

## Water safety/drowning prevention

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 19 Mawrth 2019

Petitions Committee | 19 March 2019

### Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-868

Petition title: Water Safety/Drowning Prevention and the effects of Cold Water Shock to be taught in all Schools in Wales

Text of petition: We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to include – Water Safety/Drowning Prevention and the effects of cold-water shock to be taught on the national curriculum in Wales.

In 2016 we saw the launch of the first ever water safety strategy in the UK, which aims to reduce water related fatalities by 50% by 2026. Collaboration, awareness, education and prevention are the main focuses. Wales needs to respond in support.

The families of Cameron Comey, Luke Somerfield, Kieran Bennett-Leefe, Robert Mansfield and Jem Pendragon all support this petition in memory of their sons lost to water.

Several hundred adults and children drown accidentally every year in the UK & Ireland, and Wales – having a considerable number of rivers, lakes and a wild coastline is not immune. Education and prevention are key to safeguarding our communities from needless drowning.

This petition also has its aims focused on healthy, educated interactions with our many open waterways in Wales, by promoting events nationally and locally where young people and the public can access organized events where they engage with social, active and safe events with clubs/organisations concerned with water based activities.

We also recognise that local authority cuts to swimming accessibility for all pupils (through central government pressures) and a new Welsh Bacalaureate on water safety is too wide a gap to ensure a consistent education message for all. Wales has three broad strategies (our Healthy future, Building a brighter future and Well-being of Future Generations) and have links to injury prevention and, therefore, to reducing drowning.

## 1. Current curriculum

In her letter to the Committee, the Minister for Education sets out the current place of water safety within the current, both in physical education under the ‘adventurous activities’ strand and through Personal and Social Education through learning about personal safety through the theme of health and emotional wellbeing. She also states that there are opportunities within the Welsh Bacculaureate relating to health and wellbeing.

## 2. New Curriculum for Wales (to be introduced from September 2022)

The Welsh Government, working with the education profession, is developing a new curriculum following Professor Graham Donaldson’s independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements and his subsequent report, [Successful Futures](#) (February 2015).

The Welsh Government has adopted the **four purposes** of the new curriculum as recommended by Professor Donaldson. They are that all children and young people completing their schooling will be:

- Ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives.
- Enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work.
- Ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world.
- Healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The Welsh Government has also adopted the **six Areas of Learning and Experience** recommended by Professor Donaldson:

- Expressive Arts
- **Health and Well-being**
- Humanities
- Languages, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science and Technology

The statutory introduction of the new curriculum will be in September 2022. The new curriculum will initially only be introduced in primary schools and Year 7 in September 2022, before rolling into year 8 for 2023, year 9 in 2024, and so on as the cohort moves through.

Before its statutory introduction, the new curriculum will be available for schools to feed-back, test and refine **from April 2019**, before a final version is published for school to access from January 2020. Further information on the process can be found in [this blog article](#).

Pioneer schools are collaborating with the Welsh Government, regional education consortia and experts and advisers through six Working Groups – one for each of the new Areas of Learning and Experience. These groups have produced **‘What Matters?’ statements** setting out

the latest thinking on curriculum content and key topics. The latest published draft versions of these were in [May 2018](#).

In her letter, the Minister states that the What Matters? statement of the Health and Wellbeing AoLE (not yet published) will support the delivery of swimming by specifying that learners need to experience opportunities to be physically active in a variety of environments, including around water, and need to be able to take decisions in a variety of situations and environments. However, she also notes that the new curriculum does not provide a ‘comprehensive list of detailed content’ and that it must allow professionals flexibility to choose the specific content that meets the needs of their learners.

### 3. Assembly activity

As part of their ongoing scrutiny of the Welsh Government’s curriculum reforms, the Children, Young People and Education Committee took evidence from [the Minister for Education on 10 January 2019](#). Prior to this the Committee sought the views of stakeholders on progress of the new curriculum. The [response from Sport Wales](#) said that while they were pleased with progress in the curriculum overall, they had some ‘minor concerns’ with ‘the prominence of physical activity and sport across the health and well-being AoLE and the prominence of water safety and swimming as life skills’ and:

there are concerns over the profile of Swimming from the perspective of Water safety in the current draft version [of the What Matters? statement].

When questioned on this, the Minister said:

With regard to swimming, there is reference to swimming and water safety, so there is nothing to preclude schools from pursuing swimming as a physical activity within the curriculum. So, I would argue that that is there.

Her official went on to explain:

The health and well-being AoLE will mean that learners need to be able to be physically active in and around water—so, swimming—as part of being physically active, and to be able to make safe decisions around situations in environments, including water. So, it is there.

I think the thing that we'll probably need to look at again is the guidance that goes with it and interpreting that, but, again, this is something we'll keep in touch with Sport Wales on. Sport Wales have been really close to this process and have been really close to us developing that AoLE, so it is something we'll look at with them. But, I think our view, and the view of the AoLE, is that it's there. It might be that, actually, when we come out we'll need to be clearer in terms of the supporting information that goes with it.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.