

Andrew Howlett
Assistant Clerk to the
Public Petitions Committee
T3.40
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
andrew.howlett@scottish.parliament.uk

In 2014 Scotland Welcomes the World



10 November 2014

Dear Mr Howlett

Thank you for your letter to DG Learning and Justice and DG Health colleagues of 10 October 2014 regarding the consideration of public petition PE1526 calling upon the Scottish Government to introduce comprehensive sex and relationship education into the Scottish Education Curriculum and make it statutory for all schools to teach. We welcome the opportunity to respond.

We would like to clarify that all schools under local authority control are expected to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and attributes encapsulated within the experiences and outcomes for Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) education in Curriculum for Excellence. For ease of reference, I attach a copy of the experiences and outcomes at Annex A.

All adults in schools have a responsibility to promote healthy, safe and respectful relationships. A discussion about the school's approach to both promoting and supporting all children and young people's health and wellbeing including RSHP education forms part of every school inspection. HMIE inspect all schools in Scotland and any shortcomings in educational provision should be reported.

Whilst it is true that religious and moral education is based in statute, no other part of the curriculum in Scotland is subject to statute – neither English, nor Maths, nor Sciences. We understand Sexpressions are calling for more training for teachers and comprehensive, good quality RSHP education, which we support. We do not think basing RSHP education in statute would have this desired effect.

We expect that the forthcoming revised guidance on the conduct of RSHP education, combined with awareness raising efforts from Education Scotland, will help raise its profile and encourage schools and local authorities to ensure teachers are properly trained. The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that all children and young people receive high quality relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in order to respect, protect and fulfil their human rights as they grow up.

We recognise the importance of this revised guidance and want to ensure we strike the right balance. The majority of comments made in feedback were in relation to teachers, children and young people on issues of conscience, and on the parental right of withdrawal from specific lessons on sexual health education. These are issues on which strong opinions are held, and it is important that time is taken to develop guidance that addresses these issues in a sensitive way. We will publish the revised guidance before the end of the year.

In addition to the revised RSHP education guidance, two pieces of policy work are underway that will also support the provision of comprehensive and good quality RSHP education in Scotland. A *Teenage Pregnancy and Young Parent Strategy* is currently under development through the input of a wide range of stakeholders from across Scotland. Evidence shows that high quality provision of RSHP¹ education is a key intervention in the reduction of rates of unplanned pregnancy in young people, and thus it is likely that this will be considered as key part of the Strategy. More information will be available once a final version of the Strategy is ready for consultation in Spring 2015.

The *Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework* is the Scottish Government's policy for supporting improved outcomes in sexual health and blood borne viruses. The framework recognises the importance of the provision of high quality RSHP education - wherever learning takes place - as well as the essential role that parents and carers have to play in this area. The current phase of the framework comes to an end in 2015, and a consultation process with stakeholders is currently underway to determine the priorities for the next phase. We would expect the provision of RSHP education to continue to be a priority for facilitating improvements in sexual health and wellbeing in Scotland. The refreshed framework is likely to be published in Summer 2015.

Clearly, these policies will be linked with each other, with Curriculum for Excellence and with the revised RSHP guidance to ensure a robust and cohesive approach that avoids duplication but ensures effective emphasis.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

ANN MILOVIĆ

Policy Adviser, Support and Wellbeing Team
Learning Directorate
Scottish Government

¹ http://www.gserve.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/documents/teenpreg_evidence_overview.pdf
Cidhe Bhictòria, Dùn Èideann, EH6 6QQ
Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
www.scotland.gov.uk



ANNEX A

Curriculum for Excellence: Health and Wellbeing Experiences and Outcomes –

https://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/health_wellbeing_experiences_outcomes_tcm4-540031.pdf