

# Scottish Government submission of 6 June 2022

## PE1934/A - Develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School

Thank you for your e-mail of 5 May 2022 on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee regarding Petition PE1934 to develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School. I have been asked to reply as I am responsible for policy on relationships, sexual health and parenthood (RSHP) education in the Scottish curriculum.

I appreciate the petitioners have previously corresponded with the Scottish Government through their local MSP and were informed the Scottish Government does not "prescribe" what is taught in Scottish schools. It may help if I set out the reasons why Scotland does not have a prescriptive curriculum as well as offer some further information on the wider work underway to help tackle gender based violence in schools. This is designed to ensure our pupils received relevant and meaningful learning and teaching to help create a safer society for women and girls.

In terms of defining the landscape of what is taught in Scottish schools, Scotland's curricular framework, Curriculum for Excellence, is set at a national level. The Scottish Government believes it is best for schools and teachers to design and deliver a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils and their communities and, as a result, it is for teachers to determine what is taught in their classrooms. This includes freedom to select the resources they consider will best help communicate particular topics or messages within their specific classroom context. Teachers are expected to use their professional judgement, experience and understanding of their pupils to respond sensitively to complex and challenging issues, when delivering learning and teaching within the curricular framework. It is considered good practice for schools to consult with their pupils and respond to their views appropriately, to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils in the school or educational setting.

To support teachers to deliver relevant and meaningful learning and teaching, including on the causes of gender based violence and ensure pupils leave school with the tools to help create a safer society for women and girls, there is a wide range of action and resources already in place on those topics, some of which were set out in the response provided through the local MSP. I have included below, further detail on these pieces of work which include:

- high quality RSHP education, an important part of the health and wellbeing curriculum in Scotland, which supports pupils to learn about safe and healthy relationships. Resources available to teachers, for example<sup>1</sup>, include lesson plans to support progressive learning where pupils will leave school with an understanding of what sexual harassment is and discuss how sexual harassment in school can be tackled. They will also learn about the laws around sexual consent:
  - At first level (P2-P4), learning is designed to encourage children to be whatever person they want to be, free from stereotypes and gender biased expectations;
  - At second level (P5-P7), learning about a fair and equal life for boys and girls; on consent, where children learn abuse is wrong; and, on protecting me and abuse and relationships; and,
  - At third/fourth level (S1-S3), learning about sexual harassment as well as about equalities and feminism;
- a resource<sup>2</sup> for professionals to help them support young people aged 11-18 in their understanding of healthy relationships and consent. This resource sets out that relationships should be mutually respectful, consensual, positive, healthy and enjoyable. The messages it contains are applicable to all romantic relationships – from those that are about holding hands to those where young people are sexually active, regardless of whether they are in same sex or mixed sex relationships. The messages are intended for professionals who work with young people (from secondary age to young adult) using their own professional judgement to determine when the messages are age and stage appropriate for the young person or people they are working with. A set of Key Messages on Healthy Relationships for ages 3-11, is also being developed.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.rshp.scot](http://www.rshp.scot)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/key-messages-young-people-healthy-relationships-consent-resource-professionals-working-young-people>

- Gender Based Violence in Schools Working Group are developing a framework document to help ensure consistency in messages on sexual harassment and gender based violence to everyone working with children and young people. The Working Group will also carry out a review of existing resources and identify examples of effective practice, as well as developing new resources.
- This framework will be backed up by resources that the Scottish Government have committed to developing from the Personal and Social Education review that will support schools to teach confidently about the issue of sexual harassment. The Personal and Social Education Lead Officer Network is working on collating resources to ensure teachers have confidence in delivering learning and teaching on sexual harassment.

I hope the Committee finds this letter helpful and I'm happy to provide any further information should the Committee require it.