

Notice of Motion 215: Responding to the realities and challenges of pornography

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Resolutions	The resolutions are presented at the end of the report

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To explore the realities and challenges of pornography and enable different age groups to understand these through resourcing informed and reflective conversations on these issues
Main Points	This report responds to a call from 3Generate 2014 which challenged the Methodist Church in Britain to help people of all ages, not just young people or youth workers, to discuss the realities and challenges of pornography. It highlights the complexity of defining and agreeing what is pornography and explores some of the challenges raised by a rapidly changing agenda, in part driven by the development of digital technology. It includes reference to publicly available research evidence and in particular seeks to hear the voices of children and young people. It reviews recent responses taken by policy makers and the wider church and does some initial theological exploration. The report identifies resources that can be used safely by individuals and groups and also makes recommendations for the development of further resources that could be used to support reflective conversations throughout the Church on this subject. The report concludes with a call on government to improve sex and relationship education and to make this mandatory in the school curriculum. The report is not a position statement for the Methodist Church and only seeks to offer a limited exploration of the issues involved which may form the basis for the development of more focused or detailed resources in the future which could be used in local churches or other appropriate settings.
Background Context and Documents	Notice of Motion 215 on pornography. Methodist Conference 2015 Methodist Council resolutions October 2015
Consultations	3Generate 2016 Youth President's advisory group Faith and Order Committee

Summary of Impact

Faith and Order	To consider the production of more detailed theological reflections on the issues outlined in the report.
Financial	Limited to the development of suitable material based on this report to aid reflective conversations, and the maintenance of a web-page containing links to the resources within this report.
Personnel	Identification of appropriate person to maintain web-page.
Legal	Drawing up guidelines on the use of pornography by presbyters, deacons and lay employees for the use of disciplinary panels.
Risk	This is a controversial area and there are risks that those involved in the publication of this report may receive direct contact by individuals or groups which could be difficult to manage without appropriate support.

Summary

The Methodist Church in Britain was challenged by a call from 3Generate 2014 to help people of all ages to discuss the realities and challenges of pornography. This report responds to that challenge, and in doing so it highlights the complexity of defining and agreeing what is pornography and explores some of the many issues raised by a rapidly changing agenda, in part driven by the development of digital technology and the wider use of the internet. It explores the available research evidence and in particular seeks to hear the voices of children and young people. It reviews recent responses taken by policy makers and the wider church and does some initial theological exploration. The report recognises the difficulties of being able to recommend many currently available resources, identifies those that can be used safely by individuals and groups, and also makes recommendations for the development of further resources on this subject that could be used to support reflective conversations throughout the Church. The report concludes with a call on government to improve sex and relationship education, making this mandatory in the school curriculum, and a recommendation to draw up guidelines on pornography with respect to the roles of presbyters, deacons and lay employees for the use of disciplinary panels.

“Young people today are the subjects of an interesting social experiment which goes like this: Create millions of moving pictures of people having sex. Make the pictures available to everyone, including children, at a single click. Maintain a sense of dirty mystery about sex so these videos are watched in secret and nobody feels like they can talk about them or ask any questions. React with astonishment when young people assume sex is identical to what they see in porn, and disapprove when they want to talk about it.”

Laura Bates, ‘Girl Up’¹

1. Introduction

1.1. *Fifty Shades of Grey*², a novel written by EL James, was first published in 2011. Whilst some described it as an erotic romance about a relationship between a young woman and a wealthy business man, many others expressed concern about the frequent depiction of explicit sexual practices, the apparent glorification of abusive relationships, and in particular the potential that it condoned or belittled violence towards women. However despite, or more probably because of, the controversy the book caused, it captured the interest and imagination of the world’s media because of its explicit sexual practices and by 2015 it had sold over 125 million copies worldwide, been translated in to 52 languages and had also been made in to a feature film.

1.2. At the meeting of 3Generate (the Methodist Children and Youth Assembly) in November 2014, the question of how to respond to books such as *Fifty Shades of Grey* was discussed by the 18-23 year old age stream. As part of their report to the Methodist Conference 2015 they challenged the Church, stating:

“Pornography: What should our response as Christians be to the pornography industry? What about the Sun’s page three? 50 Shades of Grey? How can we encourage respect for the different sexes?”³

The report went on to make suggestions about how the Church “could help young people feel more comfortable and confident talking about sex and adult things and recognise that it is a normal and acceptable subject to talk about and that sex is not necessarily a bad thing.” They asked for sessions on sex education in youth groups by external and Methodist experts on the

¹ Bates, L. Girl Up. Simon & Schuster 2016

² James EL, Fifty Shades of Grey. Vintage Books 2011

³ <http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-2015-11-3Generate.pdf>

subject, and asked that the Methodist Church be involved in wider discussions about providing improved education in schools on sex, relationships and pornography. They asked that the Church continue its support of the “No More Page 3” and similar campaigns. They also highlighted the need of the Church to educate young people and involve them in conversations about the use of pornography as well as recognising the effect this industry has on people’s esteem.

- 1.3. As a result of the debate, a Notice of Motion (NoM) 215 on pornography was brought before Methodist Conference 2015 and the Conference directed:
 - i That the Methodist Council appoint a Working Group to prepare a draft Conference statement and discussion materials appropriate for different age groups on pornography and to report to the 2017 Conference
 - ii That the Working Group has expertise in sexual ethics, psychology and the nature of digital media, as well as representatives from the 3Generate age group.
 - iii The Terms of Reference be agreed by the Methodist Council in consultation with the 3Generate representatives to the Methodist Council.
- 1.4. Following further discussion at the subsequent Methodist Council it was resolved that, rather than producing a Conference statement, a more useful response to the Notice of Motion would be to produce a short report as it was acknowledged that this is a rapidly changing area and a statement, which is meant to last for many years, would quickly become dated. As a result a working group was established to produce or identify appropriate discussion material aimed at enabling different age groups to understand the realities and challenges of pornography, to resource informed and reflective conversations on these issues, and to undertake some initial theological thinking on pornography and its impact. The full terms of reference and membership of the working group can be found at Appendix 1.
- 1.5. It is important to note therefore that this report is not a position statement about pornography for the Methodist Church and only seeks to offer a limited exploration of the issues involved, which may form the basis for the development of more focused or detailed resources in the future which could be used in local churches or other appropriate settings.

2. What is pornography?

“I can't define pornography, but I know it when I see it.”
(Justice Stewart in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* 378 US 184 (1964))

- 2.1. Pornography can be defined as “printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate sexual excitement.” (Oxford English Dictionaries 2016)
- 2.2. There are however many different definitions of pornography. As a House of Lords report acknowledges, “[t]here is no statutory definition of ‘pornography’ in UK legislation. The term ‘pornography’ is a contested concept and is currently interpreted differently by individuals and organisations.”⁴ The term ‘pornography’ means different things to different people, and the variety of moral, ethical and theological judgments that are attached to particular definitions add to the complexity. For example, some of the debate about *Fifty Shades of Grey* focused on the question of whether it was erotica or pornography: whilst neither is easy to define, and attempting to draw clear distinctions between them is problematic, erotica is

⁴ Impact of pornography on society. Library note. House of Lords (2015). Report produced in advanced of the House of Lords debate on the impact of pornography on 5th November 2016.
<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/LLN-2015-0041>

sometimes assumed to be more acceptable than pornography.

- 2.3. It would be generally accepted that pornography refers to magazines and films containing images of naked people, often engaged in sexual explicit acts, that have been produced primarily to sell for the purposes of sexual stimulation. The purchase of these products is often restricted by age and whilst some magazines may have been sold in newsagents and restricted to the “top shelf”, many other pornographic products were previously restricted to “Adult Only” shops. However the rapid development of the internet and the use of increasingly sophisticated mobile phones have radically changed how pornography is created, distributed, accessed and used. The internet has also led to an expansion in those creating pornography which in turn has also led to a significant change in the content and form of pornography, as producers compete with one another for customers and in some cases generate images that are more extreme and violent to attract attention.
- 2.4. However, this understanding can also vary between different cultures and faith backgrounds and even between individuals within different cultural or faith groups. It has also changed over different historical periods. For instance, the display of a woman's uncovered ankles is still regarded as sexually explicit in some cultures and, although this would no longer be the case in most western cultures, a little over a century ago this would also have been regarded as unacceptable in the UK.
- 2.5. The equivalent definition given by the dictionary.cambridge.org (2016) helps to illustrate this point. It defines pornography as, “books, magazines, films, etc. with no artistic value that describe or show sexual acts or naked people in a way that is intended to be sexually exciting”. By doing so it introduces the concept of “artistic value” to try to differentiate pornography from art. However, what constitutes “artistic value” is subjective as the depiction of a partially naked or fully naked human body in a picture displayed in a publicly accessible art gallery would generally be acknowledged as artistic within the context of modern UK culture, whilst the same image on page 3 of a tabloid newspaper or in a magazine aimed at young men may be more likely to be regarded as pornographic and unacceptable to more people within the same cultural context. More detail about the legal definitions of pornography can be found in appendix 2.
- 2.6. Broad generalizations can be made about what is, and what is not pornography, but it is difficult to draw precise boundaries between the different types of sexual imagery described by terms such as nudity, fine art, erotica, soft-core porn, XXX, hard-core porn, extreme pornography and sexploitation. The task is made more complex by the fact that images considered by many to be at the less concerning end of the spectrum may be illegal, whilst those at the higher end may not be. For instance, it could be illegal for two 17 year olds in a consensual relationship to share naked pictures of each other, but it may also be legal for violent and sexually explicit pornography to be filmed and sold. Instead a range of characteristics to interpret the variety of media types that can, or in some cases should, be regarded as pornographic could be used, including a focus on consent, revenge, objectification, fetish, legality, context, exploitation, respect and equality.
- 2.7. Although it has been important to show some of the complexities in talking about pornography through illustrating how difficult it is to define, a focus on definitions, or on what is and is not legal, can miss the wider moral and theological issues. Whilst the legal definition of pornography may be suitable for a policing and judicial process it does not necessarily serve well the needs of individuals and communities trying to make decisions about where to draw appropriate boundaries in an age of increased acceptability of, and access to, sexual images and text. The fundamental concern is about how pornography harms people, predominantly but not exclusively women and children, or depicts the subordination of one person over another in such a way as to endorse that subordination. By doing so, pornography can be

damaging to women, men and children if it encourages attitudes which are not loving, mutually fulfilling and respectful relationships, or contributes to legitimizing violent and abusive behaviour.

- 2.8. The abuse of power by one individual or group to dominate and control another is contrary to the creation of a just and creative social environment where people are valued and treated with respect and dignity and enabled to flourish. Instead such behaviour results in destructive relationships that demean, degrade or abuse others. An exploration of the realities and challenges of pornography and the impact it has on our society is therefore inextricably linked to a wider exploration and understanding of human relationships and sexuality, as well as our relationship with God.
- 2.9. Imagery which is sexually stimulating, or which celebrates the beauty of the human body within an appropriate context, may be regarded by society as acceptable. Concerns properly arise, however, when such imagery 'objectifies' the other person so that they become not a person to be loved, cherished and respected, with rights and dignity to be honoured, but rather an object, or commodity, to be to the means of gratification outside a relationship of love and mutual consent. Such imagery often has the corollary of putting emphasis on the beauty of bodily perfection rather than a relationship of love and mutual delight. This feeds and is fed by our culture's focus upon, even obsession with, bodily perfection. Undoubtedly this places people, especially young girls and increasingly young boys, under significant pressure, which can lead to distorted body images, undermining of confidence and self-worth and in some situations self-harm.
- 2.10. Whilst people will no doubt continue to use certain words about sex and sexual imagery, with the hope, or assumption, that others will understand them in the same way they were intended, it should be considered best practice to use caution in choosing words when discussing this subject. Consideration should be given about how different people could have varying interpretations of words such as soft-core porn, hard-core porn, promiscuity, purity and sexual integrity. The intended meaning of a word used may not be the received meaning for anyone hearing or reading it and could, inadvertently, cast judgment on a person or group. Careful consideration of the language we use, and the negative and positive values that could be attached to a word, may help us change the way people relate to each other as human beings, equal in the eyes of God.
- 2.11. God is continually at work in the world. As the Methodist Church seeks to discern the presence and activity of God, it pays attention to contemporary experience, thought and scholarship when reflecting on its theology and views. These are explored further in sections 3 – 6 below.

3. Some challenges raised by pornography

- 3.1. Whilst the law can help to some extent in making judgements about pornography, particularly that which is deemed to be illegal such as the taking, making, showing, distribution, possession or advertising of any indecent image of a child, there remains significant controversy and debate about other aspects of pornography involving adults which are currently legal to make, share, sell, buy and view. This is in part because what is regarded as pornographic and unacceptable by one individual or group is regarded as art to be valued and appreciated by another person or group of people. This is most noticeable in western culture, which is becoming more liberal in its view of sex and sexuality at the same time as art is becoming more experimental. However this isn't a new issue. Books such as James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* and DH Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* were both subject to significant censorship when published in the 1920s and 1930s respectively, but today they are studied in

school English literature classes and have been dramatised for prime time television.

- 3.2. Writing for The Tate gallery website in 2015⁵, Lily Bonesso commented: “For many, the porn industry represents an archaic and outmoded view of women. It continues to promote an ideology of objectification and submission which is widely considered anti-progressive.” However she went on to add: “With opposing opinions and interpretations being a given within contemporary art, many feel the only quality that can really be measured is the intention behind the work. Others argue that the artist’s intention holds less precedence than the experience of the model. Pornography itself could have the potential to move beyond being symbolic of violence and female oppression, as we see in the relatively new genre of ‘female-friendly’ porn being produced today. Likewise if art is to reflect the experience of the artist, and also be, for many, an act of self-expression, then sex as subject matter for art should not be disregarded or censored.”
- 3.3. In 2014, The Guardian writer Zoe Williams wrote about her exploration of what is known as “ethical” or “fair trade porn”⁶. She interviewed a number of film makers, one of whom said, “Feminist porn is explicitly focused on women’s desires and sexuality. Whereas I think it’s possible to produce male-gaze porn in an ethical and fair trade way. That means complete respect for performers, for their boundaries and consent. If someone says no, you don’t ask again, you don’t ask last minute in the middle of a scene. You don’t trick them into doing stuff. You pay them. It’s not only all of those principles, but also communicating that to your audience.” In the same article a veteran porn star said, “The religious right and the feminist left have been indivisible to me. People who are suffering from sexual guilt, sexual anything, their suffering is as real as a broken leg, it’s as real as cancer. They need someone who can tend to them. Who will say, ‘Your sexual desires don’t disgust me, they don’t freak me out.’” Williams concluded by writing, “And perhaps this is the sophistication of ethical porn: without exploiting or harming the participants, it allows you to explore what you’re into. You have a right not to be ashamed. This, says Cindy Gallop (who started the website *Make Love Not Porn*), gives us our cue about how to talk about porn: “When you force anything into the darkness, you make it much easier for bad things to happen, and much harder for good things to happen. The answer is not to shut down. The answer is to open up.”
- 3.4. Articles such as this, and the use of terms like “ethical” or “fair trade porn”, could be seen as trying to sanitise a subject and an industry that many would regard as always unacceptable. Such a position is not only advocated by religious groups, but also by *feminist anti-pornography campaigners such as Prof Gail Dines, the author of *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*, in which she argues that boys and men are exposed online to pornography that is increasingly cruel and violent toward women and that this also exposes teenage girls to the images that affect their sense of sexual identity and which according to Dines “ultimately tell lies about women”, suggesting that they are “hypersexualized, young, thin, toned, hairless, and, in many cases, surgically enhanced.”⁷
- 3.5. Anti-pornography campaigners will also highlight the exploitative nature of the pornography industry, suggesting links between people trafficking, prostitution and the development of pornography. They give examples of women who find themselves disempowered and controlled by others because of situations such as poverty or migration status, and are forced in to taking part in the development of pornography without any real choice. Many of the poorest and most unstable countries have the highest incidences of human trafficking, often with this movement of people being into the wealthiest countries. Where economic alternatives do not exist, women and girls are more vulnerable to being tricked and coerced

⁵ <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/art-and-pornography>

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/nov/01/ethical-porn-fair-trade-sex>

⁷ Dines G, *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2010, p. 102

into sexual servitude. Whilst establishing the extent of this can be difficult because of the unregulated nature of this area, there is no doubt that many vulnerable people are exploited and damaged by the actions of others.

- 3.6. However this is not the experience or view of all those involved in the pornography industry. The challenge offered by some is to respond with evidence suggesting women taking part in pornographic films have higher self-esteem, a better quality of life, more positivity about body image and have greater levels of spirituality than a matched sample of women⁸. Again, such surveys and reports have to be understood within the context in which they were carried out, and they will not have included the views of women where the power relationship prevents them from having their voice heard.
- 3.7. The examples from these articles and comments, alongside other issues outlined throughout this report, help highlight the challenges that any thinking by the Church will need to take in to account. For example:
- i Bonesso's article (paragraph 3.2) raises questions about how pornography represents and depicts women, and whether it promotes "an ideology of objectification and submission". It further raises questions about whose experience and interests are determinative: is it the intention behind the work that is key, is it the experience of those depicted, or is it the effect that it has on the viewer and those to whom the viewer relates?
 - ii Williams' article (paragraph 3.3) gives priority to the experience of the 'performers', raising questions both about the nature of consent and the power dynamics involved, and about the understandings of sex, sexuality and the body if all are only viewed in a framework of commercial transaction.
 - iii Williams and Gallop (paragraph 3.3) both point to the need for spaces and opportunities for people to explore their sexuality without a sense of shame.
 - iv Dines' comments (paragraph 3.4) encourage reflection on whether and how exposure to pornography impacts on a viewer's understandings of sex and relationships, their patterns of behaviour and their body image.
 - v How can the views and experience of the voiceless (paragraphs 3.5) be heard and responded to whilst also recognising the contrasting views of those who have greater self-determination (paragraph 3.6)?
- 3.8. There are many other issues to consider in relation to pornography including understandings of consent and choice; issues of abuse, exploitation and power; the effects of guilt and shame both for those taking part in the production of pornographic images and those using the material; the blurring of reality and fantasy leading to distorted thinking for both boys and girls, women and men, in terms of how they view themselves, their body image, the physical expectations of others, and their expected sexual behaviour; the question of difference in culture and context; understandings of sexual intercourse used to express and enhance a loving relationship and sex as an isolated physical act; and where the boundaries lie between celebrating the joy of being a sexual being created by and in the image of God, and engaging in sexual acts, either directly or by viewing them, which debase this God-given gift.
- 3.9. A reflection on the issue of context illustrates some of the complexities. Consensual sexual intercourse between a husband and wife within the context of a loving relationship is a form of sexual behaviour legitimised by the Church in its understanding of marriage. However, what

⁸ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/porn-stars-and-the-naked-truth-8348388.html>

if the couple filmed themselves having sex for their own personal use? How would our view change if they shared the film for free on a closed internet chat room that only contained similar couples sharing similar films? And would our opinion change further if they were paid for sharing the film of themselves? If the same couple were then invited to film the same sexual act by a multinational pornography producer with the intention of distributing the film publicly and legally, would that again change our opinion? If at any point we subsequently discovered that one partner had been uncomfortable with the filming but was persuaded to go along with it, would that further alter our view?

- 3.10. It is also worth considering the same scenarios but from the position of the viewer. Would we consider the couple watching their own film as watching pornography? Would the situation be different if one or both of the couple were masturbating whilst watching their own film, or the film of another married couple shared freely on the internet chat room, or if they used either film therapeutically to help overcome the male partner's erectile dysfunction? Does that depend more on what they are thinking than physically doing, or is that an arbitrary distinction?

4. Children and young peoples' experience and views

- 4.1. The wide use of social media and ready access to online websites using mobile devices carried in the pockets or bags of more and more people, as well as the development of broadband enabling better and faster access to the internet, has led to increased accessibility to information and images that would have been previously been very difficult to obtain. This has in turn created increased anxiety amongst parents and guardians about how they can best protect their children, not least when their children may be far more proficient in the use of technology than they are and pornography is often perceived as being just one click away.
- 4.2. In 2013, a research team at Middlesex University, on behalf of the children's commissioner for England, used a literature review to explore the effects that exposure and access to pornography have on children and young people⁹. It concluded that there was good evidence that a significant proportion of children and young people were exposed to or accessed pornography but that there were differences in the literature regarding the regularity or the rate of recurrence of this happening. They therefore highlighted the importance of considering frequency as well as prevalence in order to obtain a full picture. They also found that exposure increases with age; that boys and young men generally view pornography more positively and state that they view it primarily out of curiosity while girls and young women generally report that it is unwelcome and socially distasteful; and that access and exposure to pornography affect children and young people's sexual beliefs. These beliefs may include unrealistic attitudes about sex, maladaptive attitudes about relationships, more sexually permissive attitudes, greater acceptance of casual sex, beliefs that women are sex objects, more frequent thoughts about sex, sexual uncertainty (eg the extent to which children and young people are unclear about their sexual beliefs and values), and less progressive gender role attitudes (eg male dominance and female submission). They also concluded that children and young people learn from and may change their behaviour due to exposure and access to pornography and may be more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviour.
- 4.3. The researchers also commented on areas for which there was much less robust evidence, such as whether there was anything particular about what children and young people are exposed to or access, particularly with respect to pornography that contained explicitly

⁹ Horvath M.A.H, Alys L, Massey K, Pina A, Scally and Adler J.R "Basically... porn is everywhere" A Rapid Evidence Assessment on the Effects that Access and Exposure to Pornography has on Children and Young People. (2013).
http://www.mdx.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/48545/BasicallyporniseverywhereReport.pdf

degrading and dehumanising images, and with a greater focus on aggressive sexual activity. There were also contradictory findings regarding the possible effects of pornography on children and young people’s sexual expectations, but there was some evidence indicating that young people were dissatisfied with the sex education they are receiving and that they are increasingly drawing on pornography, expecting it to educate and give information regarding sexual practices and norms. Finally they questioned the evidence that links exposure to pornography with aggressive behaviour as being limited in its interpretive value.

- 4.4. A more recent Middlesex University led study in June 2016 explored these concerns further, on behalf of the NSPCC and the children's commissioner for England¹⁰. The researchers questioned 1,001 children aged 11 to 16 and overall found that 47% of 11-16 year olds had never seen any pornography on line. At 11, the majority of children (72%) had not seen online pornography, but by age 15 65% reported seeing pornography online at least once. It was more likely for children to find material accidentally (28%), for example via a pop-up advertisement, than to specifically seek it out (19%). It is important to highlight that that most young people did not report actively searching for pornography.
- 4.5. Of those that had seen pornography, just over half of the boys (53%) and 39% of girls responded that what they had seen was a realistic depiction of sex, with 44% of boys and 29% of girls wanting to emulate this. However 87% of the boys and 77% of the girls felt pornography failed to help them understand consent. It is also worth noting that, despite the intense media interest and parental anxiety in this area, the survey found that just 4% of young people had generated naked or semi-naked images of themselves, and only a fraction of these had been shared. However this contrasted with a survey of 2000 children conducted by ChildLine in 2015 in which 12% admitted making or being part of a sexually explicit video.¹¹
- 4.6. The Middlesex University study asked young people to evaluate the online pornography they had seen in terms of 14 possible responses to complete the following sentence, ‘Most online porn that I have seen was...’

Views about pornography seen	%N=447
Unrealistic	49.2%
Arousing	46.7%
Shocking	45.9%
Exciting	40.0%
Exploitative	37.8%
Silly	35.6%
Amusing	34.2%
Degrading/Humiliating	33.7%
Repulsive/Revolting	29.5%
Fun	28.6%
Scary	22.8%
Upsetting	21.3%
Boring	20.4%
Informative/Educational	18.8%

The results showed a vary varied picture but as the researchers concluded, it is important to keep in mind that none of these categories are mutually exclusive and that it is possible for one young person to both be aroused and troubled by the content they view (or indeed by

¹⁰ Martellozzo, E., Monaghan, A., Adler, J.R., Davidson, Leyva, R. and Horvath, M.A.H I wasn’t sure it was normal to watch it. (2016): NSPCC <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2016/i-wasnt-sure-it-was-normal-to-watch-it/>

¹¹ NSPCC, ‘Online Porn: Evidence of its Impact on Young People’, 6 April 2015.

their own arousal).

- 4.7. Importantly, most young people questioned in the survey wanted better sex education, covering the impact of pornography, and wanted to be able to find out about sex and relationships and about pornography in ways that were safe, private and credible. They went on to highlight the need for materials that are age and gender appropriate. Some also touched on lack of teacher awareness of the potential additional vulnerabilities faced by young people who do not identify as either male or female in a binary manner. Supporting this view, a survey published in 2017 for Barnardo's¹² of nearly a thousand 11-15 year old children found that 74% believed that all children would be safer if they had age-appropriate sex and relationship education at school and that the UK Government should make this compulsory.
- 4.8. These findings echoed the views of a small group of young adults who attended 3Generate in November 2016. At the annual event thirty one 18-23 year olds, 71% of whom were women, completed a brief survey, the full results of which can be found in Appendix 3. This self-selecting group included young adults who were older than those surveyed by Middlesex University and these factors therefore make it difficult to make any direct comparison with the earlier results described. However it is clear that this small group of predominately young women believed that it was easy to see pornography without intentionally searching for it and that viewing this was distressing for 74% of them. Despite it being a subject that was difficult to talk about for the majority of respondents, 87% believed that the Methodist Church both nationally and locally should enable more open discussions about the realities and challenges of pornography, with more people fully agreeing that this should be taking place locally within the church. These views were also reflected in discussions the working group had with the Youth President's advisory group.

5. Understanding the realities of the use of pornography

- 5.1. It is very difficult to find reliable facts and figures about the realities of pornography. Whilst there is no doubt that pornography is a multi-billion pound industry, the estimates of its actual value vary significantly and are increasingly complex to analyse with the greater use of on-line media. There are also no official statistics regarding the number of individuals accessing pornography in the UK; and whilst a number of recent studies have focused on the exposure to and use of pornography amongst adolescents, there are fewer figures relating to adults. One relatively recent study¹³ of a random sample of 18-59 years-old Norwegians found that 94% of all men, 92% of lesbians/bisexuals, and 67% of heterosexual women reported exposure to pornography whilst 51% of those identifying as gay men/bisexual, 42% of heterosexual men, 24% of lesbians/bisexuals, and 12% of heterosexual women had used pornography. Another study¹⁴ based only on men and women in a relationship found that 64% of women reported no pornography use and 30% of women used pornography once per month or less. For men, however, only 27% reported no use of pornography, with 10% reporting that they used pornography three or more days per week. Whilst these are limited studies and should not be generalised, they help to provide some context to understand the impact of pornography on individuals and wider society.
- 5.2. In 2013 the BBC reviewed the then commonly quoted figure of 37% of the internet being made up of pornographic material¹⁵. The article highlighted that a lot of different statistics

¹² https://www.barnardos.org.uk/news/Children_want_safer_lives/latest-news.htm?ref=121054

¹³ Traeen B; Daneback K, The use of pornography and sexual behaviour among Norwegian men and women of differing sexual orientation. *Sexologies*. 22 (2) (pp e41-e48), 2013

¹⁴ Poulsen FO et al, 'Pornography Use: Who Uses it and How it is Associated with Couple Outcomes', *The Journal of Sex Research*, 2013, vol 50 no 1

¹⁵ Many things in porn are exaggerated, including the statistics regularly quoted to show how much pornography is on the web. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-23030090>

are often quoted in debates about pornography but few stand up to scrutiny. For instance the 37% internet figure came from a press release put out in June 2010 by net filtering firm Optenet. However a spokesman for the firm told the BBC: "The statistics are not up-to-date and I would not use them to reflect the reality of the web nowadays." Optenet said the figure came from a "representative sample" of about four million URLs taken from its database of web content. However, that same year the largest study ever done into human sexuality published a very different figure for how many of the web's most popular sites were devoted to porn. The academics behind the research based their results on analysis of the million most frequented sites in the world and found that just 4% of those websites were pornographic. As the BBC report went on to comment, while the two studies do not measure exactly the same metric - Optenet counted pages, the academics sites – it is worth noting that the number of pages on a site says nothing about its influence or audience. As other studies suggest, pornography sites are likely to be disproportionately large as they trade on giving visitors new content and, as a result, create hundreds of new pages each day. Pornography sites have huge archives but the number of pages that people actually view is relatively small.

- 5.3. It is not unusual to find articles within the media, or positions purported to be factual, that when scrutinised are not supported by academically recognised research evidence and are instead based more on anecdote or personal opinion. Canadian academics¹⁶ reviewed whether commonly articulated statements about pornography made in 101 articles printed in magazines, newspapers or popular internet blogs published in countries including Canada, USA and UK, had any basis in academic research. They analysed the evidence behind the five most commonly written about themes, namely pornography addiction; pornography is good for relationships; pornography use is a form of adultery; my partner's pornography use makes me feel inadequate; and pornography use changes expectations about sexual behaviour. It was of note that the 13th commonest theme identified was "my religion says pornography is bad" although this was not analysed further in this particular study.
- 5.4. Pornography addiction was by far the most common theme, appearing in 53% of articles reviewed, and often with a very clear degree of certainty about this condition. However the research team concluded that while it seems clear that some individuals become compulsively and intrusively involved with pornography in a fashion that produces distress to the self or to others, popular media use of the term "addiction" to describe such involvement seemed unjustified.
- 5.5. 34% of articles had "pornography is good for sexual relations" as their theme, with a typical focus on pornography's ability to add interest to a couple's sex life or the suggestion that women in particular may use pornography alone as a source of empowerment and sexual exploration. However, despite the accumulated evidence of generally positive perceptions of pornography use on sexual relationships that can be found within academic research and referenced by the Canadian academics, such conclusions are not always consistent with studies which more typically suggest that pornography use may lower sexual satisfaction rather than improve it. The researchers suggested that this inconsistency even in research may indicate that the influence of pornography use on sexual and relationships satisfaction can be quite complex, as the impact may differ by the gender of the user and the relational versus solitary context of pornography use. For example, men's use of pornography may be associated with decreased sexual and relational fulfilment in couple relationships while women's use of pornography may be associated with increased sexual and relationship fulfilment as a couple.

¹⁶ Montgomery-Graham S et al, How the popular media rushes to judgment about pornography and relationships while research lags behind. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 2015; doi:10.3138/cjhs.243-A4

- 5.6. The theme of pornography use as a form of adultery was mentioned in 26% of articles reviewed. Such articles tended to be, although were not entirely from, websites and magazines with a religious affiliation, with the emphasis being on women who perceived their male partner's pornography use to be a form of adultery, whilst no items were found that discussed men worried about their female partner's pornography use and considering it as adultery. However the limited number of studies examining this area suggests that neither men nor women think that watching pornography is equivalent to adultery unless it becomes a compulsion; and it may be more the issue of secrecy, independent of the act of watching pornography, that may be contributing to the perceptions that a partner's viewing of pornography is equivalent to an affair. Alternatively, it may be that hidden pornography use is simply more characteristic in couples in which there are already relationship problems.
- 5.7. The fourth commonest area (23%) to be written about was whether a male partner's pornography use makes women feel inadequate. Again this was an area where the research evidence was not robust, although it generally does corroborate the view that a partner's use of pornography can negatively impact self-perceptions of attractiveness, albeit that this is a minority experience.
- 5.8. The fifth and final theme to be reviewed was whether pornography use changes a partner's expectations about sexual behaviour, a subject of 22% of articles. They concluded that while research is beginning to show evidence that some people imitate or acquire an interest in some sexual behaviours depicted in pornographic media, it is likely that this is within a range of activities that they perceive to be acceptable by themselves and their partner. However the paper's authors reflect that there is very little research attention concerning the occurrence or relationship consequences of pornography-influenced changes in sexual behaviour.
- 5.9. In summary therefore, this paper offers some examples of how difficult it is to get beyond deeply held views and opinions that are commonly expressed on this subject in the lay media. Having access to and being able to interpret academic research in this area is also a challenge. These researchers only found concordance to any significant extent between lay reports about pornography and academic research in two of the five themes, namely "pornography is good for sexual relationships" and "my partner's pornography use makes me feel inadequate". There was also some mixed but generally positive alignment on the theme of "my partner's pornography use makes women feel inadequate", but lack of research evidence to support the assertions about "pornography addiction" or "pornography use is akin to adultery".
- 5.10. Further research has suggested that our beliefs and feelings about pornography are influenced by our religious background. Whilst one recent study suggested that adolescents with religious adherence, particularly boys, used less pornography¹⁷, the psychological impact on them when they do can be greater than for those with no religious belief. This was highlighted by a study in 2016 of 713 U.S adults¹⁸ which found that higher certainty in God's existence was associated with higher levels of perceived addiction to pornography compared to those with no religious background. This perceived addiction was also associated with psychological distress (combining anxiety, depression, and general stress), although effect sizes were small. However, lower levels of perceived addiction suggest that nonbelievers may be less likely overall to experience psychological distress related to perceived addiction than those with a religious faith. This and other studies suggest that it is the perception of addiction, rather than the pornography itself, that causes the psychological distress. This is particularly the case when a religious belief generates a sense of sin, leading to feelings of guilt and shame that

¹⁷ Rasmussen K, Bierman A, How does religious attendance shape trajectories of pornography use across adolescence? *Journal of Adolescence*. 49, 2016

¹⁸ Bradley, David F et al, Perceived addiction to internet pornography among religious believers and nonbelievers. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*. Vol.23(2-3), 2016, pp. 225-243

would not necessarily have been the case for those with no religious belief.

6. Policy makers responding to the challenges and reality of pornography

- 6.1. The UK Government has been responding to these issues in a range of ways. Recent parliamentary debates have focused on whether availability should be censored, and if so by whom and on what basis. One way of doing this would be through restricting access by internet service providers (ISPs). In 2013 ISPs were told by Government that they would have to have filtering systems in place. The ISPs would prevent inappropriate content being accessed in homes which had the filters in place. The big four providers – BT, TalkTalk, Sky and Virgin – put in place opt-out filters for new customers, with filtering being the default option. However, take up was low, with an industry average of just 13% of customers using filters by July 2014. Sky has subsequently gone further, blocking all material deemed unsuitable for children under 13 to customers who had not opted out. In January 2016 Sky began sending emails to existing customers asking if they wanted to turn the filters on, turning on the filter automatically if they did not reply. Currently this system is voluntary for the ISPs but there have been attempts to put this on a legal footing, notably through Baroness Howe's Online Safety Bill which has been introduced as a Private Member's Bill on a number of occasions, and returned to the House of Lords in 2016.
- 6.2. There are however concerns that filtering results in "over-blocking", resulting in the regular blocking of legitimate sites. This may mean that people, and especially children, are unable to access genuine information, for example about sexual health.
- 6.3. In its 2015 election manifesto, the Conservative Party promised to restrict access for under-18s to all websites containing pornographic material through age verification. After consultation on this was issued in February 2016, the Government has brought legislation in the Digital Economy Bill requiring age verification for commercial pornographic websites and applications containing still and moving images, and a new regulatory framework to underpin it in July 2016. However it should be borne in mind that, even with this legislation, technological solutions will only ever provide a barrier around access to and blocking of websites which is open to work-arounds by those who are intent on accessing pornography.
- 6.4. In further legislation, restrictions were introduced under the Audiovisual Media Services Regulations 2014 relating to various sex acts which could be depicted in pornography produced and sold in Britain. The regulations brought paid-for video-on-demand under the same regulatory guidelines as DVD pornography (R18 films). These guidelines are set out by the British Board of Film Censors. They banned three life-threatening acts and some abusive or non-consensual acts. However, the sex acts banned by the guidelines may be watched in pornography from abroad as the guidelines cover only British-produced films. This means that certain acts may be viewed in the UK but not filmed here.
- 6.5. Legislation was also introduced in April 2015 to outlaw "revenge porn", defined as disclosing a "private sexual photograph or film" without the consent of the person depicted in the content, and with the intent to cause them distress. Social media sites do not have responsibility for carrying such content posted by users, but could be sued for breach of copyright (if owned by the victim) if they do not take it down. Most social media sites have been rewriting their rules, with Instagram tightening its standards aimed at tackling pornography and harassment by cutting the number of times it says "please" to one from four, and moving from saying "don't be mean" to "don't harass".
- 6.6. The trend for sending explicit photos by mobile phone, commonly known as sexting, has resulted in increased criminalisation of young people. In 2015 a 14-year-old boy was added to

the police database for sending a naked picture of himself to a female classmate with the act being recorded as a crime of making and distributing an indecent image. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Children has said that the way police log incidents means they are required to give children a criminal record which would need to be disclosed in a subsequent DBS check. Instead, the group argued, they should have the discretion to refer young people to other sources of support.

- 6.7. While many video games have used images of scantily clad women or characters to sell or enhance games, some go further, using sex acts or nudity as a character motivation, in-game reward, or simply as a gameplay element. Modern console publishers often have policies against depictions of nudity and explicit sexuality, but bootleg versions are available, and social gaming also makes pornographic content possible. Gaming content raises questions around boundaries between animation and real people doing real things, and also the extent to which moral landscapes are moulded by the plots of video games.
- 6.8. Schools are coming under increasing pressure to teach children about pornography in Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PHSE) education. Ofsted has said that PHSE has become too focused on the “mechanics” of reproduction¹⁹, whilst the then Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, said in 2015 that children should be taught a modern PHSE curriculum that “helps them deal with sexting and revenge porn”²⁰. Whilst PHSE is not statutory in all school settings, good practice is that teaching should cover issues raised by pornography appropriately²¹. The increased promotion by the Government of academy status could also further have an impact on the consistency of PHSE. It should be noted that different legislation will apply in different jurisdictions. Media and broadcasting are reserved issues, so are likely to be UK wide. However criminal laws covering, for example, revenge porn are different in Scotland, where different legislation is under consideration, and education is a devolved issue and so arrangements can be different in each jurisdiction.
- 6.9. Research from around the world, backed up in the UK by many including the Sex Education Forum (hosted by the National Children’s Bureau and of which the Methodist Church is a member) suggests that good quality education about relationships and sex helps young people understand not only their physical bodies, but also the complexities of how we relate to each other. Placing a greater emphasis on the importance of relationships would lead to a better understanding about the role of sex within the context of a relationship. Good relationship and sex education (RSE) is known to equip young people for life, help them make decisions and have control of their own bodies, and also delays the first sexual encounter they have, as well as improving the quality of that experience.
- 6.10. An analysis²² of three major surveys of 16-24 year olds between 1990 and 2012 found that between these dates the proportion citing school lessons as their main source of information about sexual matters increased from 28.2% to 40.3%. In 2010–2012, parents were reported as a main source of information by only 7.1% of males and 14.1% of females responding. Most

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413178/Not_yet_good_enough_personal__social__health_and_economic_education_in_schools.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.brightblue.org.uk/index.php/medias/speeches1/item/460-speech-by-the-rt-hon-nicky-morgan-mp>

²¹ https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/sites/default/files/SRE%20for%20the%2021st%20Century%20-%20FINAL.pdf_0.pdf

²² Tanton C et al, Patterns and trends in sources of information about sex among young people in Britain: evidence from three National Surveys of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles. *BMJ Open* 2015;5:e007834 doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2015-007834 http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/5/3/e007834.short?g=w_open_current_tab

young people reported not knowing enough when they first felt ready for sexual experience (68.1% male, 70.6% female). Rather than a pure focus on biological aspects of sex, they wanted more information about emotional and behavioural aspects of sexual matters (41.6% male, 46.8% female), as well as sexually transmitted infections (27.8% male, 29.8% female) and contraception (19% male, 27.5% female). Young people primarily wanted this information from school, parents or health professionals. Men and boys were more likely than women and girls to cite the internet (excluding pornography) as their main source (4.1% vs 1.9%). A small minority of men and boys (3.4% and very few women and girls (0.2%) reported pornography as their main source.

- 6.11. However, 23.9% of young men reported that whilst not the main source, pornography was one amongst many ways that they learnt about sex and relationships. These young men were less likely to report lessons at school or their parents as one of their information sources and were more likely to cite their first sexual partner as a source of information. They were also more likely to have unmet information needs (76.2% vs 65.5%), and were more frequently reporting the need for more biological (28.6% vs 20.1%) and psychosexual information (53.4% vs 37.7%) than men for whom pornography was not an information source.
- 6.12. Unfortunately, in the UK we know that over 50% of young people report receiving poor or very poor SRE; this is in part because parents and carers are reluctant to talk about sex and relationships with their children (at least within the same time frame that children are needing it) and whilst many think that our schools will teach children how to navigate human relationships, in reality many schools do not as it is not a statutory part of the curriculum. The current government guidance on SRE in schools was published in the year 2000, 4 years before Facebook was launched, 6 before Twitter, 9 before Whatsapp and 12 before Tinder. An entire generation of our children has passed through the UK education system with these technologies part of their daily lives but often with little or no formal or informal education about how these may impact on their sexual relationships. In the absence of a statutory, consistent and well-supported program of SRE in schools, combined with parental reluctance to talk (in a timely manner) about what children report that they need to know, it is not surprising that some young people may 'learn' about sex and relationships from pornography.
- 6.13. In March 2017 Justine Greening, Secretary of State for Education in England, announced her intention to put Relationships and Sex Education on a statutory footing, so every child would have access to age appropriate provision in a consistent way. She stated that the Government would amend the Children and Social Work Bill to make regulations requiring all primary schools in England to teach age-appropriate 'relationships education' and all secondary schools in England to teach age-appropriate 'relationships and sex education'. The amendments will also create a power enabling the Government to make regulations requiring PSHE to be taught in academies and maintained schools – it is already compulsory in independent schools. Regulations and statutory guidance will be subject to full public consultation with the intention that schools will be required to teach this content from September 2019.

7. How is the Church responding?

- 7.1. The issue of pornography has been the subject of a limited number of statements by various church bodies, including those listed in Appendix 4. A brief review of these statements indicated that there was no consistency in the definitions of pornography used, although there was more common ground over broad characterisations, including the deploring of all forms of commercialisation, abuse and exploitation of sex. The statements reviewed were primarily based on traditional understandings of human sexuality and marriage and saw pornography as primarily harmful. In addition, the statements tended not to put much emphasis on enabling and facilitating discussion on pornography or on engendering healthy

sexual relationships.

- 7.2. *Time for Action: Sexual abuse, the Churches and a new dawn for survivors*, a report to Churches Together in Britain and Ireland,²³ included pornography within the scope of sexual abuse, alongside unrealistic and degrading representations of women. The report highlighted that an essential feature of abuse is that it was not welcome, mutual or consensual but unwanted by the recipient.
- 7.3. As was highlighted in the initial report from 3Generate 2014 to the Methodist Conference in 2015, there was a call for the Church to continue to campaign against the images of topless women on page 3 of *The Sun* and other tabloid newspapers. The *No More Page 3* campaign, started by Lucy-Anne Holmes in August 2012, and supported by the Methodist Conference in 2014, reached 215,000 signatures by January 2015 and was ultimately successful when the topless feature was discontinued in January 2015.
- 7.4. Young people within the Methodist Church have particularly asked for opportunities for people to talk about issues relating to pornography in a safe, non-judgemental environment. This was the basis for the debate at Conference in 2015 and is echoed by a small survey carried out at 3Generate in 2016 (for details see Appendix 2). When asked if they wanted to talk to someone about an issue regarding relationships, sex, their sexuality/sexual identity, concerns about pornography, something they had seen on the internet that worried them or an inappropriate text/message that they had received, the majority felt that they would not turn to someone from their church, including youth workers, for that help and advice. In fact only 16% from the small sample felt that it was easy to talk about issues relating to pornography, sex and sexuality with people in the Methodist Church.
- 7.5. As has been implicit in much of what has been said so far, there are many words that are used with confidence by a speaker or writer, without knowing exactly how the person hearing or reading that word will interpret its meaning. 'Pornography' is one such word, where the values and context of both speaker and listener may be different enough that mixed messages, misunderstandings and differing interpretations can easily lead to assumptions, judgments, confusion or even justification for action or in-action. However, despite the current difficulties many people have in engaging in discussions in this area, there was a belief expressed by the vast majority of young adults questioned at 3Generate 2016 that the Methodist Church both locally and nationally should enable more open discussions about the realities and challenges of pornography, although one respondent importantly qualified their response by stating that the usefulness of such discussions would be dependent on how well facilitated and equipped they were.
- 7.6. This should not just be seen as an area for youth group leaders alone to acquire the necessary skills. Rather, as the availability and use of pornography can impact on people of all ages, and on people who live with varying degrees of physical or mental abilities, it is important that all church leaders with pastoral responsibility take these issues seriously as part of their own training and development. Also important is developing awareness that understanding pornography is essentially linked to understanding what a healthy sexual relationship is; and, unless we embrace that discussion and talk openly about sex, sexuality, relationships, consent, choice, violence, fantasy and the impact of technology, we will keep pornography a secret and fail to properly support those who are exploring the internet for answers. Fundamental to the debate on the impact of pornography, therefore, is how we understand and talk about the nature of human relationships and sex. This subject is returned to in section 10 below.

²³ Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, *Time for Action: Sexual abuse, the Churches and a new dawn for survivors* Church House Publishing: London 2002

8. Pornography, Sexuality and Healthy Sexual Relationships

8.1. As is apparent from this report, the subject of pornography raises significant issues and challenges, many of which need to be understood within a wider discussion about sexuality and what we believe to be healthy sexual relationships. However young people, and potentially many older people in the Church, find these difficult subjects to talk about openly. There is also a desire to discuss these issues within the context of their own Christian faith. It is therefore important for the Methodist Church to facilitate these conversations with reflections based on a foundation of our beliefs and theological understanding. It is not possible within the scope of a limited report such as this to provide detailed analysis of all the issues that arise. However this preliminary exploration may form the basis for the development of more focused or detailed resources in the future which could be used in local churches or other appropriate settings.

8.2. An “acceptable subject to talk about”

8.2.1. The 3Generate report to the 2015 Methodist Conference challenged the Methodist Church to think about its response to pornography and help “young people feel more comfortable and confident talking about sex and adult things and recognise that it is a normal and acceptable subject to talk about and that sex is not necessarily a bad thing.”²⁴ Sexuality is a fundamental aspect of human experience. As human beings, when our bodies change as we reach puberty we can experience a hormonally driven attraction to other people and a desire to have sex. Not everyone will have a healthy or happy experience of sex and some will choose not to follow what might appear to be a conventional route to sexual satisfaction, but the biological and social developmental process that occurs in the majority of post-pubescent people is part of the complexity, anguish and joy of being created human. It is in this context that we affirm that Christian teaching about love, respect and the inherent dignity of every person offer a framework to help us as we collectively try to understand how human sexuality manifests itself, in contrast to the embarrassment, silence and shame that seem to so often accompany the word ‘sex’.

8.2.2. The initial exploration of some of the issues relating to pornography also affirms the importance of giving attention to reflecting on what constitutes healthy sexual relationships and to the creation of safer space in which to talk about these issues. The Christian tradition has much to contribute to such conversations.

8.2.3. This contribution has not always been positive or helpful. During long periods of Christian history the Church, and the western Church in particular, has demonstrated a negative view of sexuality and sexual pleasure. Repentance and profound humility are called for as the Church recognises its own part in creating distorted understandings of sexuality and the ways in which it has, at times, contributed to the exploitation and abuse of vulnerable people particularly through its abuse of power. The Methodist Church continues to work to become a safer place, changing its patterns of behaviour accordingly. The group set up to monitor progress on the recommendations from the 2003 ecumenical report on sexual abuse²⁵ reported to the 2006 Methodist Conference that “we can do things that will make our community more welcoming and ‘safe’ whilst limiting the possibility of abuse occurring. And in doing this, the group believes our church communities will become more safe in a wider sense. There are many people

²⁴ <http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-2015-11-3Generate.pdf> and as noted in paragraph 1.2.

²⁵ Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, *Time for Action: Sexual abuse, the Churches and a new dawn for survivors*. Church House Publishing: London 2002

who need a safe place to explore difficult questions and things that really matter.”²⁶

8.2.4. Pornography can impact on the lives of people of all ages, and the need for safe spaces “in which to explore difficult questions and the things that really matter” is not just for young people but for people of all ages and at many different stages of life. As part of its pilgrimage of faith²⁷ the Methodist people have been encouraged to listen to one another with sensitivity, care and self-awareness, as they reflect on issues of relationships and human sexuality, and this commitment continues.

8.2.5. As the Methodist Church continues to reflect on its understandings of sexual relationships (particularly same sex relationships and, more recently, marriage), there is an opportunity to offer some theological thinking around positive and healthy sexual relationships, and this may be something the Marriage and Relationships Group may wish to explore further. To date, much of the focus (and resulting tension) in conversations about human sexuality has tended to be on the boundaries of ‘acceptable’ sexual behaviour, rather than extending thinking on the goodness of sexuality and what that means in our human relationships.

8.2.6. Methodists continue to be encouraged to engage in conversation about issues of human sexuality. It is acknowledged that such conversations can be difficult, challenging and sometimes painful and there are resources to help local churches reflect on how such conversations might be enabled²⁸ as well as the variety of resources available to help promote reflection on healthy sexual relationships.

8.3. The Gift of Sexuality ...

8.3.1. Despite a persisting negative view of sex and sexual pleasure, Christians have increasingly understood sexuality as part of the goodness of creation to be enjoyed and celebrated. The Methodist Conference has affirmed “the joy of human sexuality as God’s gift” and “given by God to be enjoyed, a subject for thanksgiving”²⁹ Sexuality is “essentially good” in that it enables the expression of love in a deep personal encounter and is an expression of God’s love for us and our love for each other.³⁰ The Methodist Church affirms this positive view of human relationships and sexuality and expresses it clearly within its marriage service.³¹

8.3.2. Sexuality relates to the physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of human nature and expresses something of our need for relatedness and our capacity to be fulfilled in deep loving relationships. God has given us a sexual urge to draw us into a loving relationship which at its best fulfils us in a secure, intimate, stable, loving bond, which is itself a reflection of the mystery of the relationship within the trinity.³² Many have seen in the doctrine of the trinity an expression of the outgoing love of God in creation, re-creation and interpersonal relationships.

²⁶ The Methodist Conference, 2006, *Tracing Rainbows Through the Rain*, p.2.

²⁷ The 1993 Resolutions, Resolution 6.; The Methodist Conference, 2005, *Pilgrimage of Faith*

²⁸ For example the *Living with Contradictory Convictions* report (2006) and discussion document; the 2016 model statement for ‘Conferring on matters on which we hold contradictory convictions’; *Challenging conversations: living with contradictory convictions*, 2006, ROOTS; <http://www.methodist.org.uk/who-we-are/views-of-the-church/human-sexuality>

²⁹ The 1993 Resolutions, Resolution 1.

³⁰ The Methodist Conference, 1990, *Issues in Human Sexuality*, §§13, 16, 22.

³¹ The Methodist Conference, 1992, *A Christian Understanding of Marriage, Family Life and the Single Person*, §62.

³² The Methodist Conference, 1990, *Issues in Human Sexuality*, §22.

8.3.3. Sexuality is therefore a dimension of human relationships. God creates human beings to be people who develop and grow in loving relationships with each other and with God, and it is God's intention that human beings flourish through and in these relationships. The Methodist Church has said that: "Intimacy is a vital part of personal development. Sadly our society tends to equate intimacy with sexual intercourse. Relationships involving mutual acceptance and understanding and a willingness to be open and vulnerable to one another are intimate relationships – whether or not physical intercourse takes place. Intimacy is the sharing of personal worlds: emotional, mental, spiritual, social and aesthetic, as well as the appropriate physical expression of mutual affection."³³ (1992, §41).

8.4. ... And Human Responsibility

8.4.1. In affirming human sexuality as one of God's good gifts, the Methodist Conference has also recognised "the responsibility that flows from this for us all".³⁴ Each of us is responsible before God for the way in which we shape our lives and for our own decisions. This is also the case in all aspects of our sexuality. As with other gifts, what matters is how it is used: "[a] gift can be used selfishly or for others; it can be exploited or developed; it can be used for promoting relationships or destroying them. In short, human sexuality can be for God's glory or it can be a denial of God's hope for us."³⁵

8.4.2. The values which we adopt in our relationships and approaches to issues of human sexuality are no different from those we are called to demonstrate in other areas of life. Every person is created out of God's love and therefore is precious and unique and of worth. Behaviour that exploits, objectifies, disregards or abuses others mars God's creation, contravenes God's purposes and causes suffering and harm.

8.4.3. Sexuality, like all things good in themselves, can be abused. Our sexuality is vulnerable to terrifying distortions when other people are used and abused for self-centred gratification in which their feelings and needs are ignored: for example, when a person is pressurised by others into some form of sexual expression; when a relationship is characterised by possessiveness or gratification at the expense of someone else; when a relationship undermines trust or expresses dominating ideas of power; or when people have the development of their sexuality and their approach to healthy relationships, damaged and distorted by pornographic images which focus on the body as object to be used rather than the person to be honoured.³⁶

8.4.4. The God who intends good for all creation calls and invites human beings to take responsibility as part of their own growth and in their relationships with others. Part of this involves discernment about what types of behaviour and attitudes respect and value others, lead to fulfilling relationships and contribute to human flourishing.

8.4.5. Very broadly speaking, Christian thinking tends to cluster around two basic approaches to responsible decision-making in human relationships, especially regarding issues of human sexuality. On the one hand there are those who argue for clear rules and fixed boundaries, derived either from a particular understanding of natural law, or from a particular reading of the bible and certain texts. Such rules, for example, might proscribe same sex partnerships, proscribe the use of artificial contraception, forbid divorce or accept it only on certain limited grounds, insist sexual relationships must await legal

³³ The Methodist Conference, 1992, §41.

³⁴ *The 1993 Resolutions*, Resolution 1.

³⁵ The Methodist Conference, 1990, §18.

³⁶ The Methodist Conference, 1990, *Issues in Human Sexuality*, §20.

marriage, or insist that all sexual expression must be open to procreation – and hence be vaginally penetrative.

- 8.4.6. Whilst generally accepting that rules might helpfully indicate where a presumption might lie and generally protect us from harm (and particularly those who are vulnerable), other Christians regard such an approach as over prescriptive, arguing instead for behaviour characterised by love, loyalty, respect, dignity, mutual delight and attentiveness. They might point out that there is nothing specific in the teaching of Jesus concerning sex, apart from the narrative of the woman taken in adultery, although this is not primarily about sex. There is, however, much about love, justice, hypocrisy and loyalty, all of which are highly relevant to how we express our sexuality. Texts such as Matthew 5:28 offer other insights. However, reading the Bible with the hope of finding ‘answers’ for current challenges is always problematic as its texts were formed for different purposes and in contexts very different from our own
- 8.4.7. Boundaries are lines which serve many purposes. They protect people and communities, especially those who are vulnerable. Whilst the Church strives to be an inclusive community and a place of hospitality and welcome, it acknowledges the need for discipline so that human flourishing might be enabled and the integrity of its witness be preserved. Both personal and corporate discipline was once a significant characteristic of Methodism’s ‘methodical’ pursuit of holiness. Holiness should never be reduced to rule-following or formulaic spirituality. The Church and all Christian disciples therefore continue to seek the gift of the Holy Spirit in discerning appropriate boundaries in both corporate and personal behaviour.
- 8.4.8. Part of our responsibility in relationships is to acknowledge the power that we have and recognise how it might be used to create a just and creative social environment where people are valued and treated with respect and dignity or how it might be used destructively to demean, degrade or abuse others. Power is present in all relationships, and complex power dynamics are involved in the use of pornography. Giving attention to where power lies (including our own) and how it is manifest is important when considering issues of pornography. Power is relational and has both a personal and a social dimension. It is bound up in the web of relationships of which we are a part. Power is understood and operates in different ways as it works in different contexts (including the Church) to normalise certain behaviours and patterns of relating, to direct particular forms of sexuality, to constitute desires and sexual knowledge, and to maintain systemic inequalities.³⁷ Our ability to make decisions and to act in effective ways depends on our connections to other people, institutions and bodies of thought that make up our daily experience. The amount of power we have depends on our relationships with others and the communities of which we are a part. We can use the power that we have to energise and enable or to dominate and control.
- 8.4.9. Drawing on the New Testament ‘household codes’ in Ephesians 5:22-6:9, Colossians 3:18-4:1 and 1 Peter 3: 1-7, in the 2005 report on *Domestic Abuse* it is argued that Christians should adopt standards in relationships that are more “in terms of love and respect, responsibility and care, than is expected by the society in which they live.”³⁸ (2005, §1.37, 2.12). If the Church takes the best of society’s understanding of all being treated as equally valuable and of mutuality of responsibility in relationships it might argue that “there is still more love and care that Christians can express” (2005, §2.12).

³⁷ Bricknell, C., 2009, *Sexuality and the Dimensions of Power in Sexuality and Culture*, Volume 13, pp.57-74.

³⁸ The Methodist Conference, 2005, *Domestic Abuse*, §§1.37, 2.21.

- 8.4.10. Many are damaged by pornography, for example: children, women and men exploited by the pornography industry; spouses or partners who feel betrayed and traumatized; young people who are presented with fantasy, idealized images of the submissive female body from an early age. Words and images that depict people as objects to enjoy, use, dominate or control present a distorted view of human sexuality. Behaviour that objectifies people, making them the object of use, pleasure or profit, dehumanises the participants, impairing their dignity and harming their sense of self-worth. The Methodist Church has been clear that: "All practices of sexuality which are promiscuous, exploitative or demeaning in any way are unacceptable forms of behaviour and contradict God's purpose for us all."³⁹
- 8.4.11. The exploitative and abusive practises that can be involved in the production of pornography may be more likely to affect the vulnerable, deprived and poor members of society. The Methodist Church has been at the forefront of social justice issues from the time of the Wesleys and continues to be so today. *Our Calling* reminded the Methodist people that "[t]he Church exists to be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice"⁴⁰ and the Methodist Church has identified as one of its priorities that it will give particular attention to "action for justice, especially among the most deprived and poor – in Britain and Worldwide".⁴¹

9. Resourcing informed and reflective conversations

- 9.1. An exploration of some of the issues of pornography reveals an area of significant uncertainty, complexity and controversy. Many views are firmly and sincerely held and yet, as the young people within the Methodist Church have highlighted, people of all ages find it a subject that is very difficult to talk about. It also should be acknowledged that it is a difficult area to explore without accidentally clicking on links or visiting websites that might raise concern.
- 9.2. The Methodist Church in Britain has a long tradition of providing a safe space for people to engage in difficult conversations and to facilitate these discussions in a spirit of love, care and support for one another. There is clearly a need to facilitate such discussions about the many issues raised by pornography within safe, non-judgmental environments. This should however not be limited to young people. Whilst a lot of research has focused on the views and experience of children and young adults, particularly as they first become exposed to both pornography and their own sexual development, all age groups are impacted in one way or another by this subject, and all age groups should be resourced to engage in reflective conversations if they chose to do so.
- 9.3. A large number of academic articles⁴², books and online resources have been written about pornography by many individuals and organisations, including within the Christian tradition. However these often approach the subject from a particular theological position which would not carry wide consensus within the Methodist Church in Britain. Some resources contain helpful elements but elsewhere also express views that would be counter to Conference resolutions and Methodist Church statements, making it inappropriate for a general recommendation. Having reviewed several of these, the Working Group has come to the conclusion that it is more appropriate to recommend resources that are written from a UK perspective, compliant with UK legislation and education models, regularly updated, have appropriate governance procedures in place, are easily accessible without triggering firewall protection and in line with Methodist safeguarding practice and principles. In addition, the

³⁹ The 1993 Resolutions on Human Sexuality, Resolution 2.

⁴⁰ The Methodist Conference, 2000, *Our Calling*.

⁴¹ The Methodist Conference, 2004, *Priorities for the Methodist Church*.

⁴² The Working Group searched Medline, Embase, PsycINFO and other databases

Working Group did not have the funding available within its budget to commission new resources.

- 9.4. Being guided by these criteria, the group has drawn up a list of recommended websites and resources that may be of help to those seeking guidance, support and/or educative materials. These can be found at Appendix 5.
- 9.5. A further area for the Methodist Church to consider is how to respond when ministers or those employed by the Church are found to be inappropriately accessing or using pornography. There is currently no clear guidance for ministerial discipline cases where concerns or allegations are made of ministers accessing and using pornography. Consideration needs to be given as part of the discipline investigations as to whether access has been obtained legally, whether the equipment used to access this was owned or provided by the church, and if other people may have also had access to the equipment (eg living in the same house or using a church office). In such instances relevant safeguarding procedures would need to be followed. In each case a judgement will need to be made about the appropriateness of use and it is recommended that a piece of work is undertaken to draw up guidelines for the use of discipline panels.
- 9.6. Some theological reflection on issues of pornography would be helpful in resourcing discussions on these issues and it is therefore recommended that the Faith and Order Committee gives this some consideration.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 34/1. The Council receives the report.**
- 34/2. The Council thanks 3Generate for initiating this discussion, and directs that this report be used as the basis for the production of a brief document that could be used to facilitate discussion within church groups.**
- 34/3. The Council directs the Connexional Team:**
 - (a) To make available as web based material the list of resources outlined in Appendix 3.**
 - (b) To update the material on a regular basis with the intention of it resourcing informed and reflective conversations on the issues outlined in this report.**
- 34/4. The Council directs the Faith and Order Committee to consider the production of further theological reflections on issues of pornography.**
- 34/5. The Council calls on all the bodies and agencies with responsibility for sex education in schools to listen to and act on the voices of children and young people, so that children and young people are better supported in their learning about relationships and sex, including pornography, in ways that are safe and credible.**

Appendix 1

The Methodist Council in October 2015 proposed the following terms of reference for the Working Group:

The Working Group will work to produce appropriate discussion material aimed at:

- Enabling different age groups to understand the realities and challenges of pornography.
- Resourcing informed and reflective conversations on these issues.

It may choose to: identify existing resources; work with others, e.g. ROOTS, to produce resources; produce resources from amongst its own membership; or co-opt others from outside the working group with particular skills, bearing in mind the constraints on budget identified.

The Working Group will undertake some initial theological thinking in pornography, in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee; and may choose to make recommendations as to how the Methodist Church might best theologically resource its involvement in wider conversations.

The Working Group will consist of members with a range of expertise, including those with expertise in sexual ethics, psychology, the nature of digital media, informal education and theological reflection.

It will take advice from the convening of a special session of the Youth President's Advisor Group, facilitated by a member of the Working Group.

It will draw on the Family Ministries Development Officer and a member of the Joint Public Issues Team as advisers/corresponding members of the Group.

In its work the Working Group will take into account:

- Methodist and ecumenical theological reflection, statements and resources on pornography.
- Current developments in digital media, sexual ethics, public policy and relevant regulation.
- Current safeguarding policy and practice.

The Working Group will ensure the resources are available in time for the 2017 Conference.

The Methodist Council appointed the following members of the Working Group:

Dr Richard Vautrey (Chair)
The Revd Dr John Harrod
The Revd John Howard-Norman
Mrs Ann Leck
The Revd Nicola Price-Tebbutt
Mrs Fiona Willams
Mr Sandy Youngson

In addition, the Group has sought advice from specialists who include Tim Carter, Connexional Safeguarding Adviser and Lynne Norman, Church and Community Development Officer. The Group has been facilitated by the Executive Support Officer for the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster, Tamar Knapton. The Group is also grateful to Rachel Lampard, Team Leader and Policy Adviser for the Joint Public Issues Team, who briefed the Working Group on some of the current public policy issues around pornography, and in particular on Censorship, the Law, Video Games and Education Policy in England.

Appendix 2

The difficulties of defining pornography are evident within the UK's legal framework where clarity is necessary to identify what is legal and what is illegal. Currently, freely available pornographic material is often not defined with regards to its explicitness, with the result being that there is a broad spectrum of acts in pornography that remain within current legal boundaries. However the *Obscene Publications Act 1959 and 1964* describes what would be regarded as illegal pornography by stating that "the law makes it an offence to publish, whether for gain or not, any content whose effect will tend to 'deprave and corrupt' those likely to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it. This could include images of extreme sexual activity such as bestiality, necrophilia, rape or torture."

Furthermore, because of the difficulty in definition and to support law enforcement agencies, the Crown Prosecution Service has produced legal guidance regarding obscene publications. This guidance states:

"It is impossible to define all types of activity which may be suitable for prosecution. The following is not an exhaustive list but indicates the categories of material most commonly prosecuted:

- sexual act with an animal
- realistic portrayals of rape
- sadomasochistic material which goes beyond trifling and transient infliction of injury
- torture with instruments
- bondage (especially where gags are used with no apparent means of withdrawing consent)
- dismemberment or graphic mutilation
- activities involving perversion or degradation (such as drinking urine, urination or vomiting on to the body, or excretion or use of excreta)
- fisting

Unless any of the factors listed above are present within the given case, the Crown Prosecution Service will not normally advise proceedings in respect of material portraying the following:

- actual consensual sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal)
- oral sex
- masturbation
- mild bondage
- simulated intercourse or buggery
- fetishes which do not encourage physical abuse."

Pornography involving children was the focus of the *Protection of Children Act 1978*, when the taking, making, showing, distribution, possession or advertising of any indecent photograph or pseudo-photography of a child was defined as an offence. The Act has been subsequently amended a number of times, including by the *Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008* which provided that "photograph" includes: "a tracing or other image, whether made by electronic or other means (of whatever nature)— (i) which is not itself a photograph or pseudo-photograph, but (ii) which is derived from the whole or part of a photograph or pseudo-photograph (or a combination of either or both), and including data stored on a computer disc or by any other form of electronic means that can be converted into such an image". It is further noted that *The Sexual Offences Act 2003* changed the definition of 'child' under these provisions from a person under 16 to a person under 18. This 2003 Act also introduced legislation for the first time defining sex tourism and sex trafficking. More recently the *Serious Crime Act 2015*⁴³ "replaced anachronistic references to child prostitution and

⁴³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/serious-crime-bill> 2015

child pornography in the Sexual Offences Act 2003". Thus offences which include the use of children to make illegal images are now referred to as child sexual exploitation. This recognises that you cannot separate the images from the exploitation that has taken place to produce them or the children who are being abused to create them.

Appendix 3

18-23s Survey Summary - 3Generate 25-27 November 2016

A total of 31 surveys were completed.

Question 1: If you wanted to talk to someone about an issue regarding relationships, sex, your sexuality/sexual identity, concerns about pornography, something you'd seen on the internet that worried you or an inappropriate text/message you received, how likely are you to seek support from any of the following:

	Very Likely	Likely	Likely/ Not at all likely (added by respondent)	Not at all likely	Don't know	Not applicable	No response given
A parent (including step, foster or adoptive)?	7 (22.58%)	14 (45.16%)	0	7 (22.58%)	3 (9.68%)	0	0
Your brother(s) and/ or sister(s) (including step, foster or adoptive)?	5 (16.13%)	8 (25.81%)	0	14 (45.16%)	3 (9.68%)	1 (3.23%)	0
Other family (including grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles)?	2 (6.45%)	4 (12.9%)	0	22 (70.97%)	2 (6.45%)	1 (3.23%)	0
Godparents and/or close family friends?	1 (3.23%)	3 (9.68%)	0	19 (61.29%)	6 (19.35%)	1 (3.23%)	1
...friends of about your own age?	15 (48.39%)	15 (48.39%)	0	1 (3.23%)	0	0	0
...a church leader/ minister/ deacon/ chaplain?	2 (6.45%)	9 (29.03%)	0	17 (54.84%)	3 (9.68%)	0	0
...a children's/ Youth/ Community/ Family Worker?	3 (9.68%)	8 (25.81%)	0	15 (48.39%)	3 (9.68%)	1 (3.23%)	1 (3.23%)
3....someone from your church who isn't a leader, minister, chaplain or children's/ youth/ family worker?	0	6 (19.35%)	0	22 (70.97%)	3 (9.68%)	0	0
....a teacher or member of school staff?	0	4 (12.9%)	1 (3.23%)	19 (61.29%)	2 (6.45%)	5 (16.13%)	0
....a doctor, nurse, clinic or other medical professional	8 (25.81%)	10 (32.26%)	0	10 (32.26%)	3 (9.68%)	0	0
.....a helpline, chatroom or support group?	6 (19.35%)	8 (25.81%)	1 (3.23%)	12 (38.71%)	4 (12.9%)	0	0

Is there anyone not in the list above that you would go to for advice?

- Partner/Significant Other/Boyfriend/Girlfriend (5)

- Dedicated sexual health advisers, sexologists or Christian counsellors (1)
- Friends (1)

Question 2: Using the scale below, please indicate how much you agree with the following statements:

	Fully agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Full disagree	Don't know	Unsure (column added in by respondent)
In everyday life it is easy to see pornography without intentionally searching for it	6 (19.35%)	14 (45.16%)	9 (29.03%)	1 (3.23%)	0	1 (3.23%)
Viewing pornography accidentally on the internet is distressing	11 (35.48%)	12 (38.71%)	5 (16.13%)	2 (6.45%)	1 (3.23%)	0
I find it easy to define what is and is not pornographic	4 (12.9)	16 (51.61%)	5 (16.13%)	3 (9.68%)	3 (9.68%)	0
The Methodist church nationally should enable more open discussions about the realities and challenges of pornography	17 (54.84%)	12 (38.71%)	0	0	2 (6.45%)	0
The Methodist Church in a local church context should enable more open discussions about the realities and challenges of pornography	19 (61.29%)	8 (25.81%)	0	0	4 (12.9%)	0
It is easy to talk about issues relating to pornography, sex and sexuality with people in the Methodist Church	1 (3.23%)	4 (12.9%)	12 (38.71%)	8 (25.81%)	6 (19.35%)	0
It is not appropriate to talk about issues relating to pornography, sex and sexuality with people in the Methodist Church	1 (3.23%)	5 (16.13%)	4 (12.9%)	17 (54.84%)	4 (12.9%)	0

Are there any further comments you would like to share with the task group?

- People need to get a grip and be more open.
- Sex is natural, so is watching porn, but it is a sin.
- One respondent answered "Don't know" to *The Methodist Church in a local church context should enable more open discussions about the realities and challenges of pornography* and clarified by saying "dependent in how well facilitated and equipped discussions are".
- Pornography is not all about its intended purpose but also the intention of the user and how it is used what can be classified as pornographic always changes.
- Church needs to provide support but it is very awkward so don't know how'd it be brought up
- I feel a lot has been done to block pornographic images accidentally appearing on browsers in recent years – which is an improvement.

- We need more training for church/youth leaders that gets them comfortable talking about this and allows them to know how to help prevent it.
- Any conversations should take place with the idea that porn is not always a negative thing.

Appendix 4

The U.S. Catholic Bishops statement on pornography at their general meeting on 16-19 November 2015, Baltimore

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications document entitled "Pornography and Violence in the Communications Media: A pastoral Response", 7 May 1989

The Church of England's Ethical Investment Policy on pornography, November 2011 (Note that there is also a Methodist Central Finance Board statement - http://www.cfbmethodistchurch.org.uk/downloads/policy_statements/cfb_pornography_policy_statement.pdf)

The Salvation Army positional statement on pornography, February 2015

The United Methodist Church's Book of Resolutions: Pornography and sexual Violence

Appendix 5

The following resources can be used to help understand the realities and challenges of pornography and/or inform and enable reflective conversations on these issues.

Think U Know

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/Teachers/>

CEOP Command's Thinkuknow programme provides resources, training and support for professionals who work directly with children and young people. They have resources designed to help children and young people keep themselves safe from sexual abuse and exploitation by developing skills in identifying and avoiding risk, learning how best to protect themselves and their friends, and knowing how to get support and report abuse if they do encounter difficulties. A wide range of resources for use with parents and carers are also available.

Revenge Porn helpline

<http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk/>

A free and confidential national helpline to offer advice to people who are subject to revenge porn, that is sexually explicit media that is publicly shared online without the consent of the pictured individual. Content is often uploaded by ex-partners with an intention to shame or embarrass an individual.

Romance Academy

<http://www.romanceacademy.org/>

This is a project of Youthscape, based in Luton. They have a team of dedicated youth specialists and have developed approaches and programmes that can be used across the UK. They produce Romance Academy Playing Cards, a resource for youth workers to use in groups to start conversations with young people about relationships and sex, leading to discussions about the emotional, physical and social challenges of growing up. Each of the 4 suits represents a topic: Values, Choices, Dilemmas, and Sexual Health. Each pack costs £8.50 and is available from <https://youthscape.co.uk/store/product/ra-playing-cards>

Planet Porn

<http://bishtraining.com/planet-porn/>

Comprehensive selection of fun, participatory and evidence based activities and resources to help people to be critical about sex produced by BISH training, a comprehensive and well respected sex and relationships education site for people over 14. As well as talking about porn this resource enables conversations around self-esteem, body image, boundaries, pleasure, consent, communication, safer sex, sexual safety, the law, emotions, relationships, gender and sexual diversity and oppression. The pack contains a number of activities and resources which all come in a pdf and a PowerPoint document. Available for £10.50

Brook: the young people's sexual health & wellbeing charity

<https://www.brook.org.uk/our-work/training-on-sex-and-relationships#brook-porn>

Brook provides free and confidential sexual health and wellbeing services for nearly 250,000 young people UK-wide, each year. They also provide a range of resources to support sex and relationships education (SRE) in a range of settings and training courses for professionals working with young people. It leads a course to raise awareness of the impact of pornography on young people's sexual health and to increase knowledge regarding the legal framework around this. The course also equips workers with the knowledge and skills to proactively address these issues with young people.

The Naked Truth Project

<http://thenakedtruthproject.com/>

Naked Truth is an initiative of a Christian Charity called Visible. They produce a range of educational programmes which are described as for “those of any faith or no faith”. Some of their resources are created specifically to enable groups within churches to talk about the issues of pornography. They offer parental workshops (<https://www.thepgworkshop.com/>) with advice on safeguarding children and young people and there is also a free Parents’ Pack (<http://thenakedtruthproject.com/parents>). The Project also offers online support groups to help people struggling to give up pornography use (<http://clicktokick.com/>).

NSPCC

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-porn/>

The NSPCC provides information for children and parents seeking advice about health sexual relations, pornography and how to keep children safe.

ChildLine

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/>

ChildLine provides information specifically for children and young adults including topics such as online porn; porn is fantasy not reality; porn, relationships and peer pressure; tips to help you stop watching porn.

Internetmatters.org

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>

Internetmatters.org is a not-for-profit organisation established with the backing of the BBC BT, Sky, TalkTalk and Virgin Media to help keep children safe in the digital world and offer advice and information on tackling e-safety issues. It contains information about online pornography, sexting and inappropriate online content.

Parent Info

<http://parentinfo.org/articles/pornography/all>

Parent Info is a collaboration between Parent Zone and CEOP (Child Exploitation Online Protection centre). It hosts articles on pornography including “How can I talk to my child about unhealthy images”, “Is internet porn affecting children’s happiness” and a video offering tips on how to open non-awkward discussions about pornography.

UK Safer Internet Centre

<http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>

This site offers e-safety tips, advice and resources to help children and young people stay safe online. It contains resources specifically for children, parents and teachers to use.

A parent’s guide to dealing with “sexting”

<http://mugloucester.org.uk/downloads/Sexting.pdf>

A two page guide for parents on what to do if their child has shared inappropriate or explicit images or films of themselves

Online damage: Porn in the 21st Century. BBC Radio 4

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00glc5z>

Although broadcast in 2009 and is now somewhat out of date, this could provide a useful discussion starter. In it journalist Penny Marshall examines the effects of the rapid expansion of online pornography on UK society. She talks to those who use online porn, including couples trying to repair the trust and intimacy dented by the persistent and secretive use of porn sites. She also hears from psychologists who are concerned that young people are in danger of having their understanding of sexual relationships permanently damaged by what they see online.