

## Advice on Responding to the Department of Education's RSE Consultation



**COMPULSORY LESSONS ON HOW TO GET AN ABORTION ARE COMING TO ALL NORTHERN IRELAND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS.**

**URGENT ACTION REQUIRED: Consultation Deadline: 5pm 24 November 2023!**

Earlier this year, the Secretary of State introduced the 2023 Northern Ireland RSE Regulations. This legislation means that all post-primary schools in Northern Ireland — regardless of their ethos or religious character — are legally required to teach pupils that they have a right to abortion and tell girls how they can get one without their parents finding out. It is unlawful for teachers to discuss abortion from a pro-life perspective.

The Department of Education is seeking the views of the public on the right of parents to be informed about the content of RSE material and in what circumstances they can withdraw their children. The consultation does not address the most controversial aspect of the new law — the promotion of abortion. It is important, therefore, to use the comments section under each question to send a message to the Department of Education.

**Please help us protect young people from pro-abortion propaganda in schools by using the consultation to oppose the 2023 RSE Regulations.**

While the consultation is limited in scope, it provides an opportunity to make your voice heard. This guide lists a range of possible responses. You can use some or all of these as well as record your own thoughts. It is important to use your own words where possible. Multiple identical submissions may be dismissed or counted as one single contribution. Personalising comments will help to avoid this. Responses from individuals are also preferable to group submissions.

The consultation closes at 5 pm on Friday 24 November 2023. Please complete the questionnaire as soon as you can and encourage your family, friends and other contacts to do the same.

The London Government is determined to stamp out all opposition to its abortion agenda and is now coming for our children. We must make it clear to the Secretary of State that abortion indoctrination has no place in our schools.

Submissions can be made through Citizen Space, directly to the Department at [rseresponses@education-ni.gov.uk](mailto:rseresponses@education-ni.gov.uk) or in writing to Curriculum Team, Room S1, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Rathgill, Bangor BT19 7PR.

You can access the online survey by going to:  
<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/de/rse-consultation/consultation/intro/>

## The Questions

1. The content of teaching and learning resources for Learning for Life and Work developed by CCEA should be factual and contain age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion and these resources should not advocate, or oppose, a particular view on the moral and ethical considerations of abortion or contraception.

Disagree

### Examples of ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

You may wish to put some of the following points in your own words:

- The terms “factual... age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate” are open to wide interpretation. It is a scientific fact that abortion ends the life of an unborn child.
- Parents are best placed to decide what is age-appropriate for their child as well as what is appropriate in respect of their religious convictions.
- It is entirely inappropriate for schools to signpost girls to abortion providers.
- The June 2023 RSE Regulations ban schools from advancing religious views on abortion.
- The new RSE Regulations are not morally neutral, they compel all post primary schools to refer girls to abortion providers.
- These Regulations drive a wedge between parents and their teenage daughters and will have a knock-on effect on young children, destroying their innocence.

Parental Opt-Out From Lesson(s) on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Covering Prevention of Early Pregnancy and Access to Abortion Any provision for an opt-out will not apply to the teaching of RSE through other subjects, including Religious Education, Drama, English, Biology and History.

2. Parents/carers should be informed about the specific nature and content of the age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion.

Agree

### Examples of ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- This law gives the London government the power to dictate the moral education of our children.
- Parents should have the automatic right to withdraw their children from all RSE lessons, as well as RSE content in other subjects.
- In a poll of 1465 adults in Northern Ireland aged 18+ conducted by Whitestone Insight between 4 and 8 September 2023, six in ten parents supported the idea that they should be allowed to withdraw their children from lessons that conflict with their moral or religious values.
- The poll found that six in ten parents strongly oppose the idea that schools can refer children for an abortion without their consent.
- Article 26 (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 2 of the First Protocol of the European Convention recognise the “prior” right of parents to have their children educated in line with their own religious convictions. The Department must respect this right.

3. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child includes at Articles 1-3 and 12 the rights of the child to 'express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously' and at Article 5 'the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to provide guidance and direction to their child as they grow up so that they fully enjoy their rights. This must be done in a way that recognises the child's increasing capacity to make their own choices.' The Department's guidance, when developed, should consider in such instances how schools balance the rights of both children and parents/carers in implementing the regulations.

Neither agree nor disagree

Examples of ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- This question is based on the false idea that parental care conflicts with the best interests of children. It is parents, not the State, who hold the best interests of their children at heart.
- Attempts by the State to sew division between children and their parents is an illegitimate interference in family life.
- The Department must respect the right of parents, recognised in international law to have their children educated in accordance with their religious convictions.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognises that: "*the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth*". Legalised abortion violates a child's right to legal protection before birth. Promoting and facilitating abortion also violates it.
- Article 18 (1) of the CRC stipulates: "*States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.*"
- Article 5 of the CRC must be read in the context of the whole treaty and its recognition of the primary responsibility of parents for the upbringing of their children.
- Article 26 (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "*Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.*" This right has priority.
- Unless parents are suspected of abuse or neglect, they must not be excluded from decisions affecting the welfare of their children, including decisions regarding abortion and contraception.

4. Pupils and parents/carers should have access to an overview of their school's RSE policy and planned RSE programme.

Agree

Examples of ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Under Article 2 of the First Protocol of the ECHR, states have a legal duty to "respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions." Parents, therefore, should have access not just to an overview of a school's RSE policy but all RSE material including content presented by external providers.
- Failure to provide complete transparency will result in mistrust and suspicion.

Other general points you can put forward include:

- Because there was no consultation before they were imposed, the Relationships and Sexuality Education (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 are illegitimate.
- The RSE Regulations should be immediately withdrawn and no further legislation introduced without a full public consultation.
- Under RSE guidance in England, schools are free to reflect their religious or moral ethos in the discussion of abortion. Why is Northern Ireland being treated differently?

The consultation closes at 5 pm on 24 November 2023. It is available online at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultations/relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse-consultation>

Responses can be emailed to: [rseresponses@education-ni.gov.uk](mailto:rseresponses@education-ni.gov.uk) or posted to Curriculum Team, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Rathgill, BANGOR, BT19 7PR



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