

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: Samaritans Cymru

1. The Bill's general principles

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

Yes

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)

Samaritans Cymru welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill. One key measure of the success of the Bill and of the whole school approach to mental health and emotional wellbeing will be that every child in every school learns emotional literacy, is able to identify when they are struggling and crucially, know where they can go for help and support.

Samaritans Cymru exists to reduce the number of people who die by suicide. We believe effective suicide prevention must be based on prevention and early intervention so we can minimize the amount of people who reach crisis point at the other end of the scale. We must embed a public health approach to suicide by placing a primary focus on prevention rather than cure alone. Investment in prevention and early intervention can reduce human, social and economic costs. In Wales, suicide is a major public health issue, but significantly, it is also a major inequality issue.

At Samaritans Cymru, we focus on a number of high priority policy areas, including children and young people. Suicide is the biggest killer of young people (15-24) in the United Kingdom. In the UK, we are seeing a continued increase in suicide rates among

young people, especially women under 25, where the rate has increased since 2012 to its highest level in 2019.

The pandemic has added an increasing sense of urgency to the need for all schools to adopt a structured and effective approach to emotional health and wellbeing, so that all children get the support they need. The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures have had a profound impact on the day to day lives of children and young people. The pandemic hasn't had an equal impact and children from the most deprived communities are likely to have been affected most.

Samaritans Cymru supports the Welsh Government response to the findings of the Donaldson Review and sees this as a real opportunity to improve the mental health and understanding of young people. The new curriculum offers a unique opportunity to place mental health and well-being at the heart of their experience in school. We have argued consistently that a key way in which to do this is to place learning about emotional health, what works to support it in yourself and in others, on a statutory footing. We welcome that the proposed guidance on developing a whole school approach to mental health will have a statutory basis. We also welcome the Welsh Government commitment to producing a statutory 'What Matters Code', ensuring that mental health will have to be covered in the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience.

However, we remain of the view that the importance of mental health as a core part of every young person in every school's learning experience means that that mental health learning should be a mandatory part of the new curriculum, on the same basis as Relationships and Sexuality Education and Religion, Values and Ethics. This is because of the importance of mental health being at the heart of the curriculum and the need to deliver it consistently. There is a real opportunity to ensure that there is time made available for conversations about mental health at different times in the school day. It remains unclear to us why the elements referenced above proposed in the new curriculum bill should be mandatory and yet mental health, because of its central and recognised importance, should not.

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)

-

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)

-

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)

-

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)

-

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)

-

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)

-

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)

-

