Sex Education for Black and Minority Ethnic Children and Young People

June 2001 - April 2003

Funded by Department of Health

The Sex Education and Minority Ethnic Groups project aims to identify, develop and promote best practice in working with minority ethnic groups on sex and relationships education. It will establish and disseminate guiding principles and a framework for best practice across a range of settings including schools, youth, community, and public care settings, pupil referral units and sexual health services. The project will contribute towards the overall Teenage Pregnancy Action Plan and specific action points within it, the Sexual Health and HIV strategy and the implementation of the Sex and Relationship Guidance from the DfES.

The Sex Education Forum will work with its member organisations including The Black Health Agency (BHA), a leading sexual health organisation in the North West and NAZ, a London based project working to meeting the sexual health needs of minority ethnic communities. It will build upon previous and current projects carried out by the Forum, including the Religious and Faith project, the Public Care project and our recent consultations with young people from a range of minority ethnic communities.

As identified by the recent Sex and Relationship Guidance from the DfEE (0116/2000) young people often rely on schools for information about sex and relationships. Parents often do not talk to their children, and research shows that this may be particularly true for those young people from minority ethnic groups. The young people in recent consultations said that for many of them sex and relationships education (SRE) was not relevant. One group of young women complained that ‘all the videos and books we used only showed white people, sex education just wasn’t relevant.’ Others have reported that SRE is often based on a set of stereotypes and assumptions. Teachers and others often lack the confidence to use activities that explore cultural beliefs and values. As a result young people from minority ethnic groups do not gain the information and develop the skills necessary to feel confident in their relationships and manage their sexual health.

There are so many young people from so many different ethnic and faith backgrounds, the picture is rich but complex. SRE policy, planning and the way that it is organised and delivered needs to be sensitive to the diversity of cultures and beliefs. This presents teachers, youthworkers and social workers with particular challenges, and they are trying to address and meet these complex needs without any support or guidance. This project aims to fill this gap.

The SRE guidance (a central element of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy) also stresses the need for those delivering SRE to work in partnership with parents. Information calls to the Sex Education Forum helpline demonstrate that those involved in delivering SRE do not know how best to do this meaningfully and feel particularly nervous about doing this with parents from minority ethnic communities. Both the Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health and HIV strategies identify the needs of black and minority ethnic groups as being under-developed in terms of understanding at policy and practice levels. This is particularly true in SRE and, as yet, there has been no national project to map existing practice to develop a framework for local policy and practice development.
To build confidence and understanding in delivering high quality SRE to young people from minority ethnic communities will contribute towards the government’s long term aim of reducing social inequalities in sexual health. Statistics show that some minority ethnic groups experience disproportionately high levels of sexually transmitted infection rates including levels of HIV infection.

**Project staff:**
Simon Blake and Simon Forrest

**Objectives**

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- A literature review and mapping exercise including consultations with professionals, children and young people to establish current best practice;
- Case study work to develop and exemplify best practice;
- A publication and SEF Forum factsheet which highlight principles of policy and practice across a range of settings;
- Dissemination of publication at one national conference and four regional seminars in partnership with NHSS co-ordinators, Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinators and the national and local education and health networks;
- Publications of articles in *Sex Education Matters*, *National Healthy School Standard Newsletter* and *Health Education Journal*;
- Independent evaluation of the project.

**Short Term Outcomes**
This project will support the objectives of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and the National Sexual Health and HIV Strategy, as well as support the implementation of the Sex Education Guidance by:
- An increased awareness and understanding amongst practitioners and policy makers about the SRE needs of young people from minority ethnic groups, with best practice guidance to support the development of the work;
- Sharing of knowledge and expertise amongst a wide range of professionals;
- Identifying areas for further work and informing the implementation of the Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health and HIV Strategy.

**Long Term Outcomes**
- A significant contribution to the development of SRE that meets the needs of young people from minority ethnic groups ethnic groups;
- Contribution to a reduction in teenage pregnancy and improvements in sexual ill-health.

**Outputs**
- A resource that identifies principles of best practice in SRE planning, policy and practice with young people and parents from minority ethnic communities;
- Dissemination by publishing articles in relevant journals and newsletters.

**Further Information:**
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