

Increase the teaching on drugs

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 13 Medi 2020
Petitions Committee | 13 September 2020

Reference: RS21/0633

Petition Number: P-06-1180

Petition title: Increase the teaching and readily available information on drugs in Welsh secondary schools.

Text of petition:

I aim to make information on drugs more widely available in Welsh secondary schools in hope to increase Welsh children's understanding of drugs and the culture surrounding it. I think that it would be detrimental to a child to not know about drugs and the implications they can cause. The amount of information taught on drugs in schools is not enough. My personal experience in school was one day of being told about different drugs and their health effects. I was able to develop my knowledge on drugs in school through taking GCSE PE. And still, I believe this is not enough. I have had conversations with teachers surrounding this topic but it feels like I am getting nowhere. I have made this petition not only to urge the Education Ministers in Wales to implement more mandatory teaching on drugs into the secondary school syllabus, but to also consider teaching children the detrimental effects of accepting a 'drug culture'. When I say this, I mean, drug dealing. I can completely acknowledge the stigma and animosity given to the idea of increasing the information of drug awareness in schools but, If you have visited Cardiff City Centre you may have an understanding that the drug use there is extremely prevalent and this is where thousands of kids go to socialise.



1. Current curriculum

Currently, mental and emotional health and well-being is included in the current curriculum through Personal and social education (PSE). Delivery of PSE is a statutory requirement of the basic curriculum although content is at the discretion of schools. The non-statutory Personal and social education framework for 7 to 19-year-olds in Wales (2008) provides a recommended approach and learning outcomes. Health and emotional well-being is one of five themes of the PSE framework. This states that:

In addition to understanding positive health choices, learners should be aware of the potential risks of the use and misuse of legal and illegal substances.

2. New Curriculum for Wales

The Curriculum and Assessment Act 2021 establishes a new 'Curriculum for Wales', which the previous Welsh Government planned to be implemented from September 2022 on a phased basis; initially in primary schools and Year 7 then rolled out to an additional older year group, year by year, until it reaches Year 11 in 2026/27. The Minister for Education and the Welsh Language announced on 6 July 2021 that secondary schools will have the option of introducing the new curriculum in Year 7 in September 2022 and it will become statutory for Year 7 and Year 8 in September 2023. It will then be rolled out to an additional older year group, year by year, until it reaches Year 11 in 2026/27.

The new curriculum represents a shift away from the traditional heavily prescribed approach of the national curriculum to one where schools have flexibility to design their own curricula, within a broad national framework. The Curriculum for Wales is therefore intended to be purpose-led rather than content-based, with a greater emphasis on skills and teaching what matters.

The Act sets out the four purposes of the curriculum:

- To enable pupils and children to develop as ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as healthy, confident individuals, ready to live fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The Act also sets out six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) for the new curriculum and the mandatory elements within them. The AoLEs are:

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

The mandatory elements within the AoLEs will be English; Relationships and Sexuality Education; Religion, Values and Ethics and Welsh.

The Act provides for a 'What Matters Code' to set out key concepts of learning and experience in each AoLE and schools' curricula must encompass each of these concepts. The Welsh Government has published 'Statements of What Matters' in the Curriculum for Wales documentation. This is intended to provide the 'national approach' which Kirsty Williams, then Minister for Education said will ensure consistency for learners.

The provisional statutory guidance on the Health and Well-being AoLE, was published in January 2020. Two of the Statements of What Matters are:

- Our decision-making impacts on the quality of our lives and the lives of others; and
- How we engage with social influences shapes who we are and affects our health and well-being.

The Welsh Government consulted on revisions to the Statements of What Matters (which will form the statutory What Matters Code) between 21 May and 16 July 2021. The above two Statements of What Matters remained unchanged.

The provisional statutory guidance on the Health and Well-being AoLE states the following:

Learners should be supported to develop positive behaviours in their wider physical health and well-being. This could relate to a range of factors, including diet, substances, hygiene, infection, the physical environment, sleep and rest. Settings, schools and practitioners should consider what experiences will support learners to understand how these factors can influence their health and well-being, develop the skills to support healthy behaviours relating to these factors, and the confidence and motivation to support those behaviours for life.

In discussing how links can be made between the teaching of the Health and Well-being, and Science Technology, AoLEs, the provisional statutory guidance also states: 'How lifestyle choices can impact the human body (including diet, drug use and exercise) can be considered'.

3. Other Welsh Government Action

In July 2013, the Welsh Government published [Guidance for substance misuse education](#). This provides information relating to the delivery of appropriate substance misuse education according to the current curriculum requirements.

The Welsh Government funds the Wales Police Schools Programme. This operates in all primary and secondary schools, delivering education on substance misuse and wider community and personal safety issues at all key stages of the curriculum. [SchoolBeat.org](#) is a bilingual site from the Wales Police Schools Programme, providing information and resources for teachers, pupils and parents to follow up on the lessons provided to all school children by our School Community Police Officers. The Welsh Government has allocated £1.98m for the programme for 2021-22. The Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Welsh Language's [paper to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee](#) on the draft budget (21 January 2021) said:

This Programme is important from an education and prevention perspective (complimenting the Curriculum Reform as it does), but also supports the emotional and mental health needs of children and young people as a result of the impact of COVID-19, in line with the continuity plan.

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.