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Let's Talk About Personal and Social Education



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Education and Skills Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.



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Executive Summary

1. The Committee has undertaken a short piece of work to examine Personal and Social Education (“PSE”). The Committee held a round-table evidence session on 22 February and discussed the issue further with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills at its meeting on 8 March 2017. The Committee also held a number of focus groups in January and February 2017 with teachers, students and others during which, among other things, PSE was discussed.
2. In addition to holding formal evidence and focus groups, the Committee asked online ‘what should Personal and Social Education sessions be about?’ and how it should be delivered. The level of response was tremendous. Hundreds of submissions, Facebook comments, short emails of around 100 words, and tweets later, the Committee is clear how valuable good PSE is to young people. It is also so important that young people experience a broad PSE curriculum to support the goals of the Curriculum for Excellence to help young people become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. The views the Committee received also made clear that every individual has a distinct view of what should feature in their ‘lessons in life’; and also how patchy the approach to PSE appears to be across Scotland’s schools.
3. The Committee has heard excellent best-practice examples with innovative ideas on how to have interactive sessions that enthuse young people and equip them for the challenges life brings. However, the experience of many young people suggests a variable picture in terms of the delivery of PSE in their schools, suggesting it is not always a priority.

6. In terms of core issues, Sex and Relationships Education (“SRE”) is essential and must feature. To be effective this means SRE which goes beyond the biology and involves talking about sex and relationships (not just watching videos and reading leaflets as is the case in some classes). The Committee received concerning evidence that for some young people, particularly LGBTI young people, sex education comes from the internet, including pornography, due to a lack of adequate provision within school. It should be noted that the Committee received a particularly high volume of written evidence on the issue of LGBTI-inclusive education, or the lack thereof.
7. In looking at SRE, the issue of consent and what it means must be covered. The evidence received indicated strongly that this is not currently covered consistently within PSE.
8. A second priority is inclusivity, including understanding and valuing diversity. This overlaps with SRE in lots of ways including an understanding of binary and non-binary identities and the need for SRE to cover more than just heterosexual relationships.
9. A third priority is learning more and talking more about mental health issues, including understanding how to listen to and interpret how young people are feeling, and how to talk about it and ask for help when young people need it.
10. Lastly, in regard to drugs and alcohol misuse, our evidence suggested that this was an area that was thoroughly covered by many schools.
11. From all the views the Committee has received, these seem to be the cornerstones of effective PSE that the Committee considers PSE programmes must feature. The Committee is reflecting upon the support it considers young people require to understand and care for themselves and others.

Co-design and co-production

12. There were so many other topics suggested by young people in evidence, but when the Committee asked about how these suggestions fed into PSE, very few young people suggested they had ever been asked what they wanted to learn about. The best means of ensuring the issues that matter to the group of young people in a PSE class is to ask them. The Committee is not saying that the voice of young people must be the only voice in determining how to use PSE sessions, rather that they should have to be part of the conversation. The Committee has heard good examples of co-design and also peer delivery in schools that is to be welcomed and encouraged elsewhere. For example, in Bearsden Academy where lessons covering the ‘sixth year holiday’ were included after feedback from senior pupils. ¹

Expertise to teach PSE

13. It should be acknowledged from the start of this report that PSE is a challenging thing to define as it can cover a myriad of issues meaning effective delivery is time consuming and complex. Teaching PSE also requires a specific skill-set, including

the ability to discuss sensitive issues with young people in an open and candid way that puts them at ease to express themselves and enables them to access personal support. The Committee has heard evidence of a lot of positive best-practice being undertaken within schools by motivated talented teachers and by organisations providing training to teachers or delivering elements of PSE directly. In the Committee's view, PSE can be delivered much more effectively, taking into account other workload pressures on teachers, when designed as a programme which engages specialists in various topic areas such as Sexpression:UK, the emergency services or Alcoholics Anonymous.

Age appropriate learning

14. There is sensitivity around the issue of what age young people, and in particular children, should start learning elements of Personal and Social Education, particularly SRE. The need for crucial conversations to happen as early as required is explored later in the report.

Support and information to complement PSE

15. PSE should be part of a supportive ethos in a school. PSE is likely to generate thought processes and questions from young people that they may not want to share in a classroom setting. So, effective PSE also needs to be supported by the availability of one to one time with guidance teachers, tutors or other support staff when requested. It also needs to point young people to appropriate informative online resources.
16. More and more of young people's time is used in the online space, be it on webpages or social media and there is a wider social issue with young people's online safety and the appropriateness of the material young people have access to online. PSE programmes should seek to ensure young people are aware of where to find the right information online on healthy relationships, including sexual relationships.

Conclusions and recommendations

For convenience, the Committee's conclusions and recommendations are listed below.

17. **The Committee wants to offer its thanks to all those who took the time to contribute to its work. The findings and recommendations for change in this report are entirely based on the comments the Committee has received.**

The need for a review of Personal and Social Education in schools

18. **The Committee notes that inconsistent delivery of Personal and Social Education has been highlighted by the Session 4 Health and Sport Committee and the current Equalities and Human Rights Committee. In light of this and the evidence this Committee has taken in 2017, the Committee considers that a picture has emerged of inadequate provision of Personal and Social Education. The Committee therefore recommends that the Health and Sport Committee's recommendation from 2013 that Sex and Relationships Education be reviewed, should be broadened out to become a review of the delivery of Personal and Social Education. This Committee is continuing the work of the Session 4 Health and Sport Committee to seek to ensure that tangible progress is now made.**
19. **As context for this suggestion, the Committee highlights Ofsted's research evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education in England. Ofsted's report *Not yet good enough: personal, social, health and economic education in schools*² was published in May 2013 and this substantially added to the evidence base and discourse around the provision of PSHE in England.**
20. **The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government should instigate a review of the approach taken to providing Personal and Social Education in all types of schools across Scotland, giving consideration to the approach taken by the equivalent Ofsted work in England and to the terms of such a review recommended by the Session 4 Health and Sport Committee. Given the broader emphasis of such a review, it would seem appropriate for Education Scotland to lead it.**
21. **This Committee also recommends that such a review should assess the extent to which schools are aware of, and take steps to comply with, existing statutory duties requiring them to be—**
 - **“health promoting” including in relation to mental health prevention, recognition, and support; and**
 - **public sector duties compliant in making provision for people who identify with protected characteristics, tackling prejudice and promoting understanding of people of different groups.**

Option of making Personal and Social Education mandatory

22. **The Committee supports the principles underpinning Curriculum for Excellence, including the ability to tailor education to the individual. The Committee also understands that the approach taken in England, of making relationships and sex education mandatory for all schools, may not be replicable given the philosophy underpinning Scotland's education system.**
23. **However, the Committee is concerned that the importance the Scottish Government places on health and wellbeing (with Personal and Social Education sitting within this) as one of three priorities alongside numeracy and literacy, is not borne out in some schools or with consistency across schools.**
24. **The Committee seeks an acknowledgement from the Scottish Government that, despite health and wellbeing being given equal priority to numeracy and literacy centrally, this is not always the case in practice locally. This acknowledgement, combined with findings from the review recommended above, is the starting point for a process of identifying what extra steps need to be taken to make tangible improvements in the delivery of Personal and Social Education.**
25. **The Committee also considers that the Scottish Government should ensure positive outcomes for all our young people if the review recommended above finds clear evidence of children and young people not receiving the level of Personal and Social Education that is expected from education authorities, particularly in the absence of external validation of teaching that is present in exam subjects.**

Improving LGBTI inclusiveness in education

26. **In light of the level of support for the TIE campaign's work, including from a majority of MSPs, the Committee supports the principle of the establishment of a working group by the Scottish Government to consider the issues raised. The Committee seeks assurances on the extent of the remit and timescales for the working group's programme.**

Co-production of Personal and Social Education

27. **The Committee considers consulting young people and tailoring the approach to teaching to their needs aligns with the ethos of the Curriculum for Excellence and that this approach would lend relevance and breadth to Personal and Social Education curricula. The Committee recommends to the Scottish Government that all Personal and Social Education programmes should include an element of co-design to ensure that young people explore issues of importance to them and are engaged in the learning process.**

28. **The Committee highlights to the Scottish Government particular themes that were raised by students, such as financial planning and citizenship, which it would appear are currently under-catered for. The Committee recommends that these topics should be highlighted as possible options for students as part of co-design processes.**

Expertise required to teach Personal and Social Education

29. **The Committee recommends that Personal and Social Education should involve external contributors with the relevant specialism where beneficial and possible.**

Age appropriate Personal and Social Education

30. **This Committee asks the Scottish Government what action it has taken in light of the recommendations made in 2013 by the Session 4 Health and Sport Committee, for example:**
- **to ensure central guidance or inspections places a sufficient emphasis on age appropriate learning; and**
 - **that education authorities engage with this issue and encourage change at nursery and school level where appropriate.**

Availability of support and information for young people

31. **The Committee invites Education Scotland and COSLA to provide information on any work undertaken centrally, or by education authorities (including collaboratively), that ensures schools have appropriate informative online resources to highlight to young people during their Personal and Social Education and that schools are being encouraged to do so as standard.**

Introduction

Membership changes

32. During the course of this inquiry, Fulton MacGregor MSP and Richard Lochhead MSP were replaced on the Committee by Clare Haughey MSP and Ruth Maguire MSP.

What is Personal and Social Education?

33. This is a difficult question to answer. The PSHE Association is an association for personal, social, health and economic education professionals with a particular focus on the English education system. Its submission sets out a broad view on what time spent on PSE should cover.

” PSE lessons should enable children and young people to gradually enrich their understanding of a set of overarching concepts (such as physical and mental health, healthy relationships, identity, risk, diversity and equality) and to develop the skills and attributes they need to thrive (such as resilience, communication and decision-making skills and managing peer influence).

Source: PSHE Association, 2017³

34. In terms of what PSE learning looks like, some schools have periods of PSE in which a variety of topics are covered. This can often include Sex and Relationships Education (“SRE”), drugs and alcohol awareness, study skills and a range of other topics. Other schools cover these issues in other ways and choose not to have a stand-alone PSE lesson.

35. The ethos of the education system is that how the curriculum is delivered is not prescribed by central government. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills stated—

” The nature of our curriculum is that we do not have a national template—we do not specify at national level that this or that must be taught. It is very much up to the teaching profession to formulate approaches in the classroom that meet the expectations of the guidance on the curriculum. That is inherent in the thinking behind curriculum for excellence.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 08 March 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 56⁴

36. Therefore, for the purposes of this work, the Committee considers PSE as being the kinds of topics that would or should be covered in a PSE lesson regardless of whether this is delivered in a stand-alone lesson or in other ways.

What are the current requirements to deliver PSE?

37. As set out in the executive summary, the Committee has concerns in relation to the consistency of the delivery of PSE and views learning about SRE, inclusivity and mental health issues as priorities when teaching PSE. This section starts by setting out current general requirements in relation to teaching PSE, and any specific requirements for SRE, inclusivity and mental health.

Statutory responsibilities

38. There is no statutory requirement to provide PSE or specific elements of it, such as SRE, in Scotland. However broader statutory requirements exist in relation to health and equalities.

39. The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) Scotland Act 2007 places a duty on all schools to be “health promoting”. Health promoting includes sexual health and mental health. Scottish Government guidance on the Act states in relation to PSE—

” Focussed programmes covering key elements of personal, social and health education provide a key medium for implementation of the Act.

Source: Scottish Government, 2008⁵

40. The public sector equality duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. The public sector equality duty covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

41. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission Scotland notes that in respect of the need to advance equality of opportunity, public bodies should have regard to the need to—

” Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people.

Source: Equalities and Human Rights Commission, 2016⁶

Curriculum for Excellence

42. Health and wellbeing is one of the eight curriculum areas within Curriculum for Excellence (“CfE”).⁷ The CfE *Health and Wellbeing: experiences and outcomes* briefing produced for schools by Education Scotland notes that—

” Learning in health and wellbeing ensures that children and young people develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing now and in the future.

43. A focus on health and wellbeing within CfE is intended to support children and young people to (among other things):

- Meet challenges, manage change and build relationships;
- Understand and develop physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing and social skills;
- Assess and manage risk and understand the impact of risk-taking behaviour; and
- Acknowledge diversity and understand that it is everyone's responsibility to challenge discrimination.⁸

44. The Cabinet Secretary set health and wellbeing as a priority of the Curriculum stating—

” Personal and social education covers a range of topics that are distributed through the curriculum under the theme of health and wellbeing. Health and wellbeing is one of the three primary curricular areas, alongside literacy and numeracy, that are deployed across the curriculum.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 08 March 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 56⁴

Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education Guidance

45. The current Scottish Government guidance on Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education was published in December 2014. Its introduction states—

” This guidance is designed to make sure that information about relationships, sexual health and parenthood is not given in isolation but as part of a programme that considers a range of issues relating to personal and social development, healthy living, values and beliefs which reinforce self-worth, respect for others and a sense of responsibility.

Source: Scottish Government, 2014⁹

46. The guidance also states, in relation to inclusivity and diversity—

” It is also important that RSHP education addresses diversity and, for example, reflects issues relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) young people or children with LGBTI parents, such as same sex marriage and hate-crime reporting.

Source: Scottish Government, 2014⁹

Inspections

47. As PSE and SRE are not exam subjects, understanding the quality and breadth of the delivery of these subjects must therefore come from different forms of assessment, such as quality and improvement mechanisms including inspections.

48. Education Scotland produce *How Good Is Our School?* which is “a suite of quality indicators that support staff in all sectors to look inwards, to scrutinise their work and evaluate what is working well for learners and what could be better.”¹⁰
49. The current version of *How Good Is Our School?* (HGIOS4) includes an indicator Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion which focuses “the impact of the school's approach to wellbeing which underpins children and young people's ability to achieve success.”¹⁰ This indicator is also used in inspections.
50. In summary, there is already:
 - statutory requirements on schools in relation to promoting: diversity and inclusivity and health, including mental health;
 - a duty of the public sector to meet the needs of individuals with protected characteristics;
 - emphasis on PSE, including SRE, in formal guidance to schools;
 - a Scottish Government emphasis on health and wellbeing as a key priority, alongside numeracy and literacy, in the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence; and
 - an assessment in formal inspections as to whether schools achieve health and wellbeing related outcomes.

Overview - how Personal and Social Education is being delivered in practice

51. In terms of consistency of delivery across Scotland, it is not clear from information produced by the Scottish Governmentⁱ or Education Scotlandⁱⁱ to what extent PSE, as a stand-alone lesson, is timetabled in schools and whether it is the primary means of delivering the health and wellbeing curriculum. There is very little information that shows how the health and wellbeing curriculum themes are translating into practical school activity to achieve the curriculum outcomes.
52. In the absence of central information on health and wellbeing, and by extension PSE, the Committee has sought to get a sense of what is happening in schools through young people, teachers, education authorities and other informed organisations. The Committee has heard some very positive best practice examples on how PSE is currently delivered and some concerning examples of where delivery has fallen short of what might be expected and what young people require.
53. Members of the Committee attended Dalkeith High School on 8 February 2017. The teachers those members spoke to were engaged with current best practice on how to deliver PSE (e.g. drug and alcohol education). The school works with outside agencies, such as the police, to understand what is happening beyond the school gates and ensures that PSE reflects, and is tailored to, this context. In respect of LGBTI identities, one teacher said that they took pride in the way young people in school accept transgender people.¹¹
54. Members also spoke to young people at Dalkeith High School. One student suggested that from S3 to the senior phase, PSE sessions have a focus on career and future education. Another student reported that guidance and other pastoral staff were available when needed beyond PSE lessons. PSE lessons were also thought to be supportive for those pupils who might “come out” as LGBTI.
55. A number of responses from young people were also positive about PSE, for example—

” I am currently a S5 pupil. PSE at my school is different for every year group. We call PSE "Skills Development". This consists of activities and lessons designed by both pupils and teachers from our school. I believe this allows the lessons to be related to the area we find ourselves in. Each year group's activities are tailored to social situations they may find themselves in and what the school sees as important to that year group.

John Wilson (by email)

Source: Education and Skills Committee, 2017¹²

ⁱ See for example the online content on the Scottish Government website

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/HLivi>

ⁱⁱ See for example the Experiences and Outcomes policy document from Education Scotland: <https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/health-and-wellbeing-eo.pdf>

56. However, a large number of respondents to our call for views were concerned about how PSE is delivered and supported across Scotland, with a large number of the comments direct from young people criticising delivery. Below is a snapshot of some of that evidence.

” Not having LGBTI inclusive PSE lessons at school is one of the reasons I got bullied & struggled with who I was.

@JustineSmithies

As a young person my experience of PSE is pretty much non-existent. In my experience a less heteronormative and more inclusive approach should be taken allowing everyone's relationships and sex to be portrayed. Sex should not be stigmatised but instead a focus on safe and healthy sex should be taken.

R M McDonald (by email)

I'm currently in sixth year, and generally over the past 6 years my PSE lessons have been pointless. I've learnt nothing.

Jess (by email)

We should be taught about all aspects of our society, and not get sheltered from things. In Catholic high schools, teachers refuse to talk about LGBTI issues. Once we were doing sex ed, and the teacher said 'Just because you are attracted to people of the same sex, it doesn't mean you're gay.' That was the only comment made.

Anon. (by email)

Instead of telling us all the terrible things that can happen if you have sex, making many worried or scared, tell us the support that is available to us and where we can get it instead of making us feel like we will be criticised and judged for decisions made.

Ceilidh Spratt (Facebook)

As a PSE teacher I see the subject's importance, but it has a low status and is not prioritised in schools despite the centrality of health and wellbeing within CfE.

Jonathan Firth (by email)

It's time to upskill Guidance staff on the theories and pedagogy around health behaviour change, especially if we want to see evidence of positive change and impact on the health and wellbeing of young people. PSE Guidance Staff have a huge remit and in some cases, PSE will be delivered by non-specialist teachers during tutor time.

Donna Dey (by email)

A pupil in primary 7 told me (I'm a teacher) when she listened to her SHRE lesson in p7 and it was explained how a man and a woman had sex, she asked "what about gay people?" The teacher shouted at her and told her to leave the class and she had no right asking an inappropriate question. She had just come out to her brother that she was bisexual. It took her another 3 years to tell her mum.

Anon (by email)

We hear regularly how young LGBT kids take their own lives as they don't understand their sexuality and their friends don't understand them either. My son's school told him he would go to hell. This must stop and it must stop now.

Louise Daly (by email)

Source: Facebook (The Scottish Parliament), 2017¹³ Education and Skills Committee, 2017¹² Education and Skills Committee, 2017¹⁴

57. Moving beyond individual experiences, some evidence from organisations and specialists made general comment on delivery across Scotland including identifying a lack of esteem and focus on PSE within schools.

” Personal and Social Education as it is currently conceived and ‘delivered’ in Scottish schools is often arid, deemed to be not relevant by young people and ‘delivered’ often by the least experienced members of staff with often minimal support or guidance in its delivery.

Dr Joan Mowat, Senior Lecturer, University of Strathclyde

Source: Mowat, 2017¹⁵

58. The Committee also received evidence suggesting some schools do not focus on non-exam subjects and, as a result, resources, support and leadership in these areas may be lacking.

” Many secondary schools still view their main purpose as academic achievement and afford less time, staff training or specialist staff to delivering PSE. Therefore, this will impact on what staff can confidently and effectively address in the classroom.

Monica Porciani, Associate Lecturer in Health Education, Strathclyde University

Source: Porciani, 2017¹⁶

59. In addition the Committee heard suggestions that, due to time pressures, schools substitute in other activities in periods timetabled for PSE.

” We would like to see all schools prioritise PSE as it is vital for the good wellbeing of our young people, in our experience too often schools forgo PSE if there is an extra commitment to slot into the timetable on any given day (for example immunisations).

Clair Halliday, National Parent Forum of Scotland

Source: Education and Skills Committee, 2017¹²

60. In relation to PSE being a means for satisfying legal obligations outlined above such as the public sector equality duty, the starting point must be an awareness of the statutory duties within schools. Brian Donnelly from Respect Me told the Equalities and Human Rights Committee—

” The biggest challenge that we have found in schools in recent years is quite saddening: the lack of knowledge in schools of the Equality Act 2010 and protected characteristics can be quite alarming.

Source: Equalities and Human Rights Committee 10 November 2016, Brian Donnelly, contrib. 22¹⁷

61. In relation to mainstream state secondary schools, Education Scotland noted in its recent report summarising themes from four years of inspections *Quality and improvement in Scottish education 2012-2016*—

” More work now needs done to ensure that Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood education provides young people with knowledge and skills to make informed, responsible and healthy choices about their lives, the real world and online world.

Source: Education Scotland, 2017¹⁸

Delivery of the core elements of Personal and Social Education in practice - evidence summaries

62. Having analysed the hundreds of comments received from young people and the submissions from other individuals and stakeholder organisations, some of the main issues raised in regard to PSE programmes include:
- SRE;
 - Inclusivity;
 - mental health; and
 - drug and alcohol misuse.
63. A summary of evidence on the extent to which each of these issues receive a focus is provided below.

Sex and relationships education - themes of evidence

Consent

64. Evidence suggested that the breadth and depth of SRE in some schools is insufficient, specifically that it does not always include key aspects of SRE such as consent.
65. Clare Clark from Sexpression:UK stated—
- ” Consent is a massive issue, but it seems not to be coming across to young people. There is clearly a gap. That is demonstrated by the fact that we are having to do consent classes in universities. We are letting people leave school with no information about consent, and we are having to cover it in universities.
- Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Clare Clark, contrib. 70¹⁹
66. The view that consent in particular is not being adequately covered in schools is supported by evidence collected by the Terence Higgins Trust which found in a survey of young people in the UK that 75% had not learnt about consent in schools.
20

Diversity

67. Evidence also suggested that it does not always reflect the diversity of relationships and, in written comments, a number of young people also identified a lack of information on sex and relationships for LGBTI people as a pressing issue—

- ” More info in sex education classes – we are taught a lot about 'normal' heterosexual sex but absolutely nothing about [LGBT] sex... For example, I had to [go on] the internet to learn about lesbian sex – not the best source of accurate information as you may imagine.

Young Person quoted by LGBT Youth Scotland

Source: LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017²¹

68. On a number of occasions, witnesses and submissions made specific reference to faith schools' delivery of SRE. Jordan Daly, from Time for Inclusive Education ("TIE"), reflecting on his own experiences, said—

- ” The obvious elephant in the room is faith schools and their position on what they are prepared to teach. It is not acceptable to continue to allow opt-outs on moral grounds as there are LGBT young people in faith schools and they have the same right to an inclusive education as everyone else. That definitely needs to be discussed.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Jordan Daly, contrib. 86²²

69. The Committee agrees that this is an issue that needs to be considered further.

Format of delivery

70. A third theme was that SRE does not always involve talking about sensitive issues, rather it is sometimes delivered in ways that do not include open discussion—

- ” It feels as if the PSE teachers try to scare us with the end results, with shocking videos of people dying, rather than educating us on how to actually avoid situations. The PSE programme is abstinence-centred and there is too much fear, not enough education and discussion.

Views of a group of young people, S1 to S4, attending a high school in Edinburgh (by email)

Source: Education and Skills Committee, 2017¹²

71. Hilary Kidd from Young Scot quoted research her organisation had done for the Scottish Government which found that—

- ” [Personal, social and health education] does not properly address topics surrounding sex, gender and sexuality as they are seen as uncomfortable to talk about.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Hilary Kidd, contrib. 78²³

The internet as a substitute for SRE

72. A last but important theme was that, where SRE is lacking, the internet is being readily accessed as a substitute. Good SRE clearly has a role to play in combating

the messages received online, and ideally in preventing young people feeling they need to go online to further their education. The reality is that an increasing number of young people are seeking out an alternative sexual education on the internet, including looking at pornography. Joanna Barrett from the NSPCC said—

” We are really interested in—and worried about—online space. We know that an increasing number of children and young people—and me, actually—are spending loads of their time in online spaces, and we are really concerned that children are getting their sex education from pornography. We did some research that showed that, by the age of 14, 90-odd per cent of young people had seen pornography, and about half of boys thought that it was an accurate representation of sex. Girls were articulating that they were very worried that boys’ impressions of and attitudes to women were negatively impacted by exposure to pornography. There are real issues that we need to look at, and we need to ensure that we are equipped to build children's resilience.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Joanna Barrett, contrib. 120²⁴

Inclusivity - themes of evidence

73. There have been a number of pieces of research on the experience of LGBTI young people in Scottish schools which have made some stark findings that reflect why effective PSE incorporating a specific focus on inclusivity is important. Stonewall Scotland’s 2012 School Report ²⁵ found, among other things:
- More than half (52 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people experience homophobic bullying behaviour in Scotland’s schools.
 - One in four (26 per cent) lesbian, gay and bisexual young people in Scotland have tried to take their own life at some point.
 - More than half (54 per cent) deliberately harm themselves, which can include cutting or burning themselves.
74. TIE has also undertaken a survey ²⁶ and it found that, among other things:
- 90% of LGBT people have experienced homophobia, biphobia and transphobia at school.
75. Making PSE and education as a whole LGBTI inclusive was also a major theme in the evidence received by the Committee. This included submissions suggesting that more could be done to explain LGBTI including intersex and trans identities to: positively present identities; challenge prejudice; and reduce bullying and harassment.

” I will use the example of the differences between gender or sex. When those are taught in schools, they are often taught in a binary manner. That fails binary and non-binary trans people; it also fails intersex people, who do not fit in with the terminology of male or female. That needs to be fixed.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Jack Douglas, contrib. 109²⁷

- ” LGBTI lives should be part of Personal and Social Education to indicate that all people are equally valued.

Ross Wright (by email)

I would like to see LGBT inclusive education in schools to stop the bullying and harassment of children and young adults suffering from intolerant and uneducated peers and teachers.

Lisa Hamilton (by email)

Source: Education and Skills Committee, 2017¹²

Mental health - themes of evidence

76. Mental health was one of the main areas that respondents persuasively argued ought to be, and is not sufficiently, included in PSE. Some comments the Committee received were:

- ” More mental health awareness! Too many children are being let down with a lack of awareness, and tend to think it's a reflection on themselves, rather than something explainable such as an illness, or circumstances!

Beth-Anne Logan (Facebook)

On behalf of the National Youth Assembly of the Church of Scotland, I would like to strongly encourage members of the committee to consider a sizable education on Mental Health into the PSE curriculum including warning against stigmatism and poor use of language i.e. referring to people as 'mental'. Mental Health was a key topic of the youth assembly this year and given the vast range of people it affects in Scotland many felt this would be a crucial step.

Andrew MacPherson, Moderator of the National Youth Assembly, Church of Scotland (by email)

Source: Facebook (The Scottish Parliament), 2017¹³ Education and Skills Committee, 2017¹²

77. A number of organisations gave their perspective based on their wider work. Barnardo's Scotland argued that—

- ” Priority needs to be given to putting in place initiatives to improve the emotional literacy of children, young people, parents and professionals. This is necessary because of the growing prevalence of mental health problems among children and young people.

Source: Barnardo's Scotland, 2017²⁸

78. The Scottish Youth Parliament highlighted recent research that found there is a need for more of a focus on mental health—

- ” SYP’s recent research with almost 1500 young people into young people’s awareness and experience of mental health information, support, and services strongly suggests that the quality of education on mental health and wellbeing is varied across the country. Young people have told us that there is not enough focus on mental health in PSE.

Source: Scottish Youth Parliament, 2017²⁹

Substance misuse - themes of evidence

79. The main theme of evidence on drugs and alcohol misuse education was that this particular issue is covered well, but occasionally too much at the expense of other issues.

- ” I think it is important to include drugs and alcohol and relationships, however maybe fewer sessions on them as often information is repeated.

Anon (PSE Prefect) (by email)

My 16 year old asks that PSE teach practical life skills such as managing a budget, writing a C.V, with less emphasis on 'preaching' about the dangers of underage drinking/sex/drugs as these issues are covered in other classes.

Cloe Deas (by email)

For me and my peers, PSE is extremely repetitive as the only topics we really discuss are: alcohol, drugs and how we should be revising for our prelims. We have been taught about alcohol and drugs since S1 which I find useless as I think it pointless to tell teenagers not to drink at all, teenagers are experimenting and it is almost impossible to stop a teenager from drinking alcohol.

Christopher Stevenson (by email)

Source: Education and Skills Committee, 2017¹²

80. The Scottish Government's Population Health Research's submission set out the current understanding of how best to approach drug education and prevention. It stated that—

- ” Programmes that provide an opportunity to practise and learn a range of personal and social skills, specifically coping, decision making and resistance skills are more likely to be effective.

Source: Population Health Research, Scottish Government, 2017³⁰

81. It also highlighted approaches that have not been found to be effective, such as non-interactive methods to provide knowledge and information; attempting to create fear; using testimony of ex-drug users; and using police officers to deliver prevention programmes.³⁰

82. There were some good examples, reflecting Population Health Research guidance above, including adapting PSE lessons to reflect on concerns at a local level, ensuring external expertise was used and moving away from the deterrent approach such as in [Dalkeith High School as noted above](#).

Improving the delivery of Personal and Social Education

83. It is clear from all of this evidence that a subject as valuable as PSE is not being taught consistently in Scotland's schools, and is not a sufficient priority in a large number of schools for a variety of reasons. A number of the Scottish Parliament's other committees have also identified this issue, specifically in relation to SRE. This includes the Equalities and Human Rights Committee ("EHRiC") as part of its current bullying inquiry, and the Session 4 Health and Sport Committee produced a suite of recommendations on SRE as part of its 2013 inquiry into teenage pregnancy.
84. The evidence to those Committees aligns with the evidence that this Committee has gathered and from it emerges a picture of inadequate provision of PSE. This is particularly concerning given: the increased incidence of mental health issues in young people; the increasing number of people experiencing bullying based on their identity; and the increasing use of social media and websites that influence the perspective of young people.

The need for a review of Personal and Social Education in schools

85. A starting point for making improvements has to be understanding the extent of the problem. But there is not enough centrally produced information at present on how Personal and Social Education and particularly SRE is delivered in Scottish schools.
86. The Health and Sport Committee recommended a review of PSE in 2013 to seek to address this.³¹ The report also stated—

” [It is vital that SRE] concentrates on relationships, respect and tolerance and on developing the skills and behaviours needed to develop and sustain relationships with others, and to develop the maturity, confidence and self-esteem to enable them to make the decisions and choices on whether these become sexual relationships or not.

Source: Health and Sport Committee, 2013³²

87. That Committee recommended that the Scottish Government “carry out a full review of the provision of [SRE] in schools. It should be a wide-ranging review that includes consideration of skills, resources, partnership with other agencies, the potential for further development of peer education approaches, the extent to which there should be central direction, initial teacher education and the inspection regime.”³³
88. This recommendation was not taken up by the Scottish Government at the time. Its response to that committee stated—

- ” NHS Health Scotland carried out two recent reviews of sexual health and relationships education, one on secondary schools in 2008 [<http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/7698-Final-SRE-full-report.pdf>] and another in primary schools in 2010 [http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/12276-Full_Report_ReviewOfSexAndRelationshipResourcesInPrimarySchoolsScotland.pdf]. The findings showed that provision and training was patchy. The Scottish Government believes this is still likely to be the case and does not believe a further review of provision, so soon after the last reviews, will add to the evidence-base.

Source: Scottish Government, 2013³⁴

89. To elaborate in relation to the reviews, NHS Scotland's work on primary and secondary schools in 2010 and 2008 respectively found “the availability of SRE training for primary staff was patchy across the country”³⁵ and “there are marked variations in the provenance, content and trained delivery of [sex and relationship programmes] in Scottish secondary schools”³⁶.
90. It is worth repeating that this perspective is reflected in a recent report from Education Scotland based on four years of its inspections in schools which states—

” More work now needs done to ensure that Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood education provides young people with knowledge and skills to make informed, responsible and healthy choices about their lives, the real world and online world.

Source: Education Scotland, 2017¹⁸

91. In addition the need for further work is acknowledged in the Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy: 2017-2027 (published on 30 March 2017) which commits to a review of PSE, the role of pastoral guidance in local authority schools, and services for counselling for children and young people.³⁷

92. **The Committee notes that inconsistent delivery of Personal and Social Education has been highlighted by the Session 4 Health and Sport Committee and the current Equalities and Human Rights Committee. In light of this and the evidence this Committee has taken in 2017, the Committee considers that a picture has emerged of inadequate provision of Personal and Social Education. The Committee therefore recommends that the Health and Sport Committee's recommendation from 2013 that Sex and Relationships Education should be reviewed, should be broadened out to become a review of the delivery of Personal and Social Education. This Committee is continuing the work of the Session 4 Health and Sport Committee to seek to ensure that tangible progress is now made.**

93. **As context for this suggestion, the Committee highlights Ofsted's research evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education in England. Ofsted's report *Not yet good enough: personal, social, health and economic education in schools*² was published in May 2013 and this substantially added to the evidence base and discourse around the provision of PSHE in England.**

94. **The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government should instigate a review of the approach taken to providing Personal and Social Education in all types of schools across Scotland, giving consideration to the approach taken by the equivalent Ofsted work in England and to the terms of such a review recommended by the Session 4 Health and Sport Committee. Given the broader emphasis of such a review, it would seem appropriate for Education Scotland to lead it.**
95. **This Committee also recommends that such a review should assess the extent to which schools are aware of, and take steps to comply with, existing statutory duties requiring them to be—**
- **“health promoting” including in relation to mental health prevention, recognition, and support; and**
 - **public sector duties compliant in making provision for people who identify with protected characteristics, tackling prejudice and promoting understanding of people of different groups.**

96. The review by Education Scotland would clearly need to co-ordinate with the review of PSE in the Mental Health Strategy should that be starting in the near future, to ensure there is no duplication of effort in relation to mental health.

Option of making Personal and Social Education mandatory

97. The Committee noted as context when considering this option that the UK Government's position has recently shifted and it now plans to require 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 UK Government is also considering whether to make PSHE mandatory. This was also raised in evidence, for example Joanna Barrett from the NSPCC said—

” The NSPCC has championed mandatory PSHE in England and elsewhere in the UK [...] there is a bit of it in our curriculum, but none of it is mandatory. I am getting to the point of asking whether that is a good enough answer.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Joanna Barrett, contrib. 112³⁸

98. A number of other respondents argued that legislation is required to help ensure higher quality and more consistent and inclusive teaching of SRE. LGBT Youth Scotland wrote—

” We strongly believe that LGBT young people should have a consistent school experience and call for a statutory requirement for LGBTI-inclusive Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education.

Source: LGBT Youth Scotland, 2017²¹

99. Jack Douglas from NUS Scotland said—

” NUS Scotland believes that PSE has to change. It needs to be statutory in some form so that there is high-quality provision throughout Scotland and not just in certain parts.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Jack Douglas, contrib. 76³⁹

100. Clare Clark from Sexpression:UK said—

” I think teachers would feel more confident talking about something that was mandatory. They would have a background to fall back on and could say, “That is actually part of our curriculum and we have to speak about it.” There would be less fear and stigma attached to teachers talking about such issues.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Clare Clark, contrib. 110⁴⁰

101. And Youthlink Scotland wrote in a submission to the Committee—

” [PSE should] be statutory, delivered in all primary and secondary schools, including denominational and additional support needs schools, as well as integrated into educational programmes within secure care units and Young Offender Institutions.

Source: Youthlink Scotland, 2017⁴¹

102. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills did not support mandatory elements of PSE. He said—

” The Government puts in place the framework and guidance and it relies on teaching professionals the length and breadth of the country to implement that in their educational settings.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 08 March 2017, John Swinney, contrib. 79⁴²

103. He also made clear that the whole ethos of the Curriculum for Excellence, which PSE sits within as part of the priority of health and wellbeing, is to enable schools to take a flexible approach based on the needs of pupils and to make one element mandatory would undermine this ethos. The Cabinet Secretary also stressed that health and wellbeing is one of the three priority areas of CfE, along with literacy and numeracy.

104. The Educational Institute Scotland ("EIS") supported the Government's position stating—

” Current EIS policy does not favour prescription. Precise content and the method of delivery of the curriculum, in the spirit of CfE, should be a matter for teacher professional judgement.

Source: EIS, 2017⁴³

105. The Committee supports the principles underpinning Curriculum for Excellence, including the ability to tailor education to the individual. The Committee also understands that the approach taken in England, of making

relationships and sex education mandatory for all schools, may not be replicable given the philosophy underpinning Scotland's education system.

106. **However, the Committee is concerned that the importance the Scottish Government places on health and wellbeing (with Personal and Social Education sitting within this) as one of three priorities alongside numeracy and literacy, is not borne out in some schools or with consistency across schools.**
107. **The Committee seeks an acknowledgement from the Scottish Government that, despite health and wellbeing being given equal priority to numeracy and literacy centrally, this is not always the case in practice locally. This acknowledgement, combined with findings from the review recommended above, is the starting point for a process of identifying what extra steps need to be taken to make tangible improvements in the delivery of Personal and Social Education.**
108. **The Committee also considers that the Scottish Government should ensure positive outcomes for all our young people if the review recommended above finds clear evidence of children and young people not receiving the level of Personal and Social Education that is expected from education authorities, particularly in the absence of external validation of teaching that is present in exam subjects.**

Improving LGBTI inclusiveness in education

109. In recent years, the TIE Campaign and other campaigns have successfully raised the profile of issues with how our education system caters for our young LGBTI people. The TIE Pledge ⁴⁴ has been signed by a majority of MSPs and calls for:
- legislation that would require all schools to be proactive in tackling negative behaviours toward LGBTI people and benchmark LGBTI inclusivity in schools;
 - nationally funded teacher training on LGBTI issues;
 - ensure that curricula (including SRE) are LGBTI inclusive;
 - ensure that all incidents of bullying are recorded; and
 - monitor schools performance in respect of LGBTI inclusivity at a local authority level and by inspectors.
110. The Scottish Government has announced in a written answer ([S5W-08159](#)) that it will be:
- ” Working with key stakeholders to fully consider the important issues raised by the Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) campaign. A new stakeholder working group is being formed to bring together key interests to consider these important issues together. The Scottish Government will write to TIE shortly once the working group remit and membership has been agreed.
111. On 19 April 2017, the Scottish Government announced the membership of the working group ⁴⁵ which includes representatives of:
- Association of Directors of Education (ADES)
 - Education Scotland
 - Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)
 - Equality & Human Rights Commission
 - LGBT Youth Scotland
 - National Parent Forum Scotland
 - respectme
 - School Leaders Scotland
 - Scottish Catholic Education Service
 - Scottish Youth Parliament
 - Stonewall Scotland

- TIE

112. While the remit of this working group, and the recommendations this Committee is making are distinct, there is an overlap in the underlying purpose of promoting understanding of diversity, inclusivity and healthy relationships. The Committee hopes that the Government's response to TIE in relation to inclusivity is indicative of a broader recognition that elements of PSE require further focus to bring about improvements. The Committee also hopes that, should the working group find that there sufficient evidence to justify the legislative change TIE calls for, that the necessary legislation would be taken forward by the Government.

113. In light of the level of support for the TIE campaign's work, including from a majority of MSPs, the Committee supports the principle of the establishment of a working group by the Scottish Government to consider the issues raised. The Committee seeks assurances on the extent of the remit and timescales for the working group's programme.

Co-production of Personal and Social Education

Breadth of topics

114. The response to the Committee clearly indicated that there are a breadth of views about what should be included in PSE. [As described above](#), the Committee has identified a number of important elements of PSE from the evidence. However, this is not an exhaustive list and there were a number of other topics that emerged as clear candidates to feature in PSE programmes including managing finances and citizenship. These are illustrated below.

115. One participant in the round-table, Clare Clark, who is 21 and attended a Scottish school, said that she had not had any teaching on politics at school and despite taking part in a number of votes, she had little awareness of what parties stood for.

⁴⁶ Many submissions to the Committee called for PSE to include citizenship.

” [PSE should include] political and social engagement - e.g. voting, influencing, volunteering.

Colin Brown (by email)

Source: Education and Skills Committee, 2017¹²

116. Managing finances, paying taxes and understanding the housing market were consistently highlighted as being a key aspect of what PSE ought to be about in written evidence.

” PSE should include things such as managing money, interview skills, how to be safe around the house for when you begin to live alone

Charlie Houston (Facebook)

Source: Facebook (The Scottish Parliament), 2017¹³

117. Students at Dalkeith High School also indicated that they would like more on life skills, financial education and citizenship to be included in PSE. ¹¹

118. Other issues individuals would like to see included in PSE:

- Study skills;
- Practical household skills;
- Communication;
- Health and safety;
- Rights;
- Mindfulness;

etc.

Co-production

119. It is arguably not possible nor desirable for central government to dictate the entire content of PSE. The issues young people want to focus on and their preferred format will differ from class to class and from individual to individual. Given this, a number of witnesses highlighted the importance of young people co-producing the PSE curriculum to maximise how relevant the courses were to young people and how engaged they were in their PSE sessions. Hilary Kidd from Young Scot explained—

” That involves young people systematically co-creating, co-producing, co-designing and co-delivering solutions. We feel strongly about that in relation to topics such as this. We need to be engaging young people around the delivery of something like this from the very beginning.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Hilary Kidd, contrib. 78²³

120. This was also advocated by stakeholder organisations such as: Youthlink Scotland; ⁴¹ Barnardo's Scotland; ⁴⁷ Children in Scotland; ⁴⁸ the Scottish Youth Parliament; ²⁹ and academics such as Monica Porciani Associate Lecturer in Health Education, Strathclyde University⁴⁹. The Session 4 Health and Sport Committee also advocated in particular peer delivery of SRE in its 2013 report on Teenage Pregnancy³³.

121. The Scottish Youth Parliament undertook work with its members on the co-design of PSE at its sitting in March 2017. MSYPs discussed a number of ways in which young people could become involved in the co-design of the curriculum and a note of the different possible approaches suggested is reproduced below—

” How would you like your school to involve you (or how would you like to have been involved) in developing PSE lessons?

- Pupils can rank topics according to preference on what they want to learn about.
- Consulting with pupils (Simply asking for our opinions would be enough.) i.e.; through survey, group discussions, etc.
- Have working group/panels of young people to update curriculum.
- Peer education.
- Make groups and give each one a topic and ask them to create a lesson on that topic.
- Involve pupil council.
- There should be a national curriculum, built in consultation with lead youth representatives, that should be rolled out to all schools. This would prevent a patchwork approach to PSE provision, or a post code lottery where certain young people get the skills they need to thrive, and some have an incomplete experience. Then Scottish Government/Education Scotland should set up a challenge panel every year, with 50% of members being young people, to assess how well it's being implemented in each region.
- Involving older pupils in redesigning lessons.

Source: Scottish Youth Parliament, 2017⁵⁰

122. During an event for Scotland's college students from all colleges across Scotland, members from this Committee held three workshops with a total of 75 young people. When asked, only 5 of these individuals suggested that they had been consulted when PSE sessions were planned at their school (or latterly at their college if the college provided PSE). This straw poll reflects that any form of co-design remains relatively rare in schools.
123. Looking at this from the Scottish Government's perspective, co-design and peer delivery would appear to be compatible with the principles behind CfE of breadth, depth, relevance and personalisation of choice. Those working with children and young people to deliver CfE are asked to work in partnership, taking a holistic approach to promoting health and wellbeing, one that takes account of the stage of growth, development and maturity of each individual, and the social and community context within which they participate.

124. The Committee considers consulting young people and tailoring the approach to teaching to their needs aligns with the ethos of the Curriculum for Excellence and that this approach would lend relevance and breadth to Personal and Social Education curricula. The Committee recommends to the Scottish Government that all Personal and Social Education programmes should include an element of co-design to ensure that young

people explore issues of importance to them and are engaged in the learning process.

- 125. The Committee highlights to the Scottish Government particular themes that were raised by students, such as financial planning and citizenship, which it would appear are currently under-catered for. The Committee recommends that these topics should be highlighted as possible options for students as part of co-design processes.**

Expertise required to teach Personal and Social Education

126. Teaching a multi-faceted, complex and sensitive subject like PSE requires a specific skill-set, including the ability to discuss sensitive issues with young people in an open and candid way that puts them at ease to express themselves and ask a teacher questions on these sensitive issues.
127. Guidance teachers also have a role to signpost their students to other sources of support and information, such as high quality online resources for sex education (e.g. [Young Scot](#), [Sexpression:UK](#), [Brook](#)), other services, and parents or carers.
128. The Committee has heard evidence of a lot of positive best practice work being undertaken within schools by motivated talented teachers and by organisations providing train-the-trainer training to teachers or delivering elements of PSE directly. A number of teachers made clear the pride they take in teaching the subject:

” “I consider PSHE to be a vital aspect of a young person’s education regardless of their age and stage. The topics we have tried to cover go some way to preparing our students for the life they are, and will experience as they grow older.”

Bryan Campbell, Head of PSHE, Merchiston Castle

Source: Campbell, 2017⁵¹

129. On 26 January 2017, Members of the Committee met with a group of University of Glasgow PGDE students who had been on school placements. One student commended TIE’s and Stonewall’s train-the-trainer training but also noted that getting time to complete the training can be challenging for teachers.
130. Some witnesses discussed whether teachers are supported and confident enough to deliver SRE and other topics that may be considered to be uncomfortable. Erin Macauley MSYP said—

” In order to have a curriculum that promotes mental health, teachers need to have the confidence to be able to speak about it.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Erin McAuley, contrib. 105⁵²

131. Furthermore, as noted previously, Hilary Kidd from Young Scot reported a reflection from young people it had worked with that—

” [Personal, social and health education] does not properly address topics surrounding sex, gender and sexuality as they are seen as uncomfortable to talk about.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Hilary Kidd, contrib. 78²³

132. TIE’s 2016 survey also found that 80% of teachers do not feel that they have been adequately trained on how to tackle homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.²⁶

133. In this context, the Committee notes Education Scotland's 2016 submission to the Equality and Human Rights' Committees work on bullying which highlights that the Scottish Government is:
- working with the General Teaching Council for Scotland ("GTCS") to provide more support to all newly appointed, guidance and promoted teachers on equalities issues by August 2017;
 - undertaking a review of initial teacher education programmes to ensure that they provide appropriate detail on equality across both primary and secondary sectors; and
 - working with the GTCS to provide more support for teachers in equality issues through career long professional learning to be in place by August 2017.⁵³
134. The Committee welcomes this work and would be interested in a progress report from the Scottish Government at the end of the summer recess when all these pieces of work will be complete.
135. PSE includes other specialist areas beyond the issues relating to equalities and inclusivity covered by the Scottish Government's work described above. The Committee does not realistically expect training to be provided in all these areas, nor would it expect one PSE teacher could be considered a complete PSE specialist given the broad and evolving range of topics young people would want to cover. In addition, the Committee is acutely aware of the time pressures on teachers and acknowledges the number of priorities teacher and other staff have to deliver, all aimed at providing important elements of education.
136. Given the complexity and diversity of PSE as a specialism, the presumption should be against expecting one individual teacher delivering a whole course. Rather PSE teachers can, where beneficial and possible, facilitate external speakers to talk on topics on which they have expertise, be they youth workers, the police, specialist charities etc.. This approach ensures sessions where teachers who do not feel entirely equipped to talk about certain issues can still take place and young people do not go without key life lessons because teachers feel uncomfortable covering certain issues.

- 137. The Committee recommends that Personal and Social Education should involve external contributors with the relevant specialism where beneficial and possible.**

Age appropriate Personal and Social Education

138. The Committee explored at what age PSE should begin, with a particular focus on SRE. From a child protection view point, Joanna Barrett from the NSPCC argued for elements of SRE to start as early as nursery, she said—

” We have a guide on preventing sexual abuse called the “Underwear Rule”, which we have trained nurseries on. Basically, that is about preventing sexual abuse, but the word “sex” does not need to be mentioned. It says that what is under a person’s pants is private and belongs to them, that no means no, and who are safe adults to speak to if someone is worried about something. It is age appropriate.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Joanna Barrett, contrib. 134⁵⁴

139. Jordan Daly also suggested that education about relationships should also begin in nursery. He said—

” You would not go into a nursery and start talking about sex, but you might go into a nursery and point out that there are different family types, especially now that—thankfully—we have made progress on same-sex adoption and lots more same-sex parents are turning up at the nursery gates. The education would be about ensuring that the other kids in the school were aware of different family types, and one of the simplest ways of doing that is through books.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Jordan Daly, contrib. 153⁵⁵

140. Ms Barrett also stated in relation to early school years—

” We need to sow the seeds of respect and dignity—for themselves and others—at primary school. I do not know whether we have even started to look at that. We offer a programme for primary 1 to 7s—in a very safe, engaging and age-appropriate way—about how to recognise abuse and what to do about it.

I underline that the subject is not just for teenagers; it relates to the whole of childhood and the curriculum.

Source: Education and Skills Committee 22 February 2017, Joanna Barrett, contrib. 96⁵⁶

141. The Session 4 Health and Sport Committee heard evidence in its 2013 teenage pregnancy inquiry that aligns with the evidence outlined above. That Committee produced the following findings and recommendation as a result—

” The Committee recognises that provision of SHRE at younger ages and at earlier stages of a child’s education has the potential to be controversial. There is potential for parents to withdraw their children and for sensational tabloid media headlines along the lines of the sex lessons for five year olds that have occasionally been seen in the past.

Nevertheless, the Committee accepts the majority of the evidence presented to it that SHRE needs to begin earlier and that the majority of parents, many of whom feel ill-equipped to discuss sexual matters with their children, would welcome and support quality SHRE provision from an early age. [...]

The Committee takes the view that it is probably never too early for children to start talking about relationships and learning how to relate to and respect others, which in turn will lead to discussion, in due course, about sex as an aspect of relationships. Clearly, it is important that the content of such learning is appropriate to the age and maturity of the children and young people concerned, but it is also essential that steps be taken that will support the earlier development in children and young people of the knowledge, skills and competences to help them understand and sustain relationships and make the appropriate choices when options present themselves to them.

The Committee therefore calls on the Scottish Government [...] to consider what measures might need to be taken to ensure that the appropriate level of SHRE is consistently available to children and young people from as early an age as possible.

Source: Health and Sport Committee, 2013⁵⁷

142. The Scottish Government’s response agreed with the position of the Health and Sport Committee and noted that relationships education begins in nursery in Scotland. The Government also stated—

” It is the responsibility of all staff in a school to foster positive relationships and look out for the wellbeing of the children and young people in that school. As part of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, schools will be monitored to ensure that this is the case.

Source: Scottish Government, 2013⁵⁸

143. This Committee supports the recommendations of the session 4 Health and Sport Committee in 2013. The issues raised in evidence with that Committee on the importance of age appropriate Sex and Relationships Education starting at an early age would appear, from our evidence, to remain in 2017.

144. **This Committee asks the Scottish Government what action it has taken in light of the recommendations made in 2013 by the Session 4 Health and Sport Committee, for example:**

- **to ensure central guidance or inspections places a sufficient emphasis on age appropriate learning; and**

- **that education authorities engage with this issue and encourage change at nursery and school level where appropriate.**

Availability of support and information for young people

School ethos

145. As stated at the outset of this report, PSE should be part of a supportive ethos in a school. When a young person learns about the value of inclusivity and diversity in PSE, the ideal is for the culture of a school to embody the values they are learning. For example, students members of the Committee met at Dalkeith High School said that gay students did not think of people becoming aware of their sexuality as 'coming out', or as any kind of an event, as the school and pupils are accepting of different people's sexuality.
146. This example is commendable and reflects real progress in attitudes including in schools. Sadly, the Committee heard that this was not the experience of a lot of young people.

” I've witnessed LGBTI based bullying in a catholic school among 6th year pupils and it was quite clearly under the radar, because it appeared to be a taboo subject. The very lack of curricular definition and clarity was what made the bullying possible.

Anon. (Teacher) (By email)

If anyone found out at school that I was gay and mercilessly bullied me, I believed it would be my fault and that I had no right to complain for I had brought it on myself both for being this way and for being careless enough to be found out. I had a right to know that it is acceptable to be gay, someone should have been there to counter the all-pervasive homophobic 'banter' in the playground.

Anon (by email)

Source: Education and Skills Committee, 2017¹²

Teacher time and support outwith PSE lessons

147. Beyond the broad school ethos, PSE sessions also need to be supported by the availability of one-to-one time with guidance teachers, tutors or other support staff when requested. This is because PSE is likely to generate thought processes and questions from young people that they may not want to share in a classroom setting.
148. For example, in relation to mental health, Barnardo's Scotland has undertaken work that found that children are likely to seek to turn to teachers or guidance teachers privately for advice on mental health and emotional issues.
149. In addition, Stonewall has found that one-to-one time with someone a young person feels comfortable with, is often lacking.

- ” More than half (53 per cent) of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils don't feel there is an adult at school who they can talk to about their sexual orientation.

Source: Stonewall Scotland, 2012²⁵

150. The Committee acknowledges that while there may be cultural or training related reasons why the one-to-one time described by Stonewall Scotland may not be available, there may also be time pressures on teachers that could hinder this type of pastoral work.

Online information to supplement learning in PSE lessons

151. [As stated above](#), the evidence the Committee has heard on the extent young people look at inappropriate material online and then consider it an accurate representation of sex is extremely concerning. Given the increase in use of the online space, especially on issues that people maybe more comfortable seeking information on the internet than talking about, it is increasingly important that young people are directed towards appropriate online information.
152. The Committee considers that PSE programmes should seek to ensure young people are aware of where to find the right information online on healthy relationships, including sexual relationships. PSE sessions should point young people to appropriate informative online resources on a particular topic as a matter of course. This should be viewed as a natural extension of PSE learning.
153. The Committee is aware of existing diverse and accessible online resources such as those provided by [Young Scot](#), [Sexpression:UK](#), and [Brook](#).

- 154. The Committee invites Education Scotland and COSLA to provide information on any work undertaken centrally, or by education authorities (including collaboratively), that ensures schools have appropriate informative online resources to highlight to young people during their Personal and Social Education and that schools are being encouraged to do so as standard.**

Annexe A - Recommendations of the Health and Sport Committee's 5th Report, 2013 (Session 4) Report on Inquiry into Teenage Pregnancy

155. In 2013, the Session 4 Health and Sport Committee published a report on its inquiry into teenage pregnancy. Reproduced below are the recommendations of the report in relation to the provision of Sexual Health and Relationships Education ("SHRE").

The full report can be found here:

http://www.parliament.scot/S4_HealthandSportCommittee/Reports/heR-13-05w.pdf

SHRE in practice – general points

244. The Committee concludes that although there has been undoubted progress over the last decade in the quality of SHRE provision in schools, the progress has not been consistent. While there are many examples of good and innovative practice in Scottish schools, it is clear from the evidence received by the Committee that much of what is provided in schools is left largely to the discretion of the head teacher. Moreover, although Curriculum for Excellence lays significant emphasis on health and well-being, in practice the time and other resources available for SHRE are often limited.

245. There are also questions about the level of training available for teachers involved in SHRE and the extent to which the subject, as one that does not, in itself, lead to any qualification, receives any degree of priority in schools, or, indeed, in school inspections.

246. Elsewhere in this report, the Committee calls for a new Scottish Government strategy on teenage pregnancy. The Committee calls on the Scottish Government, as part of the development of that strategy, to carry out a full review of the provision of SHRE in schools. It should be a wide-ranging review that includes consideration of skills, resources, partnership with other agencies, the potential for further development of peer education approaches, the extent to which there should be central direction, initial teacher education and the inspection regime. The Committee believes that the effectiveness of delivery of SHRE within schools in any new strategy should be assessed within the existing Education Scotland inspection process.

247. The Committee further notes that the Minister was open to the idea of considering whether the approach to relationships and sexual health education in schools should involve an audit of young people's views. Although the Committee has not taken any evidence on this specific proposal, much of the evidence received pointed at general dissatisfaction with the quality of SHRE and the need to listen to the views of young people. The Committee therefore takes the view that such an audit would, indeed, be helpful, and urges the Scottish Government to bring forward plans to conduct one as part of its review of SHRE.

248. The Committee further proposes that, whatever approach to SHRE is adopted, the views of young people on the education provided should be regularly ascertained and the value of the approach measured against the outcomes of the data set.

SHRE – specific issues

256. The Committee is particularly interested in this area, given its deliberate linkage in this inquiry to its related work on health inequalities.

257. The Committee also accepts that looked-after and accommodated young people face increased risks of becoming involved in sexual activity earlier and are likely to receive reduced exposure to SHRE as a result of being more likely than other children to be poor attenders at school.

258. The Committee notes that much of the innovative and ground-breaking work that does take place with the most vulnerable young people is away from the mainstream education sector and is, potentially, a target for budget reductions, particularly by local authorities, in the current economic climate.

259. The Committee therefore calls on the Scottish Government, alongside the review of SHRE in schools, to examine the specific needs of looked-after and accommodated children and other vulnerable young people, with a view to the emerging teenage pregnancy strategy having particular regard to addressing the specific needs of the young people most at risk, including the looked-after and accommodated population.

269. The Committee notes the views of the CMF and Care Scotland and accepts that such views are genuinely held and may be supported by some parents. However, the Committee believes that it is important that children and young people have the opportunity to experience high quality SHRE throughout their education, at a level appropriate to their age.

270. The Committee also notes the evidence received that the quality of SHRE can be variable.

271. The Committee has also noted the increasing sexualisation of young people and their exposure to sexual images and information through the media and popular culture and through the easy availability of internet pornography. As much of the written evidence received by the Committee pointed out, many of these cultural influences reinforce negative gender role stereotypes and may create in young people unhealthy and negative expectations of sexual relationships. Yet the Committee heard the suggestion that the focus of SHRE remains too much on the biological and reproductive aspects of sex.

272. There is obviously a need for young people to receive factually accurate information about the biological and reproductive aspects of sex and practical information about methods of contraception. However, the Committee believes it is vital that SHRE, whether provided in schools or in other educational settings, concentrates on relationships, respect and tolerance and on developing the skills and behaviours needed to develop and sustain relationships with others, and to develop the maturity, confidence and self-esteem to enable them to make the decisions and choices on whether these become sexual relationships or not. The Committee's evidence showed that, in some schools and educational programmes, progress has been made towards such a shift of emphasis, but there was also evidence that progress had been variable and patchy.

273. Bringing about such a change will clearly require resources and leadership, not least in ensuring that SHRE is given sufficient priority in schools and elsewhere, but also in ensuring that teachers and other staff are sufficiently skilled to deliver. The Committee therefore calls on the Scottish Government, as part of the review of SHRE called for earlier in this section, to consider what further measures are needed to ensure that children and

young people receive high quality SHRE that emphasises relationships and respect over biology.

280. The Committee recognises that provision of SHRE at younger ages and at earlier stages of a child's education has the potential to be controversial. There is potential for parents to withdraw their children and for sensational tabloid media headlines along the lines of the sex lessons for five year olds that have occasionally been seen in the past.

281. Nevertheless, the Committee accepts the majority of the evidence presented to it that SHRE needs to begin earlier and that the majority of parents, many of whom feel ill-equipped to discuss sexual matters with their children, would welcome and support quality SHRE provision from an early age.

282. A number of witnesses have commented to the Committee that, in Scotland, we are not very good about talking about sex. The Committee takes the view that it is probably never too early for children to start talking about relationships and learning how to relate to and respect others, which in turn will lead to discussion, in due course, about sex as an aspect of relationships. Clearly, it is important that the content of such learning is appropriate to the age and maturity of the children and young people concerned, but it is also essential that steps be taken that will support the earlier development in children and young people of the knowledge, skills and competences to help them understand and sustain relationships and make the appropriate choices when options present themselves to them.

283. The Committee therefore calls on the Scottish Government, in carrying out the review of SHRE called for earlier, to consider what measures might need to be taken to ensure that the appropriate level of SHRE is consistently available to children and young people from as early an age as possible.

288. The Committee recognises that SHRE can be delivered in different ways and using a range of resources and skills, including those of professional teachers and other staff, as is appropriate. Nevertheless, the Committee has been impressed both by the peer education projects it observed during its visits and by the evidence it received in written submissions on the benefits of peer education. There appears to be a consensus that these projects have real benefits both in terms of acceptance of the health messages by those in receipt of peer education and in the self-esteem, confidence and level of aspirations of those involved in delivering them.

289. Although the Committee acknowledges that there are other relevant approaches and that it is a matter for local partners to determine the appropriate mix for their areas, the Committee believes that the benefits of the peer education approach, where it has been able to be used, have been amply demonstrated.

290. The Committee therefore calls on the Scottish Government, local authorities and the NHS to work in partnership to ensure that there are adequate resources to support training and networks in local areas where area partners believe such an approach would be beneficial.

296. The Committee understands and fully accepts that the position of religious education in denominational schools is set out in statute and that the Catholic Education Commission has responsibility for the faith content of the curriculum in Catholic schools, on behalf of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland. The Committee also understands that the Scottish Government is working in partnership with the Catholic Education Commission in the

development of guidance for Catholic schools in keeping with the values, purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence.

297. Nevertheless, the comments by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde on being denied access to RC schools and its concerns over the lack of feedback on what SHRE is being provided in RC schools and difficulties in providing information on the board's sexual health services for young people are worrying.

298. The Committee notes the argument between NHSGG&C and the Scottish Catholic Education Service, draws the attention of the Scottish Government to it and asks that it consider these matters during the review of SHRE that the Committee has called for. It would also be helpful for the Scottish Government to engage directly with SCEC and NHSGG&C in order to help find a way forward from the current impasse between the two bodies.

299. Finally, the Committee understands that the Scottish Government intends to review the content of Education Circular 2/2001, which governs the conduct of sexual education in schools, following the passage of the same-sex marriage bill. This review would present an opportunity to consider, together with the RC authorities, whether any changes are required in relation to SHRE provision in RC schools.

Annexe B - Extracts from meetings

5th Meeting, 2017 (Session 5) Wednesday 22 February 2017

Personal and Social Education:

The Committee took evidence, in a roundtable format, from—

- Erin McAuley MSYP, Member, Scottish Youth Parliament;
- Jordan Daly, Co-Founder, Time for Inclusive Education;
- Joanna Barrett, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, NSPCC;
- Jack Douglas, LGBT+ Officer, NUS Scotland;
- Hilary Kidd, Development Manager, Young Scot;
- Clare Clark, Communications Director, Sexpression:UK; and
- Janet Westwater, Teacher

7th Meeting, 2017 (Session 5) Wednesday 8 March 2017

School Education:

The Committee heard evidence on Additional Support Needs, Personal and Social Education and the Curriculum for Excellence from:

- John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Scottish Government.

Annexe C - Written evidence

The Committee collected evidence from a number of sources. Links to the documents listed below can be found on the Committee's webpage here: <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/103227.aspx>.

Social Media

- [Facebook comments](#)
- [Twitter comments](#)

Emails

- [100-word email submissions](#)

Submissions

- [Youthlink Scotland](#)
- [Barnardo's Scotland](#)
- [Children in Scotland](#)
- [Scottish Youth Parliament](#)
- [Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education Association](#)
- [EIS](#)
- [Monica Porciani](#)
- [Responses from schools visiting the Scottish Parliament](#)
- [Dr Joan Mowat, Strathclyde University](#)
- [Stonewall Scotland](#)
- [HIV Scotland](#)
- [Dr David Lewin, Strathclyde University](#)
- [Sexpression:UK](#)
- [Mary F Lappin, University of Glasgow](#)
- [Zero Tolerance](#)
- [Population Health Research \(Scottish Government\)](#)
- [Perth Academy, Wordle image](#)
- [LGBT Youth Scotland](#)
- [NSPCC](#)

- High School of Dundee
- Enable Scotland
- Bryan Campbell
- PCS Scotland
- Josh Traynor
- Children & Young People's Commissioner Scotland
- Field Studies Council
- Wholeistic Life-Coaching for Kids
- Barnado's and NSPCC Joint Briefing
- Scottish Youth Parliament

Focus Groups

- Focus Group Note on PSE

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