

PE1526/A

Response from Dundee City Council on Petition PE1526 which calls to introduce comprehensive sex and relationship education into the Scottish Education Curriculum and make it statutory for all schools to teach.

What are your views on what the petition seeks and the discussions that took place at the meeting on 30 September 2014?

Dundee City Council follows current national guidance which states that the curriculum is not prescribed by statute and the responsibility for its delivery and management rests with Local Authorities as laid out in the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000: Conduct of Sex Education in Scottish Schools (Circular 2/2001). We ensure through a range of systems and processes that health education, including which is now Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education (RSHP) has a secure place within the curriculum in all of our education establishments. These include Annual and Extended Reviews, Health Promoting Schools Accreditation process, School Improvement Plans, Networking Opportunities, Support from Central Officers.

We acknowledge our statutory duty to provide a right of every child of school age to be provided with school education and therefore we implement Curriculum for Excellence. We have welcomed a more focused and structured approach to RSHP within the curriculum since the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence and continue to embed good planning for learning, teaching and assessment within this strand of the curriculum. As with any other curricular area we place high and equal importance on this strand providing opportunities to engage with staff in all our establishments to plan for coherence and progression across the levels and into the Senior Phase. We are confident that our practitioners are planning good RSHP learning and teaching within the wider health and wellbeing area of the curriculum. We have evidence that schools welcome the approach we are fostering which promotes the use of data to inform planning to ensure that local needs are met, including the use of appropriate partners within this. We have made a high priority to allow practitioners to take ownership and responsibility for the planning and delivery of their curriculum, in the spirit of Curriculum for Excellence, with the support and challenge of central officers and partners, including Education Scotland and Scottish Government, NHS, Diocese of Dunkeld. It is not solely the responsibility of Education staff to educate young people in RSHP. We place very high importance on the role of parents/carers and other partners in this process and we are making good progress in involving all key stakeholders in this process.

For these reasons we would not be in favour of the public petition consideration which we feel would negate the positive progress we are making in this area.

How has the current Scottish Government guidance on sex and relationship education been implemented in your Local Authority?

Prior to the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence Dundee City Council produced and delivered a progressive programme of study which included structured lessons and guidance for staff and parents/carers. In denominational schools similar programmes, in line with their faith, were also used.

Curriculum for Excellence has given us the opportunity to transform our approach in planning and delivering RSHP education, including fostering closer relationships with partners.

Developments have been made to ensure that RSHP is not seen or delivered in isolation and is fostered in a more holistic approach to enable children and young people to make informed decisions. This approach has allowed us to make connections with the vast range of issues which affect young people.

Extensive work has taken place over the past 3 years to carry out evidence based research on sexual health and teenage pregnancy allowing us to have a clear strategy on how we use this to inform our practice. This has been achieved through partnership working across Local Authority, NHS and Voluntary Sector organisations.

Our approach has included a stakeholder event, sharing of data, building capacity across communities through healthy community collaborative, workforce development, research by a Health Psychologist and most recently a secondment of a Staff Tutor in the area of RSHP.

Research has been carried out with a range of stakeholders including young people, health professionals, community learning and development, education practitioners and members of the community which has informed our strategy for the City.

Reducing teenage pregnancy and improving sexual health outcomes remains a high priority for us. The responsibility of this is shared across key stakeholders through our local action group Dundee Action on Sexual Health. As part of this, the education department takes a lead role and we continually refer to the current Scottish Government guidance in our planning and delivery of our strategy. We have also taken an active role in the consultation of the current revised draft guidance on the Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Educational Settings (2014).

Dundee City Council was visited as part of the recent Parliamentary Inquiry on Teenage Pregnancy. This reaffirmed the ongoing developments Dundee City are making in the area of sexual health.

Other key documents/frameworks which inform our practice include the Sexual Health and BBV Framework, Equalities Act 2010, Teenage Pregnancy Toolkit and the ASN Act 2009 (revised 2012).