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Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1308
Ein cyf/Our ref JMEWL/02145/22

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions committee
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7 November 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 17 October.

The Estyn report and the Children, Young People and Education Committee Inquiry have undoubtedly underlined the importance of acting now to do all we can to prevent and respond to peer-on-peer sexual harassment in education settings, to educate children and young people about the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and to empower them to call out unwanted and harmful behaviours.

We recognise that peer on peer sexual harassment is not limited to secondary schools and we are clear that action is needed across all settings, and indeed across society. But understanding how this is experienced at different ages is important to ensure we respond with appropriate and tailored interventions.

That is why we have commissioned a thematic review by Estyn into peer-on-peer sexual harassment in the further education sector. That review is currently underway and is due to report in spring 2023. We are committed to using Estyn's recommendations to underpin a specific programme of work to tackle sexual harassment in further education and have allocated funding for a collaborative college-led project to develop shared resources, research and professional learning.

We also believe it would be beneficial to have a greater understanding about children's experiences of gender based bullying or sexual harassment in primary settings. We are currently considering the scope of this review.

Whilst further reviews will help to ensure we have evidence-based policy and interventions, this does not preclude us from acting now.

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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.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a statutory requirement in the Curriculum for Wales framework and has a positive and protective role in learners' education.

RSE is intended to help children to develop healthy relationships and behaviours with their friends and families, based on kindness, empathy and respect. This is important for them to develop as 'healthy, confident individuals' with positive social, emotional and mental well-being.

RSE is also intended to keep children safe and to protect their well-being. This is critical as technology and society continue to change rapidly. RSE helps children recognise relationships and situations that might put them at risk of harm. It can support all children with what they need to know and what to do to keep safe and how to seek help.

Through the [Keeping safe online](#) area of Hwb, we have developed resources to equip practitioners to educate and support learners with this issue. Following the publication of guidance for education settings in responding to incidents of sharing nude and semi-nude images a short [training module](#) to support schools to embed this guidance was published we encourage senior leaders in all schools to undertake this training.

We are also establishing a children and young people's advisory panel for digital resilience. Panel members will be invited to share their online experiences and provide opinions and insight that will shape and inform the direction of our work and all messaging/visual content will be tested with children and young people.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) can have a huge impact on children and young people. It can affect their wellbeing, their educational attainment, family and peer relationships, and their ability to enjoy healthy, happy, respectful relationships now and in the future. Raising children and young people's awareness of equality, respect and consent is crucial if we are to stop VAWDASV. We want to ensure all children and young people have access to developmentally appropriate, high-quality learning that responds to their needs and experiences.

You may be aware that the Welsh Government published its five-year [VAWDASV National Strategy](#) on 24th May which was developed alongside a group of key partner organisations including the police, specialist sector and survivors. The Strategy sets out the overarching objectives that the Welsh Government will deliver in partnership with stakeholders to progress the purpose of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015. One of the objectives set out in the VAWDASV National Strategy is to increase awareness in children, young people and adults of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and empowering them to positive personal choices. We will be adopting a cross-Government approach to ensuring its success.

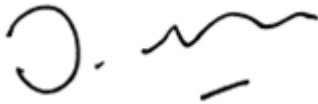
The strategy will be delivered through a Blueprint approach, which brings together devolved and non-devolved organisations, as well as strengthening the partnership between public private and specialist sectors. A number of consultation responses called for developing a specific workstream for Children and Young People. This was considered and agreed as part of the analysis of responses and a workstream focusing on children and young people will be developed. This working group will be able to consider our understanding of the needs of children and young people who are victims of VAWDASV in order to ensure service responses are appropriate and that harms are prevented and addressed for these groups. This working group will take forward the governance of the Welsh Government peer on peer sexual harassment action plan.

Working alongside Safeguarding and Education policy development, the group will ensure that there is clarity and cohesion in parallel approaches to Safeguarding and VAWDASV.

The group will also be able to support the implementation of the RSE curriculum's promotion of healthy relationships, as well as work to address peer on peer abuse.

We are also working with a range of stakeholders, including the Police to develop a multi-agency peer on peer sexual harassment action plan. The action plan will outline the actions that will be taken by the Welsh Government and partners to tackle peer on peer sexual harassment in education settings. We aim to publish the action plan during the autumn term.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS

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