



Relationship, Drug and Alcohol Education Bill

Diana Johnson MP

Joint NCB/SEF Briefing for Second Reading of Ten Minute Rule Bill in the House of Commons

9 November 2012

Contact:

Heather Ransom, Senior Policy Officer, 020 7843 6078 hansom@ncb.org.uk

Lisa Handy, Coordinator Sex Education Forum, 020 7843 1164 lhandy@ncb.org.uk

1. Summary

The Relationship, Drug and Alcohol Education Bill aims to *'require the Secretary of State to make provision to include relationship, drug and alcohol education in the national curriculum and for connected purposes'*.¹

The Relationship, Drug and Alcohol Education Bill would ensure that *'all children had access to good quality, age appropriate education in relationships, drug and alcohol throughout their education'*.² Moreover, it would ensure that specialist training and resources in Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) were made available to teachers, many of whom are currently teaching PSHE in addition to their main subject and lack expertise or support in this area.

PSHE became close to becoming a statutory part of the National Curriculum during the passage of the Children, Schools and Families Bill (now Act) in 2010 but was lost in the wash-up prior to the last General Election.

2. Introduction

[The National Children's Bureau](http://www.ncb.org.uk) (NCB) is a leading research and development charity working to improve the lives of children and young people, especially the most vulnerable. We work with children, for children to reduce the impact of inequalities, by influencing government policy, being the voice for 200,000 front-line professionals, and inspiring practical solutions on a range of social issues including health, education and youth justice, through our extensive research and evidence work. Every year we reach more than 100,000 children and young people through our membership scheme, links with voluntary, statutory and private organisations, and the 30 specialist partnership programmes that operate under our charitable status.

[The Sex Education Forum](#) (SEF), hosted by the National Children’s Bureau, is the national authority on sex and relationships education (SRE). It is a unique collaboration of over 90 members and 750 practitioners with representatives from health, education, faith, disability and children’s organisations. SEF believes that all children and young people have the right to good SRE and this website aims to provide all professionals involved in SRE with the information they need to ensure this right.

3. Why all children and young people should have an entitlement to a comprehensive and high quality Personal, Social, Health and Economic education within the National Curriculum.

NCB welcomes the provisions in the Bill to introduce compulsory relationships, drug and alcohol education. However, we recommend that this Bill is extended to the full PSHE curriculum, which would also include personal finance education (PFE) and careers guidance. This would ensure that children and young people are fully supported within the National Curriculum to address their emotional, social, health and economic well-being.

NCB believes that PSHE education should be an entitlement for all pupils because³:

1. It supports academic learning and develops through its own unique body of core knowledge the capabilities children and young people need to flourish in life and at work;
2. It promotes health, well-being and personal safety;
3. It helps schools promote the social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of their pupils – central to the Ofsted inspection framework;
4. Children, young people and their parents want it
5. Prioritising the subject will improve quality and enhance parents’ confidence by improving teacher training, assessment and inspection;

In addition, we would stress that children and young people themselves should be involved in the development of PSHE education curriculum content.

NCB’s view is that the best means of securing this for all pupils is by making PSHE education a statutory programme of study within the National Curriculum. The current non-statutory frameworks and programmes of study are of a good quality but their implementation is inconsistent due to their non-statutory status. The non-statutory status of much of PSHE education also means that some schools are not prioritising the subject and not allocating sufficient curriculum time to the subject; some schools are not delivering it (or aspects of it) at all⁴⁵⁶. At the minimum, there must be a statutory entitlement to PSHE for pupils, with appropriate support to schools for its delivery. This will send a clear message to schools about the importance of maintaining it within their curriculum.

NCB supports the PSHE Association's recommendation for PSHE education to be presented as a single framework encompassing the following four themes⁷:

Health: Learning how to maintain physical, mental and emotional health including sexual health; managing risks to health and safety; making healthy and informed choices about drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

Relationships: Knowing how to develop and maintain positive relationships; promoting family life and develop parenting skills; understanding how to deal with risky or negative relationships (including bullying and abuse, sexual and other violence, sexual consent); and managing loss (bereavement, separation and divorce).

Careers and the world of work: Learning how to manage transition; making responsible choices; being enterprising and ambitious; developing employability and leadership skills; managing risk and developing flexibility and resilience

Personal finance: Managing personal money (and understanding its link with public finance); understanding budgeting, saving and borrowing; managing financial risk (both positive and negative); planning for the future and deal with debt.

There is significant support for the statutory provision of PSHE in both Houses of Parliament. Baroness Massey of Darwen stated in a recent debate in the House of Lords:

*'If the Government gave PSHE status, that would send a message that this areas needs focus and organisation and is important for all children. PSHE would provide informed decisions about resisting pressure and working in groups. From that core, PSHE could radiate other aspects of well-being in school, for example on school policies such as bullying or school meals and the work of school councils and assemblies in subjects across the curriculum and in programmes such as UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools.'*⁸

3.1 PSHE education supports academic learning and develops the capabilities children and young people need to flourish in life and at work

Educationalists recognise that many barriers to learning lie outside the classroom and that supporting children's personal development and well-being (in part through learning in PSHE education) impacts positively on standards of achievement in all subjects.⁹

In addition, the unique body of knowledge that children and young people can learn or develop through effective PSHE education can help them develop the personal capabilities and skills that are vital in life and work. These 'life skills' include: perseverance, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, self management, self respect, teamwork, time management, financial capability, risk competence and managing stress. The Tomlinson Report on the 14-19 curriculum¹⁰, the Steer Report on behaviour¹¹, Ofsted's report on PSHE in schools¹², and the Taylor Review of Alternative Provision¹³ have all

emphasised the importance of children and young people developing life skills to help them learn, achieve and gain employment.

NCB believes that personal finance education (PFE) is vital to ensuring that children and young people develop the financial and economic skills necessary to learn how to manage their money effectively, both now and in the future. The All Party Parliamentary Group for Financial Education for Young People recently published an inquiry report¹⁴ which recommended a set of standards for financial education to support the delivery of high quality teaching and provision. Young NCB members with the support of the Personal Finance Education Group (PFEG) have developed a toolkit¹⁵ to support young people to campaign for personal finance education to be taught in their schools.

3.2 PSHE education promotes health, well-being and safety

PSHE education is crucial in safeguarding children. Good PSHE education helps children to learn about personal safety and improve their understanding of positive and respectful relationships. It can help pupils to recognise positive parenting and family relationships, as well as abusive, harmful or inappropriate behaviours. It can support children to develop the confidence to ask for help, which can contribute to a reduction in childhood abuse and neglect.¹⁶ Similarly, evidence shows that PSHE education is an important intervention for the prevention of bullying.¹⁷

Sex and relationships education should be provided to all pupils as part of an entitlement to PSHE education. SRE involves learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, human sexuality, sex and sexual health. It should equip children and young people with the information, skills and positive values to enable to have safe, fulfilling relationships and to take responsibility for their sexual health and wellbeing. SRE aims to contribute to behavior change, including reducing unprotected and unwanted sex, and reducing harmful behaviour, including sexual offences such as assault and abuse. In an online survey designed to find out from 16-25 year olds what their experience of SRE was at school, the topics that were taught less frequently were: skills for coping with relationships, feelings and emotions we experience in relationships and sex, and messages from the media about sex and relationships.¹⁸

Although slowly decreasing, teenage pregnancy rates in the UK are still the highest in western Europe. Countries like the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland which have widespread provision of sex education and have good access to sexual health services have seen a marked decrease in teenage pregnancy since the 1970s.¹⁹ National and international research shows that good quality SRE has a protective function as young people who have good SRE are more likely to choose to have sex for the first time later. Kirby (2007)²⁰ examined 48 SRE programmes and found that 40 per cent of these had a significant impact in three aspects of behaviour; delaying the initiation of sex; reducing the number of sexual partners; and increasing condom or contraceptive use.

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image recommends that children and young people have the opportunity to discuss perceptions of body image within the PSHE curriculum. Findings from their recent inquiry²¹ and an evaluation of calls to Childline²² identify a significant increase in children and young

people developing low self-esteem and depression, self-harming, dieting or substance misusing, due to dissatisfaction with their physical appearance.

3.3 PSHE education helps schools to promote the social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of their pupils – central to the Ofsted inspection framework

PSHE education enables children to learn about a range of social, moral and cultural issues; helps them understand and explore social values from a range of different perspectives; and gives them the knowledge and information they need to make informed choices. This learning is framed within the context of their community, by the ethos of their school and within the wider societal context.

PSHE education plays a key role in promoting inclusion and reducing inequalities²³ and thereby helps schools to fulfil their duties under the Equality Act. It provides myriad opportunities to explore difference and diversity and learn skills for living in a multi-cultural and diverse society. Many schools recognise the important role that PSHE education plays in promoting respect for diversity and difference.

3.4 Children, young people and their parents want it

Research shows children and young people want opportunities to discuss issues that are relevant to their lives and their well-being including emotions, relationships, health issues such as mental health, sexual health, diet and exercise, money and transport.^{24 25} Making PSHE statutory will also provide a stronger framework for parents to be consulted on, involved in and engaged with what is taught.

According to a 2011 Mumsnet survey²⁶, 98% of parents would be happy for their child to attend sex and relationships education (SRE); 92% think SRE should be a compulsory subject in secondary schools; 69% think SRE should be a compulsory subject in primary schools; and 90% think there should be a statutory duty on all schools, including faith schools and academies, to deliver comprehensive SRE. A survey by Parentline Plus²⁷ shows that 97% of parents believe that drugs and alcohol education should be delivered in schools.²⁸

Furthermore, due to the nature of the topics covered, PSHE education gives schools an opportunity to better engage parents in their children's learning. For example, Sex Education Forum research into parents views of SRE showed that parents see school and home as the two main sources of SRE, with 84% of parents believing that school and home should both be involved²⁹.

3.5 Improving the quality of PSHE: teacher training, assessment and inspection

Evidence suggests that whilst PSHE education is taught to a high standard in most schools, the quality of what is delivered is weaker in a significant minority of schools, meaning that pupils' access to good quality PSHE education is highly variable. The MacDonald Review concluded that effective learning in PSHE is dependent on the quality of teaching. The preceding reviews into sex and relationship education (SRE)³⁰ and drugs and alcohol education³¹ both provided evidence that the quality of PSHE education being delivered was too variable and was failing to meet children and young people's needs. In all cases,

the conclusion of these reviews was that PSHE education should become statutory to compel schools to tackle this.

Whilst the PSHE Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme has gone some way to improving the skills of staff teaching PSHE, there are currently a limited number of specialist PSHE teachers. This, along with the low prioritisation of the subject in schools because it is not statutory, means that the quality of PSHE provision has remained unacceptably patchy for too long.

NCB would like to see PSHE become a specialism in initial teacher training. The University of Southampton³² is already integrating substantial training on health and well-being, delivered by PSHE experts, into their teacher training curriculum. Ofsted's review of the subject³³ found that, in secondary schools, specialist teachers were more effective than form tutors at delivering PSHE. They were found to be better at planning lessons, talking about PSHE topics with confidence and knowledge and using a broad range of teaching approaches. For non-specialist PSHE teachers, the subject will continue to be a secondary priority, which can affect the uptake of continuing professional development. However, CPD provision should be continued in order to support the professional development of the existing generation of PSHE teachers.

Assessment of PSHE education is weak and Ofsted has been critical of this for some time. We are concerned that the status of the subject, and quality of teaching, will be undermined if pupils' progress is not subject to robust assessment. It is vital that pupils themselves are able to gain a sense of achievement, and recognise their own progress, through their learning in PSHE education. We support Macdonald's recommendation that innovative ways of assessing pupil progress in PSHE education should be found, with the proviso that this situation is kept under review. This work must be done in consultation with children and young people. In addition, specific consideration must be given to how to measure and award progress for disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEN).

Endnotes

¹ First reading in the House of Commons. 17 October 2012.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm121017/debtext/121017-0001.htm#12101758000001>

² Ibid.

³ Further details on each of these points is provided on pages 4-7.

⁴ Ofsted (2007) *Time for change?: personal, social and health education*. London: Ofsted.

⁵ Ofsted (2010) *Personal, social, health and economic education in schools*.

⁶ Formby, E. Coldwell, M. Stiell, B. Demack, S. Stevens, A. Shipton, L. Wolstenholme, C. and, Willis, B. (2011) *Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education: A mapping study of the prevalent models of their delivery and their effectiveness* Centre for Education and Inclusion Research, Sheffield Hallam University

⁷ PSHE Association (2012). *Our Proposal for a More Effective PSHE Education Curriculum* <http://www.pshe-association.org.uk/uploads/media/17/7719.pdf>

⁸ House of Lords debate. *Schools: well-being and personal and social needs*. 14 June 2012. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201213/ldhansrd/text/120614-0002.htm>

⁹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2010) *Poorer Children's Educational Attainment: How Important are Attitudes and Behaviours* <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/educational-attainment-poor-children>

¹⁰ Tomlinson, M (2005) *14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform*. London: Department for Education and Skills.

¹¹ Department for Education and Skills (2005) *The report of the practitioner group on school behaviour and discipline*.

¹² Ofsted (2010) *Personal, social and health and economic education in schools*. <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/personal-social-health-and-economic-education-schools>

¹³ Charlie Taylor (2012) *Improving Alternative Provision*. Department for Education. <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/a00204776/taylor-review-of-alternative-provision>

¹⁴ All Party Parliamentary Group for Financial Education for Young People. (2012) *Financial Education in Further Education*. http://www.pfeg.org/sites/default/files/Doc_downloads/APPG/APPG%20on%20Financial%20Education%20for%20Young%20People%20-%20Further%20Education%20Report%20Sept%202012%20.pdf

¹⁵ <http://www.youngncb.org.uk/PDF/Our%20Money%20Our%20Future%20Toolkit.pdf>

¹⁶ Harries, J (2007) *Promoting Personal Safety through PSHE*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

¹⁷ Thompson, F & Smith PK (2011) *The use and effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies in schools*. Goldsmiths, University of London.

¹⁸ SEF (2008) *Key Findings: Young people's survey on sex and relationships education*. http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/333301/young_peoples_survey_on_sex___relationships_education.pdf

-
- ¹⁹ Parker, R and others (2005) Teenage pregnancy strategy evaluation: final report synthesis. London: DCSF.
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RW38.pdf>
- ²⁰ Kirky D (2007) Emerging answers 2007: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases.
- ²¹ All Party Parliamentary Group on Body Image (2012) Reflections on Body Image.
<http://www.ymca.co.uk/bodyimage/report>
- ²² Childline (2012) Saying the Unsayable. NSPCC.
- ²³ Blake, S and Plant, S (2005) Addressing inequalities and inclusion through PSHE and Citizenship. London: NCB
- ²⁴ National Children's Bureau (2002) Young at Heart – consulting with children and young people on health and well being.
- ²⁵ Children's Society (2012) The Good Childhood report 2012: Summary of our findings
http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/good_childhood_research_summary_final_0.pdf
- ²⁶ 2011 Mumsnet survey of 1,000 parents <http://www.mumsnet.com/campaigns/mumsnet-sex-education-survey#Results>
- ²⁷ Chamberlain, H (May 2008) Drugs and alcohol education report. Parentline Plus.
http://www.drugeducationforum.com/images/dynamicImages/file/6814_868224.pdf
- ²⁹ Emmerson, L (2011) *Parents and SRE: A Sex Education Forum evidence briefing*, London: Sex Education Forum
http://www.ncb.org.uk/campaigning/media_news/2011/jan-jun/parents_want_support_with_sex.aspx
- ³⁰ DCSF (2008) *Review of sex and relationship education (SRE) In schools: a report by the External Reference Group*. London: DCSF. <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/13030/SRE%20final.pdf>
- ³¹ Advisory Group on Drug and Alcohol Education (2008) Drug education: an entitlement for all. London: DCSF.
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/13032/ACFE3AC.pdf>
- ³² <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=1889696&show=abstract>
- ³³ Ofsted (2007) Time for change?: Personal, social and health education