MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit Consultation Response

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<th>Title of consultation</th>
<th>Personal and Social Education</th>
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<td>Name of the consulting body</td>
<td>Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee</td>
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Why did the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit contribute to this consultation?

The Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee plans to host a round-table discussion on Personal and Social Education (PSE) on Wednesday 22 February 2017. The Committee wants to understand what the main issues are in relation to the content and delivery of PSE. This is likely to be a wide-ranging session and will help the Committee to decide what further work it may do on this topic.

The Committee was keen to hear the views of young people, teachers, parents and carers, and academics, on PSE, and asked for the views on the question: **What should personal and social education sessions be about?** and invited contributions in the following ways:

- Send a 100 word email the Committee;
- Comment on Twitter;
- Comment on Facebook; or
- Make a 1 minute video and send a link to the Committee.

The MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow, submitted two separate email responses from two of our research programmes, drawing on our evidence from studies that have looked at relationships, social networking, child and adolescent mental health and wellbeing, peer relationships, and schools.

Our consultation response

1. Based on our recent research and work with schools around sexual health and wellbeing, we think PSE should create a safe space in which to address: gender inequalities; gender-based violence; seeking sexual health help (& what to expect when you get there); law on sending ‘nude pics’ (& keeping them on your phone); pleasure; how to communicate about sex; how to have the confidence to negotiate/make decisions in practice; building and maintaining safe relationships (and recognising those that are not); consent and what it looks like; that sex is not compulsory; and the range of options/alternatives available.

2. PSE sessions should include a strong focus on mental health. School-based surveys highlight high rates of teenage psychological distress, related to factors such as worries...
We have found children as young as 10 perceive mental health symptoms as ‘rare’ and ‘weird’, and so delay or avoid disclosing these to peers, teachers and parents because they assume they will be stigmatised. This suggests health promotion around mental health and signposting to support services should begin in primary school and continue as a priority within PSE.

**When was the response submitted?**
10 February 2017 (1) and 13 February 2017 (2).

**Find out more about our research in this area**
[www.glasgow.ac.uk/sphsu](http://www.glasgow.ac.uk/sphsu)

**Who to contact about this response**

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