



Guidance to support North Yorkshire & York schools when working with external visitors to support their planned Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) curriculum which is inclusive of the statutory Relationships, Sex and Health Education

The aim of this document is to ensure that both the school and the external partners are mutually aware of the other's expectations and to ensure that a high-quality teaching and learning session is the guaranteed outcome.

Further support and resources to implement an effective PSHE curriculum are freely available via the [North Yorkshire and York Healthy Schools Website](#).

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The information within this document is inclusive of information from the PSHE association, DfE and kind permission from PSHE Education Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire to utilise their Using External Providers Guidance.

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Introduction

Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education supports children and young people to develop the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to thrive as individuals and members of society. These skills and attributes help children and young people to stay healthy and prepare them for life and work. When taught well PSHE education helps children and young people to achieve their academic potential and equipped with skills they will need throughout their life.

“Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is an important and necessary part of all pupils’ education. All schools should teach PSHE, drawing on good practice” *Department of Education*

When used well, external visitors can add interest and expertise to enhance an embedded PSHE education curriculum. The PSHE association states that:

- Visitors can bring a level of expertise in a particular issue or topic that a teacher may not have, nor should be expected to have.
- Outside agencies often have resources and personnel capacity which schools may otherwise lack.
- They can act as an expert witness, recounting events in their lives from a personal or professional perspective (for example a mother with a new baby, or a doctor explaining their career pathway).
- They can establish a ‘first contact’ to a helping agency — it can be really hard for a young person to approach any source of support ‘cold’. Establishing a relationship in a classroom session can help to overcome this. (For example, this may help establish a relationship with a health professional, a police officer or a representative of a local drop-in centre.)
- They bring ‘novelty’ — we know the brain recalls novelty. Well planned sessions can therefore add emphasis to important learning elements

External Providers

Education settings receive many offers from external providers to support their PSHE/RSE curriculum and it is important to be selective when making decisions about providers, this ensures pupils effectively learn from the experience and avoid possible hazards.

External Providers are visitors or speakers who are not regular staff members to support the planned delivery of any curriculum or awareness raising activity.

External agencies offer input and resources into RSE/PSHE include voluntary, statutory and commercial organisations. Education providers may receive input from parents, local or national charities, faith groups and health professionals.

Some organisations will have clear outcomes they want to achieve in relation to children and young people's health and well-being e.g. raise awareness of contraception choices.

Other organisations may have less clear, hidden purposes, for example they appear to offer a session on RSE and within the session covertly promote particular values or ideas e.g. pro-life, or perspectives that align with profit-making objectives and play down harms to health.

It is helpful to understand how the organisation is funded, particularly if the session is being offered free of charge. Schools should make an informed decision about industry funded educational programmes as they may offer biased information. Please see our section on Avoid Industry Funded Educational Programmes for further information.

Some external providers are private individuals rather than an organisation and these may have very compelling motives to want to deliver PSHE including sharing personal life experiences. Please see our section on Lived Experience for further information on managing these sessions.

[Relationships, Sex and Health Education Statutory Guidance July 2025 \(paragraph 52\)](#)

- Working with external organisations can enhance delivery of these subjects, bringing in specialist knowledge and different ways of engaging with young people, but **schools always remain responsible for the content and the way in which children are taught.**
- **Schools should check that external resources are accurate, age and stage appropriate and unbiased.** Schools should be particularly cautious about using resources from organisations that have a broader interest in **promoting harmful products** (e.g. cigarettes and alcohol) or that have a **strong partisan view on a contested topic.**
- **Schools are responsible for checking the credentials of any visitor or visiting organisation.** Schools should ask to see materials and a lesson plan in advance, and should seek the views of parents, **making sure that all materials can be viewed by parents**
- **It is ultimately the school's responsibility to ensure resources and teaching materials are appropriate for the age and maturity of pupils, are accessible for all pupils,** including those with SEND, fit with their planned programme and policy, and are sensitive to pupils' needs
- It is **important to agree how confidentiality** will work in any lesson, and that any visitor understands how **safeguarding reports should be dealt with in line with school policy**

WHY USE EXTERNAL PROVIDERS?

- Learning about local services including health and support services can help build trust and encourage someone to use the service.
- Learning about different perspectives, including faith, culture and social.
- Accessing specialist knowledge on a topic, for example the North Yorkshire & York [YorSexual team](#), can provide up-to-date, evidence based input that might not be as readily available to organisation's staff and can increase input.
- Children and young people can develop personal and social skills through hosting and interacting with a visitor.
- Experience a different learning method, e.g. theatre in education.
- Learning about other people's lives from a particular life experience

EDUCATION SETTINGS' RESPONSIBILITY

External expertise should only be used to enhance or add value to the learning experience, not to deliver it in full. For example, by providing specialist knowledge and resources or helping to consolidate learning.

An education setting is responsible for what is delivered within the classroom and so it is essential to be clear about the content, methods, and approach taken by any external contributor. It is the responsibility of the education setting to know what will be delivered and how it links into the scheme of work and the education settings values:

- As with any visitor, schools are responsible for ensuring that they check the visitor or visiting organisation's credentials.
- Schools should also ensure that the teaching delivered by the visitor fits with their planned programme and their published policy. It is important that schools discuss the detail of how the visitor will deliver their sessions and ensure that the content is age-appropriate and accessible for the pupils.
- Schools should ask to see the materials visitors will use as well as a lesson plan in advance, so that they can ensure it meets the full range of pupils' needs (e.g. special educational needs).
- The school knows the named individuals who will be there, any need for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and that there is an agreed protocol should any safeguarding issue arise, for example from a disclosure
- Before a session with an external speaker, it is important to check protocols for taking pictures or using any personal data the external speaker may get from the session.

Further guidance from the DfE on working with external visitors which can be accessed [here](#)

Specific consideration needs to be given to who and how the external visitor is going to work with pupils and what would be suitable for the content that is being delivered e.g an assembly by a member of the YorSexual Health Team to signpost pupils to the local sexual health service would be appropriate but this would need to be supported by the planned PSHE curriculum and work on healthy relationships, contraception/ protection and STIs in lesson time but an assembly focused on domestic abuse would not be suitable due to the content of the delivery this would need to be done in smaller groups during PSHE lessons.

There should always be staff present and engaged during any inputs delivered by external speakers. The education setting is also responsible for managing the behaviour of the pupils and should agree with the external providers how this will be managed. It is important to remember that staff will need to take forward any learning as well as take action if any possible safeguarding or behaviour management issues are identified.

Signposting

It is essential that children and young people know where to go if they want more advice or have concerns.

Many external agencies are from national organisations or individuals who may not have an awareness of local services. It should be agreed before delivery, who will be responsible for informing pupils the signposting information.

Speaking to a teacher or adult they trust in the host organisation should be the first port of call, but this may not always be practical. You should include details of local and national organisations that provide support on a particular topic and ensure that the participants know how to access this support.

Best practice is to include this at the end of any PSHE delivery to ensure that children and young people leave the session equipped with information on where to go for further support. Your schools PSHE Lead and / or pastoral lead can support organisations to identify the correct signposting services. A range of North Yorkshire & York supporting organisations can be found in the health resource section of the [Healthy Schools Website](#)

Key Principles of Effective PSHE

Active Learning

People learn better when they are involved and active learning techniques are the most effective teaching technique for PSHE education. It is important that pupils actively engage with their new learning. A "talk" session from a well-meaning expert is likely to have much less impact than an interactive session where children and young people are encouraged to prepare questions, take part in activities which encourages reflection on their own views and share ideas with the 'expert' who challenges, extends or deepens their thinking.

Embed the learning

Research shows that one-off events have limited impact on learning or long-term behaviour change. A 'one-off' event can only raise awareness or perhaps offer should quick strategies regarding a particular topic or issue.

It is important to consider how the use of external agencies contributes to the PSHE curriculum. Children and young people need the opportunity to develop skills and attributes including communication, problem-solving and decision-making; these are developed through a well-planned, sequenced, spiral curriculum that builds on prior learning.

There should be opportunity for pupils to prepare for, re-visit and embed their learning from the input with an external visitor.

When engaging with external providers it is important to ensure that key principles are in place to ensure that the PSHE education is effective.

The following effective principles are taken from the PSHE association:

- 1. Take a positive approach:** lessons should equip young people with strategies that can keep them healthy and safe. Lessons should balance teaching about negative, risk-based messages with more positive aspects of health and relationships
- 2. Balance knowledge, skills and attributes:** PSHE lessons should develop knowledge and understanding but pupils also need opportunities to develop or rehearse essential skills (e.g

risk assessment, managing influence) and attributes (e.g confidence, self-worth), through engaging participatory activities, to help manage situations in real life situations

3. **Provide accurate, unbiased information:** The purpose of PSHE education is to support pupils make safe, healthy, informed, autonomous decisions about their lives. It is therefore essential that information shared with pupils is well evidenced, up-to date, balanced, and factually accurate. It is unethical for PSHE lessons to set out to unduly influence pupils by presenting biased viewpoints on issues.
4. **Don't inspire, glamourise, or instruct in harmful behaviours:** PSHE lessons can sometimes unintentionally glamourise harmful behaviours, such as gang involvement, or drug use. Resources and teaching approaches must also be reviewed to ensure they do not unwittingly give pupils details about how to carry out or mask unhealthy behaviours such as self harm e.g how they hid what they were doing to themselves
5. **Don't set out to shock, shame or scare:** Fear or shock based approaches, such as sharing worse case scenarios or gory images and approaches that induce guilt or shame, do not promote behaviour change and can have serious detrimental effect, including retraumatising young people who have been affected by this issue, 'message blocking and delaying seeking help
6. **Handle myths with care:** Evidence suggests that when myths are presented as factual statements (e.g. in true / false quiz) over time, pupils struggle to remember which statements are myths and actually the more familiar myth can simply be re-enforced. Myth busting activities should therefore be avoided, so that inaccurate information is not reinforced.
7. **Start from where the pupils are:** Assumptions about what pupils already know, believe, and can do, in relation to PSHE topics, cannot be made based on age or year group. To make sure teaching in developmentally appropriate and builds on prior learning, complete a baseline assessment to identify existing knowledge, understanding, beliefs and misconceptions.
8. **Make learning accessible for all:** It is essential that all pupils receive PSHE education and are able to access learning that helps them to keep themselves healthy and safe. Differentiate and adapt lesson activities to ensure all pupils can achieve the intended lesson outcomes
9. **Give time for personal reflection:** Provide pupils with an opportunity towards the end of the lesson to individually reflect on how they might apply what has been learnt to their own lives. This can help embed learning and where appropriate promote behaviour change. It is often more appropriate for this to be done privately and not shared with others.

Alongside:

- Delivered within a safe learning environment based on the principle that prejudice, discrimination and bullying are harmful and unacceptable
- Positively inclusive in terms of the Protected Characteristics of the Equality Act 2010
- Ensuring that children and young people are aware of their rights, including their right to access confidential advice and support services within the boundaries of safeguarding

THE ROLE OF THE POLICE

Police input can be valuable in terms of highlighting legal consequences, such as in relation to illicit drugs. However, police involvement in education programmes needs careful planning to ensure that the messaging from other adults & services isn't just about the law. An overly enforcement-oriented approach could discourage young people from engaging openly. While the police can explain the consequences of certain actions, they should work with teachers / other providers to make sure the message is balanced and focused on health, well-being and informed decision making. This ensures that pupils are provided with accurate information, without stigmatising them or creating barriers to seeking help or advice.

USING LIVED EXPERIENCE

Using people to share their personal story can be a way to bring a topic to life and many children, young people and professionals will find listening to a lived experience can be impactful. Sharing of personal stories must be carefully managed to ensure that stories do not inadvertently glamorise aspects of their experience, be triggering or frightening for children and young people or drift towards entertaining the participants rather than contribute to meaningful learning.

External providers who share their lived experience tend to be those who were involved in a traumatic event. It is important to recognise that children and young people can learn from lots of different lived experiences including a parent, someone living with HIV, someone in a particular career e.g. to challenge gender stereotypes.

Some visitors have inadvertently given participants instructional content or inspired risky behaviour. e.g a workshop on self-harm that had clear negative outcomes for some young people, with one young person saying that the facilitator

- "was really good, but she gave you ideas"
- *"I'd be burning myself for ages and didn't want anyone to know, and she shared all these different ways she'd hidden it and stories she'd told to explain her burns. I used some of them and they worked."*

Some organisations who utilised the lived experiences method for delivery provide a framework and training for individual speakers and provide ongoing supervision to support them. This could be a key question when working with external visitors, along with asking for testimonials from other schools. *"Remember staff should not be afraid to say 'no', or in extreme cases stop a session. These are your pupils, and you are responsible for what is said to them"* (DfE)

AVOID SHOCK, SHAME or SCARE

It is a common misconception that if a child or young person is shocked or scared by what they are shown they will avoid the behaviour in the future. Whilst young people will often say that they like 'hard-hitting' material and that it engages them more effectively, in fact when experienced in a safe setting (in this case a classroom), shocking images become exciting (in a similar way to watching a horror film or riding a rollercoaster) and this excitement response can block the desired learning. Equally, for anyone who has previously been affected by something similar, it can re-traumatise them or they can block the message as it is too close for comfort, which again prevents the intended learning. It also presents a scenario which is more likely to make young people think 'that won't ever happen to me' than the desired 'that could be me' response.

Therefore, best practices and research demonstrate that sessions should not include graphic images of injuries, incidents, scenes e.g. a knife injury, sexually transmitted infections, images of a smokers' lung.

TOP TIPS FOR AVOIDING SHOCK, SHAME or a SCARE approach

1. Evidence shows that shock and scare tactics just don't work.
2. Pre-check resources for images or scenes that might be shocking, harrowing or scary for the age group. Ask for the materials before you confirm the external visitor. Remember that children and young people will have a much lower threshold for what might worry them.
3. Remember the purpose of the session is to educate not entertain. Just because young people might watch scary films in their own time, does not mean using similar films within PSHE education will promote learning.

4. Make sure there are a range of examples, case studies and consequences, most of which do not focus on the most dramatic or extreme outcomes.
5. Focus on making resources relatable – children and young people should think “that could be me” rather than “that would never happen to me”. The more relatable a resource is to the pupils the more engagement they have in the learning.
6. Think about how positive choices and actions might be promoted rather than negative actions warned against.

AVOID INSPIRING OR INSTRUCTING ON RISKY BEHAVIOURS

Some resources can unintentionally glamorise behaviour that the session was intended to warn against. For example, showing participants a range of knives and guns seized from gang members can make the lifestyle seem appealing or glamorous to some vulnerable children/young people, as can focusing on the money gang members might offer young people to recruit them.

Giving too many specific details about how a crime was committed can also instruct children or young people who may be tempted to commit a similar crime themselves. For example, when talking about cybercrime, avoid explaining how to access the dark web.

Similarly, details of how young people have hidden their activities from their families (which could range from drug use, self harm, shoplifting, carrying knives or involvement in online bullying) can inadvertently give ‘reassurance’ that others are doing these things and provide details of how they’re ‘getting away with it’

Sessions that focus on aspects of crime and negative behaviours may also unintentionally give the impression to participants that ‘all young people are doing this’, or that crime is commonplace. This can make children and young people feel unsafe in their own area, or pressured into participating in negative behaviours to ‘fit in’.

It is important to balance messages about crime or inappropriate behaviour with reminders that most people (including children and young people) do not witness or participate in crime most of the time. Statistics can be used to point out the rarity of crimes or other “positive social norms” e.g in 2024 from the [Growing up in North Yorkshire Survey](#) 7% of Year 8 /10 pupils have ever taken an illegal drug so that is 93% of this age group that have not used an illegal drug. The session could focus on why the 93% have chosen not to use an illegal drug so reinforcing the key learning that the majority of young people don’t engage in drug taking behaviours.

AVOID BIAS

The 1996 Education Act (Provision 406 & 407) requires that lesson content avoids political indoctrination, PSHE sessions should avoid inappropriately biased input on any issue.

Further guidance to schools is provided in the ‘[Political impartiality in schools](#)’ (DfE) and DfE guidance on working with [external visitors](#)

“It is important when using external agencies to take particular care that the agency and any materials used are appropriate and in line with your school’s legal duties regarding political impartiality and it is schools responsibility for ensuring that speakers, tools and resources do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.)” DfE

PSHE education is not ‘value-free’, but an important space in which children and young people can explore their own values and beliefs to different topics in as neutral a way as possible.

The PSHE curriculum should be influenced by, reflect and support the school's agreed ethos, being clear on the law and promoting healthy, safe behaviours whilst encouraging children and young people to question and explore different topics.

AVOID INDUSTRY LINKED PROGRAMMES

Schools should avoid using industry-linked educational programmes because they may prioritise the interests of the industry over the well-being of pupils. Programmes funded or backed by alcohol, tobacco, gambling, fast food companies or industry initiatives may deliver biased information that downplays risks and focuses on individual responsibility, rather than addressing broader social or environmental factors that influence behaviour.

- For example, programmes funded by major alcohol producers and retailers have been found to reinforce the idea that drinking is a normal part of adult life and convey the alcohol industry's 'drink responsibly' message, making it all about individual responsibility instead of addressing the role that pricing and advertising play in encouraging consumption. This type of messaging undermines efforts to create healthier, safer environments.

Beyond alcohol, other large industries, such as tobacco, fast/ultra-processed food also fund programmes that shape how young people think about their products. These programmes may present products in a way that downplays their health risks or promote them as harmless when they are not. For instance, tobacco companies have historically funded educational campaigns that focus on personal choice rather than addressing the harmful effects of smoking or the aggressive marketing practices that target young people.

Schools should instead work with independent, evidence-based programmes that provide pupils with accurate, unbiased information, free from industry influence. This helps ensure that pupils receive the best education about their health and well-being and gain understanding about how large companies influence the decisions we make that affect our health.

To ensure the pupils benefit fully from the contribution of the external visitor this is a self - assessment tool based upon best practice guidance, to demonstrate considerations for the use of the external provider to support the PSHE curriculum.

Lead contact person in the school completing the form:

Has the DSL been informed about the planned external provider with an overview of the content of the input?

Yes / No Date:

Name of External Provider:

Lead contact person:

Name of person(s) delivering the session:

Have all the safeguarding checks been completed on the persons delivering the sessions?

Yes / No Date:

Tel:

Email:

Criteria	Yes	No	Explanation / Action / Evidence
Credibility			
Is the external provider a charity?			
If they are a charity do they have a Charity Commissioning Listing?			
Checked that their charitable objectives are relevant to PSHE, aligned with the schools ethos and values and adhere to the political impartiality requirements for schools?			
Checked if there are any conflicts of interest with the educational purpose and responsibility of the charity?			
Company, Social Enterprise or Community Interest group			
Is the company registered with Companies House? And how is it described on Companies House listing and website?			
Checked that the company objectives are relevant to PSHE, aligned with the schools ethos and values and adhere to the political impartiality requirements for schools			
Checked if there are any conflicts of interest with the educational purpose and responsibility of the company?			
Individual			
Is the external provider operating as an individual?			

Checked published information about the individual e.g. website, is the description of their work aligned with outcomes for PSHE, the schools ethos and values and adhere to the political impartiality requirements for schools			
If the visitor is affiliated with any particular organisation(s) are they credible and align with your school's ethos and values?			
Have the school requested examples of recent work from other schools to demonstrate expertise and experience?			
Any External Provider			
Are you aware how the external provider is funded or links it has which could present potential conflicts of interest? Check for any links to industry funding or organisations (e.g. funding from alcohol producers/retailers or Trustees/Directors from companies with objectives that might clash with the educational purpose)			
Do the funding or organisational links pose any conflict of interest with the educational purpose?			
Has the external provider been checked with the DBS?			
Quality			
Has the school planned to meet with the external provider before delivery (in person or online)?			
Is the school clear how the external contribution fits in with the aims and objectives of the PSHE curriculum and the input is embedded into the PSHE scheme of work ?			
Has the delivery model been agreed to ensure maximum learning for the pupils and to minimise any safeguarding concerns or re-trauma for pupils?			
Does the external provider use research evidence to under-pin their work? Is the research from a credible source?			
Does the external provider commit to and can showcase through their materials / resources that they adhere to the key principles for effective delivery of PSHE as set out in this document?			

Are the people coming into school to present adequately qualified, experienced and trained?			
Has the school seen a copy of the contents planned to be delivered including any films? Are procedures in place so parents & carers can view the materials on request?			
Has the school made the external provider aware of any professional boundaries that they need to work within?			
Has the school ensured that an appropriate number of staff will be present during the external provider's input?			
Has the school agreed with the external provider how the learning will be assessed and evaluated?			
Content			
Has the school agreed learning outcomes with the external provider?			
How will pupils be actively involved in the learning?			
Is the external provider aware of the difference between medical and legal facts and opinions and beliefs?			
Has the school ensured the resources used by the external provider do not use a shock, shame or scare approach?			
Are any of the resources likely to trigger an emotional reaction from pupils?			
Does the external provider have clear signposting within the session to support within the school, locally and nationally?			
Pupils			
Have safeguarding measure been put in place for any pupils who might experience an emotional reaction to minimise the potential for harm? How will pupils be informed of these measures at the start of the external provider's input?			
Has the school shared and discussed with the external provider the relevant policies such as safeguarding, behaviour, health and safety, PSHE/ RSE?			
Has the school discussed and agreed how behaviour will be managed?			
Has time been planned for pupils to have time to reflect on what they have			

learnt from working with the external provider?			
Any further notes or information required:			