

Education for Choice launch report into abortion education in UK schools

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Guest post by Education for Choice

Our new report '[Abortion Education in the UK: Failing our young people?](#)' reveals the extent of poor-quality education on the topic of abortion.

Some teachers and external speakers delivering lessons on abortion have been found to be using materials which are inaccurate, biased, and often stigmatise abortion as a pregnancy option. For example, the three main anti-abortion groups regularly invited into schools to speak to thousands of young people have all claimed that abortion is linked to an increased risk of breast cancer (despite cancer organisations and respected medical bodies [dismissing this link](#)). Young people [responding to our survey of abortion education](#) reported lessons which were distressing and left them feeling upset and confused. Many felt that abortion was stigmatised, despite the fact that we know a third of women will make this choice in their lifetime. According to one young person:

"My R.E teacher taught about the 'evils' of aborting a foetus that had mental or physical impairments. The woman who came in showed us pictures and videos of late stage abortions...All the experiences seemed designed to put students off abortion or make those who had already had an abortion feel guilty or like murderers."

Unfortunately this is not an isolated incident and a number of schools are known to be using inaccurate or heavily biased information to teach about abortion.

We know, from speaking to those in abortion care services, that the stigma and guilt attached to abortion in these early educational encounters can stay with women for the rest of their lives.

And it's not just abortion which is misrepresented and stigmatised by these groups. We found materials from anti-abortion groups (and teachers' own presentations) which gave incorrect information about contraception. One organisation Lovewise, which claims to speak in hundreds of schools every year, refuses to teach about contraception for those who are unmarried, labelling it 'sinful'. Student materials from the [Right to Life Trust](#) claim that '*the contraceptive pill can be said to keep the female body in a permanently morbid, unnatural state.*' Again, our concern is that young people are not getting accurate medical information and may be dissuaded from using contraception when they are sexually active.

As well as spreading misinformation and stigma around contraception and abortion many of these groups also hold views which are contrary to schools' equality and diversity duties. SPUC, for example, is currently hosting a virulent [campaign against same-sex marriage](#) and the director of the charity states that '*the fundamental argument against gay marriage is that homosexuality is disordered*'. Similarly, Lovewise promises to promote heterosexual marriage as '*the only context in which honouring, fulfilling, secure and healthy sexual activity may take place*' declaring that '*all other contexts, including homosexual activity are damaging to mind, body and spirit*'.

We think it's time schools started paying closer attention to the groups they are inviting in to speak to young people about abortion and ensure that their teaching on this sensitive and relevant subject is impartial, factual and non-judgmental.

To read the full report/executive summary click [here](#).

The [EFC education toolkit](#) is available for further information on best practice in this area.

Education For Choice is the only UK-based project dedicated to enabling young people to make informed choices about pregnancy and abortion. [Find out more about EFC at their website](#)

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