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**Photograph:** A teacher points to a diagram of female reproductive organs projected on a screen in a classroom in a scene from 'Human Growth', an educational film on sex education shown in Oregon junior high schools in 1948.

The UK Conservative government is reviewing sex and relationships education (RSE) guidelines in England. The review follows claims from some Conservative MPs, led by Miriam Cates, that current sex education content is age-inappropriate and contains extreme sexual ideologies. Cates, along with 49 other MPs, wrote to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, calling for an independent inquiry into the matter. The MPs allege students have been taught about graphic sexual content including oral sex and choking.

Rachel Wilder, an education researcher at the University of Bath, spoke on the potential consequences of restricting sex education, emphasizing that set age restrictions are "artificial." Under new proposals by Education Secretary Gillian Keegan, sex education for children under nine would be banned, and topics like contraception and STIs would be taught only from age 13.

The current RSE guidance, mandatory since 2020, allows primary schools to decide whether to include sex education, focused on healthy relationships and safe contact. Secondary schools cover more complex issues regarding sex, sexuality, and gender identity.

Gillian Keegan stated the new guidelines aim to prevent controversial gender identity teachings from being presented as facts. She acknowledged that while evidence is scant on the extent of inappropriate material, the government's focus remains on teaching biological facts.

As the consultation period for the new guidelines begins, a survey by the Sex Education Forum shows a growing number of students find their RSE useful and want more inclusive education. Critics argue restricting RSE could lead children to seek information from unreliable online sources and leave teachers unable to address students' questions effectively.