

Consultation on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

Evidence submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

About you

Organisation: Royal College of Nursing Wales

1. The Bill's general principles

1.1 Do you support the principles of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#)?

Partly

1.2 Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1500 words)

RCN Wales welcomes the four 'purposes' of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill set out in Part 1(2). The four purposes set out the clear ambition to help younger people develop into capable, healthy and confident individuals. It is heartening to see that there is an emphasis on allowing younger people the opportunity to play a full part in life and work whilst becoming confident and valued members of society.

RCN Wales further supports the change of name from Sexual Education 'Sex Ed' to Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). The change is appropriate in widening the content and scope of the curriculum, and the emphasis on inclusivity and healthy relationships is welcomed. RSE should be an important aspect of a young person's development. RCN Wales welcomes the legislation of RSE and agrees that any education must be compulsory and developmentally appropriate.

To a certain extent the inclusion of emotional resilience has been noted in previous documents including the Area of Learning and Experience (AOLE). However, there is an air of uncertainty regarding the compulsory content of RSE, in particular the inclusion of emotional resilience. With the understanding that the Welsh Ministers are responsible for setting to 'what matters RSE code', the RCN would strongly encourage the Welsh Ministers

to ensure emotional resilience is included as mandatory for all pupils through its inclusion in the RSE code.

RCN Wales would also welcome the acknowledgement of the role of school nurses and CAMHS in the Bill. School nurses are a valuable source of professional advice and support for learners. With comprehensive training and expertise, school nurses are primed to play a leading role in the delivery of RSE. RCN Wales is clear that RSE should be delivered by health professionals who are trained to provide sexual and relationship education to children and young people. It is therefore essential that Welsh Government promote and invests in the school nursing workforce, in order to ensure that school nurses are able to fulfil this role. The inclusion of who is responsible for delivering RSE would clarify any uncertainty and ensure that pupils and children are provided the highest quality RSE.

Nevertheless, although in support of the general principles of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill, RCN Wales recognises that there are areas that need to be addressed through legislation that have not been included in the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill. For example, life saving and first aid education in particular access to Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training. RCN Wales recommends that the Bill includes a profound commitment to an All-Wales approach to teaching life saving skills, including CPR.

RCN Wales is also aware that the Curriculum and Assessment Bill has numerous interlinking documents and goes alongside the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which places a requirement on local and national governments to carry out sustainable development. The numerous documents as part of the 'Curriculum for Wales' series, provide information on topics, designing and implementing curriculum. However, RCN Wales is concerned that the importance of certain topics may be lost within these documents, for example life saving education, emotional resilience and the appropriate use of social media. Social media competency and understanding of its appropriate uses is crucial when discussing relationship and sexual education, especially considering the increasing use of technology for romantic interactions. The RCN would strongly encourage the Welsh Ministers to consider the importance of these topics when discussing the RSE code.

Emotional Resilience

Emotional resilience refers to an individual's ability to adapt to stressful situations, and to adapt to adversity without lasting difficulties. The core beliefs of emotional resilience are; high self-esteem, emotional regulation, positive coping strategies and the ability to create strong emotional relationships among others. The importance of educating children and

younger people regarding techniques and mechanisms to display emotional resilience is paramount to their emotional wellbeing and mental health.

RCN Wales strongly recognises the need for emotional resilience education as part of RSE. By building resilience in children and young people it will allow them to be better equipped to overcome obstacles and reduce the chances of them suffering from anxiety and stress related illnesses.

To a certain extent the inclusion of emotional resilience has been noted in previous documents including the Area of Learning and Experience (AOLE). Nevertheless, as previously expressed, there is an air of uncertainty regarding the compulsory content of RSE and RCN Wales strongly recommends the inclusion of emotional resilience in the RSE curriculum and encourages the Welsh Ministers to consider the importance of emotional resilience when in discussion regarding the 'RSE code'.

The Role of the School Nurse

As expressed in the answer to question 1.2, the role of the school nurse is pivotal to the delivery of high quality RSE. Education on relationships and sexuality can and should equip children and young people with the tools to interpret what are often conflicting messages around complex topics. RSE should also serve to make sure that children and young people are aware of where and how they can access help and support. As part of introducing this element of the curriculum, Welsh Government must ensure that Wales has the staff and professionals, such as school nurses, to put this positive theory into practice.

RSE should be provided by health professionals who have received education in how to deliver RSE to children and young people. The benefits of having a health professional deliver this education are profound. For example, if a child or young people expresses an issue during RSE, or a private discussion they can receive informed confidential advice and be directed to the appropriate services.

Life saving and first aid education

To some extent, the importance of life saving and first aid skills has been acknowledged within supporting documents of the Curriculum and Assessment Bill. RCN Wales welcomes the recent inclusion of life saving skills in the guidance for designing the curriculum. It is heartening to see that the Welsh Government has acknowledged the benefits of providing life saving and first aid education to children and younger people.

Nevertheless, the absence of life saving skills in the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill, and the term 'may include' life saving skills in the designing of the curriculum is concerning. RCN Wales notes that this decision has ensure that educational institutions are not legally obliged to provide life saving and first aid education. RCN Wales recommends that life saving and first aid education is re-categorised as a 'must include' to ensure the full benefits of life saving and first aid are recognised and received across Wales.

1.3 Do you think there is a need for legislation to deliver what this Bill is trying to achieve?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

Yes. RCN Wales strongly agrees that there should be legislation to deliver what this Bill is trying to achieve, particularly with regards to updating RSE. However, as expressed there are further areas that could be legislated.

2. The Bill's implementation

2.1 Do you have any comments about any potential barriers to implementing the Bill? If no, go to question 3.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

RCN Wales welcomes the ambition to embed the Welsh language throughout the curriculum as a means of ensuring Welsh is treated no less favourably than English. However, RCN Wales

is concerned that the lack of Welsh speaking teachers, support staff and nurses may be a barrier to increasing the use of the Welsh language. RCN Wales has consistently called for the increase of Welsh speaking nurses and nursing staff through the expansion of education. In order to deliver the curriculum affectively in Welsh and English there is a need for the Welsh Government to introduce a long-term commitment to increase funding and educational opportunities for professionals to support children and young people in Welsh. This must include the expansion of educational opportunities that focus on clinical topics. This would ensure professionals feel confident communicating in Welsh within a clinical setting.

2.2 Do you think the Bill takes account of these potential barriers?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

The Bill does not stipulate how the use of Welsh would be increased, merely that it desires to increase the ability to communicate in Welsh in all aspects of the curriculum. RCN Wales would welcome an investment in education and funding for Welsh speaking/learning professionals.

3. Unintended consequences

3.1 Do you think there are there any unintended consequences arising from the Bill? If no, go to question 4.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

RSE

RCN Wales has identified that the Bill does not refer to the role in educating individuals beyond the curriculum. The role of RSE in educating children and young people on the nature of healthy relationships may make individuals aware of concerning relationship that they are involved in. This could be seen as an unintended consequence of the Bill, or perhaps it is merely a consequence that the Bill has not prepare for as identifying unhealthy relationship is key to RSE.

Despite this, there is little information regarding what happens if a child or young person expresses concerns regarding their home life or require safeguarding measures. RCN Wales suggests that additional services such as those provided by CAMHS, Health Visitors, General Practice Nurses and Advanced Nurse Practitioners should also be highlighted in the Bill.

These highly skilled professionals play an important role in supporting and advising children and young people on healthy relationships and sexuality education, as well as being able refer children and young people for further assessment or specialist services. These highly skilled professionals can provide safeguarding measures and ensure a child or young person is aware of services available to them. It is important that the Bill highlights the role beyond the curriculum and the roles of health professionals.

Life saving and first aid education

At present life saving and first aid education is not compulsory for schools to provide. This has the potential to create inequalities across Wales and risk Wales falling behind the rest of the UK.

Welsh Schools have the opportunity to teach life saving and first aid education, however not every school will introduce this education. This will lead to an inequality of provision with some pupils gaining access to CPR training whilst other won't. Therefore, if there is a need to use CPR the first pupil would have confidence in performing the life saving procedure, whereas the other may not. The Welsh Government has therefore failed to address the 'postcode lottery' that exists regarding the teaching of life saving education. If the Welsh Government committed to an All-Wales compulsory approach this would ensure that all children and young people were provided age appropriate life saving education.

CPR training was introduced in England and Scotland in 2019 (to begin in September 2020), and since 2015 key stage 3 pupils in Northern Ireland have had the opportunity to develop an awareness of emergency first aid procedures through mandatory education.

4. Financial implications

4.1 Do you have any comments on the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#))? If no, go to question 5.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

n/a

5. Powers to make subordinate legislation

5.1 Do you have any comments on the appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#)). If no, go to question 6.1.

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

n/a

6. Other considerations

6.1 Do you have any other points you wish to raise about this Bill?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

N/a

