

# Make Curriculum for Life Lessons Compulsory

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## Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-860

Petition title: Make Curriculum for Life Lessons Compulsory

Text of petition: We call on the National Assembly for Wales to ensure that curriculum for life lessons are compulsory for secondary schools across Wales and that the content is reviewed annually by a board of elected young people.

A curriculum for life would include topics such as; finance, sex and relationships, politics and basic living skills. Article 28 of the UNCRC states children have the right to an education. However, the current curriculum is failing to provide us with the life skills we need.

## Current curriculum – Personal and Social Education (PSE)

PSE is a statutory curriculum requirement and forms part of the basic curriculum for all registered pupils at maintained schools who are of compulsory school age. Decisions on the precise content and model of delivery of a school PSE programme lie with head teachers and their governors, working with local authorities and other local partners. Schools use the [non-statutory PSE framework](#) (2008) to review and develop their PSE programmes. Teachers, headteachers and governing bodies of required maintained schools, colleges and other learning providers should base their personal and social education provision on this document.

The framework sets out the aims of PSE:

- develop learners' self-esteem and a sense of personal responsibility
- promote self-respect, respect for others and celebrate diversity
- equip learners to live safe, healthy lives
- prepare learners for the choices and opportunities of lifelong learning
- empower learners to participate in their schools and communities as active responsible citizens locally, nationally and globally
- foster positive attitudes and behaviour towards the principles of sustainable development and global citizenship

- prepare learners for the challenges, choices and responsibilities of work and adult life.

In her letter to the Committee, the Minister for Education states that a number of areas that are mentioned by the Petitioner, such as financial education and politics could be taught through PSE.

In relation to sex and relationships education, under the provisions of the [Education Act 2002](#) all maintained **secondary** schools are required to include, as part of the basic curriculum of the school, sex education for registered pupils.

Primary schools are not required to provide sex education as part of the basic curriculum, although they can do so at their own discretion. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from any element of sex education that is not part of the national curriculum.

## Professor Donaldson's Review of the National Curriculum

In March 2014, Huw Lewis, Minister for Education and Skills at the time, announced that Professor Graham Donaldson would be undertaking a review of the national curriculum in Wales. In his report on the curriculum, [Successful Futures](#) (February 2015), Professor Donaldson concluded:

Together the current national curriculum and assessment arrangements **no longer meet the needs** of the children and young people of Wales. The **case for fundamental change** is powerful. [my emphasis]

The Welsh Government has adopted the following **four purposes** of the new curriculum as recommended by Professor Donaldson. They are that all children and young people completing their schooling will be:

- Ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives.
- Enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work.
- **Ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world.**
- Healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The intention is that new curriculum will have more emphasis on equipping young people for life.

Professor Donaldson suggested that the curriculum should be arranged around six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs). These have been subsequently set out in the Welsh Government's [Curriculum for Wales: Curriculum for Life](#) are:

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

- Science and Technology.

The statutory introduction of the new curriculum will be in September 2022. The new curriculum will initially only be introduced in primary schools and Year 7 in September 2022, before rolling into year 8 for 2023, year 9 in 2024, and so on as the cohort moves through.

Before its statutory introduction, the new curriculum will be available for schools to feed-back, test and refine from April 2019, before a final version is published for school to access from January 2020.

In response to [Informing the future of the sex and relationships curriculum in Wales](#) (December 2017), the report of the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel, the Minister for Education has confirmed that Relationship and Sexuality Education will be part of the new curriculum.

## Petition in the Fourth Assembly

In June 2015, the Petitions Committee of the Fourth Assembly considered a petition calling for statutory Sex and Relationships Education ([P-04-636](#)). The main focus of the petition related to providing education relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans issues. At that time, the then Minister for Education and Skills, Huw Lewis, advised the Committee that the current curriculum is flexible to allow for the teaching of these issues and that the recently announced new curriculum would allow for meaningful engagement with schools and other partners. The Petition was closed in September 2015.

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.