



Engender, Rape Crisis Scotland, Scottish Women's Aid and Zero Tolerance: submission to Scottish Government Review of Personal and Social Education (PSE) in schools, including Guidance and Counselling

As a coalition of national women's equality and violence against women organisations, we view competent and consistent teaching of Health and Wellbeing as key to promoting gender equality and tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) in schools and throughout wider society.

In line with Equally Safe, Scotland's Strategy for preventing and eradicating VAWG, we identify gender inequality as the root cause of VAWG. Preventing VAWG therefore requires us to challenge the attitudes, values and the structures that sustain this inequality. The Health and Wellbeing portion of the Curriculum for Excellence is central to helping children and young people develop respectful and critical understandings of gender, gender roles and gender norms. Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) has the potential to support young people to safely and respectfully navigate relationships. The upcoming PSE Review Report has the scope to support the education sector to promote gender equality and prevent VAWG, we have therefore collated key recommendations that we would like to see encompassed within the review.

Recommendations

- 1. A Whole Setting Approach:** Education settings must embed the values and principles being taught within Health and Wellbeing, so that their ethos and culture is consistent with curriculum content. For example, principles on consent taught in classes should be reflected in responses to sexual harassment in the corridor or online. Education settings should model healthy relationships in how they interact with parents, young people and the wider community. Learning emerging from Equally Safe at School (a Whole School Approach implemented by Rape Crisis Scotland and Zero Tolerance) should inform this work.
- 2. Training:** Gender equality, tackling gender stereotypes, VAWG and prevention of VAWG should be mainstreamed within pre-qualification training and CPD for all education professionals. There is currently no requirement for further education institutions providing training for early years practitioners, social workers or teachers to include content on gender equality and VAWG. This lack of guidance on the content of gender focussed training is highly likely to undermine efforts to promote equality, fairness and diversity.
- 3. Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP):** We view comprehensive and intersectional RSHP as a critical component of tackling VAWG in schools, and there is a pressing need for a much stronger focus on gender and VAWG in order to support young people to respectfully navigate relationships. We recommend that elements of RSHP and PSE, most notably relationships, respect, sex, consent and mental health, should be standardised and delivered consistently across Scotland. We also think delivery by



schools should be complemented where appropriate by specialist evidence-based interventions such as the Rape Crisis Scotland National Prevention Programme which demonstrably improves attitudes and knowledge in relation to consent and sexual violence.

4. **Accountability:** Gender competent practice and the presence of effective systems to respond to instances of VAWG should be included within inspection criteria when assessing and rating all services working with children and young people.
5. **Strategic coordination and leadership:** We suggest a national working group is set up with a focus on preventing VAWG in early years, education and youth settings. We propose such a group should have membership drawn from Scottish Government, Education Scotland, young people's representative groups, gender equality organisations, specialist VAWG workers and agencies in voluntary and statutory sectors, NHS, EIS and the Improvement Service. The group would:
 - Enable coordination of key existing interventions operating to prevent and better respond to VAWG.
 - Ensure coordination with other strategic work addressing these issues (e.g. expert groups, consent messages, Equally Safe).
 - Establish a consistent approach to reporting and monitoring VAWG in schools, with teachers and education staff supported to do so.
 - Identify and address gaps in provision and opportunities to strengthen systems and frameworks.
6. **Monitoring and Measurement:** We recommend that a consistent approach to reporting and monitoring VAWG in schools is developed and teachers and education staff are supported to facilitate this. There is a lack of data regarding levels of VAWG in Scottish education settings. Small-scale evidence collected via work of support services, the Whole Schools Approach and Young Women Lead projects suggests instances of VAWG are extremely high.¹ We also ask that research focused on evidencing the link between VAWG in education settings and the negative impact on the health, wellbeing and attainment of children and young people should be undertaken.

Supporting Evidence

Inclusion: We know that racism, ableism, homo-bi-and trans-phobia shape gendered violence and its impacts, and that there is evidence that some groups such as girls and young disabled women face significantly higher levels of violence and abuse². Engender's recent report, 'Our Bodies, Our Rights' highlights that provision of accessible and relevant PSE for disabled women is a major gap in Scotland.³ We must recognise the full variety of women's lived experiences to enable us to end all forms of violence against all women. Therefore, all of the

¹ <http://www.ywscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/YWL-Report-FINAL.pdf>

² <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/05/include-women-girls-disabilities-anti-violence-efforts>

³ <https://www.engender.org.uk/files/our-bodies-our-rights-additional-research-report.pdf>



above recommendations should take into account the way in which VAWG is compounded by other forms of oppression and inequality.

Whole Settings Approach: Children and young people who took part in the *Everyday Heroes* consultation for the Equally Safe implementation plan (report to be released late November 2018) stated that they wanted adults in power to tackle gender bias in schools, improve schools' approaches to gender norms, stereotypes, roles, attitudes and ensure equal access to subjects, sport and space. VAWG focussed teacher training was identified by respondents as a major need in Scotland.

PSE: The 2018 Girlguiding in Scotland survey found that 78% of girls aged 13-25 learn little or nothing about consent in PSE.⁴ The Young Women Lead questionnaire showed that students turn to the internet (40%) and their friends (29%) for their information on sex and relationships. This corresponds with research undertaken by Zero Tolerance which showed, "only a quarter of young people surveyed listed formal sex education at school as their main source of sex education and a significant number of those wanted more sex and relationships information to be made available to them, on a wider variety of topics." Children and young people who took part in the *Everyday Heroes* consultation recommended that gender equality and gender-based violence education should be embedded in PSE from age 3-18.

Measurement: Recent recorded crime data showed an increase in cyber-enabled peer-on-peer sexual crime: Almost a quarter of cyber enabled crime had a victim and perpetrator who were both under 16 in 2016-17.⁵ These trends are compounded by environments where homophobia, misogyny and verbal harassment are commonplace and often dismissed as 'banter'.

⁴ <http://www.girlguidingscotland.org.uk/girls-in-scotland/>

⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-sexual-crimes-2013-14-2016-17/>