

# CONSULTATION RESPONSE: What should personal and social education (PSE) sessions be about?

LGBT Youth Scotland, February 2017



## Introduction

Personal and social education is pivotal to the achievement of children and young people's health and wellbeing outcomes and a key tool in developing a positive school ethos. LGBT Youth Scotland believes that PSE should mirror the aspirations of the Scottish curriculum to develop *'children and young people's knowledge and skills needed for positive mental health, as well as their social and emotional wellbeing both in the everyday lives and into adulthood'* and would emphasise the need for lessons that are inclusive of LGBT identities.

## LGBT Young People's PSE Needs

Evidence shows that LGBT young people experience high levels of bullying in school environments and have higher levels of poor mental health than their peers. They also tell us that the Relationships Sexual Health and Parenthood Education they experienced, was not inclusive of their LGBT identities.

- ✘ **Bullying** - 69% of LGBT young people experience homophobic or biphobic bullying in school; transgender young people have an even harder time with 77% experiencing bullying. The impact on LGBT young people includes poor mental health and leaving school early (14%)<sup>1</sup>.
- ✘ **Mental Health** - 40% of LGBT young people consider themselves to have mental health issues; this is even higher for transgender young people (67%), bisexual women (63%) and lesbian/ gay women (44%)<sup>2</sup>.
- ✘ **Sexual Health** - Research into sexual health has shown that 'men who have sex with men' are the group most at risk of acquiring HIV in the UK and yet young gay and bisexual men don't consistently receive appropriate sexual health information in school. Other research has suggested that lesbian, gay and bisexual women often do not get the right or accurate information about safer sex practices<sup>3</sup>.
- ✘ **Domestic Abuse** – Evidence also shows that LGBT young people are at risk of experiencing domestic abuse in their first relationships<sup>4</sup> and that LGBT people experience domestic abuse at a similar rate to heterosexual women (1 in 4)<sup>5</sup>.

*"More info in sex education classes – we are taught a lot about 'normal' heterosexual sex but absolutely nothing about [LGBT] sex... For example, I had to [go on] the internet to learn about lesbian sex – not the best source of accurate information as you may imagine"* (Young Person)

<sup>1</sup> Lough Dennell and Logan (2012). *Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People: Education Report*. LGBT Youth Scotland.

<sup>2</sup> Lough Dennell, Brandi Lee and Caitlin Logan (2013) *Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People: Health*. LGBT Youth Scotland.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Catherine Donovan & Marianne Hester (2014). *Domestic Violence and Sexuality - What's love got to do with it?* University of Bristol

<sup>5</sup> Donovan et al. (2006) *Comparing Domestic Abuse in Same Sex and Heterosexual Relationships*

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*“Raising awareness of trans issues... More general inclusion and awareness building of specific LGBT needs, and around sexual health, sexuality, relationships education and mental health.” (Young Person)*

### **Consistency**

There are examples of good practice in relation to PSE as well as useful tools developed by health authorities but this is not delivered consistently in Scottish schools and approaches vary across local authorities. We strongly believe that LGBT young people should have a consistent school experience and call for a statutory requirement for LGBTI-inclusive Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education (RSHPE).

We would also welcome stronger direction and leadership in relation to PSE in Scotland, with monitoring to ensure this is delivered consistently and to a high standard. These programmes; and any legislation that accompanies this, must consider the specific needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people and families.

### **Broader than PSE**

We believe that LGBT identities should also be included in the curriculum across all subjects. This embeds LGBT identities into the life of the school, rather than within one subject.

Achievement of children and young people’s health and wellbeing outcomes and inclusive school environments are also addressed by effective leadership and ‘whole school’ approaches. To this end, LGBT Youth Scotland developed a Charter Mark which supports schools to review their policies, train teachers, develop practice in relation to supporting LGBT young people and dealing with incidents of bullying, as well as curricular inclusion. At present 47 schools across Scotland are signed-up to the LGBT Schools Charter and 4 schools have been awarded this year. For more information on the LGBT Schools Charter see this short film: <http://bit.ly/2lyGyud>

### **LGBT Youth Scotland & Education**

LGBT Youth Scotland is currently the largest training provider for teachers in Scotland in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. Between April and November 2016 we delivered training to 1,200 practicing teachers and classroom assistants within 13 different local authority areas, and delivered sessions to more than 1,700 students in Initial Teaching Education in 6 of the 8 teaching Universities in Scotland.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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