

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

16th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday  
8 November 2023

## PE1934: Develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School

<b>Petitioner</b>	Craig Scoular on behalf of Greenfaulds High School Rights and Equalities Committee
<b>Petition summary</b>	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to work with Education Scotland to develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School. This resource should – <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Educate on the causes of gender-based violence and</li><li>– Ensure that young people leave school with the tools to help create a safer society for women</li></ul>
<b>Webpage</b>	<a href="https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1934">https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1934</a>

### Introduction

1. The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on [22 February 2023](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Rape Crisis Scotland, and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new responses from COSLA, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and Rape Crisis Scotland which are set out at **Annexe C**.
4. Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).

5. Further background information about this petition can be found in the [SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. The Scottish Government's initial position on this petition can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 166 signatures have been received on this petition.

## Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

**Clerk to the Committee**

## Annexe A

# PE1934: Develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School

## Petitioner

Craig Scoular on behalf of Greenfaulds High School Rights and Equalities Committee

## Date lodged

31/05/2022

## Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to urge the Scottish Government to work with Education Scotland to develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School. This resource should –

- Educate on the causes of gender-based violence and
- Ensure that young people leave school with the tools to help create a safer society for women

## Previous action

We have written to our local MSP Jamie Hepburn, who in turn contacted the Education Secretary who wrote to our group. In the response Shirley-Ann Sommerville outlined what the government already do. We asked the Education Secretary about mandatory lessons, however she informed us that the government does not "prescribe" what is to be taught in schools. We have also conducted a survey to find out if young people felt enough was taught about this issue in school. 85% of respondents said no, there was not enough teaching.

## Background information

During the period between March and September 2021, 81 women were killed at the hands of men in the UK. Violence against women is an issue felt disproportionately by women of colour and trans-women. Among the

375 transgender people killed in 2021 globally, the vast majority were black transgender women (Forbes, 2021). Gender based violence increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, where reported cases increased dramatically due to national lockdowns. It was predicted there would be an additional 31million gender-based violence cases if lockdown only lasted 6 months, the final figure will be devastatingly larger due to prolonged lockdowns. In Scotland alone, there were 65,000 cases of domestic abuse reported last year, the fifth time in a year it has risen.

It is our goal to help tackle violence against women, which destroys too many lives every year. We believe that educating our children will end any existing cycles of gender-based violence and prevent any new ones from starting.

## Annexe B

### Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1934 on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023

**The Convener:** PE1934, which was lodged by Craig Scoular on behalf of Greenfaulds high school rights and equalities committee, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to work with Education Scotland to develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in high school. The resource should educate on the causes of gender-based violence and ensure that young people leave school with the tools to help them to create a safer society for women.

At our previous consideration of the petition, the committee agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and to COSLA. We requested information from COSLA on the current provision of gender-based violence lessons across local authorities. COSLA's response details a number of on-going workstreams that schools are delivering in partnership with local rape crisis centres and Rape Crisis Scotland.

The submission from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills states that recording and monitoring of incidents in schools is essential, emphasising the importance of a consistent and uniform approach. SEEMiS, which is a local authority-owned tool, provides a function to record instances of sexual harassment. An evaluation was due to take place in 2022 to assess the success of the system. The submission also highlights upcoming reviews of personal and social education and prevention practices.

Does any member have any thoughts?

**Alexander Stewart:** I think that we need to write to COSLA to ask which of the local authorities are yet to roll out the mentors in violence prevention programme in secondary schools, requesting information about what challenges have prevented implementation and details of work planned to address those. We should ask what challenges local government faces in embedding schools-based prevention of violence against women and girls.

We should also write to Rape Crisis Scotland to request information on its reporting mechanisms for its equally safe at school—ESAS—strategy and whether its planned work with local authorities has resulted in an increase in ESAS activities across Scotland. That information would be very useful and clarify where we are in this whole process. As you have indicated, convener, this is an immensely important issue. If measures are embedded at school level, that will help to prevent gender-based violence once pupils have left school.

**Carol Mochan:** We will all be aware that there has been significant debate and discussion on violence against women and girls in Parliament. Do we have any information about whether any of the other committees have done any work around education, either in the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee or the

Education, Children and Young People Committee? If so, it would be interesting to look at that evidence.

**The Deputy Convener:** I am sure we can find that out, Carol. Do we agree to take forward Alexander Stewart's recommendations?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

# Annexe C

## COSLA submission of 6 April 2023

### PE1934/D: Develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School

#### **1. Background**

The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee considered the above petition at its meeting on 22 February 2023. At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to COSLA about the issues raised in the petition.

The Committee considered [COSLA's response](#) to its previous request for information and was keen to follow up on a number of points. Namely:

- Which three local authorities have not yet rolled out the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme to secondary schools
- Information about what challenges might have prevented implementation in those local authorities and details of work planned to address those challenges
- The challenges facing Local Government in embedding the schools-based prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls

#### **2. About COSLA**

COSLA is the national membership organisation for Scottish Local Government, comprising all of Scotland's 32 councils. It sets the strategic direction for Local Government's relationship with both the UK and Scottish Governments to best deliver for Scotland's communities.

Much of COSLA's work is to ensure that councils have the powers and resources needed to deliver services that enable everyone to live well locally. [The COSLA Plan 2022 -2027](#) sets out our vision, high-level ambitions, and priorities.

**3. In response to the Committee’s query “which three local authorities have not yet rolled out the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MPV) programme to secondary schools?”**

COSLA does not hold the information that the Committee is seeking. The MVP National Implementation Team (Education Scotland) hold related information and their response to this request is included below:

**Please see the response to the Committee’s query offered by the National MPV Team:**

“Since 2020 all local authorities have continued to engage with the MVP programme. The final local authority to train staff is East Lothian and their staff teams will receive professional learning in May 2023. Our end of year report will be sent to Scottish Government at the end of April. Information regarding progress was also shared at the recent MVP board meeting.

A summary of this year’s reach is included below:

Using evidence from our school practitioner survey December 2022 (75 responses) and national team knowledge of schools that are delivering MVP, we have 165 secondary schools delivering MVP this session, with 31 local authorities at the delivery stage and 1 local authority engaged but without schools trained. Our survey indicates the average number of staff supporting the programme in a school was 4.8. The average number of mentors (senior learners) trained was 29 (range 3 to 87) suggesting this session there were approximately 4,785 mentors. Working in groups of 3, this indicates at least 6380 sessions were delivered reaching 47,820 younger learners. Many school staff deliver supplementary lessons in addition to those delivered by the mentors.”

(from MVP Business Plan 2023-24 submitted to Scottish Government)

For further information contact [Ian.Gardner@gov.scot](mailto:Ian.Gardner@gov.scot)

**About the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme**

The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) is a leadership programme which uses a bystander approach to empower young people to challenge attitudes and behaviours which can lead to gender based violence and bullying. The MVP Programme further supports the creation of safe and supportive learning environments. Positive relationships are directly linked to learning. The MVP Programme seeks to build relationships and support learning.



## **COSLA's Relationship with the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme**

COSLA is a member of the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme National Steering Group. The steering group was convened by the Safer Communities Division of Scottish Government with the first meeting held in January 2016. The Steering Group agrees a rolling programme of work set out by the National MVP Team.

### **4. In response to the Committee's request for 'Information about what challenges might have prevented implementation in those local authorities and details of work planned to address those challenges'.**

COSLA does not hold the information that the Committee is seeking. The MVP National Implementation Team (Education Scotland) holds related information and their response to this request for information is included below:

"Engaging in the MVP programme is voluntary and local authorities join when time is right for them to participate. (staffing / readiness checklist etc)

The national roll out of MVP was always planned on an incremental basis with a small number of local authorities newly engaged each year. This allowed careful planning and support from the small national team, both for initial implementation, further roll out and the embedding of the programme in the schools".

MPV National Implementation Team

### **5. In response to the Committee's request for information on 'The challenges facing Local Government in embedding the schools-based prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls**

COSLA does not hold the direct information that the Committee is seeking.

The MVP National Implementation Team (Education Scotland) hold related information and their response to this request for information is included below:-

“Pre-covid the main challenges identified by practitioners were timetabling including room allocation, taking senior learners out of class to deliver the lessons to younger learners. Additionally, time to prepare mentors and meet with them regularly. The buy in of the senior leadership team was important as was support from the LA central team and the national team

(MVP Annual Report 2018-19).

These challenges remain with the pandemic also impacting delivery.

Feedback from Local Authority MVP coordinators in 2022 noted that the main challenges faced were,

‘a reduction in available staff in existing schools due to staff moving on and lack of staff availability where staff have remained.’

(MVP Annual Report 2021-22).

The National team have found that changes of co-ordinator can slow progress. Additionally, many co-ordinators have multiple roles and may have limited capacity to support the roll out of MVP”.

MPV National Implementation Team

### **Additional information relevant to the Committee’s Query**

COSLA’s co-owns the [Equally Safe Strategy](#) with the Scottish Government. COSLA works closely within the context of the local implementation of Equally Safe with the Improvement Service and the National Violence Against Women Network.

### **About the National Violence Against Women Network**

Equally Safe: Scotland’s Strategy to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) highlights the need for agencies across every area of Scottish life to work together to tackle violence against women and girls. At a local level, Violence Against Women Partnerships are recognised as the strategic driver for this multi-agency work and bring together the key third sector and public sector organisations working to improve outcomes for women and children who have experienced VAWG in each local authority area.

To support the local implementation of Equally Safe, the National Violence Against Women Network brings together local VAW

Partnership Coordinators/ Lead Officers across Scotland and other key national stakeholders to share information, learning and resources and ensure that there is meaningful engagement and a coordinated approach taken on relevant issues.

Violence Against Women Partnership Guidance outlines a number of 'minimum standards' that the Scottish Government and COSLA expect all VAWPs to work towards meeting. These include having a strategic plan in place that outlines how the VAWP will implement Equally Safe at a local level and using a performance management framework to measure the progress they are making towards achieving the partnership's agreed activities, outputs and outcomes.

The Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework provides a framework to support VAW Partnerships and their partner organisations to measure their progress and performance, and to help identify any areas where improvements may be required.

Related learning offered to the Committee in response this question via the Improvement Service is included below. This information has been taken from Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Management Framework 2021-22.

For more information contact

[Joanna.McLaughlin@improvementservice.org.uk](mailto:Joanna.McLaughlin@improvementservice.org.uk)

### **Improvement Service information – Challenges VAWPS are facing with engagement with schools or youth organisations to prevent Violence Against Women and Girls**

- 50% of local authority areas reported that their VAW Partnership partly met the quality standard relating to engagement with primary and secondary schools. This indicates that there are some processes in place to engage with primary and secondary schools across the local community to help ensure they deliver age-appropriate evidence-based interventions to raise children, teachers and parents' understanding and awareness of gender-based violence, positive, healthy relationships and consent, as part of a whole school approach to tackling VAWG, however there may be no examples of partners working together to support a whole school approach to tackling VAWG. 4% did not meet this quality standard.
- 64% of local authority areas reported that they partly met the quality standard relating to youth work engagement. This indicates that there

are only a few youth work organisations delivering interventions across the area, or youth work organisations only deliver interventions to a small proportion of young people. 11% did not meet this quality standard, meaning that no youth work organisations are delivering interventions.

### Challenges – Schools

- It can take a long time to get an education representative on VAW Partnership.
- Local specialist services sometimes provide input into schools, however VAWPs themselves sometimes do not have processes in place.
- Awareness raising and other related work is taking place, however not to the same extent as pre-pandemic as limitations were put in place.
- Input in primary schools tends to be delivered within the broader context of health & wellbeing/healthy relationships and the abuse of power, rather than specifically about VAWG.
- Capacity and funding have limited the number of schools that are offered educational workshops and other awareness raising content, and certain local authority areas feel that there is not a sufficient number of schools receiving the same content.
- Often there is only one provider of programmes for schools, which impacts ability to provide to all schools across a local authority area.
- There needs to be a greater focus on prevention in engagement work with schools.

### Challenges – Youth Work

- Planned scoping for youth work involvement has been delayed due to capacity and COVID-19 pressures.
- Some local authority areas have stated they have no direct work regarding VAWG taking place in youth work settings as youth work are not involved in local VAWG planning.
- Group work still needs to be re-established since restrictions during the pandemic stopped this.
- There is insufficient funding to cover demand of programmes across youth work settings.

- Youth organisations involvement in VAWP activities can sometimes be through schools and specific organisations rather than directly through their own contacts with the VAWP.
- Sometimes only a few youth organisations, potentially even only one, engaged with the delivery of related provision in a local authority.

## **6. COSLA's involvement in wider work to tackle gender-based violence and gender inequality in education**

COSLA contributes to a number of other national forums intended to consider and address gender-based violence in education. COSLA is part of and contributes to the work of the Gender-Based Violence in Schools Working Group, which is currently working to develop a National Framework, to be used by school staff, to help prevent and respond to harmful behaviour and gender based violence in schools.

COSLA is also part of the Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning, the future work of which is anticipated to focus on taking forward a range of recommendations to tackle gender inequality, and prevent and address gender-based violence, in educational settings.

## **Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills submission of 24 April 2023**

### **PE1934/E: Develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School**

Thank you for your letter of 21 March 2023 which sought further information in relation to the above petition.

As the Committee is aware, the Bullying and Equalities Module on SEEMiS, which is the schools management information system, was updated to reflect national guidance on a uniform approach to recording and monitoring these issues. The improvements made to SEEMiS for recording and monitoring incidents of bullying also allow schools to

record any instances of sexual harassment that a pupil reports. The guidance published at the time also outlines the responsibilities of local authorities and head teachers to monitor incidents at a local level.

Education Scotland undertook a thematic review on approaches to recording and monitoring incidents of bullying in schools, the findings of which were published in February 2023. The report is published at [Approaches to recording and monitoring incidents of bullying in schools \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot/publications/Approaches-to-recording-and-monitoring-incidents-of-bullying-in-schools/Pages/default.aspx).

The Scottish Government has taken the findings of the review very seriously and have put a range of actions in place immediately to respond. The report shows that staff across schools are committed to promoting positive relationships within an inclusive environment and seek to prevent and address bullying, and that schools which have systematic approaches to monitoring report a reduction in incidents of bullying and are using the data they collect to drive improvement.

These are extremely positive findings and we should build on them. However, we absolutely acknowledge that there is room for improvement and we have taken immediate action to ensure schools and school staff have the right support in place to prevent and respond to bullying.

We have therefore begun our planned review of our national anti-bullying guidance, Respect for All, in partnership with respectme, Scotland's national anti-bullying service. Through the review we will utilise the experiences and expertise of a wide range of stakeholders to understand what updates are required to the guidance to better support schools to respond to the concerns and recommendations identified in the report, and to ensure learners and parents have confidence in how bullying is dealt with. We have also begun to engage with SEEMiS, the schools information management system, to consider whether improvements can be made to the system to address the concerns raised in the report.

More widely, we are seeking the advice of the Teachers Panel and our Advisory Group on Relationships and Behaviour in Schools about the findings and next steps required to further improve our approach to recording and monitoring bullying incidents in schools.

We are also in the process of gathering evidence that will help us better understand the extent of bullying and other behaviour at a national level.

Our longitudinal Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research (BISSR) is underway with fieldwork beginning in schools this month.

HM Inspectors will undertake a second phase of the thematic inspection which will look at good practice in how schools are responding to bullying. Education Scotland will publish this report later this year. The findings will inform our future work.

Our earlier response also set out the work that we are undertaking through the Gender Based Violence in Schools Working Group to develop a national framework for schools to help tackle sexual harassment and gender-based violence. I am advised that the group has progressed well with this work, and it is expected that the framework will be published later this year.

In addition to the work being taken forward by the Gender Based Violence in Schools Working Group, the Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning will be taking forward an exercise to establish what educational resources already exist which cover gender inequality, of which gender-based violence is of course both a cause and a consequence. The Taskforce is aware that there are already a number of resources on the subject, including those developed by Equally Safe in School and Education Scotland's Improving Gender Balance and Equalities Team, and that it is essential to be clear what those are before commitments to create new ones are made.

I hope that this information is helpful to the Committee in its further consideration of this matter.

**Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Jenny Gilruth MSP**

## Rape Crisis Scotland submission of 15 September 2023

PE1934/F: Develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School

We strongly support the action taken by Greenfaulds High School Rights and Equalities Committee to address Violence against Women and Girls

and specifically to insist that all young people should have education on gender-based violence so that they leave school with the tools to create a safer society for women, and we commend the group's initiative and leadership in drawing attention to this issue.

We note that schools have a duty the 2010 Equality Act, under which sex is a protected characteristic, to take measures to address issues of gendered violence and gender equality – as follows:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Further, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out a number of rights relating to protection from abuse and violence, and education to promote equality and prevent violence:

- Article 2 (non-discrimination) The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.
- Article 19 (protection from violence, abuse and neglect) Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 29 (aims of education) (d): Education should prepare children for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin
- Article 34 (sexual exploitation) Governments must protect children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Article 39 (recovery from trauma and reintegration) Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.



Article 12 is also relevant as it underpins the need to engage with children and young people when they express concerns about issues affecting them as the petition authors have done:

- Article 12 (respect for the views of the child) Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

It may be helpful to outline a number of the measures already in place or in progress which support the group's objectives. The petitioners call in particular for an educational resource on gender-based violence and the following two items play a substantial role in delivering this:

- Rape Crisis centres across Scotland deliver a [programme of sexual violence prevention workshops](#) directly to schools, coordinated nationally by Rape Crisis Scotland. The programme is funded by the Scottish Government and included in the Equally Safe strategy, and last year reached over 35,000 young people in over 200 secondary schools. The programme is delivered by specialist prevention workers whose expert knowledge complements the RSHP curriculum delivered by schools.
- The national [RSHP resource](#) provides a comprehensive set of learning activities for use in all educational settings and is structured in line with the Curriculum for Excellence. Resources relating to gender equality and gender-based violence have been mapped and can be reviewed [here](#). There is a consultation underway on the new draft guidance for delivery of RSHP in Scottish settings.

The gaps in education available to young people may stem more from the delivery infrastructure and resourcing rather than a lack of materials. In particular the Rape Crisis Prevention Programme lacks sufficient resource to meet demand in many of the areas it operates. There is an urgent need to review funding allocations as these have been at a standstill level for some years because existing grant arrangements have been extended in place of new funds being launched, meaning it has not been possible to apply for increased resources to ensure all young people have access to the programme.

In addition to the Prevention Programme and RSHP resource, schools are supported to take a range of measures to address gender-based violence:

- We developed the [Equally Safe At School \(ESAS\)](#) whole school approach to complement the Prevention Programme so that secondary schools could be supported with guidance and tools to implement a series of measures across policy, curriculum, staff training and school culture and ethos to prevent gender-based violence and promote gender equality. This resource is freely available to schools via an interactive website with training available to local staff teams via rape crisis centres. To date 80 schools have registered an account. The University of Glasgow is commencing an evaluation of ESAS funded by the National Institute of Health Research this year.
- The [Mentors in Violence Prevention](#) programme is a peer mentoring programme that gives young people the chance to explore and challenge the attitudes, beliefs and cultural norms that underpin all forms of gender-based violence in our society. It is led by Education Scotland and delivered across the country.
- The [Gender Based Violence in Schools working group](#) is developing a national framework to prevent and respond to harmful behaviour and gender based violence in schools. This is due to be published by the end of the year and will be the first national-level document issued by the Scottish Government to guide the approach to tackling gender-based violence in schools. The group was set up following advocacy from Rape Crisis Scotland and Zero Tolerance who jointly chair the group with the Scottish Government, as well as Scottish Women's Aid and the NSPCC. The impetus for doing so was in large part due to the findings of the Children and Young People's consultation for the Equally Safe strategy '[Everyday Heroes](#)' which identified a number of concerns and priorities for education.
- The [Gender Equality Taskforce in Education and Learning](#) (GETEL) aims to identify measures to address the lack of gender equality which remains evident in education and learning settings and will advise on potential changes in practice and actions to support a gender competent experience of education and learning

for all girls and women. The group is in the process of identifying a range of systemic measures to transform the way our education system delivers on gender equality and the safety of women and girls. It is of vital importance that there is a sustained and well-resourced plan of action to engage with and implement recommendations over the medium to long-term if its ambitions are to be realised.

We would summarise that there has been substantial progress in recent years in addressing the kinds of concerns that the petitioners have outlined. However, as is clear from their experience as well as the children and young people who took part in the Everyday Heroes consultation, the reality for children and young people in school is very mixed and we are only in the early stages of progress in making it a reality for all children and young people have access to the education that is their right, and for the safety of all girls and women to be upheld, at school and in wider society.

We would urge the Scottish Government to ensure gender-based violence is treated as a priority alongside other key educational commitments, in particular as part of the Education Reform process currently underway, and that there is effective leadership to ensure it is given the prominence needed. Further, that there is commitment to long-term action to address the recommendations of the GETEL.

Whilst we recognise that Scotland does not have a statutory curriculum, children and young people nevertheless have a right to education on gender-based violence and should have parity of access to this, so whilst government cannot prescribe specific measures, there is a duty to ensure educational outcomes are met and that systems and resources are in place to assure this.