

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

18th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday
6 December 2023

PE2043: Change the way gender theory is presented in schools

Petitioner	Phillipa Jackson
Petition summary	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to redefine the Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) lessons pertaining to transgender and not present the information as fact.
Webpage	https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2043

Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 21 September 2023.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 875 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.
6. A submission has been provided by the petitioner. This is included at **Annexe D**.

Action

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

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe A

PE2043: Change the way gender theory is presented in schools

Petitioner

Phillipa Jackson

Date Lodged:

21/09/23

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to redefine the Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) lessons pertaining to transgender and not present the information as fact.

Previous action

I have written to many MPs, MSPs, my school and my local authority.

I have attended many rallies. I have attended parliament to protest. I have written to my Rabbis. I have written about this for years on social media.

Background information

The Cass Review states that social transition is not a neutral act and could possibly lead to unnecessary medical consequences.

My concern is for my autistic children. In the ten years to 2018, there was a 4000% increase in referrals to GIDS, of them 76% were girls and 48% of them had autism. Autistic children are very susceptible.

I am deeply concerned about the impact of this ideology in schools. It has been afforded a gilded platform and due to lobby groups such as Stonewall schools have been told they must celebrate and affirm trans ideation.

There is no proper scientific evidence to show that children can be born in the wrong body or that changing sex is the best option for teenagers

suffering from difficulties during puberty. It is damaging to children, especially vulnerable ones with comorbidities which must be taken into account. RSHP information must be balanced with facts not feelings.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/09/16/minister-orders-inquiry-4000-per-cent-rise-children-wanting/>

Annexe B

SPICe

The Information Centre
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2043: Change the way gender theory is presented in schools](#), lodged by Phillipa Jackson

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petitioner is “calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to redefine the Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) lessons pertaining to transgender and not present the information as fact.”

The petitioner refers to the [Cass Review](#). This was commissioned by NHS England and NHS Improvement in Autumn 2020 to make recommendations about the services provided by the NHS to children and young people who are questioning their gender identity or experiencing gender incongruence.

“The Cass Review states that social transition is not a neutral act and could possibly lead to unnecessary medical consequences.”

The Cass Review [interim report](#) states that better information is needed about outcomes:

“There are different views on the benefits versus the harms of early social transition. Whatever position one takes, it is important to acknowledge that it is not a neutral act, and better information is needed about outcomes.”

The petitioner also refers to the increased number of autistic young people, who refer to England’s Gender Identity Service.

The interim Cass Review states that from a baseline of 50 referrals per annum in 2009, there was a steep increase from 2014-15, and in October 2020 there were 2,500 children and young people being referred per annum, with 4,600 on a waiting list with a waiting time of over two years for their first appointment. Further:

“This increase in referrals has been accompanied by a change in the case-mix from predominantly birth-registered males presenting with gender incongruence from an early age, to predominantly birth-registered females presenting with later onset of reported gender incongruence in early teen years. In addition, approximately one third of children and young people referred to GIDS have autism or other types of neurodiversity. There is also an over-representation percentage wise (compared to the national percentage) of looked after children.”

What is RSHP?

[Education Scotland](#) (Scottish Government executive agency) provides an overview of RSHP education. It forms part of the Curriculum for Excellence and sits within one of eight curriculum areas – Health and Wellbeing. It is “intended to support children and young people build positive relationships as they grow older and should present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner within the framework of curricular values and an awareness of the law.”

As Scotland does not have a statutory curriculum, it is for teachers, head teachers and other professional educational practitioners to decide how best to deliver the curriculum based on local needs and circumstances.

Current statutory guidance

[Conduct of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in schools](#) (2014) is statutory guidance, required under [section 56 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000](#).

Paragraph 36 of the guidance states that it is important the RSHP education reflects issues relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) young people or children with LGBTI parents.

Paragraphs 54-61 concern taking the views of children and young people into account and informing and responding to parents and carers. It states that it is good practice for schools to regularly seek the views of parents and carers about key aspects of the curriculum, such as RSHP education. There is also provision for a parent/carer to

withdraw their child from a planned sexual health education programme. The child or young person can also withdraw themselves.

Draft statutory guidance

The Scottish Government is consulting on [Delivery of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in Scottish schools: draft guidance](#) (consultation ends 23 November 2023). This will update the current guidance referred to above.

Again, it includes guidance to give parents and carers an opportunity to view key teaching materials and covers the withdrawal of children from the sexual health elements RSHP education.

It provides more detail on certain aspects of RSHP education and includes more resources. It specifically covers:

- consent and healthy relationships
- faith and belief
- gender inclusive education
- understanding Variations in Sex Characteristics (VSC) sometimes referred to as Differences in Sex Development (DSD) or Intersex
- LGBT Inclusive Education.

On LGBT Inclusive Education it:

- promotes the inclusion of LGBT pupils to help “them feel like they belong and that who they are is not wrong, therefore increasing their engagement in learning.”
- states that content should be age and stage appropriate and linked to the [Experiences and Outcomes](#) within Curriculum for Excellence.

The draft guidance includes a recommendation from the [LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group’s report](#) (2018) to use a ‘thematic outcomes’ based approach that should cover various themes related but not exclusive to LGBT equality and inclusion, including:

- terminologies and identities
- the impact of social prejudice and the history of social rights movements

- the equality of people, families and relationships represented in an inclusive manner
- how to recognise and respond to prejudice within school and wider society while respecting individual rights and privacy.

There is also now a one stop platform for teachers to access materials and resources linked to Scotland's Curriculum to support the implementation of LGBT Inclusive Education – [lgbteducation.scot](https://www.lgbteducation.scot).

Further resources in the draft guidance include:

- LGBT Youth Scotland research
<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1354/life-in-scotland-for-lgbt-young-people.pdf>
- LGBT Youth Scotland curriculum guide
<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1585/lgbtys-curriculum-inclusion.pdf>
- LGBT Youth Scotland anti-bullying resource
<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/1299/addressing-inclusion-2020.pdf>
- Stonewall: The School Report 2017
<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/school-report-2017>
- TIE Icons
<https://www.tie.scot/primary>
<https://www.tie.scot/secondary>
- Supporting transgender young people in schools: guidance for Scottish schools <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-transgender-young-people-schoolsguidance-scottish-schools/pages/1/>

Nicki Georghiou
Senior Researcher
13 October 2023

Annexe C

Scottish Government submission of 27 October 2023

PE2043/A: Change the way gender theory is presented in schools

Thank you for your e-mail of 22 September 2023 on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee regarding Petition PE2043, seeking to change the way gender theory is presented in schools. I am replying as I am responsible for LGBT inclusive education policy in the Scottish curriculum. I apologise for the delay in responding.

Research tells us Scotland's transgender young people have poorer experiences at school than other pupils. They experience significantly more bullying, are likely to have poorer mental health and wellbeing, and do not achieve similar educational outcomes as their peers. A report¹ published by LGBT Youth Scotland in 2022 of more than 1,200 LGBT young people in Scotland showed that:

- 57% of transgender students report experiencing transphobic bullying at school;
- The percentage of participants aware of transphobic bullying in their school has steadily increased over the last decade, going from just 26% in 2012 to 69% in 2022;
- 52% of transgender young people rated their school experience as bad;
- Only 26% of transgender pupils felt confident reporting bullying to staff;
- 19% of transgender participants left school early as a result of homophobia, biphobia or transphobia; and,
- 70% felt homophobia, biphobia or transphobia had a negative impact on their educational experience, 36% negative impact on their educational attainment.

This is one of the reasons why the Scottish Government believes our education system must support everyone to reach their full potential. It is

¹ <https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/media/2712/life-in-scotland-for-lgbt-young-people-2022-e-use.pdf>

vital the curriculum is as diverse as the young people who learn in our schools.

LGBT inclusive education is a core part of relationships, sexual health and parenthood (RSHP) learning, within the health and wellbeing area of the curriculum. The Scottish Government's approach to LGBT inclusive education has been informed by the recommendations of the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group, which were published in November 2018. The Scottish Government accepted those recommendations in full. It was recommended that LGBT inclusive education should be embedded across the curriculum, not just LGBT specific lessons, to improve the learning environment for all children and young people. These recommendations also included a commitment to update the RSHP teaching guidance to cover themes relating to LGBT equality and inclusion.

RSHP education is not new and has been in place since 2010, the same year Curriculum for Excellence was implemented. Learning experiences and outcomes for RSHP education are freely available on the [Education Scotland website](#). RSHP education focuses on equipping children and young people with the knowledge, skills and values to make informed and positive choices about forming relationships. This aspect of the curriculum is intended to enable children and young people to build positive relationships as they grow older. Teachers are empowered to 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. A summary of RSHP education teaching resources is available on Education Scotland's [National Improvement Hub](#).

One of these resources, [rshp.scot](#), contains a lesson on '[Being transgender](#)' at second level (P5 to P7) as part of progressive learning about equality and being fair. This is the only time transgender issues and identities are the primary focus of learning in this resource. Learning in this short activity is framed in a way that asks what young people think transgender means and aims to challenge the stereotypes and prejudices that can lead to transphobic bullying. As outlined in this lesson plan, this content helps teachers deliver experiences and outcomes on areas such as managing changing relationships, understanding diversity, and identifying bullying behaviours and these align with the Health and Wellbeing curricular area within Curriculum for

Excellence. The rshp.scot resource was developed during the 2018-19 academic year by a partnership of health boards and local authorities, with advice from Education Scotland and the Scottish Government. The content of this resource was informed by over 1,000 primary and secondary teachers and piloted in 38 schools across the country.

The Scottish Government does not take a prescriptive approach to the curriculum in Scotland. It is therefore up to individual schools and education authorities what approaches they use and external partnerships they build to help them deliver relevant and engaging classes. Our empowered education system promotes pupil and parental engagement as effective approaches in delivering lesson content that meets the needs of all learners, and complements the flexibility of teachers to use their professional judgement in meeting the educational needs of the pupils in their classroom. LGBT inclusive education needs to start early so all children and young people begin to learn and understand tolerance, respect, and equality. This will support our children and young people to build healthy relationships and prevent prejudice occurring in any form. Educational settings have a lot to contribute, but it is vital we all help instil the values of respect and tolerance in our children and young people.

The information presented within LGBT inclusive education should be presented in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner within a framework of sound values and an awareness of the laws around discrimination. This will help ensure children and young people grow up to be responsible citizens within a diverse society. By receiving accurate, factual information in an age and stage appropriate manner, children and young people can form their own opinions, within their beliefs, in an open, supportive and respectful environment. Pupils are encouraged to discuss and understand their differences, and to understand how to hold contrasting beliefs in a respectful manner.

By learning about a diverse range of people and experiences, children and young people will be better equipped to succeed in diverse workplaces after they leave school. Additionally, one of the core founding documents for Scotland's Curriculum – [Building the Curriculum 3](#) – makes it clear that values of inclusivity lie at its heart. The document states the curriculum must be inclusive, must be a stimulus for personal achievement and must, through broadening of experience, be an encouragement towards informed and responsible citizenship.

Annexe D

Petitioner submission of 13 November 2023 PE2043/B: Change the way gender theory is presented in schools

Our children are being taught an ideology that I am deeply concerned about. Our children are being taught something that is NOT mandatory in primary school.

I would like to briefly mention that whilst I believe children should be taught about sex education, I find the current RSHP to be age inappropriate and extremely unnecessarily graphic. I agree with many others, that in its current form, the sex education part of the RSHP is not fit for purpose and is adversely affecting our children.

Some of the people involved in the making of the Scottish RSHP are very biased. Our government took advice from biased sources and people with nefarious and dubious backgrounds. One Dr the SNP took advice from wants to “break down the barrier between sexuality and childhood” He does this by quoting advocates of bringing sexuality into childhood and not criticising their views, before quoting Michel Foucault’s complaint that “age of consent laws are a result of the artificial and undesirable barrier between childhood and sexuality”. This Dr, Dr Morrison, was an advisor on the sex education lessons.

I am not here to discuss the over sexualised part though. I want to draw attention to the gender ideology part of the curriculum.

As Jennifer Bilek says:

"The word transgenderism is not fit for communication. It does not define anything clearly, but rather obscures the industry manifested in its name. It’s an umbrella term with no borders, under which sit too many conflicting ideas, allowing its definitional goalposts to move whenever anyone critiques its ideology and the markets formed around it."

Gender ideology is in direct conflict with almost every safeguarding issue. We have a duty to protect our children from dangerous adult agendas and we should not be promoting this ideology as fact. An

ideology which heralds from terrible beginnings with John Money and the tragedy of the Reimer Family.

The impact of teaching gender ideology in schools has been catastrophic for many families. It has been afforded a gilded platform and due to lobby groups such as Stonewall and LGBT Youth Scotland, schools have been told they must celebrate and affirm trans ideation.

Stonewall stands accused of campaigning against women's rights as defined in the Equality Act, and of bullying those with whom it disagrees, out of jobs.

LGBT Youth Scotland employed a co-ordinator who is in jail for running Scotland's biggest paedophile ring using his organisation as cover. The organisation are still under investigation for inappropriate behaviour towards young boys. Some of those same staff from that time, still work there. The man involved with the recent case points out that:

"LGBT Youth Scotland provide opportunities for young people ages 13-25 and their peers to meet'

Why is the allowed? This is a basic safeguarding failure"

Schools should not be taking advice from these organisations.

Additionally due to the scandal regarding a trustee of the charity Mermaids resigning after reports he spoke at a conference organised by a group that promotes support for paedophiles and the dreadful issues there, plus the serious medical scandal at Tavistock, the gender clinic in London, in which ideological concerns took priority over clinical practice and the issues with Sandyford the clinic in Glasgow, an independent review was triggered carried out by Dr Hilary Cass. Again, the primary schools in Scotland have a choice to NOT teach any of it. It is NOT mandatory.

The Cass Review states that social transition is not a neutral act, it locks the child in a fixed state and could possibly lead to unnecessary medical and surgical consequences. Adults should not be coercing children through the language used in the RSHP to think that they can be the opposite sex. Using compelled pronouns is not grounded in reality and it is not properly safeguarding children.

There is no proper scientific evidence to show that children can be born in the wrong body and to tell children that to fully be yourself you need to change yourself so wholly is abhorrent. Dysphoria exists but presenting to a child that changing sex will help, is an affirmation only route. This is a dangerous path. Data now shows that suicidal ideation increases after transition. Evidence also shows there is no such thing as a trans brain and it is not innate.

As Dr Jenny Cunningham states:

"The Scottish government's sex education curriculum in primary schools exposes children as young as age 6–7 to the language of gender identity: transgender, cisgender (i.e., not trans-identifying), Most children will only have developed a stable self-identity as a boy or girl at age 4–6. Therefore, introducing this kind of gender terminology can be extremely confusing for children."

The curriculum states that some people can sometimes not feel like the sex they were assigned and tells children they can be any boy or girl they want to be.

This is damaging to children, especially vulnerable ones with comorbidities such as autism. Children with autism experience puberty in a different and often distressing way, sensory issues can make the changes very difficult to deal with. For the school to then tell these children that their uncomfortable difficult puberty feelings are because maybe they are in the wrong body is a serious safeguarding issue.

Did you know that in the UK there was a 4000% increase in referrals to GIDS, of them 76% were girls and 48% of them had autism? Between 8-10% of children and adolescents seen at gender clinics meet the diagnostic criteria for autism. A further 20% had autistic traits such as communication skills or intense focus and attention to detail.

There are other comorbidities such as adhd, depression, sexual assault survivor, eating disorders, OCD and many others which must be taken into account before thinking about socially transitioning a child. Studies suggest that children who claim a transgender identity and undergo early social transition rarely change their minds, at least into their early teen years. If left alone over 80% of these children will desist, meaning they will revert to their biological sex.

Furthermore, telling children that sex is assigned at birth is disingenuous and confusing. Mothers already know from 10wks what sex their baby is going to be, bar chromosomal abnormalities, and it's insulting and ludicrous to tell children that people don't know so that when their baby is born they get to decide. Like some kind of genie computer game! They teach sex is arbitrarily assigned at birth but apparently gender identity is fixed in the womb. It makes no sense.

The government says that they are teaching this because they want to teach inclusion. Guess what - kids ARE naturally inclusive. They play with any other kids irrespective of sex, gender, colour, religion, disability - unless they have been shown otherwise. Kids just want to play. Let them be kids.

RSHP information must be balanced with facts not feelings. Gender ideology is based in queer theory which actively works to dismantle the family unit whilst blurring personal boundaries and lowering sexual boundaries.

Parents of children caught up in this are sometimes written off as transphobic fundamentalists no matter how supportive and loving we try to be. We often find that our voices are not as valued as parents of no particular faith. Within the private and secret groups online, we have subgroups where we turn to each other to encourage our faith and support each other through this trans nightmare.

Safe Schools Alliance has recently sent a letter to the Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom at the Office for Students, to raise concerns relating to the influence of experimental academic discourse on public policy.

Although it is too late for my children and thousands of families across the UK, I and many, many others believe it is inappropriate for our children to be learning about this adult agenda and I once again implore the government and society to remove this ideological pseudoscience propaganda from schools and replace it with some semblance of reality.