

Kirsty Williams AM
Cabinet Secretary for Education
Welsh Government

7 October 2016

Dear Kirsty,

The Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee is currently undertaking post-legislative scrutiny work on the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act). I enclose the Committee's agreed terms of reference. As part of this work, we will be revisiting the issue of education on healthy relationships, including whether enough is being done within educational settings to ensure the development of a whole school approach to challenging violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

You may recall, during the passage of the Gender Based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Bill (which gave rise to the Act), the issue of whether the Bill should make provision for compulsory education on healthy relationships was the focus of much debate. At the time, the view of the Minister for Public Services was that such provision was not necessary given that proposals put forward by Professor Donaldson following his review of the National Curriculum would, if accepted, mean that healthy relationships would feature in any new curriculum that was developed. The Minister gave a commitment that he and the then Minister for Education and Skills would explore with the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence sector how it could contribute to taking forward this work. We understand that work is now underway to develop a new curriculum and that the Pioneer Schools Network has been established.

Respondents to the Committee's consultation have raised concerns about the Welsh Government's current and future approach to healthy relationships education. These largely relate to the non-compulsory nature of guidance (especially given that the [original White Paper on the legislation](#) proposed to ensure education on healthy relationships



was delivered in all schools), inconsistency between institutions, and confusions about the duty on local authorities to report on how schools are implementing guidance.

The [**Good Practice Guide: A Whole Education Approach to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales**](#) (developed with Welsh Women's Aid) was published in October 2015. The Act placed a duty on local authorities to report on how they are addressing gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence within their education institutions, including through sex education.

In order to assist the Committee in its work, we would welcome evidence from you on the following:

- Will teaching about health relationships be included in the 'health and wellbeing' area of learning and experience proposed by Professor Donaldson? If not, will it be included in any of the other five areas?
- How the 120 Pioneer Schools (that have been charged with developing the new curriculum) are taking forward the Good Practice Guide?
- When will local authorities begin reporting on how schools are implementing the Good Practice Guide?
- How will the Welsh Government ensure that the healthy relationships education is consistent between institutions and age-appropriate?
- When will Estyn's thematic review on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence take place?
- Will there be a target date for when all education institutions should have implemented the good practice guidance?
- How will the effectiveness of healthy relationships education be monitored?
- How will these issues be addressed in further and higher education institutions?

The Committee will be concluding its evidence gathering on 19 October, when it will hear from Carl Sargeant AM, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, with overall responsibility for domestic abuse, gender-based violence and sexual violence. It would be helpful if you could respond as soon as practicable and as close to this date as possible.



I am copying this letter to Lynne Neagle AM, Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee for information.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John". The letters are cursive and connected, with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the word.

John Griffiths AC / AM
Cadeirydd / Chair



Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Post-legislative scrutiny work on the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

The Committee will be looking at progress made in the implementation of the Act's provisions and its impact to date. In particular, the Committee will be considering:

- To what extent the approach to tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is improving as a result of the obligations in the Act?
- What are the most effective methods of capturing the views and experiences of survivors? Are arrangements in place to capture these experiences, and to what extent is this information being used to help inform the implementation of the Act's provisions?
- Whether survivors of abuse are beginning to experience better responses from public authorities as a result of the Act, particularly those needing specialist services?
- Whether the National Adviser has sufficient power and independence from the Welsh Government to ensure implementation of the Act?
- To what extent the good practice guide to healthy relationships is successfully influencing the development of a whole school approach to challenging violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence?