



**NCCA**

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta  
Curaclaim agus Measúnachta  
National Council for  
Curriculum and Assessment

# Report on the consultation on the draft Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum

January 2023

# Contents

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<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Overview .....	1
1.2 Consultation process and responses .....	1
Methodological approach .....	1
Consultation responses .....	3
Data analysis .....	3
<b>2. CONSULTATION FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1 Aim and rationale.....	8
2.2 Course overview and cross-cutting elements .....	9
2.3 Learning outcomes.....	9
2.4 Classroom-Based Assessment.....	13
<b>3. OTHER AREAS OF FEEDBACK</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>4. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Appendix 1: Agencies and organisations who were represented at round-table consultation.....	18
Appendix 2: Organisations which made written submissions.....	19

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Overview

The *Report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Primary and Post-primary Schools (2020)*, highlighted the need to update the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. It specifically identified the importance of grounding curriculum redevelopments in an approach that is holistic, student-centred, inclusive and age- and developmentally-appropriate.

The curriculum updating work began with junior cycle SPHE and a draft updated junior cycle SPHE specification was published in July 2022 for public consultation. The consultation ran from July 18<sup>th</sup> to October 18<sup>th</sup>.

The updated junior cycle course will provide 100 hours of learning in SPHE over the three years of junior cycle. It will be supported by online examples of practice, resources and guidelines, which will provide further insight for teachers in using the updated specification when planning for teaching and learning.

## 1.2 Consultation process and responses

Consultation is a key aspect of NCCA's work where advice is shaped by feedback from the public, schools, settings, education partners, wider stakeholders and the general public. The following section presents an overview of the methodological approach employed during this consultation which is underpinned by the principles set out in NCCA's Research Strategy (2019) and provides a summary of engagement during the consultation.

### Methodological approach

The consultation on the draft Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum included multiple modes of engagement during the three-month consultation process:

- Online surveys
- Written submissions
- Teacher focus groups
- Student focus groups
- Roundtable consultation event
- Online consultation meeting

Opportunities to participate in the consultation were promoted in several ways: notices were placed on the [ncca.ie](http://ncca.ie) website and via the [info@ncca](mailto:info@ncca) newsletter; announcements were made on social media platforms; and requests for submissions were circulated via education partners to their members. In addition, two information webinars were hosted by the National Parents Council Post Primary (September 14<sup>th</sup> and September 28<sup>th</sup>) to provide an update on SPHE/RSE developments and invite parental participation in the consultation. These webinars were attended by over 250 parents and a recording was posted on Youtube by the National Parents Council.

A self-selecting sampling approach was used for the online survey and written submissions. Three separate online surveys (one for parents, teachers and students) comprised a mixture of rating scale questions and space for free-text comments and suggestions. The surveys grouped questions under the following broad areas for feedback:

- The aim of the Junior Cycle SPHE short course as set out in the draft specification
- The four strands, three cross-cutting elements and any suggestions on the learning outcomes
- The proposed format of the Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA)
- Any other suggestions or considerations to be taken into account in finalizing the specification.

In the case of the school-based focus group work, an open call, posted on the NCCA website and disseminated through education partners' organisational communications, invited expressions of interest to support the student and teacher voice aspect of the consultation, and participating schools were chosen from the list of applicants to reflect a diversity of school types and locations. Parental consent and student assent were sought for student participants as they were all under the age of 18.

NCCA hosted a round-table consultation event in Collins Barracks on October 6<sup>th</sup>, which was attended by representatives from over 40 agencies and organisations who work directly in the area of SPHE as well as representatives of groups/agencies who have specific expertise in a particular aspect of SPHE (listed in Appendix 1).

In addition, a meeting was held with nine experts within the HSE who work in the areas of youth mental health, physical health, alcohol and substance use, and sexual health to gather feedback on how these areas are addressed through the learning outcomes within the draft updated course.

The use of a broad range of consultation modes ensured that anyone who wished to contribute to the consultation could do so and led to breadth and depth of feedback on the draft SPHE curriculum. The survey and written submissions facilitated the collection of data from a wide

cross-section of respondents, while the face-to-face events supported deeper discussion and exploration of the issues for consideration.

### Data analysis

Data gathered through focus groups and other consultation meetings was anonymised and transcribed, and all data from the consultation was stored as digital files in line with NCCA's Data Protection Policy (2020). The privacy of all participants has been maintained through anonymisation, except where an organisation has given explicit permission to be identified as contributing to the consultation as listed in Appendix A.

A detailed written record of discussion points was made during focus group and other consultation meetings. On completion of these meetings, all the notes were reviewed by the project team to discern the range and frequency of views and to spotlight aspects of the qualitative data that related to the core lines of enquiry sought in the consultation. Similarly, all written submissions were reviewed and analysed by the project team separately and then collectively to ensure validation and compare emerging themes and key messages relevant to the consultation.

The online surveys, in the main, gathered qualitative data. However, across all survey tools, respondents used the comment boxes to amplify their responses and offer detailed comments on each part of the survey. This helped to explain and clarify the qualitative data and identified emerging themes, key messages and distinguishing feedback from specific stakeholder groups.

A careful thematic analysis and cross-analysis of all the data sets helped to identify and analyse both common and distinctive themes and messages related to the main headings in the draft specification. The findings of this analysis are presented in section 2 of this report.

### Consultation responses

Focus group meetings were conducted in five schools, representing different school types and in diverse locations. Within each school, separate meetings were held with a focus group of 10-12 Transition Year students and with 3-5 SPHE teachers. In total, 56 students and 22 teachers participated in 10 focus group sessions across the five schools.

Online survey responses were received from 4,343 parents, 142 students and 102 teachers. In addition, written submissions were received from 40 organisations and 55 individuals. 317 emails and letters were also received. Table 1 provides a summary of the data gathered.

With regards to survey responses, emails, and written submissions received from individuals, it is noteworthy that while some diversity of views was evident across these, in instances where critical perspectives were expressed, similar points were raised. In many instances, the points raised were so similar, both in substance and in wording, as to suggest the that responses were based on a petition-style communication emanating from a small number of groups.

**Table 1 Summary of data gathered**

Consultation method	Respondents/Participants	Numbers
Online survey	Parents	4,353
Online survey	Teachers	102
Online survey	Students	142
Focus groups	Teachers	22
Focus groups	Students	56
Round table consultation event, Collins Barracks	Education stakeholders, agencies, and NGOs	43
Online consultation meeting	HSE experts	9
Written submissions	Organisations and groups	40
Written submissions	Individuals	55
Emails/letters	Individuals	317

## 2. Consultation findings

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The consultation generated huge interest and engagement. In general, the draft specification was very well received. With respect to feedback from teachers, students, school leadership, support services and NGOs/agencies, there was unanimous agreement amongst these stakeholders that the proposed course is an important step forward in addressing the needs of adolescents growing up in Ireland today. In the case of responses from parents and wider civil society, and given the large number of these responses, it is not surprising that a wide spectrum of views and feedback was shared through the consultation.

In welcoming the updated course, the following reasons were most frequently mentioned:

- The proposed course is responsive and relevant to the lives and needs of students and clearly addresses topics that have been identified as important for young people's learning in SPHE.
- There is greater specificity and clarity in relation to the intended teaching and learning in the draft learning outcomes and the glossaries, compared to the current SPHE short course.
- The student is placed at the centre of the learning and the specification enables teachers to design lessons informed by students' needs that will be engaging and appropriate to their real-world experiences.
- The inclusivity of the proposed course was particularly welcomed with many noting that the course was sensitive to and respectful of the diversity of student experiences, backgrounds and identities.
- Many respondents affirmed the integrated nature of the learning across the four strands as well as the foundational cross-cutting elements – awareness, dialogue, reflection and action.
- Both teachers and students particularly welcomed the draft specification's promotion of a pedagogy that is firmly rooted in dialogue, and affirmed that it is through dialogue that learning occurs in the SPHE classroom.
- The focus on developing students' core social/emotional skills and health literacy skills was very strongly affirmed.
- Participants in the consultation noted the potential to develop student and teacher agency through the draft learning outcomes which are empowering and positively framed

to affirm young people's strengths and build their capacities to care for themselves and others.

While the main thrust of the feedback affirmed the overall direction of the updated specification, it is important to note that the consultation also provided valuable critical feedback. There were a number of overarching points raised consistently across the consultation which need to be considered in finalising the specification, together with suggestions around reframing/clarifying or adding specific learning outcomes.

The most frequently mentioned points of critical feedback which emerged across all the modes of consultation can be summarised as follows:

- Several contributors suggested that a greater balance might be struck between the personal and the social dimensions of learning as set out in the draft specification. They recommended reviewing learning outcomes to identify where learning might be reframed to enable students consider issues not only within their personal context but also in a wider social context. Aligned with this, they suggested creating a greater balance between focusing on the students' personal development and personal rights and on their social responsibilities and duty to contribute to the wellbeing of others.
- A further noteworthy critique centred around the importance of not holding young people responsible for behaviours that are outside their control (a frequent example cited being food choices). This led to proposals that the specification would benefit from a more systemic lens – one which acknowledges the factors that are beyond a young person's control when it comes to making healthy choices, and raises awareness about the wider economic, social and cultural context and social norms that are also at play.
- While many respondents acknowledged that the draft specification supports student agency and action for change, driven by both the learning outcomes and the cross-cutting element of reflection and action, they recommended further emphasising the role SPHE can play in supporting student agency, self-efficacy and action for change.
- Similarly, many respondents applauded the efforts to frame the specification in positive and non-judgmental language. However, they identified scope to go further with some learning outcomes where small adjustments could be made to create more positive framing.
- Many people noted that the draft specification refers to 'values' several times and that SPHE is a subject that is clearly values-based. However, the draft specification does not state explicitly the values which underpin the updated SPHE course and this merits consideration in the final stage of development.

In addition, a sub-set of parents who expressed strong criticism of the proposed updated junior cycle SPHE curriculum. As noted above, the majority of these responses, which were submitted by individuals/organisations, offered very similar points of feedback most of which relate to concerns about the relationships and sexuality related learning outcomes. While there was a spectrum of views expressed by this group the main points raised are summarised below:

- The most common cause of concern related to references to gender identities within the draft specification. A number of parents who responded to the survey or who sent email submissions pointed out that gender identity is a highly contested and sensitive topic. Some assert that this topic should not be included in the curriculum, as they hold the view that it may lead to questioning, confusion and even harm for some adolescents. A further commonly expressed view was that the NCCA is seeking to promote 'gender ideology' by refusing to acknowledge the binary nature of gender. These respondents are strongly of the view that we are born as either male or female and that sex is binary and immutable.
- Another common cause for concern related to the reference to pornography in learning outcome 3.9<sup>1</sup> In most instances, objections to this learning outcome were grounded in a concern regarding how teachers will approach this topic in the classroom and a fear that students would be exposed to pornography as part of classroom teaching and learning.
- Some parents objected to the draft specification on the grounds that the content is not age-appropriate for children, and these concerns mostly related to the RSE content, which they posited would result in sexualization and harm of children. In some instances, such objections may be linked to a misunderstanding regarding the intended target group for the course as it was evident through their comments that some parents thought the proposed course was being designed for primary school children rather than junior cycle students.

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<sup>1</sup> In the draft specification L.O. 3.9 states that *students should be able to investigate the influence of digital media (in particular, the influence of pornography) on young people's understanding, expectations and social norms in relation to sexual expression.*

- Some parents were concerned about the lack of reference to morality, moral teachings or family values and would like to see the specification reflect a school's right to teach topics in a manner that aligns with the school's ethos and values. Interestingly, some parents expressed an equally strong wish to see an updated SPHE curriculum free from any religious influence.
- Some parents questioned the legitimacy of schools providing SPHE/RSE as they saw this as usurping the role of parents as educators of their children. While others were more concerned with the integrated nature of the updated specification, wherein RSE features more strongly and is threaded through all strands. They noted that this will make opt out more difficult, with some parents stating their intent to withdraw their child from all SPHE classes, in the event of the updated specification being implemented.
- A final common parental concern relates to classroom methodologies and teaching materials that will be used by teachers when delivering the curriculum, as well as sources of professional development and support for teachers.

A more detailed overview of feedback from the consultation is presented on the following pages according to the four broad areas used to structure the consultation.

## 2.1 Aim and rationale

Respondents who contributed via both the online and in person meetings were broadly satisfied with the aim and rationale. The positive and inclusive focus of the rationale was most frequently affirmed. Reference to the role that SPHE can play in fostering students' core emotional social skills was also welcomed as well as its potential to support teacher and student agency.

Suggested amendments or additions to the rationale:

- Where the rationale states that SPHE 'supports their physical, emotional and social wellbeing, now and in the future' (p. 2), it was suggested that this should be revised to include the 'spiritual' in recognition of the holistic nature of wellbeing.
- The rationale should be adjusted to ensure that reference to the rights of young people is equally balanced with reference to their responsibilities.
- Some teachers commented that they liked the focus on developing young people's strengths and capacities and would like to see further reference to student self-efficacy and student voice in the final version of the rationale.

When commenting on the aim, it is noteworthy that even respondents who expressed strong concern regarding aspects of the draft specification said that the aim was laudable.

Specific suggestions for consideration in finalising the aim include:

- to reframe the aim so that it focuses equally on the personal and social dimension of SPHE and conveys the importance of contributing positively to society as an aspect of wellbeing.
- to add verbs within the aim such as 'empower', 'nurture', 'enable'.
- to include reference to 'loving' as well as 'respectful and healthy' relationships.

A further important observation concerned the extent to which the stated aim of the course can be achieved, with many commenting on factors beyond the scope of the specification itself which need to be put in place to realise the course's aim. One of the most frequently mentioned factors was the importance of teacher professional development.

## 2.2 Course overview and cross-cutting elements

The structure of the course, as set out across four strands and the three cross-cutting elements, was strongly endorsed within the consultation. The integrated nature of the draft curriculum and the opportunities it affords for creating linkages across the strands and learning outcomes was frequently noted and appreciated.

The inclusion of the three cross-cutting elements – awareness, dialogue, reflection and action – was particularly welcomed and these elements were regarded as foundational for effective and meaningful learning in SPHE across all stakeholders. It is noteworthy that many students who responded to the online survey took time to comment specifically on these elements positing that they are really important because they draw teachers' attention to what really matters. Many students remarked on the importance of dialogue in SPHE classes, expressing the view that it is through listening and caring conversations, where there is no fear of judgement, that learning takes place.

## 2.3 Learning outcomes

Most participants in the consultation approved of the overall thrust of the learning outcomes, noting that they relate to topics of relevance and interest to students and provide clarity coupled with flexibility for contextualisation to meet local needs.

When asked to comment on the manageability of the number of learning outcomes set out in the draft specification, teachers within focus group settings said that time was a challenge and doing justice to all the learning outcomes would require sufficient time. However, as schools move from 70 to 100 hours of SPHE across junior cycle, teachers thought time pressures might be alleviated.

Students and teachers alike expressed a strong view that nothing should be taken out of the draft specification as all the topics were deemed to be important.

### **Strand 1 – Understanding myself and others**

The importance of Strand 1 as a foundational strand which builds core social and emotional skills and supports young people in gaining awareness and understanding of themselves and others was affirmed through the consultation. The focus on gender equity and gender stereotypes (LO 1.5) and on discussing experiences/situations of bias, inequality and exclusion (LO 1.6) were frequently noted as being important. Regarding LO 1.6, many contributors to the consultation suggested that the examples of discrimination considered should be expanded beyond race/ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. It was also suggested that more emphasis be put on communication, listening and empathy skills within this strand.

On a critical note, some respondents suggested that LO 1.4 which relates to self-identity, needs to be reviewed. As currently framed, it focuses only on aspects of sexuality that shape one's identity and it was recommended that the learning outcome be amended in recognition of the many factors and influences that shape young people's self-identity, such as family, peers, culture, dis/abilities, religious beliefs/worldviews. In addition, reference to sexual orientation and gender identity being experienced 'along a spectrum' drew some critical feedback.

### **Strand 2 – Making healthy choices**

It was generally agreed that this strand contains very important learning and across all contributions to the consultation, Strand 2 probably generated least debate.

Participants liked the way in which the learning outcomes prompt the teacher to explore a wide range of health issues and scenarios that pertain to students' real life. They also liked the focus on examining reasons/influences that impact on young people's behaviour and choices as well as the consequences of their choices. The inclusion of e-cigarettes (in LO 2.2) was widely regarded as being very important with teachers and students both stating that vaping is a growing and serious problem among teenagers. The inclusion of learning outcomes (LOs 2,7, 2.8. 2.9) related to their online world met with widespread approval.

Points of critical feedback offered for consideration when reworking this strand are as follows:

- This strand needs to contextualise health behaviours and health choices to ensure that students understand that individual health does not happen in a vacuum. It was suggested that some learning outcomes could be reframed to ensure that young

people are not only made aware of factors within their control which influence health and wellbeing but also wider societal, cultural and economic factors.

- While respondents affirmed the positive and sensitive tone of the learning outcomes across this strand, some suggested further refinement to ensure that all the learning outcomes are framed in a non-judgemental and positive manner that encourages positive action.
- While the inclusion of health literacy was strongly affirmed, some respondents raised a question about how teachers would advise students on suitable web-based information and what guidance would be given on this.

### **Strand 3 – Relationships and sexuality**

The importance of learning in this strand was widely affirmed through the consultation. The unambiguous title for this strand was very much welcomed as many stakeholders felt relationships and sexuality education needed to be addressed more boldly in an updated curriculum<sup>2</sup>. In focus group meetings, teachers applauded the clarity and specificity of the learning outcomes which they felt would support them in addressing topics they regarded as relevant and needed, but felt unsure about addressing currently. In focus group meetings, students also welcomed all the learning outcomes which they said no longer ‘tip-toed’ around important topics. Teachers and students both liked that this strand was not overly focused on biological aspects of sexuality. That said, some contributors to the consultation noted that there could be further emphasis on discussion of healthy relationships and the building of relationship skills beyond romantic and sexual relationships.

The reference to pornography as an influence on young people’s understanding and expectations in relation to sexual expression (LO 3.9) received strong welcome by many consultation participants. In all focus group meetings, both students and teachers said that pornography is having a damaging impact on young people’s understanding of relationships and needs to be

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<sup>2</sup> In the current Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course, the RSE strand is entitled ‘Team Up’.

discussed. Students said that they encounter pornography once they get their first phone and teachers in one boys' school spoke about hearing students joke about pornography on the corridors in such a way that suggested it was 'normalised'. In contrast, a number of parents expressed deep concern that teaching about pornography might promote its use.

Points of critical feedback offered for consideration when reworking this strand are as follows:

- While many respondents to the consultation affirmed the importance of including consent education within an updated junior cycle SPHE course, some suggested that this needs to be more clearly framed within a broader understanding of the importance of respecting boundaries as an aspect of all interpersonal relationships.
- It was suggested that this strand should include an additional learning outcome that will enable the teacher to teach about the human reproductive system and how to take care of both male and female fertility.

A common comment across the consultation pointed to the need for time, resources and professional development to enable teachers to effectively engage with the valuable learning in this strand.

#### **Strand 4 – Emotional wellbeing**

This strand was regarded as hugely relevant and important for young people and there was widespread satisfaction with the overall thrust of the learning outcomes. In focus group and round table meetings, participants generally expressed approval for the change of title from 'My mental health'<sup>3</sup> to 'Emotional wellbeing' as they felt this title pointed teachers towards supporting young people to develop coping skills and strategies to manage the normal ups and down of teenage life rather than discussing mental health problems which may need professional support beyond the classroom. Reference to the fluid nature of emotional wellbeing was welcomed, as was the focus on helping students to understand and manage their emotions and be able to recognise the links between thoughts, feelings and emotions. In face-to-face meetings,

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<sup>3</sup> SPHE Junior Cycle Short Course, Strand 4, NCCA (2016)

participants welcomed the learning outcomes that address different kinds of ‘abusive and bullying’ behaviour and ways to respond. They saw bullying as one type of abusive behaviour and agreed that all abusive behaviours need to be looked at.

The main point of critical feedback on this strand that emerged through the consultation related to learning outcome 4.5. In consultation meetings, some participants questioned why this learning outcome only referred to the impact of substance use on one’s mental and emotional wellbeing and suggested that this should be expanded to consider other factors such as sleep, diet, exercise and online exposure which can also affect emotional wellbeing. To avoid students feeling overly responsible for their wellbeing, it was also suggested that there needs to be an acknowledgement that there many factors at play beyond their control too.

## **Glossaries**

Many respondents commented on the usefulness of the glossary of learning outcome verbs and the glossary of key terms as appendices to the specification. Some contributors queried specific definitions and suggested deletions/additions and/or refinements. All these suggestions will be considered to ensure accuracy and consistency of language in the final specification.

## **2.4 Classroom-Based Assessment**

A divergence of views was evident regarding the role of a Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) in SPHE. Feedback from this consultation echoed that of previous consultations<sup>4</sup> within which teachers and students questioned the value of a CBA, giving one or more of the following reasons: formal assessment in SPHE is not appropriate or needed; applying quality descriptors to student work in SPHE is problematic; students are stressed with an overload of assessment and SPHE should not be adding to this.

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<sup>4</sup> See *Consultation Report on the Background Paper and Brief for the Review of Junior Cycle SPHE*, NCCA (February, 2022).

In commenting on the CBA as proposed in the draft specification which would involve students selecting and presenting a selection of their work, teachers generally agreed that this had the potential to support student reflection on learning and was seen to be manageable. Other stakeholders generally affirmed the proposed CBA pointing to its potential for recognising student learning and promoting student agency and ownership of their learning.

Feedback from students on the proposed CBA was mixed. Students who favoured the proposed CBA saw it as potentially encouraging them to take the subject more seriously. Some also commented on the CBA as providing a valuable opportunity to reflect on learning and to gain important reflection skills. Other students, particularly those who participated in focus group meetings, favoured a more active CBA. They suggested that it would be more motivating and engaging if students could select a topic of interest that they had studied and then engage in an activity to create awareness about this amongst their peers or school community.

Whatever format the CBA takes, teachers and students agree that it should allow for flexibility, choice and student ownership, and be manageable.

### 3. Other areas of feedback

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During the consultation, a range of issues were raised that do not relate directly to the SPHE draft specification but which impinge upon its successful enactment in schools. Because of the frequency that these matters were commented on, they merit mention here.

Teacher professional development was highlighted again<sup>5</sup> as the key enabler when it comes to successful implementation of SPHE. Across all respondents to the consultation, concern was raised about the small number of qualified, confident and skilled SPHE teachers to work with the updated curriculum, with many contributors expressing real concern about the potential harm that might occur if the topics included within the updated course are not skilfully and sensitively facilitated.

The lack of prioritisation of SPHE/RSE at both school and system level<sup>6</sup> was a strong message throughout the consultation. In this context, the role of school leadership in supporting effective implementation was frequently commented upon with specific reference to the need for adequate timetable space and time for planning, deployment of teachers who are interested and trained in this area and avoiding using SPHE as a means to increase teacher class-contact hours.

Many contributors also referred to the need to ensure that the updated curriculum delivers equitable education for all junior cycle students and the need for safeguards to ensure that the full range of learning outcomes are taught across all schools. The importance of professional development to enable teachers to teach the new curriculum in full and as intended, arose in consultation meetings.

While submissions from some groups and individuals suggested that the updated SPHE course must take into account the individual ethos of each school and allow schools flexibility to adapt the curriculum to suit the characteristic spirit and context of each school, other submissions

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<sup>5</sup> *Report on the Review of RSE in primary and post primary schools, NCCA (2020) p.75*

<sup>6</sup> Also referred to in the *Report on the Review of RSE in primary and post primary schools, NCCA (2020) p.79.*

recommended putting in place resources to ensure full implementation of the new curriculum, regardless of individual school ethos.

Participants across all modes of consultation mentioned the importance of parents as key partners in education, particularly in the context of this area of the curriculum. To realize the full potential of the course will require informed parental engagement that empowers parents/guardians to work in partnership with teachers to support the learning that is happening in SPHE.

The challenge of dealing with requests for withdrawal from specific aspects of SPHE or complete opt-out will require further consideration in the context of implementation of an updated curriculum in which learning in RSE is now integrated across SPHE. Another dimension of this tension is students' right to a broad and balanced education, including comprehensive health education, balanced against the right of parents to withdraw their child from SPHE. Submissions such as that from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) broadens this lens as Ireland's international commitments are highlighted. This submission noted the view expressed by the Council of Europe's Commissioner of Human Rights that international human rights standards on the right to freedom of religion or belief do not entitle parents to withdraw children from sexuality education classes where relevant information is conveyed in an objective and impartial manner.

In addition, teachers talked about the need for quality, up-to-date teaching and learning resources linked to the strands of the SPHE short course and expressed appreciation for the recent development of SPHE online toolkits for teachers at [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie) and would like this to be developed further in line with a redeveloped specification.

## 4. Conclusion and next steps

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The consultation process was very informative and will be of great assistance in finalising the Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum. The level of engagement of those who participated in the consultation must be acknowledged and NCCA is grateful to all who participated and gave time to reflect on and share their perspectives on the draft curriculum.

Notwithstanding some criticism, a clear consensus emerged through the consultation that the work of developing an updated curriculum that is holistic, student-centred, inclusive and age and developmentally appropriate has largely been achieved in the draft specification. Suggestions for amendments to further strengthen the specification or provide greater clarification are welcome and will inform the work ahead in reviewing and finalising the specification.

The proposed next steps are outlined below:

- Review the draft SPHE curriculum in light of the consultation findings and make final amendments.
- Present the final specification, accompanied by implementation advice, to the Minister for Education for approval.
- Collaborate with partners in education in planning CPD and other supports
- Update the junior cycle SPHE toolkit on [www.curriculumonline](http://www.curriculumonline) to support teachers in planning teaching and learning aligned with the updated course.

## Appendix 1: Agencies and organisations who were represented at round-table consultation meeting in Collins Barracks, Oct 6th 2022

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Accord  
Association of Comprehensive and Community Schools (ACCS)  
Association of Education Centres  
Barnardos  
BelongTo  
Bodywhys  
Catholic Education Partnership  
Centre for School Leadership  
Childrens Rights Alliance  
Comhairle na nÓg  
Cork Sexual Health Centre  
DCU, School of Human Development  
Department of Education, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit  
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre  
Educate Together  
Foroige  
Gender, Orientation, Sexual Health and HIV, Limerick (GOSHH)  
ISPCC  
ISSU  
Jigsaw  
JMB  
Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)  
National Educational Psychological Service  
National Induction Programme for Teachers  
National Museum of Ireland  
National Parents Council PP  
National Women's Council of Ireland  
National Youth Council of Ireland  
Office of the Ombudsman for Children  
Pavee Point  
Professional Development Services for Teachers (PDST)  
Rape Crisis Network Ireland  
ShoutOut  
South East Technological University, Waterford  
Teachers Union of Ireland  
The Council for Catechetics (Irish Bishops Conference)  
Transgender Equality Network Ireland  
University College Dublin, School of Education  
WISER West of Ireland Sexuality Resource  
Women's Aid  
Youth Work Ireland

## Appendix 2: Organisations which made written submissions

The following is a list of organisations which provided a written submission and agreed to be named and published on the NCCA website;

- Accord
- Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS)
- Atheist Ireland
- Barnardos Empower Kids Project
- BeLonG2 Youth Services
- Catholic Education Partnership
- Catholic Secondary School Parents Association
- Children's Rights Alliance
- Comhairle na nOg National Executive
- Comhairle na nOg (Fingal)
- Concerned Parents Network
- Council for Catechetics
- Donegal Pro-Life Group
- Drug and Alcohol Task Force (Western region)
- Educate Together
- ETBI
- Foroige
- Genspect
- Gender, Orientation, Sexual Health, HIV Support, Limerick (GOSHH)
- HSE, Health and Wellbeing division
- Irish Education Alliance
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
- Iona Institute
- Irish Council for Human Rights
- Irish Freedom Party
- Irish Heart Foundation
- JMB
- Kerry ETB
- National Women's Council
- Network of Rape Crisis Centres
- Office of the Ombudsman for Children
- Pavee Point
- Rockbrook Park school
- Sexual Health Centre Cork (2 submissions)
- ShoutOut
- TENI
- Teresian School
- The Countess
- TUI
- Women's Aid
- Youth Work Ireland



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Curaclaim agus Measúnachta  
National Council for  
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