

4th March 2019

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about Relationships and Sex Education (RSE).

We all want our children to grow up into happy and well-rounded individuals who know how to deal with the challenges of the modern world. I know that my colleagues in the Department for Education have consulted extensively with parents, teachers, children and other groups to develop content for Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), which will be introduced in September 2020.

RSE is designed to enable pupils, in an age appropriate way, to gain the knowledge and life skills they will need to stay safe, build their confidence and resilience, and develop healthy and supportive relationships. It is important, for example, that primary school pupils understand the features of healthy friendships, family relationships and other relationships they may encounter. Secondary students will build on this foundation and, at an appropriate time, teaching will be extended to include more intimate relationships.

The current position, in which parents have a right to withdraw their child up to 18 years of age from sex education, is no longer compatible with English case law or the European Convention on Human Rights. To address this, and to ensure that parents' rights are balanced with the rights of children, the Department for Education proposes to give parents the right to request that their child be withdrawn from sex education delivered as part of RSE up until three terms before the child becomes 16-years-old, which is the point at which the child can decide to opt in. These parental requests should – unless there are exceptional circumstances – be granted. Equally, if a child decides to opt-in when they become eligible, the school should ensure that they receive teaching in one of those three terms.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP