

Consultation on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

Evidence submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

About you

Organisation: Early Years Wales

1. The Bill's general principles

1.1 Do you support the principles of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#)?

Yes

1.2 Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1500 words)

Early Years Wales are encouraged that the curriculum developments and therefore, the purposes of the Bill seeks to create a curriculum that is progressive and has the child's journey from early years through to their latter years in school considered as a whole. Furthermore, since the acceptance of the recommendations of Successful Futures, it is clear that Welsh Government has continued to create a curriculum that strives to support all children. We are pleased to see the good practice established through the Foundation Phase underpins the curriculum and within this, that children in Early Years will continue to be taught through experiential learning and with the emphasis on play still enabled.

Within the non-maintained sector, we do believe that the creation of a curriculum framework will be a positive addition for the sector. The structure and organisation of the core purposes, Areas of Learning Experience and cross-curricular skills is logical. We do have a concern that, as yet, the level of support and training for the non-maintained sector does not match that provided for in the maintained sector. It will be important for Welsh Government to consider how the practitioners in the non-maintained sector are supported through training to implement the change in practice. In this context, it is noteworthy that there are a number of time-pressures from some practitioners, particularly the pack-up and go settings or settings working from shared facilities that make changing practice and

approaches an additional burden. This might mean that the time to reflect on and adapt a curriculum offer to the context is challenging. This is why support for the non-maintained sector will continue to be an important feature in ensuring that the children are getting the type of curriculum experience that Welsh Government aspires to achieve in the Bill. One final consideration for Welsh Government to explore will be the information available to childcare settings that do not offer curriculum teaching but do provide childcare for the children beyond the statutory education time each day in consideration of 7.10 of the NMS (see footnote) . For the continuity of experience from a child's perspective, it would be better if these practitioners also receive updates in the principles and practice for children in the new curriculum. Whilst this might extend beyond the remit and finance attached to this Bill and require cross-department working, to ignore this would be a missed opportunity to create a coherent Early Years' experience for all children.

We are in agreement that the Religion, values and ethics mandatory curriculum is required in Wales to support the aspiration to have ethically informed learners. We believe there will be a role to play for all stakeholders in explaining to parents what this means at different stages of education to reassure parents. The Bill sets out some expectations for learner progression that are welcomed. As ever, the key to maximising learning across phases is well-organised transitions. The ownership of these transition points is always important and supporting practitioners to value the children's prior experiences is key to ensuring that children are not 're-assessed' when moving to a new context. Any support, training and resource applied to ensuring effective transition will help avoid situations where learner's regress following a transition point

7.10 the principles of the Foundation Phase for 3- to 7-year-olds and its seven areas of learning are understood and applied in a way appropriate to the age, abilities and stage of development of children in their care and the nature of the provision.

1.3 Do you think there is a need for legislation to deliver what this Bill is trying to achieve?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

The need for the legislation to deliver the Bill seems reasonable. This will ensure that Welsh Government are able to monitor and change elements within the education curriculum to ensure that there is a consistent high-quality offer across Wales.

2. The Bill's implementation

2.1 Do you have any comments about any potential barriers to implementing the Bill? If no, go to question 3.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

One potential barrier that complicates the opportunity to deliver a consistent curriculum offer in non-maintained settings is the variation between funding rates for delivery in the foundation phase across Wales. This contrasts with the consistent (and higher rate of funding) for the Childcare Offer. It is important to note that some setting managers/ proprietors run settings in a number of local authority areas and are therefore aware that the discrepancies exist from their first-hand experience. Making the foundation phase funding consistent would ensure that, regardless of postcode, each child's education has the same fiscal support from Welsh Government. This would also ensure that settings across Wales have the same opportunity to finance and resource their curriculum offer. It would also encourage settings to offer funded education if the rate of funding was closely matched to the Childcare Offer, which in turn, could increase parental choice.

As noted previously, training and support for the practitioners in non-maintained settings will need to be provided. Welsh Government has made a significant commitment to funding the support for training and development for teachers in the maintained sector. Ensuring that the training provision is available for practitioners working in non-maintained settings is imperative to avoid a two-tier system where there is an increased skills gap and the childcare sector feels devalued.

2.2 Do you think the Bill takes account of these potential barriers?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

At present, we cannot be sure that the Bill takes account of the variation within funding rates for non-maintained foundation phase providers across Wales, although this might be beyond the scope of this initial curriculum Bill.

3. Unintended consequences

3.1 Do you think there are there any unintended consequences arising from the Bill? If no, go to question 4.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

Some of the barriers could provide an unintended consequence such as, the funding discrepancy and the training consideration. It is important to consider how to avoid creating a two-tier system where there is a skills and training deficiency within the non-maintained sector

4. Financial implications

4.1 Do you have any comments on the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#))? If no, go to question 5.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

We welcome Welsh Government's commitment to funding the training and development of staff, where this is indicated. We believe that training, support and guidance should be invested in. It has been a long journey to get to this point where the curriculum in Wales is ready to be overhauled in such a systematic and radical manner. A key to achieving the aspirations is taking practitioners on this journey with policy makers. The new curriculum and the curriculum framework for the non-maintained sectors are only as effective as the weakest link therefore investment in teachers and practitioners over the coming months and years will be important. Furthermore, as this is investment in people, skills and training, Welsh Government should be reassured that this value and support towards the workforce is a worthwhile and lasting investment into the workforce in Wales.

5. Powers to make subordinate legislation

5.1 Do you have any comments on the appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#)). If no, go to question 6.1.

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

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6. Other considerations

6.1 Do you have any other points you wish to raise about this Bill?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

We are aware that there is a difference in approach between local authorities around Wales to providing early education. There are a small number of local authorities that mandate that early education takes place in maintained settings only. This is an aspect that is contentious as it removes an aspect of parental choice within these areas that is offered to families in other regions of Wales. Again, this might be beyond the scope of the Bill itself but considering this at a timely point in the development of the new curriculum would be welcomed. Welsh Government might consider that these are decisions that reside with local authorities beyond this Bill and into the delivery of the new curriculum, but it is worthy of note that parental choice in these areas is more limited than in neighbouring local authority areas.

