

**The NSPCC response to the consultation on the secondary curriculum
review (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2007)**

**NSPCC
42 Curtain Road
London
EC2A 3NH**

April 2007

**Telephone: 020 7825 1352
Fax: 020 7825 2964**

Website: www.nspcc.org.uk/publicaffairs

Introduction

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) is the UK's leading charity specialising in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children. The NSPCC aims to end cruelty to children by seeking to influence legislation, policy, practice, attitudes and behaviours for the benefit of children and young people. This is achieved through a combination of service provision, lobbying, campaigning and public education.

The NSPCC believes that, given the will, all cruelty can be prevented. In order to achieve this, it is vital that all children, whatever their needs, have a range of services that are flexible and offer them support and protection. The NSPCC has more than 180 services in the UK and the Channel Islands. These services aim to:

- Prevent children being abused by working with parents and carers in vulnerable families to improve their knowledge and skills in safeguarding, and giving children and young people someone to turn to through the provision of our Listening Services.
- Protect vulnerable children and young people from abuse by providing direct services in a number of settings, including schools and young people's centres. We also protect them by providing Listening Services for adults to ensure they have someone to turn to with their concerns; by ensuring that abused children and young people are identified and effective action is taken to protect them, and by working with young people and adults who pose a risk to children and young people to reduce the risk of abuse.
- Help children and young people who have been abused overcome the effects of abuse and achieve their potential.

In drawing together this response, we have consulted with NSPCC Education Advisers working in England. Education Advisers provide training and advice to teachers in a wide range of child protection related areas. Their aim is to help teachers identify signs of possible abuse and give children the skills they need to protect themselves. We have also consulted with NSPCC Schools Teams Managers. NSPCC Schools Teams offer counselling as their core service and a number of other services including individual and group therapeutic activities, peer support, PSHE work and advice and support to educational staff.

General comments

The NSPCC welcomes the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's consultation on the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE) curriculum in England, particularly the priority to developing a *coherent approach to personal development [to] help young people grow towards maturity and develop independence*. We warmly welcome the QCA's recognition that PSHEE *is a sense of the individual and the roles each person has to play in life – in a family, as a neighbour, with friends, as an employee and a member of the community*.

We recommend that PSHEE should be a statutory requirement in the national curriculum for all key stages, to ensure that children learn about appropriate behaviour and how to stay safe in relationships from an early age. It is necessary to ensure that PSHEE receives a significant amount of teaching time, to enable teachers to use different strategies to help children and young people develop necessary skills and understanding, to resolve conflict without resorting to violence and able to build their self esteem and make informed choices in later life.

We particularly welcome the link between the PSHEE curriculum and the Every Child Matters agenda. PSHEE clearly fits with the Every Child Matters agenda and contributes to fulfilling the five outcomes framework, by helping children to understand what it means to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being.

PSHE is crucial in safeguarding children. It helps them to learn about personal safety and improve their understanding of pro-social and respectful relationships, including parenting and family relationships, as well as abusive behaviours. It also helps them develop the skills to ask for help. This can contribute to a reduction in childhood abuse and neglect¹. Similarly evidence shows that PSHE is an important intervention for preventing bullying².

The NSPCC would like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to be used as a basis for the teaching of PSHEE, and is keen for this curriculum area to be more rights-based. This Convention is a unique international legal instrument, ratified by 191 of the 193 UN member states, and covers civil and political rights as well as cultural, social and economic rights, so has implications for the teaching of PSHEE and can help fulfil the right contained under Article 17 to ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

We welcome the introduction of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme into schools in September. The SEAL framework and

¹ Harries, J (2006) *Promoting Personal Safety in PSHE*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing

² Office of the Children's Commissioner (2005) *Journeys: children and young people talk about bullying*. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

programme and resources will help deliver social and emotional skills within the personal well-being curriculum.

There is a vital need for more teacher training in PSHEE for primary and secondary schools. PSHEE cannot just be taught to pupils but must be an active process of learning. We recommend that the guidance refers to the effectiveness of drama and role-play in engaging and helping children and young people explore issues which relate to values and morals. Pupils need to be encouraged to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings and to be able to discuss them.

Current work of NSPCC in developing PSHE frameworks

The NSPCC has developed *Promoting Personal Safety in PSHE* which is a teaching resource for use with Key Stage 3 and 4 of the Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum in England, the Personal and Social Education (PSE) Framework in Wales, the Personal and Social Education in Scotland, and the Personal Education Programme in Northern Ireland. Its main aim is to help young people to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to keep themselves safe and to develop positive coping skills and relationships, now and in the future. We would be keen to meet with the QCA to talk about this resource and how it can be used in teaching PSHEE to key stage 3 and 4 pupils.

The resource was developed through consultation with young people from all secondary schools in the Wrexham area in 2003 to find out what they wanted from Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons in school. They told us clearly that they would like to deal with issues that affect them directly in interesting and relevant ways. Some of the issues they wished to address through PSE were:

- Relationships – including family relationships
- How people can emotionally damage you
- Positive and abusive sexual relationships
- Rights – understanding your rights
- Depression and self-harm
- Stress – what causes it and what to do about it

The resource is in line with recent government legislation and guidance, in particular Section 175 of the 2002 Education Act, which confers on LEAs and governing bodies broader duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people in schools. With the development of Extended Schools, schools are being increasingly seen as a community resource, where young people and their families can access help and support from a range of professionals. This builds on much good work which is already being undertaken by schools to become 'emotionally literate' communities, for instance, to become Healthy Schools under the Nationally Healthy Schools Standard, which promotes physical and emotional health by providing accessible and relevant information and equipping pupils with the skills and attitudes to make informed decisions about their health through teaching PSHE.

Some important key concepts underlying the resource are:

- Abusive and manipulative behaviours can take a number of forms, such as physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, bullying, all of which can be damaging to the victim. They can be perpetrated by adults or by peers.
- All forms of abusive behaviour are unacceptable.
- Everyone has the right to be treated with consideration and respect; no one deserves to be abused or bullied.
- Everyone in the school community shares the responsibility to ensure that abusive behaviour doesn't happen.
- Knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which help young people to recognise, deal with and report abusive behaviour should be integrated into the whole of a school's ethos and curriculum. The curriculum should also help pupils to develop positive models of emotional health and social interaction.
- Children should genuinely be listened to and taken seriously, and should know who they can turn to for help and support with personal problems.
- Schools must have effective and well-publicised child protection policies and procedures in place.
- Schools should also have effective policies and practices in place to prevent and react to abusive behaviours (including bullying) and to promote positive behaviours.

Specific comments on PSHEE frameworks for Key Stage 3 and 4

Child protection training

All staff in schools, teaching and non-teaching, need to be aware of child protection issues and to receive the necessary training. Research has shown that the amount of time given to child protection training during the whole teacher training period averages at one to three hours in total.³

Schools are the only places outside the home which young people attend consistently for sustained periods and at which they can be observed by responsible adults. It is particularly important that teachers who teach PSHEE are fully equipped to deal with child protection issues if and when they arise. Some of the issues covered in the framework, such as sexual exploitation and physical violence and other forms of abuse, may bring about disclosures from

³ Baginsky, M and Hodgkinson, K (1999) *Child protection training in initial teacher training: a survey of provision in institutes of higher education*, Educational Research, Volume 41:2, Summer 1999

children and young people who have either been abused in the past or are currently being abused. It may also lead to disclosures about a friend of theirs who is being abused. Therefore, it is important that staff who specialise in teaching PSHEE are familiar with *What to do if you're worried a child is being abused*⁴ know what to do if a child tells them they are being abused and to whom they should refer to.

Safeguarding and staying safe

In relation to child abuse and child cruelty, children are often not in a position to protect themselves and be safe from others. We recommend that the frameworks should make this clear and should mention how children can develop an understanding of how to seek help when they need it from people they can trust.

Although the key stage 4 framework includes an awareness of exploitation in relationships including the use of mental and physical violence and other forms of abuse, we recommend that other recognised categories of abuse such as emotional and sexual abuse and neglect are included. It is important that children and young people are taught about vulnerability and all forms of abuse and neglect so that they can recognise it if they or their peers experience or witness it.

The framework should help develop children and young people develop an understanding of why it is not appropriate to tolerate abuses of power within a relationship, and should give clear examples of such behaviour, such as rape, domestic violence/abuse, abuse of trust, coercion and unwanted sexual experiences.

The NSPCC produces a pocket-size booklet, *Worried? Need to Talk?* for teenagers with information about what abuse is, and what a young person should do if they are being abused. The booklet also contains a list of organisations which can help young people on various issues, such as bullying, domestic violence and self-harm. The NSPCC also produces a magazine-type publication called *Hands Off!* which seeks to inform young people about the myths and realities of sexual abuse. This is currently being updated. In May 2007, we will be launching a new magazine aimed at eight to 11 year olds called *In the Know*. This provides information about how to stay safe and be strong and provides advice on what to do if they or their friends are feeling hurt or sad. We would be happy to share these publications with the QCA to include within the framework as resources for use in the classroom.

Children's rights and the UNCRC

Without a proper understanding of what their rights should be, it is difficult for children and young people to know when those rights are being infringed.

⁴ HM Government (2003) *What to do if you're worried a child is being abused* London: Stationery Office

Children are vulnerable in terms of physical strength, knowledge and understanding and therefore depend on adults for protection, well-being and development. It is essential that children and young people are given information within the PSHEE framework about their rights, as laid out in the UNCRC, and the skills to know what to do if these rights aren't being respected. It is important that pupils consider the extent to which they respect the rights of their fellow pupils, in particular those who may be considered in a minority, or 'different' in some way and to develop the skills of assertiveness, both for oneself and on behalf of others, respect and empathy.

The UNCRC has been ratified by the UK government since 1991 and acts as a 'gold standard', laying down international standards which countries should adhere to realise in terms of children's rights to survival, protection, personal development and participation. Children and young people should gain a better understanding of the nature of these basic rights.

Children and young people also need to understand why children are entitled to and require special rights and protection, and that they may be vulnerable to manipulation, exploitation or abuse because of their age or developmental stage. They must also have the opportunity to reflect on their own prejudices and think about what they would do if faced with a situation where another young person's rights were compromised.

Parenting and preparing for parenthood

We strongly recommend that family life education should be included in PSHEE for all schools. At present there is no coherent and universal programme for the provision of parenting education in the UK. In order to improve parenting practices as a means of preventing child abuse and promoting the welfare of children in general, family life education should be a key component of the PSHEE framework. This should recognise that parenting is a life-long process and provide preparation, education and support for the different stages of the parenting process.

The NSPCC's child maltreatment study⁵ found that respondents who had close relationships with parents, particularly with mothers, were less likely to report long-term and harmful effects from maltreatment. This highlights the importance of work that seeks to establish, build and strengthen parents' relationships with their children.

Family life education should focus on child development, including developing understanding of the particular vulnerabilities of babies and introduce programmes to make children and young people more aware of these. This should also include education about babies' social and emotional needs and development and how to respond to these sensitively. The NSPCC has developed a resource called *Family life education: a resource pack for PSHE*

⁵ Cawson, Pat et al, *Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom - A study of the Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect*, NSPCC, 2000

which explores relationships, family life and parenting. We would be happy to share this information with you.

Sexual activity

Calls to ChildLine reveal a worrying level of pressure on young people to be sexually active, often at a very young age and before they are ready for such a relationship. However, they also reveal an unfortunate lack of effort on the part of the adults who should be educating young people about sex, relationships, alcohol, and other pressures that teenagers face. It seems that these callers to ChildLine are living in a highly sexualised culture, yet are not being equipped to deal with its pressures. Sometimes they use alcohol to cope, and sometimes they are more vulnerable because of alcohol. Their lives are complex, and they need knowledge, advice and support to enable them to avoid becoming engaged in sexual activity they later regret. We have enclosed with this consultation response a copy of a ChildLine casenote⁶ which sets out in detail these issues.

Sex education should be taught within the PSHEE framework and must include discussion and exploration of values and moral issues, including issues of consent, as well as the biological aspects of sex. There is a need for discussions about appropriate behaviour between children and adults, including for instance between 14 and 18 year olds, which reinforces the necessity for teachers to have child protection training. There should also be clear guidance for teachers on issues of confidentiality, abuse of trust as set out in the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act and on the law relating to the age of consent for sexual relationships.

Sexuality and relationships

We recommend the inclusion of sexuality and relationship issues in the Frameworks. This should be age-appropriate and offer support and advice about such matters to children and young people. Children would benefit from information and advice about differing sexualities from primary school onwards, particularly as some children find that their sexuality will start to emerge at this age.

The crucial element to be stressed here is that school must create a climate of acceptance of young people's different sexualities. According to callers to ChildLine⁷, homophobic bullying can easily become the defining aspect of a young person's school life. Because being gay is seen by many as 'wrong' or 'not normal', callers indicate that friends are more likely to be unsupportive, to join in with the bullying, or even to initiate it after a young person has come out to them. If young lesbians and gay men have access to specific information and support, particularly peer support, this will go some way towards addressing this issue. It must also be recognised that some young lesbians and gay men will not be supported by their families and will not have

⁶ ChildLine (2006) *Alcohol and teenage sexual activity* London: ChildLine

⁷ ChildLine (2006) *Calls to ChildLine about sexual orientation, homophobia and homophobic bullying* London: ChildLine

anybody to talk to so will need access to support in schools. As is clearly stated in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*:

Schools (including independent schools and non-maintained special schools) and Further Education (FE) institutions should give effect to their duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils (students under 18 years of age in the case of FE institutions) under the Education Act 2002 and where appropriate under the Children Act 1989 by:

- *Creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for children and young people; and,*
- *Identifying where there are child welfare concerns and taking action to address them, in partnership with other organisations where appropriate.*

This clearly includes where a child is having difficulty if considering 'coming out' as a young lesbian or gay man, and may perhaps be in a more vulnerable state of mind.

Domestic violence and forced marriage

We consider that children and young people should be able to identify causes of stress and conflict within the home, including domestic violence and being forced into marriage.

Domestic violence is widespread and involves a range of abusive behaviours. Research⁸ has shown that a quarter of people witnessed violence as a child between those caring for them. For most this was occasional or rare but for five per cent it was constant or frequent. In families where there is domestic violence, children are frequently abused by the violent parent and this can have very damaging long-term effects on their mental health, sense of identity and ability to form relationships. Other common effects on children's health include anxiety, panic attacks, nightmares and bedwetting. For young people there are increased risks of self-harm, drug and alcohol misuse and running away from home.⁹

Children and young people should understand the nature and scope of forced marriage and domestic violence and be encouraged to acquire the skills to cope or to access help and support.

It is likely that a pupil or pupils in the class will have direct experience of domestic violence. The school may know of relevant circumstances and the facilitator should check before delivering this teaching unit. Facilitators should be alert to any signs that a pupil is distressed by the content of the lesson. Channels of support within the school should be flagged up, as well as external helplines and sources of support.

⁸ Cawson, Pat et al, *Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom - A study of the Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect*, NSPCC, 2000

⁹ Mullender, A and Morley R (eds) (1996) *Children living with domestic violence*, Whiting and Birch

Mental health issues

It is recognised that adolescence is a crucial period for the development of positive mental health and well being. During this time young people have to make adjustments on many levels and their feelings and beliefs about who they are and their values and goals in life are being laid down. With the help of a supportive peer group and family, most young people make the transition from childhood to adulthood without major distress. However, for a considerable minority, this is not the case. It is estimated that more than 10 per cent of 5-16 year olds will experience a mental health problem and will need skilled help¹⁰.

Given this statistic, the importance of taking a preventative approach and of actively promoting the emotional and mental health of young people is being increasingly recognised. It is essential that children and young people are able to recognise and understand negative feelings and thoughts in themselves and to work out positive strategies for dealing with them. It is also important that more extreme problems – such as loss, bereavement and self-harm - are covered within the PSHEE framework and to share thoughts about positive ways for finding an outlet for frustration and negative feelings. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme can also provide a framework and some curriculum resources to help deliver social and emotional skills within the personal well-being curriculum.

Sources of help

We are pleased to see ChildLine listed as a source of help for teachers. The ChildLine service is now provided by the NSPCC. Following the Budget in March 2006, we will be working in partnership with Department for Education and Skills to develop ChildLine and answer many more calls.

The NSPCC also provides information and advice about child protection and safeguarding for professionals. Information can be found on the NSPCC website www.nspcc.org.uk

NSPCC also has an interactive website for young people at www.There4me.com where they can access confidential advice and support from a trained counsellor.

The NSPCC has also produced an anti-bullying Z-card (a pocket-sized card in the shape of a credit card) with fold-out information and advice about bullying for young people from young people

The NSPCC asserts that the necessary investment of resources of time, effort and money required to establish PSHEE on a firm footing within the education system would be small in comparison with the long-term savings that would

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics (2004) *Survey of the mental health of children and young people in Great Britain* ONS London

result from reducing these problems in later life. The NSPCC is convinced that much of the harm that children suffer arises from ignorance rather than malice, and it is the responsibility of the education service to overcome this. A better balance needs to be struck between the current emphasis on standards and intellectual development and on the development of the whole person. A well-taught, statutory PSHEE curriculum, coupled with adequate welfare support and school-based counselling services, would contribute to the development of more emotionally balanced, well-rounded generation of young people, ready to face the challenges of adulthood and able to cope with the challenges that children and young people often face.

For further information contact Emily Arkell, earkell@nspcc.org.uk or 020 7825 1352