

CYPE(6)-23-22 – Papur i'w nodi 4

Ahead of the Plenary debate on the Committee report on Peer on Peer Sexual Harassment among Learners stakeholders were asked to submit their views on the response and in particular the recommendation that the Welsh Government rejected

Information received via email from Dyfed-Powys Police and Crime Commissioner Dafydd Llywelyn's views on the Welsh Government's response to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's Report "*Everybody's affected: Peer on peer sexual harassment among learners*"

I was pleased to be part of the important evidence session for the Children, Young People and Education Committee's earlier this year, and it is reassuring that the Welsh Government have accepted the vast majority of recommendations put forward by the Committee.

I am very much in support of the creation of a Young People's Advisory Board as it is important to ensure that as many young people as possible are given the opportunity to shape the future of policing and crime prevention. Indeed, in 2018, I developed a Youth Engagement Forum, which sees my Youth Ambassadors have their say on policing and crime, influence and challenge decision-making, and improve our understanding of young people's views and experiences. I would welcome the opportunity for my Youth Ambassadors to become involved in the Welsh Government's Young People's Advisory Board, and additionally, I would recommend that my Youth Ambassadors, together with members of similar panels/forums, be invited to be involved in:

- Recommendation 3 – working with the Young People's Advisory Board to share details of the awareness-raising campaign with young people throughout their communities.
- Recommendation 10 – speaking to their peers who have experienced this form of harassment to seek first-hand feedback on the support they received. Yes, details can be gathered from organisations in terms of the support offered, but in order to get a true picture, information ought to be gleaned from the young people themselves, by young people.

- Recommendation 14 – speaking to their peers to find out what approach to sex and relationships education they consider to be effective in addressing peer on peer sexual harassment.
- Recommendation 18 - working with the Young People’s Advisory Board to carry out an awareness raising campaign targeted at parents and families

Recommendation 8 - ensuring that pupils are taught about the underlying causes of peer on peer sexual harassment - is vital. During the Committee’s evidence session, I emphasised how important the Welsh forces’ Schools Programme will be in improving the situation with peer on peer sexual harassment among young people. We must ensure that young people are given the opportunity to understand the causes of harassment, the effect it can have on their peers, and that these young people are able to learn from their mistakes - whilst of course, continuing to safeguard victims. The Schools Programme will also be an invaluable resource in meeting recommendation 11; assisting with the creation of a culture in which sexual harassment is unacceptable.

In addition to the Schools Programme, the approach taken by the Youth Bureaus across the Dyfed-Powys area, is worth noting in line with the above two recommendations. As I highlighted in the Committee’s evidence session, within the Dyfed-Powys force area, there is positive work ongoing through the Youth Bureaus where police officers work alongside youth justice colleagues to work towards a criminal justice intervention being the last intervention for a young person, where possible and suitable. The Bureau assess a young person’s individual situation and decide what interventions are needed. These might include work specific to understanding the incident or offence the young person has committed, support with education, training and employment, help with substance misuse and any health issues. It is also recognised that these young people may be victims themselves, and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are considered in the assessment undertaken by the Bureau. The young people are offered the support they need to stay out of the criminal justice system.

It is the importance of this supportive and preventative approach which leads me to support Welsh Government’s response to Recommendation 9. ACEs is a heavily researched and considered agenda for Welsh Government, and as such, I do not

believe they are 'rejecting' the ethos of the recommendation. They may not intend to categorise 'peer on peer harassment' as an 'ACE', but it is my view that they are taking it just as seriously and taking the right steps to ensure it is dealt with as a priority.

I fully agree that peer on peer sexual harassment can have a substantial and lasting impact on the victim, and that the Welsh Government must ensure that the resources it allocates to this form of harassment reflects the severity of its impact and how commonplace it has become. Indeed, they have accepted the vast majority of the Committee's recommendations, which demonstrates their commitment in this area. It is their response and not their categorisation which matters here: Both their response to the young person carrying out the harassment, but also their response to the victim. The support provided to a victim of peer on peer sexual assault, by the police and other agencies, ought to be the same as if it were classed an ACE. The support should reflect the level of vulnerability and the victim's personal situation.

School staff can assist with a Youth Bureau's assessment, and it is right that the Committee's 13th recommendation sets out the need for Welsh Government to ring-fence funding to schools for training on peer on peer sexual harassment. In the Committee's evidence session, I highlighted the need for Welsh Government funding in order to increase activities in early intervention and prevention approaches to dealing with peer on peer sexual harassment within the educational environment. Training within the education setting is going to be vitally important, and is most certainly an area which, as well as being identified and prioritised, needs additional funding.