

21 September 2017

James Dornan MSP
Convenor, Education and Skills Committee
Scottish Parliament

Dear James,

Response to the Education and Skills Committee report: Let's Talk About Personal and Social Education

COSLA welcomes the committee's report and recommendations, and note that many of these are already in practice in schools across Scotland, for example; coproducing PSE content and delivery approaches with children and young people, and the use of external contributors from local expert organisations to deliver on specific themes. The findings of the PSE review will be seriously considered and we are fully committed to the process of the review. Schools and the wider learning community continuously reflect and work to improve the educational experience of children and young people and it is hoped that the PSE review will provide a further opportunity for this. There are excellent local examples of where PSE is being delivered in a creative, engaging and useful way, for example linking with local third sector organisations, and we are keen that these examples are shared, developed on and where appropriate adapted for use in other areas. We would not support a national approach to the PSE curriculum and are keen that a local approach to PSE delivery continues.

Schools and local authorities take seriously their statutory responsibility to be "health promoting" and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Since this Duty came into force, local authorities have worked to ensure they comply with the duty, promoting equality and diversity and tackling discrimination and harassment, which of course includes in schools. Teachers are also required by the GTCS Professional Standards to embrace equality and commit to the principles of democracy and social justice through fair, transparent, inclusive and sustainable policies and practices in relation to the protected characteristics. PSE provides excellent opportunities to do this, and, while acknowledging the positive work and developments over recent years, it is important that schools and local authorities reflect on this and the Equality and Human Rights Committee's report on Bullying, and take steps to further improve the inclusivity of the curriculum and school environment.

COSLA are members of the LGBTI+ inclusive education working group along with Education Scotland, Educational Institute of Scotland, Equality and Human Rights Commission, General Teaching Council for Scotland, LGBT Youth Scotland, National Parent Forum of Scotland, Respectme, School Leaders Scotland, Scottish Catholic

Education Service, Scottish Youth Parliament, Scottish Trans Alliance, Stonewall Scotland and the Time for Inclusive Education Campaign. The remit of the group is:

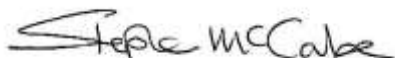
- *“facilitate joined up thinking and discussion to provide advice and recommendations to Scottish Ministers on the concerns and pledges of the Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) Campaign on how to improve the inclusive education experience for LGBTI young people; and,*
- *developing a consensus on its conclusions and recommendations within an equalities framework which recognises children and young people’s rights within intersecting identities.”*

From our perspective, we do not anticipate that this will be a long-term group. The group has met twice so far and is in the process of setting a workplan and associated timescales.

Work is underway on the review of PSE, guidance and counselling in schools, as per the action in the Mental Health Strategy: *Review Personal and Social Education (PSE), the role of pastoral guidance in local authority schools, and services for counselling for children and young people.* We are keen to ensure that the pastoral guidance and counselling elements are key features of the review and do not become secondary to the review of PSE content and delivery. We are committed to working with Scottish Government, Education Scotland, ADES and other partners to ensure this review is as wide ranging and beneficial as possible to all involved. It is anticipated that this review will cover the issue raised by the committee of what informative online resources are being used or highlighted to pupils during PSE.

Should you require further clarification on any points raised in this response, please contact COSLA officers who will be happy to assist.

Yours Sincerely,



Councillor Stephen McCabe,

COSLA Spokesperson for Children and Young People

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