

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE1918](#): Improve sex education in schools, lodged by Kate Freedman

Brief overview of issues raised by petition

The petition calls “on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to reform sex education by updating guidance and implementing clear teaching rules, focusing on topics such as:

- Menstruation and related illnesses
- Puberty
- LGBT sex, including asexuality
- Fertility
- Pornography
- Any other things that are deemed useful.”

Current [statutory guidance on the conduct of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in schools dates from 2014](#). This is statutory guidance issued under [section 56 of the Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000](#), which local authorities should have regard to while providing sex education.

The Scottish Government has been reviewing the statutory guidance over recent years. At the time of writing, neither the new guidance, nor draft guidance, had been published.

Online resources

In September 2019, the Scottish Government launched a new online resource for Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood education, <https://rshp.scot>.

In launching the website, the Scottish Government said—

“Around 1,500 teaching professionals and parents contributed to the development of the resource, which was also piloted in 38 schools.

“It aims to give teachers greater confidence in having valuable and engaging age-appropriate conversations with their pupils.

“Topics include healthy relationships, consent, sexual health, reproduction, emotional well-being, equalities, gender and parenthood.”

Whether schools or teachers use this website or any other resource is a matter for those schools and teachers. For example, some schools may prefer to use the Scottish Catholic Education Service’s [God’s Loving Plan](#).

The role of teachers

The Curriculum for Excellence is intended to provide a high degree of flexibility, with schools and teachers having agency to provide a curriculum that is aimed at the individual learners and communities they serve.

Personal and Social Education Review

Last session, the [Scottish Government undertook a review](#) of the provision of Personal and Social Education (PSE) in schools. The final [PSE Review report and recommendations](#) was published in January 2019.

This review considered the delivery and content of PSE, including “how the issue of sexual consent is taught within relationships, sexual health and parenthood (RSHP) education from early learning through all stages of school education”. The review recommended that any update of the statutory guidance on RSHP “includes appropriate guidance to ensure that consent education is age and stage appropriate and reflects the issues that are facing children and young people, especially from online influences.”

Parliament’s work

Last session, the [Education and Skills Committee undertook a short piece of work on PSE in 2017](#). This inquiry influenced the review noted above.

In 2014, the Public Petitions Committee considered [PE1526: Making Sex and Relationship Education in Scotland Statutory for all Schools](#).

Key Organisations and relevant links

Scottish Government

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16/12/2021

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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