



Eich cyf/Your ref Petition P-05-1008
Ein cyf/Our ref KW/04524/20
Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
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21 August 2020

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 12 August relating to Petition P-05-1008 Teach mental health first aid in schools in Wales.

Mental health and wellbeing of all learners is an issue which is important to me. Schools currently have an opportunity to cover these issues within the current curriculum as part of PSE and as you are aware from 2022 there will be a new [Curriculum for Wales](#).

At the heart of the Curriculum for Wales framework there are four purposes which have been central to every decision made about the new curriculum. One of the four purposes is to support children and young people to become healthy confident individuals, who are building their mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy.

The Curriculum for Wales, has been designed so that it maximises its contribution to the four purposes. These set out the fundamental purpose of education that form basis of what we should be aiming to achieve for our children and young people.

The new curriculum, includes a Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE). This is an innovative part of the new curriculum and aims to ensure that learning and support around issues such as physical, mental and emotional health are provided to all young people in Wales. The Health and Well-being AoLE has been designed to support the development of the fundamentals of health and well-being in learners, while allowing professionals to shape specific content as appropriate to their learners.

The Curriculum for Wales framework, gives every school in Wales the opportunity to design and adopt their own curriculum. It encourages schools to build their own vision for their learners within the context of the four purposes and the learning defined at a national level.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

It is for schools and practitioners, drawing on guidance and resources, to decide what specific experiences, knowledge and skills will support their learners to realise the four purposes. This is set within the consistency provided by the national framework.

Whilst the new curriculum guidance does not include a long list of individual topics, it does set out what schools should take into account in designing their curriculum and the broad expectations for learners.

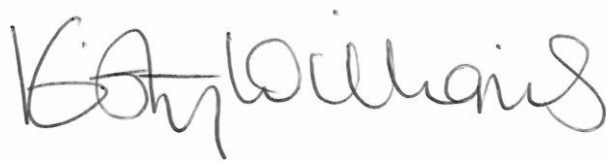
Schools will have the flexibility to select the content which best meets the needs of their learners in their specific context. Learners will have a range of needs and backgrounds, and the Framework offers schools and practitioners the ability to choose the specific experiences, knowledge and skills, as well as the specific topics, activities and contexts that will best support learning within the Framework. This means that schools will be able to teach mental health first aid within their curriculum, should they wish to do so.

This framework includes mandatory elements, including statements of What Matters for each Area of Learning and Experiences. One of these statements of What Matters for Health and Well-Being is how we process and respond to our experiences affects our mental health and emotional well-being. Under this statement of What Matters, learners will be supported to explore the connections and complexities between their experiences, mental health and emotional well-being. This will enable them to understand their feelings and develop strategies to help them to regulate their emotions, which can contribute towards a positive state of mental health and emotional well-being. Giving learners the opportunity to develop the skills and the freedom to express how they are feeling will help to create a culture where talking about mental health and emotional well-being is normalised.

The '[Designing Your Curriculum' guidance](#), published to support schools in implementing the Curriculum for Wales framework, explains that learners need to understand the links between mental health and emotional well-being, how mental health and emotional well-being affects them and that our mental health can change over time. Schools should ensure that their whole-school ethos and support systems enable learners to openly talk not only about their mental health, feelings, thoughts and emotions but also those of others.

I hope this clarifies the position.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Kirsty Williams'.

Kirsty Williams AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Addysg
Minister for Education