

## 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: NSPCC Cymru/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)*

NSPCC Cymru/Wales is pleased to support the principles of the Bill. We welcome the approach to curriculum reform, and the vision for all children fulfil the four purposes. NSPCC Cymru/Wales welcomes Welsh Government's bold approach to introducing mandatory RSE within the new curriculum for all learners age 3-16. We support the principles of the Bill in relation to RSE and the objective to 'improve the profile, quality and consistency'(1) of the subject. At the NSPCC, we believe that RSE and learning about healthy bodies, healthy relationships and a right to be treated, and to treat others, with dignity and respect is a core entitlement all children should receive. We believe it is best delivered as part of a whole school approach where it is embedded across the curriculum in wider school policies, ethos, behaviours and communications. The new compulsory RSE curriculum in Wales has the potential to ensure all children learn how to recognise abusive or controlling behaviour and know where to seek support. By embedding a safeguarding culture across school life and neighbourhoods, through a whole school approach, we have a real opportunity to alter what communities and peer groups see as normal behaviour, and rally everyone together to support and protect children from harm. This is crucial, as the most recent UK-wide prevalence study has shown that one in every five children has experienced severe maltreatment(2), with 15-17 year old girls reporting the highest rates

of sexual abuse(3). It is estimated that roughly a third of all child sexual abuse is perpetrated by peers(4) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) crime figures affirm that women were nearly four times more likely to be a survivor of sexual assault in childhood than men(5). We are however concerned that there is no commitment to RSE for post-16 learners. This is concerning as it is not only a critical time for young people's learning and experience, but post-16 it is the most likely age (between 16-19) that young people experience abuse in their relationships(6). NSPCC Cymru/Wales would like to see this addressed and post-16 RSE be provided for learners.

One of the four purposes of the curriculum is for learners to grow as healthy, confident individuals who are able to build relationships based on mutual trust and respect, and know how to find information and support to keep safe and well. RSE is an essential vehicle for this to be realised and without access to mandatory RSE, it is unlikely that all learners will be able to secure the key characteristics of the four purposes. RSE needs to provide a platform for learners to develop the knowledge and skills to form, recognise and maintain a range of healthy relationships, as well as recognise unhealthy relationships. For this to happen, children need to understand that under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Article 19) they have a right to safety, be equipped with information and language to recognise all forms of abusive or controlling behaviour, and have the confidence to speak to a trusted adult if they are worried or concerned. However, for this to be successful, NSPCC Cymru/Wales strongly believes that safeguarding needs to be strengthened on the face of the Bill.

NSPCC Cymru/Wales is supportive of the Bill which requires schools to encompass the core learning, as set out in the RSE Code in their curriculum, which will be supplemented by statutory guidance. While we welcome that the core learning in the RSE Code is designed to be explicit, it currently offers very little clarity about the remit of the RSE Code and statutory guidance. While the 6 thematic areas and their brief summaries (included in the Curriculum for Wales Guidance) are a good starting point, they are much too vague and lack specific detail of which developmentally appropriate topics should be covered within each theme. We are concerned that this lack of detail will create an inconsistent approach and further perpetuate unequal levels of RSE provision. RSE is a vast, complex and broad topic, so NSPCC Cymru/Wales believes, that schools will need a clear RSE Code, which includes comprehensive and detailed content on the six thematic areas supplemented with statutory guidance on how to build developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed content with children and young people. This will offer greater consistency for schools, parents/carers and learners on the developmentally appropriate areas that must be

designed and delivered within this mandatory element. There is also a lack of clarity about the statutory guidance, in terms of its purpose and what it should include and cover.

As 1 in 5 children experience severe maltreatment in their childhood(7), NSPCC Cymru/Wales feels there are some important safeguarding topics that must be included or expanded on within the RSE Code:

Violence, safety and support:

NSPCC Cymru/Wales welcomes the emphasis on protection and prevention and we are particularly pleased to see the emphasis on young people having the confidence to speak out and seek support for any abuse experienced. Research shows that it is very difficult for children to speak out about abuse or neglect, with many taking an average of 7 years to disclose, and some never telling anyone what has happened to them(8). Giving children the confidence to speak out means they will get help and support earlier, preventing further harm. However, NSPCC Cymru/Wales feels that it's vital that additional safeguarding themes are included; all areas of maltreatment, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, neglect, and persistent harmful household environments such as domestic and substance misuse, as well as maltreatment outside of the family home including sexual or criminal exploitation, peer on peer abuse, and how these issues intersect with online mediums. The NSPCC has produced a large number of evidence based resources to support children's learning, both at primary and secondary school, which demonstrates how to address these sensitive subjects in a developmentally appropriate way. This includes our Speak Out Stay Safe programme(9), PANTS resources (The Underwear Rule)(10) and Keeping Learners Safe(11) (see Q6 for more details on NSPCC resources).

Relationships:

NSPCC Cymru/Wales feels it is important for young people to learn about respect and tolerance; boundaries, and factors which can affect relationships. This should include a focus on domestic abuse, substance abuse, non-consensual image sharing (i.e. sexting), staying safe online, and the harmful effects of pornography. Research indicates that 1 in 25 primary school children surveyed by the NSPCC and LGfL Digisafe have been sent or shown a naked or semi-naked image by an adult, while 1 in 20 have been sent a naked or semi-naked image by another young person(12). 12% of young people in the survey video-chatted with someone they had not met face to face(13).

How children conduct relationships online needs to be a core issue addressed within the RSE Code. It is important that children are taught about consent (including when it is or

isn't possible to consent – e.g. power dynamics, and coercion) and that sharing images of someone without their consent is abuse; are supported to think critically about content they may see online in order to understand what healthy or unhealthy behaviour looks like; and are supported to develop the skill-set to assess what kind of online contact might be inappropriate or harmful and recognise when they should seek help.

#### Bodies and body image:

Within this theme, it is important that children learn the language to identify body parts; to understand the physical and emotional changes that occur through puberty and growing up; identify what a safe and healthy choice would look like for them; learn about pregnancy and infections, and know where to go for information and support. RSE is a vehicle to ensure children are empowered with the proper language and knowledge of anatomical terms so they can accurately report any experiences of abuse. NSPCC Cymru/Wales would like to see this emphasised within the RSE Code, with learners being taught to accurately identify body parts using anatomical terms.

#### Sex, gender and sexuality:

To keep all young people safe, both on and offline, we believe it is critical that RSE lessons recognise and support the full spectrum of relationships and sexualities. Our Childline service is committed to supporting all children, and last year we delivered over 6,000 counselling sessions to children and young people in the UK about issues relating to gender and sexuality - an average of 16 per day. From Brook and CEOP's joint study, Digital Romance(14), we know that LGBTQ+ young people are twice as likely (9.9%) to meet with an online contact who was not who they said they were, compared to heterosexual young people (4.9%). This may be because of a lack of visible LGBTQ+ young people in their local area, compounded by a lack of inclusivity in schools' relationship education which is often heteronormative. Inclusive RSE education is vital for ensuring all young people feel accepted, supported and safe, and can understand how key concepts apply to them and their everyday lives.

#### Rights and Equity

NSPCC Cymru/Wales supports the Children's Commissioner for Wales's position(15) that in order to safeguard the long-term needs of children, the new curriculum legalisation must include a clear commitment to children's rights. While it is positive to see a focus on rights and equity as one of the core themes, it is disappointing that links to the UNCRC have not been made. NSPCC Cymru/Wales feels that it is important that due regard to the UNCRC appears on the face of the Bill. Embedding the principles and the provisions of the UNCRC

within the Bill, will demonstrate Welsh Government's commitment to ensuring that all children in Wales are supported to learn about their human rights.

In addition to strengthening these core RSE themes, NSPCC Cymru/Wales feels it is also important for the RSE Code and statutory guidance to cross reference other relevant Welsh Government guidance that schools need to be aware of in the design and delivery of RSE. This includes Keeping learners safe(16); A Whole Education Approach to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence in Wales(17); Sexting(18); and the forthcoming Peer Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Harmful Sexual Behaviour Guidance. Clear links are important, as Estyn (2017)(19) found that many school leaders are not aware of Welsh Government guidance and toolkits to support the delivery of healthy relationships education and implement a whole-school approach to preventing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

To help ensure consistency, NSPCC Cymru/Wales would also like to see the RSE Code and statutory guidance supported by a comprehensive list of key concepts. This should include definitions around sex, sexuality, gender, gender identity, transgender, gender based violence, neglect, domestic abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. These definitions should be derived from legislation, guidance and academic or reputable sources so all schools have a shared understanding of core concepts. We recommend utilising the key concepts glossary produced by the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel(20).

As explored in more detail in Q2.1 and Q2.2, to successfully safeguard children and young people and implement an inclusive RSE curriculum, NSPCC Cymru/Wales believes the RSE Code and guidance needs a strong focus on how to design and deliver content in a trauma-informed way. Embedding a trauma-informed approach to RSE would mean acknowledging that 1 in 5 children have a history of trauma and abuse(21), and developing a sensitive and thoughtfully tailored approach to teaching to minimise the risk of unintended harm and ensure that no child feel stigmatised or unintentionally blamed if they have experienced abuse or neglect. This includes ensuring that there are no victim-blaming narratives, an onus on young people to keep themselves safe, or graphic content that is liable to provoke distress. Content should instead reinforce positive messages about all children's value and worth. While it is very important that children understand what constitutes inappropriate or abusive behaviour, RSE needs to deliver an explicitly clear message that as a child they are never responsible for stopping abuse, and if they ever feel worried or concerned they can always speak to a trusted adult who will respond appropriately.

A trauma-informed approach relies on teachers and school staff being primed with the knowledge that some children will have been traumatised by their previous experiences and have the skills they need to understand their responsibility to act on clues that children might leave that something is wrong (e.g. through changes in behaviour), and be confident in acting on those concerns so children are supported and kept safe from harm. There are 6 guiding principles to trauma-informed practice, including safety; trustworthiness and transparency; collaboration and peer support; empowerment; choice; and awareness of the intersectionality of identity characteristics(22). It is vital that these principles are at the heart of RSE curriculum, as they provide a helpful framework for working with children and young people to ensure that they can achieve their academic potential and feel happy and safe in the school environment.

NSPCC Cymru/Wales supports the inclusion of co-production being one of the core principles for embedding RSE in the curriculum, as detailed above, collaboration and peer support, empowerment and choice are some of the key tenets of a trauma-informed approach. NSPCC Cymru/Wales believes that co-production with young people is a means to not only ensure the relevance of the curriculum, but that content also is inclusive, is conscious of, sensitive and adapts to the experiences and needs of young people. In seeking to develop inclusive and relevant RSE, teachers should speak directly to young people to ascertain what additional needs they may have, and then work together to see how these might be better accommodated in the school setting. This should include young people being regularly consulted on the issues they're most impacted by, the kinds of language and expression most useful for supporting them to navigate RSE, commenting on any policies and making a meaningful contribution to RSE planning. It is important that examples of how to co-produce RSE with children and young people are included within the statutory guidance. We recommend signposting to the AGENDA(23) and Primary AGENDA resources(24), which include a wide range of activities teachers can utilise to develop co-produced and relevant RSE content. NSPCC Cymru/Wales also feels that it is important that children and young people will be meaningfully consulted and involved in co-constructing the RSE Code and statutory guidance. We would like more clarity on how and when young people will be involved in this work, and a plan in place for this to be facilitated.

### **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)*

NSPCC Cymru/Wales believes that legislation needs to be in place to provide a clear legal and policy framework, that will be necessary for successfully delivering on the contents of the Bill. Legislation on RSE is crucial, as existing evidence has shown that non-statutory provision has resulted in a wide variation in the quality and quantity of RSE that children receive across the UK. For example, the Sex Education Forum and the National Education Union carried out a survey with 1001 young people and found that 20% were not taught about the signs of an abusive relationship, and 23% did not learn anything about how to tell if a relationship is healthy(25). In their survey, Terrance Higgins Trust revealed that the vast majority of young people were not taught about consent (75%), LGBT sex and relationships (95%) or gender identity (95%)(26). It also showed that one in seven young people did not receive any RSE at all, and over half (61%) received RSE just once a year or less(27). As highlighted by the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel(28), RSE in Wales is rarely inclusive; too often biological without enough focus on rights, equity, emotions and relationships; and not reflective of children and young people's lived experiences. As the expert panel cautioned within their report, without legislative change RSE will continue to be poorly resourced, 'will remain a low priority for schools, be narrowly conceived and children and young people's rights, needs, questions and concerns are not sought or met and where sex, gender, sexuality and relationship inequalities and inequities remain unchallenged and endure' (p. 10).

## **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)*

#### Professional Development

Evidence suggests that RSE is more likely to be effective when delivered by teachers who have on-going, high quality training, and are confident in their role(29). NSPCC Cymru/Wales is concerned, that a growing body of evidence indicates that many teachers have not had adequate training to support confident and high quality RSE delivery(30). Recent evidence from NSPCC, has shown that nearly half of teachers surveyed in England lacked the confidence to teach compulsory RSE lessons(31). In Wales, the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel(32), highlighted that few RSE teachers had the training needed to feel equipped to deliver these lessons. Without specialist RSE training,

teachers may avoid addressing sensitive or challenging issues, which may fail to adequately include, and safeguard all children.

While the RSE Code and statutory guidance will provide an important starting point for schools in designing their inclusive content, NSPCC Cymru/Wales believes that this needs to be supported by a programme of ongoing professional development on RSE. This would support schools to map out the issues that are most relevant to their learners, and be more confident in creating and delivering their new inclusive RSE curriculum in a trauma-informed way. As discussed more fully in Q3, NSPCC Cymru/Wales believes it is vital that this includes training for teachers and school staff to ensure they are equipped with the tools to spot signs and symptoms of abuse, sensitively interact with a child who is disclosing and are confident in taking action to support that child.

NSPCC Cymru/Wales also supports the recommendation made by the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel(33), that provision is made for a designated RSE lead practitioner with protected hours in every school to help guide and develop the RSE curriculum and embed a whole school approach. A fully trained RSE lead practitioner will have specialist knowledge about safeguarding and will be able to support school staff to confidently deliver trauma-informed content, and training on abuse and neglect. The role also supports promoting best practice, facilitating training alongside collaborating with specialist organisations, and co-producing content with children and young people to produce high quality and relevant RSE(34). NSPCC Cymru/ Wales also recommends that there is a RSE advisor at local authority level.

### Trauma Informed Approach

With 1 in 5 children experiencing some form of severe maltreatment(35), there is a very strong likelihood that there will be a child sitting in on RSE lessons who has experienced abuse or neglect. This makes it imperative that RSE is trauma-informed, and that teachers and all school staff are primed with the knowledge and skills they need to understand their responsibility to act on clues that children might leave that something is wrong (e.g. through changes in behaviour), and be confident in acting on those concerns so children are supported and kept safe from harm. NSPCC Cymru/Wales is very concerned that RSE is not currently framed within a trauma-informed approach, and that some elements of the proposed curriculum could reinforce feelings of self-blame, shame and guilt for children who have experienced abuse, as explored in more detail in Q2.2.

### RSE Resources



NSPCC Cymru/Wales is concerned that a lack of high quality, evidenced based resources could be a barrier to the successful delivery of inclusive RSE. Schools need reputable, evidence-based, medically accurate and trauma-informed resources on RSE to draw on. This is particularly important given that resources with inaccurate, misleading or graphic content can cause harm to children, including vicarious trauma and distress.

### Engaging with Parents and Carers

Engaging with parents/carers is vital when effectively embedding a whole school approach to RSE, and this becomes even more essential within the new curriculum where parents no longer have a right to withdraw their children from RSE. Good communication and transparency between schools and parents/carers is essential in building trust and confidence in the teaching of RSE. It can also provide an opportunity to consider contextual safeguarding, and to open a dialogue within the community about what healthy or unhealthy relationships look like, enabling more people to be able to identify concerning situations and feel confident to act to protect children from harm. One of our concerns is that the curriculum does not set out detailed guidance on how to effectively engage with parents/carers around RSE.

## **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)*

### Professional Development

NSPCC Cymru/Wales is pleased to see an agreement from Welsh Government that 'professional learning will be required in order for teachers to gain the knowledge and confidence to embed relationships and sexuality education within their teaching'(36). However, we are concerned that while it has been recognised by some innovation schools that there will be an additional cost for professional learning for RSE(37), no dedicated funding has yet been allocated to support RSE training and resources. There is a significant risk that the opportunity to protect children from harm will be undermined if teachers/school staff do not receive specific RSE training.

It is important that within a whole school approach, where the workforce required to deliver RSE and create a safe and healthy school environment will expand beyond teachers, that RSE training is available to all school staff. While wider school staff may not directly teach school children, staff will regularly engage with children, or have insight into their peer groups and norms, familial situation, and usual or unusual behaviour. A whole school

approach to safeguarding requires that the entire school has a shared understanding of their responsibilities, and are equally able to recognise and respond to signs of concerning behaviour. Furthermore, how incidents of peer abuse and/or problematic sexual behaviour are responded to directly affects the culture of the school. If handled poorly, an unsafe and unhealthy set of norms can be created which enable peer-on-peer abuse and this can also deter other students from disclosing.

NSPCC Cymru/Wales feels that it is vital that Welsh Government ring-fence investment for professional learning on RSE. This must include funding for comprehensive training for teachers and school staff to ensure they are equipped with the tools to help spot signs and symptoms of trauma and abuse, engage in purposeful conversations, and are confident taking action and supporting children through the disclosure journey. NSPCC Cymru/Wales also recommends that funding is in place for a designated and trained RSE lead practitioner with protected hours and dedicated resources, in every school to support the development of the RSE curriculum, and support RSE training and professional development. NSPCC Cymru/Wales also recommends that there is a RSE advisor at local authority level.

#### Trauma Informed Approach

As indicated in Q2.1, NSPCC Cymru/Wales is very concerned that the way some of the curriculum elements have been phrased, could reinforce feelings of self-blame, shame and guilt for children, which we know are common responses to experiencing abuse and neglect(38). We are very concerned about the choice of wording in two of the sections in the Health and Wellbeing AoLE. In the section 'Healthy relationships are fundamental to our well-being'(39), we find the use of the term 'need to be aware of how to keep safe', very problematic as it places the responsibility for staying safe from violence and abuse on children and young people.

NSPCC Cymru/Wales has similar concerns about wording used in the 'Specific considerations' section, which states that children and young people 'will need to recognise unwanted attention and learn how to respond appropriately'(40). These kinds of narratives can serve to individualise the problem of child abuse, and place an onus on young people, when we really should be conveying to children that they have a right to safety and it is the responsibility of everyone in the community to uphold that right. While it is very important that children understand what constitutes inappropriate or abusive behaviour, we need to be explicit that as a child they are never responsible for stopping this, and should instead speak to a trusted adult who can respond appropriately on their behalf. NSPCC Cymru/Wales feels that it is vital that these elements of the curriculum are

addressed and reframed. We would like the first statement changed to: 'need to be aware they have a right to safety', and the second to 'can recognise abusive or inappropriate behaviour and know how to seek support if they feel worried or concerned'.

## RSE Resources

NSPCC Cymru/Wales welcomes the commitment from Welsh Government to audit the existing RSE resources on Hwb to assess the extent to which they are fit for purpose, and to develop new resources if needed. However, we believe that any resources on Hwb should be from reputable, expert and credible sources, that are evidence-based and medically accurate. It is also important to ensure that resources on Hwb are trauma-informed, and are sensitive to pupils' experiences. Some children may have already been exposed to, or be at risk of exposure to, the experiences and content being taught. It is vital that RSE resources on Hwb do not exhibit any victim-blaming narrative or graphic content that is liable to provoke distress. NSPCC Cymru/Wales supports the recommendation from the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel(41) to develop a RSE Hwb zone on the existing website.

## Engaging with Parents and Carers

NSPCC Cymru/Wales would like to see the statutory guidance include information for schools on how to engage with parents/carers around RSE, and how to manage any challenging situations and parental worries. The guidance must provide teachers with clear evidence about the crucial role RSE plays in safeguarding children and young people. In 2019, the Department of Education published two guides for parents on Relationships, Sex and Health Education for primary(42) and secondary(43) age pupils in England to communicate RSE content. Similar guidance for parents /carers in Wales could help inform and reassure any parents who have concerns about content. Schools should also recognise that parents might need support and guidance in talking about relationships, sex and sexuality at home, and they should be provided with evidence based information resources from schools to help foster discussions.

## **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)

There is a growing body of evidence that shows one of the positive consequences of good quality RSE, is that it can improve children's understanding of what constitutes abuse or unhealthy behaviour and increase the likelihood of them coming forward to disclose experiences of abuse(44). An international Cochrane Study for example, reported that students who had participated in child sexual abuse prevention programmes were more likely to disclose abuse, than those who had not(45). If delivered effectively, the new RSE curriculum could lead to an increase in children speaking out earlier about any abuse experienced, and adults taking action to help them at an earlier opportunity.

It is vital to ensure that when children do speak out about abuse and neglect, that they have a positive disclosure journey. However, NSPCC research shows that when children and young people do speak out about abuse, adults don't always recognise their attempts, understand or react appropriately(46). This can mean that a child doesn't get the support they need at the earliest opportunity. NSPCC research also shows that adults are not always confident about knowing what to say and do in the moment a child starts to disclose(47). With research indicating that teachers are the mostly likely professional to receive disclosures of abuse from children(48), it is vital that Welsh Government invest in comprehensive training for all school staff, so they are equipped with the confidence and skills needed to spot signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, and know how to sensitively and appropriately respond to disclosures and interact with a child who is disclosing.

## **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)*

As noted in Q2.2, NSPCC Cymru/Wales welcomes the agreement from Welsh Government that professional learning will be required in order for teachers to gain the knowledge and confidence to embed relationships and sexuality education within their teaching. However, we are disappointed that financial resources have not been specifically allocated to schools for professional learning on RSE. For the first time in Wales, it will be mandatory for all children to learn about how to recognise abusive or unhealthy relationships and know how and where to seek support. There is a significant risk that this opportunity to protect children will be undermined if teachers and other school staff do not receive appropriate training and support to deliver the RSE curriculum in a trauma-informed way.

NSPCC Cymru/Wales feels that for this to be realised, Welsh Government must identify ring-fenced investment in three key areas for RSE:

- Professional learning on RSE

This investment would enable schools to map out the issues that are most relevant to their learners, and be more confident in creating and delivering their new inclusive RSE curriculum in a trauma-informed way. It should also include funding for comprehensive, training for teachers to ensure they are equipped with the tools to help spot signs and symptoms of trauma and abuse, sensitively interact with a child who is disclosing and are confident in taking action and supporting children through the disclosure journey.

- RSE Lead Practitioner

NSPCC Cymru/ Wales also recommends that funding is in place for a designated and trained RSE lead practitioner with protected hours and dedicated resources, in every school to support the development of the RSE curriculum, and support RSE training and professional development. NSPCC Cymru/ Wales also recommends that there is a RSE advisor at local authority level.

- Dedicated Funding for RSE Resources

NSPCC Cymru/Wales would also like to see dedicated funding made available for schools for RSE resources.

## **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)*

NSPCC Cymru/Wales has not commented on other elements of the new curriculum, but the importance of getting the design and delivery of RSE right is crucial if we are to fulfil the four purposes of the new curriculum, and keep children safe from harm. As we have set out in this response, we believe that the four purposes cannot be achieved without strengthening safeguarding on the face of the Bill. For all children to successfully fulfil the four purposes and become healthy confident individuals, the new compulsory curriculum in Wales needs to provide a platform for learners to understand that under the UNCRC they have a right to be treated with respect, that they have a responsibility to treat their peers with respect; that they are able to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships and know how to seek help if they ever feel worried or concerned. By embedding this safeguarding culture across school life and neighbourhoods, through a whole school approach, there is a real opportunity to alter what communities and peer groups see as normal or acceptable behaviour, and rally everyone together to support and protect children from harm.

NSPCC Cymru/Wales is concerned that not all of the 11 Recommendations made by the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel(49), and accepted in principle by the Cabinet Secretary for Education(50) have been implemented in the design of the new RSE curriculum. Made in a statement in Plenary on the 22nd May 2018, the Cabinet Secretary for Education was clear that the recommendations were accepted in principle, in order to facilitate a strategic and holistic approach to improving RSE.

“I am not looking to tinker around the edges; my vision is that we transform the way this area of study is delivered, now and in the future” (Cabinet Secretary for Education, 2018: point 322)

“By taking forward the recommendations of the expert panel, and so driving real improvement in the quality of RSE provision, we will be contributing to making Wales a healthier, happier and more connected place” (Cabinet Secretary for Education, 2018: point 323)

While some of these recommendations have been incorporated, there is no explanation for why the other recommendations, such as the provision for a dedicated RSE lead in schools, a dedicated RSE local authority lead and a policy-practice-research network, have not been addressed. NSPCC Cymru/Wales would like to see an update from the Minister on progress towards the implementation of the 11 recommendations.

As indicated in Q1.2, the NSPCC has produced a large number of evidence based resources to support children’s learning, both at primary and secondary school, about sensitive

subjects in a developmentally appropriate way. We feel these resources can help support the vision within the new curriculum to bring everyone together to support and protect children from harm. This includes our Speak Out Stay Safe programme, which is a free service delivering safeguarding messages to primary school children in a lively, interactive and memorable way. The child-friendly assemblies and workshops help children to understand abuse in all its forms and recognise the signs, and know how to get help and support. The Speak Out Stay Safe programme aims to go into every primary school in the UK every 2 years, although due to COVID-19 restrictions, this service is temporarily a virtual offer. The NSPCC has also developed free PANTS resources (The Underwear Rule) for teachers, including a lesson plan, curriculum links, classroom activities designed to support teachers to teach children about PANTS and help them understand they have a right to stay safe. We have also developed PANTS guidance for parents for speaking to children with learning disabilities, and a British Sign Language video about PANTS. The NSPCC has also recently produced the Let Children Know You're Listening resources, which are designed to support professionals to better listen to a child who is disclosing abuse or neglect. NSPCC's Sharing the Science training and resources(51) offers up-to-date training on child development science and how to share it effectively, which can help school staff to develop trauma informed practice. NSPCC Cymru/Wales would welcome the inclusion of these resources in the statutory guidance and on Hwb, so schools are aware they are available to support RSE teaching, to improve children's understanding of what constitutes abuse and increase the likelihood of young people coming forward to disclose experiences of abuse.

#### List of references

- (1) See Welsh Government (2020) CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT (WALES) BILL Explanatory Memorandum, Chapter 3 - Purpose and intended effect of the legislation, point 3.53
- (2) Radford, L. et al. (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. London: NSPCC; Office for National Statistics (2020) Child Abuse in England and Wales: March 2020
- (3) Radford, L. et al. (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. London: NSPCC.
- (4) See: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1661/statistics-briefing-harmful-sexual-behaviour.pdf>
- (5) Office for National Statistics (2020) Child Abuse in England and Wales: January 2020
- (6) ONS (2015) Crime in England and Wales: Year ending March 2015

- (7) Radford, L. et al. (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. London: NSPCC
- (8) Allnock, D. and Miller, P. (2013) No one noticed, no one heard: a study of disclosures of childhood abuse. London: NSPCC
- (9) See: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/services/speak-out-stay-safe>
- (10) See: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/schools/pants-teaching>
- (11) See: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/services/keeping-safe-preventative-education-in-northern-ireland>
- (12) See: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/online-safety/children-sending-receiving-sexual-messages.pdf>
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- (30) See for example, Sex Education Forum (2018) Nearly three in ten teachers deliver relationships and sex education classes with no training.
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- (40) See 'Specific Considerations for this Area, Section 2 'What Topics, Themes and Activities will Help Respond to Learners Needs', 'How can settings and schools support learners to recognise that relationships or aspects of relationships may not always be safe or healthy?'
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- (50) See Section 6, Statement by the Cabinet Secretary for Education: Relationships and Sexuality Education, point 322: <https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/4985#A43520>
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