**WRITTEN STATEMENT**

**BY**

**THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

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| **TITLE**  | ***Publication of the Sex and Relationship Expert Panel Report*** |
| **DATE**  | ***13 December 2017*** |
| **BY**  | ***Cabinet Secretary for Education*** |

Sex and Relationships Education is an essential part of school life in the 21st century; encouraging our young people to flourish and form a range of fulfilling relationships that will support them now and into their adult lives. I am committed to ensuring that this important subject is delivered in schools to the highest standard and teachers and staff are appropriately equipped to meet the needs and experiences of their learners as they grow and mature.

In March 2017, I established the Sex and Relationships Expert Panel, chaired by Professor Emma Renold from Cardiff University. The panel was asked to identify issues and opportunities to support Sex and Relationships Education in the current curriculum and provide advice and recommendations to the pioneer schools as they develop the new curriculum.

Schools in Wales must provide a caring environment to ensure our young people enjoy learning that inspires them to succeed in life, in an inclusive learning environment. Throughout our lives, from the very earliest age, we start to form relationships with other people, our family, our friends and the world around us. It is these relationships that become the bedrock of the adults we grow into. Our education system must be built on these principles of equality, and our classrooms free of intolerance and hatred.

Sex and Relationships Education makes an important contribution to ensuring that our young people respect themselves and others; valuing diversity so they are able to build and maintain a range of relationships which are healthy, based on mutual respect and appropriate for their stage of development.

It is therefore more important then ever that schools are able to support pupils through developmentally appropriate, factual, high quality Sex and Relationships Education and access to further advice and specialist support.

Creating an education system in which all our young people can excel, becoming adults who are healthy, confident individuals, is a key part of our National Mission. We can only do this by assisting teachers to develop the knowledge, confidence and skills they need to positively attend to the physical, emotional and mental health of their pupils. The new curriculum, with its Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience, brings these priorities, as well as subjects such as Sex and Relationships, into the heart of learning.

Professor Renold’s recommendations also gives us scope to consider how issues regarding Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence; such as gender equity and healthy relationships, can be more effectively engaged with by schools

Through high quality Sex and Relationships Education, schools can create spaces where children and young people have the confidence to seek advice and assistance regarding experiences of domestic violence and abuse; ensuring that they can be supported to live free of violence and coercion

I would like to thank Professor Renold and the members of the expert panel for their hard work researching and producing this excellent report. The inclusive and rights based approach taken by the panel in the formation of their recommendations will provide invaluable evidence for the Pioneer Schools as they explore curriculum structures and wider whole school approaches around Sex and Relationships Education.

I will now consider the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel’s recommendations and will publish my response early in the New Year.