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### **Into Action resource sheet for Parents and Carers**

### **Some hints and tips for parents and carers if you want to consider talking about sex and relationships education with your child with additional learning needs.**

#### **Plan ahead ...**

- Start when your child is young. It will be less awkward than when they approach puberty if you and they already feel comfortable with the topics.
- School may have some good resources for Sex and Relationship Education, you can ask to have a look at them and maybe borrow or photocopy some useful bits. Reading up will help you anticipate issues and start early, for example just playing a game going through the laundry basket with your child and talking about which parts of the body each item covers will be a big help when later you want to start talking about and naming private body parts.
- Don't set aside a special day or time to talk about sexual matters. *'This is the birds and the bees talk'*. 'Little and often' is the best approach, even small things like saying *'well done you closed the door, you know having a shower is private now you are a big boy'* will help.
- Think ahead and have a few sentences and responses planned for when an inappropriate action, word or question comes up in public, *'that's a private part of the body, can you remember a private room where it's ok to do that?'* *'great question, it's a growing up question and I'd like to talk to you about that in a private place'* or perhaps they need to be shown a symbol for private, do they have one and does it get carried round and used?
- Try to create a climate at home where children can ask about sexual matters e.g. a storyline on a TV soap can be a good way to chat about the issues.

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### Start talking ...

- Answer questions simply and naturally. Try to be honest. If you are asked something you don't know, just say so. Maybe look up the answer together. A handy phrase for awkward questions at inappropriate moments is 'What a good question, let's talk about it when we get home/in private' and do!
- If your child asks a difficult question, ask them some questions back before you start an explanation. This will give you a bit of time and help you to know how much knowledge they have already. Only talk about a bit at a time, don't be tempted to rush into telling them everything you think they need to know about sex at once.
- Seize the moment and when your child asks a question have a go and see if you can find a few simple sentences to respond with. If your child is asking it probably means they do not feel too embarrassed about it and if you can respond in an unembarrassed way, even briefly, it helps them ask more questions and helps you to find a way into talking.
- Sharing your views, values and advice is very important. There are many messages from peers and particularly from TV, films and the internet which can seem like the only view and the truth to a young person unless their parents show otherwise.
- Talk to other parents with children with similar needs. These are issues that every parent faces at some time or another. It may be that everyone needs some advice and that school, parents support groups or other organisations can help by offering space to talk, training or access to resources.

### Stay calm and remember ...

- Inappropriate behaviour or sexual activity isn't encouraged by talking about sexual matters. In fact research shows just the opposite. When children have good information and someone to talk to they can find out things in a safe way and are more likely to make good choices.
- It is not easy for any parent to talk to their own children about these issues. But when young people are asked who they most want to hear this kind of information from, a majority say that they want their parents to talk to them about it.
- It doesn't have to be perfect, just starting conversations about these topics will help and over time it will get easier.
- Keep it light and fun where possible. It's very easy to get caught up in how dangerous and scary things are but there are lots of positives about growing up too, there needs to be a balance.

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