception therefore they shouldn't need the contraception. (Head Teacher, Dundee)

Another teacher interviewed simply did not believe discussing issues such as contraception, homosexuality or sexually transmitted diseases was appropriate at primary school, at least not in any depth and if information was required children should be directed to parents or maybe even to the young person's sexual health centre in Dundee 'The Corner'.

I have three things. I know the living and growing material touches on it, even just very briefly with a few seconds of footage. I don't believe that primary schools should be looking at contraception. I don't believe that we should be looking at homosexuality in depth and I don't believe that we should be looking at sexual transmitted diseases in detail... does it have to be in classrooms. Can this not be the 'Corners' work, where people elect to go for that information rather than well we were in the classroom and we just got it. (Head teacher, Dundee)

However, not all teachers interviewed agreed that contraception should not be taught in any detail. One teacher felt that much more needed to be done on contraception and that this was also the view of some of their parents because it was recognised that by Primary 7 some pupils were becoming sexually active.

Two parents stood up and said we can't close our eyes to the fact that children are having sex in Primary 7 whether we like it or not...They felt that more had to be in the programme about contraception, they didn't feel there was very much about that. I have to agree with that, I think more has to be in about contraception. We have taken that on board ourselves and discussed about keeping yourself safe and that includes during sexual health. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

Although the 'clitoris', 'contraception' and 'homosexuality' were the main areas of concern, a small number of interviewees raised other concerns that they found personally difficult to discuss. For example one teacher had a personal problem discussing abortion and even though it was raised by a child in her class she would not discuss it, while another teacher felt very uncomfortable with the topic of masturbation.

But with abortion, that was one that came up that we didn't discuss. One of the kids was wanting to discuss it and I just effectively dismissed it. (Teacher Primary 4, Dundee)

To be honest masturbation. Obviously I spoke with during the programme and going through it, you spoke about I don't know if actually used the word erection with the kids, I can't remember. It was using the 'hair in funny places' book and it talks about sticky stuff coming out and things like that, and I can't honestly remember what came out of that in terms of what the kids had to ask, I mean there was giggles from the boys but I mean the thing that was important was that you weren't giving them stuff that they didn't need to know. Not that they didn't need to know, may be at that stage, they didn't have a need to know, but you don't want to overload them and waiting for questions to come. It was hard to find a balance. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

A considerable number of those interviewed said that they would not be comfortable if a child asked a question concerning oral sex. One interviewee intimated that the question box was useful in such circumstances because it gave the teacher the opportunity to decide whether they were willing to discuss a particular issue with the class.

And there are just some things I wouldn't deal with. But that's just me, I wouldn't deal with oral sex and quite often the kids that are asking questions like that are kids who know all about it anyway. So that is where your questions box come in handy, you can always say that there might be something here, I'm comfortable with most things but if you are not comfortable you are not going to do yourself and anybody else any favours. I think you have got to be able to make that decision. There are one or two things that I think, no not for me to deal with. And on the whole I found it very good, because the kids are really keen to find things out. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Perth & Kinross)

Of course it is very important for teachers to draw a line. As one interviewee said "I am not a sex manual". In most cases, teachers indicated if they felt the subject was too grown up for the child or inappropriate to discuss in front of the whole class they would direct the child to their parents for answer.

There is nothing I wouldn't talk about if the children were bringing it up. I think if it was getting to things such as maybe oral sex or same sex relationships and what people were doing there are areas there I wouldn't go in to. I would think you again would phrase such as yes in the same sex relationships people will have sex but not the way a man and woman does, without going into detail if they were saying what do they do, well that's a question for mum or dad. So you are not running away from it, but at the same time you are drawing a line. That's the really good thing about this training is that you get the chance for these questions to be asked to you and how you would deal with that. (Teacher Primary 6, Angus)

4.7 Importance of Sex and Relationship Education

Although many teachers had one or two particular concerns with the sex and relationship education almost every teacher interviewed believed that this was an important and necessary part of the primary school curriculum. This was especially the case given the very high teenage pregnancy rate in Dundee and because it was believed by some interviewees that parents were failing to discuss sexual health with their children.

Well, I think it's very important and for various reasons. One, that I think is, you know that they need to get the facts, and I think that from the point of view that now that nowadays parents don't really speak to their children about sex education. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

They definitely need it because it is not done at home. Some of the kids I've been teaching this year know nothing, others know a lot, and the variations are unbelievable, some people who are totally innocent and know nothing even when they are starting puberty. (Teacher Primary 3-7, Dundee)

Another interviewee believed that SRE was important because it gave the children 'power' and 'self-confidence'.

Think it is important because it gives them power and they know then what everybody else is on about. It worries me that they go into the playground and children talk about things and they don't know. They don't know whether it is right or wrong ... and it frightens them. I think it is better to know the truth and maybe they say I don't believe that or say what you like, or I know better. It gives them a power and self-confidence because they know. (Teacher Primary 6, Dundee)

A number of interviewees stressed that the knowledge children acquire through sex and relationship education is important because it enables them to make choices about their bodies and for this they need to be aware of their bodies.

I personally think it is quite important purely they need to have the mechanisms and need to have the knowledge to make important choices about themselves, but if they are not aware of their body, exactly what saying touching is bad, touching is good, I know they do that earlier on,

they need to be aware of everything so that they can make the choices and you know to me the earlier you introduce this the less embarrassment, if you like, it causes. I don't know why they don't start it slightly younger, even just talking about body parts and things like that, why not? (Teacher Primary 5-6, Angus)

Given that towards the end of primary school children are undergoing considerable changes, another interviewee stressed that teaching this was not about specifics, it was not about being a sex manual but rather it was about taking away the fear of the changes that they each faced.

One of the girls said on the course that we are not a sex manual; we are not here to tell them how to do it and how to do different variations. That is not what we are here for...it is about understanding what will happen to their body especially with sixth grade. It is taking away their fear of change. (Teacher Primary 5-6, Perth & Kinross)

However, nor can one ignore that these children are on the cusp of sexual awakening and as one interviewee commented they can not ignore the fact that their pupils go onto be teenage parents.

Yes it is. Well the number of ex-pupils we have that are pregnant and have got babies now, well that's it, it is real. It's happening in this community. (Head Teacher, Angus)

It was also recognised by many interviewees that children are growing up much quicker today bombarded by sexual images from music, film and TV which are giving them adult ideas at a much younger age.

I think it is like any other part of growing, I think it is absolutely essential. Too late to tell them things when it is already happening to them. We prepare our children for everything in that we can in life, and that's no different, and it's a natural thing, everybody is growing up and I think the more natural you can be with these things the better for everybody. Particular in the modern life the kids are watching television, and they do see a lot of things that we wouldn't have seen when we were children and we wouldn't have heard of and so they are absorbing it so it is much better for you to be, or whoever is involved, talking through it with them. So I think it is essential. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Perth & Kinross)

I think it is priceless, really. Children are growing up so much quicker these days and even in my short time here, I can remember when I first graduated and working with children, and the difference in the attitudes of children of a certain age then until now is incredible. Likes of the media input these days, music, film they are just growing up much quicker. They are getting adult ideas, adult thoughts, adults' way of thinking a lot earlier. (Teacher Primary 6, Angus)

This interviewee also recognised that in moving up to secondary school these children are going to come up against people with far greater knowledge and that they need to know the facts to ensure that they are not put into embarrassing situations.

And I think especially at this stage when they are just on the doorstep of the academy are going to be mixing with some children who do have the information and may have the experience. Then it is good for them to know the information and know the facts so they are prepared to deal with it. And certainly not in a situation where...they are embarrassed where they don't have the information they don't have the facts. I think that just prepares them for the next step in their life. (Teacher Primary 6, Angus)

4.8 Age at which Sex and Relationship Education Should Begin

When interviewees were asked when they believed the SRE curriculum should begin there was a general consensus that it needed to be started at the lower primary levels. One interviewee suggested that we should introduce the subject in nursery through discussions on 'chickens and eggs' or 'cats and kittens'. Another interviewee felt that it was important that children knew the proper names for the body parts in primary 2 before moving onto the more sexual side after primary 5.

I think it is good that you do your friendship bits and things coming through the school. I think probably primary fives the children can take on board much more the sexual side of things. (Teacher Primary 7, Angus)

I would say it should be taken by Primary 5, particularly since you are talking about, when you are getting to the stage kids in Primary 5, they know, but also when you are actually preparing them, there are children as young as Primary 5 who are maturing, who are beginning to grow bodily hair, they are maybe having periods, I think you really have to be aware of your children. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Perth & Kinross)

It was also believed by a number of those interviewed that teachers needed to know their class and would need to make a judgement call. You can not assume that simply because this year class is ready for more sexual discussions the next year class would also be ready for the same discussion.

I think for the children that we've got. It was right for this year and I don't know if I could say that every year, it might be just that we could take it down to primary 4/5. I think you just have to see. I think a lot depends on your maturity as well and what you think they are going to be able to cope with. (Teacher Primary 1-7, Perth & Kinross)

4.9 Teachers' Role in Delivering Sex and Relationship Education

Only a very few teachers did not believe that sex and relationship education should be part of the teacher's role. However, many did believe that they should do no more than backing up the work done at home with parents.

The back-up and the parents should be the primary source and we are supporting them. I certainly don't think it should ever be the schools. (Teacher Primary 4, Dundee)

Sex Education in Primary School

Whilst other interviewees recognised that although they believe that this should be part of the parents' role since parents failed to do it then school needs to do it for them. Schools offer the best opportunity to ensure that young people have the correct information because they are a 'captive audience'.

I know it should be the parents that do this, but realistically they don't, so we should be doing it, because this is the only time you have a captive audience. (Teacher Primary 3-7, Dundee)

In providing sex and relationship education the majority of teachers interviewed believed that their role and the purpose of the education was to provide their class with good information and to prepare them for the changes that they will face during puberty.

So that the children are aware of, first of all, aware of their own bodies and the changes that are going to be happening but also that it is coming from a reliable source and they are getting the right information. And also there are parents out there who find it really difficult to talk to their children about this kind of thing, we can do it for them. But I think it is very important that the children get the right information. (Head Teacher, Angus)

Some interviewees believed that the purpose of SRE was to empower young people to think and to make choices for themselves making it clear that they are responsible for what they do to their bodies.

They have choices to make...I try to make them think, all the time I try to make them think...I don't have all the right answers, nobody does. You work out your own. (Teacher Primary 5, Dundee)

For the children to be more informed about the choices that they have and realise the good that come out of an equal relationship and the choices that they can make together. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

Well, I think it's just information. It's giving them information about what's going to happen to their body, that's the first thing. And I think it's to make them think about their body and what they want to happen to their body. I'm only telling them that it's their body and their responsible for it so whatever they do to it or whatever they do with it is up to them...I mean ultimately we'd hope it would avoid the unwanted pregnancies but I don't know (laughs) how you can measure that. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

It was also widely believed that there was an important sexual health message that they are trying to communicate to their pupils. Although you will not stop them from having sex you can provide them with the information that may enable them to avoid sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies and to give them the confidence to speak to others about abuse. In this sense teachers recognised and accepted their role as sexual health promoters.

Reduce the health risks of teenagers, if they get informed about it at a young enough age, I don't think you will stop teenagers having sex, you just won't do that, but what we could maybe do is reduce the number of STI's, the number of unwanted pregnancies, I also think that it raises children's awareness of their bodies, so it's not just preventing them from putting themselves in harm but also giving them confidence. I think also it helps, in a small way with sexual abuse. If children are aware at a younger age that what is happening to them should not be happening, then that can give them confidence. Also I think teaching them from a young age gives the children that security to come and speak to us about things like that, because we become a different person to them whenever we are talking about these things, they maybe seem us in a different light, or they maybe see us as a confidante or whatever. (Depute Head Teacher, Angus)

Probably just to ensure their sexual safety both healthwise and protecting themselves out and about. Being aware of risks but also to make them realise that it is part of the everyday life that this is a loving relationship, that this is what people do. And for me it is to promote that it is healthy. It's part of health promotion in the school. (Head Teacher, Angus)

4.10 Reasons for Attending Sexuality & Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers

The findings of the pre-training questionnaires suggested that many teachers chose to do the training to increase knowledge, for guidance on curriculum delivery and to build their confidence. Many of the teachers also acknowledged that they had not taught this area before and therefore the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* course offered them the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills:

Yes I did because I knew that as the head teacher that was responsible for it, I needed to know about it. It's not an area that I have taught in my life and all these years teaching it's not something I have tackled, and I mean, bits of it obviously within the health education, like your cycles and things like that, and any questions children would ask you, you would answer, but I haven't sat down to do a sex education programme of study, ever. And so because it was new to me I felt that I should get as much information as I could and be ready. (Head Teacher Primary 1-3, Perth & Kinross)

Some of the teachers were sent by their head teacher and were expected to pass down the information or help to construct the school's programme. For example, in one school two senior members of staff were expected to attend the course:

When the sex education course came up, our Head Teacher sent her two senior teachers on the course. We went and had to come back and make sure that everything we had learned was put into practice. (Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)

However, one interviewee believed that this type of training needed to be experienced and believed that what was learned was not easily cascaded to

other teachers. For another interviewee it was important that Sex and Relationship training be delivered by someone unknown to the teachers since such a person would not be influenced by prior knowledge about the group:

Well it's not the same ok they say teachers on a course and you can cascade the information, that's not one of the ones that you can cascade very well. It's one of the ones that you really need to go on and be on the course for the full length of time yourself. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

I think if they want sex education taught properly there has got to be more training. And I think from someone like Priscilla, who is an outsider, who doesn't know you, who has no agendas. I can speak to the staff but I know this one doesn't want to talk about it, I know that one has got very strict moral ideas and won't listen, whereas a stranger coming in and saying right this is what we do, is far easier. (Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)

This interviewee also argued that providing all teachers with the opportunity to undertake training similar to Tayside's *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* was important to ensure the development of a skilled workforce (See 4.14).

4.11 Benefits of Attending the Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers

Attending the training had a wide range of benefits for teachers. For many teachers it was the increase in confidence that was the most important benefit of going on the course.

I think that the big one, not just for me, but for everyone on the course, it was the increased confidence. For me it was actually great getting out meeting other people and hearing about what is going on in other schools, sometimes you think my goodness we are not doing that, and other times when you hear what is happening, you think we are not quite so bad after all. You get both sides of the coin. But I think the big thing was the increased confidence and also just the time. Because you spent that time in the training, the time to go through the material, if somebody just gave you the package in the school and said there you go, make your way through that, you don't actually set aside time to go through everything and also the knowledge and experience of the people delivering the training, they were superb. It's just having that experience and knowledge you know if you gave a scenario, she came back at you, well here's how you might do this or you could try that. That was just so helpful to everyone. She had a way of dealing with things, nice and calm. (Head Teacher, Angus)

I think that was the main bit, it gave me a great deal of confidence because even on the first day of the course I can remember just looking at my feet and wishing the ground would swallow me up. So it certainly by the end of day four I was feeling happier about it and thinking I could do this, and there was a lot more to it than just the sex bit or the body parts, there was a lot more to be done as well. So certainly that really helped. (Teacher Primary 7, Angus)

Sex Education in Primary School

It was fantastic. It was a really really good course. It gives you the confidence and everyone was talking openly. It was just so good. They were just full of lots of practical advice and it had a great balance of having to be able to laugh about it as well as maybe talking about more serious issues as well. The input was FAB. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

One interviewee simply said that before going on this training course she could not have personally delivered sex education to 24 children, and while she found aspects of the training challenging, she was now able to deliver the curriculum.

No I just thought there is no way I can do, I was really uncomfortable about it, there is no way I'm doing this. I haven't delivered any sex education I have only; this is the first year that I have had a level of class that we do actual sexual health so I have never done it. I'm quite comfortable with it, but the thought of delivering it to 24 children, one who has particular problems, was just, I can't do this. That's how I felt before the course. I must admit even when I was on the course, I found some of it difficult, some things even difficult to say and hear and I don't know whether it was because I was in a room of my peers and didn't know any of these people. I wasn't comfortable but I do feel that I can approach it and be comfortable delivering it. They would never have known that I was nervous, but now I feel I could deliver it quite comfortably. (Teacher Primary 5-6, Angus)

For a number of teachers another benefit of the training was the time to go through and become acquainted with all the materials on the programme.

Confidence to know what is actually taught, it gave me quite thorough use of the living and growing pack and the activities that it done so that in itself was good to see that. Even the network with other teachers and to hear their apprehensions and chat to people who are in the same boat as yourself, at the end of the course I think I felt more confident to actually go ahead and teach the programme. (Depute Head Teacher, Angus)

The training also provided the teachers with a safe place where they could not only come to terms with the content of the curriculum but also get over their own apprehension over using terms like 'penis', 'vagina' and 'clitoris'.

I think the main thing for me, what I got the most from the course, is just getting a taste of what to expect. Having to hear some of the language to hear some of the words to see some of the pictures if you like. If you can be in a room full of women and say clitoris basically there is no embarrassment. That was the main thing, I think. And also resources, it's great to get your hands on resources but the main thing for me was just, I think a bit of confidence there, not so much for me as a person, but on how to teach the subject how to approach it. (Teacher Primary 6, Angus)

Any embarrassment that you might have had about using the correct terminology for body parts or such like, is gone by the end of that, because you are reduced to having a mouth of filth on some of these

twilights. So you kind of get rid of that. The correct terminology, in a group of people you use words that you wouldn't normally use, using the correct terminology becomes much easier and less embarrassing and apprehensions about the content and why it was important for children to know certain things at certain ages was alleviated, because it was made explicit to you why it was important. You understood by the end why it was important that these children were aware of their bodies and what's going on. (Teacher Primary 6-7, Angus)

The training also gave teachers the opportunity to discuss the programme with other teachers who also had delivered sex and relationship education. For a significant proportion of interviewees this was really beneficial since it offered them the opportunity to talk to other teachers and school nurses who were experiencing the same anxieties and who may have a different point of view from them.

I think the main thing was the confidence that it gave me, and the reassurance of what I was doing was fine, gave me some other ideas to think about. Listening to others on the course, discovering we are all in the same boat. The nurses were there as well and it was the same for them. It was really good to listen from their viewpoint. But I just felt that really it kind of 'geared' me up. I know now the help that is available for me, which I can use. I really enjoyed it. (Teacher Primary 1-7, Perth & Kinross)

The training also offered those on the course the opportunity to find out about how other schools delivered their SRE programme and how advanced they were in implementing it. This provided a yardstick by which attendees could measure their own and their school's performance.

This course has opened our eyes to the fact that there are other things that we should be doing as well. Because you never really know what other schools are doing. You go in the classroom and you talk about things yourself here, but it's good to actually hear what should be taught and have ideas and how it could be taught and also hearing what the other colleagues are saying and their experiences as well. (Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)

Whereas another interviewee who felt out of step with those in her school found that she was in step with what was being said on the training and this gave her increased confidence.

Going on that course did give me the confidence. Because the training we did in school, I felt a wee bit out of step with everyone. People were sitting saying you know we shouldn't be doing that we shouldn't be watching that. I'd be watching that bit of the video but not that bit, and be tippexing clitoris out. My background was Social Work. I worked in children's units before where sex education is a huge issue, kids who are obviously active, and you realise how important it is, and I didn't have an issue with any of it, so I felt a wee bit of out of step, so it was really nice to go on this course. (Teacher Primary 3-7, Dundee)

Another benefit of going on the course for the interviewees was learning how to deal with parents who were understandably anxious that their young daughter or son was about to start SRE. The training provided them with considerable information in the form of statistics which they could use, as one interviewee did, as 'ammunition'.

Yes. Because it gave me the ammunition and the statistics and all the information that parents are asking. And all the experts I met on the course were happy to come out and do workshops for the parental evening. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

It was also suggested that one of the exercises used on the training demonstrated just how important it was for children to have SRE in primary school. This exercise was especially good at showing parents that not to give their children this information now had the potential to make them more vulnerable.

Yes there was one activity that Priscilla, and she did it fairly early on, and I thought BINGO, if ever you have to raise awareness in your parent group to that extent and it was quite shocking, that's the exercise to do. That was probably the most powerful exercise that she did for me, because if you like I didn't need to be persuaded how essential it was I needed to persuade others. And that really just captured what we need to do age 11 –16 or they are out the system, potentially gone, or they are involving themselves in practices which make them vulnerable. (005 – 2001)

One of the head teachers interviewed said that the training gave her the confidence and the knowledge to tackle both the anxieties of parents and concerns raised by members of her staff.

Just making me more confident about delivering, particularly when I've got difficulties coming, anxieties coming from parents, and from staff. If I hadn't done the training I would have been very much shooting from the hip, whereas I knew it was talking about authority policy, I knew, so therefore I was saying I'm listening to you, I hear your concerns, but here are the concerns of the authority. And it's our job to do this it's our job to ensure that your child knows, what they need to know in order to face the outside world. And I said we do that about road safety, we will do it about every kind of safety, safety in the home, we do it about everything. Why would we not do it about something that is as important. We do every aspect of safety and this is just one other. (Teacher Primary 1-3, Perth & Kinross)

While almost every interviewee believed that the training was excellent and gave them essential knowledge and skills to effectively deliver the SRE curriculum, some interviewees also recognised that the training was personally quite difficult. However, by forcing an individual to confront their beliefs and fears it produces a more confident teacher who is better able to teach this area of the curriculum.

I found the training quite daunting, it made you look very closely at yourself and your own beliefs and that was quite threatening and I don't know if a lot of people would be able to cope with that. I was very apprehensive about the whole thing but by the time I came to the end of the training I was far more confident within myself to actually get up and do this. If I hadn't gone through that I don't know if I would have had the confidence. I think the training would put a lot of people off, but if you could survive that then you come out the other end a much stronger person. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

I think to begin with when I went in it made me feel quite inadequate, that I wasn't covering and how on earth am I going to be able to do that. And I did think this is awful. But as the course went on, there were good ideas and good advice as to how to tackle certain areas and embarrassing questions and you very much developed strategies to deal with these things in the classroom. So the course was beneficial while it did shock me to begin with. I didn't come away from the course shocked, and I still come away thinking this is going to be harder than we have been doing and possibly more embarrassing but if it is necessary then it's necessary and you just have to deal with ways of overcoming any fears you have in teaching it. And I like everything the more you do something the easier it becomes. We are very much at the beginning stages here, having not used positive steps for a couple of years, but I daresay the more we do it the more comfortable we will become and the better. (Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)

4.12 What Participants Most Enjoyed about the Training

All interviewees said that they found the training enjoyable, even if it was challenging. In part this was related to the skill of the trainers and their ability to get the participants to relax.

Priscilla and Mary were just great... they were just amazing, it made me feel at ease. (Teacher Primary 5-6, Angus)

I would have to say the informal way it was presented It actually was a very relaxing course and you took everything on I mean they achieved all their objectives we covered the whole thing. I felt confident by the end of it to actually teach the whole course, but it was the way in which it was presented that I would say was the best part of the actual course. (Depute Head Teacher, Angus)

Fun, the laughter. We were all apprehensive, all a bit shy, but also been given materials to read. Materials we can use for the children and ideas. Ideas that would work. Things we could do. Gradually your confidence grows. Felt more relaxed. (Teacher Primary 3, Dundee)

Many of those interviewed also really enjoyed meeting up with other teachers and finding out how they felt and how they were progressing with the curriculum.

Probably getting to know about teachers that were in the same position as you, it's nice to know that you weren't alone. You kind of think am I the only one here that is just so uncomfortable with this. And it was nice to know that there were others out there. (Teacher Primary 5-6, Angus)

Very good ideas from some of the other teachers about how they are going about it as well and ideas from Priscilla. Ideas from Priscilla and how to open it up to your staff, especially the staff who are quite nervous about it, but the ideas from the other teachers and the opportunities to share practice helped. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

4.13 How the Training could be Improved

While everyone interviewed had enjoyed the training and felt that it was very beneficial, some aspects of the training were not particularly liked. In particular, teachers did not enjoy the twilight sessions that have been used in recent years because of the difficulty that the local authorities have had in releasing teachers for three or four full days. Some of those interviewed only had one full day followed by three twilights and the participants just did not feel this was an adequate amount of time to do all that the training needed to accomplish.

The fact that it was twilights. That's the only thing I could say was a negative about the actual course that it was done in the evening. Content was excellent, presenters were excellent. (Depute Head Teacher, Angus)

3 twilights and 1 day, but you were going at it all the time. We all agreed that there really was not enough time. There were other avenues we could have gone down and explored and talked about but you didn't have time. (Teacher Primary 3, Dundee)

The time. I felt like I was rushed. She handed us all this research and went over it basically but it would have been nice to sit and look it. She gave us a sheet of paper and answer these questions. What's this legally. When did this start. That was great. But to be able to look at that more in depth would have been good. (Teacher Primary 1-3, Dundee)

Other than the twilights and not having enough time to discuss everything and in the depth they wished to talk about it, only two other issues were raised by interviewees. One interviewee was very uncomfortable feeling forced into saying certain words. Even though it was stressed by the trainers that no one had to do anything that they were not comfortable with, this interviewee felt that she had to say these words or face ridicule from the other teachers on the training.

It was just a lot of the words that we were encouraged to think of for certain things I found that really uncomfortable and then were made to read them out. Which I didn't like doing. They did always say that if you really felt badly about it, you didn't have to do it, but then you felt that everyone would laugh at you. We were all split up into our groups and had to think a name for penis, vagina and a name for sex and a name for something else and write down all these lists. And then went round them

and read them out and did find that really uncomfortable. (Teacher Primary 5-6, Angus)

The other comment was from one of the few men on the training who felt that he would have liked some male support.

I would have liked to have seen another couple of guys there, not in terms to make me more comfortable, just to get another man's opinion. (Teacher Primary 6, Angus)

Almost all the teachers who were interviewed indicated that they were happy with the content of the training; however, one interviewee who had completed the training in 1997 believed that a greater focus on activities that could be used in the classroom with their pupils would have helped them to teach the subject more.

No there wasn't enough to show how to teach it in class...I suppose I wanted to go in there and come out thinking ok I can use that with my class or that's going to help me teach it. (Teacher Primary 5-7, Angus)

The one other issue that was raised by a significant number of interviewees was a follow-up session. It was believed by many that such a session would be useful in order to offer the teachers and school nurses the opportunity to exchange experiences with those with whom they trained and to discuss what they believed worked well and what did not.

It would be nice to have a refresher even to see how you got on, then discuss anything like 'I tried this but it was terrible', 'tried this it was brilliant'... it would also be good to go back to the original group to see how everybody felt it went and have a de-briefing about how their particular experience was and exchange ideas. That would be quite good. (Teacher Primary 5-6, Angus)

I think in terms of follow up courses, chances to discuss what's been done that type of thing would be valuable. (Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)

4.14 Importance of Training Teachers to Deliver Sex and Relationship Education

A few of those interviewed said that they believed the training should be made available for all teachers and that all teachers should be made to go on it. For one interviewee this was part of the process of creating a 'skilled workforce'.

I thought the days were fantastic. I must say first morning it shocked me to the toes, but as the two days went on I realised why it was done that way, and I think it was absolutely wonderful. And I still maintain that every teacher should go through it and I think we would have a far better 'skilled' workforce to do what they are being asked to do. Because at the moment they are not. They are uncomfortable but if they had to go through these two days I hope that would get rid a lot of their inhibitions. (Teacher Primary 7, Dundee)

Sex Education in Primary School

Only a couple of the teachers interviewed had any training on sex education as part of their teacher training, and even this was inadequate. Therefore a number of interviewees believed that training on the delivery of sex education should be incorporated into teaching training for primary school teachers.

Oh yes, I would be hoping when the student teachers are there that when they are dealing with the health that would part of the training. Yes I think that should be. (Depute Head Teacher, Dundee)

Yes, because it was quite daunting. That's one thing that the trainer on the course was quite shocked with, that I had never had any sort of this training. It wasn't even a PGCE which is 1 year, it was 4 years, and not even mentioned. Got taught a lot about, mentioned about child protection and things but never sex ed. (Teacher Primary 3-7, Perth & Kinross)

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The Scottish Executive and Local Authorities are increasingly demanding that primary school teachers become sexual health promoters. However, as both this study and others have found (see Buston, Wight & Scott 2001), many teachers are uncomfortable with aspects of this role. Even when teachers claim to be comfortable teaching SRE this is often only after tinkering with the programme. For example, many of the teachers who were interviewed as part of this research while generally happy to deliver SRE were still uncomfortable with using the term 'clitoris' and therefore removed it from their curriculum. Other subjects also caused some concern, particularly homosexuality and contraception, although a number of teachers also cited potential questions about oral sex.

Specific training for teachers on delivering sex and relationship education was considered by the majority of interviewees as extremely important, and a few interviewees did not believe that they could have delivered the sex and relationship curriculum without having attended the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* run by Tayside Health Promotion. This underlines the importance of ensuring that all teachers who deliver SRE have adequate training before entering the classroom. Ideally such training would be incorporated into the teacher training curriculum; however, few of our interviewees remember having any training on SRE. It is surprising that at primary school where it is likely that all teachers would be expected to contribute to SRE, since there is not the level of specialisation that is found at secondary school, that it is still possible to graduate without completing a component on sex and relationship education (Young 2004).

One of the major benefits of offering training on delivering sex and relationship education is the increased confidence it gives teachers (Young 2004). The *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary Teachers* course, our interviewees suggested, significantly increased their confidence in this area of the curriculum and therefore enabled them to more effectively deliver sex and relationship education. Our study also echoes the findings of the SHARE evaluation which found that teachers believed that collegiate support, the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the teaching materials, as well as overcoming their discomfort with the subject, were the benefits of training (Wight & Buston 2003). Although the SHARE intervention was aimed at secondary school, it is clear that primary school teachers appreciated the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* for very similar reasons.

For many teachers, the first time that they had looked at the SRE curriculum was at the training, and it therefore offered an important opportunity to familiarise themselves with the *Living and Growing* programme, to clarify what was expected of them and to overcome their anxieties with delivering this area of the curriculum. Although the *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary Teachers* is very successful in reducing teachers' anxieties, the continued concern with the term 'clitoris' and with discussing homosexuality or contraception should be reviewed. Part of the concern about homosexuality or

contraception seemed to stem from teachers not wanting or believing that it was inappropriate to discuss the 'nitty gritty' of sex with their pupils. However, given the recognition of the failure of the SHARE programme to affect sexual behaviour and the hypothesis that a 20 period school-based sex education programme may be too little given other influences on our sexual behaviour (Wight et al. 2002), earlier intervention may be necessary.

Even though the majority of schools started their sex and relationship programme in Primary 1 the topics covered and the age at which they were covered varied considerably. This variation is surprising given that Angus, Dundee and Perth and Kinross have all recently rolled out a sex and relationship programme. Although some topics were almost universally taught such as 'the Family and Other Special People that Care for them', 'Being Part of a Family' and 'Dealing with a Bullying Situation', the more sexually explicit the subject the fewer schools taught them. For example, the 'awareness of sexually transmitted infections' was the least covered followed by 'Parenting Roles' and 'Contraception & Family Planning'.

It is possible that variations between schools could be reduced through training, especially since it does not appear from this study that variations are the result of parental involvement. Whilst in some schools there was initially some parental concern, in other schools parents seemed unconcerned about the introduction of SRE. One school, in particular, had trouble in interesting parents at all in the curriculum or the SRE teaching materials. The reasons for this are unclear, however, this school was in an area that experienced high levels of social exclusion. The impact that this factor has would need to be explored through further research. Most parents having viewed the materials and seen the curriculum seemed reassured and some parents were particularly happy that teachers were shouldering some of the responsibility for sex education.

Appendix A: Schools' Questionnaire

Promoting Sexual Health in Scottish Primary Schools An Evaluation of Primary Teacher Sexual Health Training in Tayside

My name is Dr. Jason Annetts, a lecturer at the University of Abertay-Dundee, and I have recently been awarded a research grant from the Scottish Executive Education Development Fund to evaluate Tayside's Specialist Health Promotion Service's 'Sexuality and relationship training for primary teachers'.

A major component of this evaluation is the mapping of sexual health and relationship teaching in Tayside's primary schools. This mapping exercise will not only provide essential background information detailing the provision of sexual health and relationship education in Tayside but will also hopefully highlight the support and training needs that primary schools may have to enable them to become sexual health promoters.

If you have any questions or would like to meet with me to discuss this study further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Faithfully

Dr. Jason Annetts

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University of Abertay
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Sex Education in Primary School

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

1. Does your school have a written policy on sexual health and relationship education?
[Please tick box]

Yes	
No	

2. Does your school have a written strategy for consulting parents about sexual health and relationship education? [Please tick box]

Yes	
No	

3. Does your school currently have a sexual health and relationship programme? [Please tick box]

Yes	
No	

IF NO, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 4.

If yes, which year groups does this programme cover? [Please tick box(s)]

Nursery – Primary 3	
Primary 4 – Primary 5	
Primary 6 – Primary 7	

4. Who is responsible for the delivery of sexual health and relationship teaching in your school? [Please tick box(s)]

Head teacher	
Designated teacher(s)	
All teaching staff	
School Nurse	
Other [Please Specify]	

Sex Education in Primary School

5. Have you used any of the following consultation strategies in your discussions with parents concerning your sexual health programme? [Tick as many boxes as appropriate]

Parents sent information on planned sex and relationship programme.	
Parents' evenings on planned programme held.	
Information on sex education programme included in the school handbook or prospectus.	
Workshops/information sessions where materials used are on display	
Question and answer booklets	
Surveys to ascertain parents' views on the sex education programme.	
Other [Please Specify]	
Other [Please Specify]	

6. Have you ever had a request from a parent or guardian to withdraw a child from your sexual health and relationship programme? [Please tick box]

Yes	
No	

IF NO, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 7.

If yes, before you agreed to withdraw the child from these classes did you do any of the following? [Please tick boxes]

	YES	NO
Meet with the parents to discuss and try to alleviate their concerns.		
Ascertain how the parents/guardians were going to meet the sexual health and relationship educational needs of their child.		
Consult with the child to find out their view on the matter and their educational needs.		
Explain that you would be unable to remove the child from all classes where sexual health and relationships may be discussed.		

What arrangements were made to accommodate the parent/guardian's request for their child to be withdrawn from these classes? [Please specify]

Sex Education in Primary School

7. Have you consulted with your pupils over what information they would like to receive in your sexual health and relationship classes? [Please tick box]

Yes	
No	

IF NO, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 8.

If yes, what form did this consultation take? [Please Specify]

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8. Which of the following topics are covered in your sexual health and relationship programme?

Please indicate in what year you cover each topic.

Please indicate the topics you do not cover by writing 'N/A'.

Topic	Year(s)
Awareness of the way bodies grow and change	
Uniqueness of their body	
Where living things come from	
Family and other special people who care for them	
Exploring changes in the body	
How human life begins	
Being part of a family	
Dealing with bullying situations	
Physical and emotional changes at puberty	
Body image and self-worth	
Understanding of own developing sexuality	
Developing an awareness of gender identity	
Changing nature of friendship	
Dealing with sexual feelings	
Menstruation	
Pregnancy and birth	
Skills required to maintain friendships and relationships	
Gender stereotypes, equal opportunities & discrimination	
Permanent and responsible relationships	
Parenting roles	
Contraception and family planning issues	
Awareness of sexually-transmitted infections	

Sex Education in Primary School

9. Are there any other topics that you cover as part of your sexual health and relationship programme at your school? [Please Specify]

Topic	Year

10. Do you feel that your local authority has provided you with adequate guidance to facilitate the delivery of your sexual health and relationship programme? [Please Specify]

11. Has any member of your school's staff received specific training on delivering sexual health education in primary school?

Yes	
No	

IF NO, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 12.

If yes, what was this training and how useful has it been in the delivery of your sexual health and relationship programme?

12. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make?

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We would also very much appreciate any written materials that you can provide concerning your school's sexual health and relationship consultations, policy and teaching. This material will only be used to map the diversity of approaches taken by schools in delivering their sexual health and relationship programme.

As part of this research we are also planning to conduct a small number of interviews with head teachers to explore their school's experience of sexual health and relationship teaching. If you would be willing to take part in the interviews please could you write your name and your work telephone number in the space below.

NAME	TELEPHONE

**Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.
If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Jason Annetts.
Tel. 01382 308745
Email: shtjka@abertay.ac.uk**

Appendix B: Before Training Questionnaire

Promoting Sexual Health in Scottish Primary Schools

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this brief questionnaire. It should take you no longer than 5 minutes to complete.

This questionnaire forms part of an evaluation of *Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers* that is being funded by the Scottish Executive. The purpose of the questionnaire is to provide information on why you chose to attend this training. We will also be conducting a small number of follow up interviews in a few months that will explore how the training has facilitated your teaching about sexual health and relationships.

If you have any questions concerning this research please contact:

Dr. Jason Annetts
Division of Sociology
School of Social and Health Sciences
University of Abertay-Dundee
Dundee
DD1 1HG

Tel. 01382 308745

All information collected in the questionnaire is confidential and will be kept in a secure location at the University of Abertay-Dundee.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research.

Yours faithfully

Dr. Jason Annetts

We would like to start by asking you a few questions about yourself, your school and how long you have been teaching.

1. Are you male or female? (please specify) _____
2. How long have you been teaching? (please specify) _____
3. How long have you been teaching at your current school?
(please specify) _____
4. What age group do you teach? (please specify) _____
5. Is your school in a predominantly urban or rural Location? (Please tick most appropriate box)

Rural	<input type="checkbox"/>
Urban	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. How many children are enrolled in the school? (Please specify) _____

We would now like to ask you a few questions about why you chose to attend Sexuality and Relationship Training for Primary School Teachers.

7. Are you primarily responsible for teaching about sexual health and relationships at your school?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. How comfortable do you feel in delivering sexual health and relationship teaching? (Please Specify)

Sex Education in Primary School

9. Why have you chosen to attend this training? (Please Specify)

10. How important do you believe that promoting sexual health begin in primary school? (Please circle the appropriate number)

1

2

3

4

5

Very Important

Not Very Important

A small number of those who have attended this training will be contacted in a few months for a short follow up interview to assess the effectiveness of this training. In order that we may contact you, if necessary, we would appreciate if you could provide us with your name and school address.

Name:

School Address:

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

Appendix C: References

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Weis D. (1999) 'Inter-personal Heterosexual Behaviour' in P. B. Koch & D. L. Weis (eds.) Sexuality in America New York: Continuum.

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