



## **Personal Social Education**

### **Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education (RSHPE)**

Barnardo's Scotland is particularly interested in the role of RSHPE in PSE for its contribution towards preventing child sexual exploitation (CSE) and abuse (CSA)

The 2015 Cochrane review of Child Abuse prevention programmes (though no specific studies from Scotland met the criteria) found evidence of an improvement in knowledge and protective behaviours among children who had access to school based programmes. The 2015 evaluation of the Rape Crisis Scotland sexual violence prevention programme also found positive impacts on both young people's knowledge and attitudes to sexual violence following participation. **We still need to know more however about the long term impacts of schools programmes in terms of preventing abuse.**

PSE lessons do not of course exist in isolation from the rest of schooling – a school may be able to provide outstanding PSE lessons around sexting and online behaviour, but also needs to have clear policies to respond to individual incidents effectively. There continue to be concerns about the consistency of provision of high quality, age appropriate RSHPE across Scotland – for example whether provision covers primary and secondary levels, reaches children disengaged from schooling, and covers the range of relevant topics. **It would be useful to know more about what is provided in terms of RSHPE across Scotland and how provision in PSE lessons is supported by wider school structures and policies.**

We note the potential overlap between RSHPE aimed at preventing abuse and other areas of concern - equipping a young person with the skills and self-confidence to assert themselves against sexually coercive behaviour may also have benefits in terms of their emotional literacy for example.

### **Mental health, wellbeing and emotional literacy**

A key issue in relation to the delivery of PSE in schools is its role in addressing how children and young people understand mental health, feelings and emotions. We welcome the Scottish Government ambition that emphasises:

*"the importance of nurturing learners to help them develop the knowledge and skills they need for positive mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing at school, in their everyday lives which will be sustained into adult life."*

Over 50% of the children and young people we work with either have a diagnosed mental health problem or another issue with their mental health. Also, in a recent survey of our service users a majority of children and young people told us that at school they are most likely to speak to a teacher/guidance teacher if they needed advice or support on something related to their mental health/emotions/feelings. As such it is important that we ensure teachers are equipped to support pupils who seek advice. **It would be useful to know what training is in place for teachers who are leading on PSE? Does there need to be a particular emphasis on training around mental health?**

We have 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. Our services tell us that a referral to CAMHS is often the default position for school staff when this is not what a child or young person needs. **Some investigation of the role of PSE (or an expanded version of PSE) in developing increased awareness of feelings/emotional and mental health would be welcome.**

**Is there a role for PSE in acting as one part of an early intervention approach?** This could be focussed on ensuring that problems can be identified early, and proportionate and accessible support is put in place. We would hope that PSE could also have a role in making sure that schools adopt a 'no wrong door approach' to when children want to talk about/get advice on mental health, as well as helping to increase the emotional resilience of children and young people who often find it difficult to label and regulate their feelings and can often lack coping mechanisms and emotional literacy.

### **Cross-cutting**

We would also highlight to the Committee the importance of ongoing scrutiny and inspection of what we're achieving through PSE, and whether this is currently being achieved or worked towards through the wellbeing strand of the National Improvement Framework.

As mentioned in relation to RSHPE and mental health, what is taught in PSE can have an impact throughout the whole school so schools must ensure what is taught in PSE is mirrored in their own practice outside of these lessons. PSE doesn't exist in isolation and can contribute to wider school initiatives such as the 'no wrong door approach' to mental health.

**Contact: Nicki Wray – Policy and Parliamentary Officer –**  
**[Nicola.wray@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:Nicola.wray@barnardos.org.uk) (0131 446 7033)**