

October 2018

# Report Review of Personal and Social Education

## Online Engagement with Children and Young People



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# Personal and Social Education Review

In its Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027, the Scottish Government committed to a review of Personal and Social Education (PSE); the role of pastoral guidance in local authority schools; and services for counselling for children and young people. The review is taking place in three phases.

Phase 1, a review of communications and initial exploration of PSE teaching resources, was completed in August 2017 and the outcome published on the Scottish Government's website.

Phase 2 was a thematic inspection of delivery of PSE in schools and early learning and childcare settings across Scotland, carried out by Education Scotland.

Phase 3 includes engagement with key stakeholders, including local government organisations, third sector bodies and young people, to inform further development of the final report and suite of recommendations. To assist with this, the Scottish Government appointed Young Scot to develop and distribute a questionnaire to young people at secondary schools across Scotland.

## Executive Summary

Between 10<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, Young Scot gathered insight into young people's thoughts and experiences of the delivery of PSE in schools through a national online survey. The survey was hosted on the Young Scot Rewards platform using Young Scot's preferred third-party tool SurveyGizmo. The survey received 401 fully completed responses.

### 1.1 Survey Results

1. Just over a third of respondents (35%) rated their experience of PSE as being *Somewhat helpful*. There are noticeable differences between year groups. Around a third of people in S1 (35%) and S2 (33%) rated their experience as *Very helpful*. A fifth (20%) of respondents in S4 and around a quarter of respondents in S5 (25%) and S6 (23%) rated their experience as *Not at all helpful*.
2. The highest number of respondents (59%) stated that PSE is not given the same importance in school as other subjects. This opinion differs across year groups, with 86% of respondents in S1 stating that it is given the same importance compared to 16% of S6 respondents.
3. When asked why the subject is not viewed to be as important as other subjects, the most commonly selected reason was *Lessons are not structured* (52%). This was followed by *No say on what we learn* (43%) and *Teacher not always available to take lessons* (39%). The least commonly selected reason was *Teacher not confident in taking lesson* (12%), and 39% selected *Other*.
4. Over half of the respondents (59%) stated that their school does not regularly ask them what topics they would like them to be covered as part of PSE lessons. Those that responded *Yes* (12%) or *Sometimes* (29%) stated that their views and ideas are most often gathered *Through questionnaires/surveys* (47%).
5. Over 60% of participants (62%) stated that their school does not regularly ask them for feedback on PSE lessons. Those that responded *Yes* (13%) or *Sometimes* (26%) stated that their thoughts are most often gathered *Through questionnaires/surveys* (62%).

6. Around half of the respondents (52%) stated that some PSE lessons were delivered by people who do not work in their school day to day. The topic that these people most helped with was *Substance misuse* (67%), followed by *Planning for choices and changes* (58%), *Relationships, sexual health and parenthood* (57%), and *Physical activity and health* (54%).
7. A fifth of respondents stated that senior or ex pupils have supported the delivery of their PSE lessons. Of these, 81% stated that they found this either *Somewhat helpful* (37%), *Very helpful* (30%) or *Extremely helpful* (14%). There were differences between year groups, with 46% of S1 respondents selecting *Extremely helpful*. The highest number of respondents in S2 (46%) and a third of S3 respondents (33%) selected *Very helpful*.
8. When asked which topic areas were covered in most detail in PSE lessons, *Substance misuse* was ranked highest by the largest number of respondents (34%). *Planning for choices and changes* was ranked lowest by largest number of respondents (37%).
9. Almost half of the survey respondents (49%) gave the highest ranking to *Planning for choices and changes* as the topic area that they would like to see an increased focus on in PSE lessons.
10. S4, S5 and S6 students were asked if they would like to see more options for accreditation in subjects covered by PSE, with 41% stating that they did. Of the S4 respondents, most ranked *Volunteering Skills* (32%) as their highest preference most S5 respondents ranked *Volunteering Skills* and *Personal Development* as their highest preference (26%). *Personal Development* was ranked as the highest preference for accreditation by 29% of S6 respondents.
11. When asked if there was anything else that respondents would like to share about PSE, 141 individuals typed a response. The high majority of these were a negative comment (80%), with some positive (11%). Fifteen respondents made a suggestion to improve PSE within schools. A summary of these responses can be found on pages 13-15.

## 1.2 Important Notes

### *Format of survey*

The survey comprised a variety of single choice, multiple choice and ranking questions. Three of these questions included an “*Other*” option, where respondents were able to free type a response. The final question was a text box where respondents could freely type any further thoughts that they had around PSE.

### *Segmentation by type of school*

The survey asked young people to specify whether they attended a Local Authority or Private school. Of 401 respondents, 15 stated that they attended Private school. Given the lower response rate results have not been segmented.

### *Non-pertinent responses*

Some responses have been labelled as ‘non-pertinent’. These were typed responses that were deemed either overly explicit or not understandable.

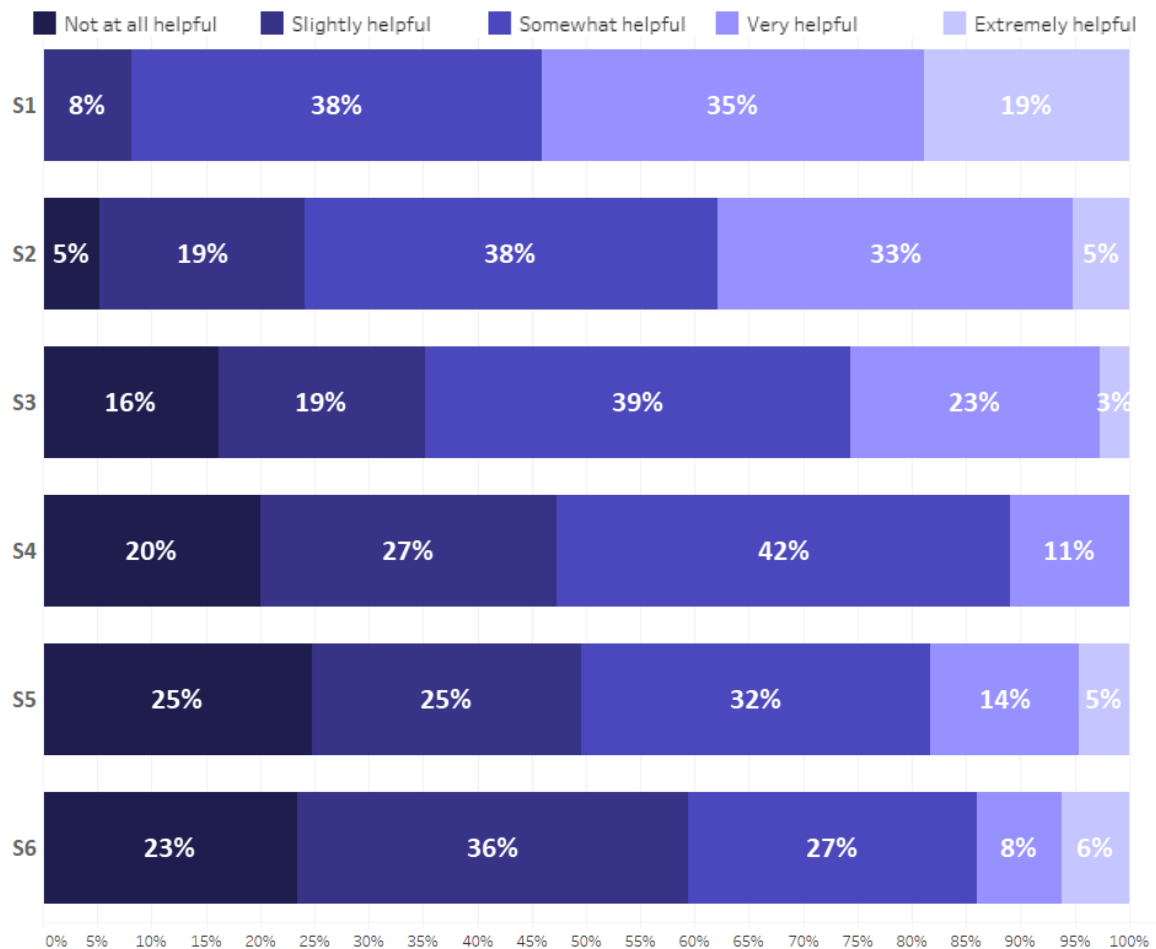
## Survey Results

1.3 On a scale of extremely helpful to not at all helpful, how has your experience of PSE been at high school?

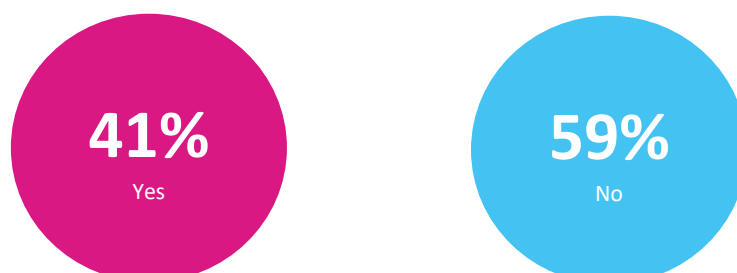
The highest number of respondents rated their experience of PSE as being *Somewhat helpful*.



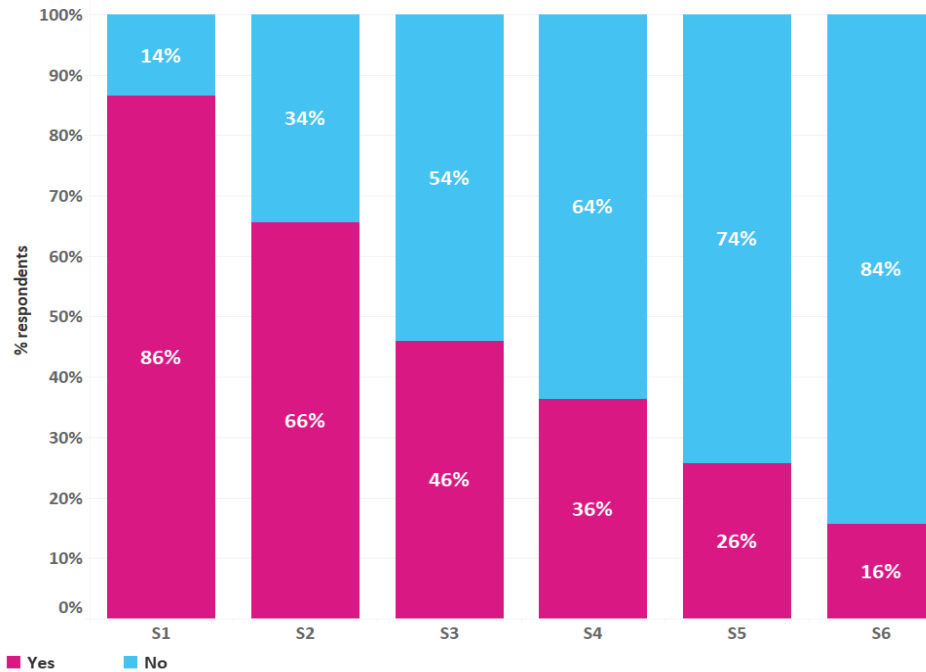
There are noticeable differences between year groups, with older pupils stating that they found the subject less helpful. Around a third of people in S1 and S2 rated their experience as *Very helpful*. A fifth of respondents in S4 and around a quarter of respondents in S5 and S6 rated their experience as *Not at all helpful*.



1.4 Do you feel PSE is given the same importance as the other subjects at school?



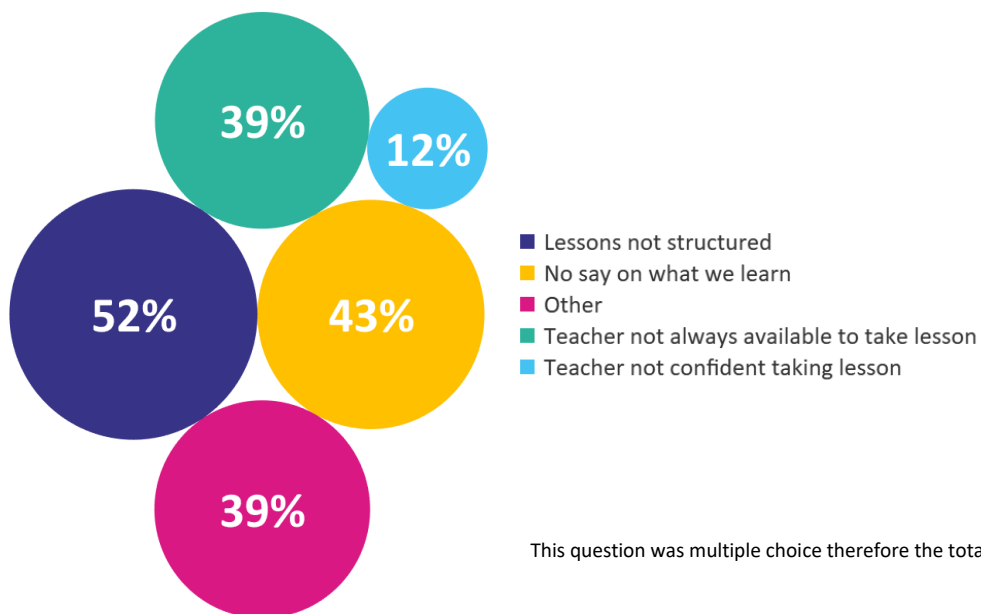
This result varies depending on year group, with more younger pupils stating that the subject is given the same importance as other subjects compared to older pupils.



### 1.5 If no, why?

238 respondents selected *No* to the previous question.

Most people stated that PSE lessons were not given the same importance as other subjects because the lessons themselves are not structured.



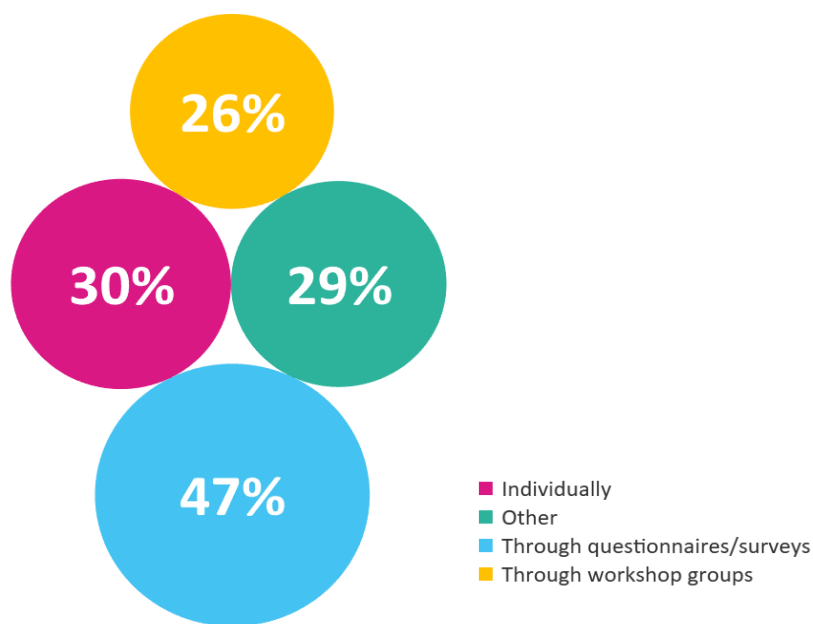
### 1.6 Does your school regularly ask you what you would like to be covered as part of the PSE lesson?



### 1.7 How do they seek your views/ideas?

165 respondents answered *Yes* (117) or *Sometimes* (48) to the previous question.

Nearly half of respondents stated that views and ideas were gathered via questionnaires/surveys.



This question was multiple choice therefore the total will not add up to 100%

Of the 48 respondents who had selected *Other*, 41 provided a written response.

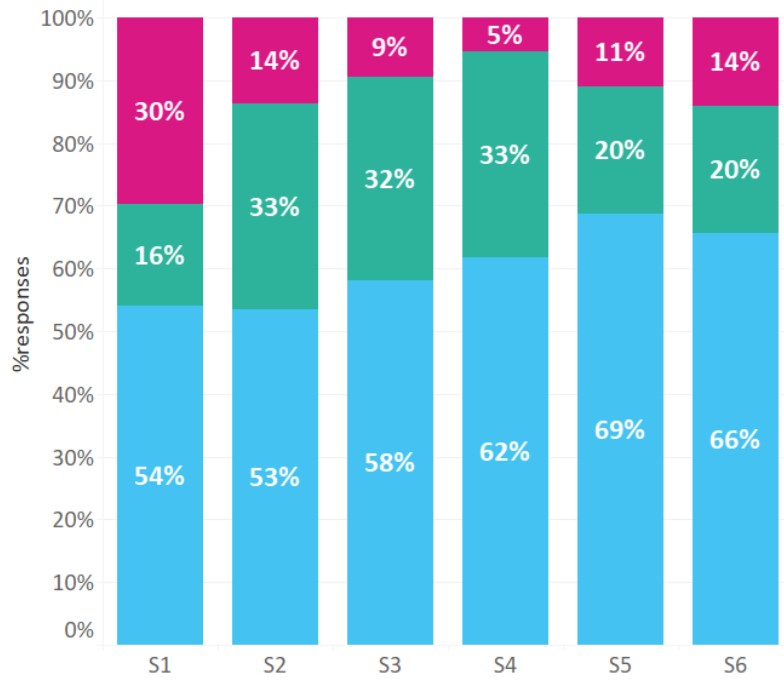
Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
Other	Asking whole class within lessons	30
	Anonymous suggestions	5
	Voting	1
	Forum	1
	Don't know	1
	Asking in registration	1
	Face to Face	1
	They don't ask	1

### 1.8 Does your school ask you to feedback on PSE lessons?

The highest number of respondents stated that they are not asked for feedback on PSE lessons, with just over a quarter selecting *Sometimes*.

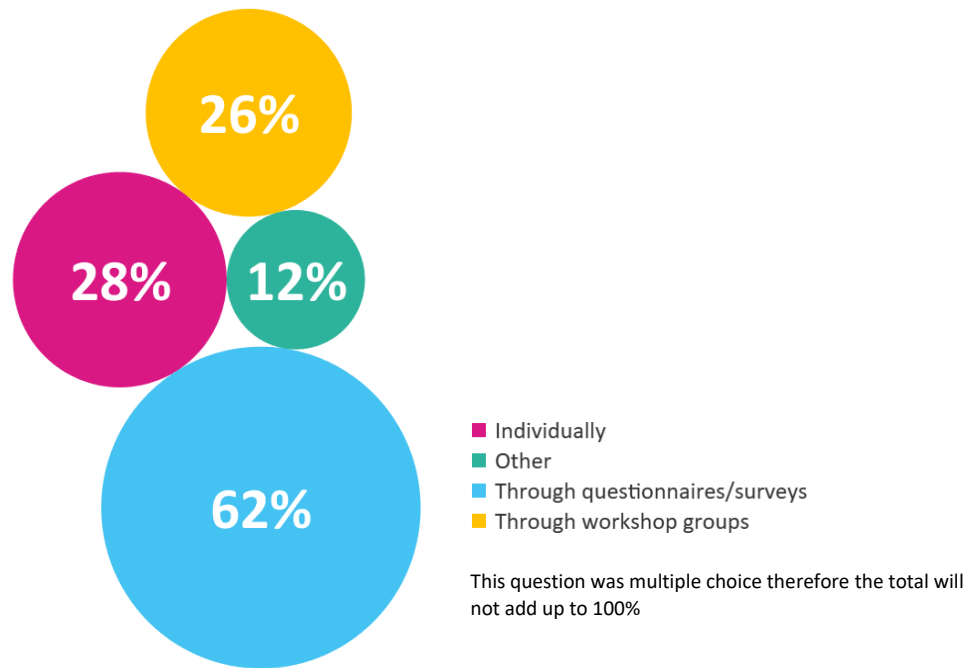


There is variance between year groups; younger pupils stated *Yes* or *Sometimes* more than older pupils.



### 1.9 How do they seek your thoughts?

154 respondents answered *Yes* (50) or *Sometimes* (104) to the previous question. Again the most selected response was *through questionnaires/surveys*.



Of the 18 respondents who had selected *Other*, 14 provided a written response.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
Other	Asking whole class within lessons	11
	They don't ask	1
	Don't know	1
	Anonymous suggestions	1



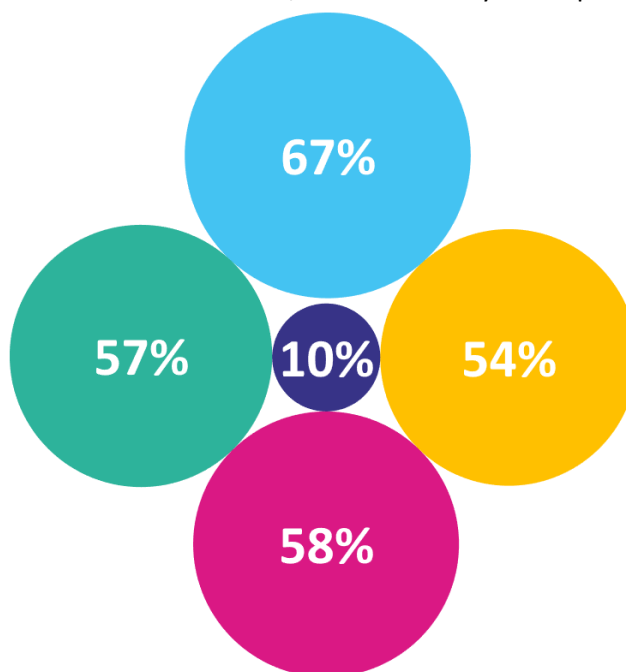
1.10 Are some of your PSE lessons delivered by other people who do not work in your school day to day?



1.11 What topics did they help learning on?

208 respondents answered Yes to the previous question.

The topic that was selected most was *substance misuse*, with a relatively even spread between the other options offered.



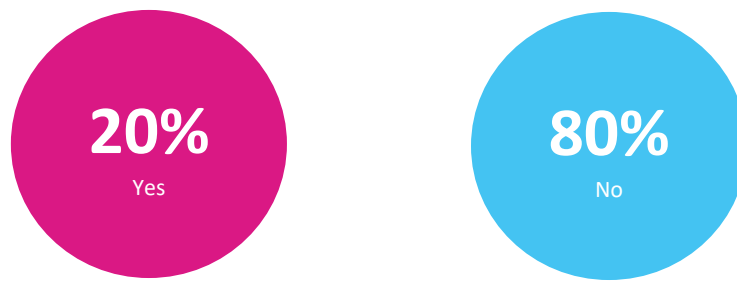
- Substance misuse e.g. drugs, alcohol, addiction
- Relationships, sexual health and parenthood e.g. sexual health, sexual consent, parenthood
- Planning for choices and changes e.g. life skills, finances
- Physical activity and health e.g. mental health, bullying, internet safety
- Other

This question was multiple choice therefore the total will not add up to 100%

Of the 20 respondents who had selected *Other*, 15 provided a written response. Three of the responses were deemed non-pertinent and are included in the Appendices.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
Other	Careers and Employment	3
	Mental health	2
	LGBT issues (sexuality)	1
	Disability issues	1
	LGBT issues (gender)	1
	Sexual advertisement	1
	Skill (driving)	1
	Housing	1
	Domestic abuse	1

1.12 Have senior or ex pupils supported the delivery of PSE lessons?

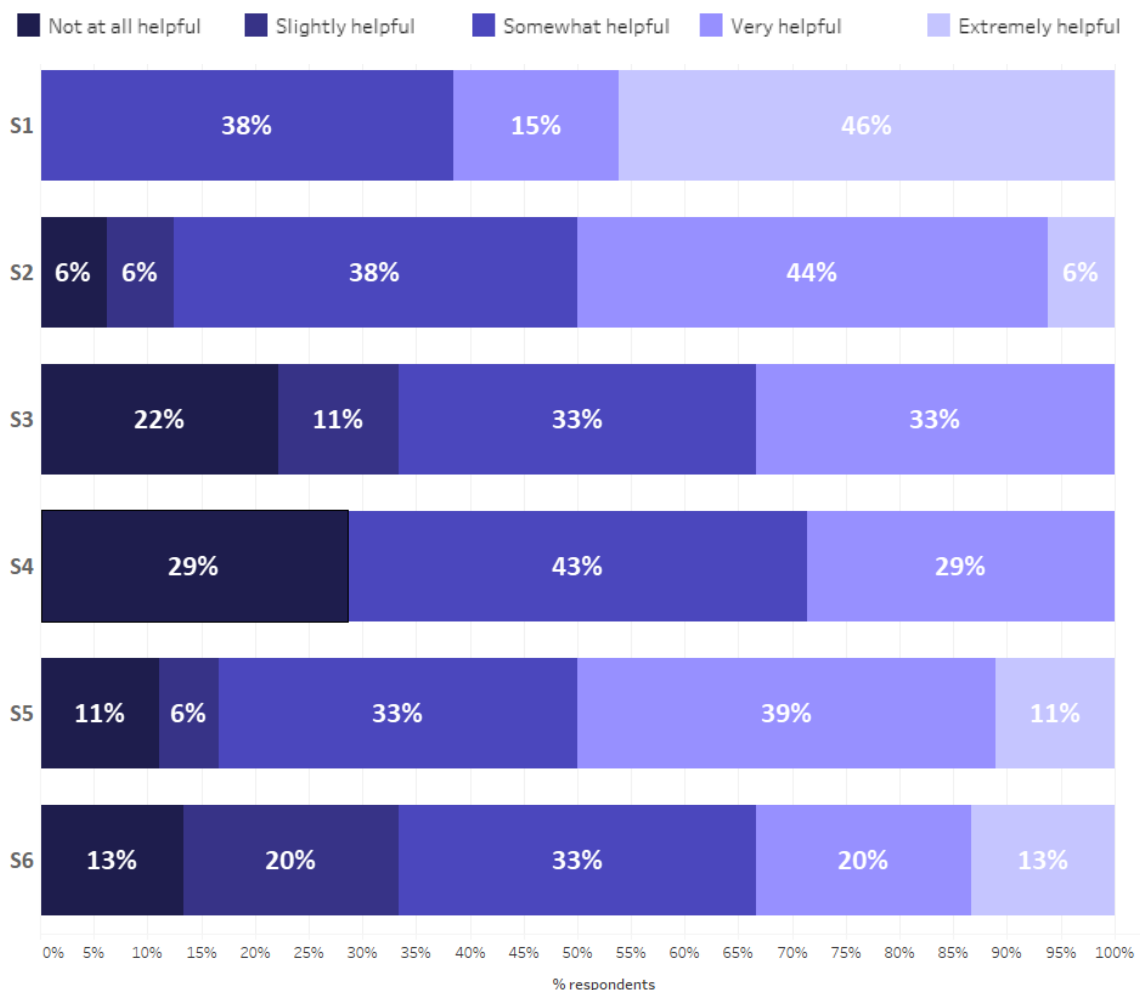


1.13 If yes, how helpful did you find this?

Of the 79 respondents who answered Yes to the previous question, the majority (81%) rated senior or ex pupils delivering PSE lessons as *somewhat, very, or extremely helpful*.

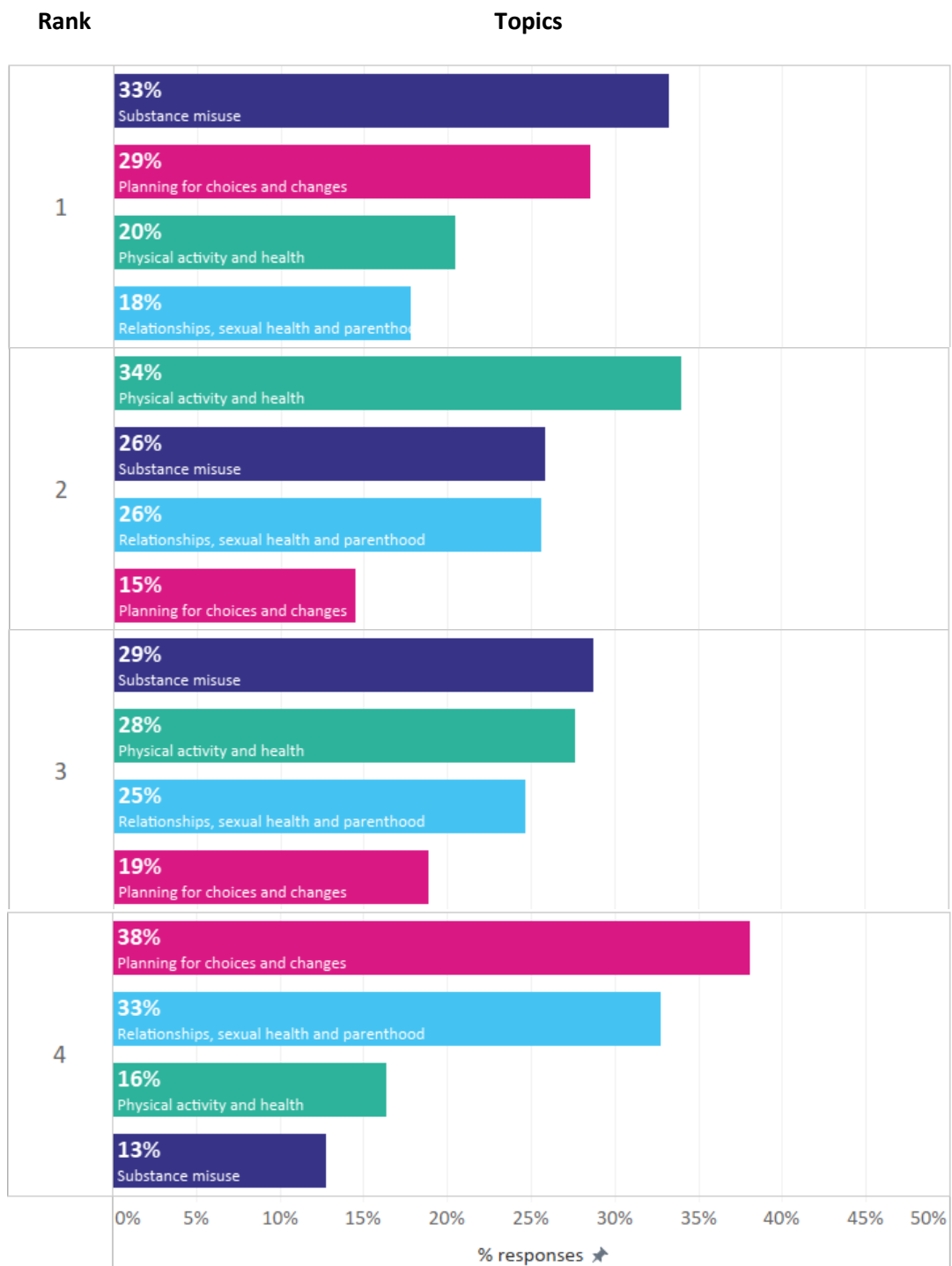


There is variance between year groups; more S1 and S2 pupils rated having ex or senior pupils supporting the delivery of PSE as *very or extremely helpful* than older pupils.



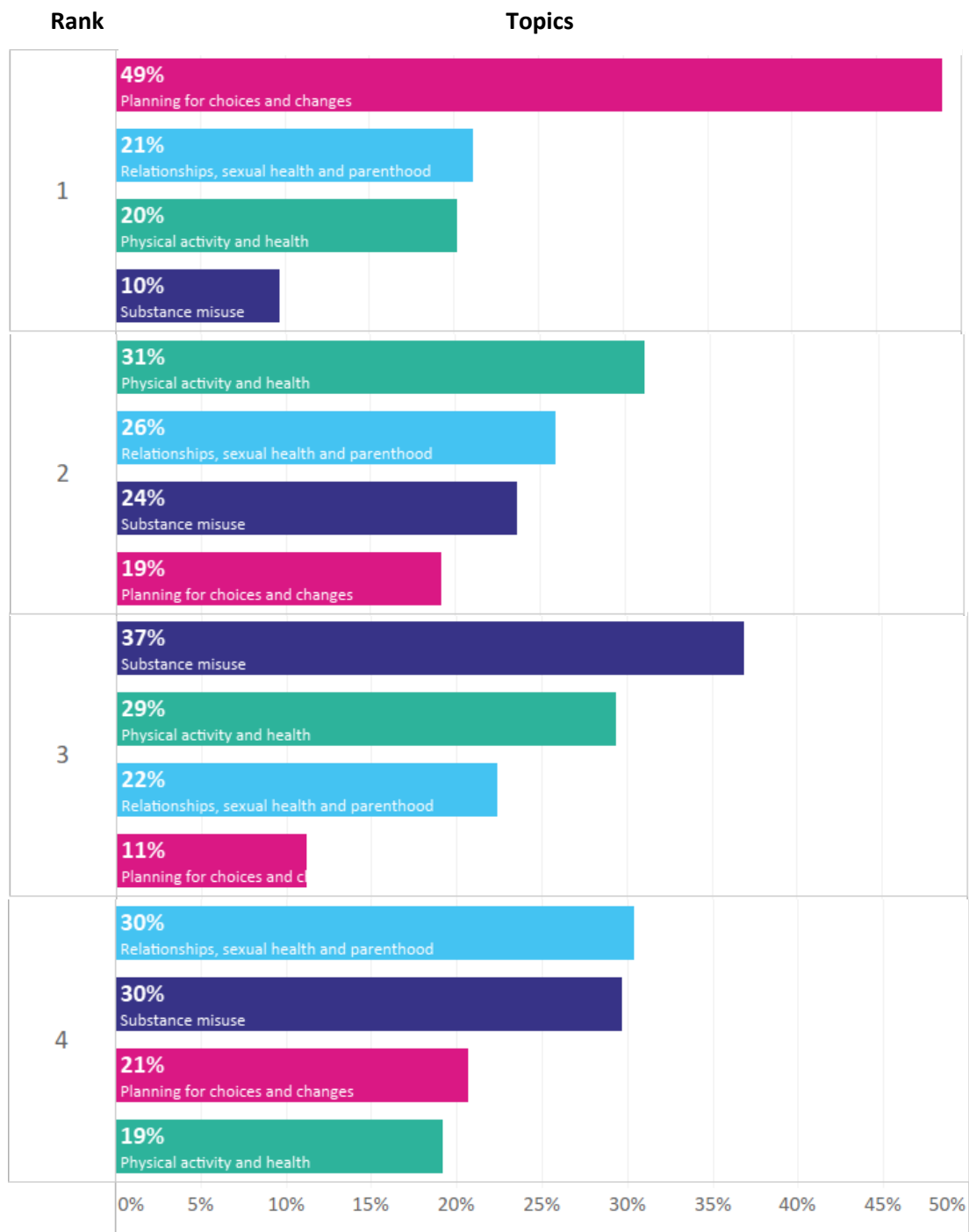
1.14 Which topic areas have been covered in most detail in your PSE lessons?

Respondents were asked to rate four topic areas in order from 1 to 4, with 1 representing the *most covered* and 4 the *least covered*. *Substance misuse* was the topic that was rated as being **most covered** by the highest number of respondents. *Planning for choices and changes* was the topic that was rated as being **least covered** by the highest number of respondents.



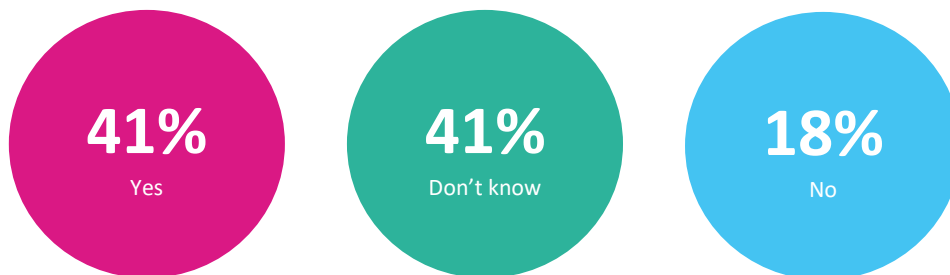
### 1.15 Which topic areas would you like to see an increased focus on in your PSE lessons?

Respondents were asked to rate four topic areas in order from 1 to 4, with 1 representing the *top priority* and 4 the *lowest priority*. *Planning for choices and changes* was the topic that was rated as being **top priority** by the highest number of respondents. *Relationships, sexual health and parenthood* was the topic that was rated as being **lowest priority** by the highest number of respondents (three more respondents than *Substance misuse*).



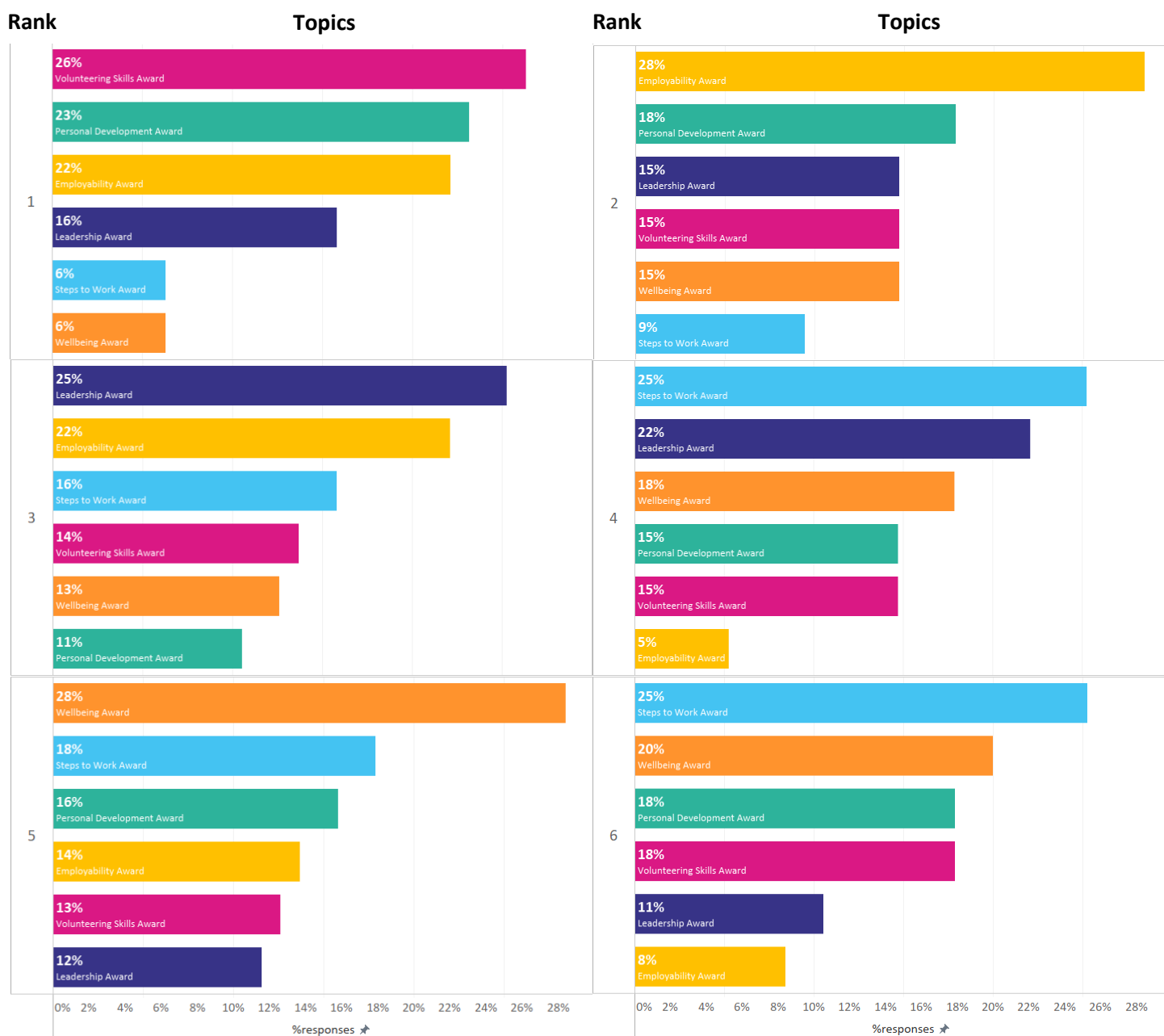
1.16 Would you like to see more options for accreditation in subjects covered in PSE?

This question was only accessible for respondents in S4-6, a total of 228 respondents.



1.17 If yes, please rank the below courses in order of preference.

The 228 respondents were asked to rate suggested courses in order from 1 to 6, with 1 representing the *most preferred* and 6 the *least preferred*. *Volunteering skills award* was the course that was rated as being **most preferred** by the highest number of respondents. *Steps to work award* was the course that was rated as being **least preferred** by the highest number of respondents.



However, the number one preference was slightly different for each year group.



The number one preference rated by the highest number of respondents in each year group.

### 1.18 Is there anything else you'd like to share with us on PSE?

There were 141 typed responses to this question.

Fifty-two people typed a variation of *Nothing* or *No*. Eight responses to this question were excluded from thematic analysis as they were considered to be 'non-pertinent'. These responses are not included in the report but are available in the Appendices.



#### 1.18.1 Negative Opinion

The majority of responses (113) expressed a negative opinion in relation to PSE, mainly related to attitudes towards the lesson and the relevance of topics.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
Negative Opinion	The subject is not taken seriously	19
	Does not prepare pupils for life after school	13
	Lessons are repetitive/pupils learn nothing new	12
	There is not a great enough focus on life skills	11
	Sexual education is inadequate	10
	Education around mental health issues is inadequate	10
	The teacher is inadequate	9
	There is too much focus on drugs/alcohol	5
	The topics are outdated	5
	The resources are outdated	4
	Learned nothing from PSE	3
	Older pupils are not given enough support	3
	General negative opinion	3
	PSE lessons only happen every so often	3
	Topics are not useful for younger pupils	2
	Lessons are not useful for older pupils	1

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*“Schools are not concentrating on teaching us the most important things we will need for when we leave school. Many topics are not covered during PSE classes, in my opinion the issues that we don't talk about or learn about are the most important ones that us pupils need when we leave school. These topics include: having children and raising them, buying a house and applying for a mortgage, LGBTQ+ sexual education ... and also the deeper and less talked about side of mental health...”*

*“They are so forceful about drug misuse and not about stuff that we actually encounter day to day. It's unhelpful and boring and usually just an excuse to mess about.”*

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### 1.18.2 Positive Opinion

Fifteen responses expressed a positive opinion in relation to PSE.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
Positive Opinion	General positive opinion	4
	Teachers are helpful	3
	Useful subject	3
	Improvement after teacher was changed	2
	Useful to have seniors/peers taking lessons	2
	Useful to have outside people taking lessons	1

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*“I really enjoy PSE and find that in my school, some of the PSE teachers (including my current one) make the lessons almost as if they feel like a safe space where anyone can share their opinion or feelings on any subject and the teachers can be trusted...”*

*“PSE is really good for learning about everything you might encounter in life. Guidance teachers are really good at getting to know you well and help you out. When some seniors and other people outside of my school come to give talks, it's very useful the kind of things they tell us about everything that could come your way and how to overcome it. It's very empowering and PSE is a very good and vital subject.”*

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### 1.18.3 Suggestion

Fifteen respondents made a suggestion to improve PSE lessons.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
Suggestion	Delivery of the lessons needs to be improved	5
	Would prefer practical activities	3
	Pupils should be more involved in choosing topics/delivery	2
	There should be nationally available resources	2
	Accreditation	1
	Lessons need to be more often	1
	PSE should be mandatory for all schools	1

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*“I think most people just see PSE as a skive. To change this I think teachers need to be more engaging and ask us what we want to learn.”*

*"I enjoy some parts of PSE but I do not like the way it is taught, I wish there was more practical ways of learning it."*

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#### 1.18.4 Other

Six respondents wrote a response that does not fit any of the other themes. Two individuals described a personal experience with PSE in more detail.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
Other	Other*	3
	Personal experience	2
	Some of the topics are covered in other lessons	1

\*The individuals in this theme did not give permission for their typed responses to be included in the report which is why they remain as "other" rather than being described.



## Summary of Findings

The survey findings suggest that opinions on Personal and Social Education are mixed. Over half of participants (59%) rated PSE lessons as *somewhat, very or extremely helpful*. The results varied greatly depending on the age of respondents, with younger pupils rating the lesson as more helpful than older. The same can be said for the importance of the subject: while the overall results suggest that more pupils find that PSE is not given the same importance as other subjects, this finding was much more prevalent in older pupils compared to younger. The main reasons that the subject was rated as having comparatively low importance were *lessons not structured* and pupils have *no say on what we [they] learn*.

Over half of respondents (59%) stated that they were not regularly asked for ideas on lesson topics and feedback on PSE lessons. For respondents who stated that they did get these opportunities, the most common method was through questionnaires/surveys.

Around half of the participants stated that some lessons are delivered by external people, with substance misuse being the most common topic that they assisted with. This was also the topic that was rated as being covered in most detail in PSE lessons. In terms of peer lesson delivery (by either senior or ex pupils) the majority of respondents (81%) rated this as *somewhat, very or extremely helpful*. However, this finding did vary between year groups, with S1 and S2 pupils rating this as more helpful than older pupils.

*Planning for choices and changes* was identified by around half (49%) of respondents as the topic that they would like to have an increased focus on in lessons.

Out of the survey respondents in S4 to S6, 41% stated that they would like to see more options for accreditation in PSE subjects, with a particular preference for *Volunteering Skills* and *Personal Development*.

When asked to provide any further comments on PSE, there was a greater number of negative comments. The comments suggest that lessons are outdated in terms of both topics and resources. Respondent's comments indicate that the experience of PSE can differ for pupils depending on their year group. Comments signified that the subject fails to meet a significant number of respondents' expectations regarding learning about life after school and relevant life skills. Respondents also indicated that the subject is repetitive and often not taken seriously. Participants suggest that pupil involvement in the development of PSE topics and approaches to lesson delivery would be beneficial.



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Or pop in for a cuppa and a hobnob...

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