



Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education and Sex and Relationships Education in Schools](#), HC 145

Wednesday 19 November 2014

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Catholic Education Service \(SRE0432\)](#)
- [SRE Islamic \(SRE0425\)](#)
- [National Union of Teachers \(SRE0334\)](#)
- [National Governors' Association \(SRE0325\)](#)
- [Girlguiding UK \(SRE0447\)](#)
- [National Crime Agency – CEOP \(SRE0461\)](#)
- [London Borough of Hackney \(SRE0361\)](#)

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Members present: Mr Graham Stuart (Chair), Alex Cunningham, Pat Glass, Siobhain McDonagh, Mr David Ward, Craig Whittaker

Questions 247-388

Witnesses: **Gillian Allcroft**, Policy Manager, National Governors' Association, **Yusuf Patel**, Founder, SRE Islamic, **Kate Persaud**, Head of Citizenship, Fairlands Middle School, and **Philip Robinson**, Religious Education Adviser, Catholic Education Service, gave evidence.

Q247 Chair: Good morning. Welcome to the Education Committee. Today we are carrying on with our inquiry on personal, social, health and economic education, and sex and relationships education in schools. We tend to be quite informal here and use first names, if you are all comfortable with that. I should say what we typically do. Our inquiries consist of a focus on a particular topic, such as this. We take written and oral evidence, and then produce a report for Government, with recommendations. One key thing that I always say to witnesses is that if you have any specific recommendations that you would like to see in our eventual report to Government, please try not to leave here today without having made those

clear to us. If you do, write to us afterwards. Whether it is a small or large issue, whether it is about maintaining something that is good now or calling for a change in the future—whatever it is, we would like to hear from you.

The Government are currently consulting on a proposal for pupils to study at least two different faiths as part of a new, more academically rigorous GCSE in religious studies. Is there a need for an equivalent breadth of views in the teaching of sex and relationships education, or will one moral code for SRE do? If so, where should that moral code come from? Kate, you caught my eye.

Kate Persaud: At the moment, as far as I am aware, we are focusing on British values in schools and are trying to understand exactly what the Government intend that to be. Within that, there is a moral structure; it talks about tolerance, democracy and the rule of law—that is morality, in the case that we are talking about. But schools already do very good religious education. I think we do in our school, and we already cover more than one faith. When we teach SRE, we are respectful of the families, cultures and backgrounds of the pupils we are teaching. The things all tie together; it does not need to be prescriptive.

Q248 Chair: How do you know that you are respectful of the background and culture of the pupils you teach?

Kate Persaud: Because we know our pupils; we know where they are from. There are certain parts of their education where we separate the boys and the girls, so that we can talk to them more appropriately about issues that girls, particularly, would find it uncomfortable to talk about with boys. It would be too uncomfortable for them to discuss those issues with the boys there, so we have moments when we can take them out.

Q249 Chair: It is quite possible for people to think that they are great at communicating, but the best people to ask are those who they communicate with to see whether they have a feel about it. There is often a discrepancy. Likewise, there can be a discrepancy between schools that think they are doing a pretty good job listening, sharing and communicating, and the parents, who feel that something is being done to their children without much of their consent.

Kate Persaud: But you do consult with parents first. Before we have our specialist health week, where we cover SRE, we have an open evening for the parents, where we share the resources and talk through the schemes. It is an open forum for parents to discuss. I feel that we do more than enough.

Philip Robinson: The comparison is an interesting one. We welcome the Government proposals on the new GCSE, because it seems appropriate within religious studies to study more than one religion. Almost all of our schools already did that, in any case, at GCSE. I am not sure if the comparison is an exact or fair one. It depends on what you mean by your question. We would always teach sex education within a Catholic context in Catholic schools, which would therefore bring with it a view of the world and a particular ethos.

Q250 Chair: My point is that in most educational subjects you would seek to give either insights into different faiths or very different views on the same subject, so should you do the same for SRE, or is there a reason why you should give one particular version, the Catholic version, and that is it—that is enough?

Philip Robinson: When I said a Catholic ethos, I was not talking about a Catholic version of sex education; I was talking about a Catholic ethos that underpins the sex education that you deliver, which is a very different thing. That is why I was asking what you meant by your question. If you were asking whether you would expect us to present a full range of facts about what different people think about this issue, that does not seem unreasonable; if you are asking us to teach it in a way that means that it is not within a Catholic context, that would be inappropriate.

Gillian Allcroft: I think that you have to teach a broad and balanced sex education. Yes, if you are a school with a religious character, your faith will underpin that, but we must also promote tolerance and understanding, so you have to teach that there are other people with different views, and actually the law allows for that.

Q251 Chair: Yusuf.

Yusuf Patel: I think that within a state context, within state schools, there must be an acceptance that children from different backgrounds are in the school. That must be reflected in the values that are discussed in SRE. One thing that I find in most schools is that generally they tend to discuss SRE in a very one-sided way and do not reflect the backgrounds of the pupils at the school. For example, if there are Muslim pupils in the school and they hear a side that does not reflect their values, they feel that it is not applicable to them. On the other hand, in a faith school context, as has been mentioned, there must be an acceptance of the fact that there is a particular ethos in that school that must be reflected in how SRE is taught. That does not mean that there is not a general underpinning of awareness and tolerance of other groups and lifestyles, but there must be an awareness that that school has children from a particular background and it must be taught in a particular way.

Q252 Mr Ward: The essence of this is not only whether other views are out there, in either faith schools or non-faith schools, but what the attitude to those other values and opinions should be. For example, you talked about context, Philip. There is a particular ethos there, but you will no doubt discuss other views and values; how are they regarded? Yusuf may wish to answer as well. Are other views and values regarded as different and acceptable, or different and unacceptable?

Philip Robinson: By whom?

Mr Ward: By whoever is teaching the children in the school.

Philip Robinson: It depends on the context that you are speaking about. I am finding it difficult to answer your question without thinking of a concrete example.

Q253 Mr Ward: We will get into details later on, but if you are teaching within a context, there is inevitably a right and a wrong—“this is what we believe is right.” Under British values, there is a balanced view that there are a range of views, none of which are right or wrong, and all of which must be introduced.

Philip Robinson: Except for the values themselves, which are presumed to be right.

Q254 Mr Ward: No. Under the British values themselves, you could say that it is a value to be tolerant towards others.

Philip Robinson: Is that right or wrong? Presumably you think that that is a right value.

Alex Cunningham: I thought we asked the questions!

Q255 Mr Ward: I am not laying down the rules on this. The rules within this country are or seem to be that we are moving towards British values, of which that is one.

Philip Robinson: I will try to answer your question. Obviously, in a Catholic context, there will be some values that we think are right, but we would not ever present those values as if they are the only possible set of values that there is.

Q256 Chair: Just that all the others are wrong.

Philip Robinson: Well, that is what anyone thinks if they have a value that is in disagreement with anyone else’s values—that is what it means to have a value. That does not mean that you do not respect the other person’s right to have a different value. The idea that in order to be respectful you have to agree with someone when they say something opposite to what you say is irrational to me. That is not what respect requires. Respect and tolerance require you to say, “I stand here. I have these values. I respect your right to disagree with me, but I also have the right to debate with you and to engage in conversation with you.”

Yusuf Patel: Some people argue that faith schools need to teach SRE in a way that reflects lots of value systems—from the perspective of accepting different value systems. That will, by definition, cancel out the faith ethos of that school. Children need to be taught that “These are the values that we believe in, but there are a whole host of different values out there.”

Chair: Thank you. Alex.

Q257 Alex Cunningham: In that context of Catholic values or any other values, should the faith-based views on SRE be taken into account in the school system, given that England is an increasingly secular country?

Philip Robinson: Yes.

Alex Cunningham: Fair enough.

Yusuf Patel: It depends on the make-up of that school. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Individual schools need to look at the backgrounds of their pupils and make a judgment based on that. Parental consultation and input into an SRE problem is so important. Prescriptive approaches are not always the best ways of dealing with this. It really has to be that parents input into the system and say, “These are our values, and this is how we would like the school to teach them.” Schools need to pay attention to that.

Gillian Allcroft: I would go back to the fact that it has to be broad and balanced, so that a range of experiences are taught. It should be very much around that tolerance, and pupils should be taught that there are other expectations and beliefs out there. In schools and the wider sector, we are subject to the Equalities Act, which provides those equal opportunities and rights for other people. They need to be respected and taught.

Kate Persaud: I am a little concerned that values and religious views seem to contradict the right to teach children SRE. SRE is about keeping them safe, and teaching them respect for themselves and for others. It is the knowledge that they need as growing adults in this society. They can learn that and be faithful to their beliefs, but they must have SRE. You cannot say that they cannot have it because their values might conflict. They are going to become adults; they need to have this knowledge and it is our job as teaching professionals to give it to them. We can do that with respect to their values and religion, but they need to have basic knowledge. This Committee needs to say what that knowledge is, and kids need to get it—guaranteed.

Q258 Alex Cunningham: There are schools that have a very restricted or narrow view of what they can or cannot teach because of their particular values, yet we still see schools—whether faith schools or otherwise—that adopt a wider curriculum as well. There is tremendous inconsistency in the quality of the information that is being given to young people.

Kate Persaud: We have the chance to change that now, don’t we? By making it statutory, we have the chance to make this clear and concise, and give it the professional value that it deserves among teachers.

Q259 Alex Cunningham: So what is the recommendation that we should be making to Government to make that happen? You say we should make it statutory, but that is one word that covers everything on earth. What do we actually say to Government that we need to do?

Kate Persaud: Well, in the entire curriculum that I teach, I have very strict guidance as to what I am supposed to teach my young people to prepare them for key stage 2 and key stage 3. You have already told me what I have to teach them. Why does that not exist in SRE with the same amount of rigour? Why is it left to some schools to decide? This is the most important thing that young people are going to be taught. It is more important than anything else that I tell them, but it is left to the discretion of schools, which are just making it up as they go along—not all schools; some schools are fabulous.

Q260 Craig Whittaker: With all due respect, if the professionals in the field do not know how to make it up, how on earth do you expect—

Kate Persaud: Have you seen the resources out there? You have not laid it out for us.

Q261 Craig Whittaker: No, no; let me take you up on that point. You said that this Committee needs to say what the basic knowledge of SRE is. You have a roomful of politicians here from a whole range of backgrounds, yet you guys are the professionals teaching those children. If you cannot tell us what it is, how do you expect us to tell you what it is?

Kate Persaud: I could tell you. I could write to you with what I have learned over the years.

Q262 Craig Whittaker: That is what we are looking for: some recommendations of what that should be.

Philip Robinson: I should just say for the record that we have talked generally about values, but I want to make it clear that we think that SRE should be taught really well in Catholic schools. Our recommendation will be different because we would not like it to be statutory. We would like the efforts to go into guaranteeing that every school delivers it well by ensuring that staff are properly trained in how to deliver it. Our evidence and the Ofsted report indicated that there were some outstanding Catholic schools.

Q263 Alex Cunningham: What would you exclude as a Catholic school, or as some other type of school? What are you denying young people because of your particular ethos?

Philip Robinson: Nothing, in the abstract. Nothing has been excluded in advance. We would say that one of the reasons that we feel it ought not to be statutory is that in those schools identified as having outstanding practice, it was outstanding precisely because it had the full involvement of the entire community. It was a course and a delivered programme.

Q264 Alex Cunningham: Was it reflecting its community, or was it reflecting the need of the child to have a wider understanding?

Philip Robinson: Both. The schools that did it in the best possible way involved parents and also consulted with students in a very open way. They asked every stakeholder that was going to be affected by this how it should happen. In our community, you often get a lot of resistance from parents, but we found that in the schools that do this well, if you involve parents in the process from the beginning, that resistance decreases. They see that your intentions are good, and the outcomes of courses like this are very positive.

The reason that we would not want it to be statutory is that anything that is too prescriptive in its content is precisely the kind of course that tends not to work in our context. The ones that really do work are ones where the practitioners are highly skilled PSHE practitioners, and they really know how to engage parents and students in the process of planning what needs to be delivered.

Q265 Alex Cunningham: So do other teachers find that there are issues or topics within PSHE that are excluded in any way? I have had your view, but are there other views on what is happening with it?

Gillian Allcroft: We think it should be statutory, but I am not sure that it has to be statutory and prescriptive. You can make a requirement that you have to teach it within a broad framework, but you can still give the profession and schools the opportunity to do that in the way they think is best—consulting with parents and all the rest of it. It was quite a while ago that we did our survey with NAHT and NCPTA, but certainly at that point, teachers did not feel they were equipped to teach this subject because a lot of them are not specialists.

Q266 Alex Cunningham: So have you got recommendations specifically around that? We have heard from other people that teachers simply do not feel equipped, and it is almost dumped on a tutor.

Gillian Allcroft: I think in some schools that is almost the case. This is such an important subject, which is difficult to deliver and is sensitive, so you need somebody who is confident in delivering it. That the person delivering the teaching should be equipped and properly trained to do so should certainly be given importance. It should not just be the form tutor because “They know the kids, so they will be able to do it,” because, actually, they won’t.

Q267 Alex Cunningham: So it should be a very specific part of teacher training, but also of ongoing professional development?

Gillian Allcroft: Yes.

Yusuf Patel: I don’t think it should be made statutory. I think it should remain as it is. I say that because as a society, we are removing many more rights from parents. Unfortunately, in this debate, although we make a nod to parents, they have been airbrushed from the discussion. We can say that schools consult parents, bring them on board and ask them what they want as part of the SRE provision, but that does not really happen in the schools that we have contacted, and that we have worked with parents to support.

Making SRE statutory will, I believe, essentially mean that the parental right to withdrawal will be removed. Nobody is arguing that you can make SRE statutory and maintain the right to withdrawal. The right of parents to bring their children up based on their values will also be severely impaired. I really believe that it should not be made statutory.

Q268 Mr Ward: I had a question to ask you later, which I will insert now, given your comments about the fear or concern you have that if it was statutory, you would have Muslim parents withdrawing from the state sector. Is there any evidence that that is the case?

Yusuf Patel: Just from working with the thousands of parents that I have worked with over the years. At the moment, no parent exercises the right to withdraw as a first choice; it is a last resort. Often, when parents decide to withdraw, it is because they have engaged with the school but they do not believe that it has listened to them.

That right to withdraw is an opportunity for parents to engage with the school, and for schools to listen to parents. The numbers of those who withdraw are small. Whenever I speak to parents, they say, “I don’t want to withdraw. I don’t want my child to be stigmatised. I am not against SRE.” Most parents are not, but they are worried about the way it is taught, the resources that are used, and the principles that underpin it.

I really believe that parents will be forced into positions that we do not want to encourage. The right to withdraw for parents should remain. For example, we work with a school that decided that, in order to convince parents to engage with the SRE provision, it would have an opt-in, rather than an opt-out. That was a brave move, because it placed the school in a position of saying, “All children will be opted-out until we convince the parents to opt in.” They had a high level of opt-in as a result of that approach.

Q269 Chair: Thank you. Kate, if Yusuf’s fears about it being made statutory are realised, is there not a risk that, if the liberal consensus is generally happy with the statutory provision, but significant segments of our society are not comfortable with that, we will sow further division and be showing a lack of sensitivity to what may be a minority view, but one that deserves to be respected?

Kate Persaud: I would hope not.

Chair: It could easily be steamrollered by a statutory basis, which would mean that, effectively, as Yusuf said, the parent’s voice would be diluted from an already low level to a lower one still.

Kate Persaud: I think parents have a fear of SRE because the S-word is dominating. I teach children from year 5 to year 8—we are a middle school. A very small part of my curriculum might cause some parents concern, but the vast majority of the SRE curriculum is very important. Parents who say, “Don’t have any of it” might be throwing the baby out with the bathwater. They might struggle with some elements, but they would agree with the vast majority of the content and think it was entirely appropriate.

Q270 Chair: My question was specifically about the risk that, if it is statutory, the voices who already feel that they are paid insufficient attention will be further marginalised, and that one should therefore hesitate before recommending a statutory approach if there were minorities who would see it as anathema, even if most people would think that it was all right.

Kate Persaud: The risks to the child could be greater if we do not make it statutory. Every report that comes out right now says that it should be statutory for children's safety.

Philip Robinson: Could I make two comments? One is on the recommendation about staff training, which I will come back to. The reason why we do not want there to be statute is similar to that given by Yusuf: we want parents to be involved. The risk to those children would still be there, because if they were withdrawn from schools where SRE is statutory, they still would not receive that SRE that they need. It would be better achieved if you focused your energies on ensuring that the SRE provision in every school was outstanding. That would mean—

Chair: Okay, thank you. Sorry to interrupt, but we have got very little time and lots to get through.

Q271 Craig Whittaker: Is the current position of SRE in the curriculum clear to you? More importantly, is it clear to parents?

Gillian Allcroft: It is probably not clear to parents. We have this mixed picture of one rule in primary school and one rule in secondary school. It is to a certain extent statutory in secondary school, and there is still the parental right to withdraw there, so those co-exist already. I would agree that schools are not always very good at communicating with parents and, therefore, there sometimes is—

Q272 Craig Whittaker: But are the schools clear? Do they give it as much priority as religious education, for example? Is there as much clarity around what they are required to do?

Gillian Allcroft: Lots of schools do it very well. They are probably clear about what the rules are. Whether it is taught well and whether the provision is good is a different issue. They might be clear about what the rules are, but whether it is delivered well is a separate matter.

Q273 Craig Whittaker: That was a worse politician's answer than a politician would give. So is there clarity—yes or no?

Gillian Allcroft: I am not sure that there is clarity across all schools about what really good provision looks like.

Q274 Craig Whittaker: Okay. I am still not sure what you mean.

Philip Robinson: I think there is a lack of clarity, more so in primary schools. There is patchiness in coverage and quality. Secondary schools probably have a better idea of their statutory obligations, and all secondary schools would teach it, but in some secondary schools it would not have the same status or centrality as the core curriculum, which it ought to have.

Yusuf Patel: I think we are rushing into talking about whether to make it statutory when the current provision is very patchy. Some schools argue that they do not need to consult with parents. When we have contacted some schools, they have said, “We’ve got no legal obligation to consult parents. Where does it exist?” Some schools convey to parents that it is statutory in primary and secondary schools. Some schools place the non-statutory elements of SRE, delivered within PSHE, within science classes, thereby removing the right of parents to withdraw. When parents challenge that, they have nowhere to go to pursue those challenges.

Q275 Craig Whittaker: Do you have evidence of that happening?

Yusuf Patel: Yes, absolutely.

Q276 Craig Whittaker: What do you think are the downfalls of that happening? Why would schools do that? Why would schools put some of SRE into science, for example?

Yusuf Patel: When we ask schools why they do it, they do not give a clear answer other than that they believe that SRE is a cross-curricular subject, but you cannot have a cross-curricular approach to it when very few aspects within primary schools are statutory.

Q277 Craig Whittaker: Could you provide us with the evidence that this is happening?

Yusuf Patel: Yes.

Kate Persaud: I am not a science teacher, but I do know there is a requirement in key stage 2 science for reproduction, so some of the—

Yusuf Patel: Not human reproduction.

Kate Persaud: No, there is, because some of the year 6 science has been covering it; and some of it is in key stage 3.

Yusuf Patel: Not in the new science curriculum.

Kate Persaud: That is from this September. You cannot be talking about now in your evidence; you must be talking about previous years.

Chair: Please address the Committee.

Kate Persaud: Sorry. The new curriculum has only just come in, so the evidence must be from previous curriculums. It was in the previous curriculum.

Yusuf Patel: Even in the previous curriculum, human reproduction was not an element of the science curriculum. Schools interpreted it to be such, and that is why the new science group came out to clarify that it was never meant to be part of the science curriculum.

Q278 Craig Whittaker: Okay. Are the teachers not the best people to determine the way forward? The National Children’s Bureau, for example, suggests that transparency would be improved through statutory status. I know we have varying views on whether that is the case. I have not seen the evidence to suggest that giving it that kind of status would improve transparency. This place can legislate until the cows come home, but unless it physically happens on the coal face it is pointless. Who is right? Will it increase transparency or not?

Philip Robinson: I fear not, which is why we are opposed to its statutory status. It might depend on what you make statutory, I suppose. What we are anxious about is a statutory provision that says, “You have to deliver it, and you have to deliver it in this way, and it has to have this context.”

Q279 Craig Whittaker: So, very prescriptive.

Philip Robinson: If it is something statutory, you have to do it. If it were statutory that you had to do it after a period of consultation with parents and children, and you had to incorporate their views, that might be a different matter.

Q280 Craig Whittaker: So why don’t you guys get on and do that anyway?

Philip Robinson: Oh, we do.

Q281 Craig Whittaker: So what is the problem?

Philip Robinson: I don’t have a problem.

Kate Persaud: It is patchy. It is not done well everywhere. That is the bottom line.

Yusuf Patel: We need to recognise that there is no one model that all schools need to use. For example, I am working with Muslim schools at the moment—Muslim independent schools—

Q282 Craig Whittaker: Just let me stop you there. So what makes you think that if we make it statutory it will improve things?

Yusuf Patel: I don’t think it will; that is my argument.

Craig Whittaker: Gillian and Kate—

Chair: Let Yusuf finish his point.

Yusuf Patel: I am working with Muslim schools at the moment to consolidate what they already do in terms of SRE, but our approach is about getting parents on board as

partners and saying to them, “These are the things that we believe children should know.” Children are living in a very hyper-sexualised society. The average age of viewing pornography is 11, and some of our children in primary schools may view it sooner. That affects their view of women; it affects lots of other issues. We are saying that parents need to decide what they would teach, what they would support in teaching and what the schools should teach. I have worked with parents in the past and, with the right support, they will engage with their children on these subjects. They are the best people to do that, because they are emotionally invested in their children. They have spent the most unstructured time with their children, and they are with their child for ever, from when they are born.

Q283 Craig Whittaker: Why do you need us to make it statutory in this place for you to do what you are doing?

Yusuf Patel: That is happening at the moment. It does not need to be statutory.

Gillian Allcroft: Making it statutory would raise its profile. It would give an entitlement to the young people. Yes, consult with parents by all means and take their views into account, but young people must come first, in terms of what is available. Without it being statutory, it potentially has a lower profile in schools. You do not necessarily have the quality of teachers across all schools teaching it. If it is statutory, it moves up the agenda, in terms of, “Actually, this needs to be done well.”

Q284 Chair: I can understand why there are fears around it being made statutory, which we explored a little earlier. Are there ways that it could be statutory, with sufficient safeguards in place to reassure you? Does it becoming statutory have to be a bad thing, or could it be all right?

Philip Robinson: I suppose that it could be. We are working on the principle that, fundamentally, the education of our children is a partnership with parents, and that parents have rights as well as children. We want to make sure that that principle is not overridden. One of our fears is that a statutory provision, depending on what sort of provision it is, would make that engagement with parents less, not more, likely to happen. If the statutory provision said that you were legally obliged to engage with parents, that might be a different matter.

Q285 Chair: Is that a recommendation? As a discrete recommendation to this Committee, would you like to see a legal obligation for schools to consult with parents on this and perhaps have some guidance on how that should be carried out? Yusuf is nodding.

Yusuf Patel: What do we mean by consultation?

Q286 Chair: Precisely. It could be defined more precisely.

Yusuf Patel: When some schools consult parents at the moment, they bring them into the school hall and say, “These are the resources that we are going to use. This is the programme that we have spent a lot of money on. What do you think?” At that stage, are they

going to change their minds if parents say, “Actually, I don’t think that this is appropriate. I think that it should be tackled in a different way”?

Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Q287 Pat Glass: This is much more than an academic discussion. There are real problems out there. I do not know what the situation is now, but when I was working in education not so long ago, this country had the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in Europe. We have had scandals of child sex abuse in Rotherham, Oxford and Rochdale, and there are many more to come. We have serious issues with consent and bullying. When I was working in south-east London, there were real issues with those things in gangs. I read something recently which said that texting is the norm among 13 and 14-year-olds.

Chair: Sexting.

Q288 Pat Glass: Sexting, sorry. You see—we are completely out of touch. I spent some time with the local police, going around on a Friday night with their alcohol groups, picking up teenagers of 12, 13 and 14 who are doing serious damage to themselves and putting themselves at serious risk. We have massive adolescent mental health problems in this country. This is not a pretty picture. It is not working at the moment.

Can I ask this to Philip, particularly? The Catholic Education Service appears to have been all over the place on this. Your position at the moment is that it should not be compulsory, yet you were part of the 2008 external steering group on sex and relationships education. The first recommendation of that group was that this should become statutory. I simply do not understand. This appears to be an issue of whether it should be statutory, and it being taught in all kinds of different ways. Is making it statutory not a baseline? What is the problem with that? I simply do not understand. We should consider the size of the problem that we have here. Some faith schools do it very well. On whether we should make it statutory, my view is that if it gets measured, it gets done; it is a start. So what is the problem with the Catholic Education Service on this?

Philip Robinson: I have tried to express it, and I will try to express it again. I guess it is a difficult position to try to express, in the sense that—

Chair: Especially as it contradicts the one you held six years ago.

Philip Robinson: I was not in post then, but I do not think it does necessarily contradict what we said six years ago. What we said then—

Chair: You would have to have studied Aquinas a long time to come to that conclusion.

Philip Robinson: What we try to say is the same thing: we want every single one of our Catholic schools to do it, and to do it outstandingly well, as our best Catholic schools do, because we recognise that the real responsibility we have to the young people in our schools is to protect them from those harms. When we ask our outstanding practitioners what it is that

enables them to do it well, it is the things that I have already outlined: it is the relationship that they build up with their community, the engagement with parents, the consultation with students, the creation of a culture of openness, and the training of practitioners.

Q289 Pat Glass: And making it statutory is going to stop that?

Philip Robinson: No; it may or may not. It is not clear that it would make it better; that is our point of view. It would also override the right of parents to make decisions about at what age and in what way children receive information about these things. I think contexts are different, and—

Q290 Chair: Are those two necessarily incompatible?

Philip Robinson: Not necessarily. When you asked whether you could frame the statute requirement in such a way that it would be something that would promote those things that we want to achieve without compromising the rights of parents—

Q291 Pat Glass: So if we found a form of words that said, “This would be statutory, but it is down to the individual schools to work with their communities to find the best way to deliver this to their children”—

Philip Robinson: That does not sound unreasonable.

Yusuf Patel: I have looked at the transcript of the previous hearings. I was trying to find a coherent argument that there is a causative link—that the more SRE you teach, the better the outcomes for children, in terms of lower teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections—and I could not find it. In those discussions, people who are more eminent than me stated very clearly that it is not really about lowering teenage pregnancies. It is more about entitlement for children.

Q292 Pat Glass: If we recommended that to the Government, and the Government agreed and came up with a form of words that said exactly that—“We have a real problem here. We think this may help, so it should be compulsory, but it is down to individual schools to work with their communities to find the best way of delivering this for their communities”—what is the problem with that?

Yusuf Patel: My point is that we are looking for a solution for a problem that we have not yet determined.

Q293 Pat Glass: That does not exist?

Yusuf Patel: Sorry; does what exist?

Pat Glass: For a problem that does not exist?

Yusuf Patel: The problem—what is the problem?

Pat Glass: Well, the problem is what I read out before.

Yusuf Patel: Sexually transmitted infections and teenage pregnancies?

Pat Glass: The huge level of teenage pregnancies, the scandal of child sex abuse, the massive problems with adolescent mental health, the number of young 13 and 14-year-olds who are putting themselves at risk through alcohol. There is a serious problem here.

Yusuf Patel: I know. I do not deny the problem, but is more SRE the solution?

Q294 Pat Glass: Will it make it worse?

Yusuf Patel: Well, from research done by David Paton and others, sometimes it can make it worse. I think increased educational outcomes and engaging children in education sometimes have greater effects than more SRE. My concern is that at a fundamental level more SRE will take away more rights from parents. In a society where we are actually trying to say to parents, “Be engaged in your children’s lives”—and we rightly sometimes rap them over the knuckles when they do not do enough for their children—we are actually saying, “We are taking away more rights from you, and expecting more from you with your children.” I do not really think that is the way to go.

Pat Glass: Sixty-two per cent. of Church of England head teachers and 90% of teachers believe that PSHE should be compulsory. If the professionals know best, what is the problem with that? Nobody? Right.

Q295 Siobhain McDonagh: A parental right to withdraw their children exists for SRE and religious education, but not for other subjects; should parents have a right to withdraw from lessons about alcohol, given the diversity of faith views on that subject?

Yusuf Patel: My subject area is SRE, so I am not going to delve too much into this, but I would say that PSHE includes a diverse range of topics. Sometimes, it is not really correct to talk about PSHE as one subject. SRE is quite a different kettle of fish from the other aspects of the PSHE curriculum. Within SRE, there are fundamental, strongly-held views of parents. Whether they believe in a more conservative or a more liberal approach, people generally have a clear idea about the moral underpinning of the subject, in a way that does not exist with other topics. SRE is about the character development of children, so in that respect, it is unique.

Philip Robinson: I suppose, again, the analogy is slightly inexact. I doubt that anybody, whatever their background, would disagree about the dangers of alcohol abuse. Everyone would agree on that.

Q296 Siobhain McDonagh: Do we not agree on the dangers of sex abuse?

Philip Robinson: Yes, of course we do, but that is not the only thing that is in SRE.

Q297 Siobhain McDonagh: So we think that ignorance is really going to help?

Philip Robinson: No, absolutely not. I said that I think that all our schools should teach it and teach it well, but in a context that respects the ethos of their particular community.

Q298 Siobhain McDonagh: Does the parental right of withdrawal interfere with schools' attempts to protect children from abuse?

Chair: Is there any evidence that the right to withdraw children has, in any way, inhibited schools' abilities to stop abuse from happening?

Gillian Allcroft: I am not aware of the evidence, to be honest.

Q299 Siobhain McDonagh: The Association of Christian Teachers suggests that the number of withdrawals from SRE lessons should be monitored. Would it be helpful for either school governors or the Government to collect data on this as an insight into the quality of school engagement with parents on the issue?

Gillian Allcroft: Governors should be finding out all sorts of information about the well-being of their students, and clearly, if you have a policy that says, "We are teaching this to our children and 50% are being withdrawn", you would want to know about that, because it says something about the relationship between the school and its community and parents.

Kate Persaud: There is a link governor for PSHE in every school.

Gillian Allcroft: No, there isn't.

Kate Persaud: Well, in our school there certainly is. They work quite closely with us on writing our policies. They attend the evening when parents come. It is a partnership of the parents, governors and teachers. It should all be linked together to protect the kids.

Q300 Mr Ward: I want to drill down a little bit into the specifics as regards what may possibly be unacceptable to parents. I am talking about engaging with parents and finding out. Some of the materials have been criticised as being inappropriate—too explicit—for young children. It might possibly even be damaging for them to see explicit materials at that age. Is that, in your experience, likely to be a consideration?

Kate Persaud: I do the PSHE certification; it is a CPD programme to fine-tune PSHE. One thing that came up there—I think Yusuf mentioned it—is that some schools, because they do not have a trained expert, are buying things off the peg. They do not necessarily know what they are buying or how age-appropriate it is. There are so many resources out there, and some schools may be buying something that is not aimed in the right way.

Certainly, the stuff that we deliver is age-appropriate and delivered in context. If you are not a professional who is trained in PSHE, and you were just given a video to play, and it was not going with the right message, there might be concerns.

Q301 Mr Ward: Does anybody else have examples of materials they have used that parents believed were inappropriate for that age?

Yusuf Patel: Before that, I would like to say: how do you determine whether a video is inappropriate or not? The guidance clearly says that parents have a say in that decision-making. Different schools may have parents from different backgrounds; the idea of what is inappropriate or not largely hinges on what parents believe is developmentally and culturally sensitive to their children. Say that teachers are the ones who decide what is or is not appropriate; many schools were using Channel 4's "Living and Growing" for many years, and it was not until recently, when the previous Schools Minister got involved and spoke to Channel 4 executives, that they withdrew the resource and re-released it, having taken away some of the parts that were deemed unacceptable or not appropriate.

Q302 Mr Ward: So would you run the maths, English and other teaching materials by parents to see whether they were appropriate?

Yusuf Patel: No, because these are different. In maths and English, the materials are not so closely aligned with values as they are in SRE, which is very much about values.

Q303 Mr Ward: This is the nub of it, really, isn't it?

Yusuf Patel: Yes.

Gillian Allcroft: I think that the very best schools that are doing this well will consult their parents and have parents in before the resources are used—"These are what we are thinking of using." Where that happens, you probably have really good quality SRE across ages. I would suggest that it is probably a particular issue in primary schools, where parents are more likely to have concerns because of the age of the children. It should be done well, and it is not always.

Q304 Chair: We have limited time left, so can we make our questions and answers nice and sharp? Philip.

Philip Robinson: What is age-appropriate is actually child-specific, not just age-specific, because children develop at different rates. To answer the question about why you wouldn't consult on maths and sciences, that is because when you are dealing with this area of child development you are stepping into sacred territory, in terms of the relationship between a parent and their children. It does touch very deeply on attitudes. Some parents end up thinking that you are actually causing the problems that you are trying to address and counter.

Chair: Thank you.

Q305 Mr Ward: There is a view that it can be damaging to children, in terms of sexualising them and introducing them to things at such an inappropriate age that it leads them into areas into which they possibly would not have gone before. Is that something that you think parents would believe to be the case?

Chair: Is there evidence for that?

Yusuf Patel: This could be controversial, but I really believe that when research has been done with child abusers, a lot of times they say that they were able to groom children based on the pornography culture—based on pornography, and getting the children to realise that some things are normal at their age and then jumping on that. Not all, but some of the resources veer into discussions around sexual relations and sexual intercourse at a very premature age, before a child has the ability to understand their own sexuality—before puberty.

Q306 Chair: But is there any evidence? You said earlier, quite rightly, that the evidence that SRE has a material effect on bringing down some of the key things that we would like to reduce is weak, but is there any evidence to suggest that SRE actually leads to earlier sexual activity, for example?

Yusuf Patel: I'm not aware of any studies that have delved into that subject.

Kate Persaud: Can I pick up on linking SRE to pornography? I am a bit flabbergasted that you can say that, Yusuf. I understand the link between grooming and pornography, but you cannot then jump to saying that SRE is doing the same thing. We do not show children pornographic material in SRE—that is just not what is happening in schools, no matter how patchy we are saying it is. It is not pornography.

Q307 Chair: Yusuf, do you accept that there is no evidence that SRE leads to a greater take-up of pornography? Or do you feel otherwise?

Yusuf Patel: No, I am just saying that we are exposing children to sexual content before they are developmentally ready for it—before they have sexually matured.

Chair: Thank you.

Q308 Mr Ward: We have evidence from the Tower Hamlets group that was formed. I do not think that it was a question of whether they were introducing pornography, but they were simply being advised that you can type in “penis” or “vagina” and then all of a sudden a new world opens up. They felt that there was therefore a danger to children.

Philip Robinson: In answer to the question about whether there is any evidence that SRE leads to the sexualisation of children, I do not know that there is any.

However, I did not know whether you were asking whether there was evidence that parents fear that it does. I think that there is evidence that they fear that it does. That is all I was going to say. Again, a lack of engagement with them is going to increase rather than decrease that fear.

Q309 Chair: But if there is no evidence that it does, it is important that those involved communicate that as clearly as they communicate the weakness of the case for SRE solving all these other problems.

Yusuf Patel: I want to mention a point that David mentioned in relation to Tower Hamlets, and the example that he gave. A child came home from school. The computer was in the public area and the parent was going in and out. The child was typing in keywords and the parent thought that the child was doing his homework, which he was, because the teacher had advised the children, “If you want to know more about these subjects, type in ‘penis’ and ‘vagina’ and you can find out more information.” So when the child decided to type those words in, he got to a pornographic website. The mother was very upset and complained to the school. She then complained to the local authority, but nobody really paid any attention to her. They said the problem was that she had internet access in her home and the child had access to it. They really tried to shift the blame away from the school and its responsibility in this.

Mr Ward: I would guess that if that had been taught effectively, the young child would have been told the danger of typing in certain things.

Q310 Craig Whittaker: To continue on that subject, you mentioned child sexual exploitation. Is the danger much greater than the danger of not teaching children about child sexual exploitation, considering this country’s history of sexual exploitation in the family?

Yusuf Patel: No, I think this is absolutely essential. I am not saying that we should not teach children about child abuse. The NSPCC came up with a very good model—the PANTS model—to make children aware of private and public, and of child abuse. That sort of approach is very useful in making children aware that some things that adults may do are unacceptable, and they have the right to say no. Those things are fine. I am not saying that we should not be teaching these things to children. I am saying that we need to be sensitive to the way we teach this, bearing in mind the background of the children, and we need to teach this working in partnership with parents.

Q311 Craig Whittaker: So basically it is about how well it is taught, and who are the best people to make those decisions about how it is taught. Is that right?

Yusuf Patel: Yes.

Q312 Craig Whittaker: Let me ask you about the Church of England. It says that the school's governing body is the best place to make those decisions, but the National Governors' Association disagrees. Who should be accountable for schools' SRE policy?

Gillian Allcroft: I think there is a difference between being accountable for the outcomes and how well it is done, and actually determining whether it should be taught, which is the case in primary schools for governing bodies, and what should be taught. Governing bodies are not education or child development professionals, so leaving the responsibility with that body is just not appropriate. Holding the school to account and looking at whether it has been doing well is absolutely a governing body responsibility. I think there is a difference between the accountability and deciding what you are actually going to be doing in the classroom.

Q313 Craig Whittaker: Okay. Does anybody have a different view?

Yusuf Patel: I think that policy is definitely the responsibility of governing bodies. We contacted most primary schools in London to find out about their SRE policies, and most of the policies do not tell you very much about what is happening in the school. They do not tell you the resources that are being used. They do not tell parents enough to make a decision, so they have to have follow-up conversations with the school to have a clearer idea.

Q314 Chair: Kate, do you accept that in too many schools the information is not really there for parents to be able to interrogate and thus know what is going on?

Kate Persaud: We publish our curricula online, where it says what the PSE curriculum is and what is covered. I think we do give enough information.

Chair: I am not necessarily referring to your particular school.

Kate Persaud: When I talk to other professionals when I go to inset days and liaison, I think that is the case. But, in terms of responsibility, if it is statutory then governing bodies will have a greater power to invest in quality teachers in their schools. Because budgets are tight and teaching roles are tight on numbers, they are not going to invest in specialist staff unless they have to. So the outcomes that we all want for these young people will happen if we make it statutory, because then we will have trained professionals in the classroom with curriculum time in a very pressurised curriculum because they will have to do it.

Q315 Chair: What is the outcome that you are after?

Kate Persaud: The outcome that these children are safer and better protected because they understand the dangers. The internet is moving faster than most parents are aware. Most parents that I deal with who phone me up are doing so because they do not know what to do, because their young children have stumbled across apps and websites and exposed themselves to such things. The parents are saying that they need help—they don't know how to limit it and they don't know what to say. You can say, "Leave it to the parents," but

parents are phoning daily to say, “Help me—I don’t know what to do.” So I think that is a very dangerous idea.

Yusuf Patel: We can say that you have to make SRE statutory to ensure that SRE policy is made robust, but what cost implications does it place on schools at the moment to ensure that SRE policies clarify what SRE there is in the school and what resources are used? It is about schools and governors being involved much more in creating robust SRE policies, and for that to reflect SRE teaching in a school.

Q316 Chair: What would happen in a multi-academy trust where the school may not even have much in the way of a governing body?

Gillian Allcroft: Well, presumably the overarching academy trust determines what the policy is. Different multi-academy trusts have different schemes of delegation, so what happens at the local level will be delegated in some cases to local school level and in others it will be determined at trust level. There are other inquiries going on into schemes of delegation for multi-academy trusts and we know that they are not always documents of the greatest clarity at this point.

Q317 Mr Ward: Kate, earlier on you said that, for a very small word, the S in SRE has a disproportionately large impact. Could you talk a bit more about the relationship part? How significant is the sex part in SRE?

Kate Persaud: Yes. It also links to the earlier question about alcohol education, because when we do alcohol education we are looking at risk behaviours in young people and where that might lead them. We are looking at their relationships with other people of the same age or of an older age and how appropriate they are. All of that feeds into them when they become sexually mature, but that is the important bit. Someone mentioned the PANTS resource—we use that and it is very good.

Even when we have our three dedicated days for year 8 on SRE, the actual sex bit is about two hours and then the rest of the three days is about being safe in relationships, understanding quality relationships, respecting yourself and respecting the environment. It is a part, but it is only a bit, and it is all the safeness around it that we teach.

Yusuf Patel: I think that children and young people need a clear message around all of these areas, but my concern is that sometimes they get mixed messages. With regards to pornography, sometimes we send the message to young people that there are good and bad things in pornography and that gives them a very mixed message about the messages they are getting in pornography.

There is a question about not only tackling the subjects, but how they are tackled. How do you enable children to make choices when you are saying that there are good and bad things about these areas?

Q318 Mr Ward: Just quickly, what is good pornography?

Yusuf Patel: You tell me.

Mr Ward: No, I don't want to get into personal details at this stage.

Philip Robinson: The relationship part is very important to us—in fact, we tend to call it RSE in our schools to put the weight in the correct place, if you like. I suppose—

Q319 Chair: Sorry to interrupt you, Philip. Would the Government be better off calling it RSE?

Philip Robinson: Yes. I think that means that you—

Chair: A yes will do. Kate, do you think that would be better? Have you given any thought to that?

Kate Persaud: I had not really thought of it until now. The order of the letters would not make any difference to what I am teaching.

Gillian Allcroft: I think it would be a good move, because the relationships bit is so important. All the stuff about gang culture, and all that Pat was talking about, is all about relationships.

Yusuf Patel: A name change would not make much difference if the way it is taught remains the same.

Q320 Chair: In so far as it sent a signal about where the emphasis should lie, do you think changing the name could be a positive step? I have three out of four of you saying yes to that, and Kate has not thought about it before.

Philip Robinson: The relationships part of the education is very important in our schools. If you were to make it, another recommendation would be for RSE in schools not to be crisis-led. We do need to protect young people from harm but we have some positive messages about what happy, loving relationships look like, and why those things are good to cherish. The goodness of the human body and human sexuality need to be very much part of our story. We do not want to make young people afraid of their sexual selves and their experiences. We want to see that as part of an integrated and healthy attitude.

Q321 Pat Glass: Can I ask you about SRE and British values, in particular gay rights? Ofsted has said it is rightly ensuring that schools do not indoctrinate pupils about gay people or anyone else being inferior, and the same goes for making girls sit separately at the back of the class. It says that goes directly against fundamental British values. The DfE says that schools should prepare all pupils for life in modern Britain. Can pupils be properly prepared for life without gay rights—or at least teaching that there are gay people—being included in sex and relationships education?

Philip Robinson: I can answer by going back to your first question. The Catholic Church's teaching on this is clear: we must not discriminate against people on grounds of sex, gender or orientation. That is straightforward.

Q322 Chair: What does not discriminating mean?

Philip Robinson: It means you must not treat them any differently. You must ensure that in our schools they are pastorally cared for.

Q323 Pat Glass: Some young people's lives are a misery in school. I saw that when I worked in schools. "Gay" is the word flung around in schools now as a put-down for kids. Should we be doing more and explaining that there are gay people who have rights and that people are entitled to go into same-sex marriages?

Philip Robinson: Yes.

Kate Persaud: There are some good resources out there about LGBT bullying, specifically for young people. Suicide rates among young people in the LGBT community are very disproportionate and we need to do more to measure that. Schools must have a very positive message about discrimination generally and about what is acceptable and unacceptable language for young people, so that they go hand in hand.

Q324 Chair: Do Catholic schools teach that homosexuality as a lifestyle choice is wrong?

Philip Robinson: No. I know that you think that we do. There is a subtle difference between being homosexual and homosexual sex, which would be ruled out in the Church's moral teaching for the same reason that contraceptive sex would or masturbation, in that it is not within the context of marriage—it is not unitive and procreative. We do not have any special categories for that kind of sexual sin. It is important to get that across.

Q325 Chair: You do teach that homosexual activity is wrong.

Philip Robinson: Yes. I said "sex" because I think "activity" is too non-specific.

Q326 Chair: Okay. We'll make it that sex between homosexual people is wrong. I want to explore the compatibility of that with not treating people differently. So what they do is completely and utterly wrong in the eyes of God but they are okay.

Philip Robinson: Yes.

Q327 Chair: Does that work?

Philip Robinson: That is true of every single person. Every single person does things that are wrong in the eyes of God but they are still okay.

Yusuf Patel: I have spoken to some Muslim schools about this. We have to maintain that the ethos of the school has to reflect the Islamic position, which is similar to the Catholic position. Any relationship outside of marriage between a man and a woman is not acceptable within Islamic theology, but on an everyday basis they will meet people in the diverse society we live in and will have to treat everybody with dignity and respect. You cannot say that just by saying that a particular act is sinful that, on the other hand, you will treat that person incorrectly. There is a balanced positioning in respect of that.

Q328 Pat Glass: Last week, *The Guardian* reported that a primary school head teacher had been subjected to aggressive comments from parents as a result of introducing teaching about same-sex relationships at the school. The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child described this as “priming susceptible, small children for gay sex later on.” I honestly cannot believe that I am reading that out. At what age should young children learn that different kinds of relationships exist and that same-sex couples can get married?

Yusuf Patel: If you were to talk to five-year-old children about sexual relationships, even heterosexual sexual relationships, it would mean very little to them. So I think in the latter part of the primary years—maybe year 5 and year 6—where they are introduced to the idea, or they are coming closer to awareness about relationships between people, they should realise that there are different relationships in society and that, although we take a particular position from a theological background, there are different people out there.

Q329 Pat Glass: So what age?

Yusuf Patel: In order to make people aware about people from other backgrounds you don’t have to go into the details about sexual lifestyles. I think that is the point that some parents are concerned about. Even from a heterosexual position, you would not start by discussing heterosexual relationships with young children from a sexually explicit point of view. Neither should you discuss any other lifestyle from that position.

Q330 Pat Glass: I have spent a lot of time in schools, although not in primary schools. I have worked with children aged four and five whom I can clearly identify will have issues around sexuality. At what point should we be talking to children about—

Philip Robinson: Did you say four and five—

Pat Glass: I am not saying we should be introducing sex education then, but I am saying that I have been able to identify children at that age who are going to have issues around their sexuality.

Philip Robinson: I think that child would not view that in terms of their sexual identity—

Q331 Pat Glass: But in order to protect those children from bullying and so on, at what age should we introduce them to the idea of different kinds of sexual relationships? Should it be primary? Should it be secondary?

Gillian Allcroft: Teaching children that there are different family types is certainly something that should be happening, even in primary school. There will be children in primary school who have lesbian or gay parents and will be different; or, indeed, in today's society you have multiple families with half-siblings, step-siblings all together. We need to be teaching children at that age about the different range of families. I am not sure at what stage you then introduce the other stuff. That would be for somebody more expert in that than me, to be honest.

Q332 Pat Glass: So not the detailed stuff?

Gillian Allcroft: Certainly that there are a range of a family groupings; that has to be done because they will come across them.

Kate Persaud: Right from the youngest age. There are children in all sorts of families. As soon as a teacher engages in PSHE from early years education they will have children in their classroom from different families, and it has to be acknowledged as being okay so the whole class knows that there is nothing wrong if you go to that child's house for tea and they have two mums. It has to be; as British values are what we are talking about, that is what we have to teach our young people.

Philip Robinson: It is probably context dependent and child dependent. I would say that you teach them about those things as they arise in that child's developmental story. That is why involvement with parents and children and asking them the questions they want to know the answers to is a really important part of the process. But it would seem that the older they get in primary schools, the more they will be exposed to these kinds of realities, which they will have questions about and to which we owe them some honest answers.

Q333 Pat Glass: Do you think that teachers are equipped particularly for young children who start to ask questions about themselves or about others?

Philip Robinson: It is difficult. I think they are not. To sharpen the recommendation I made about teachers, there is probably a difference between primary and secondary schools. The secondary schools that do it most successfully have a dedicated team of PSHE specialists and SRE specialists who can deliver all those lessons, just as you would with any subject expertise in secondary school. The difficulty in primary school is that every primary teacher teaches the whole curriculum. Some of those primary teachers would not be equipped and many of them would feel very uncomfortable and would probably avoid the issue rather than answer the question, which is deeply unhelpful on both sides. It is more difficult to work out how you equip primary school teachers to do that well. Even if you made it statutory, some of them would still struggle.

Yusuf Patel: We are talking about training for teachers, but we also need support for parents in those areas. Young children will go to their parents because they are still at the level where they are inquisitive. They go to their parents and ask them questions about this. We have got to enable parents and to have the support necessary to be able to answer their every question in these areas.

Q334 Chair: We haven't really explored that and we are pretty much at the end, but we have not touched on where the role of the school ends, the parents' begins, what the overlap is—

Philip Robinson: It should be the other way around: where the role of the parents ends and the school's begins. It is the parent's responsibility first.

Q335 Chair: Yes, thank you. It is impossible to even phrase it without causing controversy. Did you want to say something briefly about that before we finish?

Philip Robinson: I stressed at the start that, for us, it is very much the principle that education is primarily the job of parents. That is what the Church teaches. The Church also teaches that it is important as children develop more, and it is in one of its most authoritative documents, that they receive a “positive and prudent” sexual education. I love those two words; it needs to be positive and it needs to be prudent. We need to be presenting them with positive messages, not just scare messages, but we also need to be realistic and prudent about the world in which they live. We really need to do that in engagement with parents and we need to involve them in every stage of the process.

Q336 Chair: Thank you. It is not just a theological position on the central role of parents; it is also the legal position. A lot of people forget that the legal duty to educate your children rests not with the state, but with parents. They happen to delegate it in most cases to state schools, but it is their primary responsibility, not the state's. Any reflections on that, Kate?

Kate Persaud: I don't think making it statutory would take away the rights of the parent, our parents or our partners in any aspect of the curriculum. We work together to educate young people, and I think that would continue if we made it statutory.

Gillian Allcroft: Clearly, parents have a huge role to play in this. As Yusuf said, many parents feel hugely ill-equipped.

Q337 Chair: I suppose the question goes back to Philip's correction of my phrasing that parents have the primary role and the schools have the secondary role. Would you accept that?

Gillian Allcroft: Yes, but I think there is a dual role. I think the school can do things that the parents are ill-equipped to do.

Q338 Pat Glass: I have always been of the view that I am my child's first educator and the Church and the school would help me. We have to recognise that lots of families in this country are not in that position. That might well be the legal position, and it might well be the position for some of us, but many families are not equipped to do that.

Philip Robinson: You have to begin with that presumption, but the prudent part of it is the reality that you outline. Yes, we say that parents are the first educators of children and we hope that they will be the best educators of children, but in some cases they may not be. When a parent sends their child to a Catholic school they are delegating their parental educational responsibility, in part at least, to the school and are working in partnership with them. In order to try to make the school deliver its part well and better, you must not override the primary responsibility the parents have, even if they are not very good at it.

Q339 Chair: Thank you. Final words to you, Yusuf.

Yusuf Patel: I agree with that in terms of parents being the primary educators of children and schools as the supporters of parents. If parents are in a position to be able to do a lot of what we expect them to do, that requires them to be supported by the state. That leads to the best outcomes for all of our children.

Chair: Thank you all very much. If we could now switch as quickly as possible to the next panel.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Dr Zoe Hilton**, Head of Safeguarding and Child Protection, Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command, National Crime Agency, **Eleanor Moody**, Advocacy Manager, Girlguiding, **Lauriane Povey**, Author, *Veil of Anonymity*, and **Alan Wood CBE**, President, Association of Directors of Children's Services, and Corporate Director of Children's Services, London Borough of Hackney, gave evidence.

Q340 Chair: Hello and welcome. I know you will have listened to some of the previous session and I guess there is some overlap. When it comes to protecting children online, how do parents and teachers keep up with the technology and the potential threats and risks that lie within it and the many forms that can take? What is the most effective way of ensuring that we get the balance we just talked about between parents and schools, while keeping up and providing the competence and understanding to be able to support children to stay safe online? Who would like to pick up on that? Zoe, you caught my eye.

Dr Hilton: Part of the CEOP "Thinkuknow" programme is to do both. Our primary target is children and young people between the ages of four and 19. We have a range of different resources, but we are basically targeting them. We also have 100,000 professionals who use our resources and are logged into our site. We get our resources out there to professionals through a cascade model of training. We have 5,000 "ambassadors" training

other professionals, and working directly with children and young people using age-appropriate resources such as cartoons and films—all of those things. They use them in school settings and in other settings where children and young people are. At the same time, we have also worked hard to develop our parents programme. We have a Parents Protect programme. We are working very closely with Parent Zone to develop resources with them. It is not one or the other.

Q341 Chair: How many parents do you think you have reached?

Dr Hilton: Fewer, because we are only now bringing our parents programme up to the same level in terms of our dissemination mechanism. Schools are easy and professionals are easy. Last year, we reached over 3 million children via the professional networks. Next year, our target is to reach between at least 2 million and 3 million parents, so that they are doing that direct work with the kids and we have both. We cannot just rely on either one; both are essential.

Q342 Chair: Do you have the resource to keep up with the need?

Dr Hilton: We could certainly have more. I have a small team of six working on this issue and developing these resources. We are very dependent on our networks. The whole concept of the “Thinkuknow” programme is that we are basically dependent on the professionals on the ground being proactive, getting themselves trained, having our ambassadors training, familiarising themselves with the available resources and then taking that out to children and young people.

Q343 Chair: How many ambassadors do you currently have? How many would you like to have for the network that you think would be most effective?

Dr Hilton: We have 5,000 ambassadors. That is probably a good number. To be more effective, we need an even greater range of schools. But we could easily double that, and over the coming years, we would certainly hope to go on expanding our ambassadors network, potentially by having other organisations also deliver our training. We continue to be ambitious about the ambassadors network, but we could certainly do more. We want to do more.

Q344 Chair: Lauriane, how do you feel that we can deal with what is essentially a generational thing linked to developing technology? All too often, teachers and parents are not necessarily using the technology that children are using. They are therefore distant from it and in a pretty weak position, without the training and information reaching them, so that they can support children. Do you have any thoughts on how on earth we bridge that gap?

Lauriane Povey: It is impossible to educate every single parent about Facebook, Twitter and all the other social networks. School is the easiest way to do it. Teachers who are teaching PSHE should be aware of Facebook and how to use it. You cannot teach about

cyber-bullying and try to prevent it if you do not even know how Facebook and Twitter work or what Instagram, Snapchat and all the different apps are. Teachers need to be educated about it because, in this instance, pupils are more educated about cyber-bullying than their teachers.

Q345 Chair: Is it a fruitless task? What chance is there of getting teachers and parents to keep up with this technology, which, as you say, keeps moving all the time? Is it fundamentally impossible? That does not necessarily mean that we should do nothing. When you hear what Zoe describes, are you thinking, “Yes, that’ll sort it out.”?

Lauriane Povey: Possibly. Teachers will use Facebook and Twitter. The younger teachers could try to educate the older teachers who are teaching this.

Eleanor Moody: One thing about that is that one reason why we are calling for PHSE to be statutory is that the training of teachers would improve and would include greater emphasis on new technologies, such as cyber-bullying and so on. One of the key things we found at Girlguiding is that girls were experiencing bullying and sexual harassment at school, on and offline, and a key part of tackling cyber-bullying is also tackling the attitudes that create the abusive behaviour online. It is not only a case of teachers and professionals knowing about how the technology works, because young people will always know more than older people about that because they use it much more in their lives. Girls and young women are telling us that it is about abusive behaviour and the content of the cyber-bullying that is important to them, so teachers have a really important role in PHSE and SRE to understand the technology, but, as Lauriane said, they can’t be expected to know everything, nor can parents. Behaviours and attitudes must be tackled.

Q346 Chair: Alan?

Alan Wood: I think there are two issues. The one about children knowing more about technology, what is available and how to use it is critical. It is difficult to deal with that unless you are engaging young people themselves, because the teachers are the teachers and the teachers are the parents. Unless we have that access to the systems and the knowledge they have, it will always be difficult and we will always be playing catch-up. Involving young people in schools, youth centres and community groupings about how the technology is being used and its impact is important.

The second issue is the security in institutions. When children are in school and have electronic equipment, what they are able to access within the confines of the school is important for local authorities and the Government to think through. Where there are systems such as the London Grid for Learning, what protection is there in the system to stop access being made by people in the school to material we don’t want them to access? That is an important question.

Q347 Chair: Is that fruitless? I wonder whether your first point might have more long-term benefit. If the only people who really know what is going on are young people, in

the same way they can form gangs and bully online, perhaps we need to encourage them to work together and to have safety groupings within schools and other institutions to provide advice to one another. In this instance, peer support may be the only way of keeping up, because the only people who will know what is going on are likely to be the young people themselves, so we should encourage them to support one another.

Dr Hilton: Yes, and there has been some interesting mentoring work. The critical point though and the key plank of our programme is that this is about behaviour and not technology. We need to stick with that, and our work for parents, “The Parents’ and Carers’ Guide to the Internet”, which we launched a couple of years ago, is a basic guide to the technology, but it is trying to empower parents by saying, “Actually, you still have a massive parenting role here and knowledge about parenting and the world that you can impart. Your kids will always know a little bit more than you about the technology, but you are still in an essential part of this internet safety education.”

The same is true of the Thinkuknow programme, which is primarily for professionals. Yes, children will run rings around you with their knowledge of the internet, and they will probably disable the security settings and so on. Recognise that now, but engage with them in dialogue and enable them to have the tools to keep themselves safe and understand all the issues that have been talked about this morning—power, consent and relationships—and try to give them those wider tools.

Of course there are some technical issues that are important to know, such as setting privacy settings and so on, but on their own, those are simply the bare bones, and the richer education that needs to go on, certainly around our resources, is about how to manage relationships and the sort of risk taking that children and particularly adolescents engage in.

Q348 Pat Glass: I was surprised in 2010 when I became an MP—I don’t know about others—that anyone seems to be able to e-mail me or send me a message by social media and say anything, no matter how rude, or send me stuff, no matter how explicit. I am an adult, and I can just shrug that off and think, “They’re just sick, twisted or misled.” How important do you think the anonymity bit is around cyber-bullying? Are these the people who would just bully anyway using traditional methods, or is this a new form of bullying? Is it different people?

Lauriane Povey: I think it is different people. People who bully anonymously would not bully in person at all. Teachers do not need to know that much about the technologies themselves; they need to know what is right and what is wrong, and they can do that without understanding the technologies that well. In cases of anonymously spreading rumours online, children do not really understand that that is classed as cyber-bullying, because they are not actually talking to the victims themselves. When they are sending death threats online, they do not think that it is serious because they think, “I’m not going to carry it out, so it doesn’t matter. I’m not actually going to kill anyone, so why is it a problem?” Teachers need to educate that that is cyber-bullying and it is a huge problem.

Q349 Pat Glass: So there is an issue with teachers understanding about cyber-bullying, but you think it is not the traditional bullies—the people who would have bullied

people in the schoolyard and taken their dinner money off them. It is different people, and it is emerging because of the anonymity.

Lauriane Povey: Yes.

Eleanor Moody: I think that is right. With the death threats and things, there is a sort of wall that they can hide behind. Our findings also show that people who are known to victims of cyber-bullying are doing the bullying. For example, in relationship abuse—we will get on to this, probably, when we talk about healthy relationships—we did a piece of research about controlling and coercive behaviour. That research showed that social media and online tools were being used as part of that controlling behaviour, which is bullying in relationships, and in teenage relationships. There is definitely a dimension of anonymity being a problem. That may be different bullies, but there is definitely also a problem about bullies using online tools as an additional way to amplify their bullying or to spread it more widely—for example, with sexting—to amplify the harm.

Alan Wood: I think it would be very difficult to say that there is a black and white case of: you are a bully who takes things from people in the schoolyard, or you are a bully who does things anonymously from your home and bedroom. I do not think there are those discrete groupings.

Q350 Chair: Has it brought in a whole new set of people who previously would not have bullied in the schoolyard, but who can bully online? Are there any gender splits here?

Eleanor Moody: From the evidence that we have heard with girls and women, especially in teenage relationships, it seems to be that it is boys harassing girls on cyber-bullying more. That is what our research evidence finds, and I think the NSPCC has found with their sexting research, which would back that up, that girls are being harassed through sexting from boys rather than the other way around to a greater extent. Especially where the context is sexual—sexual violence, sexual bullying—there would seem to be more emphasis on girls being adversely affected than boys, although of course it affects boys, too.

Q351 Alex Cunningham: And the more general stuff? Is it boy-on-boy, boy-on-girl or girl-on-girl bullying?

Eleanor Moody: With cyber-bullying, there is definitely girl-on-girl cyber-bullying, too.

Q352 Alex Cunningham: How much of it is actually based on sexual issues rather than the general stuff—the “I’m going to get you,” or “So-and-so hates you,” and so on?

Eleanor Moody: I haven’t seen evidence on that kind of split about where that sits.

Q353 Pat Glass: The Government has recently issued some additional information on cyber-bullying as part of its advice on bullying, and it refers to the wider search powers

provided in the Education Act 2011. I sat on that Bill Committee, going through this line by line, and I do not ever remember that being in there. But they say it is in, so it must be in. Is it appropriate for teachers to be taking phones off young people and deleting certain files and apps? Can Government do more? I am thinking about things like Ask.fm, which is said to have been turned into a bullying website. Should the Government have the powers to delete these sites?

Lauriane Povey: I think the Government should give police more powers to track down the trolls on these sites, rather than banning the sites altogether. With the technology, I think the Government do not have the capabilities to ban the sites altogether. I think they should put more emphasis on finding the trolls who operate on these sites and bringing them to justice.

Q354 Pat Glass: We have seen some recent cases, particularly involving charity workers and MPs and so on, where people have been taken to court and gone to prison because of death threats or rape threats. Should it be more than just that? Should the police have the resources to track people and convict them if they just fall short of saying, “We’re going to rape you,” or, “We’re going to murder you.”?

Lauriane Povey: If it is constant and a minor is the victim—yes.

Q355 Pat Glass: What if the perpetrator is a minor?

Lauriane Povey: They will not know that at the time. In that case, I am not sure exactly what, justice-wise, should be done. They definitely should put effort into finding who is behind it.

Q356 Pat Glass: What about the others; do you think the Government could do more?

Alan Wood: I think giving guidance to schools and other institutions about sites that children access or how you provide information and advice is one thing. The issues are more localised. For example, the debate about whether young people should have access to their technology—mobile phones, iPads and tablets—at school is an issue. Some schools do not want the children to have mobile phones in school because of the possibility—

Chair: Could you speak up a bit please, Alan?

Alan Wood: Sorry.

Q357 Alex Cunningham: Are you suggesting that we should start banning these things from schools?

Alan Wood: I think that there is an issue about how children use electronic equipment that does not belong to the school and is not what the school is using as part of the

curriculum. There is evidence, particularly of cyber-bullying in schools—kids are texting from one classroom to another or even within the classroom. Some schools have a clear policy that, if you have a mobile phone, you leave it in the school office and you do not have it with you in and around the school.

Q358 Pat Glass: We have had this discussion as part of another inquiry. Head teachers have said to us that it is a fact of life. If they took every phone off every kid, they would be in constant discussion or arguments and would create behavioural issues. It is just easier to say, “If you are caught with it and you use it in school, we will take it off you.”

Alan Wood: I think that different schools have different approaches. Some schools do that. Some schools have no policy whatever and others say, “No, you can’t have the phone.” It depends on the school, the way it organises itself, what it is trying to achieve and the nature of the problems that they have. I do not think that we can prescribe it. That is related to the point about giving guidance and advice nationally. You cannot prescribe the way those things work unless you understand what the situation is in the particular institution.

Q359 Chair: Do we have clarity about what is unacceptable behaviour? Doing something with your phone physically is one thing, but when is a snide remark acceptable? When does it start to become part of a pattern of behaviour, possibly by a group, in which no one individual has done that much? How do we define this problem and what do institutions such as schools do about it to minimise the likelihood of amplification, which I think somebody has already mentioned? The technology allows amplification, and a permanence that a few snide remarks in the playground do not have. Do we need a new way of looking at what otherwise would have been regarded as an inevitable part of growing up and, unless it was peculiarly sustained, not that pernicious? In this world, perhaps it is.

Eleanor Moody: There is a complete lack of clarity for young people about what abuse is and when it becomes abusive. Our research shows that with girls and young women, the lines are blurred when it comes to the reality and the theory. When you have a list of behaviours, they can quite easily tick off what is abusive and where consent is and is not. When you are put in front of real life situations, the lines are blurred. That is the difficulty with young people: they are in very complex situations with media influences all around them, their mobile phone with them all the time, constantly getting new and different information. It is a very confusing environment for adults and young people.

One of the roles of SRE and PSHE is to give children and young people the space to discuss and think about those issues—where the boundaries are, and what is and is not acceptable behaviour—together, as groups with the guidance of expert tuition. That is why more resource for teacher training is really important. Girls are saying that their teachers are not trained well enough to do this. Consent is a huge issue, we know. There are blurred lines around consent, and this rape culture is kind of online, in everyone’s face, as it were, when it comes to young people. It is very confusing and it is creating a conducive context for sexual harassment in schools, which we have got quite a lot of evidence on. Girls are experiencing this day to day, and then you see it in wider society, with high levels of violence against women and girls as well.

Q360 Chair: Staying away from sexual violence and staying on general bullying—my snide remark amplified—how much of a problem is that? Should our focus primarily be on the issues around sexual violence, etc? To what extent does the amplification of the cyber-world cause greater damage to the well-being and mental health of young people than previously? The fundamental behaviours of the bully or the remark-maker may not have changed, but somehow has the technology made it worse, and thus more pernicious? Does it therefore need to be taken more seriously, or not?

Lauriane Povey: It is really hard to tell if something is a joke online or not, and I think schools should educate that it is hard to tell if something is a joke, and that some pupils are more sensitive to online remarks than others; if they would not be offended, someone else will be. They should give examples of things that could be considered a joke, but could be interpreted differently.

Q361 Chair: Zoe, any thoughts on that?

Dr Hilton: Yes. I think the technology has, as we have said, led to a distancing—to children and young people carelessly becoming involved in bullying; you can involve a wider network of people instantaneously. Obviously the bullying is 24/7, so it does not stop at the school gates. I think that that certainly has set out more challenges for young people.

I think cyber-bullying needs to be gripped as a bullying issue by the school. There is guidance out there for schools on cyber-bullying. I am not undermining the complexities that schools face, but I do think it is something that needs to be addressed through a whole school approach. There is guidance for schools as well about sexting, where you have clearly illegal behaviour, where that line is, where you have illegal images, and what the responsibilities are to then involve the police, and what their responsibilities are. I think there is some guidance out there. I am not in any way undermining the challenges that schools face now, in trying to deal with all of this, because it is on their doorstep and in their school.

Q362 Chair: Are schools being effective in that respect? This is staying away from the sexting—just on the straightforward kind of bullying. You get friendship groups; someone falls out with the group. Is there sustained online bullying? My own children are living their lives, seemingly, on their phones; if somebody falls out with the friendship group and they continue to be discussed in a negative way, that would be catastrophic for many young people who are very sensitive. Are you saying that schools are managing to monitor that in some way, and tackle it?

Lauriane Povey: I think schools are scared to tackle behaviour that has happened outside school hours. I think schools should feel confident in punishing with detention or talking to a child who has been bullying another child at home, even if that child says it did not happen at school. If the parents then complain—“You can’t punish my child; it didn’t happen at school”—the Government should say to schools that they should be able to punish—reasonably punish, with detention, for example—or talk to the child about their behaviours, even if it was outside school.

Q363 Mr Ward: Some of the evidence that we have seen is really quite disturbing. There is an NSPCC survey on the subject. I am specifically looking at sexting now, but this applies to other things as well. Some 37% of 13 to 24-year-olds have sent a naked photo of themselves via a smartphone. Probably even more disturbing is that 49% believe it is just harmless fun. That is really worrying. Just how serious is this thing? Do you believe that we are at a crisis point? Presumably this is only going to happen more and more, unless steps are taken. Just how serious is it, and is enough being done?

Chair: Is this sexting in particular you are talking about?

Mr Ward: Sexting in particular, but it applies to all the different forms of social media used for bullying.

Dr Hilton: I am not minimising the issues with sexting, but I think the age group who are most likely to sext each other are actually young adults. The research shows that it is very prevalent in the adult population. Children, particularly older children, are looking at celebrities and at what the adult population is doing.

In our advice, particularly for older teenagers aged 14 plus, we try to show how, if this is something you want to do, you do it safely—how would you do it anonymously? We have tried to give realistic advice, because we have reached the point with older teenagers where sexting is a normative behaviour, so we need to get them to recognise when it is abusive, harmful, or linked to exploitation or the beginning point of an exploitative relationship. We must recognise that it is something that some young people will do regardless of all the safety messages in the world, so we must look at how we can be realistic about the safety advice.

One thing that we have tried to do as a programme is look at some of the research, particularly that carried out by David Finkelhor in the States, about safety messaging in schools—what is effective and what is not. We have been struck by some of the critiques of safety messaging where it is not realistic to what children and young people are experiencing. We have to be realistic about age, developmental stage and the choices that children and young people are making.

Q364 Mr Ward: Is there an age beyond which you are basically too old to be able to talk to young people? Should it be coming from young people? I am not looking at you in a particular way, but obviously a young recovered drug addict talking to young drug addicts is far more powerful than a 40-year-old youth worker saying, “This is not really good for you.”

Dr Hilton: I don’t know that that is true.

Alan Wood: No, I don’t think it is true. If you take young people involved in crime and have hardened criminals working with them, there is some evidence that shows that that does not deter young people at all—it encourages them to be involved in crime. It is not a truism that if you have an experience and talk to someone about it, you will improve their understanding of or response to that experience.

Q365 Mr Ward: I believe you have been back to your school, Lauriane; what was that experience like?

Lauriane Povey: I think that the children were probably more open to me than they would have been to teachers about their experience of cyber-bullying and what happens on Facebook. It has become normal for 14-year-old girls to have as their profile picture them stood in a bra, and the whole world can see that. That has become normal and acceptable in that age group, and that must be addressed. Have you heard of Snapchat?

Mr Ward: I use it every day.

Lauriane Povey: People think that when they send a photo on Snapchat it will disappear in three seconds, but young people need to be educated, because you can take screenshots of it and you can download third-party apps that will keep and store all the images that have been sent to you via Snapchat. So it does not necessarily disappear in three seconds. People use Snapchat for sexting, thinking that it will be gone in three to five seconds and that no one else will see it, but that is not the reality; you can store the images.

Q366 Mr Ward: Eleanor, I want to ask you a different question, although others can answer as well. You spoke earlier about attitudes that lead to abusive behaviour. To what extent has there been a societal change, particularly in terms of men and boys having a new, effective form of showing their attitudes towards girls and women, and to what extent has there been an actual change in the attitudes of men/boys to women/girls?

Eleanor Moody: The UK has a big problem with violence against women and girls, which is evident from the Home Office strategy—they recognise that. It is definitely not a new thing; violence against women and girls has been an issue and remains an issue. It is not being tackled in schools. Girls and women whom we speak to feel that it is an issue in their schools. They are being sexually harassed at school; we have evidence of that. I would agree that, as I said earlier, there is now a way to amplify some of those behaviours. Of course, it is not only boys and young men who are abusive; girls and young women can be abusive, too.

There is definitely a gender dimension to teenage relationships. There is the context, external to schools, of how women are portrayed in the media versus men, and the gender roles that are portrayed; and we heard the previous panel talking about pornography. That has an impact, too. Young people we are speaking to are saying that they would like space and time to talk about that with their peers. With a lot of unacceptable behaviours, young people are not quite clear on whether they are acceptable or not. They need space and time to discuss those.

Q367 Mr Ward: I am asking you because I believe that it was your organisation that found that 40% of girls say that it is okay for a partner to make you tell them where you are all the time.

Eleanor Moody: Yes. What we found in that piece of research, which involved focus groups working with 75 girls and young women, was that social media is used as a tool.

Controlling behaviour is perhaps escalating because of the nature of online activity, social media and social networking. You can check in all the time to say where you are. With social media, we are able to check where you are in the world and where you are in your community and at what time, who you are with, and who you are talking to. We found in that research that that is having an impact on teenage relationships. It can be used for coercion and control. There is not as much understanding of that among girls and young women as we would like, because lines are blurred.

Q368 Alex Cunningham: We see much in the media about people being groomed through cyberspace or whatever you want to call it. The Committee has heard evidence about the importance of SRE for protecting young people from sexual abuse, but we have already heard that schools could be doing a lot more. Are there other things that we as a Committee should be suggesting to Government that schools should be doing? Eleanor, you are nodding your head.

Eleanor Moody: There is one thing. To go back to the issue of sexual harassment of girls in school, we would like the bullying guidelines that the Government put out in October to include the gender dimension of tackling sexual harassment in school. They include SEN bullying, racist bullying and LGBT bullying, but we found that girls are experiencing very specific forms of sexual harassment at school, and how schools should be dealing with that is not covered in the guidance at all. We think that at the same time as all young people are learning about acceptable behaviour and consent in their sex and relationships education and PSHE, those school policies need to be in place, and that is one that we are calling for because we have spotted that gap.

Q369 Chair: Thank you. What more could schools be doing? Do you have any thoughts on that, Alan?

Alan Wood: Ofsted's latest research on the teaching of PSHE in schools shows that 60% of the lessons that it observed were good or better, so there's a whole chunk—40%—that weren't. Even in the latest thematic report on CSE, published this morning, it makes reference to two cases of SRE teaching in schools, and in both cases, it says, although there were examples of some good preparation and planning for teachers, in the main there was inadequate provision for the training and development of teachers in the teaching of SRE. That is an area to which some serious attention needs to be given by Government, in terms of further advice to schools.

Q370 Alex Cunningham: So you all agree with the first panel that the training is an extremely important element from the start of a teacher's career and throughout. You are all nodding your heads. Ofsted inspects safeguarding in schools, but not SRE. Is the link between the two clear enough for schools?

Alan Wood: I think it is becoming clearer. In the good schools, you will find that there is good connection, but I think that people are now understanding the importance of SRE. The evidence shows that good SRE teaching can have an impact on wider issues in

children's lives to do with their personal health, the age at which they engage in sex, and their understanding of sexual relationships, so I do think that there is a very clear evidence base for it. How we deal with it when we have a national curriculum that does not apply to all schools is quite a difficult one. We need to overcome that issue and make sure that the guidance that we give applies to all schools, and that all schools are required to follow it through.

Alex Cunningham: Zoe?

Dr Hilton: We see the issue the other way round, so an insight from our casework is more about seeing, from sex offenders' behaviour, what they do, how they act and what they look for. We see in a lot of our cases—this is from online transcripts and other things—the way in which they manipulate and use children and young people's risk-taking behaviour, naivety about sex and natural curiosity about sex. That is one of the ways that we have tried to reconfigure our programme—so that it sits within a PSHE or SRE framework. We want it to be taught in a way that is about consent and power in relationships, so that when children find themselves in those situations online where they are experimenting and taking risks—in adolescence, that is what they are programmed to do—they have the resilience to recognise the power and abuse, and what is going on from the sex offender point of view.

Sex offenders will use everything they can to find a vulnerable child. They will look out for particular vulnerabilities, use that innocence, and make children appear to believe that something is normal and consensual when it is not. They will want them to get on the web cam and get undressed and all those things. We see that very starkly, so, to come back to your question, for our programme it really is the quality and consistency of that education in schools that is going to be the starting point.

Q371 Alex Cunningham: You have just stolen my next question in your last sentence. If we do get the balance right in schools, with teachers trained appropriately, could we expect to see a measurable impact on sexual exploitation statistics as a result of that?

Dr Hilton: That is very difficult, because sexual exploitation statistics are problematic. We have very few accurate, sensitive prevalence studies. Obviously, police recorded crime rates are an arguable quantity in some ways. From a professional perspective, I think you would see an impact because you would see that development of resilience, which is what offenders look to exploit, but that is more a professional judgment than to say, "Yes, in three years' time, if you do this you will definitely see a reduction in recorded crime rates." Actually, that may be a good or a bad thing in terms of understanding prevalence. I do not think that your statistics around exploitation are sensitive enough to pick up a policy change if one of this nature were to be made, but I think anecdotally—a lot of our evidence comes anecdotally through our professional network—you would see a good result.

Q372 Alex Cunningham: What sort of recommendations can we make in this area to the Government, apart from "Let's train the teachers better" and "Let's make it statutory"?

Alan Wood: There is something that we can get some comfort from if we look back over the last 20 to 30 years to see the way in which schools and society in general have dealt with major issues of education—for example, racism, homophobia, and the whole discussion

about AIDS. I think what we learned from those programmes was that a commitment to them over the longer term does bring about a change in behaviours and attitudes. The sexual exploitation of children, domestic violence and all those issues are connected, and we need a campaign equivalent to that from Government about these issues to give people the confidence to talk about them in communities, and to be open about what they know and what they see.

Q373 Alex Cunningham: On something altogether separate—the role of local authorities—I know that in the world of academies they do not have some of the rights to dictate things to schools, but should they be providing leadership on SRE in terms of safeguarding responsibilities?

Alan Wood: I think they should, and I think they are. This has been given a very important jolt with the transfer of responsibility to local authorities for public health. There is now a better chance of all the guidance from the Chief Medical Officer, for example, being internalised within schools and supported by local authorities. That movement of responsibility to local authorities is really important. I do think that local authorities have a leading role in this, and it is a very weak authority that thinks that it does not.

Q374 Alex Cunningham: Do you think that there is any difficulty around the fact that, in many areas, schools are now very separate from the local authority?

Eleanor Moody: I do not think that I have got evidence to say one way or the other whether that is good or bad.

Chair: Does anyone else want to pick up on that?

Alan Wood: Good local authorities have a view about schools, which is that they are not particularly interested in the constitutional nature. What they are—

Q375 Alex Cunningham: I do appreciate that. It is a case of them being open to direction.

Alan Wood: I think it is about influence, persuasion and the moral leadership that local authorities have on these issues.

Q376 Alex Cunningham: Finally, Lauriane, I did not give you the chance to add anything else that you thought schools could be doing. I know you gave some evidence earlier about better information and things of that nature. Are there specific things that we should be telling the Government that they should be putting in guidance for schools?

Lauriane Povey: Specifically, defining what cyber-bullying is in different circumstances. Children know if they are being mean or not, but they do not know to what extent that is bullying. I think that should be made clear.

Eleanor Moody: I am sorry, I thought you were talking about the other issue.

Q377 Alex Cunningham: I was, but if you want to pitch in on this, you are welcome.

Eleanor Moody: On the abuse campaign, 85% of the girls and young women we surveyed think it is a fantastic campaign and support it. The DFE could do more to promote that in schools and make sure that schools are using that campaign. In terms of what you put forward to the Government, we would like to see certain issues covered in SRE as statutory: violence against women and girls; consent; and safety online. There is a list of issues that we would like to see put forward.

Q378 Alex Cunningham: Would you like to add a few more?

Eleanor Moody: We would like LGBT relationships to be covered. Girls and young women are saying that they would like information about that in their SRE lessons.

Q379 Siobhain McDonagh: How can SRE make a contribution to the protection of vulnerable children, including children in care and those who have special needs or a disability? Who currently provides SRE to vulnerable children, and are they suitably trained and supported?

Alan Wood: SRE mainly at the moment is delivered through schools, and that is where that responsibility would lie. It is important to be aware of the differences that sometimes are associated with vulnerable children, however defined, whether they are looked-after children—in the case of sex exploitation, they are a group that we are all very concerned about at the moment—or disabled, precisely because of Zoe’s points about children’s ability to be influenced, and their ability not to know how you normalise what you are being asked to do, against a set of “Is it right or is it wrong?” codes. As with any subject, you have to differentiate it, and it has to be tailored to the particular needs of the young people you are working with.

However, around looked-after children, there has to be additional consideration, because, unfortunately, in too many cases, those children have movements of home and movements of setting. Again, there are children who have learning difficulties, who may not be quite clear about what is being said to them or why it is being said. I think sensitivity around those issues is going to be really important.

Dr Hilton: We have resources in our programme for children with mild to moderate learning difficulties with very special needs. For deaf children, our films are audio-described. We also have resources for LGBT, because I think that is a specific vulnerability that offenders look for. In terms of children in care homes, they are some of the most vulnerable to exploitation. In our parents and carers programme, we have resources for professionals working with that set of children. We need to be alive to the particular requirements that are needed.

Q380 Chair: Is it good enough, and do we need to do more? We have done various inquiries on children in residential care homes. The local authority that has corporate parenting responsibility could be hundreds of miles away, so when the child runs away, they do not actually get the post-runaway review or whatever meeting. These people are peculiarly vulnerable. They have often been sexually exploited. They are often craving emotional relationships, and are therefore open to sexual relationships, perhaps before they are otherwise ready. If ever there was a group that could do with some high-quality SRE to help them either stay on track or get on track and have the right balance of self-esteem and all the rest of it, it is these children.

Dr Hilton: Yes, I agree. It is not only about SRE, but about the combined safeguarding response: the return interview, the safeguarding plan, and looking at whether they are repeat missing. There are a whole series of things that SRE certainly sits in.

Q381 Chair: Alan, what is the experience of young people in care—I will take that as a particular sub-group—in terms of the SRE that they receive? Is any special effort going into it to make sure that they have well-trained professionals engaging with them and helping them make choices going forward through their teenage years?

Alan Wood: When a local authority makes a placement—for example, in a children's home—it should make clear to the children's home what the needs of the young person are and what educational placement has been arranged for the young person. It should also make clear that sexual exploitation must be taken account of and that they must be alert and aware of it. As you say, that class of children has historically been appallingly exploited in that way.

Chair: My question is, is it good enough? Does it happen?

Q382 Pat Glass: My experience is that children arrived in school and you didn't know that they were looked after. I hope that the situation has improved, but often teachers had an extra child in their class and they had no idea that the child was looked after. So is it actually happening?

Alan Wood: I think it has improved, but there are still issues. The distance from home that children are placed is smaller now. They are much more likely to be in reach of the local authority, unless there is a special reason why the child should be removed a long way from home—for example, if they are subject to exploitation by gangs. The pressure that Parliament put on local authorities to bring children closer to their home, to focus more attention on their needs and to ensure everybody is clear about the risk they face from sexual exploitation has improved the situation.

Dr Hilton: There is a gap that I am conscious of, which we want to close. "Thinkuknow" is intended to be a universal programme, and you are talking about SRE in schools as a universal programme. A lot of the time, kids in situations such as care homes have gone beyond the utility of universal programmes and universal products, so we need to look at the other tiers of resources out there to do sexual exploitation prevention work. They need access to more specialist resources. I know how hard those resources can be to access for individual kids, because I have tried to get children into groups, and it is often the second and third tier that those young people need. Often, you don't have as many resources

available for them. There certainly could be more out there. It is also about group work, youth work and access to specialist sexual exploitation prevention services.

Chair: We, as a Committee, are keen to get it right for that group—if we can get it right for them, we will be getting it right for a lot of others. Do you have any specific thoughts or recommendations about that? Should there be a changed duty on schools? We are always nervous about that. If you have any thoughts about how we can improve matters for that most vulnerable of groups, that would be great.

Q383 Siobhain McDonagh: According to a YouGov poll, one in five adults believe it is normal for young people to have sex by the age of 14. At what age do young people need to start receiving SRE to protect them from sexual exploitation by either other young people or adults?

Lauriane Povey: In secondary school—from 11 or 12—because people are having sexual intercourse at the age of 13. Obviously, a lot aren't, but you need to protect the ones who are. That is going to be really controversial, but I think it should be at secondary school.

Q384 Siobhain McDonagh: Not to me. I thought you might say younger than 11.

Alan Wood: I think the earlier the better, in the right context with the right content. We should be talking to children about the construct of relationships from a very early age in primary school. We know that, apart from anything else, children are vulnerable at all ages. I think it is important that we do it in an appropriate and effective way and use the resources not only of the school but of the wider community and other agencies such as the health service and the police.

Dr Hilton: I think it has to be appropriate to the school, the children and the community. I agree that you can do the relationship bit before secondary school. That is the critical bit, isn't it? It is about power and consent. You can do those things without teaching the sex bit, which can come later.

Eleanor Moody: I agree. I think we should be talking to young people about attitudes from as early as possible in primary school, right the way through senior school. I was talking to a 13-year-old about her sex education. She said, "It was okay, but it didn't talk to me about my life because I am not having sex. I am 13; I just want to know how to talk to boys." The age appropriateness of it is really important. This may be contrary to what other people think, but actually they want to know less about the mechanics of sex, because they are getting that in science and biology. They want to know about relationships, and even younger children in primary school want to know that. The basic stuff, like how to talk to boys, is what they really want, so I think it's really important that we listen to young people and hear what they need at the different ages, as well.

Lauriane Povey: The relationships stuff should start at the age of five; the sex part possibly at 11.

Q385 Craig Whittaker: Zoe, can I just ask you about CEOP and how you have narrowed the focus? I think you narrowed the programme to cover more sexual exploitation, but why have you done that?

Dr Hilton: In line with the organised crime strategy that we work to, CEOP command in particular is focused on preventing sexual exploitation of children. We have focused on how to prevent sexual exploitation, based on what we learn from all the operational work. So the whole model of the CEOP command is that our education and protect teams sit closely with our police and social workers, and can learn from the intelligence that we get. That has led us to think, “How do we prevent this? From a primary and secondary point of view, how do we get children and young people empowered, so that they can protect themselves from these kinds of behaviours?” because we see a lot—very directly—of the behaviours of sex offenders.

We get between 200 and 300 reports a month from the public, but largely from children and young people, or their parents, talking about the kinds of issues they face in the online world, such as pressure to send sexual pictures, or get on web cams. Sometimes it is offline sexual exploitation as well. So it gives us a kind of visibility on some of the issues they are facing directly. We obviously have the professional network that gives us feedback and we also have the information that we get from our casework, which is often quite extensive, where we see sex offenders directly grooming children and young people, and the kinds of techniques they use.

The techniques are very varied. With some sex offenders, you will never be able to empower a child to protect themselves from them because the manipulation is very direct and quick, and they will immediately just take over the child’s account, and almost hack in aggressively. With others, there is more of a kind of pattern of grooming, trust-building and manipulation. So styles change and are varied across the sex offender population, but they share a tendency to target deliberately the things that make children most vulnerable to exploitation. What we want to do is try to use that knowledge to prevent children from getting into these situations, and if they are in these situations to help them not to feel that they cannot report or take power back, by helping them to recognise the abuse and the exploitative nature of the situation that they are in.

Q386 Craig Whittaker: Can I just ask you about those points you have made? Do you think that making SRE statutory would make your programme much more accessible and more widely available to the young people who need it?

Dr Hilton: I suspect it would. We are not experts on how schools run, but one of the things about “Thinkuknow” is that it has been taught all over the curriculum, so sometimes it has been taught in computing and sometimes in other areas. But focusing on the fundamentals of the programme, we have found that it is most effectively explored not in the computing lessons, which are generally about setting the privacy settings and the technical stuff, but within PHSE or a good SRE programme.

Q387 Craig Whittaker: Okay. So, statutory or not?

Dr Hilton: I guess that if I had to choose between the two, I would say statutory, because that would enable schools to timetable it and all those things, and it would make sure that some form of PSHE happened. If there was some brilliant other way to ensure that schools taught good SRE or PSHE, I would be happy to go with that. I don't think that we are coming from the perspective that it has to be statutory; we are coming from the perspective of, "We want this to happen most effectively as possible in schools, so that we can get to the maximum number of children and help them to stay safe."

Our most recent resource is all about two offline relationships, contrasting a positive relationship with a negative one. So, on the one hand, you see a story of a child being drawn into a group that is clearly exploitative; on the other hand, you see a young person navigating a normal, positive relationship with a young man. That is the purpose of our approach, to contrast the sort of relationship they should be trying to begin to engage in with how a sex offender behaves.

Q388 Siobhain McDonagh: How should the views and priorities of young people be incorporated into a school's SRE policy? Who should decide what young people learn in SRE?

Lauriane Povey: Young people, to an extent, as Eleanor was saying, don't want to know about it. Some of the kids I was speaking to on the PSHE day had just come from a sex lesson and I heard, "I don't want to know about it". They were about 11 or 12 years old. It is important to do it to an extent, but general relationship stuff at some point is more important. You should definitely listen to the kids. Most of them do not want to know the details of it all. At 11 or 12, cyber-bullying is probably more prevalent than learning about sexual exploitation.

Eleanor Moody: I think it is important, for safeguarding reasons, to have a separate curriculum on certain things, but within that and outside that, talking to young people about what they need and what they want. For example, asking them what they want to know about relationships and incorporating their ideas. It is crucial to listen to them first.

Chair: On that positive note, we will end. Thank you very much indeed. As I said, if you have any further thoughts on today, particularly around recommendations, do please be in touch. Thank you.