



ALTERNATIVE ACRES

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE/RSE) Policy

Academic Year 2026/27

Policy owner	Head of Provision
Head of Provision	Gemma Robertson
DSL	Daun Beresford
Deputy DSL	Gemma Robertson
Inclusion & Engagement Lead	Rachel Archer
Core learner age	11-16 and appropriate post-16 placements
Reviewed	01/09/2026
Next review	01/09/2027 or sooner following safeguarding learning or relevant guidance change

Alternative Acres supports learners to understand healthy relationships, consent, safety, wellbeing and preparation for adult life through sensitive, age- and development-appropriate education that reflects SEND, lived experience and safeguarding needs.



1. Purpose

This policy sets out Alternative Acres' approach to relationships, sex and health education (RSHE/RSE) within its non-school alternative provision.

Alternative Acres supports learners whose education may be shared with or commissioned by a school or local authority. RSHE may therefore form part of a wider programme for which the commissioning school retains statutory curriculum responsibilities. Alternative Acres will work with commissioners so that its contribution complements rather than unnecessarily duplicates the learner's wider education.

2. Status of the 2026 statutory guidance

The revised DfE statutory guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education came into effect on 1 September 2026. It applies to schools and specified school bodies, including maintained schools, academies/free schools, independent schools and PRUs.

Alternative Acres is a non-school independent AP provider and does not present the school-specific statutory RSHE duties as applying to it in exactly the same way. However, Alternative Acres uses the 2026 guidance as an important benchmark for safe, high-quality and age-appropriate practice and works with commissioning schools/local authorities to support their responsibilities.

3. Safeguarding framework

RSHE is closely connected to safeguarding. KCSIE 2026 is statutory guidance for schools and colleges; Alternative Acres aligns its safeguarding practice with relevant principles and its own Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 strengthened national guidance concerning abusive behaviour in intimate relationships, coercive control, child sexual abuse and teenage relationship abuse. These risks are reflected in Alternative Acres' safeguarding and relationship education.

4. Aims

Alternative Acres aims to help learners build knowledge, language and skills that support safe, respectful relationships and informed choices. Teaching should promote dignity, equality, safety, self-respect and respect for others.

- Recognise healthy, respectful and unsafe relationships.
- Understand consent, boundaries and the right to seek help.



- Recognise coercion, control, exploitation and abuse.
- Develop safe online relationship behaviours.
- Understand relevant physical and emotional health information.
- Build confidence to ask trusted adults/professionals for help.
- Respect equality, difference and lawful rights.
- Prepare for increasing independence and adulthood.

5. Individualised approach

Alternative Acres' learners may have SEND, SEMH needs, anxiety, disrupted education, trauma, communication differences or gaps in prior learning. Teaching must therefore be adapted to the learner's developmental understanding rather than assuming knowledge based solely on age.

Individualisation must not mean avoiding important safeguarding knowledge. Learners should receive accessible teaching about consent, boundaries, online risk and healthy/unhealthy relationships at a level they can understand.

6. Curriculum coordination

Where a learner remains on a school roll, Alternative Acres should understand what RSHE the school is providing and what contribution Alternative Acres is expected to make where this is relevant to the placement.

Placement planning and review can be used to agree specific priorities, for example healthy relationships, online safety, emotional wellbeing, puberty, consent, exploitation awareness or preparation for adulthood.

7. Core content

Depending on age, development, identified need and the learner's wider curriculum, Alternative Acres may support learning across relationships, sexual health/safety and physical/mental health themes.

- Families, friendships and respectful relationships.
- Intimate relationships and consent.
- Online relationships, grooming and digital safety.
- Sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour.
- Puberty, body changes and sexual health where appropriate.
- Mental wellbeing and help-seeking.
- Physical health, substances and risk where relevant.
- Equality, identity, respect and discrimination.



- Exploitation, coercive control and teenage relationship abuse.
- Preparation for adulthood, independence and accessing support.

8. Healthy relationships

Learners should be helped to recognise characteristics of healthy relationships, including mutual respect, trust, honesty, kindness, communication, equality, privacy and appropriate boundaries.

Teaching should also help learners recognise unhealthy or abusive behaviours, including controlling behaviour, intimidation, isolation, humiliation, coercion, threats and violence.

9. Consent and boundaries

Consent should be taught as freely given, specific and capable of being withdrawn. Learners should understand that pressure, fear, manipulation, intoxication, age/power imbalance or exploitation can affect a person's ability to consent.

Everyday teaching about personal space, permission, saying no, hearing no and respecting boundaries can reinforce consent concepts without requiring explicit sexual content in every discussion.

10. Teenage relationship abuse and coercive control

Staff should recognise that abuse can occur within teenage intimate relationships and may be emotional, physical, sexual, controlling, coercive or technology-assisted.

Where a learner describes monitoring, threats, isolation, pressure for sexual activity/images, control of friendships, repeated location checking or fear of a partner/ex-partner, staff must consider safeguarding rather than treating this simply as ordinary relationship difficulty.

11. Sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour

Alternative Acres takes sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour seriously. It must not be dismissed as banter, joking or an inevitable part of growing up.

Reports or concerns must be managed under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and child-on-child safeguarding arrangements. Staff must not conduct their own investigation before consulting the DSL.



12. Online relationships and digital sexual harm

Teaching should reflect that relationships often develop and operate online. Learners should understand privacy, online pressure, grooming, impersonation, sexualised contact, image-sharing, location sharing and the permanence/redistribution risk of digital content.

AI-generated or manipulated sexual images, deepfakes and other emerging technology-assisted harms should be discussed where relevant and developmentally appropriate. Staff must follow safeguarding procedures where such content involves a child.

13. Intimate images

Learners should be taught that requesting, creating, sharing or forwarding intimate images involving children can create serious safeguarding and legal consequences.

Staff who become aware of an intimate image involving a learner must follow safeguarding procedures and must not casually view, copy, forward or ask a learner to send the image to them.

14. Exploitation and grooming

RSHE should support learners to understand grooming, exploitation, power imbalance, gifts/favours, secrecy, manipulation and unsafe relationships with peers or adults.

Staff must remain alert to child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and other forms of abuse where a relationship is being used to obtain control, sexual access, money, status, criminal activity or other benefit.

15. Puberty, bodies and sexual health

Where appropriate to the learner's age, development and agreed curriculum, teaching may include puberty, menstruation, body changes, reproduction, contraception, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and accessing reliable health information.

Information should be factual and presented without shame. Staff must stay within their competence and use appropriate educational/health resources rather than giving personalised medical advice.

16. Mental health and emotional wellbeing

Health education can include emotional literacy, coping strategies, recognising distress, healthy routines, sleep, social connection, help-seeking and understanding how relationships affect wellbeing.



Staff should avoid presenting normal emotional difficulty as a diagnosis. Concerns about self-harm, suicide, abuse or significant mental-health risk must be escalated through safeguarding/emergency procedures.

17. Physical health and risk

Relevant teaching may include healthy routines, substance-related risk, first aid awareness, personal safety, sleep, physical activity, food, hygiene and accessing health support.

Farm-based learning can provide practical opportunities to discuss responsibility, hygiene, risk, caring relationships and wellbeing, but should not be used to avoid direct teaching of sensitive topics when that teaching is needed.

18. SEND and accessibility

Teaching must be accessible to learners with SEND. This may include visual supports, simplified language, repetition, social scenarios, concrete examples, reduced information load, additional processing time and checking understanding.

Staff should recognise that some learners with SEND may be particularly vulnerable to grooming, exploitation, misunderstanding boundaries or literal interpretation. Teaching should build protective understanding without portraying disability or neurodivergence negatively.

19. Equality and inclusion

RSHE should be delivered without discrimination and in a way that supports respect for people with different protected characteristics, family structures, backgrounds and beliefs.

Teaching should be factual and age/development appropriate. Staff should not stigmatise learners because of sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, race, religion/belief, pregnancy/maternity or other protected characteristics.

20. Religion, belief and family values

Alternative Acres recognises that families may hold different religious, cultural and ethical beliefs about relationships and sex.

Staff should treat these views respectfully while ensuring that safeguarding information, equality expectations and factual education are not undermined. Learners should be able to discuss different viewpoints without hostility or discrimination.



21. Sensitive questions

Learners may ask spontaneous questions. Staff should respond calmly and without embarrassment, considering age, development, safeguarding, relevance and whether a private follow-up or specialist source is more appropriate.

Staff should never feel required to answer an inappropriate personal question about their own sexual or relationship history. Professional boundaries apply at all times.

22. Ground rules and safe discussion

Before sensitive discussion, staff should establish clear expectations: respect, no personal pressure to disclose, no naming/gossip about other learners, appropriate language and the limits of confidentiality.

Staff should use distancing techniques such as fictional scenarios where helpful, rather than encouraging learners to reveal personal sexual experiences in a group setting.

23. Disclosures during RSHE

RSHE can prompt disclosures. If a learner shares information suggesting abuse, exploitation, sexual harm or another safeguarding concern, staff must listen, avoid leading questions, not promise secrecy and report promptly to Daun Beresford (DSL) or Gemma Robertson (Deputy DSL).

Safeguarding concerns must be recorded on CPOMS. Immediate danger requires immediate protective action, including 999 where necessary.

24. Staff competence and external resources

Staff should teach only within their competence and use suitable, evidence-informed resources. Sensitive or specialist content may be supported by an appropriately qualified health professional or external provider where this improves quality.

Use of an external visitor does not transfer Alternative Acres' safeguarding responsibility. Content, suitability and safeguarding arrangements should be checked in advance under the Visitors, Volunteers, Contractors and External Speakers Policy.



25. Political impartiality and personal views

Staff should not use RSHE to impose their personal political, religious or moral views. Where topics are contested, teaching should be balanced, factual and appropriate to the learner's understanding.

Staff may explain that people hold different views while reinforcing the law, safeguarding expectations, respect and Alternative Acres' equality responsibilities.

26. Parents/carers

Alternative Acres values constructive communication with parents/carers about a learner's education. Where Alternative Acres is delivering planned RSHE content as part of a commissioned placement, the scope should be transparent and coordinated with the commissioner.

Parents/carers may raise concerns or ask what content is being covered. Alternative Acres will respond respectfully and explain its role, the commissioning arrangements and the safeguarding/educational purpose of the content.

27. Withdrawal from sex education

School-specific statutory rights concerning withdrawal from certain elements of sex education sit within the statutory RSHE framework applying to schools. Because Alternative Acres is a non-school AP provider, it will not independently determine or override a learner's statutory withdrawal arrangements.

Where a learner is school-registered and a parent requests withdrawal, or the learner approaches the age at which statutory guidance provides for opting back in, Alternative Acres will refer the matter to and coordinate with the commissioning school so that the correct legal process is followed.

Safeguarding education, relationships education and relevant health/safety teaching should not be casually removed under the label of sex education.

28. Learner voice

Learners should have opportunities to indicate what they understand, what feels relevant and where they need further support. Learner voice can help staff identify misconceptions and gaps.

Learner preference should shape delivery but does not require staff to avoid essential safeguarding content.



29. Recording and confidentiality

Educational content and progress should be recorded through appropriate learning/placement records. Personal disclosures or safeguarding concerns must be recorded on CPOMS rather than embedded unnecessarily in ordinary educational notes.

Sensitive health/relationship information should be shared only where there is a legitimate educational, safeguarding or legal reason.

30. Monitoring and quality assurance

Alternative Acres will review whether RSHE-related work is age/development appropriate, accessible, safeguarding-informed and aligned with agreed placement outcomes.

Quality assurance may include learner feedback, commissioner discussion, resource review, safeguarding learning and staff training needs.

31. Related policies

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2026/27; Child-on-Child Abuse arrangements; Online Safety and E-Safety Policy 2026/27; Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy 2026/27; Social Media and Professional Online Communication Policy 2026/27; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Policy 2026/27; SEND and Inclusion Policy 2026/27; Behaviour Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy; Drugs/Substance Misuse Policy; Visitors, Volunteers, Contractors and External Speakers Policy 2026/27; Safe Working Practice and Professional Boundaries Policy 2026/27.

32. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner following significant safeguarding learning, a material change in Alternative Acres' curriculum role, commissioner requirements or relevant national guidance.

33. Quick staff guide

Learner asks a sensitive question	Answer factually if appropriate and within competence; use a suitable resource/follow-up if needed.
Learner begins describing personal sexual harm	Stop treating it as a lesson discussion; listen and follow safeguarding procedure.



Learner asks staff about their own sex life	Maintain professional boundary; staff do not need to disclose personal information.
Parent asks to withdraw learner	Do not make an independent legal decision; coordinate with commissioning school and established statutory arrangements.
Learner with SEND does not understand consent	Adapt/reteach using concrete accessible examples; do not simply omit the topic.
Learner describes controlling partner behaviour	Consider teenage relationship abuse/coercive control and consult DSL.
Intimate image involving a child is reported	Do not ask for it to be forwarded or casually view/copy it; follow safeguarding procedure.
External speaker/resource proposed	Check content, suitability and safeguarding arrangements before use.
Safeguarding disclosure	Report promptly to DSL/Deputy DSL and record on CPOMS.
Unsure about content or appropriateness	Pause and seek Head of Provision/DSL or commissioner guidance rather than improvising.