

A curriculum for life

The case for statutory Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education

“From the first day in post, I talked about the need for compulsory PSHE in school . . . I think schools understand that high wellbeing means high attainment too. They do not see these as different competing agendas necessarily. They can see that they are linked.”

Anne Longfield OBE, Children’s Commissioner for England, November 2017

“PSHE education requires improvement and the situation appears to have worsened. This would not be tolerated in other subjects. We accept the argument that statutory status is needed. The statutory requirement should have minimal prescription of content to ensure schools have flexibility to respond to local needs and priorities.”

Commons Education Committee *Life Lessons* report, February 2015

“There is much more to be done by the Government to deliver ‘a curriculum for life’. By making PSHE education a statutory entitlement, with an expectation that schools will incorporate local issues of key importance to their pupils, we believe that schools would re-prioritise PSHE education and retain the flexibility to meet pupils’ needs.”

Young People’s Select Committee *Curriculum for Life* report, January 2014

“The NAHT is calling for PSHE Education to be made statutory, for all pupils, in all schools, to the same timescales as RSE – PSHE is the vehicle which will support successful and effective delivery of RSE and make it work for schools and students as well as raise the status of the subject”

NAHT union, November 2017

Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	5
Evidence of potential impact of PSHE on pupils' life chances	7
Pupil safety online and offline	7
Physical health and risk-taking behaviours	8
Mental health and emotional wellbeing	9
Building key skills and attributes for life and work	10
Academic success	10
Employability and social mobility	11
Economic wellbeing, financial capability and careers	12
The state of current provision	14
The case for statutory status to improve provision	15
The view from the Commons Education Committee	15
The potential impact of statutory status	16
Support for statutory status	17
Public support for statutory PSHE education	17
Political support for statutory status	17
Experts calling for statutory status	18
Key principles for statutory status for PSHE education	19
Conclusion	20
Appendix	21
References	25

Executive summary

Today's children and young people are growing up in a rapidly changing world, full of opportunities but with few guarantees. PSHE education is the school subject which prepares them for life and work in this changing world, helping to keep pupils safe, healthy and boosting their life chances. There is strong evidence that, when delivered by trained teachers in line with best practice, this 'curriculum for life' is popular with parents and helps children and young people to protect themselves and others both online and offline, improves their physical and emotional health, and develops character, resilience, academic attainment and employment prospects, with the greatest benefits experienced by the most disadvantaged pupils.

Yet this potential to boost life chances is unfulfilled: Ofsted's 2013 report on PSHE education, tellingly entitled *Not Yet Good Enough*, highlighted the need for major improvements in provision and suggested that lack of teacher confidence means that the subject is not taught rigorously, with topics such as mental health, online safety and abuse left off the curriculum altogether by many schools at a time when the public profile of these issues has never been higher. Ofsted's report suggests that millions of pupils miss out each year on high-quality lessons and the Department for Education's own data suggests that the picture has rapidly deteriorated since 2013.

Non-statutory status is at the root of these problems. As a non-statutory, non-examined subject, PSHE education is not held to the same standards of rigour as other subjects and PSHE teachers are not given the curriculum time or training they need to deliver to the standards we should expect. Ofsted has highlighted that lack of clarity on the status of the subject is used by external organisations seeking to undermine schools' provision on areas of PSHE such as relationships and sex education (RSE) and equality. Statutory status for PSHE education would protect against this and ensure that teachers are given the training and curriculum time they need to realise the subject's potential. It would also bring expectations on maintained schools and academies into line with their independent sector counterparts.

Government amendments to the 2017 Children and Social Work Act concerning PSHE education therefore provide a historic opportunity to strengthen this area of the curriculum. These amendments mean that from 2019 all primary schools (including academies, free schools, independent schools) in England must teach 'relationships education', all secondary schools in England must teach 'relationships and sex education', and that the Education Secretary has power to make PSHE education statutory in its entirety, depending on the outcome of a consultation. This is a major step forward following years of leading the campaign for change, but there is much work to be done to ensure the proposals meet their potential. The Association will be working very hard during the consultation process to make sure PSHE education, including comprehensive RSE, achieves the status it deserves.

This statutory status for PSHE education is supported by 85% of business leaders, 88% of teachers, 92% of parents, 92% of pupils, the Children's Commissioner, the Chief Medical Officer and the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for child sexual abuse, Public Health England, 100 leading organisations including the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the NSPCC, the Children's Society, Barnardo's and a host of leading Parliamentarians from across the political spectrum, including the Commons Education, Home Affairs and Women and Equalities Committees, the Joint Committee on Human Rights and the chairs of Commons Health and Business, Innovation and Skills Committees.

This document sets out the urgent case for statutory status for PSHE education, drawing on the views of experts, parents, teachers and pupils. We make reference throughout to a 'curriculum for life', the term the

Members of the Youth Parliament have used when calling for improvement in PSHE provision for all pupils nationally. The time has come to finally turn their request - and that of professionals, parliamentarians and parents across the country - into reality by making PSHE education a statutory part of the curriculum for all pupils in all schools.

Jonathan Baggaley, PSHE Association Chief Executive

1. Introduction

Today's school pupils are growing up in a world full of opportunities but with many risks and anxieties too. While some risk-taking behaviours, such as substance misuse, appear to be in decline, other – often linked – issues are emerging, particularly in relation to pupils' mental health, relationships and safety, both offline and, increasingly, online.¹ PSHE education is the school subject which addresses pupils' personal safety and their mental health while preparing them for life and work in a changing world. As set out in this document, there is huge demand for this kind of holistic, 'curriculum for life' from pupils, parents and business leaders and strong evidence that it boosts attainment and life chances, particularly amongst disadvantaged pupils.

PSHE pedagogy

PSHE education covers core knowledge relating to issues such as online and offline safety, relationships, health and careers, taught in a way which is appropriate to the age and maturity of pupils. The subject is tied together by the development of the key skills and attributes which pupils need to thrive both in their childhood and throughout their adult lives. These key skills and attributes – such as self-management, empathy, critical thinking, communication, resilience, teamwork and negotiation – are crucial to pupils' life chances.

The PSHE Association's Programme of Study for PSHE education (key stages 1 – 5)² sets out how schools should link their PSHE provision to citizenship, religious education and other subjects so that PSHE lessons complement the whole school curriculum. It shows how schools can tailor their provision using local data, engagement with parents and community leaders and consultation with pupils. This means that while the pedagogy of PSHE education should remain the same wherever the subject is taught, the issues covered and the way the timetable is arranged will be based on local circumstances and will therefore vary from school to school and from key stage to key stage.

The current status of the subject

Unlike in the independent sector, where delivery of the subject is a core expectation, PSHE education is currently a non-statutory subject in state schools. In effect, this means schools don't have to teach it, and when lessons are provided they are often not as rigorously planned or delivered as other subjects. The status of PSHE is different from all other subjects as it is neither part of the national curriculum – like subjects such as maths or science – nor part of the basic curriculum, like religious education.

In March 2017, however, the Government took historic steps towards changing the status of PSHE through amendments it tabled to what eventually became the Children and Social Work Act. The amendments mean that 'relationships education' will be statutory on the curriculum in all primary schools from September 2019 and 'relationships and sex' education in all secondary schools, while also giving the Government a 'power' to make PSHE statutory in its entirety, pending consultation. A 'call for evidence' on these proposals was launched in December 2017, following a period of initial engagement with organisations in the sector.

The case for statutory status

As demonstrated in the next section, there is strong evidence that when delivered by teachers trained in the subject, in line with best practice principles, PSHE education can have a significant impact, for individual pupils, schools, and the wider economy. The document goes on to show that this potential is currently not being fulfilled and sets out how statutory status would help to improve provision, bringing PSHE education into line with the high standards expected for other subjects.

What statutory status should look like:

We outline the key principles of statutory PSHE education in Section 5. The main priorities can be expressed as follows:

PSHE education should be taught . . .

- **regularly** – regular lessons on the timetable like other subjects
- **as a whole subject** – from relationships & sex education to mental health, online safety to employability skills
- **by trained teachers** – PSHE covered in teacher training and ongoing opportunities to learn
- **in all schools** – all schools including academies and free schools
- **to all pupils** – from year 1 to finishing secondary school

2. Evidence of the potential impact of PSHE on pupils' life chances

As set out below, when it is delivered by trained teachers in line with best practice principles,³ PSHE education has significant potential to boost pupils' life chances, helping them to **stay safe both online and offline, improve their physical and emotional health and develop the character, resilience and skills they need to succeed academically and in the workplace.**

Pupil safety online and offline

PSHE education is an important response to parental fears about child safety online and offline. When pupils receive lessons on healthy relationships, their first sexual activity occurs later and they are more likely to report abuse and exploitation. Experts see PSHE education as the best way to promote the safe use of technology and address online abuse.

There is no question PSHE should be on every curriculum as it is at the frontline of child protection.

Peter Wanless, Chief Executive, NSPCC, August 2015

A key part of preventing child sexual exploitation is teaching pupils how to spot the signs of grooming. It is vital the government prioritises lessons about healthy relationships.

Javed Khan, Chief Executive, Barnardo's, August 2015

Parents' fears about issues such as sexting and online pornography have had significant recent media coverage.⁴ PSHE education teaches pupils to challenge unhealthy and exploitative relationships, both to safeguard them from being abused and prevent them from engaging in abusive behaviours themselves. A series of inquiries into cases of child sexual exploitation (CSE) in recent years,⁵ as well as Nus Ghani MP's inquiry into harmful sexual behaviour amongst children,⁶ have recommended that all schools should teach pupils about consent and healthy relationships.

Relationships and sex education (RSE) forms just one part of broader PSHE education however, and should always be taught in this context to more effectively address issues such as CSE, as PSHE education covers other issues which can

contribute to exploitation, such as drug and alcohol misuse and online safety. The report of the inquiry into CSE in Oxfordshire,⁷ for example, recommended that universal drug and alcohol education should be provided to secondary school pupils to help protect children from exploitation. The National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre has noted that education on online exploitation 'most effectively sits within a PSHE programme',⁸ while the national police lead for child protection, Chief Constable Simon Bailey, has called for PSHE education to be taught to all pupils to prevent sexual exploitation⁹.

The evidence of the impact of this learning is significant. An international Cochrane Study¹⁰ suggests that when pupils receive lessons on sex and relationships, disclosures about abuse and exploitation increase significantly. Recent surveys involving 15,000 British adults¹¹ suggest that those who cite school lessons as their main source of sex and relationships education were less likely to have had first intercourse before age 16 and say that both partners were consenting. A series of international studies¹² show that school lessons reduce unplanned pregnancy rates.

Statutory status for PSHE education is backed by the NSPCC, Barnardo's, The Children's Society, the Association of Independent Local Safeguarding Children Boards Chairs, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the Children's Commissioner and many other child safety experts.¹³ It was also backed by the Commons Home Affairs Committee after its inquiry into female genital mutilation¹⁴ and the Commons Women and Equalities Committee after its inquiry into sexual harassment in schools, while a parliamentary inquiry into preventing violence against women and girls¹⁵ stated that Britain would be better placed to meet its obligations under the Istanbul Convention on preventing violence against women and girls if PSHE was statutory.

Physical health and risk-taking behaviours

Educating pupils about their health reduces risk-taking behaviours such as drug or alcohol addiction and improves diet and exercise levels, in turn boosting long-term life chances.

There is strong evidence of the health impacts of the kind of learning provided by PSHE education: a recent Cochrane Review¹⁶ demonstrated that PSHE type health education programmes can improve pupils' health behaviours as part of a whole-school approach, positively affecting their diet and lifestyle (in line with Government efforts to reduce obesity) and reducing substance misuse; it also showed promising results in relation to reducing bullying and violence. A DfE review of PSHE education provision¹⁷ also found a range of positive outcomes from PSHE provision, including improved attitudes to health, being able to deal with personal difficulties and improved behaviour. A Cochrane review of universal preventative programmes¹⁸ shows that such programmes are connected with reductions in the use of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis by young people.

PSHE should be a routine part of all children's education

Chief Medical Officer, 2015

There should be a universal requirement for schools to teach age appropriate PSHE ... The evidence, along with the views of pupils, teachers and parents, supports this position

Public Health England, July 2014

The evidence shows that PSHE education can improve the physical and psychosocial well-being of pupils. A virtuous cycle can be achieved, whereby pupils with better health and well-being achieve better academically

PSHE Education: A Review of Impact and Effective Practice, DfE, 2015

The Chief Medical Officer's 2015 Annual Report¹⁹ states that PSHE should be a routine part of pupils' education. The landmark RCPCH 'State of Child Health' report 2017²⁰ recommended that PSHE education lessons 'are mandated and implemented across all primary and secondary schools' to support pupil physical and mental health. Statutory status is backed by Public Health England, six medical royal colleges, the Faculty of Public Health and the Royal Society for Public Health.²¹

There is also good evidence to suggest that emergency life-saving skills programmes delivered through PSHE education could have a significant impact on survival rates from cardiac arrest. In Norway, where first aid has been a compulsory part of the curriculum for decades, survival rates for cardiac arrest outside hospital are 52%; in the United Kingdom, that figure is 12%.²² A 2016 report from the British Red Cross²³ highlighted that up to 59 per cent of pre-hospital deaths due to trauma or accidental injury were potentially preventable with basic first aid and recommended that Government make first aid mandatory in all schools. The 'Every Child a Life-Saver' coalition – consisting of the British Heart

Foundation, British Red Cross and St John Ambulance – is strongly supportive of statutory PSHE education as a means to equipping all young people with emergency life-saving skills and knowledge.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing

There is growing evidence that, when delivered well, PSHE education can promote positive outcomes relating to emotional health while reducing stigma and helping pupils learn where to go if they have mental health concerns. This all helps to boost pupils' life chances, but there are risks related to lessons about mental health delivered by untrained teachers.

Poor mental health is the key emerging risk for children and young people according to recent research (SHEU, 2015; Cabinet Office, 2015). PSHE education is the school subject through which mental health is addressed, with three key areas of focus:

- promoting positive mental health among pupils through evidence-based programmes
- giving pupils information on where to go if they are worried about their own mental health or that of a friend or family member
- reducing mental health stigma by teaching about the issue openly and honestly

In its 2015 *Inquiry into Parity of Esteem for Mental Health*,²⁴ the All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health recommended that '*mental health education should form a core part of the PSHE curriculum, to promote wellbeing and resilience in children and young people and prevent mental health problems developing*'. Recent research²⁵ suggests that 93% of universal mental health programmes in schools are delivered through PSHE education, and statutory status for PSHE education is supported by expert bodies including the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

The 2017 joint inquiry into the role of education in supporting mental health by the Commons Education and Health Committees concluded that there should be a whole-school approach to mental health, with statutory PSHE education playing an important role. The report also highlighted the potential effects of social media use on mental health and how PSHE education can help in this regard.²⁶ There is good evidence of the impact of this kind of learning. According to a meta-analysis²⁷ of 75 studies on universal school-based social, emotional and/or behavioural programmes, these lessons could benefit pupils in seven outcome measures including social skills, antisocial behaviour, positive self-image, mental health, and prosocial behaviour. A Cochrane Review of the Health Promoting Schools programme²⁸ also identifies an impact on bullying.

While there is strong evidence of the potential positive impact of high-quality PSHE teaching on pupils' mental health, there is also clear evidence of the dangers of poorly taught lessons on the subject. There are particular risks in relation to lessons on eating disorders and self-harm which, when taught by inexperienced or untrained teachers, could prove 'instructive' to vulnerable pupils (Knightsmith, 2015²⁹). Due to its non-statutory status, responsibility for teaching PSHE education is often given to untrained, unprepared and inexperienced teachers, potentially putting vulnerable pupils at risk. Statutory status would ensure high-quality training in the subject for teachers and increase the number of lessons taught by more experienced teachers, reducing the risks and increasing the potential for positive impacts on pupils' emotional health.

Teaching about and promoting mental health provides a further example of the importance of PSHE education in its entirety gaining statutory status, not just relationships and sex education. There are

many aspects of mental health which don't fit within teaching about relationships and sex – eating disorders and managing stress to take just two examples. And areas that impact on mental health – such as online safety – are covered in broader PSHE education but would not be effectively and comprehensively covered within a programme of purely relationships and sex education.

There is strong support for statutory PSHE amongst leading bodies concerned with young people's mental health bodies. These include: the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Rethink Mental Illness, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Centre for Mental Health, Royal College of General Practitioners, Faculty of Public Health, Royal College of Nursing, Association of Young People's Health, Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM), Men's Health Forum, The Children's Society.³⁰

Building key skills and attributes for life and work

The non-academic skills and attributes acquired through PSHE education have a positive impact on academic performance and life chances as well as being key to boosting the employability of school-leavers and improving social mobility.

Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman has demonstrated the impact of non-cognitive skills on academic attainment and employability.³¹ An evidence review³² by Heckman and others concludes that these skills and attitudes are malleable into adolescence (and comparatively more so than cognitive skills), with teachers playing a measurable role in their development. Research suggests that the kind of classroom-based learning delivered through PSHE education can develop these social and emotional skills: reviews by the Department for Education³³ and the Education Endowment Foundation³⁴ have concluded that there is strong evidence that these programmes have a significant impact on attitudes, skills and emotional outcomes.

In 2016, the PSHE Association worked under funding from the Department for Education's character education grant programme to develop a toolkit enabling schools to focus on key skills and attributes through the delivery of the subject content of the programme of study for PSHE education. The toolkit was trialled by 12 schools (both state and independent) and was launched in summer 2016³⁵.

PSHE education can also play an important part (along with subjects like Citizenship) in helping pupils to engage with social action initiatives such as the National Citizen Service (NCS), by fostering the skills and attributes – such as self-confidence, self-esteem, team-working and communication skills – that encourage pupils to get involved in the first place and make the most of the experience. 2017 Government guidance on NCS for schools and colleges recommends that schools embed promotion of NCS through their PSHE and Citizenship education curricula.³⁶

Academic success

PSHE education has been proven to remove barriers to learning and provide skills to aid success

A major evidence review³⁷ (covering over 1200 studies) by Pro Bono Economics in 2017 found 'very strong evidence' that PSHE learning has a positive impact on academic attainment, with disadvantaged

pupils enjoying the greatest benefits to performance. The review collated evidence of PSHE learning's impact on physical and mental health, levels of bullying and general behaviour and showed that PSHE allows pupils to excel by removing barriers to learning, and developing skills and attributes - such as confidence and positive risk-taking - which support their progress.

The academic benefits of PSHE education in terms of improved attainment are significant: a group of leading academics in an editorial in the British Medical Journal recommended statutory status for PSHE education,³⁸ noting that *'education and health are synergistic ... students in better health do better academically'*, and identifying countries such as Finland and Singapore which have better academic success than England and place a greater emphasis on pupil health. This finding is backed by a DfE-commissioned report which found that pupils with higher levels of emotional wellbeing have higher levels of academic success,³⁹ and is further emphasised by Ofsted's finding that outstanding schools almost always have outstanding PSHE education.⁴⁰

Research also suggests that programmes to build the non-cognitive skills set out above impact on pupil attainment, attendance and behaviour: an analysis of over 200 social and emotional skills programmes⁴¹, predominantly delivered through PSHE education, demonstrated improved attitudes and behaviour in pupils and an 11% improvement in academic achievement. Similarly, a study of emotional resilience programmes found short-term improvement in attainment rates, particularly amongst those eligible for free school meals and pupils who had been performing at below national average in maths and English.⁴² The Education Endowment Foundation⁴³ recommends such programmes as a way to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

A study by the University of Hertfordshire found significant correlations between high-quality PSHE lessons, reduced levels of bullying and increased feelings of school belonging.⁴⁴

Employability and social mobility

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the British Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors have all called for an education system that provides school-leavers with key skills and characteristics to thrive in the world of work. Studies suggest these skills could have a £100bn impact on the UK economy and PSHE education could be a key subject in which these skills are developed.

PSHE education gives pupils information on the world of work, challenges stereotypes about different careers and helps pupils to develop the skills they need to succeed in the workplace. As set out above, there is strong evidence that these skills can be developed through classroom-based activity such as PSHE education. The impact of improving employability skills in schools could be significant, not just for individual pupils but for the whole economy: according to a CBI-backed study, such skills could make a £109bn contribution to the UK economy over the next five years.⁴⁵

A 2011 study showed that such skills are more important in determining life chances at age 30 than academic qualifications.⁴⁶ Businesses want such skills too. As Neil Carberry, CBI Director for People and Skills, puts it: *“the right attitudes and attributes in people such as resilience, respect, enthusiasm and creativity are just as important as academic and technical skills”*.⁴⁷

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission has recommended ‘purposive’ action to develop these non-academic skills and attributes to tackle intergenerational disadvantage.⁴⁸ More recent research from the Commission into non-educational barriers to top jobs demonstrates how important employability skills are to employers, and how disadvantaged pupils have fewer opportunities to develop these skills.⁴⁹

Independent schools, in which PSHE education is already an expectation, recognise the importance of these skills and place a much greater emphasis on the subject: 30% of the demand for training from the PSHE Association comes from the independent sector in spite of that sector serving just 7% of the population.

There is, therefore, an imperative for state schools to ensure that their pupils have the same opportunities to develop these skills as their independent school counterparts. However, PSHE Association research shows that just one in three business leaders think schools are doing enough to equip pupils with skills for work.⁵⁰ The CBI,⁵¹ the British Chambers of Commerce,⁵² the Institute of Directors⁵³ and the Federation of Small Businesses⁵⁴ have also made this point. According to a PSHE Association/YouGov survey, 85% of business leaders would support a move to statutory status for PSHE education to ensure that all pupils develop these key skills.⁵⁵

The 2017 Sutton Trust ‘Life Lessons’ report⁵⁶ found that skills and attributes such as confidence, social skills, self-control and resilience support success in school and work and are highly valued by employers. The report then highlighted the importance of the PSHE education curriculum to developing these skills, stating that: “Personal, Social, Health and Economic education also has a substantial role to play. While currently not statutory, its curriculum has a welcome focus on developing the ‘essential skills’ of confidence, resilience, self-esteem, communications and ability to work with others.”

PSHE education provides an opportunity to provide or enhance skills such as perseverance, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, self-management, self-respect, team work, locus of control, time and stress management.

PSHE Education: A Review of Impact and Effective Practice, DfE, 2015

Economic wellbeing, financial capability & careers

Whilst teaching in Mathematics, Citizenship, English and other subjects make important contributions to education for economic wellbeing, the PSHE education curriculum provides an opportunity from key stage 1 to learn about aspects such as the impact of personal financial choices, an understanding of risk and responsibility, about different types of work and the influence of the media on financial choices (e.g. in relation to gambling).

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Financial Education for Young People agrees that PSHE education, on a statutory footing from key stage 1, is the best context for financial education. In 2016, the APPG published *Financial Education in Schools: Two Years On – Job Done?*⁵⁷ The report assessed developments

since the introduction of statutory financial education as part of the Citizenship curriculum in English secondary schools in 2014, and stated that financial education was “patchy, inconsistent and varying in effectiveness”

62% of teachers polled by the APPG agreed financial education should be delivered within PSHE education – a higher percentage than for any other area of the school timetable – and 90% believed that at least some of the financial education topics currently taught through PSHE education should be statutory on the curriculum. Only 52% of secondary level Mathematics teachers polled said they taught financial education through their subject. Recently appointed APPG Chair Julian Knight MP has reiterated the call for PSHE education to be statutory to guarantee a strong economic education from key stage 1 upwards.

The PSHE Association Programme of Study for PSHE Education (Key stages 1 – 5)⁵⁸ has been welcomed by those involved in financial education – such as Young Enterprise – as it:

- involves teaching economic wellbeing and financial education from the beginning of primary school
- explores the important ‘personal’ or behavioural aspects of financial education that Mathematics and Citizenship are unable to cover in as much depth. This includes for example an understanding of risk and consequences regarding online gambling.

PSHE education also provides discrete curriculum time to allow a comprehensive careers education that encompasses preparation for work experience, visits from employers, signposting sources of support, and the development of specific knowledge, skills and attributes for employability. This view is supported by the Career Development Institute (CDI), who stated in their Framework for careers, employability and enterprise education⁵⁹ (2015) that *“Inspection and monitoring evidence suggests that the most effective model for delivering the separately timetabled element is to organise the careers, employability and enterprise outcomes within an integrated course of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education taught by a team of specialist PSHE education teachers”*.

The 2017 DfE Careers Strategy⁶⁰ recognised PSHE education’s important role in delivering careers education, stating that *“Many schools deliver careers education, including employability and enterprise, through the curriculum as part of their commitment to Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education.”*

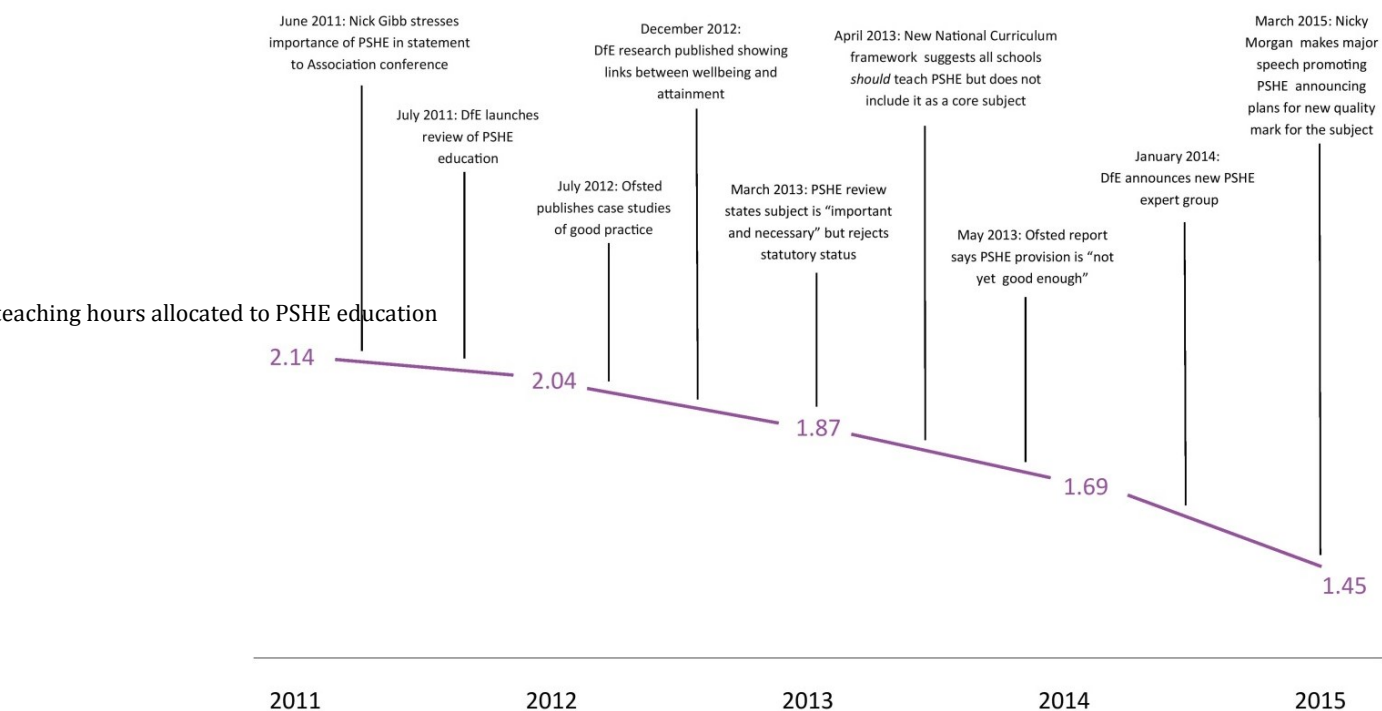
3. The state of current provision

This section explores how the huge potential of PSHE education set out above is not yet being realised, with provision at all key stages ‘not good enough’ according to Ofsted and the situation ‘deteriorating’ according to the Commons Education Committee.

In 2013, Ofsted published a report into current PSHE provision. Entitled *Not Yet Good Enough*,⁶¹ the report suggested that while provision was outstanding in 20% of schools (almost all of which were schools rated outstanding by Ofsted in their most recent whole-school inspection), provision needed improvement in at least 40% of schools, with lessons too often delivered by teachers with insufficient training and curriculum time. As a result, key issues such as mental health and prevention of abuse were left off the curriculum altogether by some schools. Following on from the so-called ‘Trojan Horse’ affair in Birmingham, Ofsted has also identified concerns about external groups undermining schools’ PSHE lessons on issues such as equality⁶².

The Commons Education Committee has concluded that PSHE provision is ‘deteriorating’,⁶³ an assessment backed by Department for Education data which suggests that provision decreased by over 32% at key stages 3 and 4 between 2011 and 2015, demonstrating the urgent need to act.

Figure 1: DfE data showing the proportion of curriculum time schools give to PSHE at key stages 3-4



The impact of these trends is directly felt by pupils. According to a recent report, only around 23% find lessons on emotional health quite or very useful, while just 43% of Year 6 pupils report that teachers have talked to them about changes to the body as they grow up⁶⁴. The Health and Social Care Information Centre’s 2015 report into *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England*⁶⁵ suggests that over 40% of pupils do not feel they get enough information in school on smoking, alcohol or drug use. Girlguiding’s 2015 Girls’ Attitudes Survey found that fewer than half of young women had talked about mental health in lessons at school (44%).⁶⁶

4. The case for statutory status to improve provision

As set out in the previous section, PSHE education provision is not good enough in schools despite the importance of the issues it covers. Here we set out the case for statutory status in order to ensure that all pupils receive the ‘curriculum for life’ they need and deserve and to ensure that all teachers are trained and supported to teach it to a high standard.

The links between non-statutory status and reduced quality of provision have been made by leading education unions including the National Association of Head Teachers,⁶⁷ the Association for Teachers and Lecturers,⁶⁸ Voice,⁶⁹ the National Union of Teachers⁷⁰ and the NAHT Edge,⁷¹ as well as the National Governors Association.⁷² PSHE Association members working in schools directly link non-statutory status to a number of trends which limit the quality of provision, including:

- learning delivered through occasional off-timetable ‘drop-down’ days rather than regular timetabled lessons which build learning week by week
- schools giving responsibility for PSHE lessons to teaching assistants or teachers with spare lessons, rather than teachers with training in the subject
- PSHE leads having fewer resources and lower status in schools than other subject leads/departments
- perhaps most worryingly, pupils believing that the subject is not valued by their school.

The view from teachers

“I don’t understand why PSHE is not statutory but yet we are required to meet outcomes that only it can meet. I understand the reservations about having a nationally imposed programme but I don’t see why we can’t adopt a locally agreed syllabus.”

“If PSHE was to become compulsory it would raise its profile among staff and pupils. At present it is often seen as a timetable-filler which creates an ‘It’s just PSHE’ mentality.”

Initial teacher education at present places little emphasis on PSHE education, and uptake of the (once Government funded) national PSHE CPD programme has fallen by 90% since 2010.⁷³

The view from the Commons Education Committee

In 2015, having examined the status of the subject in a thorough inquiry which took over 400 evidence submissions, the cross-party Commons Education Committee concluded:

“PSHE requires improvement in 40% of schools. The situation appears to have worsened over time ... this situation would not be tolerated in other subjects This must change, and we accept the argument that statutory status is needed for PSHE ... The statutory requirement should have minimal prescription to ensure that schools have flexibility to respond to local needs and priorities”

The implications of a move to statutory status on standards of provision are set out below.

The potential impact of statutory status

PSHE is the subject that prepares children for the rest of their lives yet it's often cut from the timetable to make space for other subjects. This is why statutory status is so important.

Julia Peters, Girlguiding Young Advocate

Parents have never needed their children to have excellent teaching in PSHE as much as they do now. They are faced with the reality of having to talk to their children about pornography, sexting, cyberbullying and all of the other risks that the online world includes. Parents accept their responsibility to guide their children with these issues as a core part of parenting but they can't be expected to do it alone. They need all schools to be offering excellent PSHE lessons.

Vicki Shotbolt, Founder and CEO, Parent Zone

In addition to guaranteeing PSHE education lessons for all school pupils, statutory status would send a clear message to schools about the high standards of provision expected. As a non-statutory subject, PSHE education is uniquely vulnerable to falling off the curriculum in schools with other subjects taking priority. Statutory status would be a vital step towards ensuring that every pupil received regular PSHE education lessons from trained teachers, giving it parity with other subjects in relation to expectations of rigour and frequency.

Maintaining flexibility for schools

A statutory entitlement to PSHE education would be fully compatible with flexibility for teachers to continue to tailor their PSHE provision to the needs of their pupils (based on local data, consultation with pupils, parents and communities) and freedom for heads to be able to fit the PSHE curriculum into their timetable arrangements and ensure teaching is in line with the school's ethos. While not dictating the content of lessons to schools, statutory status would provide clarity that PSHE is a subject which needs to be held to the same high standards as other subjects, taught through regular lessons in adequate curriculum time by trained teachers.

Wider benefits

Statutory status would send a message to the whole education community, including teacher training providers, that the subject should be prioritised. It would also bring the statutory curriculum into step with government aims to deliver positive outcomes on life chances, employability, character, British values, preventing radicalisation and, crucially, safeguarding.

Finally, statutory status would provide crucial balance in school accountability: ministers have raised the stakes in terms of performance in academic subjects, driving for higher standards for all pupils. If this isn't balanced by raised expectations for PSHE education, standards of provision and frequency of provision will continue to decline. Statutory status would ensure that lessons were taught with greater rigour by trained teachers, in line with expectations for other subjects. As set out below, such a move would have huge support from teachers, pupils and parents.

5. Support for statutory status

Support for statutory status from respected public figures, expert bodies, business leaders, teachers, parents, children and young people is overwhelming.

Public support for statutory PSHE education

Statutory status for PSHE education is supported by:

- **Parents:** 92% of parents say that all schools should teach PSHE education.⁷⁴ Statutory status is supported by leading parent bodies including Mumsnet, Mothers' Union, PTA UK (the national body for parent-teacher associations) and the National Governors Association.⁷⁵
- **Pupils:** 92% of young people receiving PSHE lessons say that all pupils should receive them.⁷⁶ The UK Youth Parliament made '*a curriculum for life*' – including comprehensive, statutory PSHE – their priority campaign in England in 2014 and again in 2017.⁷⁷ Statutory status is backed by Girlguiding, the British Youth Council and UK Youth.
- **Teachers:** an NUT survey showed that 88% of its members want PSHE to be statutory⁷⁸ and teaching unions NEU, NAHT, NAHT Edge, ASCL and Voice have all called for statutory status.
- **Business leaders:** 85% of business leaders support statutory status according to a YouGov survey undertaken on behalf of the PSHE Association.⁷⁹
- **Media:** the statutory PSHE campaign is endorsed by the Times and Daily Telegraph newspapers and has been responsibly reported by tabloids including the Daily Star and Sun.

Political support for statutory status

As set out above, the Commons Education Committee called in February 2015 for statutory status for PSHE education at all key stages.⁸⁰ This echoed an earlier call for statutory status from the Home Affairs Committee after its inquiry into female genital mutilation in June 2014,⁸¹ while the Parliamentary inquiry into the UK's efforts to prevent violence against women and girls stated that Britain would be better placed to meet its obligations to prevent gender-based violence if PSHE education was statutory.⁸² In September 2016, the Commons Women and Equalities Committee recommended statutory status in order to help prevent sexual harassment in schools; a follow up letter by five Select Committee Chairs to the Education Secretary⁸³ expressed regret at failure to "seize the opportunity" presented by the Women and Equalities Committee report and reiterated need for statutory status for PSHE.

Statutory status has also been backed by the chairs of the Commons Health and Business, Innovation and Skills Committees and by senior figures and former Ministers from across the political spectrum⁸⁴. Parliamentary supporters include former education secretaries Lord Blunkett and Baroness Morris, former Children's Minister Tim Loughton⁸⁵, former Health Secretary Lord Fowler and 15 all party parliamentary group chairs⁸⁶.

Government amendments to the Children and Social Work Bill regarding statutory relationships and sex education (and 'relationships education' at primary), and the power to make PSHE statutory in its entirety pending consultation, passed through both Houses of Parliament in the Spring of 2017, and received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017. The nature of the RSE and PSHE proposals will then be subject

to subsequent consultation and debate, with any changes to the curriculum due to be implemented from September 2019.

Experts calling for statutory status

The campaign for statutory status is backed by over 100 expert bodies including two royal societies, five leading education unions, six royal medical colleges, the NSPCC, Barnardo's, Stonewall, Google, the British Red Cross, the Children's Society, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the Association for Chairs of Safeguarding Children Boards, the Children's Commissioner, the Chief Medical Officer, Public Health England, the Faculty of Public Health and the national police lead for child protection, Chief Constable Simon Bailey⁸⁷.

6. Key principles for statutory PSHE

In summary, the PSHE Association and partners are campaigning for PSHE education to be statutory and for this to mean that the subject is taught:

- **regularly** – regular lessons on the timetable like other subjects
- **as a whole subject** – from relationships & sex education to mental health, online safety to employability skills
- **by trained teachers** – PSHE covered in teacher training and ongoing opportunities to learn
- **in all schools** – all schools including academies and free schools
- **to all pupils** – from year 1 to finishing secondary school

The PSHE Association has developed a set of recommended principles to apply to statutory PSHE to ensure high standards of rigour, balance and parent and community involvement.

Best practice dictates that this provision should be:

- **Designed and delivered by teachers to meet their pupils' and community's needs:** this should include early consultation with parents and community leaders, and teaching which is in line with the ethos of the school. Any statutory provision must recognise the need for schools with a religious character to teach the subject in the context of the school's foundation, while ensuring that lessons reflect a range of religious, cultural and other perspectives and meet the requirements of the Equality Act, 2010.
- **Taught by teachers who have had training in the subject:** this means ensuring the subject is a key part of all initial teacher education routes and that there are high-quality CPD opportunities available for existing teachers.
- **Taught in regular timetabled lessons:** providing an opportunity for developmental learning, with clear cross-curricular links made with other subjects as part of a curriculum planned by the school. Curriculum content should be determined by schools using best practice guidance, local data and assessment of pupil need in consultation with pupils, parents and community leaders. This localised approach, based on pupil need, parental consultation and the professional judgement of schools, is preferable to a rigid curriculum set nationally.
- **Balanced, factually-accurate and appropriate lessons:** learning in PSHE education should be balanced, factually accurate, always cover the law and a range of views and beliefs on a given issue, while being appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils and respectful of their religious and cultural backgrounds.
- **Avoid a 'parade of topics' approach:** teaching in PSHE education should balance the development of knowledge, essential skills and attributes, through a 'spiral curriculum'. Such a curriculum ensures developmental learning by revisiting core themes, building on the previous learning, rather than comprising a 'patchwork' of unrelated, and sometimes one-off, topics.

As set out above, it is critical that schools engage with parents when a school's PSHE curriculum is being developed. While there is widespread consensus amongst parents, governors and parent-teacher associations about the need for PSHE education, it is understandable that parents will want to ensure that a school's programme is appropriate for their children. Ofsted has found no evidence of inappropriate teaching, but we should not be complacent and statutory duties to ensure that schools engage parents as they develop their PSHE programme should be maintained. Statutory status for PSHE education could be supported by enhanced statutory guidance for schools relating to parental involvement and more frequent monitoring of provision by Ofsted.

7. Conclusion

There is an overwhelming demand for statutory PSHE education – from teachers, parents and young people themselves. It's important that school leaders and governors take PSHE seriously and improve their provision by investing in training for teachers and putting PSHE lessons on the school timetable. Statutory status will help ensure all of this happens.

Commons Education Committee, February 2015

Schools should ensure every pupil has the opportunity to develop and thrive. That can only happen if they are prepared with the right amount of time set aside for PSHE education. Young people are calling on the Government to do the right thing – ensure PSHE education is statutory.

Mita Desai, Chair, British Youth Council, June 2015

When delivered by trained teachers in partnership with communities, parents and pupils, PSHE education can contribute to a range of positive outcomes for children and young people: keeping them healthy and safe, both online and offline, improving their academic performance, preparing them for the workplace and building the character and resilience they will need to thrive in a changing world. There are significant potential social and economic benefits of this kind of education too, yet this potential can only be fulfilled by raising the status of the subject.

Raising the status of PSHE education would send a clear message about the importance of a subject currently in the vulnerable position of being non-statutory. It would not only persuade schools but also the whole education system, including teacher training providers, that the subject should be at the core of learning. It would send a message to schools about parity of budgets and status for PSHE leads and it would bring statutory duties on schools into line with government ambitions to deliver positive outcomes on social mobility. It would also send a clear message to parents that their concerns about child safety were being heard and would send an equally important message to those external groups seeking to undermine schools' PSHE provision on matters like equality and relationships and sex education.

The government has raised the stakes in terms of school performance in academic subjects, and if this is not balanced by raised expectations for PSHE education, standards of provision will continue to be unacceptably low, leaving millions of young people without the skills to thrive in the modern world. Statutory status would be a catalyst for positive change: initial teacher education providers, CPD providers, headteachers, local authorities, academy chains and others would have to respond. The support for statutory status from such organisations demonstrates that the education system stands ready to respond to leadership from government.

The campaign for statutory status is supported not only by professional bodies but also by pupils, parents and teachers across the country. Teachers and parents are calling for a partnership between home and school to support pupils' personal and social development, while '*a curriculum for life*' has been chosen as a consistent campaign priority for the UK Youth Parliament for the last number of years, in a vote involving nearly a million young people. 88% of teachers, 92% of parents and 92% of pupils who have received PSHE education believe that it should be an entitlement for all. It is time that these calls for a rigorous curriculum for life are finally heard. Recent Government proposals are encouraging in this regard but there is much work to do in the months ahead to ensure they result in high quality PSHE education for all pupils in all schools.

Appendix: Support for PSHE education and calls to raise its status, May 2013 to present

May 2013: Ofsted report sets out that PSHE education provision is “not good enough”. The report states:

“Lack of high-quality, age-appropriate PSHE education... is a concern as it may leave children and young people vulnerable to inappropriate sexual behaviours and sexual exploitation.”

October 2013: UK Youth Parliament publishes landmark report calling for ‘a curriculum for life’, stating:

“The need for education and discussion of issues such as pornography, body image and online grooming and abuse is greater now than it was a decade ago... By making PSHE education a statutory entitlement, with an expectation that schools will incorporate local issues of key importance to their pupils, we believe that schools would both re-prioritise PSHE education and retain the flexibility they need to meet pupils’ needs.”

June 2014: Home Affairs Committee report on preventing female genital mutilation (FGM) highlights the scale of FGM in the UK, estimating that 65,000 girls aged under 13 were at risk of FGM, and stated:

“It is important that teachers and pupils have an opportunity to discuss issues such as FGM, especially where a proportion of the school population may come from a practising community ... Empowering children to discuss the issue openly will increase the likelihood of breaking the inter-generational cycle of FGM, and will also increase the level of reporting, in so doing helping to ensure the safeguarding of at-risk girls. We recommend that PSHE be made compulsory, including teaching pupils about FGM in high-prevalence areas.”

August 2014: Jay report on child sexual exploitation in Rotherham states that survivors were “scathing” about the “out of touch” sex education they received. The report recommended that all children receive sex education and that it needed to be updated. Subsequent reports on CSE in Oxfordshire, Rochdale, Greater Manchester and Birmingham all stress the important role of education in keeping children safe. The report on CSE in Greater Manchester highlights the vulnerability of primary school pupils and states:

“Because PSHE education is not compulsory, there is a piecemeal approach in Greater Manchester with a huge variation in the information that schools are giving to children. Some schools don’t teach about CSE for fear about reputational damage if they are seen to have a problem. We need to campaign for the Government to make PSHE compulsory so that all children in Greater Manchester schools are better safeguarded from CSE.”

October 2014: National Crime Agency submission to Education Committee PSHE inquiry states:

“Online safety is not primarily a technology issue but about behaviour, communication and relationships... While some aspects of the topic can be addressed through computing lessons... other topics such as sexting or online pornography are more appropriately addressed within PSHE lessons... It is not simply technical mistakes such as ‘sharing personal information’ or young people failing to ‘think before they post’ which makes them vulnerable. Rather, it is child sex offenders’ exploitation of young people’s expectations, natural naivety, impulsivity, curiosity and inexperience which can enable sexual abuse. As a result the CEOP Command’s developing understanding of the threat suggests that sex and relationships education is essential”

January 2015: Joint Committee on Human Rights in its report on the UK’s efforts to meet its obligations on preventing violence against women and girls, stating:

“The UK would be in a stronger position to say that it is fulfilling the requirements of Article 14 of the Istanbul Convention if all schools were required broadly to teach the same curriculum in relation to PSHE and we believe that this national curriculum should include issues relating to violence against women and girls.”

February 2015: Commons Education Committee landmark ‘Life Lessons’ report on PSHE education states:

“Young people ... have a right to information that will help keep them healthy and safe. We accept the argument that statutory status is needed for PSHE, with sex and relationships education as a core part of it ... Better PSHE has the potential to help efforts to address many problems in society, including teenage pregnancy, STI rates, drug and alcohol abuse, cyberbullying, and child sexual exploitation.”

February 2015: 15 All Party Group Chairs, including former Conservative Health Secretary Lord Fowler, support Commons Education Committee call for PSHE to be statutory, stating:

“PSHE education has the potential to have a positive impact on academic success, safeguarding, physical, mental and sexual health... Yet according to Ofsted, more than 40 per cent of schools do not have good PSHE education. This means millions of pupils are not getting appropriate teaching that prepares them for life.”

March 2015: At Downing Street child sexual exploitation summit, Sarah Champion MP sets out the case for PSHE, calling for statutory status from key stage one in order to keep children safe.

March 2015: Barnardo’s, NSPCC, Children’s Commissioner, two former education secretaries, former Children’s Minister Tim Loughton and other leading figures issue joint call for PSHE to keep school pupils safe from risks like child sexual exploitation, stating:

“The Prime Minister referred to CSE as a national threat; he must now act. We urge the government to make PSHE education statutory on the curriculum, so that all pupils learn how to protect themselves and others.”

November 2015: Children’s Commissioner report “Protecting children from harm” on child sexual abuse in England sets out the scale of abuse suffered by children across the country and states:

“The Commissioner recommends that all schools equip all children, through compulsory lessons for life, to understand healthy and safe relationships and to talk to an appropriate adult if they are worried...”

November 2015: Government expert panel on preventing children viewing pornography online says:

“We believe... that careful attention should be paid to the findings of the House of Commons Education Committee who concluded that “PSHE requires improvement in 40% of schools. The situation appears to have worsened ... and young people consistently report that the education they receive is inadequate.”

December 2015: In her 2015 annual report which focuses on women’s health, the Chief Medical Officer recommends that the Department for Education makes PSHE “a routine part of all children’s education”.

January 2016: Joint letter from four select committee chairs makes the case for statutory PSHE education:

“PSHE is a crucial part of preparing young people for life. It can provide them with the knowledge and confidence which will affect their health, wellbeing and relationships, now and in the future...”

March 2016: In a Times interview, former Culture Secretary Maria Miller becomes the fifth serving Select Committee chair to call for statutory status, in order to address the “appalling” impact of sexting:

“The way the internet is impacting on young people’s lives — and particularly young girls — leaves them in need of far greater support. We have to make sure that we tackle it properly.”

April 2016: Norfolk Chief Constable Simon Bailey, the national police lead for child protection, calls for statutory PSHE education in the context of growing fears on child sexual exploitation, stating:

“Once police become aware a child has been abused it is too late; they have already been harmed... compulsory PSHE would ensure all children get the information to help themselves so they can stay safe.”

April 2016: Report from the House of Lords Social Mobility Committee argues that key “life skills” such as communication, team working, resilience and self-management should be embedded in the school curriculum, arguing that “preparation for the workplace needs to begin as early as possible” in schools.

July 2016: Report into harmful sexual behaviour amongst children chaired by Conservative MP Nusrat Ghani recommends that all children should have access to high quality, age-appropriate information and advice about healthy relationships, their rights and responsibilities and how to seek support, noting:

“Children [are] being exposed to a vastly greater volume of sexualised content at far earlier ages... It is increasingly important that they have access to information from responsible authorities. If it is not available they will seek information anyway, but are more likely to receive this from less reliable sources.”

August 2016: Chair of the Association for Police and Crime Commissioners (APPC), Vera Baird QC, stresses the importance of statutory PSHE in helping children and young people to recognise and stay safe from child sexual abuse, stating:

“Taught well, PSHE would give children who are victims of abuse the education to judge earlier that it is wrong and develop the confidence to report” and that “reports into abuse in Oxford and Rotherham both concluded that good-quality PSHE keeps children safe, and polls suggest overwhelming parental support for it to be taught in schools”.

September 2016: The Commons Women and Equalities Committee recommends statutory status for PSHE education, with sex and relationships education (SRE) as a core component, in order to help to prevent sexual harassment in schools. It states:

“Excellent resources to teach pupils about gender equality, relationships, sex and consent, in age appropriate ways, already exist. But only a minority of schools are delivering good teaching. The Government must take a lead in ensuring that all children have access to high-quality SRE and it does not remain the privilege of a few.”

November 2016: Five Select Committee Chairs write joint letter⁸⁸ to the Education Secretary calling for statutory status for PSHE education, expressing regret at failure to “seize the opportunity” presented by the Women and Equalities Committee report on sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools, stating:

“When you came to the Education Committee on 14 September, you indicated that you were indeed looking at the question of statutory status, alongside existing plans to improve the quality of PSHE. We ask that you give serious thought to this proposal and the benefits that would arise from it. We also ask you to consider the consequences of failing to act; not only for the quality of education in England, but also for the lifelong consequences which can result from patchy or inadequate access to PSHE and SRE.”

January 2017: Landmark Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health report⁸⁹ on child physical and mental health recommends statutory PSHE education. The ‘State of Child Health’ report says:

“Department for Education should ensure that high-quality, comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes are mandated and implemented across all primary and secondary schools. This should foster social and emotional health and wellbeing through building resilience and specifically tackling issues around social inclusion, bullying, drug and alcohol use, and mental health”

March 2017: The Education Secretary Justine Greening outlined historic steps to improve relationships and sex education (RSE) and PSHE education in all schools.

“I am today announcing my intention to put Relationships and Sex Education on a statutory footing, so every child has access to age appropriate provision, in a consistent way. I am also announcing my intention to take a power that will enable me to make PSHE statutory in future, following further departmental work and consultation on subject content.”

March 2017: Lords Communications Committee calls for statutory PSHE to support online safety and digital literacy

“We recommend that the Government should make PSHE a statutory subject, inspected by Ofsted. The Committee further recommends that PSHE be mandatory in all schools whatever their status. The PSHE curriculum must be designed to look broadly at the issues young people are concerned about online, including compulsive use, data gathering, body image—rather than the current e-safety agenda of risk.”

May 2017: RSPH calls for statutory PSHE to promote safe social media usage

“RSPH has long called for the introduction of comprehensive, statutory Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) in schools. A component of this education should feature the safe use of social media including: cyber bullying and where to seek help; social media addiction; body image and social media, and other potential effects of social media on mental health. The education system must evolve with the society in which it operates and equip our young people with the tools necessary to navigate the digital age in a way which protects their mental health and emotional wellbeing.”

May 2017: Health and Education Committees call for compulsory PSHE education to address mental health and social media concerns

The Education and Health Committees published a joint report on the role of education in supporting mental health and emotional wellbeing. Recommendations included a call for the Government to follow through on proposals to make personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education compulsory in all schools as part of a whole school approach, and that schools should include education on social media within PSHE lessons.

June 2017: Stonewall calls for statutory PSHE in their 2017 School Report

In its recommendations, Stonewall called on the DfE to “consult on, and introduce, statutory PSHE that is inclusive of LGBT issues and of which RSE is a component.”

July 2017: Public Health England CSE report highlights ‘critical’ role PSHE can play in prevention

A report from Public Health England on child sexual exploitation (CSE) suggested that the existing body of evidence ‘repeatedly highlights the critical role of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) and Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in addressing these issues’.

July 2017: Government 2017 drug strategy emphasises PSHE education’s role in prevention

The Government released referenced the need to build “confidence, resilience and risk management skills” through PSHE education in order to “prevent the range of risks young people face” such as drug misuse, crime, exploitation and unhealthy relationships. The strategy describes high-quality PSHE education as “at the heart of supporting young people to leave school prepared for life in modern Britain”.

August 2017: NSPCC calls for RSE as part of a wider PSHE curriculum to combat sexual misconduct in schools

In response to a TES report that children as young as five have been excluded from school for sexual misconduct, the NSPCC commented that RSE “must be dragged into the 21st century, it must be consistent, and it must be offered in every school as part of a broader personal, social, health and economic education curriculum.”

August 2017: Fake news and critical literacy review highlights PSHE education’s role

The National Literacy Trust Fake news and critical literacy evidence review suggested that various aspects of the PSHE education programme of study “tap into critical literacy and being able to spot fake news” and that “most significantly for critical literacy, one of the overarching concepts of the programme of study – power – includes issues such as how power is used and encountered in various contexts (including online)”. The review went on to say that: “In a similar vein, the essential skills developed through the programme of study include “discernment in evaluating the arguments and opinions of others” and “recognising, evaluating and utilising strategies for managing influence”.

October 2017: Sutton Trust recommends PSHE in its Life Lessons report

The report found that skills and attributes such as confidence, social skills, self-control and resilience are increasingly recognised because they underpin success in school and work and are highly valued by employers. The report then highlighted the importance of the PSHE education curriculum to developing these skills, stating that: “Personal, Social, Health and Economic education also has a substantial role to play. While currently not statutory, its curriculum has a welcome focus on developing the ‘essential skills’ of confidence, resilience, self-esteem, communications and ability to work with others.”

October 2017: Internet Safety Strategy Green Paper highlights role of PSHE

The Green Paper highlighted schools vital role in keeping children safe online, including the opportunities presented by compulsory relationships and sex education from 2019, and potentially PSHE education in its entirety.

November 2017: NAHT survey shows overwhelming support for statutory PSHE from 2019

90% of over 900 professionals surveyed by school leader’s union NAHT said that PSHE education, including relationships and sex education (RSE), should have the same status as other school subjects, and 91% of respondents want the subject to be taught in regular, timetabled lessons. The survey was conducted with a view to establishing how Government proposals could work best for schools and for students.

November 2017: Sex Education Forum highlights need for RSE to remain part of PSHE in its principles of effective RSE

The Sex Education Forum release a 12 point statement on what is needed to ensure good-quality relationships and sex education (RSE), including that it should remain an identifiable part of PSHE curriculum.

November 2017: Children’s commissioner urges Government to take urgent action on statutory PSHE

In her evidence to the Education Committee, the Children’s commissioner Anne Longfield urged the Government to make plans for statutory PSHE in its entirety ‘urgently’, not just RSE. Ms Longfield stressed that the need for “consistent” and “high-quality” PSHE, taught by “specialist individuals” with digital literacy as a key element.

December 2017: Green Paper Transforming Children and Young People’s Mental Health Provision launched

On December 4th the Health and Education Secretaries jointly launch the Government’s Green Paper on mental health, The paper discusses the role of schools in the strategy, and references PSHE education’s role within this.

December 2017: new DfE Careers Strategy references role of PSHE

The strategy mentions the role PSHE education plays in teaching children and young people about careers education, employability and enterprise, stating that “many schools deliver careers education, including employability and enterprise, through the curriculum as part of their commitment to Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education”.

December 2017: Pro Bono Economics literature review finds ‘strong evidence’ of PSHE’s impact on academic attainment

A major evidence review (covering over 1200 studies) by Pro Bono Economics found ‘very strong evidence’ that PSHE learning has a positive impact on academic attainment, with disadvantaged pupils enjoying the greatest benefits to performance.

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