

CYPE(6)-18-22 - Paper to note 7

Information submitted by Women's Equality Party (Wales) in response to the publication of the Welsh Government's response to the Committee report on Peer on peer sexual harassment among learners

I am writing to you on behalf of the Women's Equality Party in Wales. Led by our youngest members, we have been campaigning to end sexual harassment in schools. We know that this is critical both to the safety and wellbeing of girls in Wales, but also to the long-term societal attitudes towards women. We have therefore been following your inquiry closely. We welcome the recommendations that you made to the Welsh Government, and indeed their response this week, however we do have two key areas of concern.

We bring these to your attention today and ask that you discuss them in your committee meeting on 6th October.

Firstly, as indicated in your report, this doesn't only happen in secondary schools, it begins in primary, and follows young women and girls into further education and beyond. We see no reason why the majority of actions accepted by the Welsh Government can't be extended to cover all educational settings immediately (e.g. adopting the standard definition, robust standardised reporting, inclusion in Estyn inspections, funding for teacher training). Children and young people in Wales have been waiting long enough for action to be taken on this issue that is affecting their daily lives and learning experiences. Another inquiry will only delay the important work of changing a culture that regards commonplace sexualised bullying as a normal part of society and schooling, action must be taken now across all schools and colleges.

Secondly, we are extremely disappointed to not see any new funding announced to allow specialised training and support for teachers and school staff. We have been hearing from many teachers that whilst they support the aims of the new curriculum, and the whole school approach to RSE, they feel unprepared to deliver lessons and facilitate conversations around these sensitive topics. Whilst ring-fencing a proportion of the professional learning budget is a start, it doesn't go far enough to address the huge gaps in both understanding of, and confidence in, tackling these issues. This is a specialised subject which requires quick implementation, and therefore increased funding.

We look forward to your response on these two important issues.

Hanna Andersen

Branch Leader

Women's Equality Party (Wales)