

# Leader Decision

## Relationships and Sex Education - Provision of Online Information and Signposting

<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Leader</b>
<b>Date of decision</b>	<b>18 March 2022</b>
	<b>Signed</b>

### 1. Decision taken

The Leader of the Council

1. Notes the outcome of the independent review commissioned into the online Relationships and Sex Education resource for young people in Warwickshire known as Respect Yourself, and approves the replacement of that resource with an information and signposting online offer delivered through the School Health and Wellbeing Service.
2. Approves the closure of the Respect Yourself online resource and the decommissioning of the technical contract that provides systems and web-page design for that resource.
3. Delegates to the Strategic Director for People authority to enter into enhanced contractual arrangements with the School Health and Wellbeing Service for the provision of Relationships and Sex Education Online Information and Signposting, on terms and conditions acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources.

### 2. Reasons for decisions

- 2.1 For many years, Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has prioritised investment into the delivery of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) programmes to support young people's understanding of healthy relationships and to enable them to build positive and safe relationships as they grow and develop into adults. One of the programmes, Respect Yourself, provided an online resource for young people in Warwickshire to learn about relationships and sex education. In 2019, the RSE programme in Warwickshire was placed under review following changes to legislation and government guidance, and as part of this work, public access to the Respect Yourself website was paused.

- 2.2 The new regulations and government guidance placed statutory requirements on schools for the delivery of RSE programmes in primary and secondary schools (Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019). This altered the prior position under which responsibility rested with Local Authorities. The new curriculum was compulsory from September 2020, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, schools that were not ready, or were unable to meet the statutory requirements, were given until the start of the summer term 2021 to begin teaching the new requirements. The Respect Yourself online resource was developed before the new regulations and guidance were published.
- 2.3 In March 2020 the Leader received a report regarding Phase 1 of an independent review commissioned from the Sex Education Forum (part of the National Children's Bureau) into RSE resources in Warwickshire. Phase 1 focussed on the RSE programme for primary school children known as "All About Me" and approved the replacement of that programme with an information and signposting offer to schools in line with the Department of Education's national materials and resources
- 2.4 As part of that report it was agreed that a further paper would be brought to the Leader on conclusion of Phase 2 of the independent review. Phase 2 focussed on the Respect Yourself RSE online resource for young people aged 13 years and over, and in particular considered:
- the complete content of the Respect Yourself website for young people aged 13 years and older, to also include the information available for parents.
  - the overall approach to the production of the website.
  - how closely aligned the Respect Yourself content and approach is to relevant guidance, legislation and the evidence base of best practice for young people aged 13 years and older.
- 2.5 The Sex Education Forum report notes that Respect Yourself *"covers a broad range of relationships and sex education topics that are relevant for young people. This comprehensive approach is supported by the very clear evidence internationally and nationally that comprehensive Relationships and Sex Education is beneficial for children and young people, see for example UNESCO's International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (2018)"*.
- 2.6 Recommendations were made in relation to 8 key areas of the Respect Yourself online resource, including:
- Improved understanding of how the website has been used and what young people use today.
  - Focusing on the unique aspects of Respect Yourself and signpost out.
  - Establishing a sustainable process for updating the website.
  - Reducing the questions and answer section and providing a more accessible means of browsing.
  - Reducing the dictionary of sexual terms.
  - Focusing the parent material.
  - Creating a relationship between Respect Yourself resource and learning offline.
  - Providing quality assurance through collaboration with relevant colleagues and experts.

- 2.7 In view of the findings of the review and the changes to legislation and guidance which now place statutory requirements for the delivery of RSE programmes on schools, the closure of the Respect Yourself online resource and its replacement with an information and signposting offer embedded in existing commissioned provision through the School Health and Wellbeing Service contract, is recommended.
- 2.8 The School Health and Wellbeing Service provides the specialist public health nursing function into schools in Warwickshire, including the provision of information and advice to young people on a range of health issues. The proposed signposting and information offer would form part of the young people's health website. Initial conversations with the current provider have indicated a good appetite to take on the RSE requirements as outlined in this report. If the decision is taken to proceed as recommended, the technical contract that manages the Respect Yourself website from an IT systems and design perspective will be terminated.

### **3. Background information**

#### **3.1 Independent Review of the Respect Yourself Online Resource**

- 3.2 Phase 2 of the independent expert review of the Respect Yourself programme was also undertaken by the Sex Education Forum, part of the National Children's Bureau, with a detailed investigation and review undertaken of the whole resource.

#### **3.3 RSE Programme Governance**

- 3.4 The RSE programme in Warwickshire was established to support improvement of health and wellbeing outcomes and to enable children and young people to understand how to build and sustain healthy relationships to keep them safe from avoidable harm. These outcomes remain a priority for Warwickshire County Council, in line with the Council Plan 2025, and its priority outcome for Warwickshire's communities and individuals to be supported to be safe, healthy and independent.
- 3.5 To manage the change of approach to delivering RSE Online Services, the RSE Programme Board will have responsibility for overseeing the change, working with key stakeholders, and monitoring the impact of programme delivery changes on health and wellbeing outcomes for young people in Warwickshire. This will include ensuring that a focus is also maintained in relation to young people with protected characteristics and vulnerabilities to ensure that their needs are appropriately considered providing equity of access, experience and outcomes for all young people in relation to this offer.

### **Financial implications**

- 4.1 Funding released through de-commissioning aspects of the current commissioning portfolio of RSE programmes will be re-allocated to support enhanced contractual arrangements with the School Health & Wellbeing Service.

4.2 Funding may also be re-allocated to support a revised public health approach to addressing relevant outcomes for children and young people relating to relationships and sex education, as work progresses, and monitoring of key outcomes is undertaken.

4.3 The budget to support new arrangements, as outlined in this paper, is £74K.

### Environmental implications

5.1 There are no environmental implications for this report. As programme developments are agreed and actioned, considerations will be given to environmental implications.

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<b>Strategic Director</b>	Strategic Director for Communities, Strategic Director for People
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health, Portfolio Holder for Children, Families & Education

<b>Urgent matter?</b>	No
<b>Confidential or exempt?</b>	No
<b>Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?</b>	No

### List of background papers

#### **RSE Regulations.**

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, make Relationships Education compulsory for all pupils receiving primary education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education.

The Regulations also make Health Education compulsory in all schools except independent schools.

Further information on the Regulations is available [using this link](#).

### Members and officers consulted and informed

Portfolio Holder – Yes

Corporate Board – Yes

Legal – Yes

Finance – Yes

Equality –

Democratic Services – Yes

Councillors – Relevant Portfolio Holders

Local Member(s):Not applicable as county wide report