

Consultation on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

Evidence submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill.

About you

Organisation: St John Ambulance Cymru

1. The Bill's general principles

1.1 Do you support the principles of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#)?

Partly

1.2 Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1500 words)

St John Ambulance Cymru support the general principles of the Bill, however, we do believe there is a need for a more defined responsibility from schools. We want to see every child in Wales educated in first aid and lifesaving skills through the new Curriculum for Wales to ensure each child receives the same, standardised and quality training - reducing inconsistencies in experiences for pupils, especially those in lower socio-economic communities.

We support the notion that head teachers know what's best for their students and that it is important they are able to react to these needs, however as an organisation, we believe the issue of first aid and lifesaving skills has a wider consequence than just for the individual. We are considering what is best for the community and Wales as a whole; having a generation of people armed with the first aid and lifesaving skills. Skills proven to save lives and support's the Health Secretary's Out Of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Plan.

St John Ambulance Cymru are pleased to see the move forward in highlighting the importance of first aid in schools, however we believe the recent changes to the supporting documents of the Curriculum and Assessment Bill do not go far enough to ensure EVERY young person in Welsh education will have the opportunity to learn vital first

aid and lifesaving skills and thus losing not just the safety of communities but also the potential to inspire young people to follow a path into healthcare. We can already see a discrepancy in the relationship between Welsh counties and the number of Welsh schools who are choosing to support their pupils and community with first aid training. We've trained approximately 66% of schools in Caerphilly County since 2013 but just 22% of schools in Gwynedd. It is clear pupils in areas where schools do not prioritise first aid are at a disadvantage to their counterparts who are. Pupils who are helpless to act in a life-threatening situation.

A patient's chance of surviving an out of hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) decreases by an estimated 10% with every passing minute, meaning that the quicker Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) can be applied, the better chance of survival the patient has. Adopting a universal approach to training our younger generation in first aid and lifesaving skills would go a long way to improve these chances in our future communities.

There have been various studies over recent years which illustrate our communities' desire to have this training. In Oct 2019, a study on OHCA, reported that only 56% of respondents had been trained in CPR, with 45% of those having been trained over 5 years ago

In addition, research undertaken by the British Red Cross, showed that:

- Almost a fifth of children (19%) polled in Wales have experienced a situation where someone needed first aid.
- 58% said they would feel helpless to act if they witnessed an accident and someone was injured.
- 94% of children agreed that knowing first aid skills would make them feel more confident to help in a first aid emergency.

Training our young children and raising public awareness is paramount in ensuring early recognition and prompt intervention in OHCA and other first aid emergencies. Early recognition and immediate initiation of bystander CPR can double or quadruple survival from OHCA whilst the use of a defibrillator within 3-5 minutes of collapse can significantly improve survival rates.

1.3 Do you think there is a need for legislation to deliver what this Bill is trying to achieve?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

Overall, St John Ambulance Cymru agree there is a need for schools to be able to tailor their teaching to the needs of their students

2. The Bill's implementation

2.1 Do you have any comments about any potential barriers to implementing the Bill? If no, go to question 3.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

By giving head teachers the powers to decide the curriculum of each individual school, the teaching of first aid and lifesaving skills is likely to be missed or of different standards throughout many schools; thus having a detrimental effect on their communities in years to come – especially with the rising, ageing population and apparent increase in the number of undiagnosed heart conditions within younger people. The Bill does not provide specific guidance on including first aid and lifesaving skills as a part of the core curriculum.

As we have identified earlier in this response, there is already an imbalance in first aid training provision from school-to-school and this will undoubtedly increase should there be no clear focus on first aid and lifesaving skills provided in the curriculum. In particular, schools in more remote areas of Wales are falling behind in terms of their delivery of first aid training in schools.

2.2 Do you think the Bill takes account of these potential barriers?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

The Bill does not appear to take account of these barriers as detailed in question 2.1. As it stands, pupils are not guaranteed to be equipped with lifesaving skills.

3. Unintended consequences

3.1 Do you think there are there any unintended consequences arising from the Bill? If no, go to question 4.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

The AoLE for Health and Wellbeing goes some way to ensure these vital skills are being taught to young people in Wales, however, St John Ambulance Cymru do not believe this goes far enough to ensure that EVERY student will have the opportunity to learn these skills. It is our recommendation that this wording be changed from "may" and "could include" to "must include lifesaving and first aid skills" for a minimum of one hour dedicated to the subject annually. This will ensure all students will have an annual update of vital first aid and lifesaving skills who will be ready to become healthy, confident citizens of Wales and the wider world, following the objective of the four purposes.

Without providing a universal approach to teaching first aid in schools, we are missing a vital opportunity to prepare our future generations and communities with the skills to look after themselves and others. Providing first aid and lifesaving training in schools could, additionally have a positive effect on our NHS with more people being able to step in and support in responding to life threatening situations such as sudden cardiac arrest. Sparking interest in healthcare services in our younger generations at a younger age will benefit the future of our community too, with the potential for more young people to become inspired to help others and take part in medical training. It will have particular benefit in more rural areas of Wales where access to emergency services can be delayed due to their remote location

4. Financial implications

4.1 Do you have any comments on the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#))? If no, go to question 5.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

N/A

5. Powers to make subordinate legislation

5.1 Do you have any comments on the appropriateness of the powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (as set out in Chapter 5 of Part 1 of the [Explanatory Memorandum](#)). If no, go to question 6.1.

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words)

N/A

6. Other considerations

6.1 Do you have any other points you wish to raise about this Bill?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

St John Ambulance Cymru would like to reiterate the following as reasons why first aid and lifesaving skills need to be more prominent in the new curriculum:

Community need

As highlighted in our response to 1.2, there is clear evidence that there is a desire within our communities and young people to learn these vital skills. There is a clear lack of knowledge and confidence in first aid skills in our communities, which does not reflect the clear desire many have to increase this knowledge. Not only would first aid and lifesaving skills training help to provide essential early intervention to any first aid emergencies in the community; saving lives. It will also go a long way to achieve the objectives laid out in the four purposes of the curriculum. Furthermore, there is a growing reluctance to seek health care because of anxiety about exposure to COVID-19 in addition to issues accessing services due to an overstressing of the healthcare system. This could result in an unnecessary increase in deaths from causes that can quickly turn fatal without treatment of early symptoms. A generation who are universally trained in first aid and lifesaving skills will help reduce the number of deaths caused by lack of emergency care in a post COVID-19 world.

Imbalance of a first aid training provision

St John Ambulance Cymru welcome the concept of granting powers to individual schools to set their curriculum as they undoubtedly best know the needs of their pupils and how to equip these individuals with a skill set for their futures. However, whilst a school can

recognise the needs of the individual, St John Ambulance Cymru have the best intentions of the community. The use of terms such as “may” and “could” will cause an imbalance in the skills of communities throughout Wales, creating an unequally skilled generation, depending on what value each individual school places on first aid and lifesaving skills. The provision of first aid and lifesaving skills in ALL Welsh schools will largely benefit the community as a whole with larger cross section of society skilled to act quickly in an emergency. It would, again, contribute to creating a generation of people who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society as laid out in the four purposes. Alongside other organisations, St John Ambulance Cymru offers a full profile of first aid training to schools ranging from face-to-face to training to online materials that schools can download.

Evidence session

In conjunction with the British Heart Foundation and British Red Cross, we would welcome the opportunity to take part in an evidence session for the Children, Young People and Education Committee in order to enable us to expand on this if required.

