

**Cross Party Group Children and Young People
Wednesday 30th October 2013
13.00 - 14.30
Committee Room 2, the Scottish Parliament
Chair: Marco Biagi, MSP**

Sex and Relationship Education

Attendees

Marco Biagi MSP
Kezia Dugdale MSP
Haroon Abass, CLIC Sargent
Mark Ballard, Barnardo's
Gareth Brown, Scottish Youth Parliament
Louise Cameron MSYP, Scottish Youth Parliament
Eric Carlin, Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems
Nicky Coia, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde
Sara Collier, Children in Scotland
Alyson Evans, Children's Hearings Scotland
Fee Ferguson, Children in Scotland
Laura Forster, SCIS
Rachael Grant, Sense Scotland
Emma Grindulis, Together
Fiona Henderson
Martin Hunt, Tartan Silk
Maria Jackson, Scottish Marriage Care
Nico Juetten, SCCYP
Line Knudson, Children in Scotland
Sophie Leslie, Who Cares? Scotland
Brandi Lee Lough Dennell, LGBT Youth Scotland
Sara Lurie, Fostering Network
Brian Magee, COSCA
Claudia MacDonald, Who Cares? Scotland
Garry McGregor, Befriending Networks
Emma Maidens, University of Edinburgh
Ian Midwinter, Salvation Army
Ann Milović, Scottish Government
Paul Mullan, Quarriers
May Nelson, Children 1st
Jamie O'Neill, Roshni
Alison Newlands, Scottish Council of Independent Schools
Fiona Nicholson, Quarriers
Vibha Pankaj, Enable
Mandy Powell, Queen Margaret University

Eileen Prior, Scottish Parent Teacher Council
Michael Robinson, Who Cares? Scotland
Tracy Rodger, CLIC Sargent
Barbara Schuler, Youthlink Scotland
Cara Spence, LGBT Youth Scotland
Colin Spivey, Scottish Government
Laura Tomson, Zero Tolerance
Stuart Valentine, Relationships Scotland
Sarah Vernon, Children 1st
Shirley Windsor, Scottish Government
Nicki Wray, Barnardo's
Zhou Wu, University of Edinburgh

Apologies

Alison McInnes MSP
Fiona McLeod MSP
Anela Anwar, Roshni
Kim Atkinson, SSA
Salena Begley, Family Fund
Jackie Blair, Spark of Genius
May Chamberlain, Relationships Scotland
Rozanne Chorlton
Anna Chrystal, SIAA
Morag Coleman, Families First St Andrews
Mo Colvin, RNIB Scotland
Mig Coupe, Mindroom
Kathleen Deacon, Scottish Marriage Care
Morag Driscoll, Scottish Child Law Centre
Barry Fisher, DofE Scotland
Gina Freeman
Ross Gilligan, Children in Scotland
Gail Grant, BMA
Mark Griffiths, Shelter
Alison Hardie, Young Scot
Kim Hartley, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
Keith Irving, Living Streets
Alan Jones, SDEP
Fiona Jones, Cl@n Childlaw
Charlene Kelly, Relationships Scotland
Ruth Kerracher, Article 12
Richard Knott, Salvation Army
Nancy Loucks, Families Outside
Sharon McCluskie, Play Scotland
Marion Macleod, Children in Scotland

Liz May, Action for Sick Children
Jacquie Morgan, Central Scotland Youth Project
Agnes Mullen, Church of Scotland
Calum Munro, Highland Children's Forum
Sarah Paterson, Youthlink
Mags Powell, Stable life
Virginia Radcliffe, Licketyspit
Katie Rafferty, NDCS
Lisa Ross, Mindroom

Welcome

Marco Biagi, MSP

Marco welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced that he would be chairing in place of Kezia Dugdale.

Marco explained that the current refresh of the guidance on the conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) education in Scottish schools is due largely to the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill and the effect it may have on marriage in sex education if it passes.

Marco added that the guidance that was in place before the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) can now be refreshed and as health and wellbeing play such a vital role in the curriculum, it's important that we get it right.

He explained that there has been no formal consultation on the draft guidance but the Scottish Government is inviting key stakeholders to comment and contributions should be submitted by the 8th November.

Colin Spivey, Head of Support and Wellbeing Unit, Scottish Government

Colin thanked the group for the opportunity to take part in the discussions and gave some context to the draft guidance refresh. CfE is one of the key reasons for the refresh as it brings about a greater emphasis on health and wellbeing for children and young people, and RSHP education is an integral part of this. Colin emphasized that RSHP education is intended to enable children and young people to build and develop positive relationships as they grow older and they should be presented with facts, taught in an

objective and balanced manner, within a framework of sound values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. We no longer talk about sex education; it is relationships in which this is framed.

Turning to the draft guidance, Colin stated that the original guidance released in 2001 was generally well liked and therefore has been used as the basis for this refresh, however it does need to be updated, particularly to reflect CfE and also same sex marriage legislation.

Colin continued by highlighting a few specific changes to the guidance namely:

- Paragraph 4 - repeal of section 2A, it is now legal to discuss homosexuality in the classroom
- Paragraph 7 – removal of ‘value placed by churches’, as many churches do not approve of same sex marriage
- Paragraph 10 – completely new, this has been introduced over concerns that teachers may fear expressing their own points of view, for fear of being labelled homophobic
- Paragraph 16 – regarding parental right to withdraw children from RSHP lessons
- Added section on bullying taken from Scottish Government bullying strategy

Colin reiterated that the Scottish Government is keen to hear from all stakeholders regarding suggestions for amendments and redrafting, and will be taking comments until 8th of November.

Louise Cameron MSYP, Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)

Louise introduced herself as a 6th year in high school who has received five years of Personal and Social Education (PSE) so far. Now in her 2nd elected term at the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) Louise stated that through her work as an MSYP she has developed knowledge of a wide range of issues including consent, stable relationships, arranged marriage, same sex marriage, LGBT, rape culture, teenage pregnancy and bullying. She explained that she had gained this knowledge from talking to others and sharing experiences, and this has led her to a deeper way of thinking which has been particularly valuable.

Unfortunately, Louise cannot say the same about her experiences of PSE.

The aforementioned issues are often deemed too controversial in schools, but Louise asked the Cross Party Group: why?

Louise suggested that if we want a country where people are tolerant of, and can sympathise with others, and if we want educated young people who can positively contribute to society then we need a change. The media, particularly the internet, provides unlimited access for young people to get information on these subjects, and this is why it's so important to provide information safely in schools, rather than risk young people being subjected to information which could be unsuitable.

SYP consulted with young people aged 14 – 25 on these issues and the outcomes have direct relevance.

- 63% of respondents said they were not taught enough about consent
- 74% of respondents said they were not taught enough about discrimination against minority groups
- 50 respondents had negative comments about PSE in school
- 87% of respondents said that trained experts brought in to school to teach PSE would be positive, informal and less awkward
- 88% of respondents believed they should have the right to take part in classes even if their parents had asked for them to be withdrawn

Louise confirmed that SYP welcome the guidance update in light of the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill, and SYP support an appropriate amendment being made to the guidance on the value of teaching stable relationships, including same sex ones, and that the discussion of same sex marriage should not be banned from school.

SYP believe that a young persons' rights should be respected and not undermined and while SYP agree that parents should have the right to withdraw children from classes which may conflict with religious or

cultural views, if the young person disagrees with their parents, they should have the right to the education they want for themselves.

Louise confirmed that SYP are more than happy to help the Government carry out further consultations in this field.

Brandi Lee Lough Dennell, LGBT Youth Scotland

LGBT Youth Scotland believes that sex education in Scotland is not LGBT inclusive. So what needs to change? Brandi explained that their work with local authorities and research with young people has found that LGBT young people rarely see themselves reflected in the curriculum. When LGBT young people do not receive information that is relevant to them, it undermines their UNCRC right to education and moreover, leads to increases in homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

This lack of relevant information can lead to LGBT young people seeking information in age inappropriate socialization opportunities or through pornography on the internet. There is an increased risk of domestic abuse among LGBT young people, particularly men, as they do not see themselves reflected in education on domestic abuse or safe and healthy relationships in PSE.

Brandi presented LGBT Youth Scotland's recommendations for the guidance, namely:

- to use gender neutral language, LGBT young people often feel excluded when the focus is on the "mechanics" of sexual health
- to focus on keeping an individual safe from STIs, rather than on contraception
- to focus on responsibility of both partners rather than both sexes
- to question gender stereotypes and gender inequality

Nicky Coia, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Nicky gave some context to his experience, explaining that over the past 10 years he and his team have developed partnerships working over six local authorities to deliver training for teachers and curriculum materials for RSHP education. As a result of this on-going work, they

are coming from a strong background on sexual health and relationships issues; with knowledge of how to make the subject area work and what are the most common problems.

Nicky stated that teachers can often feel vulnerable and exposed in taking this work forward, however when teachers undertake the training and get a chance to explore practice based issues the result is very positive and allows teachers to effectively deliver sexual health and relationship education.

Nicky noted disappointment with the draft guidance, highlighting two paragraphs in particular as problematic:

- Paragraph 10 – the word “conscience” is too vague, needs attention in terms of wording
- Paragraph 16 – this is a missed opportunity, young people should have the final say
- One third of Glasgow and Clyde schools are denominational schools – concerned that the guidance has not been updated to include further clarity on how we can have an equal standard provision for CfE in denominational schools

Laura Tomson, Zero Tolerance

Laura began by sharing statistics from her research with youth workers, and presented findings that suggested there was frequent cause for concern for young people being at risk of abusive relationships, sexually demeaning texts, and being pressured into engaging in sexual activity they were not comfortable with. This is a common situation.

Laura explained the background to the work Zero Tolerance have been doing with young people on the issues of pornography and sexualisation as looking into young peoples’ worlds to find out how they perceive it themselves.

240 young people aged between 14 and 19 responded to Zero Tolerance’s consultation, which highlighted the following issues:

- it was perceived that pornography is normalized among young people

- young people said that every day they are surrounded by non-pornographic sexualized images, ranging from adverts to music videos
- the word slut was prominent throughout the focus groups, always in reference to women, always negative
- girls were under pressure to wear revealing clothing and remove body hair, this was normalized from age 14+
- boys faced negative consequences around not liking porn and not sleeping with lots of women, perceived as “gay” or “not a real guy”

Laura continued to share some statistics around the question: “What is the most common way young people learn about sex and relationships?”

- just under 25% said school
- just under 10% said pornography, more boys than girls
- no one said Dads, 1% said Mums or female carers

Laura emphasized that while many advocate that we shouldn’t have “too much” sexual education in schools because that’s something parents should take care of, this research clearly highlights that this is an unrealistic expectation that could have detrimental effects.

Laura finished by raising some points around LGBT young people, namely that they generally experience more exposure to sexual imagery and pornography and are half as likely to say school was their main source of information. Echoing previous comments, Laura stated that young LGBT people who do not see themselves reflected in sex education and whose knowledge stems mainly from pornography are putting themselves at risk.

Group Discussion

Marco then invited the group to open discussion on the issues raised by the speakers.

Jamie O'Neil from Roshni raised the issue of working with minority ethnic communities where talking about this issue can be quite a different situation. He stated that withdrawal from class can be quite different for a pupil from a minority ethnic community and asked, how can we make sure these young people get the information if they are withdrawn from the lesson, and what can we do to make sure young people are confident to challenge adults in their communities?

Nicky Coia from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde explained that more traditional issues once coming to sexual health services are being superseded by abuse in relationships. We are seeing young people who are sexually active at a young age in fairly difficult circumstances such as alcohol-influenced sex, where this activity has been filmed and shared. We have failed to keep up with changes in society affecting teenagers.

Lesley McNab from CHAS highlighted the need to acknowledge young people with disabilities in the curriculum regarding RSHP education, by providing education materials where young people affected can see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

Eileen Prior from the Scottish Parent Teacher Council presented an idea for improvement, expressing the need for a higher quality of information resources, jointly shared between parents and school. We must arm parents with information so they can share it with their children.

Patricia from CLIC Sargent stated that she would like to see specialist workers coming in to schools to teach RSHP education and also highlighted the lack of discussion around emotions and feelings regarding this issue.

May Nelson from Children 1st raised the issue of teaching domestic violence, emphasizing the need to "name it" as domestic abuse and not just a form of bullying. She explained the need to start early, breaking down different kinds of abuse with Primary 6 pupils and getting them to describe what they think abuse is. Often the children are surprisingly knowledgeable on the issue.

Marco acknowledged that there was a noteworthy consensus across the room regarding all the issues raised so far in the meeting, and asked the group to discuss how we can ensure that our aspirations for improvements to the guidance are delivered.

Maria Jackson from Scottish Marriage Care emphasized the need for training, supervision, assessment and evaluation for school teachers who are providing RSHP education to ensure the best information and support for children and young people.

Laura Tomson, Zero Tolerance

Laura explained that the most prominent suggestion coming from young people in the consultation was that of peer education, with many saying that it's embarrassing to talk to their parents about sex. In general, young people want more than one source of information, including decent sources on the internet, and they need support all the way through growing up.

Nicky Coia, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Nicky summarized by reiterating that our society has moved on significantly since last guidance, but we have failed to keep pace. Children and young people are saying that sex education as it stands is not good, teachers aren't feeling supported and parents are crying out for support and information.

Louise Cameron MSYP, Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)

While Louise acknowledged that an outside specialist coming in to schools teach RSHP education may be beneficial, she emphasized the need for a permanent teacher in school who you can talk to and trust on a regular basis.

Colin Spivey, Head of Support and Wellbeing Unit, Scottish Government

Colin thanked everyone for their contributions to the discussion and drew some overall key messages from the meeting. It is clear that content is something of a huge concern, and while this document is regarding conduct, we can't completely divorce the two.

There was a strong consensus around the room regarding the emphasis being on relationships, and Colin assured the group that this is at the heart of CfE.

Marco Biagi, MSP

Marco noted the action point from today's meeting was that he and Kezia Dugdale would write to Minister Mike Russell providing a summary of concerns from today and asking for a direct response.

Next meeting 26th November 1pm
Topic to be advised.