



30/10/19

Dear Ms Fogarty and Cllr Morgan,

Re: Respect Yourself Guidance

We have had no response to our email to you of the 13<sup>th</sup> October relating to the 'Respect Yourself' guidance and our petition with Click Off. Therefore, on behalf of our members in Warwickshire, Safe Schools Alliance UK has written the following response to your comments made to in Coventry Live on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2019 - [article here](#).

- 1) In an interview with Coventry Live, Monica Fogarty said: "When the site was launched we gave a commitment to young people that we wouldn't back away from any of their questions.

**SSA UK response:** *If children and young people asked: How do I self-harm, or kill myself, or how do I roll a joint, or take cocaine, would Warwickshire County Council supply those answers?*

*Instagram was strongly criticised for not doing more to remove images relating to self-harm after the death of teenager Molly Russell, and has now said it will remove images, drawings and memes showing methods of self-harm or suicide from its platform. Why is WCC not taking a similar stance over exposing young teenagers to information about violent and degrading porn?*

- 2) "The site was created to host their questions and their content. That's why it's been so successful - young people feel confident because we don't interfere or neutralise it.

**SSA UK response:** *We are not aware of any evidence for this claim. On what basis is the site considered to be successful, and how has this been evaluated?*

- 3) "From 2010 to 2017 the rate of teenage pregnancy in 15 to 17-year-olds has halved, as has the number of STIs. We aren't naive enough to think there's a direct causal link but the site is one of a number of things having an impact."

**SSA UK response:** *How is this site having an impact? Again we know of no evidence for this.*

*The use of STI stats is misleading: in fact [both gonorrhoea and syphilis have risen among 15-19 year olds](#) by 24% and 30% respectively from 2017 to 2018.*

*Regarding teen pregnancy, this response implies that Warwickshire is outperforming other counties due to its use of this site. But according to the ONS, [the under-18 conception rate](#)*



Safe Schools Alliance UK



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[across the whole of the UK has been falling steadily for 10 years](#): in 2017 it fell to 17.9 conceptions per thousand women aged 15 to 17 years. In Warwickshire the average was in line with this at 17.5, with some areas as high as 22.

Where are the statistics that show that this particular programme in Warwickshire has had an impact on this figure, and more importantly, where is their evidence that children and in particular girls are actually safer and feeling more confident in relationships?

The NHS has recently reported that [1 in 10 people seeking sex and relationship therapy are teenagers](#), up from 1 in 30 two years ago. Experts have linked this to the damaging and desensitizing effects of pornography. Does WCC believe that telling children that consuming porn is just like watching a movie or reading a book is the best way to combat this?

- 4) She added: "Many of us may not feel comfortable with the descriptions, but this is stuff our kids are talking about and if it goes some way to keeping them safe and confident in relationships it has got to be worth it."

**SSA UK response:** *This is insulting to parents who are concerned for their children's physical and mental well-being. It's not about comfort; **it's about safeguarding.***

- 5) Censoring the site could drive youngsters to other, unregulated websites, she fears. "We are all the same - if we want an answer to something and we don't get it at our first port of call then we look elsewhere," she said. "We would push it underground, we would diminish the trust young people have with the local authority and public health, and I would be reluctant to do that."

**SSA UK response:** *We have no objection to the council providing an informative and responsible resource relating to Sex and Relationships Education. This site, which minimises the harmful effects of porn and exposes children to degrading and dangerous practices, is not that resource.*

*If a 12 year old girl clicks on 'B' on the Sextionary because she wants to look up 'bisexual' and on the same page finds 'bukakee', how is this better than an 'unregulated' website?*

- 6) Looking ahead, the site is expected to go back up online - after an independent review. "Although I'm completely comfortable with Respect Yourself, I want to make sure we are responsible in checking everything is as it should be. We have someone independent looking at it and I hope it will be back up soon - two to three months tops."

**SSA UK response:** *Is this an individual commissioned by the council to review the site? Please tell us how they are qualified to do this, in particular from a child safeguarding point of view.*



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*Safe Schools Alliance UK request that WCC consult with us on this matter as stakeholders representing Warwickshire parents.*

Yours sincerely,

Safe Schools Alliance UK