

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Hynt y gwaith gan Lywodraeth Cymru wrth ddatblygu Cwricwlwm newydd Cymru | Welsh Government's progress in developing the new Curriculum for Wales

CR 21

Ymateb gan: Stonewall Cymru
Response from: Stonewall Cymru

Background

Stonewall Cymru is Wales's leading lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) equality charity. We were founded in 2003, and we work with businesses, public bodies, schools, the Welsh Government, the National Assembly for Wales and a wide range of partners in communities across Wales to work towards our vision of a world where lesbian, gay, bi and trans people are accepted without exception.

Background - Relationships and Sexuality Education in the new curriculum

1. Stonewall Cymru was part of the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel, which was formed by the Welsh Government to inform the future of how sex and relationships education would be taught in Wales.
2. The recommendations of the group's report on [The future of Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales](#) were all accepted in principle by the Cabinet Secretary for Education in May this year. It was announced that Relationships and Sexuality Education would be a statutory part of the new curriculum to come into force in 2022.
3. There are two vital changes in approach in the new Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) provisions. Firstly, schools will be required to teach about issues a broader range of issues relating to relationships and sexuality than the narrow, biological approach which many schools continue to use, covering issues such as consent, abuse, and healthy relationships. Secondly, teaching across all issues will have to be inclusive of learners who are lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer and intersex (LGBTQI).

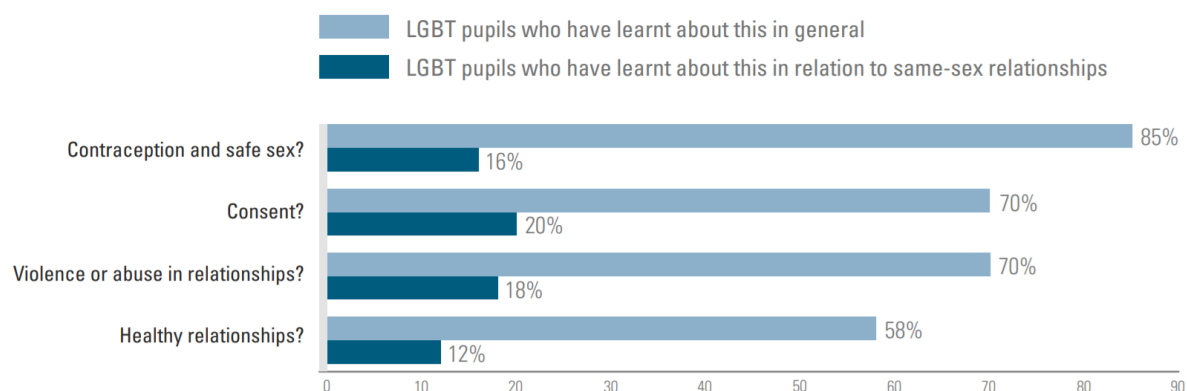
"School has only ever taught me sex ed for straight people. I had to learn about same-sex relationships by asking people and looking on the Internet. Given that school didn't teach me about same-sex relationships when I was young and questioning, I found it alienating and felt even less like I could come out."

Rachel, 18, FE college, *School Report Cymru* (2017)

Preparedness of schools and teachers to deliver LGBT-inclusive RSE

- Our research shows that most schools in Wales do not teach RSE in a way that is relevant to and inclusive of LGBT students. While there are some examples of exemplary practice in Wales, on the whole teachers and school staff lack confidence in addressing LGBT issues in a school context.
- Our [School Report Cymru \(2017\)](#) covers the findings of a survey of 267 LGBT young people from across Wales. Over a decade after the repeal of

HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT...



Section 28, it found that three in five LGBT pupils in Welsh schools are never taught anything about LGBT issues. While most LGBT young people had received some form of school teaching about healthy relationships and safe sex, very few have learned about these issues in the context of same-sex relationships, as shown in the following graph.

School Report Cymru (2017), p.16

- Bi and trans pupils were especially unlikely to see issues affecting them covered in teaching, with more than four in five saying they have never learned about or discussed bisexuality at school, and 87 per cent saying that they have never been taught about or discussed gender identity and what 'trans' means. Only six per cent of LGBT pupils in Wales have learnt about where to go for help and advice about being trans.
- More generally, despite examples of exemplary practice in some schools, teachers lack confidence in teaching about LGBT topics in the classroom. Teachers are unlikely to have received any training that covers LGBT inclusion in the curriculum, tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language and bullying or supporting LGBT students, and these issues are not typically covered in Initial Teacher Education.

"I have never heard a teacher challenge [anti-LGBT] behaviour. For example I was having a discussion with a boy who was using transphobic language while a teacher was listening who didn't respond at all."

Anna, 13, faith secondary school, School Report Cymru (2017)

8. This leads to enduring myths about whether it's even appropriate for teachers to discuss LGBT issues in the classroom. Our survey of teachers ([Teachers Report](#), 2015) found that almost two in five of secondary school staff in Wales surveyed say they do not know if their school allows them to address lesbian, gay and bi issues.
9. In primary schools, more than a third of staff say their school does not allow them to teach about lesbian, gay and bi issues and almost half do not know if they are allowed. This is despite the fact that primary schools can and should provide inclusive education that celebrates difference, benefitting all pupils. For example, when learning about relationships, pupils could learn about the different types of families that exist in society, including families with two mums or two dads.
10. This is connected with the low level of professional training among teachers about the delivery of sex and relationships education more generally. Estyn's [review of healthy relationships education](#) (2017) found that out of schools surveyed, only 'a few... have effective arrangements to ensure that all staff who deliver healthy relationships education are knowledgeable and confident with the subject content'.¹
11. The context of professional learning around sex and relationships education in Wales and the issues which need to be overcome to realise the ambition behind the plans for Relationships and Sexuality Education are covered in depth in the report accompanying the recommendations of the SRE Expert group, on [Informing the Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales](#).²
12. Given the current context, there need to be wide-reaching efforts to make sure teachers are equipped with the professional learning and resources to meet the requirements of the new curriculum around LGBT inclusion with authority and confidence, and to empower schools to deliver inclusive RSE before the start of the new curriculum.

Progress on professional learning and resource provision

13. At the time of the RSE announcement, the Cabinet Secretary for Education announced £200,000 for education consortia to 'begin the process of identifying professional learning needs' in the subject. Welsh Women's Aid were awarded £50,000 to develop resources and training for schools.³ We welcomed the Cabinet Secretary's recognition of the importance of improved professional learning for teachers on RSE especially on questions of LGBT inclusion.
14. Since then we have been invited by Welsh Women's Aid to work with them on the lesson plans they have created for teachers, and have

¹ Estyn. (2015). *A review of healthy relationships education*, 19

² Renold, E. and McGeeney, E. (2017). *Informing the Future Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales*. Cardiff University, 93-117

³ <https://gov.wales/newsroom/educationandskills/2018/kirsty-williams-announces-focus-on-healthy-relationships-in-major-reforms-to-relationships-and-sexuality-education/>

- provided feedback and input to ensure LGBT young people see themselves and their issues reflected in teaching.
15. More recently, the Cabinet Secretary announced £24 million as part of the new National Approach to Professional Learning, with the first year of funding allocated to the education consortia.
 16. We are not aware of the details of how this funding will be spent across the curriculum. However, to prepare schools for the RSE component of the new curriculum, it is crucial that the recommendations around professional learning (*recommendations 6-10*) contained in [The future of Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales](#) report are acted upon from the beginning of this work, including the establishment of an RSE professional development pathway and the identification and training of an RSE lead in every school and local authority.
 17. Furthermore, work to prepare schools for RSE should recognise the need to adopt a whole-school approach to LGBT inclusion and address topics relating to relationships, sexuality, and the experiences of LGBT people across all Areas of Learning Experience. Stonewall's guide to [Creating an LGBT-Inclusive Curriculum](#) contains practical ideas on how this can be done in different subject areas.
 18. Crucially, any future work by education consortia and local authorities on professional learning and resource provision needs to be informed by the lived experience and expertise of LGBT young people themselves, and should seek out collaboration with organisations with expertise on LGBT issues.
 19. This is especially important in ensuring that the breadth of LGBT experiences are reflected in RSE teaching and across the curriculum, such as those specific to bi and trans young people, and the experiences of LGBT young people with other marginalised identities.
 20. Relatedly, Stonewall Cymru does not currently include intersex issues within our campaigning remit. The Welsh Government and other organisations working on the development of the RSE curriculum, training and education should specifically ensure they engage with organisations with expertise on intersex issues to ensure that efforts to make the new curriculum inclusive of LGBTQI+ learners don't leave intersex children and young people out.

Reports cited and further reading

[The Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales: Recommendations of the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel](#) (Welsh Government, 2017)

[Informing the Future Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales](#) E Renold and E McGeeney (Cardiff University, 2017)

[School Report Cymru](#) (Stonewall Cymru, 2017)

[The Teachers' Report](#) (Stonewall Cymru, 2015)

[A review of healthy relationships education](#) (Estyn, 2017)

[Creating an LGBT-Inclusive Curriculum: A Guide for Secondary Schools](#) (Stonewall, 2017)