

Present:

Jocelyn Davies AM, Chair

Rhayna Pritchard, Researcher to Jocelyn Davies

Cecile Gwilym, NSPCC, Secretariat.

Joyce Watson AM, Assembly Member for Mid and West Wales

Aled Roberts AM, Assembly Member for North Wales

Siriol Burford, Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer

Evie, Student, Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer

Jake, Student, Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer

Rebecca Griffiths, Public Affairs Officer, Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales

Menna Thomas, Barnardo's Cymru

Meg Kissack, Welsh Women's Aid

Tina Rees, Welsh Women's Aid

James Dunn, Researcher to ??

Ioan Belin, Researcher to Simon Thomas AM

Item 1, the AGM and the election of the Chair and Vice Chair, was postponed until a further meeting.

*Item 2: Boys and Girls Speak Out, the next steps. The role of PSE in promoting gender equality and healthy relationships. Professor Emma Renold, Cardiff University.*

Professor Emma Renold (ER) gave background information on the research, which was undertaken last year with support from the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales and the NSPCC. The aim of the research was to get children and young people's views about things that matter to them, such as bodies, fashion, relationships and friendships. The research involved 125 young people, from 5 secondary and 3 primary schools in Wales.

ER went on to talk about a project she conducted in Ysgol Gyfun Plasmawr in Cardiff, involving young people who wrote a poem about gender stereotyping and pressures. ER circulated a copy of the poem to attendees.

ER also talked about the DIGON group based in Ysgol Gyfun Plasmawr, who developed a drama based on the research findings. The young people from this group have also run peer led workshops in 6 or 7 primary schools.

ER highlighted how the Welsh research has been used by Maggie Jones in her House of Lord campaign calling for mandatory sex education in primary schools.

ER then went on to discuss the research findings relating to gender stereotyping and sexism. More children spoke about putting up with every day sexism. In contrast with what is being portrayed by the media, girls prefer “comfy” clothes. There is a strong level of body anxiety in girls: they feel constantly judged and watched. They talked about giving up activities they once used to enjoy as they clashed with their perceived idea of “femininity”. Sexy was perceived as dangerous. Girls struggled with fitting in, and reported a degree of verbal harassment if they didn’t fit in.

The boys’ comments around their bodies, appearance, and their relationships with girls centred around safety rather than sexuality. Girls’ taste for fashion and make up was seen as a way to “get a boyfriend”. For boys, having a girlfriend was about fitting in and having fun.

The young people taking part in the research had views on gender stereotyping and bullying but did not know where to go with them. Many didn’t see the every day pressures on them as gender bullying and would not have used bullying policies within their schools to deal with them. They wanted to be able to talk more freely about gender stereotyping, and have a safe space to do so rather than have to wait for a PSE lesson. This, according to ER, highlighted the need for a whole school approach in tackling gender stereotyping.

ER highlighted the lack of resources available for schools to tackle gender stereotyping. She briefly mentioned a resource developed by the NUT about gender stereotyping, and called on the Cross Party Group to reflect on how the research findings could be used to influence the current curriculum review which is being undertaken by the Welsh Government.

Jocelyn Davies AM asked if some young people were able to successfully resist pressure to conform to stereotypes. ER answered that if they had family support they could resist pressures.

*Item 3. Implementing good practice throughout schools. Siriol Burford, Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer.*

Siriol Burford (SB) started by highlighting that work on equalities and wellbeing was particularly important in areas where confidence is low.

She outlined her role as Deputy Head Teacher responsible for wellbeing:

- Pupil voice
- Inclusion
- PSE
- Spiritual, moral and personal development
- Emotional literacy
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She reminded attendees that all these things are part of the Estyn framework for wellbeing.

She went on to say that in the many roles that she has held in various schools, she has always started by creating young leaders, as it is a great way to engage young people.

In Ysgol Glynderw where she previously worked, she developed a wellbeing survey :

- The survey included a question about SRE: young people at Glynderw wanted professionals rather than teachers to teach them SRE.
- Many young people wanted to learn about relationships: 38% in Ysgol Glynderw and 48% in Ysgol y Cymer wanted to learn how to be safe.

This work was built on through a curriculum enrichment week: all pupils in year 9 trained to be leaders in many fields, including healthy relationships. The week included themes such as how to be safe/DA; body image; self-esteem; self-confidence; self-worth; persistence and resilience. Young people learned about:

- Sexual bullying
- Domestic abuse
- Boundaries
- Power and control
- Help and advice
- Relationships and sex education

Following their training, the young people got the opportunity to speak in conferences about their work. Young people fed into the White Paper consultation on the Violence against Women Bill.

SB was very clear that this is the type of thing young people should learn at school, not just literacy and numeracy, in order to become well rounded individuals. She called on the Cross Party Group to think about how wellbeing can be implemented in schools. The new Schools challenge Cymru launched by the Welsh Government should be part of this agenda. Teachers should know how to address the issue of healthy relationships. Children will achieve better if they are safe, happy, and valued.

*Item 4: What do we want from PSE? Evie and Jake, Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer.*

Evie and Jake outlined how they had been part of peer-led PSE lessons delivered by Year 10 girls at Ysgol Gyfun y Cymer. The lessons covered healthy relationships and body image.

Situations were described, with pupils having to choose whether they were right or wrong, and then reflecting on their own behaviour. A video was also used to highlight what makes a relationship healthy.

Both pupils felt that peer-led lessons were more useful and powerful because the girls teaching them understood how they felt. Also they were being looked up to, and boys understood it was a serious issue.

Boys looked at scenarios where girls were being pressured, and thought that boys would probably brag about doing such a thing, but PSE lessons taught them that girls should be respected and that it wasn't "cool" to pressure girls into doing things they didn't want to do.

Girls were reported to sometimes feel uncomfortable about talking about the different scenarios presented to them. They didn't realise before the lesson what was right or wrong, and were unsure about what was supposed to happen within a relationship. After the lesson, they felt more informed and knew who to talk to about any concerns.

### *Conclusions*

The point was made once again about how little resources there are to help teachers address this issue within schools. The Group was called on to think about how it can influence the ongoing curriculum review.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Group would be set for as soon as possible after the introduction of the Violence against Women Bill, as this would allow time to identify what needs to be done to further promote the need for healthy relationships education provision within schools. It was agreed that the Group would meet jointly with the Cross Party Group on Violence against Women for their next meeting as there is a lot of cross-over between the two groups at the moment.

Cecile Gwilym thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting as Jocelyn Davies had to attend Plenary.