

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: British Red Cross

1. The Bill's general principles

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

Yes

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)

The British Red Cross believes that first aid and humanitarian education are essential to the 'four purposes' which underpin the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill. Specifically, they would 'enable pupils and children to develop as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world'. In order to achieve this, we believe first aid and lifesaving skills should be mandatory to ensure every pupil in Wales has the opportunity to learn first aid. We welcome that first aid and lifesaving skills are recommended in the new guidance for schools that will accompany the new curriculum for Wales. However, guidance alone does not ensure all young people will have the opportunity to learn these skills.

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, however, we believe this Bill could be strengthened by changes to the legislation and the accompanying guidance to guarantee the provision of first aid and life-saving skills. We recommend:

- The Health and Wellbeing AoLE guidance should be amended to include the reference 'must' with regard to first aid and life-saving skills to ensure universal teaching and learning.
- The guidance should require annual teaching of the contents – specifically first aid education – for at least one hour, once a year, every year, to allow for the development and continuity of skills throughout a child or young person's education.
- Alternatively, first aid and life-saving skills should be added as a cross-cutting theme for curriculum design – like sex and relationships education – to ensure no one misses out.

At the British Red Cross we want children to be prepared for future emergencies and challenges, ensuring a nation of resilient individuals with positive personal attributes. In particular we welcome the focus on health and wellbeing, and we agree that this should be put into law to safeguard and protect the educational rights of children and young people.

We believe that in order to achieve the aims of this Bill, which is to develop confident and resilient individuals, this Bill should stipulate first aid education as a statutory requirement.

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)

The British Red Cross believes that first aid and humanitarian education are essential to the 'four purposes' which underpin the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill. Specifically, they would 'enable pupils and children to develop as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world'. In order to achieve this, we believe first aid and lifesaving skills should be mandatory to ensure every pupil in Wales has the opportunity to learn first aid. We welcome that first aid and lifesaving skills are recommended in the new guidance for schools that will accompany the new curriculum for Wales. However, guidance alone does not ensure all young people will have the opportunity to learn these skills.

The health benefits of first aid education are self-evident; first aid education increases ability, willingness and capability to assist in a health emergency.¹ Our research has found

that up to 59% of deaths from injury could have been prevented if first aid was given before the emergency medical services arrived.²

First aid should be taught in schools to reach children and young people equitably across Wales. Currently, access to first aid education is inconsistent,³ first aid education is often provided outside the classroom with children from less affluent families less likely to have access to extracurricular activities.⁵ As noted by one parent we spoke to; "School is the best place for them to learn, especially as my children don't go anywhere else where they could learn it."⁶

A mandatory approach to the guidance will enable access to first aid education and its wider benefits to reach children and young people from all socio-economic backgrounds.⁷

We are concerned that, without legislative backing, teachers might not feel confident enough to access and use available resources to teach first aid. We see from our services that teachers gain confidence in teaching first aid when given the right resources and guidance. Our approach is to support flexibility and to give teachers the skills to teach first aid themselves, using accredited resources including a growing digital offer. With the right communications and sharing of these resources between first aid organisations and teachers, universal provision of first aid can be streamlined.

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)

Without ensuring that first aid and lifesaving skills are mandatory in the new curriculum for Wales, through stipulating this in legislation, we believe this represents a barrier to implementing the Bill successfully and realising the four purposes in Wales.

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)

Wales is at risk of being left behind the rest of the UK unless first aid education is made a statutory requirement. First aid education has been added to the national curriculum in

England, and in Scotland all local authorities have committed to ensuring all children learn essential life-saving skills.

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)

-

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)

-

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)

Recommendations:

The Health and Wellbeing AoLE guidance should be amended to include the reference 'must' with regard to first aid and life-saving skills to ensure universal teaching and learning.

The guidance should require annual teaching of the contents – specifically first aid education – for at least one hour, once a year, every year, to allow for the development and continuity of skills throughout a child or young person's education.

Alternatively, first aid and life-saving skills should be added as a cross-cutting theme for curriculum design – like sex and relationships education – to ensure no one misses out.

The British Red Cross supports the aims of the Curriculum to enable children and young people to become ambitious, capable learners, healthy, confident individuals, ethical, informed citizens and enterprising, creative contributors. However, to fully enable children and young people to acquire these competencies, first aid education should be a statutory component of the curriculum. First aid education should be built upon throughout primary and secondary education, once a year, each and every year, for at least one hour. This supports the development and continuity of skills built upon throughout a child or young person's education.⁸

We welcome first aid and lifesaving skills are recommended in the new guidance for schools that will accompany the new curriculum for Wales. However, the guidance is limited and will not ensure all young people will have the opportunity to learn these skills. We recognise the curriculum design is less prescriptive. However, first aid education and life-saving skills are umbrella terms that include a wide range of skills that schools and teachers can choose from to suit the needs of their pupils, providing a tailored approach to developing personal resilience.

The benefits

The health benefits of first aid education are self-evident; first aid education increases ability, willingness and capability to assist in a health emergency.⁹ Our research has found that up to 59% of deaths from injury could have been prevented if first aid was given before the emergency medical services arrived.¹⁰ First aid education facilitates health prevention; it can improve health literacy and promote self-care and an understanding of risks.¹¹ Of the children and young people who used our online resources in the academic year of 2017/18, out of 357,631 pupils, 83% answered questions on first aid skills correctly, and out of 19,774 pupils, 68% felt an increase in their confidence to respond to an emergency.¹²

We know the majority of people lack the confidence or skills to provide basic first aid in an emergency situation. Only one in 20 adults feels confident and willing to intervene in potentially life threatening emergencies.¹³ This leads to unnecessary deaths, injuries and disabilities, and can put greater pressure on emergency services. A study, commissioned by the Red Cross and conducted by the University of the West of England, Bristol and the University of Bristol, found that first aid education could help ease the pressure on A&E.¹⁴

First aid education facilitates a range of societal benefits through the pro-social skills and sense of community it imparts.¹⁵ For example, first aid education teaches the willingness to step in and to help in a scenario where first aid is needed. The young people we spoke

to highlighted the role of first aid education to excite and motivate young people to help and take responsibility, and that through learning small skills they can become 'something greater'.¹⁶

Current knowledge of first aid among children and young people in Wales is poor. When Welsh parents were asked about their children's knowledge of first aid and life-saving skills (such as knowing how to do CPR, or what to do if someone is bleeding heavily), 59% of the children were described by their parents as having "very poor" or "fairly poor" knowledge of first aid.

First aid should be taught in schools to reach children and young people equitably across Wales. Currently, access to first aid education is inconsistent,¹⁷ 18 first aid education is often provided outside the classroom with children from less affluent families less likely to have access to extracurricular activities.¹⁹ As noted by one parent we spoke to; "School is the best place for them to learn, especially as my children don't go anywhere else where they could learn it."²⁰

A mandatory approach to the guidance will enable access to first aid education and its wider benefits to reach children and young people from all socio-economic backgrounds.²¹

Public Support

A joint survey by the British Red Cross and the British Heart Foundation Cymru found that first aid education is valued by children, young people, parents and teachers.

Almost nine out of ten children surveyed in Wales (89%) said learning how to save a life is one of the most important lessons they could learn.

Over nine out of ten children (94%) agreed that knowing first aid skills and knowledge would make them feel more confident to help in a first aid emergency.

79% of parents agreed that first aid and life-saving skills should definitely be on the curriculum in Wales. ²²

97% of teachers surveyed agreed that first aid and life-saving skills should be part of the curriculum for Wales.

A recent survey found that during the recent Coronavirus lockdown over half of parents say they have dealt with a first aid emergency at home whilst almost a third of parents say they wouldn't know how to help their child in a first aid emergency at home. We found

that 65 per cent of parents admit they feel worried, scared or helpless when dealing with a first aid scenario at home and two-thirds of parents think it's important to learn first aid ahead of any potential second lockdown. This suggests making first aid and life-saving skill and mandatory element of the curriculum Wales could build a confident community ready to help in an emergency.²³

The British Red Cross are expert providers of first aid education and life-saving skills and are well-placed to work in close partnership with schools to implement first aid education across primary and secondary levels. We understand the pressures on teachers and schools: our approach is to support flexibility and to give teachers the confidence and skills to teach first aid themselves, using accredited resources including a growing digital offer. We see building a nation of life-savers as part of our core humanitarian purpose and we are pleased to be able to support schools to achieve this aim.

We are committed to providing free teaching resources to all schools however, only by including first aid education on the curriculum as a statutory element for all schools in Wales will these resources be taken up universally, ensuring no communities are left behind. Our recommendations are aimed to strengthen the guidance and ensure that schools are well supported to deliver high quality lessons to all children and young people.

Evidence session

We have outlined the societal, educational and health benefits of teaching children first aid. We would warmly welcome the opportunity to take part in an evidence session for the Children, Young People and Education Committee, alongside the British Heart Foundation and St John Ambulance Cymru. Expanding on our response and provide the committee with further detail, knowledge and share our expertise. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if this is a possibility.

For further questions, please contact xxxxxx xxxxx, Policy and Public Affairs Officer (Wales), xxxxxxxxxxxx@redcross.org.uk.

About the British Red Cross:

The British Red Cross is a leading standard setter for first aid education in the UK and internationally. We provide face to face and virtual first aid sessions for children and young people, as well as online, free-to-access first aid teaching resources to empower schools to provide effective first aid learning. Our aim is that children, young people and adults can learn to be more confident, able and willing to help themselves and others in a crisis.

We have long advocated for the importance of teaching children first aid, and for first aid to be taught regularly throughout primary and secondary school. We welcome that first aid and lifesaving skills are recommended in the new guidance for schools that will accompany the new curriculum for Wales. However, guidance alone does not ensure all young people will have the opportunity to learn these skills. Wales is at risk of being left behind the rest of the UK unless first aid education is made a statutory requirement. First aid education is now part of the national curriculum in England, and every local authority in Scotland has committed to teaching life-saving skills.

As part of our online first aid offer, we have developed first aid champions (<https://firstaidchampions.redcross.org.uk>), a brand new website designed for children, young people, teachers and parents. We also put life-saving tools into people's pockets through our free first aid phone apps (redcross.org.uk/app). The learning ranges from treating minor injuries, to coping with local emergencies like flooding or understanding the impact of major international disasters and conflicts.

At a local level, Red Cross staff and volunteers across the country work with schools and communities identified as being at greater risk of harm or stigma to teach focused first aid and humanitarian education. As face to face sessions were paused during the Covid-19 crisis, we have adapted our classroom experience to work in a virtual setting. As part of the British Red Cross response to Covid-19, our youth education offer has been focused on providing online educational resources designed to promote wellbeing, resilience and coping skills (all based around our core brand value of kindness).

