

This response was submitted to the Children, Young People and Education Committee consultation on Sixth Senedd Priorities

CYPE SP 74

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Theme 1: School-age education

The Committee should pledge to launch an inquiry on schools' readiness to teach LGBTQ+ inclusive Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in a holistic manner, across all Areas of Learning and Experience whilst being underpinned by a whole school approach. We have yet to see adequate evidence that the workforce is trained, knowledgeable and, crucially, confident enough in delivering fit-for-purpose RSE in Wales. Additionally, we have seen no concrete plans from Welsh Government to meet this need for professional learning on RSE specifically. Whilst research on professionals' confidence to deliver RSE in Wales has yet to be undertaken, such research would be of great value. [NSPCC research](#) conducted alongside NEU (National Education Union) in England found that half of teachers lacked confidence to teach compulsory RSE lessons. Here in Wales, the picture is less clear, as teachers have not been asked how comfortable they feel in delivering RSE and the new curriculum more widely. We think it is vitally important that this inquiry takes place, to get ahead of the likely challenges faced during implementation before they happen and to provide evidence for where government resources are best targeted to ensure that all children in Wales receive high-quality LGBTQ+ inclusive RSE. Following this inquiry it should be clearer what intervention is needed by the Welsh Government to ensure that the implementation is of a safe and high standard. The findings should indicate what level of provision is needed from Welsh Government, some provisions might include; ringfenced targeted funding on RSE and specific support in light of new areas being covered such as violence against women and domestic abuse, that should sit alongside the new curriculum content.

During the second half of the Committee's tenure in this Senedd, the Committee should seek the views of young people on the effectiveness of RSE delivery and LGBTQ+ inclusion across the curriculum. Such outreach should act to uplift the voices of LGBTQ+ children and young people to ensure they are seen and heard in these conversations.

In addition to this, the Committee should focus on scrutinising the roll-out of the new curriculum more broadly, focussing on the delivery of new curricula in comparison to its aspirations. Within this we feel that this exercise should take a particular focus on the embedding of LGBTQ+ inclusive RSE and relevant professional learning processes. With the Committee running for the next five



years this scrutiny will be vital in ensuring that the new curriculum acts as imagined. We believe the Committee sit in a strong position to lead on this work.

Safeguarding and bullying in education environments should also be an issue of concern for the Committee. [Stonewall Cymru's School Report](#) (2017) highlighted how LGBTQ+ learners in Wales are all too often bullied for their LGBTQ+ identities, hear homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language and, equally important, do not feel confident that teachers will intervene when incidents take place. The study found that three in five LGBTQ+ pupils in Wales felt that there was not an adult in school they could talk to about being LGBTQ+. It is very likely that this is worse for some LGBTQ+ young people as [evidence](#) shows that LGBTQ+ people of faith, for example, are less likely to be open about their identity to family members. It is vital that all LGBTQ+ children and young people, as well as practitioners are adequately supported in identifying the needs and issues LGBTQ+ people can experience. In this regard, we feel that this is a vital issue facing young people in school-age education and one that the Committee could spend some of its valuable time on considering.

Theme 2: Further and higher education

In light of an increase in hostility towards trans inclusion at some Welsh Universities, it is vital that protection for all students, including trans and non-binary students, is on the agenda of the Committee. Universities and places of further education should be safe spaces for all and this status is currently being brought into question in Wales, as more and more anecdotal evidence is presented by students and staff at higher education institutions. [Research](#) suggests that LGB and especially trans students in Britain face multiple disadvantages and discriminations in universities, from negative comments from staff and students alike and a lack of confidence in reporting homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying to university staff. Higher and further education thus have a long way to go before they are safe spaces for all.

Theme 3: Health and well-being, including social care (as they relate to children and young people)

On Health and well-being, the Committee should understandably focus on the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of young people. Within this, it is vital that the Committee attempt to understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ children and young people. [Research suggests](#) that poor mental health is alarmingly high amongst LGBTQ+ young people in Wales, with trans young people at particular risk. LGBTQ+ young people in Wales also reported disproportionate levels of self-harm and suicidal thoughts. This situation is likely to have been



exacerbated by the pandemic, with recent [research by Just Like Us](#) highlighting the disproportionate mental health impact of the pandemic on LGBTQ+ young people, with feelings of loneliness and suicidal thoughts being [prevalent](#). It is therefore vital that any examination of the mental health of children and young people must consider the distinct experiences of LGBTQ+ young people as well as the intersection of these identities and orientations with other marginalised groups, e.g. LGBTQ+ Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, LGBTQ+ disabled people etc.

The Committee should work with the Health and Social Care Committee to seek to understand the need for a Welsh Gender Service for children and young people in Wales. In this regard the Committee is in a good place to seek to understand the need for such a service from the perspective of children and young people in Wales, which can inform the work of the Health and Social Care Committee as well as Welsh Government.

More broadly, it is important that when analysing any health or social care issue that impacts children and young people that the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth are given space to provide their input and experiences. This is the only means through which equitable outcomes will be achieved in policy interventions. Using the Committee's platform to uplift marginalised young people's voices is a meaningful and powerful use of Committee's time and could have a tangible impact on its ability to scrutinise government.

Theme 4: Children and young people

Broadly speaking, a priority for the Committee should, in all of its work, seek to uplift the experiences and voices of children in Wales, whilst attempting to reflect the experiences of all children and young people, especially including those from marginalised identities. The Committee should support LGBTQ+ children to be safe, seen and heard by being cognisant of their needs, seeking to hear from them and by understanding that LGBTQ+ inclusion is vital for wellbeing and mental health for all.

The Committee could consider children and young people who are not in education, employment or training and means through which assistance can be given to support those individuals. Within this it is important to identify groups of people who experience disproportionate levels of exclusion in these environments. Recent [research](#) found that anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, lack of support at home or visible role models continues to have a devastating impact on LGBTQ+ young people's mental health, leading many to become shut out of higher education and work. With far too many LGBTQ+ young people in Britain falling through the gaps in current support services, the Committee should consider how minoritised young people can best be supported in Wales.



The Committee could use its time to support the youth work sector in its efforts to upskill on all matters of equality, diversity and inclusion. This could come in the form of scrutinising the Welsh Government's response to the [Interim Youth Work Board's Recommendations](#). It is vitally important that the youth work sector in Wales, both voluntary and statutory, is equipped to support the needs of LGBTQ+ young people.



USE OF YOUR INFORMATION

In order to enable us to handle your information in accordance with our [privacy notice](#), please complete the questions below. We will be unable to process your response if these questions are not completed.

6. We have stated our intention to engage meaningfully with children and young people, in tailored and appropriate ways, in the autumn. However, if you are responding using this proforma and are under 13 years old, we will only be able to accept your response if your parent or guardian has confirmed that you can participate. They can do this by sending us an email to SeneddChildren@senedd.wales.

Are you under 13 years old?

I am under 13 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am 13 or over	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

7. Please choose one of the following options to confirm whether you would prefer that your name is not published alongside your evidence.

We will not publish the names of people under the age of 18.

I am aged 18 or over and I am content for you to publish my name alongside my evidence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I am aged 18 or over and I would prefer that you did not publish my name alongside my evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am under the age of 18	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Please choose one of the following options to confirm whether you have agreement from any third parties referred to in your evidence that you can share information that may be used to identify them and that they understand that it may be published.

I confirm that any third party I have referred to in my evidence has agreed that I can share information that may be used to identify them, and that they understand that it may be published.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do not have the agreement of one or more of the third parties I have referred to in my evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have not referred to any third parties in my evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

