

Children and Young People Committee

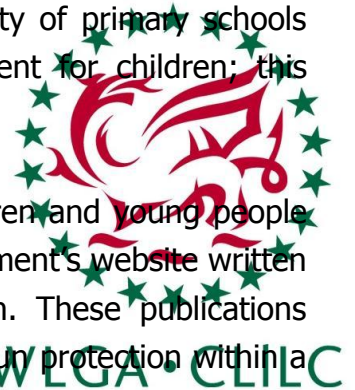
CYP(4)–10–12 Paper 2

Inquiry into school sun protection policy

Evidence from the Welsh Local Government Association

Introduction

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities, the three fire and rescue authorities, and four police authorities are associate members.
2. It seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.
3. The WLGA welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Children and Young People Committee on the use of sun protection for children under the age of 11 in school or childcare.
4. Local authorities in Wales are aware of the health issues associated with over exposure to the sun, particularly by children and young people. Changes in the curriculum for younger children has made this issue particularly important as the Foundation Phase encourages more outdoor activities for children aged 3 – 7 as part of the play based curriculum. In order to meet this requirement many schools have had purpose-built all weather areas constructed which provide protection from both rain and sun, allowing children to play safely outside. A recent Estyn report on the implementation of the Foundation Phase found that the majority of primary schools were providing a varied, productive and motivating environment for children; this includes the provision of outdoor areas.
5. There are existing guidelines regarding sun protection for children and young people in schools and pre-schools that is provided on the Welsh Government's website written by Cancer Research UK, as part of their Sunsmart campaign. These publications provide a comprehensive, and easily understandable, guide to sun protection within a school setting, although they are not currently available bilingually on the Welsh



Government's website. These guidelines are supported by the Wales Network of Healthy Schools which is a voluntary scheme, funded by the Welsh Government involving schools across Wales.

6. Although schools will be aware of the issues surrounding sun protection existing work could be supported by further awareness raising about the Cancer Research guidelines with schools, for example by the guidelines being highlighted in the Welsh Government's regular circulars to schools at the beginning of each term. Governing bodies of schools could also be made aware of the guidelines through links with organisations such as Governors Wales. Provision of the Cancer Research guidelines in Welsh would be welcomed by the WLGA and local authorities. Local government in Wales would be happy to work the Welsh Government to continue to raise awareness of the guidelines in schools and nursery settings.
7. There are a number of issues that could be seen as barriers to the use of sun protection in schools. In terms of the application of sunscreen for younger children who were unable to apply their own, there could be child protection implications. However, schools and childminders are subject to strict checks and safeguards can be put in place to ensure that the risks are minimised. This should be seen in the context of the overall child protection procedures within schools.
8. It is the view of the WLGA that the provision of free sunscreen to all children under the age of 11 would have to be fully costed before this proposal could be considered. There are currently 1,415 primary schools in Wales that would have to supply sunscreen to all their pupils. This additional cost could be significant. Local government would consider that should this proposal be implemented then the cost should be covered by the Welsh Government, in addition to funding that schools and local authorities already receive.
9. There could also be a cost implication in terms of the use of suitable clothing, hats and shade. The WLGA considers that the provision of suitable clothing and hats should be made by arrangements between schools and parents when appropriate. Ensuring that a school building has adequate shade could have a capital funding implications where building work has not already been undertaken in order to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase. The 21st Century Schools programme is the strategic programme for capital investment in schools and through this programme is would be possible to raise awareness about the provision of shade in relation to both new build schools and refurbishment projects.

10. In summary the WLGA welcomes the Committee's inquiry into sun protection for children and considers that it is important that children are protected from harmful exposure to the sun whilst in school. The WLGA considers that this should be done through the use of the existing guidelines from Cancer Research.

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