

CYPE(6)-23-22 – Paper to note 2

Ahead of the Plenary debate on the Committee report on Peer on Peer Sexual Harassment among Learners stakeholders were asked to submit their views on the response and in particular the recommendation that the Welsh Government rejected

Information received via email from ParentKind

I have included Parentkind's views on peer on peer sexual harassment being treated as an Adverse Childhood Experience below:

NHS Wales describes Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as stressful events occurring in childhood and has very specific definitions of what constitutes an ACE. Parentkind joins others in suggesting that the Welsh Government considers the potential benefits of treating peer on peer sexual harassment as an ACE. Children and young people who experience peer on peer sexual harassment have to deal with trauma as a result. This is significant as this experience may lead to a host of negative implications for the victim, for example, peer on peer sexual harassment may lead to the victim's school attendance suffering. With pupil absence already an issue in Wales, considering peer on peer sexual harassment an ACE would mean that targeted and commensurate support could be given.

Parentkind's Parent Voice Report 2021 showed that mental health and well-being for children and young people was prioritised by parents. It also revealed that anxiety and bullying were included in the top five concerns for parents. Peer on peer sexual harassment could quite easily be included within those stated concerns at school. The Welsh Government could help tackle this concerns by treating peer on peer sexual harassment as an Adverse Childhood Experience as it will help schools deal with the problem effectively and a positive educational environment.

Parentkind's Parent Voice Report 2021 also found that one of parents' concerns were children and young people feeling pressure to engage with social media. Peer on peer sexual harassment is prevalent online, outside of school. The fact that young people are engaging (and feeling the pressure to engage) with social media at ever earlier ages means that they are potentially put in harm's way where it comes to the risk of sexual harassment. Parentkind would suggest that, if designated an ACE, the Welsh Government should consider what further educational support around social media and the online world could be given.

Parentkind recommends that the department treats peer on peer sexual harassment as an Adverse Childhood Experience in order to deal with the issue in the most effective manner, ensuring that long term effects are minimised and harms are actively reduced.