



Raising champions

With your help, acet UK and the ACET family is raising champions to stand up for, educate, and protect children and young people in over 15 countries.

Over our 32 years, tens of thousands of youth workers, parents, teachers, peer educators, health workers, and church and community leaders have been trained and equipped to reach literally millions of young people. Your support has made this possible.

And 2020 is no different. Despite the huge challenges of COVID19, your support has been amazing as we continue on our mission to raise champions so that many more children and young people can be supported in making informed, safe, healthy decisions about relationships, sex - and their futures.

This issue of our newsletter celebrates just some of those champions.

Parents' rights to withdraw their child from sex education

Some of you have been in touch, concerned about the change to parents' rights in regards to RSE, so here's a summary of the change.

Parents' right to withdraw a child from sex education does still stand but, from three terms before their 16th birthday, a child can overrule their parents' wishes and receive sex education for one of those three terms. As 16 is the age of consent, the government believes that a child should have the opportunity to access sex education before this age.

Parents cannot, however, withdraw their child from **relationships or health education**. Withdrawal from sex education only may become more complex once a child is in secondary school, as aspects of RSE are likely to be integrated into a single topic so that young people learn about sex in the context of relationships - which we believe is important.

Statutory relationships and sex education (RSE) has arrived!

After years of consultation, the new RSE guidance is finally statutory. The guidance details learning outcomes but leaves the decision of what materials and approaches are used to the school itself. We encourage you to support your local school as they implement the changes. Many teachers feel unprepared and ill-equipped so if you know of a local school in this position, please do tell them about us as we may be able to help with teacher training.

The guidance acknowledges that 'parents are the first teachers of their children' and makes it clear that schools must consult with parents and communicate what will be taught and when. If you are a parent or carer, has your school been in touch about their RSE curriculum yet? It's a great opportunity to have your voice heard and make real impacts on the RSE your child experiences.

We have found that going to a school in a spirit of collaboration and support is the best way to make a positive impact. Even if there are significant differences between a school's suggested approach and your parent's preferred approach, finding common ground and building from there seems to be the most effective way to make positive change. We'd love to hear how you get on!



Aneni, a 20 year old peer educator

“ Before I joined the Shining Star Project, I had no hope. I was living with an abusive uncle and spending most of my time on the streets. I didn't complete my education as I couldn't pay school fees after my parents divorced, so I was earning money through sex work and selling hairpieces. **Shining Star changed my life.** They saw my interest in the hair and beauty trade and sent me to Beauty Therapy School. Also, I learned how to look after my health by having one partner and getting tested for HIV and STIs. As a peer educator, I can help others learn about and protect themselves from HIV and AIDS too. **I am now more confident and believe that I can achieve anything.** ”



Sexual health peer educators

8,802 condoms were distributed in the first 6 months of this year, which was highly important during the lockdown period as there was a condom shortage and price increase due to the closure of sexual health clinics and international supply chain disruptions, leading to an increase in STIs.

This year has proved challenging for the Shining Star Project. COVID19 reached Zimbabwe in March and the government imposed a national lockdown. However, the work of the Shining Star Project is more important than ever during this disruptive time as more girls and young women are turning to sex work to survive.

In the first 6 months of 2020, the project has trained and mentored 33 new girls and women, engaged in sex work in Bulawayo and Hwange, as peer educators. They have joined 40 current peer educators to become change-makers in their communities.

Brilliantly, the 73 peer educators have reached 436 sex workers with vital sexual health information. These peer educators have also received business training, offering them pathways out of sex work.

As a result of the peer educator programme, 280 women were referred for HIV testing, 6 treated for STIs and 73 tested for cervical cancer. 2 ladies tested positive for HIV, and 3 were diagnosed with cervical cancer; and were referred to partner clinics for support.

15 peer educators who are living with HIV attended 2 support group sessions to encourage one another on treatment adherence. Peer support was especially important in protecting their mental health during the lockdown as, sadly, many experienced breaches of their privacy when collecting their antiretroviral medication.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Workshop

The 53 peer educators in Bulawayo attended a GBV workshop led by lawyers and police officers to address issues of violence and stigma directed towards girls and women engaged in sex work.

The training equipped them with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves from GBV and seek necessary legal support.

THE NEED:

84% of those who attended the training said they had suffered abuse in their work.

Community leaders and student peer educators

We CELEBRATE that there have been no cases of teenage pregnancy in ACET DRC's partner schools this year, compared to 15 in 2018. This is testament to the commitment of the teachers in a country where 27% of girls becomes pregnant aged 15-19 - the 7th highest rate in the world.

Despite the barriers of COVID19 restrictions, ACET DRC have been able to innovate and pivot their programmes to ensure that they still reach as many young people as possible.

5,616 young people participated in interactive life skills and sexual and reproductive health lessons led by trained ACET educators during the first 6 months of 2020. Key topics were puberty, self-esteem, healthy relationships, and goal setting for the future.

Despite school closures, the education programme was established in 5 new schools, in addition to the 20 previous schools, equipping students with skills and resilience that proved crucial during the lockdown and will continue to help their development in the recovery period.

ACET DRC Life Skills clubs provide leadership opportunities for students to become peer educators and champion good sexual health. The 120 existing peer educators have remained dedicated to the programme and 44 new peer educators have been recruited this year. Their input has been instrumental in delivering important COVID19 messages to their peers in accordance with social distancing guidelines.

Listening Centres

Listening centres are run by school chaplains trained by ACET DRC, providing one-to-one pastoral support, counselling and advice on sexual and reproductive health.

Over 990 children were counselled in the first 6 months of the year.

In a culture where topics such as sex and mental health are not talked about openly, this is an especially important service for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

15 counsellors attended a week long training event at the start of the year, to ensure that high quality counselling is provided and that safeguarding practices are implemented.

“ Life was hard because I had to take on manual labour and engage in sex work to pay my school fees.


I was so desperate I thought I would not make it in life and had suicidal thoughts. My life was saved when the new chaplain came to my school and introduced the programme where we discuss healthy relationships.

I learnt that it is dangerous to have unprotected sex. I went to get a HIV test and know how to protect myself.

I also learned how to set goals for the future and I have decided that I want to become a construction engineer to help my country. ”

“ The most useful part of the training was learning what to do if a client discloses or tells me something personal they are going through, for example, abuse. I know how to report and deal with concerns and how to look out for signs and symptoms of abuse. ”

Bwakya Primary School Chaplain



Peer educator
and club member,
Rosa tells her story



NIGERIA



Parents and carers

Early this year, ACET Nigeria trained 24 parents as peer educators to improve parent-child communication skills through their Better Parenting course.

This engaging course provides parents with the skills for positive parenting and to teach other parents to support and encourage their children in reaching their full potential.

Some of the trained parents were able to form Better Parenting forums in their communities before lockdown, which reached 30 couples and indirectly impacted 62 children.

“ Before, my home and family life were not peaceful due to lack of understanding between myself and my wife, which affected the health of my children and their education. After I attended the Better Parenting Forum, I learned that I needed to work to create a strong family and the ACET Nigeria team supported me to do this by engaging my wife and me in activities such as discussions and eating together. I learned that I need to see everyone's point of view and never commit violence. Now I am a focussed father to my children and instead of arguing with my wife, we discuss family issues together and support one another. ”



Chimamanda's story

BELARUS



“ I loved this event! I used to attend lectures on drug use prevention, but the information was always provided in a repetitive and boring way.

Here, parents had a chance to take part in discussing the problem, to have a debate, to watch an interesting video.

An active interaction was established between the educator and the audience, and also between the parents themselves.

I realize now that family is the place where the child should be taught values that will continue to guide him or her in the future.

I think that today it became more clear to us. ”

Natalia Alexandrovna, mother, School No.5, Mogilev

ACET Belarus delivered 21 parent workshops on relationships and health topics during the first six months of the 2019-2020 academic year, reaching 712 parents and carers.

The **Mother Buddy** scheme run by ACET Uganda involves women, who are living with HIV, providing support for pregnant women.

The Mother Buddies help the women access antenatal care services, and, using mobile phone apps, educate them on how to improve their own health as well as their babies', including how to prevent mother to child HIV transmission.

The **Mama Save groups** formed 2 years ago are now made up of around 85 Mother Buddies and their clients.

Membership allows mothers quick access to loans to improve their household income and also improve their food security.

54 have been able to start small, income-generating activities which are envisaged to grow and strengthen the economic welfare of the members.



20 **Papa Camps** in Kitgum each worked with 10 men this year, to support their wives during pregnancy, health visits, delivery, and breastfeeding.

The camps have also played a great role in responding to gender-based violence which increased because of COVID19. They took on the role of mediation between partners in households that had witnessed gender-based violence. This is such a positive, if somewhat unforeseen, outcome!



UGANDA

This year the successful Mother Buddies project was rolled out into a new area and 25 new ladies were trained and equipped with the necessary tools (e.g. mobile phones).

They were in operation for a short period before being closed during lockdown then, thankfully, there was a slight easing of restrictions and they were able to go into the communities to offer help and support.

The Mother Buddies became a very vital lifeline especially when a night curfew was declared due to COVID19. The Mother Buddies were able to support 37 pregnant women during this period as they were allowed to walk and keep checking on them, and were also able to ensure 11 safe deliveries (at health centres) during the period. This is fantastic news and a point of great celebration!

Living with HIV in a village deep in the Budaka District, Alice did not have the privilege of having someone to walk with her and educate her about her pregnancy and how to take good care of her baby.

With her sixth child already infected with HIV, Alice says meeting a Mother Buddy in her seventh pregnancy saved both her and her baby's lives!

Alice attended the recommended health visits, delivered her baby at the health facility, and carefully followed the breastfeeding guidelines.

Now with a bouncing baby boy in her hands, Alice couldn't be more grateful. Her Mother Buddy continues to help Alice with family planning and encouraged her to join the Mama Save group.

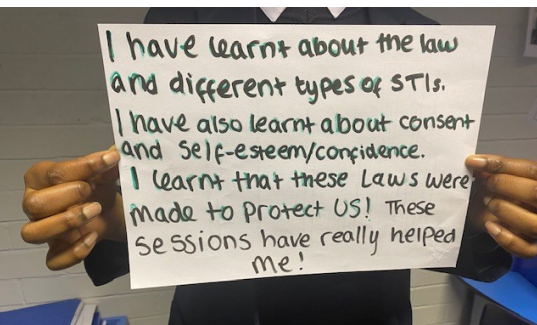
UK

It has changed my mindset towards
Sex and relationships.

RSE educators

"Before these lessons, I would have found it ok for the person I am with to send me naked pictures of themselves but now that has changed."

Year 11 student



"I particularly liked the story about boundaries. The students have benefitted by getting a sense of what a healthy relationship consists of. It certainly made the students think."

Year 9 teacher

We are so grateful to all of you who donated this year! Coupled with emergency funding due to COVID19 and some generous grants, acet UK has been able to reach even more young people in this academic year than we did last year, despite the challenges of lockdown and school closures!

2,365 young people in London took part in engaging relationships and sex education to support them in achieving better health outcomes. Evaluation of the lessons through feedback forms showed that the students increased their knowledge, developed their relational skills, and changed negative attitudes as a result of our interaction with them.

For example, 64 Year 10 boys had a lesson with us about the impact of pornography. Afterwards, 100% of the boys said they were more aware of the issues surrounding pornography and one told us that, as a result of the lesson, he had told a friend to **"stop watching porn!"** We are thrilled that the young people we teach are sharing important messages with their peers as a direct result of what they learn through the Esteem programme.

With no in-person access to students in the summer term due to lockdown, we swiftly adapted our lessons for online delivery. Sadly, due to the poverty and deprivation in Southwark where most of our schools work is carried out, many students did not have suitable devices at home to be able to access the sessions. We were, however, able to provide 294 students in Westminster with online lessons during this time., which is fantastic news!

Our Esteem network who are trained and supported by our team continues to grow. There are now 192 educators in the network who together reached 37,995 young people in the 2019-2020 academic year!

"This online Zoom session has been the best out of all the other external online lessons that have been delivered at our school so far since we went online due to COVID19. The lesson went well and the girls were a lot more engaged than I expected them to be. As always, an excellent lesson."

Head Of Life Skills

We have set ourselves up to run live video link lessons to schools this Autumn term. This means that we can either teach in person, depending on the situation at the time, or through the video link if external educators are not allowed into school.

As well as delivering RSE sessions in schools in Cheshire and London respectively, acet UK's Gareth and Paul lead our teacher training and accredited RSE courses, equipping other educators to provide RSE sessions for young people in their community.



RSE trainers

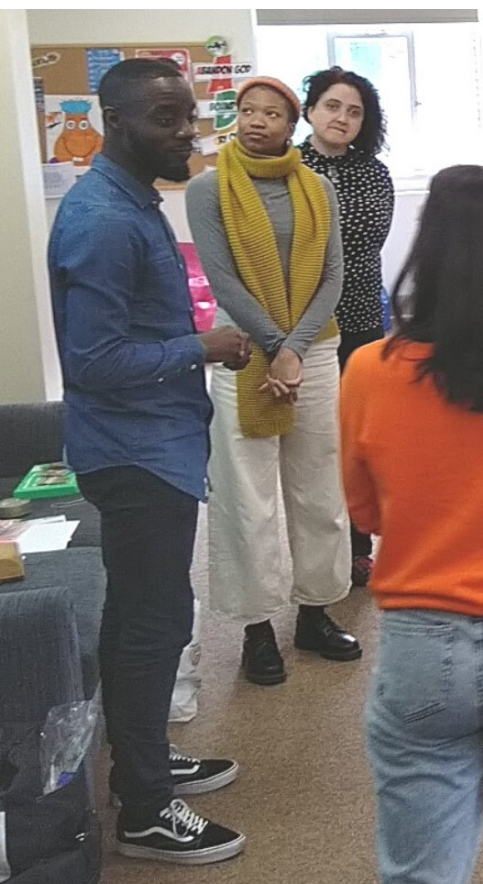
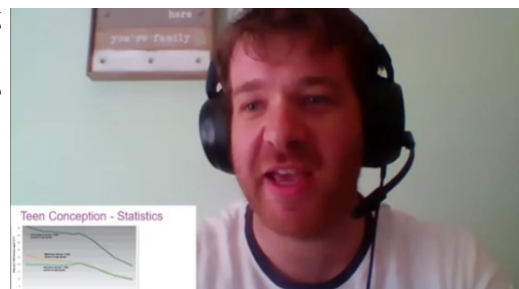
Paul is acet UK's accredited RSE training coordinator for London and the South, and the schools' worker for London. Before working for acet UK, Paul was working with young people across a spectrum of ages, contexts, and capacities.

Paul has a wealth of experience of working in secondary schools having delivered RSE lessons to thousands of young people. Paul holds a level 3 award in education and training, and runs training for teachers, youth workers, and counsellors in RSE delivery. He also pastors in his local church.

acet UK's Esteem network director, Gareth was originally trained as a JNC validated youth worker before moving into teaching relationships and sex education. Gareth has a decade of experience teaching RSE, is an accredited trainer, and is currently finishing a Masters in Public Health.

Dividing his time between leading our training delivery, providing RSE sessions for young people, and developing RSE resources, Gareth also supports the Esteem network of RSE educators trained by us.

One way he has supported our network members during lockdown is to run regular online skills workshops. These have helped members explore and practise examples of software and techniques to enable them to provide online relationships and sex education when and where needed.



“ Gareth and Paul made the day very useful and the delivery of the session was excellent – a good mix of sharing their own knowledge and allowing us to discuss things and do activities. ”

“ Gareth is extremely knowledgeable and had the perfect manner for training. He navigated the online training elements really effectively. Great sharing of resources too. ”

“ Paul was brilliant, relaxed and very knowledgeable. I liked the ideas of how to deliver the sessions to students using a variety of media and resources. ”

“ It was clear and understandable and great interaction with all attendees. Gareth is passionate and enthusiastic about the delivery of RSE which has a great knock on affect. ”



Despite the challenges of lockdown, the training side of our work has flourished - partly because we have been able to provide our courses online.

Over the past academic year, **81 educators** have participated in our accredited training courses, with **38** of those attending online, and **63** opting to do the level 4 accreditation in "Teaching relationships and sex education."

In addition, **39 teachers** from 6 schools accessed our online teacher training in the summer term.

Our first 'lockdown' course was in early April and we moved very quickly to make the relevant changes to ensure the interactive nature of our training could work online.

One of the huge benefits of delivering training online has been the wider audiences we have been able to reach. In-person training was a barrier for some youth workers due to cost of travel and accommodation, health issues, and family commitments, but online delivery has opened up our reach which is fantastic! We have so far had youth workers joining us from the Isle of Man, Scotland, Germany, Slovakia, South Africa, the USA, and Egypt.

“ The facilitators delivered the training in such a beautiful way that empowers people to educate and spread a positive message about relationships and sex.

It not only raises confidence, but it comes with practical tools, exercises, and methods on how to make a workshop engaging and educational. ”

“ As well as having more knowledge in each area, the training has shown me how to think outside the box and how to focus on meeting young people's needs.

The training had a good balance of developing knowledge and developing the teaching/facilitating skills to be able to use it effectively with young people.

Consequently, my confidence has grown in both of these. We have been given tips and examples of best practice throughout and this was also modelled by the training facilitator. ”

“ So much was covered in good depth with clear applications. Very interesting and easy to engage with.

It is very much focused on benefitting the young people and I feel that this course will rarely, if ever, fail to produce high-quality RSE educators.

As someone new to this it was invaluable, but I feel it would also have huge benefits for people who have done some RSE delivery as it helps educators become more well-rounded, balanced, and inclusive. ”

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