

Rape Crisis Scotland submission of 15 September 2023

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

We strongly support the action taken by Greenfaulds High School Rights and Equalities Committee to address Violence against Women and Girls and specifically to insist that all young people should have education on gender-based violence so that they leave school with the tools to create a safer society for women, and we commend the group's initiative and leadership in drawing attention to this issue.

We note that schools have a duty the 2010 Equality Act, under which sex is a protected characteristic, to take measures to address issues of gendered violence and gender equality – as follows:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Further, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out a number of rights relating to protection from abuse and violence, and education to promote equality and prevent violence:

- Article 2 (non-discrimination) The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.
- Article 19 (protection from violence, abuse and neglect) Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 29 (aims of education) (d): Education should prepare children for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship

among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin

- Article 34 (sexual exploitation) Governments must protect children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Article 39 (recovery from trauma and reintegration) Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

Article 12 is also relevant as it underpins the need to engage with children and young people when they express concerns about issues affecting them as the petition authors have done:

- Article 12 (respect for the views of the child) Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

It may be helpful to outline a number of the measures already in place or in progress which support the group's objectives. The petitioners call in particular for an educational resource on gender-based violence and the following two items play a substantial role in delivering this:

- Rape Crisis centres across Scotland deliver a [programme of sexual violence prevention workshops](#) directly to schools, coordinated nationally by Rape Crisis Scotland. The programme is funded by the Scottish Government and included in the Equally Safe strategy, and last year reached over 35,000 young people in over 200 secondary schools. The programme is delivered by specialist prevention workers whose expert knowledge complements the RSHP curriculum delivered by schools.
- The national [RSHP resource](#) provides a comprehensive set of learning activities for use in all educational settings and is structured in line with the Curriculum for Excellence. Resources relating to gender equality and gender-based violence have been mapped and can be reviewed [here](#). There is a consultation underway on the new draft guidance for delivery of RSHP in Scottish settings.

The gaps in education available to young people may stem more from the delivery infrastructure and resourcing rather than a lack of materials. In particular the Rape Crisis Prevention Programme lacks sufficient resource to meet demand in many of the areas it operates. There is an urgent need to review funding allocations as these have been at a standstill level for some years because existing grant arrangements have been extended in place of new funds being launched, meaning it has not been possible to apply for increased resources to ensure all young people have access to the programme.

In addition to the Prevention Programme and RSHP resource, schools are supported to take a range of measures to address gender-based violence:

- We developed the [Equally Safe At School \(ESAS\)](#) whole school approach to complement the Prevention Programme so that secondary schools could be supported with guidance and tools to implement a series of measures across policy, curriculum, staff training and school culture and ethos to prevent gender-based violence and promote gender equality. This resource is freely available to schools via an interactive website with training available to local staff teams via rape crisis centres. To date 80 schools have registered an account. The University of Glasgow is commencing an evaluation of ESAS funded by the National Institute of Health Research this year.
- The [Mentors in Violence Prevention](#) programme is a peer mentoring programme that gives young people the chance to explore and challenge the attitudes, beliefs and cultural norms that underpin all forms of gender-based violence in our society. It is led by Education Scotland and delivered across the country.
- The [Gender Based Violence in Schools working group](#) is developing a national framework to prevent and respond to harmful behaviour and gender based violence in schools. This is due to be published by the end of the year and will be the first national-level document issued by the Scottish Government to guide the approach to tackling gender-based violence in schools. The group was set up following advocacy from Rape Crisis Scotland and Zero Tolerance who jointly chair the group with the Scottish Government, as well as Scottish Women's Aid and the

NSPCC. The impetus for doing so was in large part due to the findings of the Children and Young People's consultation for the Equally Safe strategy '[Everyday Heroes](#)' which identified a number of concerns and priorities for education.

- The [Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning](#) (GETEL) aims to identify measures to address the lack of gender equality which remains evident in education and learning settings and will advise on potential changes in practice and actions to support a gender competent experience of education and learning for all girls and women. The group is in the process of identifying a range of systemic measures to transform the way our education system delivers on gender equality and the safety of women and girls. It is of vital importance that there is a sustained and well-resourced plan of action to engage with and implement recommendations over the medium to long-term if its ambitions are to be realised.

We would summarise that there has been substantial progress in recent years in addressing the kinds of concerns that the petitioners have outlined. However, as is clear from their experience as well as the children and young people who took part in the Everyday Heroes consultation, the reality for children and young people in school is very mixed and we are only in the early stages of progress in making it a reality for all children and young people have access to the education that is their right, and for the safety of all girls and women to be upheld, at school and in wider society.

We would urge the Scottish Government to ensure gender-based violence is treated as a priority alongside other key educational commitments, in particular as part of the Education Reform process currently underway, and that there is effective leadership to ensure it is given the prominence needed. Further, that there is commitment to long-term action to address the recommendations of the GETEL.

Whilst we recognise that Scotland does not have a statutory curriculum, children and young people nevertheless have a right to education on gender-based violence and should have parity of access to this, so whilst government cannot prescribe specific measures, there is a duty to ensure educational outcomes are met and that systems and resources are in place to assure this.

