



# Cross-cutting themes for designing your curriculum

Part of [Designing your curriculum](#)

Schools and practitioners should have a methodology for designing a curriculum which incorporates, where appropriate, opportunities for learning and consideration of cross-cutting elements. These should allow learners to:

- consider local, national and international contexts
- develop understanding of relationships and sexuality education, human rights education and diversity, and careers and work-related experiences

## Relationships and sexuality education (RSE): statutory guidance

### Legal status of this guidance

This section sets out statutory guidance in relation to RSE and is published under section 71 of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 (the Act); it is designed to assist those responsible under the Act to design RSE as part of the curriculum.

### Introduction

#### Mandatory

[Relationships](#) and [sexuality](#) education (RSE) is a statutory requirement in the Curriculum for Wales framework and is mandatory for all learners from ages 3 to 16.

RSE has a positive and empowering role in learners' education and plays a vital role in supporting them to realise the [four purposes](#) as part of a [whole-](#)

[school approach](#). Helping learners to form and maintain a range of relationships, all based on mutual trust and respect, is the foundation of RSE. These relationships are critical to the development of emotional well-being, resilience and empathy. An understanding of sexuality with an emphasis on rights, health, equality and [equity](#) empowers learners to understand themselves, take responsibility for their own decisions and behaviours, and form relationships that are fully inclusive, reflecting **diversity** and promoting respect.

Schools and settings have an important role to play in creating safe and empowering environments that support learners' rights to enjoy fulfilling, healthy and safe relationships throughout their lives. This is critical to building a society which treats others with understanding and empathy, whatever their ethnicity, social economic background, disability, or [sex](#), [gender](#) or sexuality.

This section of the Curriculum for Wales framework contains:

- the RSE Code: this sets out the mandatory learning at developmentally appropriate phases
- the supporting statutory guidance: this provides support in developing RSE in a curriculum both as essential learning in its own right and also as a cross-cutting element in all Areas

The section below makes clear what is part of the mandatory Code and what is statutory guidance. A link to schools' and settings' legal duties on RSE can be found in the [legislative summary](#) section of this framework guidance.

## Why is RSE so important?

The world around us is evolving rapidly and significantly. As a society we are becoming ever more aware of:

- changing family structures and relationships
- shifting social, cultural and religious norms in relation to sex, gender and sexuality
- advances in technology including the rising influence of social media and increased use of digital communications and devices
- changing laws and rights around relationships, sex, gender and sexuality

In this context, RSE is an important support in enabling learners to navigate these changes. Understanding how relationships are formed, developed and maintained enables children and young people to develop skills and attitudes to support them in their own relationships throughout their lives. These may include family relationships, friendships, professional relationships, romantic and sexual relationships. Learning about both relationships and sexuality supports young people to develop the knowledge and skills needed to make sense of their thoughts and feelings and to effectively navigate rapidly changing influences. Learners need to be supported to respond to these and, where appropriate, feel equipped to challenge harmful stereotypes and perceptions and seek help and support.

RSE has the potential to be transformative for learners and communities, it is important in empowering learners and in developing their critical thinking. Children and young people are navigating a range of complex and contradictory messages about relationships and sexuality that will shape their

sense of self and their relationships with others. High-quality RSE provision will support learners to critically engage with what they are learning and experiencing. This supports them to understand their values and beliefs and to [advocate](#) for respect and understanding of others.

The Welsh Government believes all children and young people have the right to receive high-quality, holistic and [inclusive](#) education about relationships and sexuality. High-quality, holistic and inclusive RSE is associated with a range of positive and protective outcomes for all learners and their communities and can, for example:

- help increase learners' understanding of and participation in healthy, safe, and fulfilling relationships
- help young people recognise abusive or unhealthy relationships and seek support
- help reduce all [bullying](#), including homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and increase safety and well-being for all learners
- help all learners make informed decisions about sexual intimacy and reproductive health
- help promote equality and equity of sex, gender and sexuality
- increase [awareness, knowledge and understanding](#) of gender-based and sexual violence

## What is RSE?

RSE encompasses the knowledge, skills, dispositions and values that will empower learners to:

- support their health and well-being
- develop healthy, safe and fulfilling relationships of all kinds, including those with family and friends, and in time, romantic and sexual relationships
- navigate and make sense of how relationships, sex, gender and sexuality shape their own and other people's identities and lives
- understand and support their rights and those of others to enjoy equitable, safe, healthy and fulfilling relationships throughout their lives and advocate for these

RSE provision helps to ensure learners develop a positive understanding of relationships and sexuality and to recognise misconceptions. RSE aims to empower learners in line with their needs, experiences and wider development. Through discussion and by responding to learners' questions and needs, it can provide safe and empowering environments that enable learners to reflect on and express their views and feelings on a range of issues.

RSE in the curriculum focuses on three broad strands:

- **Relationships and identity:** helping learners develop the skills they need to develop healthy, safe, and fulfilling relationships with others and helping them to make sense of their thoughts and feelings.
- **Sexual health and well-being:** helping learners to draw on factual sources regarding their sexual and reproductive health and well-being, allowing them to make informed decisions throughout their lives.
- **Empowerment, safety and respect:** helping to protect learners from all

forms of discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect and enabling them to recognise unsafe or harmful relationships and situations, supporting them to recognise when, how and where to seek support and advice.

## Principles and approaches of effective RSE

To achieve the aims set out above, the following principles and approaches provide guidance and support for schools and settings as they design and realise RSE within their curriculum:

### Whole-school approach

Teaching and learning in RSE should be supported by a whole-school approach to RSE and this is critical in supporting learners' well-being.

This means effectively linking all aspects of school, including the curriculum, policy, staff, school environment and community to support learners in their relationships and sexuality education. This should support the development of positive relationships, allowing learners and practitioners to thrive, reinforce a consistent, positive ethos and provide holistic high-quality support for practitioners and learners.

A whole-school approach should include consideration of leadership and policy around RSE. This should include the participation of the senior leadership team in developing the school's vision for RSE as well as the designation of a RSE lead within the school. This should also consider how curriculum and pedagogy supports and informs the development of the wider approach. Professional learning is also key. The senior leadership team should ensure that all staff participate in professional learning. Schools should also consider how their culture and environment can support RSE.

### Enabling human rights

Schools and settings should discuss RSE in the context of children's rights as protected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ([UNCRC](#)). A rights-based approach supported by equity should be embedded in the learning.

The Children's Commissioner has published a guide for schools [The Right Way: A Children's Rights Approach for Education in Wales](#). This should inform how settings embed a rights-based approach in the curriculum, including RSE. Rights provide learners with a way of exploring RSE issues, helping them to develop the foundational skills for healthy relationships, respect and understanding of others and to recognise healthy and harmful behaviours.

In this way, learners develop an understanding of how rights are related to all aspects of RSE and contribute to the freedom, dignity, well-being and safety of all people. This also helps learners to understand the importance of equity, recognising the importance of rights in ensuring fair treatment for all.

Schools and settings should expressly consider [children's rights](#). Learning in RSE should highlight the right to:

- non-discrimination (Article 2)
- be heard and involved in decision-making (Article 12)

- freedom of expression (Article 13)
- follow your own religion (Article 14)
- have privacy (Article 16)
- access information to make informed decisions (Article 17)
- not be harmed and should be looked after and kept safe (Article 19)
- experience the highest attainable health, access to health facilities, and preventative health care (Article 24)
- education that prepares children to understanding others (Article 29)
- protection from sexual abuse and exploitation (Article 34)
- get special help if they have been abused (Article 39)

Article 3: everyone who works with children should always do what is best for each child, is relevant to RSE, as it is to the whole curriculum.

Schools and settings can also link learning to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Learners should also be supported to develop an understanding of the legal duties and protections associated with diversity, gender-based and domestic violence and well-being. Further information on relevant laws can be found in the legislation summary of this guidance.

### **Inclusivity, including [LGBTQ+ inclusivity](#)**

In line with the mandatory requirements of the RSE Code, RSE will be realised in a way that is inclusive in accordance with the principles of equality. This helps ensure that all learners can see themselves, their families, their communities and each other reflected across the curriculum and can learn to value difference and diversity as a source of strength. This contributes to a cohesive, fair and equitable society that equips learners with skills for life. This of course includes gender equity and LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

Learners are growing up in a world where gender and sexual identity, cultures, rights and legislation are changing or evolving around the world. In order to be effective, inclusive RSE must start early. From a young age learners can learn about their own uniqueness, how to appreciate diversity and respect the rights of others. This is the foundation for exploring diversity in relationships, gender and sexual identity and for developing the skills and values needed to think critically about gender and sexual norms, rights and inequities. This should include consideration of a range of influences that shape our values and identity. It should help learners to develop understanding of different values, religious beliefs and non-religious convictions that can inform our values and identity around relationships and sexuality.

### **RSE as a cross-cutting element**

RSE is a broad, interdisciplinary and complex area that includes biological, social, psychological, spiritual, ethical and cultural dimensions.

This means that each Area of the curriculum and the range of subject disciplines within them each have a unique contribution to learning in RSE. RSE should draw on all Areas to allow learners to make connections between their learning in RSE and the wider curriculum, understanding historical, cultural, geographic, physical, political, social and technological perspectives and influences on RSE issues. This also helps avoid a 'single issue' approach where each lesson covers a different RSE issue, isolated from other learning.

Schools should consider what each Area can authentically bring to an understanding of RSE. This should be meaningful and should avoid superficial or tenuous links.

The Designing Your Curriculum section for each Area includes support on how each Area can authentically contribute to RSE.

## **Developmentally-appropriate learning**

All learning in RSE should be developmentally appropriate and consider the following:

### **Responding to learners' needs, experiences, and evolving knowledge**

Schools should include **learners' perspectives** to ensure relevant and responsive RSE and provide increasing opportunities for learners to help direct their learning as they progress. Learners' views about what, how and where they learn should be taken into consideration so that the RSE curriculum can truly reflect the experiences that children and young people encounter in society.

- The RSE Code sets out each strand of teaching and learning in three broad developmental **phases** as follows:
  - Phase 1: from age 3
  - Phase 2: from age 7
  - Phase 3: from age 11

Each phase represents the building blocks of progression in RSE. As learners progress, they should build on previous learning from either phase one, or phases one and two, consolidating and strengthening the same dispositions, knowledge and skills and applying them in new and relevant contexts as they develop. This is very different to simply acquiring learning about topics in isolation and then moving on to other content.

Schools should have regard to the mandatory strands of developmentally appropriate content within the RSE Code to develop their approach, and should recognise learners' social, physical, emotional and cognitive development and needs during their planning.

During the early phase of development, an effective focus on prerequisite skills can enable the learner to successfully respond to situations in a meaningful way, thus supporting all learners with progression. In the early phase, this is how most RSE topics are considered.

## **Understanding the nature of progression in RSE**

The principles of progression across the **Health and well-being Area** offer guidance to **progression** in RSE. Learning should revisit content, themes and topics as outlined in any of the preceding phases set out in the RSE Code below, reinforcing and building on learners' developing understanding and changing needs. As they develop, learners should be encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.

## **RSE for learners with special educational needs or additional learning needs**

Schools providing education for learners with moderate and severe, profound and multiple learning needs should consider how best to meet the needs of all learners whose understanding of sexual health and well-being issues may not match their development.

All staff, including ancillary staff, physiotherapists, nurses and carers should be aware of the school's approach to RSE when working with learners with additional learning needs.

RSE provision should be a planned and integrated part of the curriculum, coordinated effectively to ensure continuity and progression in learning across the continuum. Special schools should decide the precise content of the RSE programme which, in many cases, will include careful consideration of the prerequisites for meaningful learning in RSE and the strategies for learning adopted to meet the differing needs of learners. For example, for learners who use alternative methods of communication, such as signing, symbols or communication switches and aids, schools will need to ensure that all staff are familiar with key RSE terms in Makaton, Braille and British Sign Language, or whatever alternative methods of communication are being used.

## **Engaging with learners, parents, carers and wider communities**

Schools and settings should have clear lines of communication in relation to RSE and should **engage with learners, parents, carers and the wider community**, offering them the opportunity to engage with learning and teaching in RSE.

Communicating effectively with parents and carers on an ongoing basis is an important way to foster positive relationships in order to engage them in purposeful and meaningful dialogue. When undertaken well, this can help aid learner progression by helping parents and carers to understand how they can support learning within and outside the school environment. Schools' curricula should also recognise and reflect the needs and contexts of the communities within and beyond the school.

A proactive approach should help to dispel any concerns that parents and carers may have in relation to RSE provision. This should also help to reassure them of the positive nature of RSE by setting out the proposed learning and resources to be used at the different developmental phases.

Schools and settings should recognise when and where they need to use the support of external organisations and expertise, such as school nurses. School staff should be present at all times when external organisations are engaging with learners. They should also have appropriate knowledge and understanding of the local support services network for support and referral when necessary.

It should be ensured that all resources to be used in schools and settings are relevant, reputable, developmentally appropriate, inclusive and sensitive to learners' needs. Schools should share examples of the resources they plan to use with parents and carers in order to reassure them and to enable conversations, where appropriate, to be reinforced and continued in the home.

## **Professional learning**



Professional learning is a key requirement for the realisation of high-quality RSE, and should occur at a school, cluster, regional and national level.

The senior leadership in schools should ensure that all practitioners contribute to the school's RSE priorities, either through the whole-school approach, the cross-cutting element or the essential learning. Schools and settings should facilitate all practitioners' access to professional learning that can support them to develop their confidence, knowledge and skills in RSE.

## Positive, protective and preventative RSE

Building on the Code, the approach to RSE should be positive, protective and preventative, considering how learners might need to be supported to:

- understand and cope with change, conflicts and pressure
- recognise potentially harmful behaviours in relationships and know how to seek support
- have the knowledge to recognise all forms of discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect, including [violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence](#)
- seek help and advice where appropriate

Schools should look to create safe and supportive learning environments. These help create trust and allow learners a safe space to consider learning, ask questions and express their thoughts and feelings. Practitioners should seek to present learning around RSE issues positively and meaningfully. While understanding risks and harm is an important aspect of RSE, using these as the focus for teaching about RSE issues, or focusing mainly on the negative aspects of RSE is likely to be ineffective or harmful.

This can be achieved by developing a working agreement of ground rules with learners for discussions about RSE. This helps to maintain professional boundaries and keep learners and practitioners safe. For example, creative approaches can help learners share their questions, views and experiences anonymously, allowing more open, honest discussion.

## RSE Code

### Mandatory

This Code contains mandatory requirements, the legal basis for which is set out in the [legislation summary](#) of this Curriculum for Wales framework guidance. It sets out the themes and matters that must be encompassed in RSE. A curriculum and teaching and learning must encompass the mandatory element of RSE outlined within the following RSE Code.

### Designing your curriculum

This mandatory RSE Code supports schools to design their RSE. The content is set within the context of broad and interlinked learning strands, namely:

- relationships and identity



- sexual health and well-being
- empowerment, safety and respect

These strands allow practitioners to design and develop a curriculum tailored to their learners, making connections and developing authentic contexts for learning across the curriculum.

The Welsh Government committed to covering the following themes in RSE: relationships; rights and equity; sex, gender and sexuality; bodies and body image; sexual health and well-being; and violence, safety and support. To assist schools and settings in their planning of RSE, these themes are interwoven into the learning strands.

Across the learning strands, curriculum content in RSE must be inclusive and reflect diversity. It must include learning that develops learners' awareness and understanding of different identities, views and values and a diversity of relationships, gender and sexuality, including LGBTQ+ lives.

Learning about rights and equity runs through all the strands, as well as embedding learning and experience through a rights-based approach to the learning.

### **Content appropriate to learner development**

The Act requires that the RSE schools provide must be developmentally appropriate for learners. This means schools and settings must take account of a range of factors including the learner's age; knowledge and maturity; any additional learning needs and anticipating their physiological and emotional development. RSE must be developmentally appropriate for each learner, meaning that learners' needs of similar ages may differ.

The phases have been designed to give practitioners an understanding of what is likely to be developmentally appropriate. For example, in phase 1 and 2, learners will be taught about the principles of general consent as pre-requisites for learning about sexual consent at the developmentally appropriate time in phase 3. In practice, this means learners in phases one and two developing an awareness of asking for permission to share materials, for example toys; or learning about respecting personal boundaries.

The phases are designed to help schools and settings make judgements about whether learning is developmentally appropriate for specific learners. The ages set out below indicate broadly when practitioners should start to consider whether learning in a phase is developmentally appropriate for their learners. This may mean some learners will be ready for specific learning before the broad indications given in the Code, but likewise it may mean that some learners need opportunity for further development before they engage with specific learning. Introduction to a phase may be gradual, with some learning in that phase being developmentally appropriate for learners sooner than other learning. As outlined above, these decisions must be based on a range of factors.

The tables attached to each strand of learning below are in three

broad developmental phases. As they are set out, they represent the building blocks of progression in RSE. As learners progress, they will be building upon previous learning from either phase one, or phases one and two, consolidating and strengthening the same dispositions, knowledge and skills and applying them in new, relevant contexts. This is very different to simply acquiring learning about topics in isolation and then moving on to other content.

The learning for RSE refers to both what is taught expressly and what is embedded throughout the curriculum and in the school environment through the whole-school approach.

## **Relationships and identity**

This strand focuses on:

- the range of relationships that human beings have throughout their lives
- how identity can be shaped by our relationships and sexuality
- the importance of human rights in securing healthy, safe and fulfilling relationships in an inclusive society

Learners need to develop the understanding and behaviours that will support them to develop and maintain healthy, safe and fulfilling relationships throughout their lives. Learners need to be supported to recognise and value different types of relationships, including families and friendships, as well as the diversity within different types of relationships, including LGBTQ+ diversity, and that these can change over time. Developing empathy, compassion and communication skills are critical to learners' relationships now and the relationships they will form in the future. This will also support respect, understanding and equitable treatment for others, whatever their sex, gender, sexuality, faith or belief.

Learners also need to develop both their sense of self and their sense of everyone being unique. Over time, learners can explore how relationships, sex, gender, romantic and sexual attraction and personal experiences may shape and inform a person's identity and individuality. This supports learners to understand how identity, relationships and sexuality are informed by biology, technology and social, cultural and religious norms and that these may change over time. By engaging with these aspects, learners can recognise both positive and harmful behaviours and norms and have the confidence to speak up for themselves and to speak out and advocate for the rights and respect of others.

This strand also recognises how rights can support and underpin equitable, respectful relationships, as well as a fair and inclusive society.

## **Document**

Table: [Relationships and identity strand mandatory content](#) [PDF]

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## Sexual health and well-being

This strand focuses on:

- learning about how living things grow, reproduce and have a life cycle
- developing an understanding of the human body, including people's feelings about their bodies and how these can be represented
- the health issues related to relationships and sexuality
- an understanding of how sexuality and sexual health affects our well-being.

In early development, learners need to experience contexts for understanding the importance of maintaining personal health and well-being, including hygiene, and how this impacts on themselves and others. This progresses to applying broad principles of health and hygiene within sexual health.

As learners develop, teaching and learning needs to include focus on exploring how physical changes have an impact on well-being and relationships ensuring the representation of LGBTQ+ experiences and lives. Learning also focuses on menstrual well-being and conditions which can affect the reproductive system; as well as developing understanding of the possible outcomes of the decisions made relating to sexual health and relationships. All of this learning will focus on recognising the diversity of human body types, how perception and understanding of the human body is shaped by society, the law, science and technology and the impact of this on well-being.

### Document

Table: [Sexual health and well-being strand mandatory content](#) [PDF]

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## Empowerment, safety and respect

This strand focuses on:

- learners' rights to safety and protection and freedom from harm and discrimination
- how and where to seek information, help and support
- how to support and advocate for the rights, fair treatment and respect of all

This strand builds on the positive behaviours and skills of healthy relationships. It reinforces the requirement to support learners to develop empathy, kindness and compassion towards each other and empowering them with the confidence to draw upon available support if they are concerned about their own safety or that of others.

They should be supported to understand that exercising their right to be free from all forms of discrimination, violence, abuse and

neglect is enabled by trusted adults who can support their safety. This includes through a number of legal protections that exist for all. Criminal law makes such behaviours unlawful and there are criminal sanctions for those found guilty of committing such offences.

Learners need to develop an understanding of the social, emotional, physical and legal nature and impact of harmful behaviours, including all bullying, and LGBTQ+ based bullying, sexual violence and gender-based violence in a range of contexts, including online.

### Document

Table: [Empowerment, safety and respect strand mandatory content](#) [PDF]

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## Relevant links

[Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act \(2015\)](#)

### Safeguarding

Welsh Government guidance on [keeping learners safe](#)

[Guidance for education settings on peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour](#)

[Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence \(VAWDASV\) educational toolkit](#)

[Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence \(VAWDASV\) National Strategy | GOV.WALES](#)

[Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: guidance for governors | GOV.WALES \(2016\)](#)

[Rights, respect, equality: Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools 2019](#)

[Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: Responding to incidents and safeguarding children and young people: Keeping safe online: Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

## Human rights

Human rights are the freedoms and protections to which all people are entitled. In Wales our human rights are protected in law by the [Human Rights Act 1998](#). Further information on the legal aspects relating to rights in the context of the Curriculum for Wales can be found in the [legislation section](#) of this guidance.

The Human Rights Act 1998 outlines and safeguards everyone's rights. This is irrespective of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, sexual orientation or any other status. What is more, everyone is equally entitled to human rights without discrimination. These rights are all related to one another, dependent upon one another and indivisible from one another.

In addition, children and young people and disabled persons have specific human rights guaranteed under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ([UNCRC](#)) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([UNCRPD](#)). These two conventions also convey obligations on nation states.

### Mandatory

**The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021** (the Act) provides that schools and other settings must promote knowledge and understanding of the two conventions among those who provide learning and teaching in respect of their school or setting's curriculum. This means, for example, that school leaders must make sure that practitioners and other school staff providing learning and teaching gain knowledge and understanding of human rights, as set out by these two conventions.

## UNCRC

The UNCRC is an international agreement that protects the human rights of children and young people up to the age of 18. It covers all aspects of a child's life and sets out the rights that all children everywhere are entitled to, including education provision. UNCRC is one of the key principles of policy making with regards to children and young people in Wales. The principles of the UNCRC informed the development of the **four purposes**. Each of the four purposes enables learners to experience their human rights, which is **exemplified** in the mapping undertaken by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

## UNCRPD

The purpose of the UNCRPD is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by disabled people. It is important that learners, with or without [impairments](#), see and experience the principles of the UNCRPD in action throughout their education.

Supporting learners to know their rights and respect those of others through human rights education enables a curriculum driven by the four purposes.

## Human rights and the curriculum

Learning about, through and for human rights should encourage inquiry, analysis, forming arguments, making decisions, cooperation, evaluation, and developing behaviours informed by values. Human rights education encompasses the following.

- Learning about human rights – incorporates understanding human rights and the sources of those rights, including the UNCRC and the UNCRPD.

Learners can develop knowledge about human rights primarily through the **Humanities** and the **Health and Well-being** Areas of Learning and Experience, and can be practiced across other Areas. Learners should develop understanding of citizenship, participation and ethical action. They develop understanding of the UNCRC and UNCRPD and can learn to recognise their own and others' rights. Rights are also fundamental in **Relationships and sexuality education** and through this learners understand how rights related to sex, gender, sexuality and relationships contribute to the freedom, equity, dignity, well-being and safety of all people. Central to this learning is an understanding of the opportunities and challenges people face in exercising their rights across the world.

- Learning through human rights – is about the development of values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect human rights values.

Learners should experience their rights through their education and develop a critical understanding of how their educational experience supports their rights. Schools and settings can develop this experience by taking a children's rights approach. A key principle of this approach is the rights of children and young people to participate in decisions about their learning and their wider school experience. However, learners and adults should have opportunities to collaborate to develop and maintain a school or [setting](#) community based on equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation; this includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both practitioners and learners and promotes well-being. [Duty bearers](#) are accountable for ensuring that learners experience their rights.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales has free **guidance and resources** for schools and settings to help them embed a children's rights approach based on the principles of the UNCRC and UNCRPD; though other resources are also available, such as that produced by **UNICEF**. Whole school approaches to **participation**, **well-being**, and **anti-bullying** can all be integrated into a children's rights approach. Information on **rights for disabled people** is available from Disability Wales.

- Learning for human rights – is about the motivation of social action and empowerment of active citizenship to advance respect for the rights of all.

Human rights education empowers learners as rights-holders. This enables learners to critically examine their own attitudes and behaviours and to develop skills to be ethically-informed citizens of Wales and the world, who can be advocates for their rights and the rights of others.

## Diversity

Diversity here refers to recognising and celebrating the diverse nature of social groups and communities and to ensuring that the curriculum reflects that diversity and is responsive to the experiences of those groups and communities. At its most basic, it means being aware of the characteristics of others and treating others with compassion, empathy, understanding and equity, regardless of those characteristics. As learners progress, they should become increasingly aware of a range of specific characteristics which can define our identity, including sex, gender, race, religion, age, disability and sexuality.

Humans, by their very nature are social beings. They have diverse values, identities, behaviours and physical characteristics. The cohesion of any human society depends on how it manages that diversity. Valuing the different contributions and experiences of those in our social groups strengthens the connections between us and supports the well-being of all members of those groups. Sharing the experiences of others outside our social groups expands our horizons, adds to our perspectives and contributes to our shared sense of humanity. By feeling valued, we are empowered to make meaningful contributions to our societies.

School communities will reflect the diverse range of backgrounds and perspectives found in society. As learners grow, their social interactions are likely to become ever wider in an increasingly interconnected world. Creating a curriculum which recognises the diverse culture of their society enables learners to celebrate the diverse nature of all societies. This promotes equality, inclusion, social cohesion and a feeling of being valued.

In designing a curriculum, practitioners should incorporate opportunities for learners to:

- develop empathy and compassion for others
- celebrate diverse backgrounds, values and characteristics
- develop their own values and sense of identity
- develop understanding of people with different beliefs and perspectives
- challenge stereotypes

Practitioners should also tell and listen to the stories of different groups, including minority groups, and enable all learners to see themselves and their experiences represented in the topics, experiences and knowledge developed through the curriculum.

## Careers and work-related experiences

### Introduction

#### Mandatory

This section of guidance has been developed to support practitioners in schools and settings to plan, design and implement careers and work-related experiences (CWRE) as a cross-cutting theme through the Curriculum for Wales framework for learners from ages 3 to 16.

Learning about CWRE is fundamental to developing skills for work and life. This helps learners to understand the relationship between their learning and the world of work.

A school's curriculum should enable learners to gain experiences related to work and careers, developing knowledge of the breadth of opportunities available to them throughout their lives. This learning can help them make informed decisions about their career pathways. The **four purposes** and the integral skills that support them are central to preparing learners for careers



and work. These support learners to be resilient, creative and ambitious, requiring them to solve problems, engage with different information and work independently. This will help prepare them to respond to the opportunities and challenges of a changing economic reality.

Effective CWRE is comprised of age- and developmentally appropriate careers education embedded across the areas of learning and experience (Areas). It is supported by a wide range of relevant work-related learning experiences and environments. To help ensure that learners are engaged in CWRE, schools or settings should have regard to a range of factors such as learners' age, knowledge and additional learning needs.

### **Mandatory**

Advice on the legal status of this section of guidance can be found in the [legislation summary](#) within the Curriculum for Wales framework.

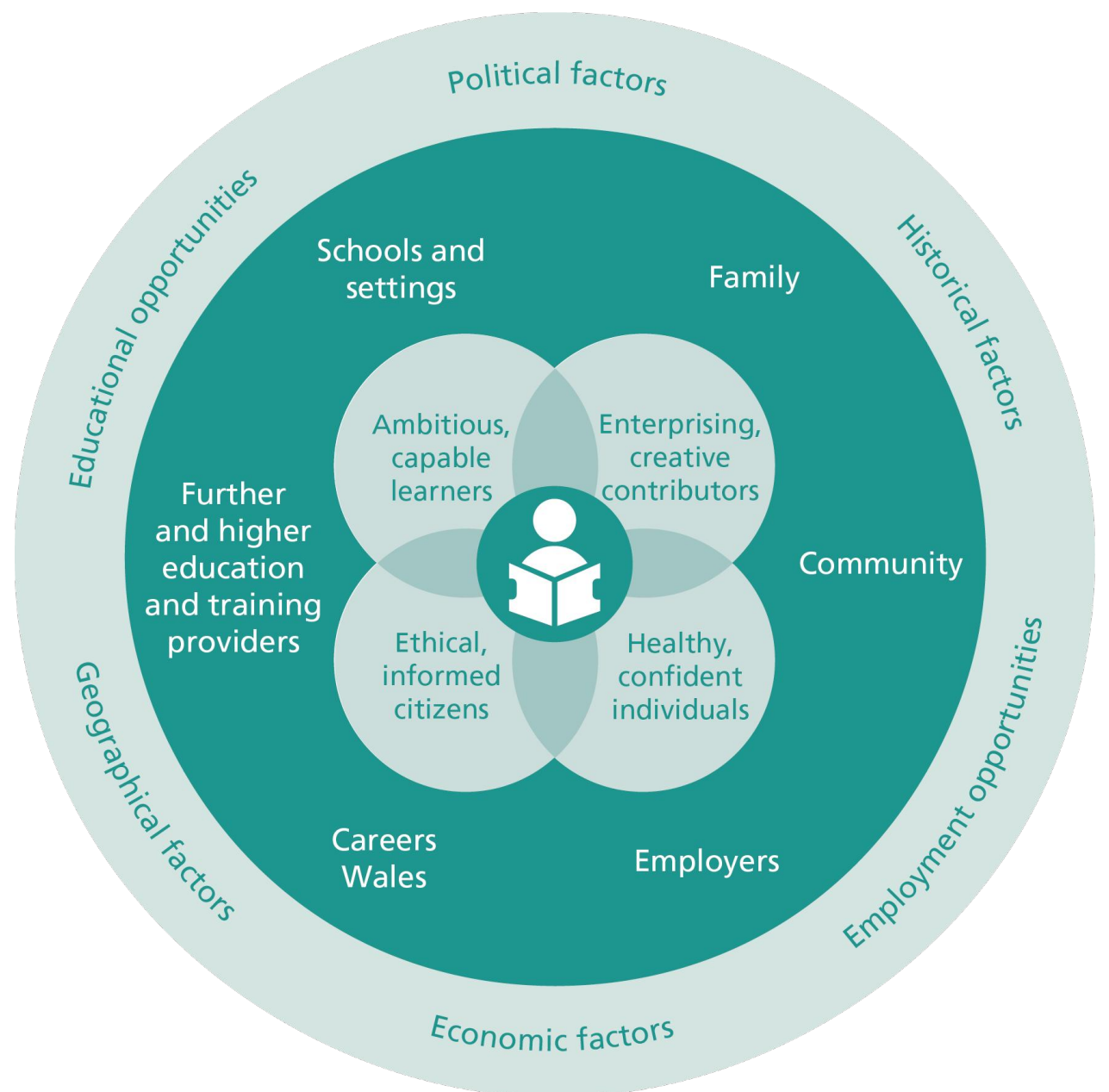
## **Why CWRE is important in schools and settings**

CWRE enables learners to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in preparation for the challenges and opportunities of further learning and the ever-evolving world of work. CWRE contributes towards learners' realisation of the [four purposes](#) of the Curriculum for Wales.

From the age of 3, CWRE should inspire learners to:

- develop an understanding of the purpose of work in life, both for themselves and for society as a whole
- become increasingly aware of the range of opportunities available to them, broadening their horizons
- develop the attitudes and behaviours required to overcome barriers to employability, career management and lifelong learning
- appreciate the increasing range of opportunities in the workplace where an ability to communicate in Welsh is important
- explore opportunities through a variety of meaningful experiences in learning, work and entrepreneurship
- develop resilience and the ability to be adaptable in response to the challenges, choices and responsibilities of work and life

The illustration below shows the importance of key contributors and influences on the career decisions of young people and how schools and settings should consider these in designing CWRE to support the four purposes in their curriculum.



## Contextualising skills through CWRE

Schools and settings should help learners to begin to appreciate the importance of using **skills integral to the four purposes** within careers and work-related experiences. They should encourage learners' evolving perception of their potential contribution to the future world of work. This learning will progress to enable them to appreciate how their contributions can benefit not only themselves but also the future prosperity of their communities, Wales and the wider world.

### Skills integral to the four purposes

#### Creativity and innovation

Through being actively engaged in real-life examples from the world of work, learners can develop their confidence to be more curious and inquisitive. This enables learners to begin to consider, investigate and generate novel solutions to problems, which can provide opportunities to develop an entrepreneurial mindset. Skills that contribute to individuals becoming creative and innovative are increasingly valued by employers across sectors, as they can support advancements and the continuous improvement of efficiency and effectiveness in industry.

#### Critical thinking and problem-solving

As learners begin to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, CWRE contexts can be used to encourage risk-taking. Applying these skills to their own career pathway supports learners to better understand the correlation between risk and reward, and how this impacts on their experience of the world of work. Learners should critically analyse a diverse range of information to shape their views and perspectives on the world of work. This will support them to understand and consider the impact of their decisions, now and on **future generations**.

## **Personal effectiveness**

Learners' growing self-awareness and confidence contributes to their appreciation of their self-worth and how this relates to what they have to offer to the world of work. Employers value skills such as contributing to a team, leadership, resilience and the ability to reflect, adapt and change in different situations. As learners progress, they should increasingly reflect on their effectiveness during and after careers and work-related experiences, enabling them to identify strengths and areas for further training and development. Developing an enquiring mindset encourages learners to be open to acquiring new skills. This can support learners in becoming more adaptable which will enable them to access further opportunities in the world of work.

## **Planning and organising**

Experiencing these skills in authentic contexts can help develop learners' decision-making and reflective-thinking skills. CWRE allows learners to demonstrate their planning and organising skills, such as implementing ideas, setting goals, time management and monitoring and reflecting on results. Learners can be encouraged to become increasingly independent, which will support them in taking greater responsibility for their development in work and study. Planning and organising skills are highly valued by employers, and learners need to be supported to understand the relevance of these skills so that they can achieve their ambitions.

## **Cross-curricular skills**

Schools and settings should help learners to begin to appreciate the importance of using their cross-curricular skills within careers and work-related experiences.

## **Literacy**

The world of work requires the ability to communicate effectively and apply literacy skills in different contexts. Developing effective communication skills enables learners to engage in careers and work-related experiences, for example, when considering other people's views and opinions. This will help learners understand the importance of developing positive relationships in the world of work.

## **Numeracy**

The world of work requires the ability to use numeracy effectively. Learners need to develop confidence in applying their numeracy skills, for example, when using and interpreting data and understand the importance of managing money in work and life. Learners, as they progress with their numeracy skills, should have opportunities to apply knowledge within different CWRE contexts.

## **Digital Competence**

Increasingly, the world of work requires the ability to use digital technology in a wide range of situations. With an ever-evolving and international world of work, learners need to develop their digital confidence and capability, which will enhance their communication skills, as well as be able to access CWRE opportunities and analyse information from beyond their own locality.

A learner's [digital footprint](#) can be long-lasting and affect their career prospects, both positively and negatively. Learners should be encouraged to question the validity and accuracy of the information found on digital platforms

when considering their life choices.

## **Contextualising the Areas through CWRE**

CWRE should be developed across the curriculum for learners to explore and understand the world of work in developmentally appropriate contexts. CWRE provides real-world learning and experiences that support learners in developing their skills and applying their knowledge and understanding within all the Areas. In doing so, CWRE supports the design of a purposeful curriculum and opportunities for authentic learning which is vital to learners' increasing understanding of their career choices as they progress.

Further guidance on how CWRE supports learning within each Area can be found in the respective sections of this guidance:

- **Expressive arts**
- **Health and well-being**
- **Humanities**
- **Languages, literacy and communication**
- **Mathematics and numeracy**
- **Science and technology**

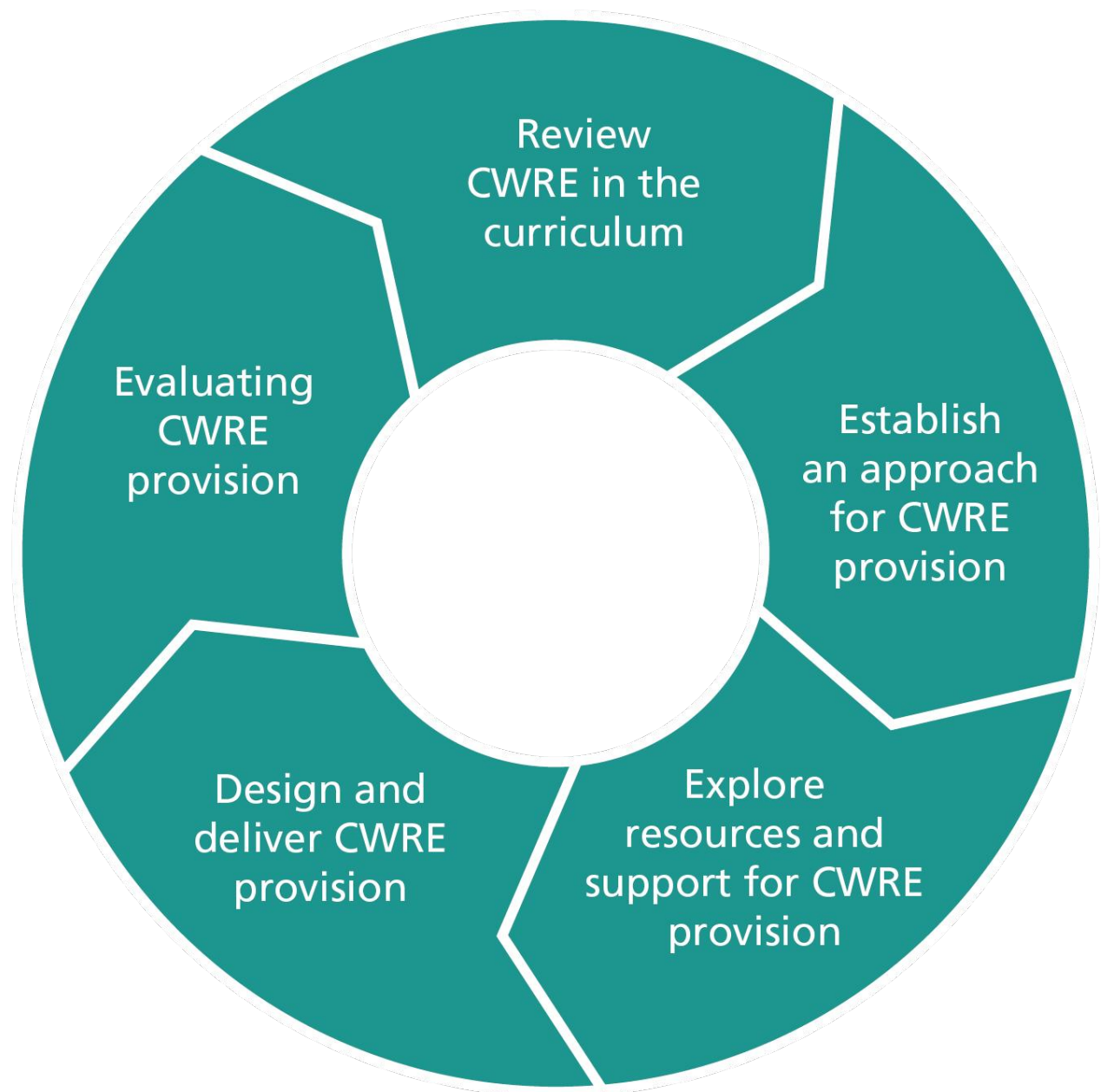
## **Designing CWRE in the curriculum**

To support all learners to make progress in CWRE, it should be embedded throughout the 3 to 16 continuum and across the curriculum. It should not be taught as a stand-alone subject. Schools and settings should design CWRE as an integral part of their curriculum and learning experiences. All practitioners have a role to play in its realisation.

Schools and settings should consider how CWRE can offer learners insights that generate inspiration and aspiration, but also foster realism in terms of future possibilities. A CWRE programme should cover a wide range of learning and teaching experiences, which may include digital environments, and contributions from a variety of stakeholders. CWRE provision should include individual advice and guidance, provide authentic experiences as well as opportunities to learn from a diverse range of role models.

Parents and carers have a significant influence on learners' career decisions and development. Consequently, it is important to provide them with a level of knowledge and understanding of CWRE learning so they can support learners in making ambitious, realistic decisions.

Schools and settings should consider a number of stages as they plan for CWRE in their curriculum. The diagram below illustrates a cycle for integrating CWRE within their curriculum. Schools and settings are encouraged to continually review, develop and evaluate their CWRE provision.



### **Review CWRE in the curriculum**

A review of CWRE learning establishes a foundation from which to develop and support curriculum design. Schools and settings may wish to consider the following questions when developing CWRE in their curriculum.

- How well do we develop learners' knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to CWRE?
- How well do we provide meaningful careers and work-related activities and experiences to support our learners?
- How well do we work with stakeholders, including employers, **Careers Wales** and parents and carers, to support and develop our CWRE provision?
- How well do schools and settings collaborate with each other to plan for learners' progression in CWRE throughout the 3 to 16 continuum?
- How well do we evaluate the impact of our CWRE on learners' understanding?

### **Establish an approach for CWRE provision**

Schools and settings should establish an approach for CWRE provision that is embedded within their vision for curriculum and teaching and for realisation of the Curriculum for Wales. This should include key priorities for progression in learning, career planning, successful transitions and engagement beyond the school or setting.

### **Explore resources and support for CWRE provision**

Schools and settings should explore and develop their own learning and teaching materials that enhance knowledge, skills and understanding of CWRE in the curriculum, including those produced by **Careers Wales**, third party organisations and publicly funded bodies. Learning and teaching

materials should support learners' growing awareness of the broad range of opportunities available to them. They should also showcase role models and mentors from diverse backgrounds.

There are a range of resources available locally to support every school or setting as well as those online, such as webinars, virtual lessons, virtual tours and other learning materials that are geared towards cultivating an interest in the world of work. They can highlight the vast range of career opportunities that are available at a local, national and international level and broaden a learner's view of careers. A CWRE self-assessment [toolkit and toolbox](#) is also available online.

Consideration should also be given to how a school or setting can make effective use of the support available from parents and carers, alumni, employers, the local community, Careers Wales and other stakeholders.

## **Design and deliver CWRE provision**

The rate of acquisition of skills and knowledge will differ for all learners, as well as across an individual learner's progress. To ensure that CWRE provision meets the needs of learners and includes opportunities to develop career management skills, it should be well planned and outlined within a school or setting's policy.

## **Evaluate CWRE provision**

Regular evaluation of CWRE provision should take place using schools and settings' existing evaluation and improvement processes for the curriculum as a whole. This is important to help determine whether it meets the needs of all learners and to ensure equity and diversity. CWRE provision should continually evolve over the long term with ongoing curriculum development. Sharing good practice and professional development opportunities is encouraged to support these developments. Learners should be encouraged to engage in the evaluation process to enable them to provide feedback to shape the planning of future CWRE provision and improve outcomes.

## **Contributors to effective CWRE**

Schools and settings should be supported by a range of committed contributors to be able to realise effective CWRE through their curriculum.

Governors, management committees, or the local authority (the local authorities' duties are discharged in some cases by the regional consortia under the national model for regional working) can play a key role in ensuring CWRE is reflected in a school or setting's strategic planning and reporting. As part of the vision and curriculum development, they should consider an inclusive and whole-school approach to CWRE.

Senior leadership plays an important role in the strategic development of CWRE. The support of senior leadership will be needed to drive the ongoing development of the curriculum. They should:

- oversee the development of a coherent and effective CWRE programme for all learners with clear progression outcomes throughout the learning continuum
- ensure resource allocation for CWRE, including for professional learning
- facilitate wide stakeholder involvement, including staff, learners, parents



and carers, employers, Careers Wales and the wider community

- liaise with and support the CWRE leader to maintain regular updates on progress and communicate outcomes

CWRE leaders empower practitioner ownership of, and commitment to, CWRE. They are practitioners who:

- co-ordinate and facilitate an inclusive whole-school approach to CWRE
- liaise with practitioners to assess learners' needs
- create and maintain relationships with stakeholders, including learners
- provide support to practitioners with embedding CWRE in their curriculum through sharing effective practice
- identify CWRE learning outcomes and monitor progress

Curriculum leaders and practitioners play an important role in implementing a whole-school approach to CWRE. They:

- contextualise learning and opportunities in CWRE throughout the curriculum for all learners
- consider learners' potential career ideas and pathways
- ensure appropriate involvement of parents and carers
- access and make effective use of appropriate professional learning opportunities

**Careers Wales** is a bilingual, inclusive and impartial national careers service for Wales, a wholly owned subsidiary of, and funded by, Welsh Government. Support is offered to learners to help them to better understand the world of work, the skills they need and the opportunities available to them. In addition, Careers Wales offers support to schools and settings in the delivery of the Curriculum for Wales, with some initiatives beginning in primary schools. The range of activities includes:

- support and resources, to help schools and settings to embed CWRE throughout their curriculum
- providing all learners of secondary school age with careers guidance and coaching relative to their needs
- engaging parents and carers
- supporting schools and settings in developing links with employers
- career events

It is beneficial for learners to have access to careers guidance group sessions and interviews to help them choose effective and appropriate learning pathways pre- and post-16.

Parents and carers' experiences of education and work can shape learner thinking, aspirations and decisions, both positively and negatively. Schools and settings should encourage the engagement of parents and carers in CWRE events and make them aware of the support provided within the school or setting. It is also possible that parents and carers may be able to contribute to the development and realisation of CWRE learning as part of the school or setting's curriculum.

Further and higher education institutions, and work-based learning providers, can contribute to and facilitate CWRE provision by showcasing the variety of



academic, apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities that can help raise learners' aspirations and broaden their horizons. They can also provide access to relatable role models to inspire learners, as well as to mentors who can provide them with support. These institutions and providers can also offer professional learning for practitioners to become more informed about the opportunities available for their learners.

Employers can work closely with schools and settings, supported by Careers Wales, third party organisations and publicly funded bodies, to provide opportunities to inspire and motivate learners. They can provide learners with an insight into the world of work and the skills needed to succeed in the future through engagement and enrichment activities. Employers can provide a real-world context for a wide range of learning provision across the curriculum, showcasing a range of employment opportunities.

Employer engagement can show learners the value employers place on positive professional attitudes and behaviours, including being motivated, resilient, curious, adaptable and ambitious. Employers also value work-related experiences, volunteering and extra-curricular activities, which can help learners develop their skills.

## **Support and guidance for schools and settings**

In establishing and maintaining effective practice in the provision of CWRE, the following can play a significant role.

### **Professional learning**

Schools and settings should ensure their staff engage in appropriate and relevant professional learning opportunities to help CWRE become effectively integrated in their curriculum.

Practitioners are also encouraged to undertake training opportunities offered by employers and other organisations, to help them learn about the latest developments in the world of work. For example, they could explore resources that are available on [Hwb](#), as well as engage with [Careers Wales](#), regional consortia and learning modules available online. Courses are also available for those who wish to obtain a professional careers-related qualification.

### **Work-related experience**

Work-related experiences encompass a range of activities including employer visits, masterclasses and mentoring structured work as well as enterprise experiences, taster sessions and careers events.

Long-term and sustained employer engagement has the potential to inspire and enhance learners' understanding of the world of work. It is important that work-related experiences are broad, varied and developmentally appropriate. Learners should develop an understanding that the world of work is more than just paid employment.

Schools and settings should, therefore, work with a wide range of employers and third party organisations to provide high-quality enrichment experiences for learners. Opportunities for volunteering and community participation can help learners to develop work-related skills and promote their health and wellbeing.

Work-related experiences should showcase the range of career opportunities within a **local, national and international context**. Learners should increasingly recognise their responsibilities and rights as employees and how to follow safe working practices. It is essential to consider **health and safety**, safeguarding policies and risk assessments when organising work-related experiences.

In order for practitioners to maximise the benefits of work-related experiences, it is useful to:

- ensure that experiences are accessible to all learners, and take into account their specific needs and interests
- prepare learners and provide opportunities for reflection
- encourage learners to appreciate links with the curriculum
- challenge their own perspectives as well as those of learners, parents and carers, on issues such as workplace stereotypes
- request feedback from employers on learner progress, and on their experience of engaging with the school or setting
- enable learners to build on their personal interests and strengths, applying their learning to careers and work-related experiences

Work experience opportunities support learners to develop future career aspirations. These will take many forms depending on the local labour market. Therefore, consideration should be given to classroom-based activities, such as digital delivery, workplace visits or interactions with individuals or mentors and employers.

## **Labour market information**

Labour market information enables learners to be aware of trends in pay, roles and location. Accurate labour market information provides an insight into the current and developing world of work. This will help learners to make informed, effective decisions regarding work, study and training routes, and to develop the knowledge and understanding to put their plans into action.

Labour market information resources are available from Careers Wales and others, such as the Regional Skills Partnerships' Learning and skills observatories and the Welsh Government. Schools and settings should incorporate developmentally appropriate, impartial and current labour market information, at a local, regional and national level, to ensure CWRE provision is well designed to meet the needs of all learners. The use of labour market information can inform the planning of experiences related to careers and work.

## **Local, national and international contexts**

The local, national and international contexts provide key perspectives for learners and are of particular importance in supporting learners to realise the **four purposes**. They help learners make sense of the skills and knowledge they are developing by making connections with surroundings, experiences and events they may be more familiar with. They also introduce learners to less familiar contexts, broadening their horizons, engaging with perspectives different from their own and appreciating wider challenges and issues. These

contexts also help them make sense of their relationship with their communities, their national identity and the wider world. This supports learners to develop a citizenship which is multifaceted, reflecting on their roles and responsibilities within each context and recognising the diversity within each. While local, national and international contexts provide distinct contributions to learning, they are profoundly interconnected. Curriculum content can often be considered through each context and practitioners should seek to draw across these contexts and support learners to understand the clear, intrinsic links between them.

These contexts provide an important opportunity for learners to understand and respond to different issues and challenges, including social, economic and environmental questions in working towards a sustainable and equitable future. The environment forms an important part of each of these contexts, with human impact transcending geographical and political boundaries. This includes the relationships between human activities and the local, national and international environment. Learners should have opportunities to respond to the issues and challenges that arise from these relationships, considering how they have shaped our past and present and how they may shape our future.

To understand Wales, learners should also develop an understanding of its relationship with and changing place within the United Kingdom and the stories and peoples of these islands: both now and in the past. Learners' understanding of Wales should also recognise how different perspectives, values and identities shape Wales, rather than presenting a simplistic characterisation of a uniform Welsh identity.

Practitioners' own understanding of the school's local area and awareness of the changing issues and challenges in each context will help them to be creative in embedding these contexts in learning and teaching.

When embedding local, national and international contexts, practitioners should look for opportunities to support learners to:

- develop learning through a range of places and events of significance
- make links with local communities and organisations
- learn about the contributions and experiences of different individuals that shape each context
- learn about cultural diversity, values, histories and traditions that shape each context
- understand different identities, histories, cultures, perspectives and values that shape communities and societies
- recognise and engage with factors, influences and impacts (including economic, social and environmental impacts) locally, nationally and internationally
- develop an authentic sense of [cynefin](#), building knowledge of different cultures and histories, allowing them to develop a strong sense of individual identity and understanding how this is connected to and shaped by wider influences
- draw on the stories and distinctiveness of a school's local surroundings
- understand their role as citizens and the structures of government which affect them in each context
- explore, critically analyse and respond to contemporary issues and challenges affecting their lives and the lives of others through each context

- understand sustainable development, the challenges the environment and society face and how they can engage with and make a difference on these issues supporting sustainable citizenship
- understand contemporary Wales, providing opportunities to reflect, understand and analyse contemporary society and their engagement with it
- recognise Wales' diverse linguistic heritage and culture, and its connections with the rest of the world
- recognise how our languages unlock knowledge about our literature, geography, history and their links beyond Wales
- recognise the links between local, national and international contexts, understanding how they constantly influence each other
- use critical analysis in each context, recognising both positive and challenging aspects within each

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