

PLVAW 33

Ymchwiliad ôl-ddeddfwriaethol i Ddeddf Trais yn erbyn Menywod,
Cam-drin Domestig a Thrais Rhywiol (Cymru) 2015

Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women,
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

Ymateb gan: NAHT Cymru

Response from: NAHT Cymru

6th October 2016

To: Jon Antoniazzi
Clerk to Policy and Legislation Committee Service,
National Assembly for Wales

Dear Jon,

Please accept this short section of written evidence from NAHT Cymru as additional information in support of the work of the National Assembly's Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee as they underake post-legislative scrutiny work on the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

As the focus for this evidence is the impact of the good practice guide to healthy relationships and whether it is successfully influencing the development of a whole school approach to challenging violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, I will aim to ensure the evidence is concise and focused.

Where the whole school approach has worked best, we know that particular features are common.

Best practice takes place in schools that have a clear context for healthy relationship work. The link with Safeguarding is clear but this context might also be within well structured Personal, Social and Health Education (including Sex and Relationship Education) or within an overall strategy involving areas such as Values Education. In Values Education, for example, children and young people are encouraged to explore a range of whole-school agreed values – such as respect, honesty, equality etc – through a variety of activities. By understanding what each value means, how they may choose to develop it within their own lives and what values mean within their relationships with others, children and young people can begin to identify healthy and unhealthy elements. This enables them to recognize that violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence are completely unacceptable and, in turn, equip them to develop more positive healthy relationships in the future.

A key element is that any whole-school approach is not an add-on but an integral part of the programme of learning for children and young people. When undertaking planning, strong cross-curricular opportunities are identified and specific outcomes are clear. If schools can also gain beneficial by-products from such learning e.g. improved oracy skills, literacy and collaborative skills, the potential 'buy-in' across the setting from staff is often improved.

The best schools have established positive and supportive relationships with key partner organisations who, in turn, can provide support, guidance, expertise and resources. At the early stages of planning, schools often need to anticipate potential issues to come and ensure structures and support are established and in place at the outset. For example, as a result of effective learning activities, certain vulnerable children and young people may need additional support, for example, when sessions bring to the surface specific issues they may be facing. Being proactive with this at the planning stage is best rather than trying to react as and when it may arise.

The good practice guide provides some useful direction for schools. However, the sheer volume of policy, initiatives and external accountability streams facing all schools, and across the education sector as a whole, may result in this area of work not being seen as a priority for many.

Schools have finite resources, including staff and the time available in the school day. In addition, if they are under pressure from external groups such as Welsh Government, Regional Consortia, Local Authorities and Estyn to improve outcomes in literacy, numeracy and other subject performance, anything else may be viewed as an 'extra' or 'add-on'. The simple truth is that schools are often required to include an impossible number of important areas within learning sessions. Workload for staff is an issue. The vast majority of teachers will be quite open to implementing important initiatives and new activities, but they often say, 'I have no room in the current timetable so what can I stop doing to create the space to deliver this?' Unless challenging violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is knitted within the core work of schools, the inconsistency now seen across Wales is likely to continue.

However, it is worth noting that within the new Areas of Learning planned for the roll out of the curriculum and assessment changes, expressed in Professor Graham Donaldson's 'Successful Futures', we now have Health and Well-being. This Area of Learning may present the ideal opportunity to establish this work as an integral part of every school's teaching and learning. Careful, pragmatic planning is required.

I trust that the contents of the above letter will be treated in the manner intended – as a very brief indication of the current picture and a few suggestions of areas to consider in future. Should you require further details or additional information, please contact NAHT Cymru, once again.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Rob Williams
Director of Policy – NAHT Cymru