

Meilyr Rowlands  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training  
Estyn  
Anchor Court, Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW

6 October 2016

Dear Mr Rowlands,

Thank you for agreeing to provide a written evidence to help inform 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.

By way of background, 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 was delivered in all schools), inconsistency between institutions, and confusions about the duty on local authorities to report on how schools are implementing guidance.

The [Good Practice Guide: A Whole Education Approach to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales](#) (developed with Welsh Women's Aid) was published in October 2015. The Act placed a duty on local authorities to report on how they are addressing gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence within their education institutions, including through sex education.

In order to assist the Committee in its work, we would welcome your views on the following:

- Should teaching about health relationships be included in the 'health and wellbeing' area of learning and experience proposed by Professor Donaldson?
- Should the 120 Pioneer Schools (that have been charged with developing the new curriculum) be taking forward the Good Practice Guide?
- When local authorities should begin reporting on how schools are implementing the Good Practice Guide?
- How should the Welsh Government ensure that the healthy relationships education is consistent between institutions and age-appropriate?
- When will Estyn's thematic review on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence take place and how do you anticipate this feeding into the development of the new curriculum?
- Should there be a target date for when all education institutions should have implemented the good practice guidance?
- How should the effectiveness of healthy relationships education be monitored?
- How should these issues be addressed in further and higher education institutions?



The Committee will be concluding its evidence gathering on 19 October, when it will hear from Carl Sargeant AM, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, with overall responsibility for domestic abuse, gender-based violence and sexual violence. It would be helpful if you could respond as soon as practicable and as close to this date as possible.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John". The letter 'J' is large and stylized, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

John Griffiths AC / AM  
Cadeirydd / Chair



## **Equality Local Government & Communities Committee**

### **Estyn response to specific issues relating to healthy relationship education**

#### **Should teaching about healthy relationships be included in the 'health and wellbeing' area of learning and experience proposed by Professor Donaldson?**

Teaching about healthy relationships should be a clearly defined aspect of sex and relationships education which is delivered through personal and social education. It should be included in the health and wellbeing area of learning.

#### **Should the 120 Pioneer Schools (that have been charged with developing the new curriculum) be taking forward the Good Practice Guide?**

The good practice guide provides valuable information and useful advice on important aspects of healthy relationships education within schools and Further Education Institutions (FEIs). All schools and FEIs should act on the guidance to ensure that nine key elements of good practice are embedded in their provision. Pioneer schools must consider the good practice guidance when developing the new curriculum.

#### **When local authorities should begin reporting on how schools are implementing the Good Practice Guide?**

It is not clear what local authorities should report on. The good practice guide says that there will be further statutory guidance on monitoring and reporting requirements – has this been developed? Does this refer to the potential national indicators that are identified in the act and within the draft national strategy on Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence? Or will local authorities be required to provide a qualitative report on how well schools are delivering healthy relationships education? If so in what format and to whom? They do not provide such reports about other aspects of curriculum delivery.

However, the good practice guide describes a holistic approach. Local authorities would be in a position to report on for example, training delivered to school-based staff under the national training plan, following development of that plan by March 2017.

Without a clear idea of the reporting requirements, it is difficult to provide a considered view on when local authorities should begin reporting.

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

It is clear that there needs to be a planned approach to healthy relationships education. This should be a consideration for the health and wellbeing area of learning and experience (AoLE) group as part of the curriculum reform. Any progression reference points and achievement outcomes that are developed should consider the expected outcomes of healthy relationships education. This will ensure that important messages are sustained and durable.

## **When will Estyn's thematic review on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence take place and how do you anticipate this feeding into the development of the new curriculum?**

Estyn will gather evidence for the remit survey of healthy relationships education during November and December 2016 with a view to reporting in July 2017. The remit will provide:

- A state of the nation survey on the extent to which healthy relationships education is being delivered to pupils in schools across Wales
- Case studies of best practice to promote improvements in teaching and learning
- Evidence of whether current structures around safeguarding are used to support schools to deal with issues around violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV)
- Evidence of how leadership by headteacher's and governors can impact on the delivery of positive healthy relationships education
- Evidence of how teachers use resources and external organisations to support the delivery of positive healthy relationships education
- Feedback and practical recommendations on how practice might be improved
- Feedback on the impact of existing guidance and legislation around VAWDASV

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

Education institutions would have had appropriate opportunity to review their approaches to personal and social education, including sex and relationships education, to take account of the good practice guidance by September 2017.

## **How should the effectiveness of healthy relationships education be monitored?**

Healthy relationships education is an aspect of sex and relationships education. Estyn currently evaluates the quality of this provision as part of quality indicator 2.3 of the common inspection framework for all schools. This quality indicator evaluates the institution's provision for care support and guidance.

Estyn is in the process of reviewing its inspection arrangements. A new common inspection framework will be in place from September 2017. The framework is likely to consider sex and relationships education and its impact under the following areas:

- Inspection area 2 – pupils' wellbeing
- Inspection area 3 – teaching and learning experiences
- Inspection area 4 – care support and guidance

The effectiveness of healthy relationships education provision could be monitored through identifying whether pupils know what constitutes an abusive relationship, have positive attitudes towards gender equality and are confident to challenge and report abusive attitudes and behaviours.

Ultimately, the measure of success will be the extent to which domestic abuse, violence against women and sexual violence is prevented and the impact upon victims, including children who witness abuse, is reduced.

## **How should these issues be addressed in further and higher education institutions?**

We typically find that in further education institutions that this aspect is through the following aspects of work:

- General awareness raising for all students through a tutorial system, sometimes including a series of e-learning modules
- Tailored support for individuals through learner/student support services, for example based on a learner support plan, and including links to external agencies for specific support
- Response to specific concern through safeguarding policies and procedures

As a result, it may be helpful to work with Colegau Cymru to consider any specific Wales-wide resources which could be developed to support this work.

Within our current inspection arrangements, Estyn would look at these aspects of provision within further education institutions under 2.3 of our common inspection framework which evaluates care, support and guidance.

Estyn has a limited involvement with higher education institutions. Within our inspections of initial teacher education we would consider how well the institution equips students to deliver personal and social education and be aware of safeguarding policies and procedures.

From 2019, new programmes for ITE will begin in Wales, and revised accreditation procedures will be introduced (Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers). Estyn will take part in the approval process for new provision, and full accreditation will depend on a successful outcome in inspection. In this new cycle of inspections, Estyn's new inspection guidance for ITE will align with the accreditation criteria.

The proposed accreditation criteria states, under part 4, programme structure and processes, section 4.4.4 Safeguarding and student teachers' welfare, that:

- The partnership should provide advice, support and guidance, including counselling, as well as medical and careers services.
- There should be clarity around safeguarding and whistle-blowing (page 23)

In addition, all accredited providers must:

- Familiarise students with the most recent national guidance on child protection, safeguarding, the principles of the UNCRC, Health and Well-being (page 37)

On entry all accredited ITE course providers must be satisfied that prospective student teachers:

- Have been vetted to ensure they don't have a criminal background which might prevent them working with children or vulnerable young people, or as an education practitioner; and ensure that student teachers have not previously been barred or excluded from teaching or working with learners (VBS); (safeguarding is a legal requirement) (page 38).

These accreditation criteria provide the possibility to ensure that a focus on healthy relationships is covered.