

Sex and the Law

Age Range:

13+, Years 9+,
KS3, KS4

Topics Covered:

Knowledge on the legal
aspects of sexual health

Time:

20 - 40 minutes

Equipment needed:

Copies of the 'sex and the
law' quiz and answers and
the 'Legal or Illegal' quiz
and answers.

An exercise to explore key facts around sex and the law.

Introduction

This exercise uses team work and reflective learning to look at the legal situation and how this affects decisions on starting a sexual relationship.

Exercise

Hand out copies of the sex and the law quiz found on the next page. This contains ten questions with true or false answers to help the group to understand some of the basic facts on how the law relates to sexual activity. The answers are supplied below.

The quiz can be done as a worksheet but can be more fun in teams. Teams can swap papers to mark at the end.

After the quiz ask the group to recap on the main facts they learned from the activity.

Run a values continuum exercise using the 'Legal or Illegal?' sheet on below. This can be run in a few different ways. The simplest is to take a vote for each statement on whether it is legal or illegal followed by a discussion before giving the actual answer.

A more active and complex version is to clear a space in the room and to make one wall as 'legal' and the opposite wall as 'illegal'. You could ask people to move to the end of the room that they think matches their view. This can be interesting as people may be unsure and stand closer by varying degrees to their view. Someone who was unsure but thought it was more likely to be legal might stand closer to the 'legal' end of the room. Basically, the more confident they are in their answer the closer they stand to that end of the room.

After reading out each statement ask people to move into their chosen position. Ask people why they thought the statement was legal or illegal depending on where they have stood. Ask those who have stood in the middle, why they chose their positions.

After discussing the different views, reveal the answers (also shown below).

Summary

Sum up by asking the group to recap on the main laws they have learned about sex and ask why they think these laws have been made and how they might affect someone's decisions around sex and relationships.

Learning Outcomes:

- Young people have increased knowledge of STIs, contraception and unplanned pregnancy.
- Young people have increased awareness of the importance of being ready for a sexual relationship (legal, moral, personal, health etc.)

This supports key concepts for PSHE education in personal wellbeing including:

- Personal identities
- Healthy lifestyles
- Risk
- Relationships

Sex and the Law Quiz

Please mark whether you think each statement is true or false.

1. It is illegal for any man to have sexual intercourse with a 15 year old young woman.

TRUE / FALSE

2. You can get married at 16 as long as your parents or guardians agree.

TRUE / FALSE

3. You can get married at 17 even if your parents or guardians disagree.

TRUE / FALSE

4. A woman needs the consent of two doctors before she can have a legal abortion.

TRUE / FALSE

5. A woman can not have a legal abortion beyond 20 weeks of pregnancy.

TRUE / FALSE

6. If a 19 year old young man has sex with a 16 year old young man he could be prosecuted.

TRUE / FALSE

7. A doctor must always get parental consent before prescribing the pill to anyone under 16.

TRUE / FALSE

8. It is illegal for anyone under the age of 16 to buy condoms from a chemist?

TRUE / FALSE

9. It is illegal for teachers to talk about homosexuality with young people.

TRUE / FALSE

10. 10% of people surveyed admitted to being worried about the amount of time they spent viewing porn.

TRUE / FALSE

Sex and the Law Quiz (Answers)

1. It is illegal for any man to have sexual intercourse with a 15 year old young woman.

True - the age of consent is 16 years old and any man who has sex with a young woman under 16 is at risk of prosecution. Each case though is treated individually. If both people understand their actions, are accessing appropriate support, have both consented and there is no evidence of a large age difference or exploitation then they *may* not be charged. However anyone having sex with a woman under 16 is still technically breaking the law and could be prosecuted. The sexual offences act 2003 makes it illegal for any person in a position of trust such as doctor, social worker, youth worker, teacher etc to have a sexual relationship with any young person under the age of 18 if they work with them.

2. You can get married at 16 as long as your parents or guardians agree.

True.

3. You can get married at 17 even if your parents or guardians disagree.

False - you have to be 18 or over to marry without parental consent however a person aged 16 - 18 can ask a court for approval.

4. A woman needs the consent of two doctors before she can have a legal abortion.

True - the 1967 Abortion Act states that a woman must have the consent of two doctors. They have to agree that continuing the pregnancy would cause greater risk to the women's physical or mental health than termination, or that if the baby was born it would be severely handicapped.

5. A woman can not have a legal abortion beyond 20 weeks of pregnancy.

False- the upper limit for legal abortions is 24 weeks into pregnancy.

6. If a 19 year old young man has sex with a 16 year old young man he could be prosecuted.

False – From the year 2000, the age of consent for homosexual sex is the same as heterosexual, ie.16 years of age. This law is also the same for lesbian relationships.

7. A doctor must always get parental consent before prescribing the pill to anyone under 16.

False - Doctor's can prescribe the pill to under 16's without parental consent as long as they act in the best interest of the girl and are sure that the girl is mature enough to understand the consequences and make her own decision.

8. It is illegal for anyone under the age of 16 to buy condoms from a chemist?

False - there is no minimum age limit for purchasing condoms.

9. It is illegal for teachers to talk about homosexuality with young people.

False - teachers can discuss different sexuality objectively, appropriately and sensitively with young people.

10. 10% of people surveyed admitted to being worried about the amount of time they spent viewing porn.

False- According to a survey by Radio 1 Newsbeat, 1 in 4 (25%) of people surveyed admitted to being worried about the amount of time they spent viewing porn. Adding to this, 1 in 3 users said they had actually missed a deadline or an appointment due to watching porn.

Legal or Illegal?

1. A 17 year old young woman and her 19 year old boyfriend have sex.

Legal, as the young woman is over 16 (the UK age of consent.)

2. A 17 year old young woman starts a sexual relationship with her 24 year old tutor at college.

Illegal, as the tutor is in a 'position of trust' the legal age of consent in this case is 18.

3. A 15 year old woman and her 17 year old boyfriend start a sexual relationship. They had decided it was what they both wanted and went together to a sexual health clinic for advice before they had sex.

Illegal, as technically the young woman is under the age of 16. In practice though as the relationship is consensual and they understand their actions and have accessed appropriate support it is unlikely that a prosecution would be made.

4. A 19 year old man meets a 14 year old girl on Facebook. He sends her e mails and texts every day and these become more and more flirtatious and eventually sexually explicit. He asks to meet up however once they meet he becomes aggressive and demanding. He repeatedly demands sex and starts getting angry when she refuses. They have sex.

Illegal. The young woman is under the age of 16. There is a high chance of police charging the man here as the relationship is unequal with signs of exploitation / online sexual grooming.

5. A doctor prescribes the pill to a 15 year old young woman after a long conversation where he is convinced that she is not at risk and understands what she is doing. Afterwards the doctor calls her parents without the young woman's knowledge to let them know.

Illegal, doctors can not break confidentiality in this situation and do not need parental consent if they are sure that the young woman is mature enough to understand her own decision.

6. Two gay men aged 16 decide to start a sexual relationship.

Legal, the age of consent for gay men is 16, the same as for heterosexual relationships.

7. Two lesbians aged 15 decide to start a sexual relationship.

Illegal, the age of consent for lesbian relationships is 16, the same as for heterosexual relationships. Therefore it is illegal, as they are both underage.

8. A 16 year old young woman starts a sexual relationship with her 30 year old female youth worker.

Illegal, although the young girl is 16, the youth worker has a 'position of trust' and so the age of consent here in this situation is 18.

9. A 15 year old young man tells his 15 year old girlfriend that if she doesn't sleep with him then he will spread sexually explicit rumours about her. He prevents her physically from leaving the room until she eventually has sex with him.

Illegal, the young woman is under 16 and this time even though there is no age difference there is evidence of exploitation and lack of consent.