

Dáil na nÓg 2022



Topic 1: A more inclusive relationships and sexuality education

Topic 2: Addressing inequality issues and barriers to education

Topic 3: Addressing gender inequality



A more inclusive relationship and sexuality education



Within the topic of inclusive relationships and sexuality education, five **key issues** were identified:

- ▶ 1. The policy and approach to RSE
- ▶ 2. The content of the current programme
- ▶ 3. Delivery of RSE
- ▶ 4. The resources to support RSE
- ▶ 5. Other (sometimes unreliable) sources of information outside school

1. Issues with Policy and Approach to RSE



- ▶ Not mandatory – clashes with other subjects – not taken seriously
- ▶ No standardisation – variability in what is delivered across the country
- ▶ Outdated programme – in need of reform
- ▶ Influence of the church on what is delivered to students
- ▶ Timing – too late and not enough after Junior Certificate
- ▶ Option of parents to opt out
- ▶ No consequences of homophobic bullying in schools

1. Recommendations to Policy and Approach



- ▶ Reform the RSE to improve the delivery of inclusive RSE
- ▶ Make the delivery of RSE mandatory
- ▶ **Standardise the delivery of RSE (host consultations with YP, teachers and stakeholders in the reform)**
- ▶ **Consultations & student voice – proper workshops on curriculum reform**
- ▶ Start earlier
- ▶ Better sex education focus on healthy relationships

2. Issues with content RSE Programme



- ▶ **Content of current RSE**
- ▶ Not enough information covered in programme
- ▶ Focus on biological facts rather than emotional aspects of relationships
- ▶ Abstinence based
- ▶ Not inclusive
- ▶ Misogynistic - different social standards
- ▶ No focus on consent
- ▶ No focus on body image
- ▶ No focus on period product availability
- ▶ Not enough information on contraception

2. Recommendations on content of RSE programme



- ▶ Reform of RSE (standardised and implemented, starting earlier, developed with youth voice, removal of influence of church, mandatory same sex relationship education,
- ▶ The content of RSE to include information on consent and healthy relationships, and LGBTIQ education
- ▶ Delivery of RSE by trained teachers
- ▶ Resources to include more inclusive textbooks, access to sexual health information, access to sanitary products, free condoms and STI services.

3. Issues with Delivery of RSE



- ▶ Low teacher competence
- ▶ Not trained – low skills
- ▶ Teachers afraid to teach it/uncomfortable with topic
- ▶ Limited awareness and biased delivery – teachers presenting their opinion (e.g. sexist, homophobic, transphobic)
- ▶ Too teacher led – book focused – limited discussion/interaction
- ▶ Skimmed over and some topics censored
- ▶ Not an exam subject so given little attention – perceived to be a 'doss class'

3. Recommendations on delivery of RSE



- ▶ Improve the training of teachers to deliver inclusive RSE
- ▶ Better education on delivering LGBTI+ sex education and ways to support LGBT+ students**
- ▶ Regular training for teachers
- ▶ **Resources to support inclusive RSE**

4. Issues with Resources to support RSE



- ▶ Outdated materials/text books
- ▶ No diversity in text books (RSE and general) (e.g. no images of same sex parents)
- ▶ Limited support for LGBTI+ students in schools

4. Recommendations on resources to support RSE



- ▶ Myth busting leaflets for schools
- ▶ More funding and resources
- ▶ Resources for young people
- ▶ Delivery of RSE by trained teachers
- ▶ Resources to include more inclusive textbooks, access to sexual health information, access to sanitary products, free condoms and STI services
- ▶ More information on healthcare and access to services
- ▶ More images of same sex relationships in textbooks and materials (i.e. mum/mum dad/dad)
- ▶ Access to free products in school (e.g. sanitary products, condoms)
- ▶ Access to free STI testing

5. Other issues with RSE



- ▶ Without good quality inclusive RSE, students have to rely on unreliable sources of information
- ▶ Parents (who need educated as well and who set limits on what is taught)
- ▶ Covid restrictions means 2 years of missed RSE
- ▶ Period poverty
- ▶ 'Stand up' programme not offered in all schools (inconsistent delivery)
- ▶ Lack of support for teen parents in schools/stigma of teen pregnancy

5. Other issues recommendations



- ▶ Reform of RSE (standardised and implemented, starting earlier, developed with youth voice, removal of influence of church, mandatory same sex relationship education,
- ▶ The content of RSE to include information on consent and healthy relationships, and LGBTIQ education
- ▶ Funding for NGOS in relation to sexual mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ Better support systems ,resources

Top three priorities



- ▶ 1.Reform of RSE (standardised and implemented, starting earlier, developed with youth voice, removal of influence of church, mandatory, same sex relationship education)
- ▶ 2.The content of RSE to include information on consent and healthy relationships, and LGBTIQ education
- ▶ 3.Delivery of RSE by trained teachers

Recommendations on Action



- ▶ Lobbying decision makers
- ▶ Securing the voice of young people
- ▶ Ongoing consultation to tease out specific actions (e.g. another conference/engagement)
- ▶ Specific consultation and engagement to revise the RSE curriculum and programme materials.