

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

16th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday
8 November 2023

PE1918: Improve sex education in schools

Lodged on 6 December 2021

Petitioner Kate Freedman

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to reform sex education by updating guidance and implementing clear teaching rules, focusing on topics such as:

- Menstruation and related illnesses
- Puberty
- LGBT sex, including asexuality
- Fertility
- Pornography
- Any other things that are deemed useful

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1918>

Introduction

1. The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on [18 January 2023](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to Education Scotland.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received a new response from Education Scotland which is set out in **Annexe C**.
4. Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).
5. Further background information about this petition can be found in the [SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.

6. The Scottish Government's initial position on this petition can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 8 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee

Annexe A

PE1918: Improve sex education in schools

Petitioner

Kate Freedman

Date lodged

06/10/2021

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to reform sex education by updating guidance and implementing clear teaching rules, focusing on topics such as:

- Menstruation and related illnesses
- Puberty
- LGBT sex, including asexuality
- Fertility
- Pornography
- Any other things that are deemed useful

Previous action

I have emailed my MSP and received no response from them.

Background information

I have researched sex education for a year and a half. As a current student I found the education within schools to be lacking and caused me to have to look to YouTube for basic information from sex educators like Hannah Witton. It was there I found information I should have already known from school. There is a big taboo around sex which can cause lots of issues. I've struggled with my periods for years as they are very irregular. I felt very alone and confused because I didn't understand what was happening. It was only after doing research I felt confident enough to go to a doctor where I got diagnosed with PCOS. I surveyed 150 students in my school on a scale of 1-10, most people rated period education at 1-3. I am often shocked by the lack of knowledge many young people have surrounding sex and it needs to change.

Annexe B

Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1918 on 18 January 2023

The Convener: PE1918, which was lodged by Kate Freedman, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to reform sex education by updating guidance on implementing clear teaching rules that focus on topics such as menstruation and related illnesses; puberty; LGBT sex, including asexuality; fertility; pornography; and any other things that are deemed useful.

The Scottish Government has outlined the ways in which the views of children and young people are used to influence policy in the area, including collaboration and co-design in classrooms. Its recent submission provides examples of local engagement seeking the views of children and young people on sex education. It also states that the Scottish Government is in the process of revising its relationships, sexual health and parenthood—RSHP—teaching guidance and that it will run a public consultation to gather views. As part of that, it is exploring the best approach to gathering the views of children and young people. The submission concludes by stating that the Government is working to have the revised guidance available as early as possible in the 2023-24 academic year.

Do members have any comments or suggestions for action?

David Torrance: I wonder whether we should keep the petition open and write to Education Scotland to follow up on the committee's previous request for information on how it monitors the implementation of teaching guidance. I would also like to see as soon as possible what comes back from the consultation on RSHP.

The Convener: As there are no other suggestions from members, are we content to do as Mr Torrance suggests?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C

Education Scotland submission of 23 October 2023

PE1918/D: Improve sex education in schools

The Committee is seeking further information relating to -

- How Education Scotland monitors and evaluates the implementation of current RSHP teaching resources in schools.
- What data (if any) is collected as part of that process.
- Whether any monitoring and evaluation processes take into account the views of children and young people and how these views are sought.

The Official Report of the meeting will be published on Wednesday 25 January and a video of the meeting is available online.

Response to supplementary questions

Overview

It is for education authorities and schools to consider the resources and approaches that they utilise in supporting children and young people's learning within a Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers can use a range of resources to deliver age-and-stage appropriate education in a way that enables children and young people to make informed decisions about their lives. Local authority officers and schools will monitor and evaluate learning and teaching across all curriculum areas through their internal policies.

Direct response to supplementary questions

How Education Scotland monitors and evaluates the implementation of current RSHP teaching resources in schools.

Education Scotland does not monitor and evaluate the implementation of current RSHP teaching resources in schools. The RSHP Steering Group (of which Education Scotland is a member) oversees the user data for the RSHP.scot resource.

- This group is chaired by the NHS and gathers data on the number of times the site is visited.
- It does not offer specific details around the number of schools or practitioners accessing the site.

What data (if any) is collected as part of that process.

Education Scotland does not monitor and evaluate the implementation of the resource because of the reasons outlined above. We have delivered webinars for practitioners around using the site and would be able to offer data around the number of colleagues who have attended these sessions. This data does not indicate which schools were represented at these webinars.

Whether any monitoring and evaluation processes take into account the views of children and young people and how these views are sought.

Education Scotland does not work directly with learners in the delivery of the curriculum. Education Scotland does encourage all local authorities and practitioners to ensure participation of learners is evident in any work related to learning and teaching.

Education authorities and in particular, Quality Improvement Officers, can support participation of learners more directly. Where this is done effectively, Education Scotland is keen to share practice to build capacity Nationally. For example:

- Angus Council led an in-depth consultation with practitioners and children and young people around RSHP. Education Scotland have shared this example of effective work with a range of national networks which include practitioners and local authority officers, to support a similar approach across other local authorities.