



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Direct Tel: 0131 348 5222
Fax: 0131 348 5600
es.committee@parliament.scot

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Personal and Social Education

Dear John

The Education and Skills Committee undertook a round-table on personal and social education on 22 February 2017. In advance of the meeting, the Committee sought written evidence from young people, parents, teachers and other interested parties. In a little over two and a half weeks, the Committee gathered a great deal of information on people's views of personal and social education. Links to the evidence the Committee received can be found here:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/103227.aspx>

Many of the responses the Committee received focused on the topics that ought to be included in PSE. The responses indicate an appetite for a breadth of subjects to be covered, particularly: health and mental health awareness; awareness of LGBTI+ equality issues; broader and better sex and relationship education; financial literacy and practical life skills; career and continuing education guidance; and citizenship and rights. These themes were developed further during the Committee's round-table discussions on 22 February. For example the Scottish Youth Parliament argued that mental health awareness and how to access support should be addressed in PSE. Others noted that financial literacy and citizenship are not adequately covered. Another issue raised was online safety and access to pornography.

The session was lively and constructive. The *Official Report* of the meeting has been published and is available here:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10808>.

The reason I am writing to you at this stage is because the Committee agreed, given the number of constructive ideas for improvement to the delivery of PSE raised during the roundtable, that these could usefully be shared with you in advance of your evidence session. I hope this gives you and your officials an opportunity to consider the potential to adopt some such ideas in practice. I attach the list in the annexe. The Committee has not added its endorsement to any of these ideas at this stage but will discuss them with you on 8th March.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Dornan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a distinct 'D'.

**JAMES DORNAN MSP
CONVENER**

Proposals raised by witnesses on PSE

- Some witnesses highlighted concerns that PSE is inconsistently delivered and that sometimes there is a lack of esteem and focus on PSE within schools. They questioned whether it should have more prominence in the Curriculum for Excellence (the SPICe paper for the meeting highlights distinctions in approach);
- Others suggested that co-design with young people should be the starting point – Bearsden Academy and Dalkeith High being best practice examples of this raised in evidence;
- Consistency of the delivery of broad sex and relationship education is an issue, particular reference was made on a number of occasions to faith schools' delivery. Witnesses suggested that having statutory duties to deliver broad-based sex and relationship education would be beneficial in terms of consistency and would support teachers (e.g. could help teachers who might be cautious of parents' views on topics being raised in schools);
- Sex and relationship education was considered by the witnesses to be too narrow, with more of a focus on a variety of sexual orientations and gender identity required, and also a lack of focus on healthy relationships and vital issues such as consent. There may be scope to look at the definition of what lies within sex and relationship education;
- A central online resource for pupils (and teachers' reference) would be useful as at present too many young people are using the internet as the basis for their sex education;
- A number of witnesses mentioned the need to have more awareness of what was currently being delivered in schools as there is a lack of information on the consistency of delivery and the associated impact on young people at present;
- increased use, or more standardised use of external organisations, was suggested to educate on issues they specialise in such as Stonewall or Sexpression;
- Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) suggested that there should be national funding for training for teachers on equalities in respect of people who identify as LGBTI+;
- TIE also suggested that policy and practice in schools to ensure an inclusive culture for LGBTI+ young people in schools be better evaluated, for example including evaluations in school inspections
- TIE also questioned whether all schools are meeting their duties under the Equalities Act 2010 to ensure an inclusive and nurturing environment for LGBTI+ young people;
- The witnesses explored how age appropriate sex and relationship education could be delivered throughout nursery and primary school education (some evidence suggested some people were not learning about certain topics until university); and
- The witnesses discussed how many of these issues could be delivered in a cross-curricular way and raised examples of good practice.