

# Family Education Trust

(Family and Youth Concern)

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## ***Government presses ahead with sex education plans without consulting parents***

**Friday 14 November 2008: For immediate release**

The government is ploughing ahead with plans to make sex education compulsory in all schools without making any attempt to seek the views of parents. It has quietly launched an independent review which is giving organisations with an interest in sex education just three weeks to respond to questions seeking 'the most effective ways of making PSHE [Personal Social and Health Education] education statutory' and the best ways to provide a statutory entitlement to PSHE education for all pupils'.

Family Education Trust Director, Norman Wells, commented:

'Just a few weeks ago, Ministers made a firm commitment that they would not make any decision about the future status of PSHE until they had conducted a full public consultation, but now they are going back on that promise.

'Parents are being excluded from the entire review process. There was no parental representation on the government's steering group on sex and relationship education, parental input was not sought at any point, and ministers have repeatedly refused to meet with organisations representing the views and concerns of a large proportion of parents.

'Given that parents bear the legal responsibility for the education of their children and education law is clear that children must be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents, it is outrageous that the government should now be conducting a review that presupposes that PSHE will be made statutory without fully engaging with parental views and concerns.'

Family Education Trust is calling on ministers to put the review on hold until after there has been a full public consultation on whether PSHE should be made statutory, in line with previous ministerial commitments. Norman Wells remarked:

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Trustees: Arthur Cornell MEd F.Coll.P (Chairman); Betty, Lady Grantchester; Dr John Guly MB BS DMJ;  
Eric Hester BA (Vice Chairman); Dr Joseph Lim BPharm, MRPharmS, PhD; Simon J Ling MA FCA (Hon Treasurer);  
Mrs Valerie Riches (Founder President); Dr Trevor Stammers BSc FRCGP; Robert Whelan MA Director: Norman Wells FRSA

Sponsors: Professor John Bonnar MA MD FRCOG; The Viscountess Brentford OBE; Peter Dawson OBE BSc FRSA;  
The Baroness Elles; Michael McKenzie CB QC; The Duke of Montrose; The Baroness O'Cathain OBE; Professor Dennis O'Keefe

‘You can’t ask about “the best ways” to make PSHE statutory before you have consulted on whether to make it statutory in the first place. Rhetoric about the importance of parents will continue to sound very hollow until the government starts showing them proper respect and makes an effort to listen to their concerns.’

### **Notes for editors:**

1. In declining to meet with pro-family organisations with a different perspective from organisations represented on the government’s sex and relationship education review group, Schools Minister Jim Knight gave a categorical assurance that there would be ‘a full public consultation on any substantive recommendations made by the steering group’ (letter, 24 July 2008).
2. The Minister went back on this commitment when, on 23 October 2008, he accepted the recommendation of the sex and relationship education review group to make PSHE, including sex education, a compulsory part of the curriculum for all children from the very beginning of primary school.
3. Family Education Trust has subsequently reminded the government of its earlier commitment and called upon Ministers to honour their promise to undertake a full public consultation before making any final decision about making PSHE statutory.
4. The government has now set up an independent review of PSHE, chaired by Sir Alasdair Macdonald, to consider how to progress its plans to make the subject compulsory, without making any attempt to listen to parental concerns.
5. Education law states that parents bear the legal responsibility for ensuring that their children receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have. It also upholds the general principle that pupils should be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents (Education Act 1996, sections 7 and 9).

### For further information:

Family Education Trust is an educational charity committed to promoting stable family life and the welfare of children and young people.

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