

## Episode 4 – “We need to teach consent in schools!”

**Laura:** Hello and welcome to are you convinced I'm Laura McInerney

**Ndidi:** and I'm Ndidi Okezie and we're your hosts for this brand new podcast. The debate show that bridges the gap between all things, education and youth services.

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**Laura:** Okay. The proposition on the table today is going to seem at first, like it's really straightforward and then I'm going to twist it and take it further. Today's idea is we need consent to be taught in schools. And as much as that shouldn't, you know, it used to be controversial, it's really not that much anymore because from September of last year, All schools across England are mandated to teach sex and relationship education.

And the government have laid out quite clearly, what's involved and it does involve down there in the detail, consent. However, there are loads of things in the school curriculum they're supposed to be taught and then not. So I think it's still worth putting on the table right now that we need to do this.

It needs to be taught in school, but more than that, I'm going to try and convince you that it needs to be taught in lessons, not around assembly on a random choice. It needs to be taught in depth, not one quick fumbly lesson. And I believe it should be taught in conjunction with the police, which can be reasonably controversial, given views around the police and what their role in society should be.

So let me just very quickly lay out why I think this is the thing we should debate. Almost always, when people say something extra should be put into the school curriculum, my first reaction is we haven't got time. It isn't something that teachers can do. And also just because you teach it doesn't mean that children will learn it.

We teach maths like a lot, right. We teach it every day pretty much. And when children are 5 to 16 and yet people will leave school and they can't do maths. That said, I think there's just some things which are more important than others. For example, in primary school, I do believe that road safety should be specifically taught. Those of us who will remember from when we were younger being taught "stop, look, listen", and now this thing on the end, that's important. It's lifesaving. This is another huge source of controversy - it's expensive for schools to do, but I do think it's a lifesaving skill that actually children should be taught. Nobody argues in secondary schools and in primary that we should be teaching about periods.

And that actually that's fundamentally important. But also we've then got this issue of sex education, and I feel as if consent often gets missed compared to things like pregnancy, STR. Or it's just sort of put in as like, you have to make sure that everybody's happy and it is way more complicated than that.

And the reason I know it's more complicated is that I was a citizenship trained teachers to start with, but then I actually did a second QTS and I trained as a PSEG specialist, sex and relationship education teacher, in the mid two 2000s. We used to do a 10 week program with our Year Elevens I think about that.

Now there is no way that GCSE-aged pupils would get 10 hours of sex education. Schools just wouldn't do it anymore because they'd be too focused on their exams. But it was intense. It was in depth and it was brilliant. And when we used to do the lesson on consent, it wasn't five minutes of that lesson. It was a whole lesson. We would look at relationships first and before we even got onto pregnancy, STI and everything else, we did this whole lesson on consent led with a police officer.

Who asked us questions. Ndid, I'm going to ask you these questions. Do you know where on someone's body you have implied consent to touch?

**Ndidi:** Um, I just assume you don't have consent unless you've given it?

**Laura:** Yeah, there is, but there's one part of your body that actually people have implied consent in, in our society to touch.

**Laura:** It's your hands. Isn't that weird. And it's because of handshakes and like being able to guide people places. And yet that's totally weird because actually that's quite, in some ways like handholding is quite intimate, but anywhere else, for example, on somebody's back, that could be considered like somewhere that you need to have consent to touch.

So there's all kinds of quirks and there was a big discussion in our class. What's the difference between sexual assault and sexual harassment. Here's another question

for you. If you're 15 years old and your girlfriend sends a naked selfie to you, right? Then you send it to your mate for a bit of a laugh.

Have you broken any laws? Which laws have you broken?

**Ndidi:** The law about sharing like child pornography almost. Right?

**Laura:** Exactly. Loads and loads of teenagers don't get that because they think, because they're the same age, they can't possibly be under the legislation for child sexual abuse. But of course you can.

Just being a child yourself doesn't stop you from being under that legislation. So all of those rules were things that we used to go. In excruciating detail with a police officer to make it clear that these are legal ramifications. Yet we both did it beforehand with relationships. Like these are the reasons why you should do this because it's good for relationships.

These are the legal things you need to know. And then we used to talk to them about lots of other stuff as well. And at the end, you know, I do remember some of the kids. I still remember this kid turning to me. It's like, oh man, miss. I used to think sex was going to be awesome and simple.

And now you've made it very complicated. And I worried about that for a bit, but do you know what I would rather, he went away with a detailed understanding of the complexity of human relationships and the tools to deal with it than he didn't. So my view is we need to teach consent. In lessons and in depth and in conjunction with the police.

**Ndidi:** Right. Okay. Boom. I love the mic drop to be honest. You're right. And you open it up to say, it doesn't seem that controversial, but you're going to take it there, and I think you did successfully take it into an area that slightly did. Other than the obvious. So my challenge with this, and I'm so glad that we've got our guest experts, because I think they're going to be far more equipped to probe on this than I am.

You kind of took me on a bit of a journey with your, with your opening, because I think you said some things are more important than others, and I kind of had you there and you gave the example of like road safety in primary school, which I thought, okay, yeah, fair enough. Then you said swimming. And for some reason I actually wasn't with you when you said swimming.

Cause again, I just think we can't go there. I don't know that I would put swimming at the same critical level as like road safety or something. But the bit that I was really

kind of not willing to go with you yet is the involvement of the police. Um, and again, you kind of just alluded to the relationship dynamic issue.

That's a pretty big issue. And maybe in of itself that shouldn't be a reason not to do it, but I just think in the introduction of the police into something like this, I think just takes it to a whole new level. But you actually then said for me the most important line, just because you teach something doesn't mean it's learned.

And for me that's the bit that, yeah. I was like, well, that's it like, I don't honestly know whether it makes a difference, whether you're going to do it in a 10 hour package or one-off assembly. I think there's something far more deeper here and far more societal. And with all of these things, I'm always of the, why have we started with the school and not the family?

Like, why aren't we talking about what just goes on in society more broadly when it comes to what's acceptable. And so where I landed at the end of the year, Opening is that I actually think it's less about what is formally taught in school. And I'm much more interested in the culture in the school. I'm much more interested in the way the school talks about these things.

Just generally not in the lesson, not in a you're now going to hear this, but just in an everyday playground behavior, classroom, behavior, and techs, all of those things, because the POS store rule environments in a school. Is for me, probably the most powerful lever to really embed change in terms of how we treat one another.

So that will be my kind of opening. I think it is an important issue. I don't actually think we get to what you want via formal structured lessons. I think there is something far more. Um, almost deeper and holistic and that needs to be something that I would expect school leadership to take really, really seriously, and maybe be held to some kind of account to not in Ofsted, but kind of like, just in terms of like the way that they are able to understand the impact that that kind of approach is having in their schools.

So, I don't know much about what's going on in terms of like, what is possible, what isn't at this point in schools, but I know someone who does, so I would love to introduce our first guest expert. And that is Jonny. Jonny is the CEO of The Education Alliance, which is a Multi Academy Trust in East Yorkshire and Hull as a national leader of education.

Jonny works with schools in many different contexts and is committed to a school improvement approach that puts ethical leadership at the heart of our system. So kind of like opening the door there, Jonny, but for me, if you're a Trust that puts ethical leadership at the heart of your system, surely you would see that the way you

would address consent would be more about just the, almost the intangibles of your school culture.

Where do you stand with Laura's proposal?

**JONNY:** I think where I stand with Laura's proposition is I'm inclined to support it at this stage. It's difficult, really? For me to push back on anything that's been said there, I do, however, have a couple of, of issues I'd really like to consider. One is around the role of the police in the DFE guidance at the moment, there's three different places where the issue of consent is mentioned, and one of them is around consent and the law.

And I do, I would welcome that input from the police. And I think some of the things that you've talked about there about where implied consent is, what the consequences of forwarding indecent images are, are the real issues that schools are dealing with day in, day out. Well, I would say though, is I wouldn't want us to do things that makes boys think of it only as a legal thing.

Um, they understand consent and they respect the notion of consent because of the law. I think we've got to go much further than that, and we've got to get used to the point where they do it because it's just the right thing to do. Yeah. And it's just what being a decent human being is about. And I think we've just got to be really careful about how we do that at this stage.

It's a little bit boring because I'm kind of with both of you at this stage, I can see the merits of what both of you say. But hopefully that will change as this goes on.

**Ndidi:** Again, I think as always, guest experts end up putting it so much better than I can.

What you've said at the end. Is my point. Like, that's why I think it can't be just like, here's a load of lessons, whether it's the police or not, you're not doing it because it's on your schedule to do it. You're doing it because the culture of our school reinforces that this, this is the right thing to do in terms of how we treat one another.

So, Laura, I don't know if that is far away from where you are or whether you think no, that's still not quite what you're talking about.

**Laura:** No, I think that should be that it's just not enough. And the reason it's not enough is, how many times in a school, is there a people who having really been worked on by the teachers?

The relationships are strong. They come into school and they're able to show really good behavior and they understand, and they want to be the human that they are

within schools. Right. But they walk away and in a different setting, in a different context, in a different culture, whether that's at home or with their friends, their behavior starts to wane.

And as much as we all might want. That doesn't happen. We all want to be in a position where actually these young people carry their culture with them at all times from the school. I just don't think it's realistic. And it's the same with the law. I understand. That's not why people should be worried about consent.

It's fundamentally about the fact that you are concerned about the other person that you're having a relationship with. And that should always matter, but we do have laws there so that when people are starting to make bad decisions, there's even more of a red line where we say, okay, you've kind of made the decision to this point and it hasn't been great, but this is the point after which there are really serious ramifications.

And that's what the law is there for. You know, we should all want to drive slowly on a road because we know that if we go fast, we'll hurt somebody. Well, the reason why there is still a law that is to just really reinforce the fact that if you break this rule, there are consequences. Regardless.

**Ndidi:** I kind of feel like you could make the exact argument the other way as well.

Like, just because I had 10 hours of whatever across a year. Um, and if nothing else in my school environment reinforces that for me every single day, you said like, just because you teach something doesn't mean people learn it. I don't think you were saying it is either. Or I think you're probably saying it's both as well, but for me, I kind of feel like if I had to bet which one was the most powerful, I actually think that there is something there about, I don't know, like the schools talk about that you're developing the person you're developing this human being broader than just this, you know, schedule.

If we actually don't think that works and that changes once they leave the school environment, that's not an issue just for the topic of consent. Surely.

**Laura:** We don't have to bet either way. We can do both of those things. I'm not suggesting you should only have 10 lessons and put one on consent.

And the rest of the time kids should be roaming around school, told what they can do, what they want to people. I think it's about both, and what I've maybe not made the case strongly enough and we'll probably get into it shortly is how endemic sexual harassment, how often sexual assault is happening in it.

Even if we were to only change it by 2%, that would still be worth doing. Because at the moment, it's just so massive and we're not, it's not getting anywhere better.

**Ndidi:** Let's bring in our other guests expert. Lovely to introduce Bradley O'Donoghue. Bradley is the university and volunteers coordinator at Tender - a domestic abuse and sexual violence prevention charity that uses the arts to engage young people. He founded Tender's university programme, developing sexual violence prevention strategies to ensure students are safe and supported.

Bradley. You've obviously heard the conversation so far. What are your kind of opening thoughts on this topic?

**BRADLEY:** It's so interesting. I mean, there's so much material. I kind of want to unpack and literally just listening for the last like 10 minutes, I was just like, oh, you could go down so many different avenues with that, I mean, I kind of agree in part with everyone and what everyone said in the sense that, you know, conversations around consent and relationships need to exist within schools, they need to exist within primary schools, secondary schools.

Throughout someone's life entirely, and we need to be supporting schools and supporting teachers in order to address these conversations and these issues in a really safe, supportive, and nuanced way, because we know that young people have relationships. Both intimate partner relationships, relationships with your friends, your family, your carers.

We have so many relationships where consent is so important and valuable. So as indeed, he said, embodying that is important, but also it's about the culture in which that young person is involved. So, you know, how is it being embodied by the teachers interacting with young people? How has it been between teachers?

My hesitation delivering this work in conjunction with the police - I would argue that in some aspects it is important to be able to identify the legal boundaries of consent. And when you know, someone is committing sexual assault or sexual violence, but also. When we're talking about consent, and when we're talking about relationships, we should be doing it in a really accessible and fun way with young people.

Because when we're talking about sex and not that all relationships have to have sex at all, but we want young people to be able to identify what is positive in a relationship, and really engage in meaningful conversations about what makes each other happy. And what boundaries are. I would just be cautious of using too many figures of authority in order to draw that down, because it surely is that not just going to scare young people out of having relationships.

**Ndidi:** Mm. I kind of think Laura wants some of the fear thing, which is not the fear thing, but like the seriousness of it, which is actually a really important element of it. I think maybe. What I'm hearing is that there's probably not enough recognition that this isn't just like a casual decision that you get to make.

Like there are legal consequences to you not doing it, but you've just said something that I think is really interesting, which is the kind of the environment that you create around that learning experience. And you obviously talked about fun and I don't know Laura, whether you thought, whether that kind of hits the nail on the head for you in terms of like, no, let's just make sure people don't mess around here.

**Laura:** This is serious. Doing one of these programs, actually, I used to teach an all-boys class and I taught them in Year 11. We used to do these ground rules at the beginning of this particular module. Cause I teach them citizenship sort of politics or whatever, and then suddenly we'd be talking about sex. And I remember with that particular group, I'd ask, what do you want from me?

What do you want from each other? And so on. And one of the things they said that they needed as a group was they felt that humor was really important. And I absolutely understand that. I think when you're a teenager discussing, well, when you're anybody discussing sensitive issues that alleviation and relieving of tension is important, but what we did was we role modeled kind of, well, where are the boundaries on that?

There are things that are going to be quite funny here, but it's not about making anybody in particular a joke. And so there's something quite complicated about SRE and relationship education, which is that line between fun and funny between what makes it accessible and interesting broadly, which you talked about.

But how quickly it can turn. And so it's not that I'm against fun. I think it's actually quite important, especially for making things memorable, but how you manage that into play is really difficult.

**BRADLEY:** I absolutely agree. I think there is a conversation to be had about where is the line between fun and funny.

And you're talking about the power relations within those young people and that broader conversation. Uh, facilitators who go into schools or universities. It's about navigating the conversation with young people about we're talking about consent. If we're talking about early warning signs and using the arts can sometimes allow us to look at other perspectives or the characters, and to be able to identify when someone is becoming the butt of a joke or when someone is contributing things in a

way to diminish someone's opinion someone's perspective. And again, I think that harkens back to the wider culture of the content. So you're not just presenting information to young people. It's about how do you embody it within your physicality?

How do you embody it between the way facilitators deliver between teachers and being able to have that conversation about actually, you know, what that comment went a bit too far. Maybe we need to kind of harken back to what the. Topic or conversation is a clear example of that is sometimes within our projects, we use statistics as a way to understand the prevalence of unhealthy relationships or with our older work sexual violence.

And sometimes young people can get so engrossed in a more engaging format of learning and they might, once they get an answer right there might be start sharing and then we have to get. Hang on guys. Um, let's just have a think about what, what are we discussing here? What, like, why it's good to be engaged and it's good to make conversations accessible, but there are also times where you need to think about what is the impact of these stats.

What impact is this inappropriate behavior having on other people? It's a really sensitive line. And I think that's why. Teachers are incredible facilitators, but they also need specialist organizations to come in and support with that kind of work.

**Laura:** The reason why I had, we had a school police officer at the time he did there.

So he knew the students quite well. I still feel, I know there's a big debate on this, about whether it's useful to have police in schools or not, but him knowing those students, him seeing them around, but him being that kind of line, like if we're there together talking about this and things went off track.

He, he just sort of did symbolize that authority to be able to say, actually guys, you know, there is a very serious point and I know I can say that, but there is something different about, think an external person, whether that's also a facilitator and we use great PSEG facilitators at times as well to do it.

It does really help as a teacher. I mean, Jonny, you'll be traversing this stuff in school all the time. How do you manage those things? Lines and boundaries.

**JONNY:** Yeah, that's right. My first promoted post in school was that PSHE coordinator and delivery of all of this is really skilled and really new onset.

It requires a confident teacher. It requires getting the, the boundaries. Right. Just going back to the policing. I agree completely with what you're saying there about the role potentially of community policing. We've had some great examples in one

of our asks. Absolutely fantastic community officer who would just come in at really short notice.

If you'd had an incident, you know, again, around something like texting inappropriate images or whatever, and just coming in and sitting down one-to-one with the young person and really explaining clearly what they'd actually done. And that was really powerful. His relationship was so good. They used to come to the prom and sit outside in the patrol car and the kids used to have pictures with him, you know?

So that's it. They know if you've got that, it can be incredibly powerful.

**Ndidi:** Laura, you said something, you know, obviously you talked about, let's just, uh, the seriousness, the gravitas, the, the enormity of the challenge that is currently, and I'd love you just to share a bit more about where this kind of provocation is coming from and why we kind of need to do something a bit different.

**Laura:** So I've ranted on one of our previous episodes about this, but I guess this comes back to the fun and funny point as well, which is that I think sometimes. We are forgetting that consent really is important and serious, and the consequences are both legal, but they're legal because it has such an influence on people.

And the big grant the other week was around the fact that I think particularly men, although I appreciate not always, when in groups, when out and about, especially if drunk can say things, do things, make comments, and that's just sort of considered acceptable. It's just the way that it is because it's 'lad bants' and it's gotta be dealt with.

And I often think back to that Year 10 boy or Year 11, he said, well, miss it's all much more complicated. And he really seemed to be holding onto it. Do I think that three years later, if he was on a night out getting hammered with his mates that he thought about that lesson? Yeah. Possibly not, but maybe it really did seem to have a genuine influence on him.

And that's the thing. If we could have a proper conversation about consent in terms of why it matters for your relationship, why it matters for laws and the consequences. I think maybe it just chips away a little bit and all you need in a group. Is usually 20% of people to think that something is wrong and be willing to speak up about it.

And that's what will start to tip the balance because then you'll get another 20% who'll come over to your side. And the next thing, you know, once it's half of a group of same mate, that's unacceptable behavior. It's done and that won't solve everything. It won't mean no woman ever gets attacked again.

But I do think it would just help with things like safety walking out in the street or just stuff like that. That's where it's coming from.

**Ndidi:** I think we're all just like furiously on the same page when it comes to that. I guess my point is that I just don't see how lessons in school gets us to where you're talking about.

And for me, this is, this is the dilemma of the role of the school in terms of like curriculum time. And you opened up by saying that usually your reaction to schools should be like, you know, we don't have time. And Jonny, that was my initial kind of question to you in the sense that when there is like, Opportunity cost as to some of these things, this isn't to suggest that like this isn't an issue of seriousness for me, this is actually an issue of success fullness.

If that makes sense. Like, for me, the reason why I think that, that boy, that gentleman that you mentioned, Laura, I don't know if the catalyst for change for him would have been your lessons per se, in terms of the hours versus when he is in the playground with his friends who says what to him, when he is like online, it's acceptable, what isn't acceptable, what happens when you're outside and like other people see your behavior?

I don't know if the change we're looking for is going to come through school curriculum. I think there is something, and this is probably where you're going to accuse me of like trying to boil the ocean. But like, I think there is something much broader here about what society tolerates almost regardless of what kids learn in school.

But to your point, if they learn it, they go out and that behavior is not supported in any other environment they're written. I don't know how we think that lesson is going to like, do what it needs to do.

**Laura:** I guess it's just, there are very few leavers and that's why people always come back to the school curriculum.

They see a problem and they come to the school curriculum. 99.9% of the time. I say it's inappropriate, but just to give you even just a tiny example on how this influences women all through their lives. For example, when I started, I was the editor of Schools Week at one point in time, and we were trying to get female contributors to write newspaper articles for us.

We were always struggling and it struck me that one of the reasons why was because women very rarely shared at that time, their mobile phone numbers. And

even now it's more challenging to get female phone numbers. On a website or LinkedIn, WhatsApp's changed it a little bit, but not as much as you might think.

And as a newspaper editor, or if you're a TV producer, you need to phone people because you need the commitment quickly. And when I started speaking to women about why this was, they said immediately it's because of safety concerns about harassment predominantly from men. If they put their phone numbers out and they'd be blamed for it.

And I think, okay, that that's so huge. Such a consequence for careers that has so many consequences everywhere. How do we change it? And I'd love it to be a social change. If there are other leavers you've got and you can think of, and I'd love to hear them. But the one thing I think we could do is this in school, I think there is time because some stuff has come off the citizenship curriculum, particularly the EU.

And we could take some of the bits out, I think around courts. It is now mandatory. So it is in there. All it takes is people to put the time and the teachers to it. Now there's no incentive to do that at the moment as the government have things with their performance league tables. But that's why I think this is really important proposal.

I think it just has to be taken seriously and not just written, buried in a room.

**Ndidi:** So Jonny, you agree that it is a priority even in terms of the opportunity cost of time. So here's my question. Where are you getting the time from, that would be my first question, just in terms of like adding this or doing this in the quality way that Laura is talking about.

But then I guess my other point is around my level is the pastoral rule and limit of the school. So I guess my question on that is. When you think about pastoral rule curriculum, when you think about all of the things that schools talk about in terms of who we are as a school, our ethos, and all the different ways in which that permeates through the school, how much of that is taught in a curriculum scheduled time?

I was, unless things have dramatically changed in the last few years, I would assume not much, but yet we put a hell of a lot of weight on it because we understand that is honestly what ends up shaping our students. So I guess my question to you is where's the time coming from in terms of the practicality of what schools have to do.

And then also, why is that scheduled time? In your mind, possibly more powerful than the general. If you have to choose, I know we want both, but let's say for example, we have to choose whether we're going to put the schedule time in, or we're going to double down on the pastoral role culture as it were.

Where would you stand on the where's the time coming from and how hostile rule things kind of seep into students' life.

**JONNY:** There's a whole load here. If, if I had to nail my colors and I could only have one or the other right now, I would go for full on curriculum time and teaching of it. The reason being, I think that if you, you know, you're talking about boiling the ocean, you're talking about changing society.

The only way we change society is over a 40/50 year period. And you start with young, and this is the most tolerant open-minded generation that this country has ever had. And there's a huge opportunity. To change the way we are by winning hearts and minds of, of young people. So if I could only do one, I would do that.

And I think you, I just don't think that schools or society can turn away from Sarah Everett. Everyone's invited. It is so powerful and so important right now. I just don't think that schools can choose not to. The other thing, this sort of interesting bit that we haven't talked about yet is we talking really obviously rightly about secondary schools, but.

In terms of consent, there's a much more broad, general piece of whether you can do in primary schools where you're talking about consent and control over your yourself and your body and your person in much more general terms, a much younger age.

**Ndidi:** I agree with you that schools can't afford to turn away from these issues and not address these things.

I guess my point is, I don't think you're going to address it by adding 10 hours of a scheduled time to talk about it. That for me, it has to go deeper than that. I guess that's my argument that, like, I don't know what we can point to apart from that, the very beginning, you know, your road safety point, that probably the one that really stuck out and obviously swimming, you know, skills and all that good stuff.

I don't know what we teach in those kinds of contexts that do stick in this way. So that's my point. I want it done, but I just don't think that's the way we're going to actually create the change that we want to see. I don't know. Bradley, you, obviously you focus more on the university and the things.

Would you imagine that your job would be, look differently. If schools were doing this in a much more structured way that like Laura and Johnny has suggested, would you imagine that by the time they get to university, you wouldn't necessarily have as much work to do.

**BRADLEY:** Yeah absolutely, it's so interesting hearing everyone's opinions, the idea of prevention, and I think entity, I'm kind of getting onto your point in that 10 hours.

If you put it into, you know, giving young people, sex and relationships education for 10 hours, it's not necessarily going to be the culture change we're looking for, but actually if we look about embedding it throughout someone's life. As Johnny briefly talked about embedding this in primary school work, which we talk about emotions, identifying emotions, expressing emotions.

Really taking the time to build a vocabulary with young people. That's half the job. It's building an awareness amongst young people about relationships, about consent and how you turn those conversations into lived experiences and live to reality. So that's one part of the change in order to cycle with sexual violence, tackle abuse.

I feel like you're also getting to this. It's difficult to talk to young people about these issues and talk about equality and talk about inclusion and accessibility, but then they are going to grow up and they're going to be going into cultures. They're going into workplaces or universities where.

Discrimination sexual violence, abuse, power exploitation exists. And I think in one aspect, yes, we need to be talking about this with young people, but we also need to be sustaining the conversations around consent in every aspect of someone's life. And unfortunately, yeah. Historical sex and relationships education has been very heteronormative has been very inaccessible and not representative of a diverse range of young people. And what I find in my role is sexual violence at universities is so extremely high. I think our report from 2018 said 62% of students and recent graduates had experienced some form of sexual violence.

And from my work with those students, They want conversations around consent and they wish that it had been embedded from a young age and a really accessible and diverse way. So in aspect, I mean to summarize, sorry, that was a long way of going about it, but I think. Yes. If we had been taught about these topics from a young age, we want necessarily to be seeing, you know, the highest statistics that we are at the moment, or potentially how these conversations are being exposed via social media, which at the same time, I think it's great that people are able to use those platforms to talk about it.

But I think we should be doing more. Let's talk about how we embed it within the wider culture.

**Laura:** Thank you for your reasoning. Catch a normative point there. Cause that is one of my big regrets. When I look back at the time when I was teaching and I don't think it's probably moved on very much.

But the programme we ran was entirely heteronormative. Like there was really very little discussion of any LGBTQ issues or anything around diversity. We taught in a very multi ethnic area. And so for that reason, I think we thought about different religious points of views at different cultural point of views. But we certainly didn't think about different aspects of sexuality and gender.

And I really feel that it's something that might still be at risk of getting missed in some of the discussions around consent. But one of the questions I was going to ask Ndidi, this is to help you, one of the questions I was going to ask is, you've worked broadly at universities quite a bit. Is there anything that you've seen in the culture and environments of universities that makes a difference, which isn't directly about teaching young people this issue?

**BRADLEY:** I would probably, I mean, I think the teaching of it is really important, particularly with that demographic because of the previously quite terrible sex and relationships education, but also university faculties, university in itself, being able to identify the pathways to support and being able to identify the impact of sexual violence on students on young people.

It can really teach about why you should be asking for consent, why you should be talking about it. What I find is sustaining the conversation and then making sure it's not tokenistic. I think sometimes when we talk about consent, it can be like a tick box thing, but actually we need to look at sexual violence, sexual harassment, within all aspects of an organization.

So that's, you know, how do we promote conversations? How do we identify when something has gone wrong? When someone needs support, what does that support look like? And we know this might be going slightly off tangent, but yeah. You know, victims of sexual violence, it's really traumatic experience. So being able to clearly identify what the avenues to support are and what yeah.

**Ndidi:** Laura, it's going to be your turn to kind of bring us to a close on this. And I, you know, I think you've caught at least half the room already. Again, I think Bradley just then really summed up my view in terms of the fact that I think this is, I think the requirement goes deeper than this. And not even that, I think.

We're not going to get what you want just by curriculum time. So I've guessed the thing that I need to be convinced on is how does curriculum time lighten up against all the reality of what we know is really how young people learn and how behavior is

changed and modified, which sadly I don't think is about what happens in PSHE lessons.

**Laura:** Sure. So the statement on the table is we need to teach consent in schools, but more than that, it should be in lessons. It should be in depth and it should be in conjunction with the police. And, but it coming back to what you've said there about the young people that you've spoken to, who've gone through experiences at university, and then they've wanted to have conversations about consent.

And they've said to you, they wished they'd had this at school, you know, that comes up over and over and over again. And I'm often reasonably unsympathetic to this point of view. And did he, it goes to what you were saying, right? Well, we could talk about it in school, but it wouldn't make a difference. And I think that's possibly true, but I do also believe in powerful knowledge.

I think there are certain things that if you understand, and you know them, they, they, they can make a life-changing difference. So, and I don't know what you've got against women. I, I come, I go out while you can't think that important. I mean, drowning is, is, is, is a really serious topic. And many, many people each year get themselves into trouble in the waters in part because, um, they can't swim.

And also just the level of social exclusion. If you can't swim, you know, you can't go to a swimming birthday party. If you go to the beach with friends, you can't get in. And that's where I think it's just a really powerful piece of knowledge, actually, that when you need it, no, one's necessarily going to turn up and teach you quickly how to swim.

And that's how I feel a little bit about this kind of stuff. It's. A set of languages, Jonny, I love your point that it should be taught all the way from primary. So it becomes normalized. We talk about it and increasingly complicated ways. It gives us that vocabulary and it's only going to stick and have that vocabulary.

If it's talked about regular. In depth with the sort of thinking that goes on behind lessons, because lessons should be planned in a way that mean that children do walk away with that knowledge long-term in their memories. That doesn't happen in assemblies. It doesn't happen in a dropdown day. It doesn't happen if you just do it through culture, I would love it to happen through culture, but I just don't think the knowledge is there.

And that's the reason why I think we need consent in schools. So Johnny, are you convinced?

**JONNY:** I am completely convinced. Just that sort of final point. I think young people, they learn all sorts of things at school and then forget it later if they think it's important and believe it's important, it stays with them forever.

And I think schools have got to do everything they can. To make young people feel that this is as important as it is. And then we've got a decent chance of making it stick.

**Laura:** Thank you. And Bradley, are you convinced?

**BRADLEY:** I'm convinced. I think embedding this conversation with young people from primary school is so important.

Essentially the work is giving young people a vocabulary and a set of tools to identify when something is unhealthy or a behavior or interaction is nonconsensual. And I think that can only, if it can benefit one person in a classroom, then that is doing its job, because that means that person will be able to access support.

But I also agree with what Ndidi says about how do we not only teach it in a curriculum, but embed it within the wider culture. And I think that's just about sustainability.

**Laura:** And finally the most important one. Are you convinced Ndidi? Really secretly all along? Have you just been playing devil's advocate?

Is that what's been happening?

**Ndidi:** I'm trying to have my cake and eat it too, because of course it should be taught, but I don't think it goes far enough. I really don't. And I'm actually been really enlightened in this conversation, especially from Jonny's perspective because I think there is so much that happens pastorally in the school that you can't see it in the curriculum, but I bet you, every single child knows about those things that have been embedded and reinforced and explicitly spoken about, but they're just not like, oh, that's why I'm going Monday morning at two o'clock I'm going to hear about this.

It's so much deeper than that. And the kind of contexts that you laid out in terms of the seriousness of this and the reality that we kind of currently live in. I think we need to go further. And so I guess my concern and my hesitation is that I worry that we think, you know, tick box I've now added it to my curriculum job done.

And I just don't think that's going to create the change that we are talking about. So it's not that it shouldn't be. It just doesn't go far enough, something much more substantive needs to happen in schools for this to really stick. And can I just get in

this thing about swimming, like learning to swim, but you placed it next to you that really important things, more things are more important than the other.

I'm sorry. You just, based on the context of reality where lots of communities are, I'm actually prioritized, I don't know, credit debt, employee ability, like finances, like I'd put. But far above led in how to swim, if I'm going to be honest. So that was my swimming thing, but yeah, nothing against people, not drowning at parties.

**Laura:** Oh, well, you've always so annoying when you do this, right? Like I'm now convinced by you, but luckily the scores on the doors are currently three one. So I'm taking this one. It's a victory. But if people listening take from this. I've definitely taken from the conversation with both of you, Jonny and Bradley that this does need to be bigger, right?

Like it can't just be a tick box. And indeed you're right. If it ended up being that because people had taught there 10 hours, that was the end of the conversation. That wouldn't be brilliant. But my goodness, if we could all start with those 10 hours, that would be fantastic. So thank you everybody for taking part in that.

**Ndidi:** And that's our show. Thank you everyone. For coming along with us on this really important conversation, we would really like to shout out our amazing guests experts. Jonny, thank you so much for joining us. Where can our listeners find out more about you and the work that you do?

**JONNY:** I'm on Twitter @jonny\_uttley

That's straightforward. Um, recently published a book with a co-author John Thompson called putting stuff first, which is really looking at kind of ethical leadership and supporting staff in schools.

**Ndidi:** Ooh, nice. And I've seen lots of really great reviews on that, so please check it out everyone.

And Bradley, thank you so much for coming and like fighting my corner a little bit. where can our listeners connect with you and the work that you do?

**BRADLEY:** Thank you for having me. You can find our organization Tender at [www.tender.org.uk](http://www.tender.org.uk). We have Twitter. We have the social media as you know, at tender UK.

Yeah. My personal one. If you want to hear the thoughts of me, it's Bradley\_Selkirk

**Laura:** Are You Convinced? Is out every fortnight. If you've enjoyed listening, please do let us know. Subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, SoundCloud, or wherever you get your podcasts, please, please, please rate and review the show.

It helps us and we welcome the feedback. Lastly, spread the word, tell at least one friend, uh, possibly one who knows about swimming.

**Ndidi:** Oh, my Lord. We're going to have an episode about swimming. I can see it. Remember, we'd love to hear from you via our social channels as well. You can join the community by following us at @ukyouth on Twitter and Instagram.

**Laura:** Tell us what you thought of the show and join our club house club, where we are doing regular club house discussions of the topics in the show. So come along, share your thoughts with us when the next one is on.

**Ndidi:** Well, it's goodbye for me.

**Laura:** And it's goodbye from me. Bye!

**Ndidi:** Are you convinced podcast brought to you by the charity UK Youth, produced by Sarah Myles and presented by, into the OKC and Laura McInerney.

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