

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education Committee

Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg |
Priorities for the Children, Young People and Education Committee

CYPE 15

Ymateb gan : Ymddiriedolaeth Terrence Higgins

Response from : Terrence Higgins Trust

Question 1 – Within the remit set out above: what do you consider to be the priorities or issues that the Children, Young People and Education Committee should consider during the Fifth Assembly?

Sex and Relationships Education

Our recent report “[Shh no talking](#)” included the SRE experiences of over 900 young people, 11% of whom lived in Wales. The report found there was extreme variations in access to, and quality of SRE. However it was clear that young people want SRE – LGBT–inclusive SRE – that answers the many questions they have around sex and relationships.

The report found:

- 1 in 7 young people did not receive any SRE at school at all
- 99% of young people thought age appropriate SRE should be taught in all schools
- Half of young people rated the SRE they received as poor or terrible and only 2% rated it as excellent.
- Only 5% of young people were taught about LGBT sex and relationships yet 97% thought that all SRE should be LGBT–inclusive
- 75% of young people have not learnt about consent.

Evidence has shown pupils with good SRE demonstrate sophisticated personal and social skills, and can confidently and maturely discuss the issues raised in lessons.

SRE can give children and young people the skills and knowledge to:

- Better manage their sexual health

- Be more informed about teenage pregnancy and contraception
- Be informed and supported if they are LGBT, and to challenge and report homophobic bullying
- Be more aware of the unrealistic portrayal of sex in pornography and be safer on the internet
- Identify airbrushing in the media and recognise unrealistic portrayals of the human body
- Be aware of abuse and be empowered to report it if they suffer abuse

Young people need an impartial education on how to address matters such as contraception, STIs, HIV and teenage pregnancy in an age appropriate manner. When young people are equipped with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions, they are more confident in having the relationships they want. International evidence from UNESCO research shows that when taught properly, SRE can delay sexual activity.

Young people across Wales are not getting the SRE they want and need. This needs to urgently change.

Access to sexual health services for young people.

Rates of sexually transmitted infections continue to increase in young people aged 15–24.

Yet in many areas of Wales young people lack basic access to sexual health and contraception services. There is currently no statutory sexual health service provision of any kind in Powys. Sexual health prevention and health promotion services have been decommissioned in three Local Health Boards (Betsi, Cwm Taf, Hywel dda) despite these areas being the most deprived. Cwm Taf has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Wales and Hywel dda is a rural area with the closest sexual health clinic located 60 miles away in Swansea.

Young people need services that are easily accessible and appropriate for them. They need sexual health advice and contraceptive services that are local, and fully meet their needs.

The current situation results in inequitable access to sexual health services for young people. We are encouraging our young people to make sensible decisions about their own sexual health and promoting “healthy relationships”, yet young people are not provided with basic sexual health services to support them in this.

Question 2 – From the list of priorities or issues you have identified, what do you consider to be the key areas that should be considered during the next 12 months (please identify up to three areas or issues)? Please outline why these should be considered as key priorities.

We believe that both of the issues above – SRE and access to sexual health services – need to be taken forward in the next 12 months. The lack of access to sexual health services is an urgent matter as young people are currently without access to any services in some areas of the country.

Every year that goes past without universal quality SRE, another school year of young people are failed. The start of a conversation regarding the need for quality SRE in all schools is needed urgently if we are to implement quality SRE in all schools as a matter of urgency.