

REPORT TO: DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 18 DECEMBER 2000

REPORT ON: RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION BY LEARNING + TEACHING SCOTLAND ON GUIDANCE ON SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 774-2000

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report brings to the attention of the Education Committee documents produced by Learning + Teaching Scotland on Sex Education in Scottish Schools. It seeks the approval of the Committee for a response to consultation on these documents.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Education committee is recommended to;

- a. endorse the content of the response to Learning + Teaching Scotland set out in Appendix 1
- and
- b. approve the proposals by the Director of Education to consult on and publish guidelines on sexual health education for schools

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications arising directly out of this report.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications arising directly out of this report.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications arising directly out of this report.

6.0 BACKGROUND

6.1 In October 1999 the Scottish Executive announced its intention to repeal Section 2A of the Local Government Act 1986. The Executive also

announced that a package of safeguards would be put in place before repeal came into force. The package of safeguards comprises:

- A new section in the *Ethical Standards in Public Life etc (Scotland) Act 2000* which puts a duty on councils to have regard to:

the value of a stable family life in a child's development
the need to ensure that the content of instruction provided by authorities is appropriate, having regard to each child's age, understanding and stage of development

- strong clear guidance to local authorities on consultation with parents regarding sex education
- advance consultation with parents by individual schools
- simple direct procedures for parents to raise concerns
- review of curriculum advice and supporting materials for schools and teachers.

6.2 In addition the Executive has introduced a new section in the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000* which enable Ministers to issue guidance and requires local authorities to have regard to such guidance. This guidance will take the form of a Circular on the conduct of sex education.

6.3 The Working Group on Sex Education in Scottish Schools was established in February 2000 to review the range of curricular advice and support available to teachers on sex education, specifically in the light of the repeal of section 2A of the 1986 Act.

6.4 The Working Group undertook a detailed examination of the package of safeguards proposed by the Scottish Executive and concluded that the package was sufficiently complete, wide-ranging and robust to meet the legitimate concerns of the public, parents and carers and teachers. In reaching this conclusion they took account of the existing good practice in Scottish schools and authorities, the professional judgement of teachers, the quality assurance systems in place in schools and authorities, and the awareness and involvement of parents.

6.5 The Working Group was unanimous in its conclusion that sex education should be presented in a context that values stable relationships, healthy living and personal responsibility and firmly sets sex education within the wider context of health education, religious and moral education and personal and social development.

The Working Group made three key recommendations:

- that there should be a summary of all the guidance on the issue of sex education
- that there should be advice to schools and local authorities on how best to consult with parents
- that the Scottish Executive should produce a Parent's Leaflet explaining:
 - the nature and purpose of sex education
 - its place within health education

the importance of its relationship to Personal and Social Education and Religious Moral Education

6.6 As a result of these recommendations, Learning and Teaching Scotland was commissioned to take this work forward. A Reference Group was formed to help in this process. Three documents have been produced for consultation:

- ***Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities on Effective Consultation with Parents and Carers***
This document is the result of a survey of good practice across Scotland, and is based on current practice. However, in seeking a more consistent approach, the document sets out to provide guidance and support for local authorities and schools in consulting with parents. It also gives advice on working with other agencies.
- ***Summary of National Advice on Sex Education***
This document sets out a wide-ranging review of the curricular advice presently available on sex education in schools, setting it firmly within Personal and Social Development, Health Education, and the concept of the Health Promoting School.
- ***Leaflet for Parents and Carers***
This document sets out to answer questions that parents and carers may have about the nature and purpose of sex education.

6.7 Copies of these documents are available in the Members Lounge and with Group Secretaries.

7.0 PROPOSALS

7.1 It is proposed that the Response to Learning + Teaching Scotland should be put forward with the endorsement of Dundee City Council.

7.2 The Director of Education has established a working group on Sexual Health Education. This group is currently developing curriculum guidance for schools. These guidelines will be the subject of detailed consultation with school staff, representatives of health education groups, churches, school boards and parents groups. It is proposed that this group be asked to incorporate the guidance from Learning + Teaching Scotland into their proposals.

7.3 The Director of Education will provide a further report to the Education Committee detailing the proposed Curriculum Guidelines on Sexual Health Education.

8.0 CONSULTATION

8.1 The Response to Learning + Teaching Scotland has been discussed by the Education Department Working Group on Sexual Health Education. The Director of Finance, Director of Neighbourhood Resources and Development and the Director of Support Services have been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were used in preparing the above report;

- Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities on Effective Consultation with Parents and Carers
- Summary of National Advice on Sex Education
- Leaflet for Parents and Carers

Anne Wilson
Director of Education

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Sex Education in Scottish Schools

Response to Questionnaire on Guidance on Sex Education in Scottish Schools by Learning + Teaching Scotland

Additional Comments by Dundee City Council Education Department

1. Guidance for Schools and Local authorities on Effective Consultation with Parents and Carers

Dundee City Council is concerned to develop closer working between schools and parents/carers in all aspects of education. The advice in this section provides a succinct summary of the principles and aims which should underlie good practice in schools. It briefly summarises current advice and contains some helpful pointers to good practice. It is therefore generally welcomed.

Comments on points of detail are listed below.

The bullet points of good practice cover both general health issues and specific sexual health education issues. The advice offered focuses primarily on content. There is a need to clarify the relationship between Sexual Health and Local Authority / School Health Promotion and Health Education Policies.

There is an obvious need to ensure effective consultation with parents, faith groups etc. by Local Authorities and Schools. It should however be recognised that schools currently face high demands on their time and resources. It is therefore essential that consultation is well co-ordinated to ensure that it is appropriate, avoids duplication of effort and is not an unnecessary drain on resources for learning and teaching. Dundee City Council will offer additional guidance and support to schools in this area as part of its Curriculum Guidelines on Sexual Health Education.

No mention is made of taking account of the views of young people, as contained within the provisions of The Children (Scotland) Act 1995. This is felt to be a key part of any effective provision in this area.

2. Guide for Parents and Carers

The dissemination of information to parents is welcomed. The leaflet contains a considerable amount of helpful information. However the layout and language may not meet the needs of the target audience. It would benefit from a more reader friendly design which addresses the key areas in a more succinct and accessible and attractive fashion.

3. Summary of National Advice

The sources of national advice provide a concise and helpful update for reference purposes. The list of documents is useful as a source but more limited in supporting learning and teaching about relationships.

Some reference is made to examinable curriculum content at Standard grade and Higher but Human Biology is omitted. The inclusion of Higher Still PSE may be misleading as few schools are likely to offer this course to S5/6, but the PSE programme within S5/6 would contain Sexual Health Education.

The comments from the faith groups are interesting and helpful. Dundee City Council would wish to involve faith groups more fully in any consultation on the Revised Guidelines for 5-14 Health Education and on Dundee's Curriculum Guidelines on Sexual Health Education.

4. Circular, Standards in Scotland's Schools, etc. Act 2000: Conduct of Sex Education in Scottish Schools

Dundee City Council notes the duties contained in section 35 of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000. In particular it welcomes the additional guidance in this area and the development of closer links and more effective consultation between parents / carers and schools.

Dundee City Council is of the view that teachers in our schools currently provide a very effective and supportive service to young people in developing their awareness and understanding of issues to do with sexual health education. The Council is concerned to develop and improve the support to young people in this area and to support the staff delivering such a service. The Council is of the view that sexual health education is, and should continue to be, clearly set within the context of developing self awareness; personal esteem and self confidence; an appreciation of the importance of relationships and the value of a stable family life, and a respect for the views of others.

Dundee City Council would strongly agree with the Working Group findings that " existing curriculum guidelines, advice and support information were adequate and required no revision but that they could usefully be complemented by the development of additional material to support teachers and schools in developing their programmes and consulting with parents". The Education Department of Dundee City Council is currently engaged in providing such additional support and advice through its Working Party on Sexual Health.

It is considered that the Circular is a useful summary offering clear information and advice. As such it would be helpful to schools if this was part of the main documentation, perhaps serving as an introduction. Presented as a circular it may not be easily accessed by all teachers.