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Consultation – Summary of responses

DRAFT RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) GUIDANCE 2019

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| Audience | Head teachers, governing bodies, personal and social education coordinators and teachers of relationships and sexuality education in all maintained schools. Health boards, school nurses, looked after children (LAC) nurses, sexual health nurses and other health professionals working in schools. LAC education coordinators responsible for the health and education of looked after children. Welsh Network of Healthy School Scheme Coordinators, Children and Young People's Partnerships, local authorities and coordinators/providers of sex and relationships education training programmes. |
| Overview | Summary of responses to the Welsh Government's consultation on the draft Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) guidance 2018. |
| Action required | Schools must have regard to the guidance when implementing their sex education policy and relationships and sexuality education provision. |
| Further information | Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Curriculum Division Arts, Humanities and Well-being branch Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ e-mail: RSEGuidance@gov.wales |
| Additional copies | This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website https://gov.wales/consultations |

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1. Introduction

This paper presents the key findings of the analysis, identifying the key messages and themes presented in consultation responses on '*Draft relationships and sexuality education guidance 2018*'.

2. Summary

The Welsh Ministers were seeking views on the draft relationships and sexuality education guidance 2018'.

The aim of this guidance is to provide teachers and school staff with practical support to build high quality provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education as part of a "whole school approach".

The advice in the draft guidance was informed by the evidence gathered by the Sex and Relationships Expert Panel and Estyn in their thematic review of healthy relationships education.

3. Responses

The consultation received a total of **275** responses:

- **122** were submitted through the online consultation
- **116** were submitted via e-mail

In addition, **37** responses were received through a campaign organised by the Humanists.

A total of **46** responses were identified as being from organisations and representative bodies, and a number of responses were received from individual schools and parents. It is possible that other organisations, representative bodies or schools also responded but chose to remain anonymous.

It is important to note that not all respondents provided answers to every question. The number of both yes / no / don't know responses and written comments varied significantly between questions. The number of responses to each question is presented in relevant sections of this report

4. Questions and Themes

Question 1

We have changed the name of Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) to Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). Does the introduction in the new guidance fully explain the scope and context of RSE?

| Response | Number |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Yes | 43 |
| No | 42 |
| Not sure | 17 |
| Total | 102 |
| Number of supporting comments | 65 |

The change from 'SRE to RSE was broadly welcomed. Many respondents were supportive of the expert panel's recommendations, and the development of a whole-school, and rights based approach to building high quality Relationships and Sexuality Education.

"We welcome the change from 'sex' to 'sexuality' in the guidance. This is supported by RSE expert agencies, existing literature, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNESCO."

"...we welcome that the proposed changes to the curriculum will ensure education is fully inclusive of LGBTQ+ learners, and includes wider issues such as domestic abuse, consent, and the importance of respecting diversity."

A number of respondents commented that the guidance was clear and concise without being too restrictive. Responses highlighted the importance that learners develop healthy relationships, and they were supportive of the intent in the guidance to fully encompass the scope and context.

"We agree with the change of name which will better reflect the content of the subject, with an appropriate emphasis on knowledge, understanding and support to enable learners to develop positive healthy relationships."

Respondents suggested the introduction should be strengthened, and it should include a clear narrative and rationale for the new RSE. It was recommended that use of the full explanation of the scope and context of RSE provided in the SRE expert panel should be considered.

"The introduction also does not include any reference to the context of educational reform in Wales. It should be contextualised in relation to the Four Purposes and the six AoLES of the new curriculum at the very least. It would also be helpful for schools to see how RSE can be integrated into whole school approaches to emotional wellbeing and mental health."

A number of respondents highlighted there is no clear or consistent definition of either 'sex' or 'sexuality' within the guidance, and recommended the inclusion of the World Health Organisation's working definition of sexuality. Respondents also suggested the development of case studies would help explore this definition as part of the new RSE context.

"The Expert Panel used the WHO's working definition of sexuality. We would support this as a definition of 'sexuality' for the guidance."

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) should be a prominent feature of the guidance, and the provisions of the UNCRC that are promoted through RSE should be clearly outlined.

Some respondents felt that young learners should not receive sex education at a young age, and that introducing aspects of 'sexuality' too young is likely to confuse children.

"No sex education before 12ys old, let children be children & decide their orientation as consenting adults."

A number of respondents expressed concerns that relationships are defined too broadly within the guidance, and that marriage was 'downgraded'.

Suggested that more detail should be provided around sexual health, which was felt to be critical to any teaching or learning about sexuality and relationships.

"The outline of relationships education is helpful. Further detail is needed to define sex education, for example aspects such as sexual health, human life cycles, correct terms for genitalia, the menstrual cycle, contraception, condoms, pregnancy choices, fertility, puberty, menstruation, FGM, and pornography."

Question 2

This guidance has been structured around a 'whole school approach'. Is it clear what a 'whole school approach' is? Does this guidance support you to deliver this?

| Response | Number |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Yes | 41 |
| No | 33 |
| Not sure | 23 |
| Total | 97 |
| <i>Number of supporting comments</i> | 53 |

Agreement with the principle that the guidance had been structured around a 'whole school approach'. Respondents welcomed this approach, and acknowledged its importance to ensure effective relationships and sexuality education for learners.

A number of respondents recommended that the guidance should include more detail for schools to be able to deliver effective RSE.

"Given the central role a whole-school approach plays in supporting the effectiveness of healthy relationships education, the draft guidance needs to provide more comprehensive detail about what is expected of schools in meeting this requirement. This includes providing information about how these key elements interact with one another in the context of the new curriculum. It is important that the whole-school approach for RSE also complements other whole-school approaches."

"While we value the inclusion of the UNESCO eight core themes, which provide an excellent starting point, there is a complete absence of the content of the curriculum. We propose including the content that UNESCO provide relating to this detail, as well as the information developed by pioneer schools and other agencies (e.g. central south consortia)."

Respondents were also clear that teaching must be supported, and suitable training for teachers is available to ensure readiness to deliver RSE.

"As with every other subject, for RSE to really be taught well, it needs staff who have training specifically in the subject and will take a lead in coordinating it within each school."

"As outlined in section 4 of the Expert Panel's report, successful high quality SRE in all schools depends upon having a well-trained and confident workforce. It is therefore crucial that alongside reforming this guidance, the Welsh government outlines its plans for providing specialist RSE training for teachers, including within initial teacher education."

Question 3

The draft guidance should be read alongside the signposting section and annexes A, B and C. Are the annexes and signposting links useful and informative?

| Response | Percentage (number) |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Yes | 44 |
| No | 27 |
| Not sure | 25 |
| Total | 96 |
| <i>Number of supporting comments</i> | 53 |

The inclusion of case studies was welcomed. However, a number of respondents felt schools require greater detail and resources in planning their teaching, and it was felt some examples were too broad, and not suitable for all schools.

“Case studies in Annex D do not link to whole school planning documentation, nor to any planning for teaching and learning, nor to any resources. They are brief, broad descriptions of practice which would be very useful alongside content guidance but are less useful without this.”

Respondents broadly welcomed the signposting links available within the guidance. However a number of comments were submitted highlighting further links to be included, and queried the relevance of some the current links included within the draft guidance.

“Information on signposting could be more detailed. Perhaps relating the 8 thematic areas from UNESCO as this list of topics is what schools will likely look to base their RSE.”

It was felt that more detail should be included within annexes A, B and C. Respondents outlined a range of additional areas to be considered.

More information is required, and it was felt high quality evidence based resources will need to be made available for teachers in Wales to meet the needs of the RSE curriculum.

“Content guidance should be linked to developmental stages and there should be additional guidance around how to differentiate learning for those with additional needs. This will give professionals the support and backing they need to develop their own content and practice suitable for their settings.”

Question 4

The draft guidance should be read alongside the signposting section and annexes A, B and C. Is it clear that the signposting section and annexes must be considered and is this helpful and practical?

| Response | Number |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Yes | 36 |
| No | 35 |
| Not sure | 19 |
| Total | 90 |
| <i>Number of supporting comments</i> | 46 |

Some respondents indicated their support for the tools available to schools within the draft guidance, although a few questioned the suitability of some of the links and highlighted the need to promote greater support around safety, wellbeing and health.

Some respondents indicated that the format should be improved, and draft guidance does not make clear enough that the annexes should be read alongside the guidance.

“.....the guidance could also make stronger links to the resources of Hwb.”

Clarification is also required as part of the guidance for primary schools, and it was expressed that greater links need should be made with the new curriculum.

“Without RSE being statutory most primary schools will not prioritise reading all additional information or developing and delivering the subject. Further information is needed to support the development and delivery of RSE in light of curriculum reform and the new AOLEs, particularly in relation to the Health and Wellbeing AOLE.”

“.....it would be helpful if, within the Guidance, clear links are made with the new curriculum in Wales. The Four Core Purposes and Six Areas of Learning and Experiences are referenced in the Consultation Document, but not in the Guidance. School staff would welcome Guidance that is fully incorporated into the vision and structure of the developing transformational curriculum in Wales.

Question 5

Do you think each section of the draft guidance is clear and explains what is required of teachers and schools?

| Response | Number |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Yes | 32 |
| No | 56 |
| Not sure | 18 |
| Total | 106 |
| <i>Number of supporting comments</i> | 167 |

Respondents welcomed this section of the draft guidance, but felt the guidance was vague and did not clearly explain what was required. It was suggested that it could be strengthened by further content, learning outcomes and further teaching resources.

“The non-statutory language (for example, “schools are encouraged”) used throughout the draft document does not provide clarity about what is expected of schools and teachers. The guidance would benefit from making use of already accepted writing conventions and clearly frame expectations by using the recognised terms ‘must’, ‘should’ and ‘may’.”

It was felt additional detail is needed to support the development and delivery of RSE in light of the curriculum reform, particularly in relation to the Health and Wellbeing AoLE.

“The UNESCO technical guidance however does appear to be a useful guide for schools in supporting them to determine learning outcomes at various key stages and in providing support in addressing and integrating rights and gender equity based approaches to the curriculum but again it appears not to provide actual lesson plans and teaching resources to use in order to be able to deliver on these learning outcomes.”

Concerns were also raised that there is no detailed information about what should be taught by each key stage or even what might be and a lack of clarity over what is developmentally appropriate for different age groups.

“As a result of this we are seriously concerned that the guidance does not guarantee schools will teach a comprehensive and robust RSE programme. The guidance also does not provide schools with clarity as to what is recommended to be taught when

Question 6

Thinking about each of the sections, do you feel there are: any gaps in information? And if so, what do you feel should be added that would be useful and helpful in your delivery of RSE? Any parts that are particularly helpful?

| Open question | |
|---|-----|
| Number who provided additional comments | 183 |

Respondents broadly welcomed each of the sections within the guidance, however it was felt there is a lack of specific information about appropriate content.

In a number of cases, respondents felt that a clear definition of key terms to teach RSE should be included within the guidance.

It was felt the guidance should be strengthened to inform teacher planning through the inclusion of a dedicated resources section, rather than a referencing and sign posting section.

Some respondents reported that the guidance does not give clarity on how RSE should be delivered in a developmentally appropriate way, and particular consideration should be given to support professionals in delivering RSE to children and young people with Additional Learning Needs.

“.....clarification on how RSE should be delivered in an age-appropriate way will be vital in engaging children and young people and mitigating any potential harm or trauma. It will also be vital in securing support from parents, governors and communities.”

It was felt further clarification is required for faith schools in particular and the sections should be strengthened to support practitioners and learners.

The inclusion of case studies was welcomed, and further consideration is recommended to capture and share best practice and resources.

Question 7

Do you agree with the approach outlined in the section ‘engaging with parents/carers/community’ on how schools should plan and develop their RSE policies?

| Response | Number |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Yes | 35 |
| No | 32 |
| Not sure | 27 |
| Total | 94 |
| <i>Number of supporting comments</i> | 64 |

A number of respondents agreed that engaging with parents, carers and the community was important, and this provided parents/guardians with an opportunity to become familiar with the curriculum.

Some respondents highlighted they were unable to locate a section entitled ‘engaging with parents/carers/community’ within the draft guidance, but welcomed the emphasis of engagement with parents.

It is recommended the draft guidance should include a ‘stand alone section’ specifically on engagement with ‘parents/carers/community’. It was recommended that the guidance should include detail about how teachers and schools can achieve effective engagement with parents and the community,

“To ensure an inclusive whole school approach it is important to consult with parents and carers regarding the development of RSE policies and delivery in school. Effective consultation can lead to better understanding and appreciation of how best to deliver RSE in school – it encourages dialogue and secures ownership of the agreed policies.”

Parental ‘Right to Withdraw (RtW)’ was referenced within this section by a few respondents. Some felt RTW should remain in place, and others felt it should be removed.

Question 8

Do you feel the guidance gives you the information you need to engage meaningfully with your learners to plan your RSE provision?

| Response | Number |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Yes | 28 |
| No | 38 |
| Not sure | 16 |
| Total | 82 |
| <i>Number of supporting comments</i> | 45 |

A number of respondents felt the guidance doesn't outline what exactly should be taught through RSE and further detail is required.

“At present the guidance does not provide clarity on how to engage and co-produce the curriculum with children and young people to ensure that it is ‘needs-led’ and ‘experience near’ (this is not necessarily the same as developmentally appropriate). Clearer guidance for example is required perhaps in the examples/case studies to clearly illustrate how teachers can work with existing information (e.g. data from the SHRN survey) and creative qualitative approaches to provide safe environments to listen and learn from children and young people.”

Some respondents also reflected in this section that the minimum age for such education should be secondary school age.

It was felt the guidance would benefit from having practical advice on how to engage with pupils to better understand their experiences and to inform planning of the development of RSE.

“Estyn welcomes the draft guidance referring to UNESCO’s technical guidance for sexuality education and its sub-headings. These provide a good starting point that support teachers to design a local learning offer in line with the principle of subsidiarity. However, there is a need for more detail and it is important for the guidance to provide assurances that local delivery of RSE is consistent with a national framework. While Estyn acknowledges that work to develop the new curriculum is well underway, the draft guidance would benefit from making appropriate links with how RSE helps to underpin to the new curriculum’s four purposes and it should inform local delivery of the six Areas of Learning and Experience.”

Question 9

What kind of training, support or resources would you like to see to help support the successful implementation of the guidance?

Supporting Comments

| Open question | |
|---|-----|
| Number who provided additional comments | 177 |

A number of respondents felt that more training opportunities are required for teachers, and it was felt they should have the expertise and knowledge to deliver RSE.

“This guidance needs significant development to include a clear and specific detail against which teachers can plan content with confidence that they have the backing of evidence-informed expertise, their school and their local and national government. I suggest this should be developed with external expertise, teaching professionals and young people, and should ensure that the needs of young people with additional learning needs are also represented.”

It was reported that resources relevant for RSE vary, and there is a need to consider how resources, and support from agencies can be cascaded through schools. It was suggested that the HWB would be a useful tool to share best practice and resources. It was also suggested that a dedicated programme path for teachers to use would be beneficial for practitioners.

Some respondents felt that lesson plans for different ages would be welcomed to ensure there is consistency in the delivery of the curriculum.

A number of respondents advised that Welsh Government should revisit the recommendations on training, support and resources, from the SRE expert panel.

“- Welsh Government to establish a RSE professional development pathway, differentiated for stage of education, to be incorporated into ITE and professional learning courses. This pathway would provide an opportunity to further progress their professional development and specialise in RSE, allowing scope for the workforce to achieve a Masters level RSE qualification.”

“- All schools should have a specialist trained RSE lead with access to resources and guidance to co-ordinate a rights and gender-equity based curriculum. Hours for delivery across the key stages should be equitable with other curriculum subjects. This role should involve embedding RSE in a whole school approach.”

Question 10

If you are not a specialist delivering SRE/RSE in your school, is this guidance sufficient to help you plan and deliver it for your learners?

| Response | Number |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Yes | 13 |
| No | 39 |
| Not sure | 19 |
| Total | 71 |
| <i>Number of supporting comments</i> | 32 |

In some cases, respondents felt there was a lack of a framework setting out the content in the subject, and more clarity is required.

“We appreciate that the new curriculum is yet to be published for consultation however, it would be helpful to have clearer signposting between this document and relevant What Matters statements of the AoLEs, especially the Health and Wellbeing AoLE.”

It was felt the guidance should be strengthened to for schools to help teachers plan and deliver for their learners.

“More guidance is needed for primary schools. More emphasis is needed on the school’s accountability in delivering RSE.”

“The NASUWT does not believe that there is sufficient guidance for non-specialists to plan and deliver RSE in schools. The Union reiterates that there may be more helpful guidance in the yet-to-be published AoLE. The NASUWT therefore believes that the consultation on new draft guidance is premature and the full details of the new curriculum should be made known before proceeding with this change.”

Question 11

We would like to know your views on the effects that the updated relationships and sexuality guidance would have on the Welsh language, specifically on: i) opportunities for people to use Welsh ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. What effects do you think there would be? How positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

| Open question | |
|---|----|
| Number who provided additional comments | 44 |

A number of respondents reported that they do not foresee any negative effects that the updated RSE guidance would have on the Welsh language.

“I feel that the introduction of the RSE will have a beneficial effect on the Welsh language. It would provide opportunities for the children to look at how RSE has developed in Wales compared to the rest of the UK and world.”

The need for additional high quality Welsh Language resources to effectively deliver RSE was raised by a number of respondents.

“It is essential that the RSE guidance document and all RSE supportive materials are available bilingually so that all schools and individuals can access and receive information in the medium of choice.”

Respondents also highlighted the importance that resources, and training, should be available bilingually to properly support learning, and that agencies should have Welsh speaking staff to deliver RSE.

“It is not expected that the Welsh Government’s renewed vision on RSE will have a positive or negative impact on opportunities for people to use Welsh. However, further consideration is needed to ensure Welsh-medium RSE provision is treated no less favourably than English-medium provision.”

Question 12

Please also explain how you believe the proposed relationships and sexuality guidance could be formulated or changed so as to have: i) positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language ii) no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

| Open question | |
|---|----|
| Number who provided additional comments | 34 |

A number of respondents felt that availability of Welsh language resources and training will support learning.

“As long as the resources and training are available bilingually it should adequately and properly support learning.”

Terminology was raised as an important issue, and it was suggested ‘user friendly terms’ would be welcomed within the draft guidance.

“Terminology is important in regards to RSE; it is vital that the use of Welsh language has a positive impact on expressing healthy relationships, sexuality and gender identity. By giving young people the opportunity to discuss and learn in both Welsh and English, young people will have the opportunity to develop the use of positive terms across linguistic divides.”

Question 13

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues, which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

| Open question | |
|---|-----|
| Number who provided additional comments | 173 |

A number of respondents commented that the reference to right to withdraw was omitted from the consultation. A number of respondents were in favour of parents retaining the right to withdraw children from RSE:

“You have not mentioned anything about respecting parental opt-out or parental wishes as to what their children should be taught.”

“We reiterate our strong support for keeping the parental right of withdrawal for RSE.”

“Parents are the primary educators of their children on these matters and ultimately it is up to them to decide how their children are taught these subjects.”

Some respondents also commented that future right to withdraw arrangements should be considered:

“I am unhappy about parents retaining the right to withdraw a young person from RSE beyond that age of 16, which is the age at which a young person's own views should be taken into account by professionals.”

A number of issues were raised by respondents around the content and themes listed within the draft guidance and their appropriateness for young children in particular. It was felt that these should be reviewed.

A number of respondents supported the development of the RSE curriculum.

“I understand the Welsh Government is currently consulting on a proposal to make RSE compulsory for all pupils under the age of 16. I firmly support this plan because all the evidence shows that pupils who are provided with high-quality, comprehensive, factually accurate lessons on these issues are best placed to grow up healthy, happy, and safe.”

“Education on relationships and sexuality can, and should equip children and young people with the tools to interpret what are often conflicting messages around complex topics. RSE should also serve to make sure that children and young people are aware of where and how they can access help and support. As part of introducing this element of the curriculum, Welsh Government must ensure that we

have the staff and professionals, such as school nurses, to put this positive theory into practice.”

“Compulsory RSE is, however, just a starting point and the process to ensure every child in Wales receives high quality, rights and equity based, inclusive, holistic RSE should follow with the development of comprehensive statutory guidance setting out a core curriculum. It is this core curriculum that all children and young people are entitled to receive. Indeed, the core curriculum should take the form of the ‘whole school approach’ model, as well as the development and delivery of professional training to ensure schools are equipped to deliver high quality RSE.”

It was felt further detail is required within the draft guidance for special needs schools to strengthen support for practitioners and learners.

“We would welcome clarity as to the requirements for special needs schools and private and independent schools in Wales to deliver this new RSE element of the new curriculum, and whether there will be any statutory requirements on them to ensure this vital subject is covered. “

5. Annex – List of respondents

1. Secularism UK
2. Swansea Education Department
3. Public Health Wales
4. Humanists UK
5. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
6. FPA
7. Cardiff University
8. Estyn
9. Royal College of Nursing Wales
10. Caerphilly LA Healthy Schools
11. SEA Cymru
12. Cardiff University
13. Whitmore High School
14. Catholic Education Service
15. Birmingham University
16. Christian Concern
17. NASUWT (Wales)
18. Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales
19. NSPCC CymruWales
20. Conwy County Borough Council
21. Mencap Cymru
22. Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent
23. Terrence Higgins Trust
24. Barnardos Cymru
25. NEU Cymru
26. Children's Commissioner for Wales
27. Christian Action Research & Education (CARE)
28. Children in Wales
29. Stonewall Cymru
30. End Violence Against Women Coalition
31. Educational psychologist
32. National AIDS Trust
33. National Secular Society x 37
34. Ysgol David Hughes
35. Info-Nation (Swansea Councils Young Peoples Services)
36. NHS consultant
37. Moorland Primary
38. Plan International UK
39. The Christian Institute
40. Mae'r Cynghrair Efengylaidd
41. Sex Education Forum