Glasgow City Council

Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee

Report by Executive Director of Education Services

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EDUCATION SERVICE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVTIES RELATED TO EQUALITY

Purpose of Report:

To inform the committee of the activities in relation to supporting the development of the equalities agenda across Education Services.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the committee note the developments planned and the activities in relation to the development of the equality agenda across Education Services.

Ward No(s):   Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐   consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1   BACKGROUND

1.1   The Education and Skills committee has asked for Equality update reports at every second scheduled meeting of the committee.

1.2   This report will update the committee on the activities of Education Services in developing the equalities agenda as directed by the Education Equalities Working Group (EEWG) and the Education Improvement Service (EdIS). Whilst the headings may relate to individual protected characteristics, the outcome of many of the activities are often intersectional. This paper focuses on equalities work in relation to Gender and countering online hate, disinformation, and prejudice.

2   GENDER

2.1   Glasgow Education Equalities Working Group is committed to supporting Gender issues and has successfully taken forward significant work to address key issues for girls and young women across our schools. The need for further focused work on supporting boys and young is well recognised within and beyond education, particularly in relation to wellbeing and mental health challenges.

2.2   Young men in Scotland today face a convergence of mental health challenges such as rising rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviors; barriers in accessing help; pressures around masculinity and body image; and significant service delays. These are compounded by societal, economic, and digital influences.

2.3   There are currently a range of well-established services and supports available in Glasgow to help young people's mental health and wellbeing. These are funded by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and Glasgow City Council.

For example: -

- School Counselling and Therapeutic Supports in all schools
- Play Therapy
- Art Therapy
- Youth Health Service
- Kooth
- Togetherall
- Compassionate Distress Response Service (CDRS)

2.4   These services show that the uptake of support changes as a young person reaches adolescence and this is more significant in males. Where the uptake of services for primary aged boys is comparable to that of girls, once they reach secondary school these changes to 30% males to 70% females.

2.5 It is proposed that Glasgow Education Services addresses this inequality through targeted work across all 30 Secondary Schools using the methodology from Men Minds—formally known as MEN-MINDs: Co-producing Change for Better Mental Health for Adolescent Young Men at the Margins—this was a UKRI-funded research initiative led by Dr. Nina Vaswani (Children & Young People's Centre for Justice at Strathclyde), with collaborators including Professor Daniela Sime (University of Strathclyde), colleagues at Monash University (Melbourne), the Mental Health Foundation, and the University of Dundee.

Primary Objectives of this research were: -

- To engage marginalised young men—specifically those who are migrants/refugees, LGBTQ+, or have been in conflict with the law.
- Co-produce research methods with these young men to better understand masculinities, mental health, well-being, and help-seeking behaviors.

2.6 Using peer-led methodology A Young People's Forum (YPF) of around 8–12 young men (ages 16–24) was formed. These individuals were directly involved in shaping and conducting the research—through interviews, focus groups, and surveys—ensuring the study was relevant and accessible. The peer-led phase involved surveying and interviewing around 60 young men across Scotland, in varied settings—from art galleries to prisons to parks and online.

From the research, the key insights gained were:

- Identified barriers to participation, including stigma, lack of trust in services, feeling unrecognised, and societal norms about masculinity.
- Co-produced, peer-led research can provide safe, supportive environments that foster confidence, trust, agency, and therapeutic benefits among participants.

2.7 Project Proposal

Glasgow Education Services will work with a range of partners in holding a conference for young men from across 30 Glasgow secondary schools, to launch a project that will involve co-production of research in each school to identify barriers and opportunities for supporting young male students from S1 to S6. Each school would identify 5-6 pupils (S3-S5) with an interest in this topic. As the project is likely to last a year it would not be possible for S6 pupils to participate.

Partners in this project include: -
Glasgow Secondary Schools
Quality Improvement Officers from EdIS
Members of Education Equalities Working Group
Glasgow Educational Psychology Service
University of Strathclyde
LifeLink
Kooth
Togetherall
Police Scotland

Third Sector Partners

2.8   A startup conference is planned for Friday 30th January 2026, 9:00am to 12:30pm in Glasgow City Chambers Banqueting Hall. The event will launch the project. and will involve around 180 male students along with school staff. The agenda for the morning's events provides young people with an opportunity to set the context for learners and allows them to engage in discussion around mental health.

2.9   Schools will then develop their own individual action plan and be allocated a coach/mentor from a partner organisation. This coach would have regular contact with the group and work collaboratively to support action research in the school.

2.10   There will be a follow up event in each area (North / South) in January 2027 where the working group will report back / showcase the work that they have carried out and the impact of this. This project can be completed at no additional cost to any of the partners apart from giving time to support the schools.

3   GENDER -Equally Safe at School

3.1   The Equally Safe in Schools (ESAS) initiative in Scotland is part of the broader national Equally Safe Strategy. ESAS is aimed at preventing and eradicating gender-based violence, particularly in educational settings. The initiative aligns with the new gender-based violence framework for Scottish Government, the Health and Wellbeing outcomes of the Curriculum for Excellence and Getting It Right For Every Child.

3.2   This whole-school intervention has been developed by Rape Crisis Scotland and the University of Glasgow and supports secondary schools across Scotland to prevent gender-based violence. respond effectively to incidents and disclosures and created a positive, inclusive school ethos.

3.3   Alongside on-going work in Glasgow schools in relation to gender -based violence, Education Services are now committed to ensuring the implementation of the Equally Safe at Schools initiative across Glasgow's secondary estate. To support this, a presentation on the key aims and principles of the initiative were shared with senior leaders at September's Secondary Headteachers Business Meeting held in the City Chambers.

3.4 To ensure that all key staff within schools have a firm understanding of the aims of the initiative and information to support implementation, further webinars are now planned to support all Glasgow's secondary schools. This mandatory training will be delivered by Rape Crisis Scotland and will take place during October 2025.

4   DIGITAL DISCOURSE

4.1 The negative effects of harmful ideologies shared through social media are widely acknowledged. A key priority for Education Improvement Services and the Education Equalities Working Group is to ensure that staff across Glasgow schools possess the knowledge and understanding necessary to help children and young people develop the digital literacy skills needed to confront online misinformation and discrimination.

4.2 To tackle this challenge, Glasgow Education Services is collaborating with Time for Inclusive Education (TIE) colleagues to implement the Digital Discourse Initiative for all education staff in the city. The initiative, which is a joint educational project created by TIE and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), includes professional learning modules and classroom resources designed to equip school staff with the tools to combat online hate, disinformation and prejudice.

4.3 This professional learning offer promotes inclusivity and empowers staff to address sensitive subjects such as extremism and discrimination in a constructive and informed manner. It also helps learners recognise and challenge harmful messages that promote inequality and division.

4.4 An initial introduction to this training was successfully delivered to all Child Protection Coordinators across the city. During the August 2025 Inset Days, Central Education Officers and staff from all schools also participated in initial awareness raising sessions delivered by our partners from TIE. This training was positively evaluated by over 2,000 members of staff. Many staff commented that the session was eye-opening but hopeful, raising awareness and supporting solutions. Further analysis of staff feedback identified key themes and takeaways as outlined below.

- Urgency and scale of the challenge
- Need for Professional Upskilling - building professional confidence
- Understanding of online harms
- Value of the webinar and resources
- Value of real-world examples
- Role of schools in Digital Literacy and Safeguarding
- Parental role and wider community engagement

4.5 Moving forward, Glasgow Education Services and the EEWG will now collaborate with TIE colleagues as a pilot local authority to develop and trial additional educational resource materials related to the Digital Discourse

Initiative. This will include workshops led by TIE's Education Officer, as well as lesson plans for teachers to use and provide feedback on. Sessions designed for parents and carers will also be delivered.

The pilot will involve:

- Identified primary and secondary schools from various areas of the city participating in workshops and lessons.

- A Learning Community that facilitates pupil inputs and parent and carer sessions.

The primary objective of the pilot will remain focused on helping children and young people enhance their critical and digital media literacy skills, equipping them with the tools and resilience needed to navigate online information and online hate.

5   NEXT STEPS

5.1   Education Services will continue to focus in the coming session on working to support collaboration and empowerment across the city, taking forward our aspirations linked to Equalities.

6   POLICY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resource Implications:

Financial: Using existing core funding and funding from SG care Experienced budget   N/A

Legal: None

Personnel: None

Procurement: None

Council Strategic Plan: Specify which theme(s) and outcome(s) the proposal supports. Where relevant the specific numbered priority should be listed.

Grand Challenge 1 Reduce Poverty and Inequality in Our Communities
Mission 2 -Meet the learning and care needs of children and their families before and through school

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	Yes The proposal specifically supports Outcomes, 12,13,
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	Positive impact in relation to Gender equality and improved ability to challenge online hate, disinformation and prejudice.
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.	

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	No
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	None
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	No

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts: None

7   RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1   It is recommended that the committee note the developments planned and the activities in relation to the development of the equality agenda across Education Services.