

Draft relationships and sexuality education guidance 2018

Consultation response form

Your name: Catherine Phillips

Organisation (if applicable): Welsh Women's Aid

e-mail/telephone number:

Catherinephillips@welshwomensaid.org.uk

Your address: Pendragon House, Claxton Place,
Cardiff, CF23 8XE

Responses should be returned by 1st April 2019 to

Health and Well-being AoLE Team
Arts, Humanities and Well-being Branch
The Education Directorate
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or completed electronically and sent to:

e-mail: RSEGuidance@gov.wales

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?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------	----	-------------------------------------	----------	--------------------------

Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

For teachers or RSE practitioners to have sufficient understanding of the gravitas of the name change and its subsequent impact a fuller explanation is needed, which should include the actual definition from the World Health Organisation (see below) in order to negate any presumptions of awareness.

This reinforces The Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales Expert Panel Recommendation of the name change to emphasise, “an inclusive, holistic, rights and gender equity based SRE.”

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines **sexuality** with the following: “...a central aspect of being human throughout life encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.” (*WHO, 2006a*)

And **Sexual health** as: “a state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to **sexuality**. It requires a positive and respectful approach to **sexuality** and **sexual** relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe **sexual** experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.”

As laid out in these definitions, it is important to establish the connection between the name change from SRE to RSE and impact of ensuring children and young people can enjoy equal, safe and healthy relationships free from violence and abuse.

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?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------	----	-------------------------------------	----------	--------------------------

Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

Information regarding the ‘whole school approach’ needs to be consistent with The Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales Expert Panel Recommendations. The guidance also needs to advocate that the ‘whole school approach’ is integral to ensure that RSE lessons are not devaluated or undermined

across different areas of the school or community, and is more likely to produce a sustained cultural change.

The impact of this on the individual learner is a greater awareness of safety and respect, which will equate to increased prevention of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

In order to make vital links to the work being undertaken nationally on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Welsh Government's existing *Good Practice Guide: A Whole Education Approach to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales*¹ needs to be more prominently and explicitly referenced as a supporting document in the guidance. This guide, co-created by Welsh Women's Aid, sets out existing good practice and the importance of a multi-layered 'whole school' approach to give children the support they need, through nine key areas. This includes:

- Staff training offered in all schools in line with the National Training Framework under the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.
- Active participation of children and young people, staff and parents/carers to prevent VAWDASV, which includes older children being trained to mentor younger ones and/or deliver workshops or assemblies on relevant topics and parents and teachers given access to information and encouraged to lead conversations or programmes.
- Access to local experts and links to specialist VAWDASV services.

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?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
------------	--------------------------	-----------	--------------------------	-----------------	-------------------------------------

Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

As the umbrella organisation in Wales that supports and provides national representation for independent third sector violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) specialist services in Wales (comprising our membership of specialist services and members of the regional VAWDASV Specialist Services Providers Forums),ⁱ Welsh Women's Aid needs to be placed in Annex C.

The "equalities" section needs to include sufficient resources and organisations that can support both teachers and students on understanding and achieving equality, alongside the LGBT organisations currently featured, such as [The Women's Equality Network](#), [Race Equality First](#), [Disability Wales](#), [The Equality and Human Rights Coalition](#) and [Diverse Cymru](#). The Spectrum Project, under VAWDASV, is not an

¹ Good Practice Guide: A Whole Education Approach to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales, Welsh Government, 2015

organisation, however it is a viable resource for schools who are looking for support on how to talk to children and young people about healthy relationships.

There needs to be a greater diversity of support organisations under sexual abuse, as opposed to only NSPCC. Other organisation's working in this sector in Wales including [Stepping Stones](#), [Horizon](#), [The Survivor's Trust](#), [Stop it Now! Wales](#), [Meic](#) and [Young Minds](#).

Currently, the guidance does not contain sufficient information around signposting procedures for specialist services who support survivors of abuse, or how to deal with disclosures of VAWDASV. Teachers and schools need to be aware that the Welsh Government's Live Fear Free helpline, delivered by Welsh Women's Aid, is also a professional resource that can be utilised if staff and teachers need advice or support regarding student (or their own) well-being.

The guidance would also benefit from including 'The Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales Expert Panel Recommendations' and 'The Good Practice Guide: A Whole Education Approach to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales', as referenced above.

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?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	-------------------------------------	----	--------------------------	----------	--------------------------

Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

It is clear that the annex is to be used in support of the guidance, however it would benefit from being more comprehensive, reflecting the extent of the VAWDASV specialist services in Wales. It should also contain the context of the RSE curriculum in the form of The Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales Expert Panel Recommendations and The Good Practice Guide: A Whole Education Approach to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales.

The Live Fear Free Helpline should also be prominently promoted throughout all sections of the guidance.

Question 5 – Do you think each section of the draft guidance is clear and explains what is required of teachers and schools?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------	----	-------------------------------------	----------	--------------------------

Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

It is important that teachers are aware of any issues that may/will arise as a result of the sessions relating to VAWDASV so that pupils can be supported in and outside of

class. This is in addition to access to adequate sign-posting, so that teachers know where they can go for extra help, and listening to the non-abusive parent when they voice concerns.

Alongside a VAWDASV informed RSE curriculum, there is a need to engage and make connections with VAWDASV specialist services in a school's locality to support both teachers and students if they require any continuing support, someone to talk to or to establish a more formal referral pathway. As children and young people's awareness of all forms of abuse increases, so can their risk. This is especially significant to a child or young person who is living within an abusive home or experiencing abuse in their own relationship as education can, by proxy, shift their 'norms'. It is vital that the curriculum includes increasing the ability of children and young people to seek help², and that schools are linked to appropriate services³.

[Before] I was a lot more upset and worried about my mental health and my wellbeing, [now] I'm not as worried how bad my problems are (survivor, 12)

The importance of training teachers to recognise and address methods and language that perpetuate sex and gender inequalities relating to academic attainment, achievement and aspiration, should also not be underestimated in this context as it will directly impact the sustainability and success of the RSE curriculum.⁴

RSE is a key tool in keeping children safe from violence, abuse and plays a key role in instilling and embedding the norms of what behaviour is acceptable and not between peers, particularly in the context of utilising the Whole Education Approach to promote increased gender equality as a tool to reduce violence against women and girls.

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?

- Improve the layout by numerically marking headings and subheadings (e.g. 1, 1.1, 1.2 etc.)
- Ensure all acronyms are written in full (include a glossary if needed) and complete
- Insert completed supporting documents in the annex, as opposed to hyperlinks, and include a comprehensive and quality assured resource list that includes RSE websites and materials, and not only single issue agencies, many of which do not provide support on RSE teaching and learning in schools and the approach advocated in the guidance.
- In the introduction, stipulate clearly exactly what is going to be provided to the schools in regards to RSE lesson content, lesson plans and suggested resources.

² Miller, D. & Brown, J. (2014) We have the right to be safe: Protecting disabled children from abuse: Executive summary. NSPCC

³ Are you listening and am I being heard? Welsh Women's Aid, March 2016, http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Are_you_listening_and_am_I_being_heard_FINAL_July_2016.pdf

⁴ Jones, K., Evans, C., Byrd, R., Campbell, K. (2000) Gender equity training and teacher behavior. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 27 (3), 173-178, <http://www.freepatentsonline.com/article/Journal-Instructional-Psychology/66355136.html>

- Insert a supported timeline for training, development and delivery of the RSE curriculum.
- Provide information on where teachers can go for additional training and support to aid facilitation.
- Ensure clear referral pathways are in place within the disclosure section. This needs to include more emphasis throughout on safeguarding and equipping children with the knowledge, understanding and language to identify if abuse and neglect is happening to them and who are a safe adults from whom to seek help
- Under the VAWDASV section include information on the different types of abuse (sexual abuse, economic abuse, coercive control, domestic abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse).
- Change the language around children ‘witnessing’ abuse. There is no such thing as indirect impact of violence and abuse on Children and young people. Research indicates that children experience domestic abuse not just as witnesses but as victims (Katz, 2015), (Callaghan, 2015). Domestic abuse creates a distressing, stressful and harmful environment and the long term consequences of this trauma can stretch into adulthood and can affect children in different ways.
- Welsh Women’s Aid would like to reinforce the importance of a designated and trained RSE lead practitioner to develop and deliver the RSE curriculum and embed RSE in a whole school approach, as recommended by the Expert Panel. The current guidance has been written for teachers, who will not be experts in the role. This will have a significant impact on the individual teachers, the student engagement and, potentially, the wellbeing of those in the school.
- Stronger links should be made throughout the guidance with the existing Welsh Government work on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV). Particular links should be made to the Good Practice Guide: A whole education approach to ending VAWDASV. Domestic abuse is currently covered, but sexual violence is not prominent.
- Identify and recognise the gendered nature of abuse as a tool to understanding that gender inequality is a cause and consequence of violence against women and girls.
- Reinforce the use of the Live Fear Free helpline as a professional resource in this section.

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?

Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

Schools need to be equipped with the resources they need to properly publicise the benefits of the new RSE curriculum and how it is aligned to the seven well-being goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015⁵.

Working with parents will be integral to ensuring the success of RSE. This can be achieved by:

- Letting parents know about the education programme, when it is happening and what will be talked about
- Sending home discussion notes for parents to talk about with their children
- Inviting parents to participate in family workshops and develop relationships and encourage good communication between parents and children
- Deliver workshops and courses for parents⁶.

This approach is also in line with The Good Practice Guide's⁷ nine key elements of a whole education approach to tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV), which advocates the need for parents, carers and family members to learn about all forms of abuse in order to support the well-being of children and young people.

Welsh Women's Aid believes that any concerns raised by parents and caregivers should be dealt with through the school's usual policies and decided on a case by case basis. This should be done by prioritising conversations and awareness raising with the concerned parties. In order for this approach to be effective, practitioners must be fully trained and confident in the RSE approach.

Question 8 – Do you feel the guidance gives you the information you need to engage meaningfully with your learners to plan your RSE provision?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
------------	--------------------------	-----------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

N/A

Question 9 – What kind of training, support or resources would you like to see to help support the successful implementation of the guidance?

--

⁵ Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Future Generation's Commissioner for Wales, <http://futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

⁶ http://www.preventionplatform.co.uk/?page_id=2324

⁷ Good Practice Guide: A Whole Education Approach to Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, Welsh Government, 2017: https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/522394/A-Whole-Education-Approach-to-Violence-Against-Women,-Domestic-Abuse-and-Sexual-Violence-in-Wales.pdf

- A definitive training programme, delivered by specialist trainers with an in depth understanding of VAWDASV, needs to be established with a timeline.
- Training needs to be on-going to ensure staff feel fully supported and the standard of the sessions is consistently high.
- A programme of VAWDASV training delivered by specialist trainers. The National Training Framework Ask and Act Group 6 is aimed at public sector leaders, which includes Headteachers. The training includes a series of short films on strengthening leadership, each on an important issue related to VAWDASV. A more comprehensive, bespoke RSE training should be layered with a VAWDASV informed approach to ensure integration of current policies and resources.
- RSE teachers and practitioners should have access to on-going training on all forms of abuse and how to deal with disclosures.

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?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
------------	--------------------------	-----------	--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

Supporting comments (no more than 250 words)

To support and facilitate the delivery of SER/RSE, work has been carried out by the third sector to develop tools to deliver in educational settings where positive attitudes toward gender equality and healthy, respectful relationships can be fostered now and in the future. This includes:

AGENDA: A Young People’s Guide to Making Positive Relationships Matter⁸ is Wales’ first national guidance for young people on how they can safely and creatively make positive relationships matter. Created jointly by Cardiff University, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Welsh Women’s Aid and NSPCC, it aims to help young people exercise their rights, be inspired by the stories of others and support each other in getting started to share and change what matters to them.

S.T.A.R (Safety, Trust and Respect) Suite of Services is a range of group programmes that have been created to teach children and young people about Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) and to support children and young people who have experienced it either directly or indirectly. The programmes focusing on support are aimed towards younger children, from ages 4 to 11, which are delivered only by Welsh Women’s Aid specialist service members by dedicated Children’s Workers in recognition of the importance of delivering this work ethically and appropriately. Programmes for older children and young people (11-25 years old) are preventative (it should be noted that priority is however, given to those who have experience of domestic abuse) and are often delivered in youth clubs and schools to inform children and young people about issues surrounding VAWDASV. Welsh Women’s Aid has previously designed participatory focus group

⁸ <http://agenda.wales/>

discussions that sought to give an opportunity for children and young people to talk about the S.T.A.R programme.

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 could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Supporting comments

Welsh Women's Aid would urge that the use of the Welsh language is equally as robust as English (for example there are no stages in the curriculum where a person has to revert to English) and that the Welsh language can be used at every stage of the curriculum. We would also urge that it is clear that a child or young person can disclose in Welsh and that the ability to respond in Welsh is promoted in order to ensure inclusivity in all contexts.

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.

Supporting comments

See above

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.

The paragraph that states part of sex and relationships education, pupils should be taught about the "nature and importance of marriage for family life and bringing up children" is problematic from a VAWDASV and inclusivity perspective, despite the reference later in the

paragraph that stipulates that children should not experience any “stigmatisation.” The socio-cultural norm of marriage as a pre-requisite to a happy and stable home life will cause harm to children from single parent families and same sex relationships, potentially affecting their own social, educational and economic mobility, which is the anti-thesis to an inclusive, holistic curriculum whereby children are to be encouraged and supported to ‘meet their potential’.

The gendered roles of wife and mother are also used as mechanisms to reinforce control in abusive relationships and contribute to a survivor’s shame when it comes to leaving a marriage. Survivors who have escaped an abusive relationship should not in any way be stigmatised for their choice to leave. This is imperative as the current language around the preference of marriage could put children further at risk and further alienate single parents seeking support. Therefore Welsh Women’s Aid strongly recommends the amendment of this wording.

Welsh Women’s Aid would recommend the following re-write:

“As part of sex and relationship education, pupils should be taught about the nature and importance of a stable, healthy home environment in which to raise children, which consists of an equal, respectful relationship as a key building block of community and society.”

Secondly, according to the Expert Panel recommendations, each school was due to have a designated RSE Practitioner to develop and deliver the RSE curriculum across years 7, 8 and 9.

As already stated, the current guidance has been written for teachers, who will not be experts in the RSE role. This will have a significant impact on the individual teachers, the student engagement and, potentially, the wellbeing of all those in the school.

Welsh Women’s Aid would like to reinforce the importance of this recommendation to have a designated RSE Practitioner, and further query how teachers are going to be best supported to ensure an effective RSE curriculum? Clarification should be added to the guidance around this point.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here:



ⁱ Our membership of third sector violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence specialist services in Wales, with whom we have national partnership agreements to ensure our work is coordinated and integrated includes: Aberconwy DAS, Atal y Fro, Bangor and District Women's Aid, Clwyd Alyn Housing Association (CAHA) Women's Aid, Stepping Stones, Safer Merthyr Tydfil, Carmarthen Domestic Abuse Service, Calan DVS, Cardiff Women's Aid, Cyfannol Women's Aid, Domestic Abuse Safety Unit (DASU), Gorwel (Grwp Cynefin), Montgomeryshire Family Crisis Centre, Newport Women's Aid, North Denbighshire Domestic Abuse Service, Port Talbot & Afan Women's Aid, RCT Women's Aid, Safer Wales (including Dyn Project), Swansea Women's Aid, Threshold, West Wales Domestic Abuse Service and Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC) North Wales.