

Teach mental health first aid in schools

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 29 Medi 2020
Petitions Committee | 29 September 2020

Reference: RS20/13862

Petition Number: P-05-1008

Petition title: Teach mental health first aid in schools in Wales

Text of petition: For too long now Wales has been plagued by a silent killer, countless people have lost loved ones as a result of fighting an unknown battle. This petition is to push for Mental Health first aid training in schools to build a society where people will always have support and the tools to fight the awful battle so many face on a daily basis, hopefully saving many lives.



1. Background

Mental and emotional health and well-being is included in the current curriculum through Personal and social education (PSE). Delivery of PSE is a statutory requirement of the basic curriculum although content is at the discretion of schools. The non-statutory **Personal and social education framework for 7 to 19-year-olds in Wales** (2008) provides a recommended approach and learning outcomes. Health and emotional well-being is one of five themes of the PSE framework.

The new age 3-16 Curriculum for Wales will be introduced in all maintained schools and publicly funded nursery settings from September 2022 on a phased basis. The **Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill** was introduced to the Senedd on 6 July 2020. The Bill sets out the four purposes of the curriculum:

- To enable pupils and children to develop as ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as healthy, confident individuals, ready to live fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The Welsh Government has emphasised that the new Curriculum for Wales will be **purpose-driven rather than content-driven**. Specific learning content is not stipulated in the same way as under the current national curriculum.

The Bill sets out six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) for the new curriculum and the mandatory elements within them. The AoLEs are:

- Expressive Arts
- Health and Well-being
- Humanities
- Languages, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science and Technology.

The mandatory elements within the AoLEs will be English; Relationships and Sexuality Education; Religion, Values and Ethics and Welsh.

The Bill provides for a 'What Matters Code' to set out key concepts of learning and experience in each AoLE (including Humanities) and that schools' curricula must encompass each of these concepts. The Welsh Government has published 'Statements of What Matters' in the [Curriculum for Wales documentation](#). This is intended to provide the 'national approach' which the [Minister for Education says](#) will ensure consistency for learners.

The [provisional statutory guidance on the Health and Well-being AoLE](#), was published in January 2020. This states:

The fundamental components of this Area are physical health and development, mental health, and emotional and social well-being.

2. Welsh Parliament action

2.1. Children Young People and Education Committee

The Children Young People and Education Committee (CYPE) published the report of its inquiry into children and young people's emotional and mental health, [Mind over Matter](#) [PDF 3.4KB], in April 2018. The Committee were not satisfied that the [Welsh Government's initial response](#) [PDF 1.2KB] met the Committee's report recommendations.

In May 2019, the [Ministers for Health and Social Services and Education provided an update](#) on the recommendations to the CYPE Committee. In June 2019, the Committee undertook follow-up work and [heard oral evidence](#) from the Minister for Health and Social Services and Minister for Education.

2.2. Petitions Committee

The Committee considered two petitions, [Introduce Compulsory Mental Health Education in Secondary Schools](#) and [To Make Mental Health a Part of the National Curriculum](#) in 2016. At that time, the Minister for Education said that as part of the design of the new curriculum, the Health and well-being AoLE would draw on mental, physical and emotional well-being. As such, the Committee closed both petitions.

3. Welsh Government Action

On [14 January 2019 the Health and Social Services Minister announced](#) £7.1 million, to support the Government in its work following recommendations made by the Committee. The funding is intended to protect, improve and support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young

people by further developing services. The £7.1m investment is in addition to £1.4m being invested by the Welsh Government in a programme of mental health in-reach support for schools to strengthen the support from CAMHS [children and adolescent mental health services] in schools in four pilot areas across Wales.

3.1. A whole school approach to emotional and mental health

The Welsh Government established a **Ministerial Task and Finish Group** and a **Stakeholder Reference group**, co-chaired by the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health and Social Services to take forward the whole school approach to emotional well-being and mental health, as part of a whole system approach which also recognises the links between mental and physical well-being.

The Welsh Government published a consultation, **Embedding a whole-school approach to mental health and well-being** on 8 July 2020. The consultation, which closes on 30 September 2020, seeks views on possible improvements to how the framework will support:

- positive mental health and emotional well-being of all learners and staff
- the development and embedding of best practice
- consistency and collaboration between schools and partners
- activities such as training and awareness.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.