

PE1526/E

Midlothian Council Response

Petition PE1526 - '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?

Midlothian Council follows current national guidance which states that the curriculum is not prescribed by statute and recognises that Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education (RSHP) should be delivered at all stages in Primary and Secondary schools as set out in the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000: Conduct of Sex Education in Scottish Schools (Circular 2/2001).

Curriculum for Excellence has offered our schools a more structured framework for RSHP and as an authority we are committed to delivering this through effective learning and teaching approaches within the health and wellbeing curricular area. RSHP education must, we believe, be delivered by trained and confident professionals and accordingly we are committed to providing opportunities for our teaching staff to regularly update their knowledge through appropriate training episodes but also by working closely with our partner agencies such as health and MYPAS (Midlothian Young People's Advisory Service).

Parents are informed of the timing and content of the RSHP units by schools and, where appropriate, are invited to contact headteachers to raise concerns.

The use of SHARE, in non denominational schools, and Scottish Catholic Education programmes (Called To Love - Secondary and God's Loving Plan – Primary) allow our schools to deliver a coherent and progressive RSHP curriculum from the Broad General Education through to the Senior Phase.

Curriculum for Excellence also places a responsibility on all staff to deliver health and wellbeing across all aspects of learning and as an authority we are making good progress with staff, students and parents in developing our self-evaluation approaches to wellbeing to ensure we are getting it right for every child (Making the Links...Making it Work, Education Scotland).

We feel strongly that the guidance within Curriculum for Excellence, the clear and robust RSHP programmes available and the positive support of partner agencies means that there is no requirement for this to become a statutory requirement. It is however most important that schools and local authorities maintain this as a key priority area and work with Education Scotland, where necessary, to ensure that robust processes are in place to monitor the impact of the programmes.

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

As expressed previously, all schools within Midlothian are expected to deliver a comprehensive RSHP programme, with detailed, but distinctive programmes being used in denominational and non-denominational schools.

RSHP is delivered within the health and wellbeing curricular area and the nature of the programmes used ensure that a coherent and progressive curriculum, with a strong relationships focus is available for all of our young people. We acknowledge that this, like all curricular areas, needs to be continually revisited to ensure information and knowledge shared is 'current'. Representatives from all of our non-denominational (secondary) guidance teams recently (June 2014) participated in the updated SHARE training from our partners in health.

We actively seek to involve parents in their children's learning by ensuring that parents are made aware of the timing and content of the programmes and are committed to developing our approaches to the self-evaluation of wellbeing within our schools so that pupils, parents and staff have a strong voice in shaping future priorities.

Reducing teenage pregnancy and improving sexual health outcomes remains a high priority for Midlothian Council. The responsibility of this is shared across key stakeholders as part of the 'Single Midlothian Plan'.

The authority is also very aware that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people experience high levels of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and are committed to working with partners such as LGBT Youth Scotland and Stonewall to support and educate all of our young people. All non-denominational secondary schools have signed up to participate in the Stonewall Champions Programme.

We also look forward to the publication of the current draft guidance on the Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Educational Settings (2014).