**Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning**

**Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 11 May 2023**

# Harassment in Schools Update

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| **Purpose:** | To brief the Panel on work undertaken since the verbal update provided in June 2021. |
| **Content:** | An overview of work undertaken by the Education Directorate. |
| **Councillors are being asked to:** | Consider the information provided and give views. |
| **Lead Councillor:** | Cabinet Member for Education & Learning |
| **Lead Officer & Report Author:** | Rhodri Jones, Head of Achievement & Partnership Service Rhodri.jones@swansea.gov.uk <br><br> Lisa Collins, Child Protection and Safeguarding Officer Lisa.collins@swansea.gov.uk |

## 1. Introduction

1.1 In June 2021 a verbal briefing was provided to the panel on the topic of harassment between pupils in schools. At this time there was a heightened national focus on this topic due to the Everyone's Invited website. Founded in June 2020, it provided a space for victims of sexual abuse and harassment to share their stories. Everyone's Invited then released the names of the schools mentioned in the testimonies.

1.2 The Minister wrote to schools to seek assurance and set out his expectation that schools were actively reviewing the culture and processes that they have in place to safeguard learners, including fostering a culture where incidents of sexual harassment and abuse are not normalised and learners are encouraged to, and feel confident in, reporting incidents.

1.3 The letter went on to highlight all the support that is available to schools, including what is provided via the local authority's designated lead officer for safeguarding and the designated safeguarding person.

1.4 Further to the above, Estyn were commissioned to considers the incidence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in the lives of secondary-aged young people and review the culture and processes that help protect and support young

people in secondary schools in Wales. They reported back in December 2021, and the report is available in Appendix A.

1.5     In addition, the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee carried out a Policy Inquiry; *Everybody's affected: Peer on peer sexual harassment among learners* that reported back in July 2022. This report is available in Appendix B.

**2.      Estyn: We don't tell our teachers - Experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales**

2.1     Following a Thematic Review by Estyn in response to the Everyone's Invited website and campaign, the report "We don't tell our teachers" Experience of peer on peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales was published in December 2021. The Director of Education requested the establishment of a working group to provide a position statement for our schools.

2.2     Within the report there are recommendations for secondary schools, local authorities and Welsh Government. The working group focused on the recommendations for the Local Authority which were to:

- Work with schools to collect and categorise and analyse all bullying and harassment data correctly and comprehensively. In addition, support schools to analyse this information regularly to identify trends and put restorative arrangements in place.
- Plan suitable intervention and support on gender issues at both school and local authority level, evaluating regularly their impact on pupil wellbeing.
- Provide school staff with the necessary professional learning to adopt a proactive approach to peer-on-peer sexual harassment, including homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and harassment.

2.3     In May 2022, following meetings of the working group, a position statement on the above Estyn recommendations was presented back to the Director for officers to take forward.

**3.      Swansea Position Statement and Actions**

3.1     On recommendation one, MyConcern is the system used in most schools to record safeguarding and concerning incidents. Schools have applied the use of MyConcern to fit with individual needs and so there is limited consistency with how the system is used. Individually schools do not feel confident that they are getting the most out of the system meaning collecting bullying and harassment data is restricted.

3.2     In response to the report Schools were keen to work with the local authority to develop a more consistent approach in order to improve data collection and holistic analysis for an improved response. An action plan has been developed to progress this work and is attached in Appendix A.

3.3     On the second recommendation, some Swansea schools have LGBTQ+ groups promoting inclusivity and pupil voice and all schools look to support all LGBTQ+ learners in a way that best suits their needs. Supporting pupils on gender issues is complex and the local authority offers support to schools by accessing the Western Bay Safeguarding Board's policy on Transgender pupils. However, there does not appear to be a consistent flag within MyConcern which easily allows schools to record incidents and link them to gender related hate. Categories are linear and so schools are left having to determine whether an incident reported is linked to gender/sexuality related hate.

3.4     Pupil Wellbeing is high on school agendas, and we will work with schools and wider partners to provide consistent advice and guidance that supports schools to support learners and their families and to signpost to trusted organisations.

3.5     On the final recommendation, the local authority has promoted the use of the supporting resources which were helpfully attached to Estyn's report. The local authority Safeguarding Officer provides a termly newsletter and resources, signposting to policy, training and updates on various safeguarding guidance. The desire for an annual resources and training bulletin is accepted and has been included in the action plan to support this response.

3.6     Upon review of the action plan, work is ongoing to analyse and benchmark data and we are currently on track to respond to the other actions. In addition, reference to the Estyn report "we don't tell out teachers" is now routinely included in training delivered to schools.

## 4.     Further Work on Harassment in Schools

4.1     The local authority safeguarding officer has represented the directorate and contributed to a multi-agency response to the Independent Investigation into Child Sex Abuse (IICSA) enquiry which highlighted various child sex abuse issues including exploitation and peer harassment.

4.2     Since the publication of the report there has been national training offers regarding harassment and a drive on harassment and bullying more generally. The local authority has therefore linked the work being undertaken for peer-on-peer sexual harassment to consider all forms of harassment/bullying under Welsh Government's Rights Respect Equality framework. The intention is to develop consistency across schools in how reports are encouraged, recorded and responded to.

4.3     There is ongoing work with the local authority's Contextual, Missing, Exploited, Trafficked (CMET) team to support schools by targeting year groups 8 and 9 for preventative work not only in relation to sexual harassment but physical violence. CMET are also developing plans for safeguarding roadshows in schools.

4.4     Now that the local authority has agreed its VAWDASV strategy, the education directorate are also developing a whole school/education approach to domestic

abuse which promotes the healthy relationship agenda via the relationship and sexuality education (RSE) curriculum and PSE lessons.

**5.      Legal implications**

5.1     There are no legal implications associated with this report.

**6.      Finance Implications**

6.1     There are no financial implications associated with this report.

**7.      Integrated Impact Assessment**

7.1     The report is for information and not for decision.

**Appendices:**

Appendix A: [We don't tell our teachers - Experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales | Estyn (gov.wales)](#)
Appendix B: [Everybody's affected (senedd.wales)](#)
Appendix C: POPSH Action Plan

**Peer on Peer Sexual Harassment – "We don't tell our Teachers" report – Estyn December 2021**
**Action Plan**

| Action | By whom | By when | Desired outcome |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Analyse data available using Clarity/ MyConcern to achieve benchmark data | Data and Systems Manager | September 2022 | Schools & LA have benchmark data and are able to analyse and identify areas for improvement in data recording |
| Identify inconsistencies and agree standard set of flags/types for consistent reporting | POPSH group | July 2023 | A consistent agreed set of flags/types of concern are identified and agreed by the group |
| Develop consistency in data usage in MyConcern to support school recording on incidents. | Data and Systems Manager<br><br>Head of Achievement and Partnership | September 2023 | Consistent set of flags/types of incidents that can be used across all schools. |
| Pilot the promotion of consistent flags/types for analysis with the use of Clarity | Swansea Schools<br><br>Data and Systems Manager | June/July 2023 | An understand of what will work and what needs further development to enable accurate interpretation and analysis of data. |
| Pilot a POPSH survey where pupils can post anonymously their experiences. Questionnaires, | Swansea Schools | Autumn Term 2023 | Theory to promote engagement of pupils and assist schools in analysis to identifies themes |
| Collate and produce a safeguarding resources & training newsletter using the supporting | Child Protection and Safeguarding Officer | August 2022 | Schools are better prepared and are able to plan for training, assistance and are supported to provide relevant safeguarding updates at the beginning of term. |

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| resources for sharing at the beginning of term | | | |
| Plan for safeguarding roadshows in schools promoting how schools are responding to the above and engaging pupils to assist, contribute and reduce POPSH across the whole school. | POPSH group/school leads | Spring Term/ongoing | Safeguarding roadshows, possibly to coincide with transition days/safeguarding week working with pupils to help us understand where they see safety, risk, harassment/abuse from peers. |
| Apply Clarity analysis to work against benchmarks and help identify improvement and areas for development. | Data and Systems Manager | Academic Year 2023/24 | Regular reporting across Swansea enables the LA to evidence improvement and Swansea Schools to be more confident in the battle against POPSH. |