

GBV 80

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill :

Stage 1

Response from: Barnardos, NSPCC, Welsh Women's Aid

Credwch
mewn plant
Believe in
children



Barnardo's
Cymru



Cymorth i Ferched Cymru
Welsh Women's Aid
Rhoi Merched a Phlant yn Gyntaf
Putting Women & Children First

NSPCC

Dim mwy o greulondeb i blant. DIM.
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

Gender based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Bill – A response to the absence of the section on 'Improving Education and Awareness in Education Settings'

A primary aim of this Bill (as introduced) is stated to be '*to improve arrangements for the **prevention** of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence*'. We were therefore surprised and concerned to see that White Paper proposals to ensure that education on 'healthy relationships' is delivered in all schools and to promote a whole-school approach, are absent from the Bill. The White Paper clearly evidenced the potential preventative and protective impact of making the delivery of a comprehensive and expertly delivered element of the PSE curriculum on inter-personal violence and safe relationships statutory.

We ask the Welsh Government to explain, during Stage 1 deliberations, how they will fulfil their commitment, made in the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence White Paper to ensure school age children and young people in Wales will receive mandatory, comprehensive 'healthy relationships' education.

We call on the Welsh Government to either:

1. Include measures on 'Improving Education and Awareness' in Educational Settings on the face of the Bill.

Or:

2. Make a clear commitment that this provision will be delivered through the Curriculum as a result of the ongoing Welsh Government Review, and clarify the 'Supporting measures to ensure schools embed violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence more generally' (Explanatory Memorandum – 59)

Whichever option for delivery is chosen, we call on the Welsh Government to ensure a whole-school approach, in line with the proposals set out in the White Paper and the Welsh Minister's duty to due regard on the UNCRC (Articles 34, 28, 19, + 13).

Why we think this is so important?

We believe that ensuring all children and young people in Wales experience rights-based education on healthy relationships, gender equality and human rights will help to deliver the outcomes sought by this prevention focussed legislation. This should form part of mandatory PSE age-appropriate content on keeping safe, in particular on-line, how to recognise abuse, exploitation and neglect, and where to go for help. The curriculum should go beyond the healthy relationship and gender equality issues to include, for example, child sexual exploitation, trafficking, sexually harming behaviour, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. In order to achieve this effectively we also believe the planning and delivery of such a programme of education should be based on past research and practice experience. This evidence indicates that a number of measures that sit outside, but are supportive of, the PSE curriculum should be included on the face of the Bill. These pertain to whole school approaches to gender based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence initiatives which contribute to pupil wellbeing^{1,2} We would welcome further clarification about the decision not to include these measures on the face of the Bill. Our responses to the Independent Review of Assessment and the National Curriculum Wales consultation, though encompassing the above, would have been considerably stronger on these issues had it been clear that this element was omitted from the Bill.

¹ A review of preventative work in schools and other educational settings in Wales to address domestic abuse. Research Summary 02/2011. Welsh Government

² Prevention and Education: A whole School Approach. Wales Violence Against Women Action Group

We welcome continued statements of commitment by the Minister for Local Government and Government business to Welsh Government delivery of the White paper proposals on healthy relationship education and encouraging schools to take a whole-school approach:

Education is obviously very important, and I absolutely remain committed to delivering the White Paper proposals on healthy relationship education and on encouraging schools to take a whole-school approach to addressing gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The proposals will not feature on the face of the Bill for a number of reasons. One, as you will be aware from our discussions, is that the Minister for Education and Skills has commissioned a review of the national curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales, and that work by Professor Donaldson will consider the place of healthy relationships education in our future approach to PSE in Wales. That is a real opportunity that we must make the most of. I do not want to see healthy relationships taught at the end of the week by somebody who is not appropriately trained. That is another thing: we must make sure that the people delivering that healthy relationships education in our schools are appropriately trained.

Any future education-related Bill would take forward any legislative changes to the curriculum, and I think that it is advisable that we should do that within that Bill.

Minister for Local Government, The Record 1st July 2014.

We also welcome comments that there may be scope to amend the legislation to include provisions during the scrutiny process on the Bill:

"I want to assure ... all Assembly Members that healthy relationships education is a very important part of preventing gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence. I think that teaching our young people to be aware of what behaviour is and is not acceptable at a very young age can help them to develop healthy relationships in their own lives and prevent abuse in future relationships. My officials and those of the Minister for Education and Skills are working together to assess how we might include further provisions in this area in Stage 2 or 3.

Minister for Local Government, The Record 9th July 2014.

We call on the Welsh Government to - **during the passage of this Bill** - make clear how it will deliver the White Paper proposals on delivering mandatory, comprehensive 'healthy relationship education' to school-age children and young people in Wales.

Evidence to support our position

1. Research carried out on behalf of the NAFW Cross Party Group on Children's Sexuality–Sexualisation and Equalities and funded by the NSPCC Cymru/Wales, Cardiff University and the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Walesⁱ found that most children and young people reported struggling to live with gender stereotypes and 'everyday sexism', and experiencing verbal and gender-based harassment.

Cal: 'They were all shouting at him, 'kiss her' and stuff...and my friend was dragged into there (alley) with this girl and they said 'go on kiss her'

Daman: 'The group was pushing him (...)

Cal: The girl was probably feeling very uncomfortable

Daman: (but) we keep it to ourselves, because in our school teachers wouldn't know about it (age 12)

As children get older, we start getting nastier to each other, and to our girlfriends. (boy aged 11)

The study recommends a rights-based approach to Sex and Relationship

Education: the development of appropriate SRE material for children should aim to promote an understanding of every child's right to be safe (Article 19, UNCRC) and promote cultural change that challenges gender stereotypes and prejudice and practices in line with a human rights approach.

2. A Barnardo's report on a Parliamentary inquiry into the effectiveness of legislation for tackling child sexual exploitation and trafficking within the UK **highlighted the need for 'high quality age-appropriate sex and relationship education' to improve the prevention of child sexual exploitation.**ⁱⁱ

3. A review of preventative work in schools and other educational settings in Wales to address domestic abuse carried out by NFER on behalf of Welsh Assembly Government in 2011ⁱⁱⁱ **recommended considering making domestic abuse education a compulsory part of the school curriculum.**

4. The Task and Finish Group report^{iv} referenced research evidence which established a link between children's exposure to domestic violence and emotional and behavioural problems, poor peer relationships, low academic attainment and engagement in risky health behaviours. It also referenced a literature review^v which '*found that children and adolescents living with domestic violence are at increased risk of experiencing emotional, physical and sexual abuse, of developing emotional and behavioural problems and of increased exposure to the presence of other adversities in their lives*'. **It recommended compulsory education about gender equality, healthy relationships, safety and respect.**

This coalition supports the Children Are Unbeatable Campaign call for equal protection for children and removal of the defence of reasonable punishment in relation to children.

ⁱ Renold, E. (2012). Boys and Girls Speak Out, a qualitative study of children's gender and sexual cultures NSPCC and Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales: http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/boys-and-girls-summary-English_wdf100422.pdf

ⁱⁱ Report of the Parliamentary inquiry into the effectiveness of legislation for tackling child sexual exploitation and trafficking within the UK Chaired by Sarah Champion. Barnardo's April 2014. Available at: http://socialwelfare.bl.uk/subject-areas/services-client-groups/children-young-people/barnardos/161487cse_parliamentary_inquiry_report.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ NFER, *A Review of Preventative Work in Schools and other Educational Settings in Wales to Address Domestic Abuse* (Welsh Government, Cardiff, 2011). Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/research/110315executivesummaryschoolbasedworktoaddressdomesticabuseen.pdf>

^{iv}Robinson et al (2012). Recommendations from the Task and Finish Group. Welsh Government. Available at: [http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/resources/Robinson%20et%20al%20\(2012\)%20Task%20and%20Finish%20Group%20Report.pdf](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/resources/Robinson%20et%20al%20(2012)%20Task%20and%20Finish%20Group%20Report.pdf)

^v Holt, S., Buckley, H. and Whelan, S. (2008) The impact of exposure to domestic violence on children and young people: a review of the literature, *Child Abuse and Neglect* 32, pp797–819.