

**THEMATIC UNIT:  
PORNOGRAPHY**



**Overview**

This unit is provided to support young people aged 14+/16+ who are learning in Curriculum for Excellence terms at Early, First or Second Level. This is a broad spectrum of cognitive ability but this content acknowledges that other parts of the national RSHP resource might not meet the needs of young people who require *age appropriate* but also *cognitively appropriate* learning on this key topic.

**This unit aims to enhance the learners’ understanding of pornography.** This might be content they have seen without intention, images they have looked for, or have been shown by others. Prior to facilitating learning on this theme young people will need an understanding of what sex is, which is covered in the unit called **Sex/Sexual Intercourse**. Learning should also stand alongside ongoing opportunities to learn about relationships and the core idea of consent.

Understanding is developed and embedded through a range of carefully planned and personalised learning experiences. The activities are suggestions only. You can adapt or extend them to suit your learners’ age, cognitive ability and specific needs.

Links to Curriculum for Excellence	Learning intentions	Success criteria
<p>I know that popular culture, the media and peer pressure can influence how I feel about myself and the impact this may have on my actions. <b>HWB 3-46b</b></p> <p>I recognise that power can exist within relationships and can be used positively as well as negatively. <b>HWB 3-45a</b></p> <p>Using what I have learned I am able to make informed decisions and choices that promote and protect my own and others’ sexual health and wellbeing. <b>HWB 3-47b</b></p>	<p>With the appropriate level of support and resources children and young people learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That pornography is a photograph, image, film or words that are about something sexual.</li> <li>• That pornography can portray sex in ways that are not appropriate in real-life relationships.</li> <li>• That they can choose not to watch pornography.</li> <li>• That if they see something they do not understand or upsets them they can speak to an adult they trust.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can describe what pornography is.</li> <li>• I can explain that the people and the sex you see in pornography is different from real life.</li> <li>• I can explain that pornography can show sex that is not appropriate in real life relationships.</li> <li>• I understand that I do not have to watch pornography.</li> <li>• I can identify a person I can speak to if I have questions or I am upset about something I see.</li> </ul>

## Why this learning matters

It is often difficult for adults to understand just how accessible pornographic material is to young people. Many young people say that they first see pornography by accident, perhaps through pop ups or watching 'reaction videos' on YouTube, that is watching other people react to watching particularly graphic pornography. Young people's earliest exposure to pornography and collective experiences of viewing pornography together (especially young men) may be through the lens of humour rather than eroticism. They may have been sent pornographic images or film by others.

By 14 years old two-thirds of young people will have watched pornography, rising to three-quarters by age 16.<sup>1</sup> These statistics are based on the general population of young people, we do not know if they are the same for young people with additional support needs/learning disabilities. But what we can assume is that if a young person has access to a mobile device or tablet and can access the internet or communicate with other young people or adults, and be able to do so without any controls on what their device can access, then pornographic content is readily available.

We also lack a good understanding of how young people with cognitive impairments understand the pornography they might see. A common message to young people is that 'pornography isn't real' but for the young person with learning disabilities it looks real.

Then we tell young people/young adults that watching pornography will negatively impact on their own personal intimate relationships. Yet when it comes to young people/young adults with learning disabilities, opportunities for these real-life relationships are often limited. This can mean that masturbation, using pornography, may be the only sexual experience that some young people/young adults will have. So how do we navigate such complex and hard realities?

The learning materials in this unit take a somewhat pragmatic approach. Young people learning at Early/First/Second Level who are 14+/16+ will likely have a degree of curiosity and independence and online access that means they need support to understand what they see and make choices about they want to see as young adults. Learning about pornography is also protective. By teaching about sex and pornography we offer a healthy alternative to what a young person might find online. If young people can be supported to recognise what pornography is, they can better understand or communicate when someone shows them such content or asks them to make or share images.

Some of the concepts here are challenging, but we can work together as the adults around the young person to provide the best possible supports or scaffolding so that – especially as

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<sup>1</sup> The British Board of Film Classification reported in 2019 that more than half (51%) of 11 to 13 year olds reported that they had seen pornography at some point, rising to 66% of 14-15 year olds. <https://www.bbfc.co.uk/about-us/news/children-see-pornography-as-young-as-seven-new-report-finds> A University of London 2021 survey found that 78% of 16/17 year old respondents had seen online pornography on various platforms, and that their exposure was relatively recent: <https://www.city.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2021/05/four-in-five-uk-16-and-17-year-olds-have-seen-online-pornography-most-commonly-on-the-day-of-the-survey>

they navigate the online world - there is a foundation we can build on to ensure understanding and personal safety.

Before you use this material, or adapt it to suit your learners, there is a need to have supported learning on some key themes that will act as a foundation for this learning on pornography. Please check each learner's knowledge and understanding and go to the RSHP resource for support, both the main body of material (more links at the end of this booklet) and additional support for learning/complex ASN materials on *My Body, Masturbation and Consent* [Complex ASN - RSHP](#) before learning about *Pornography* it is important that young people have had the chance to learn about *Sex/Sexual Intercourse* which can be done using the folder of materials also in this section of our RSHP resource.

### **Activities, ideas and supports for learning**

We have developed a 5 part PowerPoint that acts as a script for conversations and learning you can facilitate with an individual young person or group. The text is a starting point, you might want to add or edit text or images guided by what the learner/group wants or needs to know. Of course, the PowerPoint is not to be used in one session, rather use, revisit and adapt over time. For learners who require more graphic/unambiguous images we have curated images here: <https://rshp.scot/learners-with-additional-support-needs-asn/images/>

#### **1. What is pornography?**

- Pornography is sometimes called 'porn'.
- Pornography is a photograph, image, film or words that are about something sexual. Porn can show people's sexual body parts or show people having sex.
- Most people find pornography on the internet. This can be free. But some websites ask you to pay to watch.
- There are different types of pornography. Some shows a man and a woman having sex. Some shows two men having sex. Some shows two women having sex. Some shows a group of people having sex.

#### **2. Why do people watch pornography?**

- Developing sexual feelings is a normal part of growing up. A person might watch pornography because they want to see something sexy.
- If someone feels sexy, they might touch their private parts. This is called masturbation.
- If you masturbate this must only be in your bedroom/in private.

#### **3. Be careful**

- Some porn can be upsetting because it shows a person being hurt or abused.
- It is wrong and against the law for an adult or other young person to show you pornography. If someone shows you porn, then tell an adult you trust.
- If you see something you don't understand or is upsetting it helps to tell an adult who you trust.
- If someone asks you to take and share photos or film *of you*, tell an adult you trust.
- Who can you speak to if you are upset or have a question?

4. **The people and the sex you see in pornography is different from real life.**
  - When you look at pornography you see real people, but they are acting.
  - The people in pornography have different bodies from most people. The men might have big muscles or big penises. The women might be thin, have no hair on their vulva and have big breasts. It's okay not to look like the people in porn.
  - In pornography the sex can be rough or violent. This is not what sex should be like in real life.
  - In pornography the men often don't use condoms. You should always use a condom in real life.
  - In pornography people don't ask their partner if they want to have sex or do something sexual. When you ask this is called consent. In real life you must always ask and have consent.
  
5. **If you choose to watch pornography**
  - Some people do not like pornography. Some people watch it.
  - If you watch it you must only do this in your private place/in your bedroom. Where is your private place?
  - You must never watch pornography at school or college, when you are in a bus or car or when you are in a public place like a shop, library or on the street.
  - You must never show another young person what you are watching. It is against the law to share what you watch with another young person

*Note: My private place*

In the materials developed to support work with learners with Complex Additional Support Needs the thematic unit on *Masturbation* has material to support learning around the concept of *my bedroom is my private place*: [Complex ASN - RSHP](#) You can refer to this to support a young person consider a safe approach to viewing pornography. It is true however that whether discussing masturbation, or this topic of viewing pornography, this is more complex when a young person shares a room and so additional work will need to be done to establish times of a day/week when indeed the space can be private.

### **Extending learning**

In the identification of which CfE Experiences and Outcomes are of relevance to our learners we have drawn, in this unit, on those at Third Level. This is not because we expect our learners to be learning at Third Levels for say Literacy or Numeracy, but because they remind us that much of what we do needs to be age as well as developmentally appropriate. If your learners would benefit from extending learning beyond what is described in this booklet please do refer to other RSHP material at Third/Fourth Level and Senior Phase for some useful material you might want to adapt.

<https://rshp.scot/third-fourth-level/#pornography>

<https://rshp.scot/senior-phase/#PornographySen>

**And finally....**

### **I can indicate to an adult if I am upset**

Young people may be upset about aspects of their RSHP learning. As they learn we want them to understand and remember who they can find support from. Please use other

opportunities to support young people to identify adults they trust and can talk to. In the material that supports learning for learners with more complex needs we talk about the My Circle exercise (see unit [Personal Space and Boundaries - RSHP](#)) which can support young people to identify who they can speak to if they are upset. Of course, it is also the responsibility of adults who provide education and care to know the learner well and to be aware of changes in behaviours that might communicate worry or distress.

### **Learner evaluation**

Learners should be asked to show a preference as to whether they like or dislike the activities that are part of their RSHP learning. It may be possible to tell if the child/young person is enjoying their participation as it happens, this is facilitated when the adult knows the learner well and is able to interpret reactions. Whether at school or at home, you may have already worked on developing an object of reference or signifier for when you want to know a child/young person's opinion. Learner evaluation will help you to make learning more enjoyable, relevant and useful for the learner.