**Talking Sex Pack: Impact Report**

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# Background to the Project

* The Talking Sex pack was developed as part of the ‘Sex and History’ project at the University of Exeter, led by Dr Rebecca Langlands (Classics) and Professor Kate Fisher (History). The project uses their research into sexual knowledge and the history of sex to empower people of all ages – and especially young people – to talk more openly about sex and discuss the issues that matter to them in a supportive but thought–provoking environment. It particularly focuses on using museum objects to engage with historical and contemporary issues around sexual knowledge.
* The Talking Sex pack is a PSHE resource that was developed in line with the broader principles of the ‘Sex and History’ project. It seeks to encourage discussion about museum objects and the history of sex for the purposes of sex, relationship and emotional health education. The pack contains a series of sample lessons, artefact factsheets and a DVD of film clips for use with KS3 and KS4. It was developed through consultations with local schools and was distributed to twenty schools for a trial in 2011. The pack was disseminated to schools in the form of a collection of coloured A4 cards and a DVD resource. It is therefore an ongoing resource to which schools still have access, but this report relates primarily to the first year of its use in 2011/12.
* These schools were all provided with training for using the resource. In total these schools have 15,698 pupils aged 3–18.[[1]](#footnote-1) The majority of pupils in schools where the resource was trialled were in the age range 11–16, as alltwenty schools included students within this age group whereas only six schools taught students under the age of eleven and only six schools taught students older than sixteen. The resource was designed for suitability with a range of age groups but was specifically designed for key stages 3 and 4 (age 11–14 and 14–16 respectively), thus all schools in which it was trialled had a suitable student demographic for its use.
* Bodmin College – 1513 pupils, age range: 11–18.
* Callington Community College – 1427 pupils, age range: 11–18.
* Cape Cornwall School – 421 pupils, age range: 11–16.
* Children in Care Education Team – 334 pupils, age range: 3–18.
* Glynn House Short Stay School – 3 pupils, age range: 5–16.
* Humphry Davy School – 681 pupils, age range: 5–16.
* Looe Community Academy – 605 pupils, age range: 11–16.
* Newquay Tretherras School – 1608 pupils, age range: 11–18.
* Ninemaidens Short Stay School – 12 pupils, age range: 5–16.
* North Cornwall Short Stay School – 2 pupils, age range: 5–16.
* Penair School – 1163 pupils, age range: 11–16.
* Penryn College – 1025 pupils, age range: 11–16.
* Poltair Community School – 786 pupils, age range: 11–16.
* Pool Academy – 936 pupils, age range: 11–16.
* Redruth School: a Technology College, 1051 pupils, age range: 11–18.
* Restormel Short Stay School – 8 pupils, age range: 5–16.
* Richard Lander School – 1300 pupils, age range: 11–16.
* Saltash.net Community School – 1352 pupils, age range 11–18.
* St Ives School: a Technology College – 667 pupils, age range: 11–16.
* Torpoint Community College – 804 pupils, age range 11–18.

The Heads of PHSE in Devon and Bristol attended a workshop on the Pack. Plans to trial the resource have been delayed by structural reorganisation. Further trials will take place once the resource has been further developed in response to this report.

# Methodology of the Impact Report

* The report is based on two main sources:

1. Telephone and face-to-face interviews with individuals who helped to design and launch the pack and the ‘Revealing Collections’ exhibition in Truro.
   * + Hilary Bracegirdle, Director of the RCM: involved in organising the exhibition and brought in Kate Sicolo as a consultant.
     + Kate Sicolo, The Intercom Trust: wrote and launched the pack.
     + David Hampshire, Cornwall County Council: involved in pack design at an advisory level and in organising the training.
2. Telephone and email communication with PSHE and Citizenship Subject Leaders at the Cornwall schools in which the pack was trialled. 17 out of 20 schools responded.[[2]](#footnote-2)

* All interviewees were asked: whether they received the ‘Talking Sex’ pack; whether they used the pack and why; (if so) how they utilised the resource in the classroom; and what they would change about the pack in future.

# Impact of the Project

## Design

* The pack had a formative as well as a summative impact. It was designed in collaboration with two of the largest schools cited above: Callington Community College (1427 pupils) and Saltash.net Community School (1352 pupils). According to the designer of the pack, ‘we took feedback from those schools and took it from there’.
* The effectiveness of this consultation process supports comments made by David Hampshire, that ‘If you want curriculum materials to really work, **you have to involve the people who are going to use them in their design** … If you have something where you are being asked to make choices and your time is very limited, it’s unlikely that it’s going to be used if you have not been involved in the development of the product itself.’

## Use

* All 20 schools were given training in using the pack, which took the form of a full day session. The feedback to the organisers was positive: ‘It was a good mix of PSHE leaders … Generally the feedback was very good, people took to it quite well – on the day they were quite positive about it and about how they could integrate it into what they were doing and put it into practice.’
* 11 out of 17 respondents recalled receiving the pack.[[3]](#footnote-3) Three of these used the pack systematically: Callington Community College – 1427 pupils, Torpoint Community College – 804 pupils. Poltair Community School – 786 pupils.
* The teachers who used the ‘Talking Sex’ pack commented on the attractiveness and utility of the resource:
  + ‘[I]t is a really exciting resource. So far I have ... used a few of the pictures that relate to contraception. I have used them in a PowerPoint as a **visual stimulus starter task**.’
  + ‘I particularly like the photos of contraception in the past – **the photos are great to promote discussion** … pictures can say a thousand words. The pictures were also quite surprising to students with some very interesting information about how attitudes have changes [sic].’
  + ‘**The idea of the pack is** **excellent and the presentation is great** – colourful and clear. The aspects of sex are varied and interesting ... It was useful to be able to circulate pages amongst a group and get them talking … I used the whole pack for a class who were in small groups. Each had a card to read and discuss and then it was passed on to another group. This was rounded off by a brief whole class discussion where students could raise issues or comment on the cards.’
* I think one of the things that is impressive about the resource is that it does actually attempt to deal with some of the more difficult issues quite creatively…it enables you to have a critique of where we are – things like the Egyptian God male breastfeeder – it does help us to challenge concepts… it enables us to recognise that the way we categorise relationships is actually quite transient…holding up that mirror to ourselves is quite educative.
* The impact of the resource was not limited to those schools that directly used it in their PSHE curriculum. Three schools noted that they plan to use the resource but that they have been limited by curriculum design to this point. However, the resource still influenced their thinking on potential new approaches to PSHE:
  + ‘The images are **thought and discussion provoking**.’
  + ‘The pack is very **informative** and has been put together well.’
  + ‘I took it for reference ... I keep a pile of **‘potentially useful’** resources.’

## Wider Reception and Publicity

* + The Sex and History project, of which the ‘Talking Sex’ pack was an important part, won an award for Outstanding Social and Cultural Impact at the inaugural Exeter Impact Awards.
  + The project has been put forward for an EngageU award, a European Competition for Best Innovations in University Outreach and Public Engagement.
  + The pack was promoted by the Royal Cornwall Museum as part of their workshops on PSHE (see <http://www.royalcornwallmuseum.org.uk/learning/learning.ks34.htm>, which includes a link to online samples of sessions from the pack, and <http://www.royalcornwallmuseum.org.uk/news/> which discusses the project’s Social and Cultural Impact award).

# Areas for Development

* Interviews revealed the ways in which many teachers would like to see the resource expanded. The idea of using historical objects as a basis for meaningful discussion around sexual issues for young people within the context of formal education was widely felt to be a useful and innovative idea which would benefit from being developed and given a wider application. One main areas for development related to a high demand for expanded versions of the pack – either for new student demographics or in terms of the material within it, so that it might reach a broader range of age groups or cover more issues and concerns.
* Many schools suggested that the pack could usefully be integrated with existing sex education programmes provided by external agencies such as Brook or Christopher Winter. There was a sense that such new resources should be developed in collaboration with other sex education providers for the purposes of compatibility with existing PSHE provision. Those schools that did not use the pack had no criticisms of the pack or its concept, but rather felt that it needed to be expanded and developed in order to be suitable for a wider range of students and to fit with existing PSHE courses (especially those designed by external agencies).

### New Resources: Digital and Creative Content

* + - ‘[A] **DVD** could have been added or **additional creative ideas <art or drama?>** for teachers to develop.’
    - ‘It would be brilliant if there were some **suggested lesson ideas** and other resources that would complement the images.’
    - ‘People **use the [interactive] boards** a lot now.’
    - ‘A website is also a good resource as it can been accessed easily ... **then it can be shown to students on the projector**.’
  + **‘[Digital is] good for resources** as most of the PSHE resources we use are saved on the teachers’ drive at work and often means we can adapt them and edit them for individual classes.’
  + ‘A **digital resource would be good**.’
  + ‘The nice thing about that concept (online) is that you could point people to it.’

[*As an option/alternative rather than a substitute*]

* + ‘I personally **prefer the paper format**.’

### New Resources: For specific age/ability groups

* + ‘There was a general feeling that “this is really good but **I don’t think I could do this with my year 8s and year 9s**”.’
  + ‘I didn’t use it because we’re a PRU [Pupil Referral Unit] … **I would use it for PSHE for a good ability group in a mainstream school**.’

### Collaborative Development and Ongoing Training

* + ‘[We] use a lot of resources that have been developed by **Brook and the Family Planning Association** … [any programme] needs to respond to the statutory guidance on SRE issued by the government.’
  + ‘**Brook** ... is actually delivering a large proportion of the PSHE in schools.’
  + ‘**People need to trial things and come back and share their experiences, with positive monitoring of the process** … The Christopher Winter project gives training, then you observe somebody else teaching (using the resource), then you team teach, then you teach and you’re observed… it’s proved to be really successful.’

# Summary of Findings

* **Collaboration:** The pack had a formative as well as a summative impact. Including schools in the design process seemingly made them more likely to use the resource. This collaborative process could be expanded upon in future through work with other agencies such as Brook or Christopher Winter.
* **Use:** Thepack’s concept had an impact both on teachers who used and who did not use the resource, with some of the latter planning to use it in future. Teachers liked the resource, found that it provoked discussion and was aesthetically successful. They would benefit from ongoing training and from an expansion of the resource, for specific student groups (such as special needs or different age groups) and in new formats (such as digital and creative).
* **Response**: The Talking Sex pack has received positive media attention and recognition within education communities. This recognition has been significant at a local level and the project is increasingly being feature in international competitions (such as EngageU).

1. These figures relate to the date of writing the report (17/02/13 – numbers taken from schoolsetc.co.uk, with a random sample of 25 per cent cross–checked with school websites to corroborate figures). They can be taken as broadly representative of the numbers from 2011–12 academic year in which the Talking Sex pack was trialled. The pack’s use is also ongoing, thus the current–day pupil numbers are important. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Quotes have been made anonymous here to protect the privacy of interviewees, but are all from direct communication with Victoria Bates, University of Exeter, September-December 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 2 did not receive the pack, 4 were unsure. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)