# Sex and Relationship Education and PSHE

## Consultation Response

## Summary

In December 2017, the Government's Department for Education launched a consultation as part of their strategy to update existing guidance on the teaching of sex and relationship education, and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). This paper presents Just Finance Foundation's joint response to the consultation, with Young Money and the Church of England.

We discuss the following themes:

- The need for making financial education compulsory, which lies in the fact that if it is not mandatory then schools will not teach it due to constraints on space and time in the curriculum and that uncertain incomes, the impact of lifelong indebtedness, and high housing costs are compounding to make financial capability an issue of pressing importance for younger generations.
- The distinctive features of the LifeSavers programme, for example its values-based approach, its flexibility and the emphasis on experiential learning, for example through getting pupils involved in setting up, using, and running their own school savings club.
- The importance of ensuring that PSHE content can be embedded within other aspects of the curriculum, which also contributes to wider PSHE goals too, such as building confidence, agency, and an awareness of the variety of different circumstances people live in.
- Finally, we recommend that a new duty to make financial education a compulsory part of the PSHE curriculum, is supported by a number of other enabling measures, which we set out.

JUST FINANCE FOUNDATION

# Introduction

At Just Finance Foundation, through our Financial Education programme Lifesavers, we give primary school children the knowledge, skills and attitudes to manage money well.  We welcome the Department for Education's consultation on the teaching of PSHE. In our response, we focus on the areas in which LifeSavers gives us direct experience: namely in equipping schools to develop financial capability amongst Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils. Financial education is not the only important component of PSHE, but it is one that merits much greater emphasis as we seek to build a fairer society in which all children and young people have the opportunity to flourish. Whilst we welcome the Government's consultation, we are concerned that the strong focus on Sex and Relationships Education within the call for evidence, and its promotion, risks overlooking the other components of PSHE that are no less essential to the future flourishing of our children and young people. We would like to see financial education receive parity with sex and relationships education.

## About Just Finance Foundation

Just Finance Foundation works locally and nationally through churches and other community groups, to increase the supply of fair and affordable finance and to empower poor and low-income consumers by building their financial capability. Through our local networks in the Black Country, Liverpool, London and Tyne to Tweed, we promote and support credit unions and other community finance providers and improve access to free debt advice and appropriate financial services.

**LifeSavers**, our financial education programme for primary schools, is of specific relevance to this consultation. LifeSavers helps children manage money wisely now and in the future by providing training and resources for teachers, offering support for school savings clubs, and encouraging parental and wider community engagement. The programme has been designed to incorporate all the relevant recommendations of the APPG on Financial Education for Young People and resources are accredited by Young Money.

LifeSavers is an initiative of the Just Finance Foundation delivered in partnership with Young Money. It enjoys financial support from the Cabinet Office and Virgin Money. The programme is currently offered in 6 areas: Bradford & Leeds, Nottinghamshire, London, North East, Merseyside and Bristol & Gloucester. LifeSavers offers a holistic and embedded approach, building schools' capability to integrate and sustain financial education in the curriculum, assemblies and wider aspects of school life.

# Our Responses

**Why prioritise financial education within PSHE in Primary Schools?**

Our experience – drawn from working closely and collaboratively with teachers and head teachers in a broad cross section of primary schools across England – leads us to argue strongly for the inclusion of financial education as one of the three most important subject areas to be included as a required component of primary PSHE.

Indeed, given that money worries have been identified as the leading strain on couple relationships in the UK today, financial education arguably has a vital part to play in enabling children to enter into and sustain healthy, long term relationships in the future.[1]

A recent report by the APPG on Financial Education for Young People stated:

> *'we need to start younger and recognise the role that primary schools can, and should, play in familiarising children with money concepts in an age appropriate manner. Financial education should not be a 'postcode lottery', with some students left out simply due to the school they attend, which is why we recommend that statutory financial education is introduced at primary level.'* [2]

We would endorse this view, particularly in light of the fact that 70% of teachers involved in our LifeSavers programme agreed financial education should be provided to primary-school-aged pupils as a compulsory part of the national curriculum.[3]

As the initial APPG report advised, the necessity of making this provision compulsory lies in the fact that 'if personal finance education is not mandated, examined or inspected, schools will not teach it due to constraints on space and time in the curriculum.'[4] LifeSavers currently operates at pilot scale, providing a solution for exceptional schools, but we recognise these barriers for others. As we explain below, the ability to handle money wisely is too important to the lives of our children and young people, and indeed the future of our society, for us to allow this to happen.

Financial distress is on the rise in the UK. A recent report by the Financial Conduct Authority found that 50% of UK consumers show one or more characteristics of financial vulnerability[5] and the Money Advice Service estimate that 1 in 6 individuals in the UK are over-indebted.[6]

Uncertain incomes, the impact of lifelong indebtedness, and high housing costs are compounding to make financial capability an issue of pressing importance for younger generations.

This is widely recognised by teachers, particularly in some of the more deprived areas in which LifeSavers is used. For example, one head teacher said:

> *"We need to get in there early to increase knowledge, understanding and form good habits. This is so important that it should be the responsibility of the education system to embed financial education into its curriculum and to be a natural part of school life – it is our job to prepare pupils for the future and all the challenges it brings, and money is one of the biggest ones."* [7]

In spite of its importance, and evidence that financial skills, knowledge and abilities begin to form at a very early age, research by Sheffield Hallam University showed that at KS1 and KS2, the majority of primary schools were delivering personal finance/financial capability education once a year or less.[8] [9]

**What to prioritise within Financial Education**

The APPG on Financial Education for Young People and the Money Advice Service National Capability Strategy have conducted extensive research into what the content of schools-based financial education should be. LifeSavers was developed in response to this as a model of best practice. It addresses each of the core outcomes identified as important for 3-11 years olds:

- how to manage money
- becoming a critical consumer
- managing risks and emotions associated with money
- understanding the important role money plays in our lives.[10]

The LifeSavers teaching materials are designed to engage pupils in learning about money through the lens of four core values: generosity, wisdom, thankfulness and justice.

It uses 'Five Big Questions About Money' to enable pupils to explore all the things we can do with our money – earn, spend, save, give, lend, invest and borrow:

- Where does our money come from?
- How does money make us feel?
- What can we use our money for?
- How does our money help other people?
- How can we look after our money?

The distinctive features of the programme are its values-based approach, it's flexibility and the emphasis on experiential learning, for example through getting pupils involved in setting up, using, and running their own school savings club.

**How should the content of PSHE lessons be delivered?**

A measure of flexibility is important in enabling schools and teachers to adapt their PSHE provision to best meet the needs of their pupils and local communities, which may differ substantially between schools. Our experience with LifeSavers has shown that an approach which begins by acknowledging the different capacity and motivation of schools to deliver financial education can be highly effective, allowing schools to take on what they can, and seeing their enthusiasm and engagement grow as the value of the programme proves itself.

LifeSavers works by equipping leadership teams and teachers, building their knowledge, skills and confidence to teach financial education through training and through the provision of resources that are easy to use and can be integrated across the curriculum. This is both a more effective and more sustainable approach. We should say too, that though it is commonly reported that teachers lack the knowledge and confidence to teach financial education, LifeSavers guidance and resources have proven effective at assuring them they can do so well. 81% of teachers surveyed in the programme evaluation agreed that LifeSavers had improved their confidence to deliver financial education.[11]

Ensuring that PSHE content can be embedded within other aspects of the curriculum is particularly important: pressure on timetables – and teachers – does not necessarily have to be exacerbated by new requirements if they are integrated into subjects and topics that pupils will be studying anyway. This is borne out by other schools that have developed their own approach to financial education. As well as different topic and subject-related resources, LifeSavers also includes materials for collective worship or assemblies, meaning schools can make thinking and talking about managing money wisely a routine part of the culture and life of the school. Some schools have adopted the LifeSavers values as their school values.

A further benefit of this embedded approach is that it ensures it contributes to wider PSHE goals too, such as building confidence, agency, and an awareness of the variety of different circumstances people live in. For example, children learn about the different salaries that different kinds of job attract, and about how tax contributes to the funding of services we all use. Our schools have also reported that the context-based learning provided by the savings club, for example, has improved pupils' handwriting and maths skills.

**Wider conditions for success**

In closing, we would emphasise that our most important point is that financial education should be a compulsory part of PHSE.

We recommend that a new duty is supported by a number of other enabling measures which together create the conditions for financial education to be enthusiastically and effectively adopted throughout England:

- The value and benefits, and methods for teaching financial education are widely promoted – to stimulate demand from schools;
- Updated guidance is issued with the new duty: it is the most effective stimulus and schools find it necessary and very useful in turning expectations into practical schemes of work. Guidance seems overdue, having last been issued in 2008 and before that, in 2000;
- Additional financial resources are provided to enable staff time to be back-filled while they embark on training and planning, and for training and travel to paid for. Our experience with LifeSavers demonstrates this can be a modest and largely one-off cost, though schools my regularly need top-up training to deal with staff turnover;
- In line with the APPG on Financial Education for Young People, that OFSTED inspection of primary schools incorporates reporting on financial education delivery – a compulsory duty means it could be included in the Common Inspection Framework. In addition, the Department for Education may wish to consider whether awards for excellence in PSHE (including various aspects of it) might create further incentives for schools, provide recognition, spread and encourage good practice;
- The long-term impact of financial education is measured to prove and improve teaching. For example, England could subscribe to the OECD PISA Financial Literacy Assessment.

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