



Investing in Children

# Young people's experiences of Personal, Social, Health and Education in Northamptonshire



March  
2020





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# Summary

In the summer of 2019 Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire was commissioned by Public Health Northamptonshire to carry out a review of Personal, Social, Health and Education (PSHE<sup>1</sup>) in Northamptonshire schools.

To complete this work a survey was designed by Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire and shared across the county. The survey looked at young people's experiences of PSHE lessons including how useful they were and the topics they had learnt about as well as the ones they wanted to learn more about.

823 people aged between 13 and 15 completed the survey between May and October 2019. To gather responses we worked with local partners including:

- Schools across the county
- Northamptonshire Association of Youth Clubs
- The Lowdown
- Free2Talk
- Service Six
- Ask Normen
- Local Offer

Four focus groups were also held with 100 young people across Northamptonshire.

The young people that completed the survey told us they preferred to have PSHE delivered through specific lessons on their timetable and that to improve their PSHE lessons said they would like more interaction and group work with up to date relevant content. The most valued topics were the same as the ones most covered already, but many wanted to know more about topics that would prepare them for adult life, such as money and finances.

Overall, young people were fairly satisfied with their PSHE lessons, with over half rating their usefulness as four or five out of five, and only one-fifth giving a rating below three out of five.

In October 2019 Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire made a video reporting the findings of this project (<https://youtu.be/ZhWQTFfjAh8>)

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<sup>1</sup> PSHE, or PHSE is a school subject through which pupils develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to keep themselves healthy and safe, and prepared for life and work. Well-delivered PSHE programmes have an impact on both academic and non-academic outcomes for pupils, particularly the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. [www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/curriculum](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/curriculum)



# Key findings

- **87% of young people had between one and six PSHE lessons a month** (45% had between four and six). 6% said they had no PSHE lessons and 4% did not know how many lessons they had. Students nearer Wellingborough and Daventry had more lessons.
- **Two-thirds of people (67%) said their PSHE lessons were delivered in specific timetabled lessons**, with this being the case for more students near Kettering (93%) and Daventry (86%). One-quarter (26%) had PSHE lessons delivered in ‘form time’. Most lessons were delivered by school teachers (81%) or staff (14%). 5% told us that attending PSHE lessons was optional.
- The most frequently covered topics in PSHE lessons were **drug and alcohol awareness** (68%), **e-safety/online safety** (65%) and **relationships** (64%), with some slight variation by district. These topics were also **among the top five most valued**: drug and alcohol awareness (46%), e-safety/online safety (32%) and relationships (33%), along with **online grooming** (35%) and **sex education** (34%).
- The **focus groups highlighted relationships, health, sex education, and safety** as important parts of the PSHE curriculum.
- The five topics that young people identified as the most valued were quite similar across the genders. More **females valued** having learnt about **relationships and emotional wellbeing, emotions and mental health** compared to **males** and those identifying as non-binary who valued **sex education and puberty** more. **Equality and diversity and preparing for the working world** were also valued in **Daventry** and **life skills and violence** were also valued in **Wellingborough**.
- The most frequently mentioned topics that the young people would **like to understand more about** were **life skills** (46%), **preparing for the world of work** (40%), **exams** (36%) and **first aid** (33%). The suggested topics were similar from each of the four main districts. The survey findings were supported by the focus group, which showed that dealing with **money and financial issues** were life skills people particularly wanted to know more about. They also highlighted careers, relationships, safety, sex education, other cultures, parenting, drugs, mental health and medical issues.
- **Home educated people would like to know more about taxes, road safety, mental health, life skills and general knowledge.**



- Nearly half (49%) of those who answered rated the usefulness of their PSHE lessons as four or five out of five. One-fifth (20%) gave a rating of one or two out of five and the average rating was 3.34. Males gave a slightly higher rating (3.45) than females (3.26) as did those who had timetabled PSHE lessons (3.54) compared to those who had PSHE in form time (2.97).
- People at schools near Kettering gave higher ratings (average 3.66), whereas those at school near Daventry (average 2.95) or Wellingborough (average 2.87) gave lower ratings.
- One-quarter (26%) said that more interaction and group work would be an improvement to PSHE lessons, followed by up to date relevant content (21%) and more self-discovery (17%). The answers were similar from each district. Others commented that they would like more content that would help prepare them for adult life or more relevant content.
- When asked about how they would like lessons to be delivered, one-third (34%) would prefer to have PSHE taught in specific timetabled lessons and 28% would prefer it was optional to attend. The answers were similar from each district, with a stronger preference for specific timetabled lessons in Kettering and for optional attendance in Daventry and Wellingborough.

## Recommendations

1. Include more life skills content in PSHE lessons to help young people feel better prepared for adult life, particularly about money and financial issues.
2. Consider further tailoring of PSHE lesson content to different ages and genders.
3. Explore how to help home educated young people learn about the topics they would like to know more about.
4. Continue to engage with young people to ensure PSHE is delivered in a way they feel is relevant and of benefit to them.



# Response from Public Health Northamptonshire

Thank you Young Healthwatch and other young people from across the County that took the time to participate in focus groups and surveys to inform the work we are looking to implement to improve Personal, Social, Health and Education (PSHE) in line with the Government National curriculum and in statutory guidance on: drug education, financial education, sex and relationship education (SRE) and the importance of physical activity and diet for a healthy lifestyle.

Public Health take on board the recommendations made to;

- Include more life skills content in PSHE lessons to help young people feel better prepared for adult life, particularly about money and financial issues.
- Consider further tailoring of PSHE lesson content to different ages and genders.
- Explore how to help home educated young people learn about the topics they would like to know more about.
- Continue to engage with young people to ensure PSHE is delivered in a way they feel is relevant and of benefit to them.

Public Health are in the process of setting up a health in schools programme that will look to work with partners to support schools to tailor PSHE to meet the needs of the school by age. Public Health will also look to ensure more life skills content is made available to schools to include as part of their PSHE curriculum. Looking to other experts within the County to support schools in delivering this especially around money and financial issues.

Public Health will work with existing mechanisms in the County to explore how home educated young people can learn about the topics they would like to know more about. For example, the school nursing service is actively trying to engage this group, for more information about how this service can support home educated young people, please look at <https://www.nhft.nhs.uk/0-19>

Public Health will continue to seek young people's views about PSHE as the healthy schools programme develops and embeds. We will be especially interested in those areas where fewer young people were included this time such as Corby, East and South Northants.



# Background

PSHE is the vehicle through which schools deliver education about health, relationships, careers and wellbeing.

In June 2019 The Department for Education published the final draft statutory guidance for Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education<sup>2</sup>. The statutory guidance covers a range of topics including healthy relationships, wellbeing and safeguarding. In 2020 it will become compulsory for all primary schools to teach health education alongside relationships education. In secondary schools it will be compulsory for relationships and sex education to be taught.

The feedback from this project will enable Public Health Northamptonshire to set out a localised agenda for the new curriculum in Northamptonshire, ensuring the voice and experiences of local young people are heard. This will include information about how they would like to receive future PSHE lessons, enabling schools to provide lessons that have an impact on future learning.

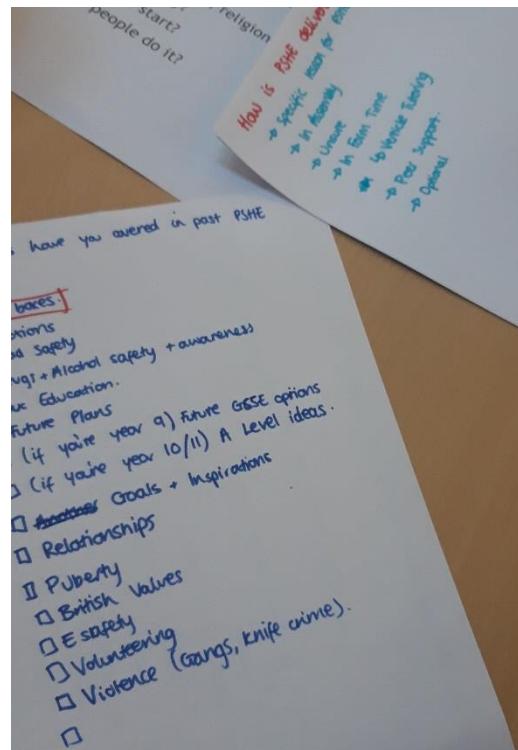


<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education)

# Method

## Survey design

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire was asked to design a survey for 13-15 year olds to ensure that it would engage other young people locally and that the questions about current lessons in schools were appropriate. At their meeting in April 2019 Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire designed the survey questions. As with previous surveys they agreed that the survey should be no longer than 20 questions, should be available online and in paper format and the paper survey should be no longer than two sheets of A4 paper so that it would not take too long for young people to complete.



## Survey distribution

The target was to have a minimum of 90 responses from each of the seven different districts of Northamptonshire: Daventry, East Northamptonshire, Corby, Kettering, Northampton, Wellingborough and South Northamptonshire, this would be a total of 630 responses.

The survey was distributed to schools through the schools news bulletin from Northamptonshire County Council and through direct email with each school. Phone calls were also made directly to the schools. Northamptonshire Association of Youth Clubs (NAYC) also added the survey to their newsletter.

The survey was also shared across our social media channels (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), including a paid advert on Instagram targeting 13-15 year olds in Northamptonshire. On Twitter posts about the PSHE survey appeared on people's timelines more than 4,000 times and on Facebook the posts appeared on timelines nearly 9,000 times. The posts were viewed on Instagram fewer times, which is why the targeted advertising was used.

Surveys were also completed at events we attend through the summer e.g.

- Northampton Carnival
- Northampton Mela
- National Play Day
- International Youth day

Unfortunately, due to weather the Northampton Carnival and Mela had fewer attending than in previous years.

## Focus groups

We also conducted four focus groups, attended by 100 young people, to give more young people the opportunity to tell us more about their PSHE lessons. Groups were held in Wellingborough, Kettering and Daventry, plus one focus group with young people from across Northamptonshire who were Home Educated<sup>3</sup>. At the Daventry focus group, we partnered with Lemon Pop Workshops<sup>4</sup> to deliver an interactive session, using crafts and design to gain feedback on PSHE.

The participants were young people ranging in age from 11 to 15. The focus groups took place in areas where young people already gathered and would feel comfortable. These included schools and youth clubs.

### *Home education focus group*

We held a focus group with eight home educated young people at Boost Trampoline Park in Northampton. The venue was somewhere some of the young people had been to before and where they felt comfortable.

People were recruited to this focus group through a message placed on a local home educated Facebook group with details of the event and how people could be involved.

More home educated young people completed the questionnaire via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. We were unable to identify how many home educated young people completed the survey in this way as this was not something we asked as part of the research.

## Video

At the end of the project Young Healthwatch members created a video to showcase the findings (<https://youtu.be/ZhWQTFFjAh8>).



<sup>3</sup> [www.gov.uk/home-education](http://www.gov.uk/home-education)

<sup>4</sup> <http://lemonpopworkshops.com>

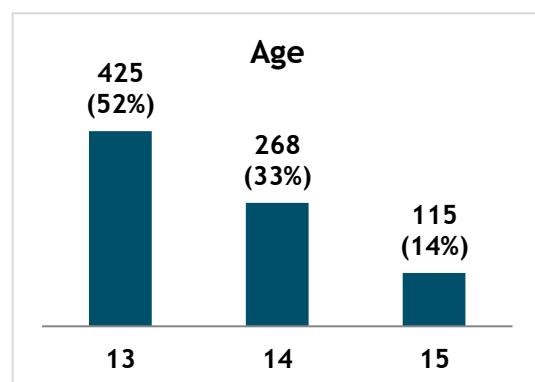
# What people told us

- 823 young people responded to the survey that ran from June to October 2019.
- 100 people took part in four focus groups, these results are shown in a separate section and not included in the quantitative data.
- All figures given are percentages of the answers received for each question, unless otherwise specified.

## Demographics

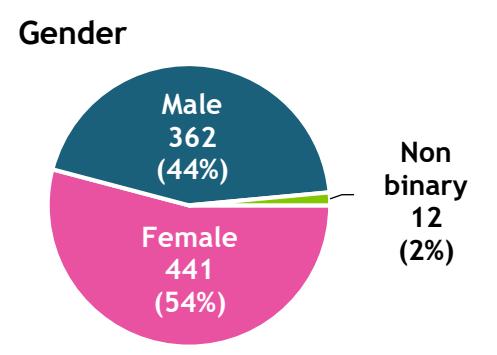
### *Age*

Over half of the young people were 13 years old (52%). (808 answered.)



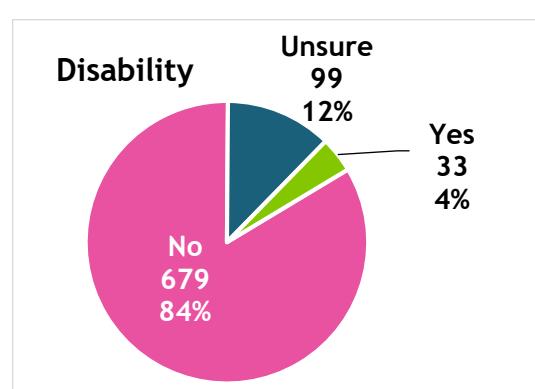
### *Gender*

Slightly more young people identified as female (54%) than male (44%). Twelve identified as non-binary. (816 answered.)



### *Location*

Over half the young people selected Northampton as the closest town to their school (59%). Very few selected Corby, Towcester or Thrapston (1% or less), although it is possible that people live in a different district to the town they selected, or that they have selected the towns they are more familiar with. (804 answered.)



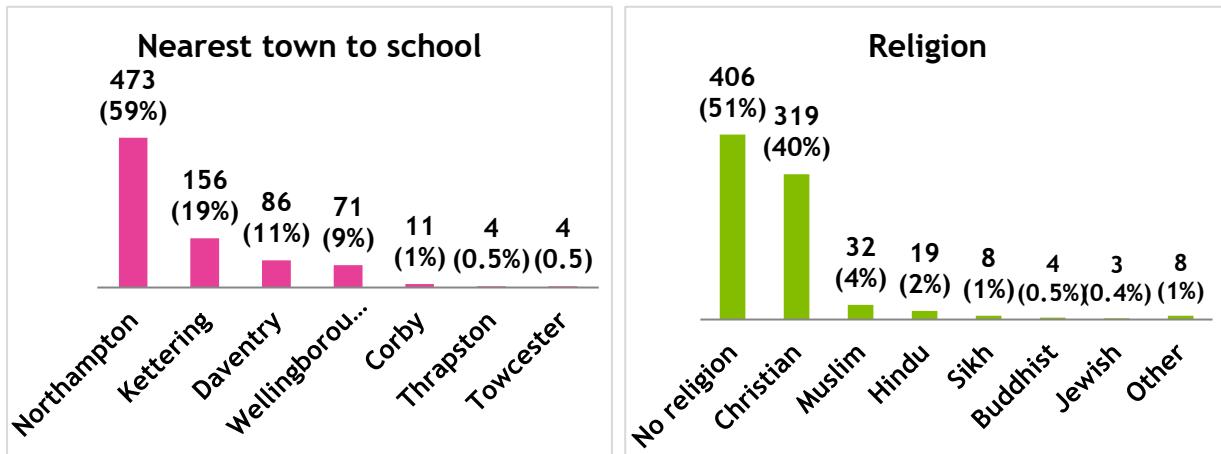
### *Disability*

Most young people (84%) said that they did not have a disability. 12% (99) were unsure, which may be due to a misunderstanding of the question rather than confusion around having a disability. (814 answered.)

### *Religion*

Half of all young people described themselves as having no religion (51%) and over a third were Christian (40%). The percentage describing themselves as having no religion was higher than for the county's population as a whole, while those reporting to be Christian was lower. This variation may be due to difference of

religious affiliation between young people and the adult population. (812 answered.)



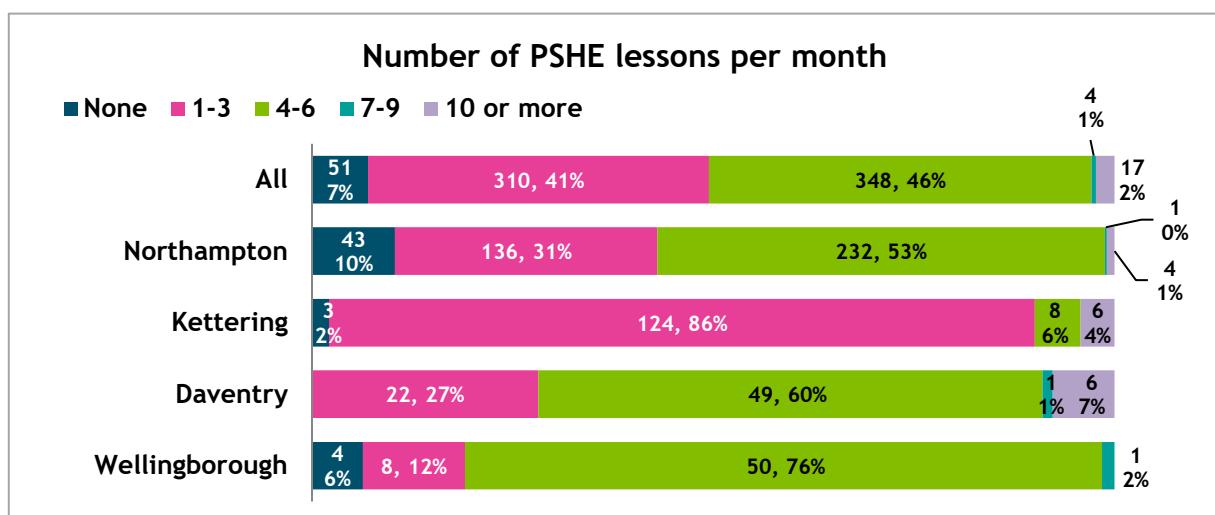
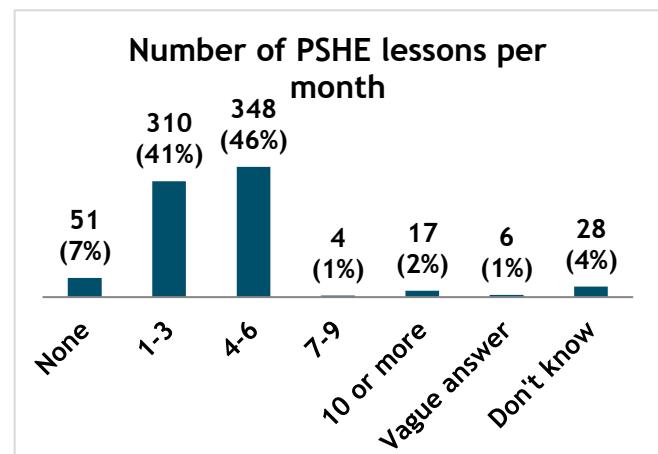
## PSHE lessons

We asked people how many PSHE lessons they had each month. The majority of young people had between one and six PSHE lessons a month (87%). 7% said they had no PSHE lessons and 4% did not know how many lessons they had. (764 answered.)

The answered varied by district<sup>5</sup>.

More people at schools near

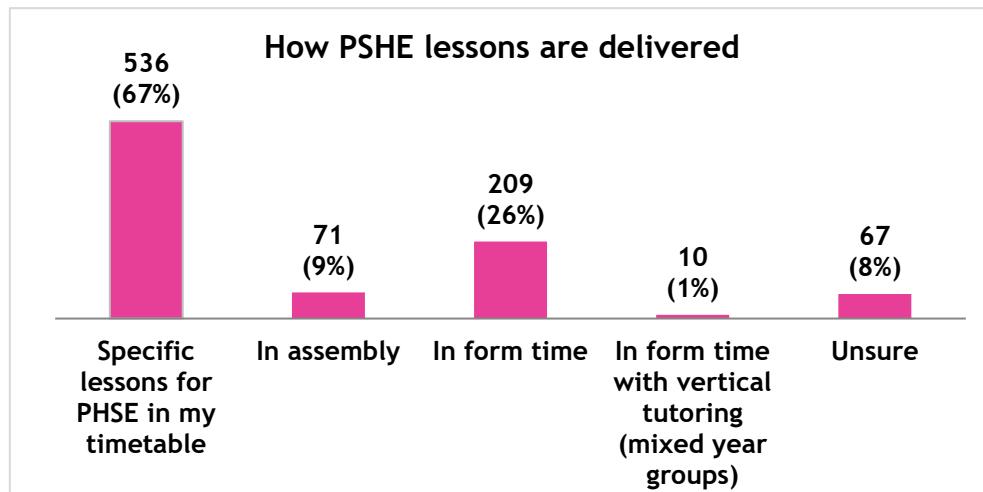
Wellingborough (76%, 50 of 66) and Daventry (60%, 49 of 82) had between four and six lessons, whereas more near Kettering (86%, 124 of 145) had between one to three lessons a month. The differences may be a reflection of how many different schools were represented in each district, but this data was not collected.



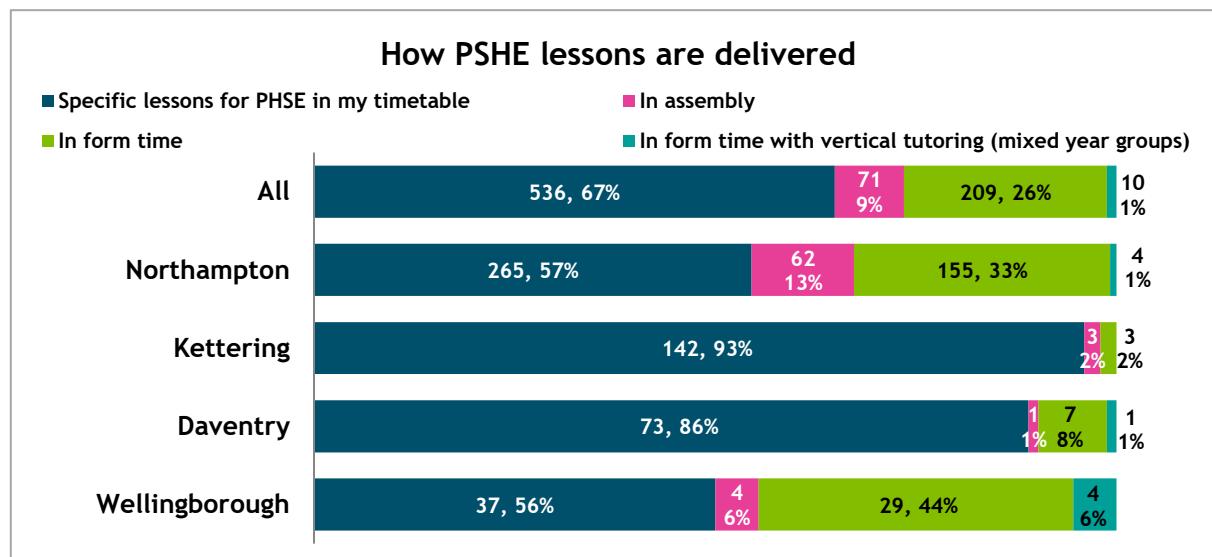
<sup>5</sup> Statistically significant differences between each district and the rest, Chi-square P<0.0001

Most PSHE lessons were delivered in specific lessons (67%). Over a quarter of young people had PSHE lessons delivered in ‘form time’ (26%) and 9% had their PSHE lessons in assembly. (804 answered.)

76 gave more than one answer, implying their PSHE lessons are delivered by more than one method, or perceived to be.



More people at schools near Kettering (93%, 142 of 152) and Daventry (86%, 73 of 85) had specific PSHE lessons in their timetables and more near Wellingborough had PSHE in form time (44%, 29 of 66)<sup>6</sup>.

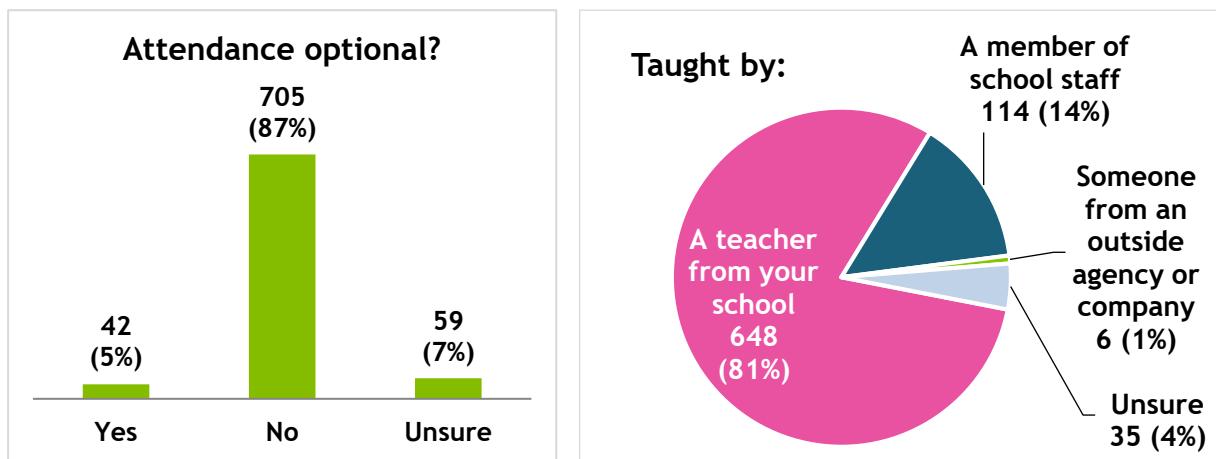


For most of the pupils (87%), it was not optional to attend PSHE lessons. 5% told us that attendance was optional. (806 answered.) There was no significant difference in the answers from each area.

<sup>6</sup> Statistically significant differences between each district and the rest, Chi-square  $P<0.0001$

Over three-quarters told us that a teacher from their school teaches them PSHE (81%). Another 114 (14%) told us that they are taught PSHE by a member of school staff and 6 people (1%) by someone from an outside agency. (803 answered.)

More people attending a school near Wellingborough said a member of school staff taught them PSHE (22%, 15 of 67) and fewer that a teacher from their school did (69%, 46 of 67)<sup>7</sup>.



## Topics covered in PSHE

We asked young people to tell us what topics they had covered in PSHE in the past year, choosing all relevant from a list of 22. The most frequent topics covered were *drug and alcohol awareness* (68%), *e-safety/online safety* (65%) and *relationships* (64%).

What topics have you covered in the past year in PSHE?	Responses	
	Skipped	Answered
Drug and alcohol awareness	68%	545
E-safety / online safety	65%	518
Relationships	64%	515
Online grooming	58%	467
Emotional wellbeing, emotions and mental health	57%	459
Bullying	57%	454
Sex education	55%	445
Puberty	54%	437
Violence	53%	428
Emotions	51%	407
Healthy lifestyles	50%	404
Equality and diversity	49%	392
British values	45%	363
Domestic abuse	35%	278

<sup>7</sup> Statistically significant differences between district and overall results, Chi-square P<0.001

Life skills	31%	251
Future plans	27%	219
Exams	25%	199
Goals and aspirations	24%	196
Road safety	23%	184
Preparing for the working world	22%	177
First aid	15%	123
Volunteering opportunities	15%	120
Other	3%	24

Some of the ‘other’ topics covered were; *community challenge, consent, ethics, stereotypes and prejudice, police, and what to do in terrorist situations*. One young person gave a longer comment:

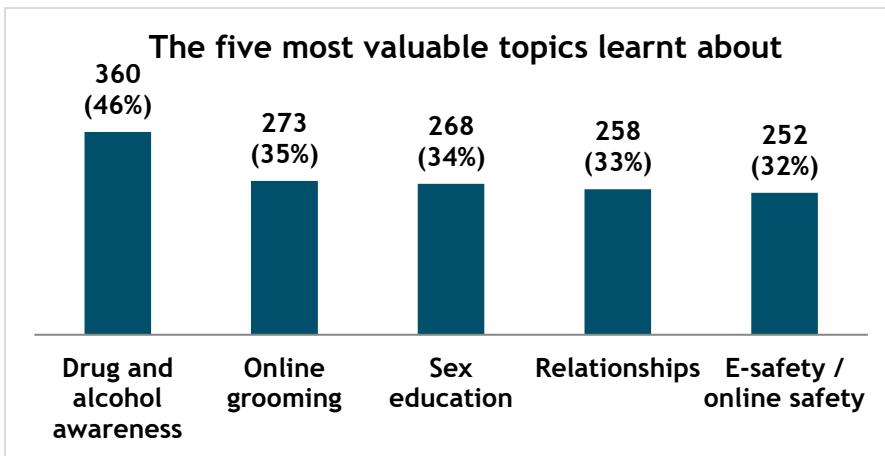
“We have taken part in a myriad<sup>8</sup> project which we did for a month or so instead of our usual PSHE lessons. They spoke about mindfulness and mental health.” - Female, age 14, Wellingborough

There were some slight differences between the top five most covered topics in each district (nearest town to school):

The five most covered topics in each area (nearest town to school)			
Northampton	Kettering	Daventry	Wellingborough
Emotional wellbeing, emotions and mental health - 68%	Drug and alcohol awareness - 74%	Relationships - 74%	Sex education - 87%
E-safety/online safety - 67%	E-safety/online safety - 71%	Drug and alcohol awareness - 61%	Drug and alcohol awareness - 84%
Relationships - 66%	Puberty - 69%	Sex education - 58%	Relationships - 81%
Drug and alcohol awareness - 65%	Sex education - 61%	Domestic Abuse - 58%	Online grooming - 75%
Violence (including gang and knife crime) - 63%	Online grooming - 59%	Bullying - 54%	E-safety/online safety - 71%

Young people were also asked to tell us which of these topics they had learnt about were the five most valuable. Nearly half reported that *drug and alcohol awareness* (46%) was one of the most valuable topics, following by *online grooming* (35%), *sex education* (34%) and *relationships* (33%).

<sup>8</sup> My Resilience in Adolescence (MYRIAD) is a Wellcome Trust Strategic Award research project investigating how schools promote young people’s wellbeing and resilience throughout adolescence. <http://myriadproject.org/>.



Other topics mentioned by the pupils were: “poverty and philanthropist”, “spasms, stroke and disease”, “stereotypes” and “terrorist situation”.

Two people mentioned having “hardly covered any” of the topics.

What are the five most valuable topics you have learnt about?	Responses	
	Skipped	41
	Answered	782
Drug and alcohol awareness	46%	360
Online grooming	35%	273
Sex education	34%	268
Relationships	33%	258
E-safety / online safety	32%	252
Puberty	31%	240
Emotional wellbeing, emotions and mental health	29%	224
Bullying	28%	219
Violence	27%	215
Equality and diversity	25%	194
Emotions	24%	190
Healthy lifestyles	24%	187
Life skills (bank accounts, bills, taxes)	19%	148
Exams	15%	119
Domestic abuse	14%	107
Future plans	14%	106
British values	13%	103
Preparing for the working world	11%	86
Road safety	10%	81
First aid	8%	64
Goals and aspirations	6%	49
Volunteering opportunities	3%	24
Other	2%	12

The top five most valued topics included the top four topics most learnt about in the past year (drug and alcohol awareness, online safety, relationships and online grooming).

The five topics that young people identified as the most valued were quite similar across the genders, with *drug and alcohol awareness* being the most valued by all. More females valued having learnt about *relationships* and *emotional wellbeing*,



*emotions and mental health* compared to males and those identifying as non-binary<sup>9</sup> who valued *sex education* and *puberty* more.

What are the five most valuable topics you have learnt about? (Top five)					
Female (431)		Male (358)		Non-binary (14)	
Drug and alcohol awareness	43%	Drug and alcohol awareness	49%	Drug and alcohol awareness	64%
Relationships	35%	Sex education	37%	Sex education	64%
Emotional wellbeing, emotions and mental health	35%	Puberty	37%	Puberty	43%
Online grooming	34%	Online grooming	36%	Relationships	36%
Sex education	31%	E-safety / online safety	34%	Bullying	36%

Other notable differences between genders were:

- More males (14%) valued *road safety* than females (8%), although this was still only the eighteenth most valuable topic for males and nineteenth for females.
- More females (30%, seventh) valued *equality and diversity* than males (18%, thirteenth).
- More females (35%, third) valued *emotional wellbeing, emotion and mental health* than males (22%, eleventh).

*Drug and alcohol awareness* was the most valuable topic for people from all four main districts, with *equality and diversity* and *preparing for the working world* more valued in Daventry and *life skills* and *violence* more valued in Wellingborough.

What are the five most valuable topics you have learnt about? (Top five)			
Northampton	Kettering	Daventry	Wellingborough
Drug and alcohol awareness - 42%	Drug and alcohol awareness - 62%	Drug and alcohol awareness - 49%	Drug and alcohol awareness - 46%
Emotional wellbeing, emotions and mental health - 35%	Sex education - 51%	Sex education - 38%	Sex education - 43%
E-safety/online safety - 34%	Puberty - 50%	Relationships - 33%	Life skills - 41%
Online grooming - 34%	Online grooming - 47%	Equality and diversity - 33%	Relationships - 38%
Relationships - 32%	E-safety/online safety and Relationships - 37%	Preparing for the working world - 33%	Violence - 32%

<sup>9</sup> Higher percentages for non-binary young people may result from the small size of this group.



## Topics people would like to understand more about

We then asked young people to tell us what topics they would like to understand more about, again choosing all relevant from a list of 22 or suggesting other topics. The most frequent topics mentioned by one-third or more were *life skills* (46%), *preparing for the world of work* (40%), *exams* (36%) and *first aid* (33%). The suggested topics were similar from each of the four main districts.

Other suggestions included: “*terrorist situation*”, “*social influence*”, “*anything that will be useful to us after we leave school*” and “*doing life*”.

The top five topics people wanted to understand more about had not been covered in lessons for many (between 15% and 31% had been taught about them in PSHE lessons): life skills (31%), preparing for the working world (22%), exams (25%), first aid (15%) and future plans (27%).

What topics do you want to understand more about?	Responses	
	Skipped	121
	Answered	702
Life skills	46%	324
Preparing for the working world	40%	283
Exams	36%	253
First aid	33%	229
Future plans	29%	201
Emotional wellbeing, emotions and mental health	21%	144
Equality and diversity	20%	143
Goals and aspirations	20%	142
Violence	20%	140
Domestic abuse	20%	137
Sex education	19%	133
Relationships	19%	132
Drug and alcohol awareness	19%	130
Volunteering opportunities	17%	120
Healthy lifestyles	17%	116
Emotions	15%	108
Bullying	15%	108
Online grooming	15%	107
Puberty	15%	104
Road safety	14%	100
E-safety / online safety	12%	85
British values	10%	69
Other	1%	6

What topics do you want to understand more about? (Top five)			
Northampton	Kettering	Daventry	Wellingborough
Life skills - 51%	Life skills - 36%	Life skills - 43%	Life skills - 47%
Preparing for the working world - 45%	Exams - 36%	First Aid - 40%	Exams - 47%
Exams - 34%	Preparing for the working world - 34%	Exams - 37%	Preparing for the working world - 44%
First Aid - 32%	Future plans - 30%	Preparing for the working world - 30%	First Aid - 40%
Future plans - 28%	Emotional wellbeing, emotions and mental health - 28%	Emotional wellbeing, emotions and mental health - 28%	Future plans - 35%

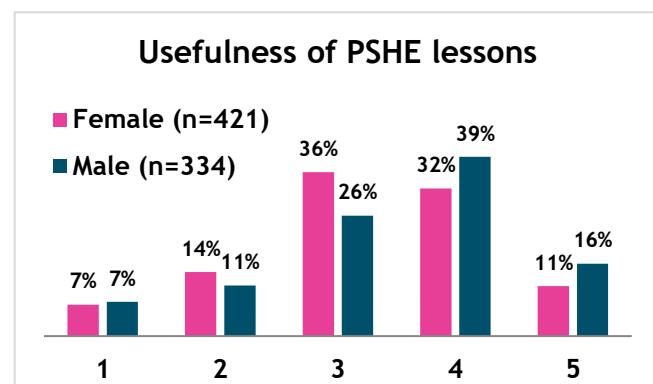
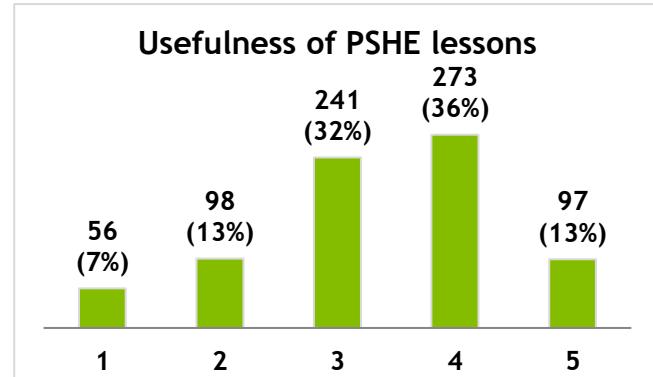
## Usefulness of lessons

We asked young people to rate the usefulness of their PSHE lessons out of five, with one star being not at all useful and five being extremely useful. The average rating was 3.34 out of five.

Nearly half (49%) of those who answered rated their PSHE lessons as four or five stars. One-fifth (20%) gave a rating of one or two stars. (765 answered.)

There was a small (but statistically significant<sup>10</sup>) difference between the ratings given by females (average 3.26) and males (average 3.45), with males giving a higher rating. Eleven people identifying as non-binary had an average rating of 3.73, with eight giving four or five stars.

People at schools near Kettering gave higher than average ratings (average 3.66), whereas those at school near Daventry (average 2.95) or Wellingborough (average 2.87) gave lower ratings<sup>11</sup>.

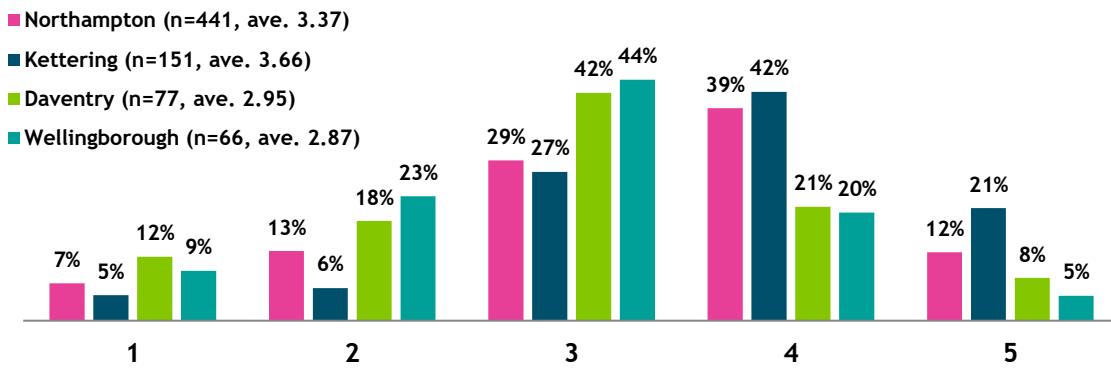


<sup>10</sup> Statistically significant differences between female and male results, Chi-square  $P<0.01$

<sup>11</sup> Statistically significant differences between each district and rest, Chi-square  $P<0.01$



## Usefulness of PSHE lessons



The average rating was lowest for the 48 who said they did not have any PSHE lessons per month (2.96), who interestingly rated their lessons despite having said they did not have any (they may receive PSHE content through other subjects, such as science). Those who had between four and six lessons per month (339) gave the highest average rating (3.55)<sup>12</sup>.

Star rating	Number of lessons / Responses			
	None	One to three	Four to six	Over six
1	6 (13%)	29 (10%)	14 (4%)	2 (11%)
2	10 (21%)	37 (13%)	32 (9%)	1 (5%)
3	15 (31%)	95 (32%)	102 (30%)	8 (42%)
4	14 (29%)	104 (35%)	137 (40%)	4 (21%)
5	3 (6%)	29 (10%)	54 (16%)	4 (21%)
Total	48	294	339	19
Average	2.96	3.23	3.55	3.37

The 517 who said they had specific timetabled lessons for PSHE gave a higher average rating (3.54) than those 196 who had it in form time (2.97)<sup>13</sup>.

## How lessons could be improved

The young people were asked to choose one option from a list of suggestions that they thought could improve their PSHE lessons, or to suggest something not listed. Many used the ‘other’ box to suggest more than one of the listed suggestions, so these were reclassified.

One-quarter (26%) said that *more interaction and group work* would be an improvement to PSHE lessons, followed by *up to date relevant content* (21%) and *more self-discovery* (17%).

<sup>12</sup> Statistically significant difference between the those with four to six lessons and the rest, Chi-square P<0.001

<sup>13</sup> Statistically significant difference between the two groups, Chi-square P<0.00001



What would improve PSHE lessons for you?	Responses	
	Skipped	52
	Answered	771
More interaction and group work	26%	204
Up to date relevant content	21%	163
More self-discovery	17%	134
An environment that is more comfortable	13%	100
The lessons not being taught by a school teacher	12%	91
Learning from a specific PSHE learning program/App	8%	61
More of a focus on wellbeing	7%	55
Make them compulsory	4%	33
Other	4%	29

Twelve of the other suggestions were about the content of lessons, including four comments about wanting content that would help prepare them for adult life, e.g.:

“More understanding of the working world, example: how to get certain jobs or how long it takes to get one.” - *Male, age 13, Daventry*

“Learn about adulthood. Bills, tax, mortgage, jobs.” - *Female, age 15, Northampton*

Others content suggestions included giving students options about what they learnt, having more teachers, having more activities and looking at things more in depth, e.g.:

“Giving children options on what we could learn in the year.” - *Female, age 13, Northampton*

Eight people wanted to have the option of not doing the lessons or having them less often, e.g.:

“Only do them if we want to as the majority of the lessons are common sense.” - *Male, age 15, Northampton*

Two people wanted to have more lessons, e.g.:

“Actually having more of these lessons because we don’t have them often and it’s very rare if we do have them.” - *Female, age 14, Northampton*

Three people commented on the environment (who they could sit with or the room used) and two people thought that lessons did not need improving.



The answers were similar from each district.

What would improve PSHE lessons for you? (Top five)			
Northampton	Kettering	Daventry	Wellingborough
More interaction and group work - 29%	More interaction and group work - 21%	More self-discovery - 29%	More interaction and group work - 24%
Up to date relevant content - 20%	Up to date relevant content - 16%	More interaction and group work - 26%	Up to date relevant content - 23%
More self-discovery - 18%	More self-discovery - 13%	Up to date relevant content - 25%	More self-discovery - 14%
An environment that is more comfortable - 13%	An environment that is more comfortable - 13%	An environment that is more comfortable - 21%	The lessons not being taught by a school teacher - 14%
The lessons not being taught by a school teacher - 11%	More of a focus on wellbeing - 13%	The lessons not being taught by a school teacher - 14%	Make them compulsory - 8%

Young people were then asked to tell us more about how they would prefer to have PSHE lessons taught, by selecting from a list of options or making other suggestions.

One-third (34%) would prefer to have PSHE taught in specific timetabled lessons and 28% would prefer it was optional to attend.

How would you prefer to have your PSHE lessons?	Responses	
	Skipped	43
	Answered	780
Specific lessons for PSHE in my timetable	34%	263
It is optional to attend	28%	217
Unsure	18%	141
Having it taught by someone who is not a school teacher	17%	130
In form time	13%	100
In assembly	6%	47
Other	3%	22
In form time with vertical tutoring	2%	13

Other suggestions included six comments on the quantity of lessons (three to have more and two to have less). One person suggested making them optional but with a minimum attendance:

“Optional but you have to at least attend one - two.” - Female, age 14,  
Kettering



Three people suggested having lessons outdoors.

Two commented on who should deliver lessons:

“Being taught by a school teacher, but if a subject could use someone outside of school, use them.” - *Female, age 13, Northampton*

“In class with member of school staff.” - *Male, age 13, Daventry*

Two suggested content (less wellbeing and more life skills), and two suggested having lessons with friends of people they felt comfortable with, e.g.:

“In groups where people would feel comfortable speaking.” - *Male, age 15, Northampton*

The answers were similar from each district, with a stronger preference for specific timetabled lessons in Kettering (53%) and for optional attendance in Daventry (42%) and Wellingborough (35%).

How would you prefer to have your PSHE lessons? (Top five)			
Northampton	Kettering	Daventry	Wellingborough
Specific lessons for PSHE in my timetable - 29%	Specific lessons for PSHE in my timetable - 53%	It is optional to attend - 42%	It is optional to attend - 35%
It is optional to attend - 25%	It is optional to attend - 27%	Having it taught by someone who is not a school teacher - 21%	Specific lessons for PSHE in my timetable - 32%
Unsure - 21%	Having it taught by someone who is not a school teacher - 15%	Unsure - 20%	In form time - 28%
Having it taught by someone who is not a school teacher - 16%	Unsure - 13%	Specific lessons for PSHE in my timetable - 19%	Having it taught by someone who is not a school teacher - 20%
In form time - 15%	In form time - 3%	In assembly - 7%	Unsure - 12%

## Other comments

Young people were given a final chance to tell us anything else about their PSHE lessons. 123 people commented.

Twenty-four people made further suggestions for improvement or mentioned the aspects or topics they would like to see included in the PSHE curriculum, including future life skills (10 people), more PSHE lessons (7), more group work (3), emotions/mental health (3), and more sex education (2). For example:



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“I would like to learn more about careers and further education after secondary school.” - *Female, age 14, Northampton*

“It’s good to learn about sex and other topics that you don’t want to talk to your parents about.” - *Female, age 15, Kettering*

“Physical and mental disabilities and how to help people with them.” - *Female, age 13, Northampton*

“Have more of them, even in year 10 and 11 because the things you learn about are more relevant as we get older and we will relate to them as we discover and try new things.” - *Female, age 14, Corby*

“Teach us about the future and what we actually need to know about like bills, GCSE’s.” - *Male, age 15, Northampton*

“We focus a LOT on wellbeing - it has helped but maybe do more stuff to do with teenagers.” - *Female, age 13, Northampton*

“Learn more about LGBTQ+.” - *Non-binary, age 13, Northampton*

“We need to learn more things such as emotions, bullying, equality and much more.” - *Female, age 14, Daventry*

“I think that the topics should change and become more complex further up the years, so that we are not repeating things we have covered. I think that the topics aren’t very useful as most things such as sex education, healthy lifestyle, e-safety relationships, etc. we have already covered in assemblies and with the school nurse.” - *Female, age 14, Wellingborough*

“I would benefit from learning more about emotions, stress, exams and the future and I would feel more comfortable if they were not compulsory; however I would still attend.” - *Female, age 13, Kettering*

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Other suggestions included using the right teachers (3) and asking people what they want lessons to cover (1), e.g.:

“I would like to have different teachers teach us different topics.” - *Male, age 13, Northampton*

“I think the, teacher/tutor should ask the students what they want to learn about to make it a better learning opportunity.” - *Male, age 14, unknown*

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“I don’t enjoy talking to my teacher about PSHE, as she teaches me a separate subject, and I don’t feel comfortable doing it, and I don’t feel comfortable talking to the teacher I currently have.” - *Female, age 13, Northampton*

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Negative points mentioned included lessons being boring (16), topics not being useful or relevant to young people (15), and feeling awkward or uncomfortable (3). For example:

“Most lessons aren’t very engaging and none of the beneficial topics (for me personally) have been covered.” - *Male, age 13, Daventry*

“Everything we learn is just common sense and they state the obvious.” - *Male, age 15, Northampton*

“They are rubbish because they don’t teach us about bullying.” - *Female, age 15, Towcester*

“Sometimes boys and girls having their lessons together can make it VERY awkward.” - *Female, age 13, Corby*

“I would like people to be more respectful to others when we are learning about personal topics (e.g. puberty) as some people laugh when we talk about it.” - *Female, age 13, Kettering*

“More group work and using interactive work, e.g. iPads.” - *Female, age 13, Northampton*

“It’s boring and needs more interaction, include more real life situations.” - *Female, age 14, Northampton*

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Positive comments included lessons being fun (5), lesson being interactive (4), and feeling like the topic is covered in a comfortable way (2). For example:

“They are very good.” - *Female, age 13, Kettering*

“They’re fun and interesting and interactive.” - *Male, age 15, Northampton*

“They are all to a good standard and make you feel comfortable about things.” - *Male, age 13, Northampton*

“I really enjoy all PSHE lessons, we are normally taught by a school teacher in a timetabled lesson (compulsory), but occasionally an outside staff member will do a lesson.” - *Female, age 13, Kettering*

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## Focus groups

The themes raised by the four focus groups covered a wide range of topics, which reflects the broad scope of PSHE education within schools.

Although a variety of topics were mentioned by participants, recurring themes appeared across all the focus groups. Young people highlighted *relationships, health, sex education, and safety* as important parts of the PSHE curriculum.

The most common topics young people wanted to know more about were aspects of *adult life*, particularly dealing with *money and financial issues, careers, relationships, safety, sex education, other cultures, parenting, drugs, mental health and medical issues*.

The way that PSHE is taught was also a discussion topic, with the teachers approach and young people's capacity to develop good relationships with staff being seen by participants as important to effective engagement with PSHE. For example:

“Our tutor is passionate about teaching us PSHE that’s important.”

“A passionate teacher.”

“We have made a relationship with our tutor and we don’t feel as awkward.”

“Other young people (under 18) teaching. Because they would teach us how we would understand. As we have the same thoughts.”

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Interactive practical lessons involving the use of booklets and video and real-life examples were suggested as ways that young people want to learn about PSHE topics, e.g.:

“Something where you learn the subject but in a fun way so we remember it.”

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Four young people suggested using external experts, such as doctors and nurses to talk about some topics.

## Home education focus group

The eight participants of this group told us that the main way they learn about PSHE is from friends and family, including parents. Some did tell us that they also learnt through experiences while two told us that they learn about PSHE from home education work books and the internet. They told us that for them the most important part of PSHE was sex education, health, healthy relationships, online safety and road safety.

One young person told us that issues are addressed as they come up:

“If I am about to go to a party and there might be alcohol there my parents have a conversation with me about alcohol and how to stay safe.”

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There were five areas that they said they would like to know more about:

- Taxes
- Road safety
- Mental health
- Life skills
- General knowledge

They also told us that the way they wanted to learn about PSHE was through experience, talking and work books, but they wanted it little and often and done casually.





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# Acknowledgements

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire would like to thank:

- Young people across Northamptonshire that took part in the survey
- Every organisation that supported us in spreading the message online about the survey.
- Local services including:
  - Service Six
  - Free to Talk
  - The Lowdown
  - Ask Normen
  - Northamptonshire Association of Youth Clubs
  - The Hub, Daventry
  - Northamptonshire Emergency Service Cadets
  - Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust
- Schools that allowed their students to take part in the survey including:
  - Danetre and Southbrook Learning Village
  - Malcolm Arnold Academy
  - Wootton Park School
  - Bishop Stopford School



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# About Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Healthwatch Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and wellbeing and improve the quality of services to meet people's needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and social care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvement, where required.

Our rights and responsibilities include:

- We have the power to monitor (known as “Enter and View”) health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of health and social care.
- We report our findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision makers and make the case for improved services where we find there is a need for improvement
- We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people, to influence how services are planned, organised and delivered.
- We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we find out what local people think about health and social care. We research patient, user and carer opinions using lots of different ways of finding out views and experiences. We do this to give local people a voice. We provide information and advice about health and social care services.
- Where we do not feel the views and voices of Healthwatch Northamptonshire and the people who we strive to speak on behalf of, are being heard, we have the option to escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations including Healthwatch England, NHS England and the Care Quality Commission.



# About Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire are a group of young people between the ages of 11 to 24 who are health and social care champions.

What we do:

- Look at local health and social care issues
- Give young people a voice for all aspects of health and social care locally.
- Work with professionals on the health and wellbeing of young people locally and nationally
- Set our own work plan
- Learn new skills
- Report back to the Healthwatch Northamptonshire Board

**WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR MORE YOUNG PEOPLE TO JOIN US. PLEASE GET IN CONTACT**



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**Investing in Children**

If you are a professional that wants to work with us please contact us on the details on the next page or email [youngh healthwatch@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk](mailto:youngh healthwatch@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk)

**Young  
healthwatch  
Northamptonshire**



# About Connected Together CIC

Connected Together Community Interest Company (CTCIC) is a social enterprise and a partnership between the University of Northampton and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire.

We have expertise and experience in delivering community engagement, research, surveys, training and more. Connected Together Community Interest Company (CIC) is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch Rutland and Healthwatch Northamptonshire.

The remit of the Connected Together CIC includes:

- Contract compliance
- Legal requirements
- Financial and risk management
- Sustainability and growth
- Agreeing strategy and operations
- Agreeing policies and procedures





# Appendix - Survey questions

1. How old are you?

- 13  14  15

2. Which is the closest town to your school?

- Northampton  Kettering  Corby  Daventry  
 Wellingborough  Towcester  Thrapston

3. Are you?

- Male  Female  Non-binary

4. Do you have a disability?

- Yes  No  Unsure

5. What religion are you?

- Christian  Jewish  Hindu  Sikh  Muslim  No religion  Other

6. How many PSHE lessons do you have in a month?

7. How are your PSHE lessons delivered?

- Specific lessons for PSHE in my timetable  
 In assembly  In form time  
 In form time with vertical tutoring (mixed year groups)  
 Unsure

8. Is it optional to attend your PSHE lessons?

- Yes  No  Unsure

9. Who teaches you PSHE?

- A teacher from your school  
 A member of school staff  
 Someone from an outside agency or company  
 Unsure



### 10. What topics have you covered in your PSHE lessons in the past year?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emotions                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> British values  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road safety                               | <input type="checkbox"/> E safety / online safety  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic abuse                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering opportunities  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online grooming                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence (including gang and knife crime)                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drug and alcohol awareness                | <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sex education                             | <input type="checkbox"/> First aid   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Future plans                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Equality and diversity (LGBTQ+, racism and discrimination)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exams (GCSEs / A levels / future careers) | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy lifestyles (healthy eating and being physically active)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goals and aspirations                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Life skills (bank accounts, bills, taxes)                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relationships                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparing for the working world (CV writing, interviews, work experience) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Puberty                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional wellbeing, emotions and mental health                           |
| <br>   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                    |  |

### 11. What are the 5 most valuable topics you have learnt about? (Please only select 5) (Same list given as question 10)

### 12. What topics do you want to understand more about?

(Same list given as question 10)

### 13. What would improve PSHE lessons for you?

- Make them compulsory
- More interaction and group work
- The lessons not being taught by a school teacher
- Learning from a specific PSHE learning program or App
- Up to date relevant content
- An environment that is more comfortable/a trusted environment/different learning environments (e.g. outdoors)
- More of a focus on wellbeing
- More self-discovery (finding out who you really are)
- Other (please specify)



**14. How useful do you think current PSHE lessons are? (1 star being not at all useful and 5 stars being extremely useful)**



**15. How would you prefer to have your PSHE lessons?**

- Specific lessons for PSHE in my timetable
- In assembly
- In form time
- In form time with vertical tutoring
- Having it taught by someone who is not a school teacher
- It is optional to attend
- Unsure
- Other (please specify)

**16. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your PSHE lesson?**



# Contact us

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