

18 April 2019

Dear Lynne Neagle AM,

I am writing to you as chair of the Children and Young People's Committee to raise concerns about the new curriculum. There is a risk that Wales will fall further behind other countries and more lives will be lost unnecessarily across Wales if CPR and other life-saving skills are not referenced in the content that needs to be covered in the new curriculum.

BHF Cymru supports the Donaldson Review and agrees that less prescription is imperative to the success of the new curriculum. This is why we already provide free CPR training resources for every school in Wales to ensure that they can teach CPR at a time and in a way that suits them.

Along with St John's Cymru and British Red Cross Wales, we have met with the Welsh Government officials leading the development of the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) on a number of occasions. However, at the last meeting, we were alarmed that the Health and Wellbeing "what matters" statements core content and progression steps did not make any reference to learning CPR or lifesaving skills. Even the "what matters" statement about improving other people's health makes no reference to gaining knowledge and experience of CPR or lifesaving skills despite the evidence for this and the obvious fit for these skills with this statement.

We are concerned about this omission because of the missed opportunity this presents for learning key skills and improving health outcomes in Wales, and without a presence in the AoLE or "what matters" statements, it is very likely that schools may feel that they don't need to teach life-saving skills. The evidence is very clear. In countries where CPR is taught universally in schools and bystander CPR and survival rates are 2-3 times higher. For example, in Denmark in 2005, a programme to teach all secondary school age children CPR was introduced and a decade later the out of hospital



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cardiac arrest rate had tripled. In Denmark and Norway, where CPR is learnt universally in schools around 1 in 4 people survive an out of hospital cardiac arrest. In Seattle, where a similar programme was introduced, the survival rate is 1 in 5. Today in Wales, and across the UK, out of hospital cardiac arrest survival rates are less than 1 in 10 because rates of bystander CPR remain stubbornly low.

In 2016/17 the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust responded to over 2,800 out of hospital cardiac arrests where resuscitation was attempted. This means that we would likely see over 200 lives a year saved in Wales in the future if we follow the lead of other countries that have included CPR as a core part of their school curriculum.

A survey carried out by YouGov in October showed that nearly a third of adults in the UK would not attempt to carry out CPR in a situation which required them to. Yet, evidence shows that nearly 1 in 6 will witness a cardiac arrest. This is a skill that many young people will need - in a class of 30 students many will go on to put these lifesaving skills into practice later in life.

In both England and Scotland this evidence has led to changes and *all* students will now leave secondary school having been trained in CPR. At the start of 2019, the UK Government announced that CPR and life-saving skills will be a part of the English school curriculum from 2021 and as of 5<sup>th</sup> April 2019, all Scottish local authorities have committed to teaching it in all their schools. Based on the available evidence, it is highly likely that in a decade's time, that England and Scotland's out of hospital cardiac arrest survival rates will significantly improve. We urge the Welsh Government to consider the implications of not making any reference to CPR and other life-saving skills within the content that needs to be covered in the Health and Wellbeing AoLE.

At present, we know through our work, that around 85% of Welsh schools have our CPR kits, but with no reason for teachers to build this into their lessons in the future, we are extremely concerned that the numbers of people leaving school equipped with life-saving skills may actually fall.

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There is also a very high level of variation between schools at present and the evidence is unequivocal that the only way to address this and improve survival rates is through including lifesaving skills within curriculum content. Schools play a vital part in equipping children with the skills they need for life. We will continue to work with schools across Wales to support young people in learning CPR and we do not want to prescribe how or when children learn these skills in schools. In some schools, peer to peer learning works really well. In other schools, there will a member of staff with a passion and experience of teaching lifesaving skills who will want to deliver these sessions. Our 30 minute videos allow anyone to teach basic CPR in English or Welsh. If the new Welsh curriculum provides a simple reference and hook for life-saving skills then schools will be able to work with all the lifesaving charities in Wales to make sure no communities miss out and lives are saved.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Fletcher  
Head of BHF Cymru

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