



What should personal and social education lessons be about?

Scottish Youth Parliament

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Education and Skills Committee's call for views on what Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons should be about. PSE is repeatedly raised by Members of SYP (MSYPs) and their constituents as an issue of concern, and we are heartened that the Committee is exploring the issue.

Our research and consultation with young people has told us that PSE needs to address a wide range of issues that help prepare young people for life. Below is SYP policy on PSE developed and voted on by young people:

- “All pupils should have access to up-to-date and effective PSHE from a primary age, which addresses lifestyle, health, relationships, equality, social justice, and citizenship.” (*Lead the Way* manifesto commitment, 79% agreement)
- “The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that in order to tackle domestic abuse in Scotland, schools should provide gender and LGBT-inclusive Relationship, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education (RSHPPE) that covers the principles of equality, the signs of abuse, how to report abuse, and where to seek help.” (Members' Motion debated and voted on by SYP's membership, 80% agreement)
- “The Scottish Youth Parliament believes young people should be involved in the design of PSHE course content, which must be kept up-to-date and relevant to our rapidly changing world.” (Members' Motion debated and voted on by SYP's membership, 93% agreement)¹

A particular area of concern about the content of PSE is mental health. SYP's recent research with almost 1500 young people into young people's awareness and experience of mental health information, support, and services strongly suggests that the quality of education on mental health and wellbeing is varied across the country. Young people have told us that there is not enough focus on mental health in PSE.²

At a Mental Health Discussion Day SYP held in March 2016, young people overwhelmingly felt that one of the key ways to overcome the stigma and negative connotations surrounding mental health is to provide high-quality mental health education in schools from a young age. Young people repeatedly asserted throughout the event that more needs to be done in schools to both educate and support young people in mental health, with mental health education being given equal emphasis as physical health education.³

As a result, SYP has recommended that a Mental Health Standard be developed to increase the focus on mental health education in the Curriculum for Excellence, and we urge the Committee to consider this recommendation in its discussions on PSE.

¹ All of SYP's policy can be accessed via our website here: http://www.syp.org.uk/policy_log

² Scottish Youth Parliament, *Our generation's epidemic: young people's awareness and experience of mental health information, support, and services*:
[https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/scottishyouthparliament/pages/475/attachments/original/1467641786/SYP_MENTALHEALTH-REPORT_FINAL_2_\(1\).pdf?1467641786](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/scottishyouthparliament/pages/475/attachments/original/1467641786/SYP_MENTALHEALTH-REPORT_FINAL_2_(1).pdf?1467641786)

³ Scottish Youth Parliament, *Developing Scotland's next Mental Health Strategy*:
https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/scottishyouthparliament/pages/449/attachments/original/1461763333/Final_report-mental_health_discussion_day.pdf?1461763333