



## **Children Young People and Education Committee’s Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales: Implementation**

### **Introduction**

Children in Wales is the national umbrella organisation in Wales for children and young people’s issues, bringing organisations and individuals from all disciplines and sectors together. One of our core aims is to make the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) a reality in Wales. Children in Wales campaigns for sustainable quality services for all children and young people, with special attention for children in need and works to ensure children and young people have a voice in issues that affect them.

For further information on the work of Children in Wales, please see [www.childreninwales.org.uk](http://www.childreninwales.org.uk) and [www.youngwales.wales](http://www.youngwales.wales)

### **Children in Wales Response to the Review**

Children in Wales welcomes the opportunity to aid the Committee in its consideration of implementation of Welsh Government’s ‘A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life’. We regard this as a critically important policy development which should effectively improve the well-being and life chances of children and young people in Wales. We also regard it as being an important tool in taking forward the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within the education sector. As we know from our Young Wales work on priorities well-being and good mental health are one of the most discussed topics, with many young people feeling that school could and should do more. We know this is part of the new agenda and is welcomed but currently the gap between pilot work and knowledge in the field remains.

#### **1. The work of the Pioneer schools network in designing and developing the new curriculum;**

1.1. We have limited knowledge about what is happening in the Pioneer Schools

1.2. We are unclear how much effective engagement of children and young people there has been in the Pioneers schools discussions to date?

1.3. We are unclear how much is being discussed between and outside of the pioneer schools as the work progresses.

1.4. Inequalities persist in education attainment levels and gaps remain between those that excel and those that do less well e.g. pupils receiving free school meals, Looked After Children and some other groups such as gypsy traveller children. Whilst we welcome the universal approach to reform, some additional targeted support will need to be built in to ensure all can benefit and no one is left behind and we are not aware of how this is being considered in the pioneer schools.

1.5. We are also unsure how children excluded, temporarily excluded, home schooled or taught in off-mainstream school sites are being considered in the pioneer areas.

## **2. Interface with effective professional learning for the education workforce and initial teacher education and training;**

2.1. We do not have evidence of children's rights being sufficiently built into all strands of teacher training and classroom teaching. Concerns about human rights teaching were raised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in May – teaching on rights to children as well as to teachers and other school staff requires a whole school approach.

2.2. The cultural shift required for implementation of the new curriculum will require a wholesale revision of training. Children in Wales runs training courses including courses on children's rights and across the board there is a need for training in this area including to governors.

### **3. Governance arrangements for implementation and the role of the Independent Advisory Board, Change Board and Strategic Stakeholder Group; and**

- 3.1. Children in Wales has a place on the Strategic Stakeholder Group which has representation from a large number of organisations. However there are only a very few organisations representing children and young people – eg the office of the Children’s Commissioner, the NUS and Children in Wales through the work of Young Wales. The majority are from education delivery bodies. For this reason we encouraged the formation of a sub group to consider how best to keep children and young people involved. This group has met twice. It is however unclear to us how children and young people will participate across all the activities including the Pioneer Schools and the Governance structures.
- 3.2. Participation and engagement. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child made a recommendation that *‘children are not only heard but also listened to and their views given due weight by all professionals working with children’*. As part of any inquiry which the NAFW Committee chooses to conduct, it is imperative that the issue of participation and engagement of all children and young people on all decision making matters which concern them is considered and included. Through our Young Wales work we are aware of considerable interest and work done by children and young people across Wales on a wide range of education and school related issues such as bullying, healthy relationships, sexual health etc.

One example is from Cardiff Youth Council which undertook a survey of young people to find out how well the current PSE system in Wales prepares young people for life. 47% of young people who responded to the survey said they thought it did not. Some of the topics they felt should be included in PSE were employment and taxes; independent living; how to get official documents, such as a driver’s license and passport; housing and parenting. Comments from the survey included:

*“Although some of the work we are taught in PSE has relevance, it seems to lack substance in some areas ... lots of the subjects need to be backed up with more detail ...”*

*“At the moment it feels like a time killing subject ... it’s not given enough importance ...”*

*“I think we should be taught more about independent living and democracy and rights ... I feel like our education system doesn’t teach us enough about life skills, such as housing, parenting, mental health and national politics, rather than healthy eating and smoking, which are common sense really.”*

(Cardiff Youth Council survey)

3.3. The Stakeholder Group does not meet often enough to have as much influence as it could have. Discussions at the last meeting did consider how best to ensure that representatives had sufficient time and information to be able to consult their respective members/constituencies. It was recognised that there needs to be more lead in time and common communication material to assist in this process.

3.4. Whilst the Stakeholder Group receives one or two presentations about what is happening in other parts of the programme of activity, there needs to be more joined up activity to both avoid duplication and to enable stakeholders to actively engage at a sufficiently early stage to be able to influence the operational design.

#### **4. Other issues of concern and/or importance regarding the development of the new Curriculum for Wales.**

4.1. Regarding the main concerns for young people growing up in Wales today, Professor Donaldson’s report identifies 4 purposes for the curriculum. It recommends that the entirety of the school curriculum should be designed to help all children and young people to become: ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world, ready to be citizens of Wales and the world healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

4.2. Through Young Wales work, young people have identified their priorities amongst which are anti-bullying and hate crime, healthy relationships, curriculum development, Future Generations work and the UNCRC implementation. Some recent work in schools reflected 2 areas in school where children and young people can have more of a say and play a fuller role.

- School councils - They feel that they are run very much to the agenda of the teachers rather than the pupils.
- PSE lessons - across the board young people have said they are pointless, they would like to have a taste of sessions e.g sexual health, well-being, food standards and then ask for certain agencies to come back to have a 'fuller' session/sessions. Also depending on what is relevant to them locally eg if there are high levels of self-harm in the school it may be more relevant to have sessions with school nurse or well-being sessions.

4.3. 'What training/support may be in place for teachers/support workers to fulfil this learning to young people?' In both of these areas young people would be able to develop in the four areas quoted in 4.1 above.

4.4. We have a concern that some schools pool PSE lessons into one day a year rather than spreading them throughout the year. If a child misses that day, then they miss out on a year's worth of lessons.

4.5. Estyn has just released a consultation on the next inspection framework <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/consultation> - how will this be tied into the curriculum implementation?

4.6. How will the new curriculum influence families whose children are home schooled are completely out of the loop?

4.7. How will the interface between implementing the new curriculum and the Additional Learning Needs reform be managed in mainstream schools?

4.8. Cross border issues for children who move to and from other parts of the U.K.  
– transition arrangements for children such as ‘looked after children’ who will follow a totally different curriculum if moved to out of country placements. What provisions is being made to strengthen support for when they return to Welsh schools so they don't fall further behind?

4.9. There needs to be links with the violence against women legislation and the future generations’ well-being goals.

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November 2016