

Kirsty Williams AM
Cabinet Secretary for Education
Welsh Government

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
ELGC(5)–09–16 Papur 3 / Paper 3

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



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Ein cyf/Our ref MA(L)KW/5255/16

Llywodraeth Cymru
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John Griffiths AM
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Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
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18 October 2016

Dear John

Thank you for your letter of 7 October about the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee post-legislative scrutiny work on the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (“the Act”).

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to an important Post Legislative Scrutiny process. As requested I am providing evidence to the following questions you highlight in your letter:

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?

I am unable to confirm at present, given the early progress of work, but, I envisage that teaching about healthy relationships will be included in the ‘Health and Well-being’ Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) as proposed by Professor Donaldson who identified four purposes of Education in his report Successful Futures report. I am pleased that the priorities in the National Strategy on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence are in alignment with those four purposes – including one to support children and young people to become healthy, confident individuals.

My officials are currently working with key stakeholders to design a new curriculum for Wales which will be developed with the four purposes proposed by Professor Donaldson at its heart. The vision, based on these purposes is that children and young people in Wales should have the skills and knowledge to manage everyday life as independently as they can, build their mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy, know how to find information and support to keep safe and well and to form positive relationships based upon trust and mutual respect to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

How the 120 Pioneer Schools (that have been charged with developing the new curriculum) are taking forward the Good Practice Guide?

The Health and Well-being AoLE will have a key role to play in promoting the development of positive and appropriate relationships. The Good Practice Guide: Whole Education Approach to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales will form part of the information and good practice resource that will support the Pioneer Schools which will be involved in the AoLE in its work.

Pioneer Schools are currently considering the strategic design and core principles of the curriculum. It is not envisaged that all Pioneer Schools will be involved in developing all six AoLEs. Each Pioneer School will know which AoLE they are focussing on in the near future and will be tasked with gathering evidence to help inform the high level AoLE design during the first period of development. This will be taken further during 2017 with a view to the new curriculum being available to schools from 2018 and fully available to support learning and teaching by 2021. My officials will continue to work with the National Adviser for VAWDA to ensure suitable evidence is provided during the design and development phase.

When will local authorities begin reporting on how schools are implementing the Good Practice Guide?

The Committee will of course be aware that Section 9 of the VAWDASV Act, amended section 29 of the Education Act 1996 to enable the Welsh Ministers to make regulations to require local authorities to publish information on whether and how they are exercising their educational functions to promote the purposes of the Act, that is to say, to address the issues of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

It is anticipated that during early 2017, under section 29 of the Education Act 1996, regulations will be developed that will place a duty on local authorities to publish information annually on the action they are taking, including within schools, to promote the purposes of the Act. Those regulations will be subject to the standard consultation process.

As noted above, the legal duty to publish the information will be placed upon Local Authorities. However, there will be information that will need to be collected from schools which they are unlikely to be collating at present, and the mechanism for such collation requires further consideration and input from education colleagues. We anticipate that the collection system will involve a minimal amount of work for schools and will seek to limit the additional work for schools as much as possible.

How will the Welsh Government ensure that the healthy relationships education is consistent between institutions and age-appropriate?

My officials will review, through the Personal and Social Education (PSE) advisory group, the current arrangements of the delivery of healthy relationships provision and share good practice. Officials will also look at opportunities to promote good practice and useful resources through Hwb, the education digital platform, which is accessible to all maintained schools in Wales.

Professor Donaldson set out in *Successful Futures* Report that legislation for the new curriculum should not specify detailed prescription of content but provide a framework to allow greater flexibility for practitioners and institutions. However, the four purposes noted in *Successful Futures* will be at the heart of the new curriculum and will be the starting point for all decisions on the content and experiences developed as part of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements. The Health and Wellbeing AoLE working group will consider evidence concerning consistency and age-appropriate content in relation to teaching about healthy relationships.

When will Estyn’s thematic review on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence take place?

Estyn will be conducting a thematic review of existing healthy relationship provision during 2016/2017 academic year.

Will there be a target date for when all education institutions should have implemented the good practice guidance?

There was no specific target date for implementation. The Good Practice Guide: A Whole Education Approach was published on 20 October 2015 with an expectation for schools to start using the guide (or indeed already be doing it) straightaway.

The guide, which has been developed in conjunction with Welsh Women’s Aid is based around the nine key elements of the Whole Education Approach, with each section exploring the types of activity which could be taken under each element. The guide suggests a range of practical ideas and is illustrated with case studies throughout.

The Good Practice Guide was designed to be a practical toolkit for schools and FEIs, the Statutory Guidance will be aimed at Local Authorities in their dealings with schools. It will therefore need to build upon the aspect of the Good Practice Guide where there is a role for the Local Authority (primarily around monitoring and evaluation).

How will the effectiveness of healthy relationships education be monitored?

Section 29 of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Act) allows regulations to be made to require local authorities to publish information on how it is exercising its education functions to support the purposes of the Act. As outlined above this is being applied in the context of the Good Practice Guide.

With regards to the new curriculum arrangements, we are still in the early stages of development and it is too early to forecast the detailed arrangements beyond the principles laid out in *Successful Futures*. For clarification, it recommends that legislation for the new curriculum should not specify detailed prescription of content but provide a framework to allow greater flexibility for practitioners and institutions.

How will these issues be addressed in further and higher education institutions?

As mentioned above The Good Practice Guide: A Whole Education Approach was published on 20 October 2015 and designed to be practical toolkit for further education institutions.

The statutory function for producing specific guidance for higher education rests with HEFCW. Through HEFCW's existing guidance and equality plans, higher education institutions in Wales already have in place a number of measures to raise awareness of these issues, provide information and advice, and to safeguard students and staff. Welsh Government will work with HEFCW to review how higher education institutions can be further supported in addressing these issues.

My officials are reviewing how higher education institutions can best be supported to address these issues.

I trust the information provided in this letter provides you with the information you require.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

Kirsty Williams AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education