

Education, Children and Young People Committee

Equally Safe informal participations session with young people from the Young Women Know campaign

Wednesday 29 November 2023

Note of discussion

Committee member attendees

Sue Webber MSP (Convener)
Ruth Maguire MSP (Deputy Convener)
Stephanie Callaghan MSP
Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP
Ross Greer MSP
Liam Kerr MSP
Ben Macpherson MSP
Willie Rennie MSP
Michelle Thomson MSP

Apologies were received from Bill Kidd MSP

Discussion on Equally safe in relation to schools

The Committee spoke with 8 young people from the Young Women Know campaign on Equally Safe in relation to schools. The following summary is intended to provide an overview of the main themes that emerged from the discussion.

The Committee heard about two campaigns delivered by the young people, [Brave Lassies Blether](#) and [Bold Girls Ken](#). The Committee was also provided with information on [Oor Fierce Girls](#). These three campaigns come under the umbrella

campaign of 'Young Women Know' which is a partnership between the Young Women's Movement and NSPCC Scotland.

The campaigns involved the young people having meetings with each other supported by the Young Women's Movement and NSPCC Scotland to design and deliver their messages. They have also met with school staff to help get their message across. The teachers have been welcoming, positive and supportive of the work that young women are doing and the Committee heard that there is good visibility in their schools and communities. The campaign groups are also linking to other organisations such as further education colleges.

Developing a whole school approach to preventing and eradicating gender-based violence and sexual harassment

- There is a need for all teachers to be trained to talk about and deal with young people experiencing GBV in schools not just guidance teachers. Young people could then approach the teacher they feel most comfortable with.
- Signposting for support for young people should be improved.
- More needs to be done to educate all young people on GBV.
- More focus should be on educating the perpetrators rather than focusing solely on how young girls can protect themselves.
- It is important to be able to approach teachers and staff for a chat, not necessarily needing to make an appointment for a more formal discussion.
- GBV issues should be talked about across the curriculum not just in PSE.
- Older young people could provide an alternative person for younger young people to talk to.

- More realistic scenarios are needed when discussing these issues and it should be more open and framed about person-on-person discussions rather than men and boys perpetrating against women and girls.
- Healthy conversations need to be encouraged. It was highlighted that consent discussion is started earlier, so that people know that consent is required for everything – holding hand, hug etc. and it is a building block for further discussion and understanding.

The role of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) Education and Personal and Social Education (PSE) in supporting a whole school approach to preventing and eradicating gender-based violence and sexual harassment in schools

- Teachers should have more training in Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) Education.
- Without that training, when approaching someone for advice or support, you could be passed on to another teacher or a school counsellor which can make the pupil feel that they are being 'handed on'.
- PSE is a real-life subject and it is important for people to learn it. However, it often feels pushed to the side in senior school (when the focus shifts to university applications etc).
- PSE is often not taken seriously.
- It was highlighted that as students are not examined on PSE, they may feel there is no need to retain any of the information. In addition, there is no reflection on teacher effectiveness regarding what they teaching in PSE as there is no evidence as to whether it has been taught well.
- Some examples of good practice in PSE and RSHP lessons were mentioned such as a lesson on coercion, part of which included watching a BBC

documentary and another coercion lesson where the police attended. A lesson with a Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre was also highlighted as being beneficial.

- It was highlighted that there was a lack of consistency, even across schools, in which external partners come in and what is taught.
- A lack structure to the programme of lessons was highlighted for example, lessons on coercive control was followed by a lesson on entrepreneurship.
- It was suggested that young people should be able to feed into what lessons are taught and these lessons should be relevant and concise.
- Sometimes PSE lessons are dropped in favour of prelim revision, despite the prelims not taking place for 2 months.
- There is a need for lesson material to be age appropriate. Sometimes the information delivered is only pitched at one level and it is not modified for the age / class group being spoken to on the day.

Addressing the differing experiences of sexual harassment for different equality groups e.g. the links between sexual harassment and racism, homophobia, disablism, Islamophobia, and other prejudice-based harassment

- If harassment is aggravated, it should be considered and understood before being tackled – so that it can be address in the right way.
- Sexual abuse can happen to anyone, any age, any race. Victims should be treated as victims, regardless of the reason – the tackling of it maybe has to differ but support should be there for everyone affected.
- It is important that support is individualised to each person and their particular experience so that their individual needs are met.