



BRIEFING

Responding to the Welsh Government Consultation

Radical Plans to Abolish Parental Rights and Subject all Children (aged 3-16) to Compulsory Sexuality Education

Deadline: 28 November 2019

Online Questions Asked by the Welsh Government

For online questionnaire: [Read here](#)

For the Welsh Government's own Summary of its Proposals: [Read here](#)

For the Welsh Government's Consultation document: [Read here](#)

When responding to the consultation please use your own words. Responses found to be written in the same words may be ignored. Below you will find suggested points to assist you in answering the questions raised by the Welsh government. While suggested answers are offered, we stress that you use your own words because each response submitted is made by an individual on their own behalf.

It is crucial to show that you understand the relevant government documents that the questions draw upon. Therefore, we recommend that you first read the accompanying [VfJUK Briefing](#) that provides informative and essential background to the Questions.

Question 1

What implications would there be for learners, parents/ guardians/ carers and schools if all learners were required to receive Religious Education (RE) and/or Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) lessons in the new curriculum? *You are invited to provide comments in the box.*

Although this question treats both RE and RSE in combination, we recommend that you tackle it in two distinct parts. It will therefore help if you divide your overall response into two headed sections, the first being Religious Education or RE, and the second, RSE. Given that there are overlapping themes connected to the proposed abolition of the parental right of withdrawal, we suggest you sum up your main concerns about your legally enshrined parental rights being removed, in a short concluding paragraph at the end.

1. Religious Education

On the matter of compulsory RE and the abolition of the parental opt-out, there are suggested points provided below, any of which could be mentioned as part of your answer. **Please use your own words in all answers.**

Given the Welsh Government's proposal for Religious Education to be renamed as "Religions and Worldviews", this radically alters the scope and agenda of this subject, by giving space to philosophies of humanism and atheism. VfJUK believes children should, as part of a rounded education, ideally learn about the World Religions, including an understanding of atheism. However, we have well-founded concerns underlying this current proposal for change.

The Welsh government states: "In order to equip a pupil for the modern world, schools must provide them with pluralistic, neutral and critical education on those religious and non-religious world views."¹

We understand that as part of growing trends in society at large, secular values (directly drawn from humanism or atheism) are increasingly presented as more respectable than traditional religious values. Those objecting to this position will claim that the doctrine of pluralism safeguards against bias and disrespect for particular religious values. However, political correctness, often directly associated with what pluralism means in practice, abhors traditional religious values, thus rendering pluralism a political tool for compliance and censorship. Given the Welsh Government's plans to abolish parental rights of withdrawal from sex education, this shows overt legal discrimination and disrespect, therefore there can be no case for neutrality on questions of "Religion and Worldviews".

We believe that the Welsh Government's claim that this subject will be taught neutrally is therefore unconvincing. We also believe that the parental right to withdraw their children from RE or any rebranded equivalent is a fundamental breach of both the letter and spirit of the European Convention of Human Rights (now incorporated into the Human Rights Act 1998), which upholds the rights of parents to choose the education for their children that reflects their religious or philosophical convictions. Parental choices must be respected by the State. Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights enshrines the fundamental right of parents to choose the education that reflects their beliefs and values. It states:

No person shall be denied a right to an education. In the **exercise of any functions** which it assumes in relation to **education and to teaching**, the **State shall respect the right of parents** to ensure such education and teaching is in **conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.**² (emphasis added)

2. Relationships and Sexuality Education

As with RE above, removing parental rights of withdrawal from what will become Relationships and Sexuality Education, is a fundamental breach of the Convention right, enshrined to uphold parental freedoms.

The question asks, in part, what are the "implications for learners" if RSE becomes mandatory. We believe compulsory RSE is inappropriate for children for the following reasons:

- The youngest of children, especially those who are pre-pubescent, are not by definition, cognitively aware of anything connected to sexual interests. It is therefore inappropriate on the basis of age and physical development to introduce any matters about sex or sexuality, which can only serve to prematurely sexualise children. It has the potential to sow confusion and anxiety. Brain development is not complete until the mid-twenties.³ When children have reached puberty, educational messages that effectively add up to "show and tell" are more likely to prompt experimentation, yet the lack of cognitive maturity means that children who apply their learning, don't fully appreciate what can be lifetime consequences. This can be

unwanted pregnancies; abortions; one-parent families; fatherless children; children placed in care; emotional hurts following relationship break-ups, including increased susceptibility to mental illness; and a range of STIs, some of which can lead to infertility and may be fatal if caught late.

- We understand it is also inappropriate for young children to be told about sexual orientation in the ways in which this concept is taught. Apart from the cognitive and emotional immaturity that makes understanding problematic, children are at risk of confusing friendship with “being gay”. Children are often told that gay people “like” members of the same sex. In reality, pre-pubescent children naturally prefer their own sex in the choice of friends they make (over that of the opposite sex); this is not about sexual interest but normal bonding and child development. Children who are introduced to ideas of sexual orientation will therefore be at risk of confusion about their identity.
- On the question of gender identity, a tiny fraction of children who experience gender dysphoria⁴ carry this problem into adulthood. There are great medical risks to introducing to children of any age the idea that they can change their sex. While surgical intervention is technically illegal for under 18s, this has been questioned by the Government in direct response to one of VfJUK’s campaigns.⁵ Even in the absence of actual surgery (the lifetime effects of which are irreversible), administering sex-changing hormones for under 18s will set in motion effects on the body which can leave a trail of adverse medical consequences.⁶ Puberty blockers, until recently thought to have no long-term effects, have now been shown to produce irreversible changes and are currently subject to research.⁷
- The legal age of consent is 16. Therefore, teaching children about anything that has the potential to encourage or is capable of encouraging experimentation, should be avoided. RSE in the UK typically draws on resources from external agencies who have permissive agendas, none of which is neutral, but ideological. These include, among others, *Brook*,⁸ *Stonewall*⁹ and *Sexwise*.¹⁰ Resources from organisations upholding traditional values about sex, marriage and family are noticeably absent and should be included to reflect a broader perspective.

Question 2

What support, information and guidance would be needed if this approach were adopted? You are invited to provide comments in the box.

We believe this approach should not be adopted.

Question 3

Our proposal is that parents should not be able to prevent their child from having RE or RSE lessons. This will be rolled out from September 2022, for all primary age learners and learners in year 7 in secondary school (with additional year groups added each year).

Should the ability of parents/carers to prevent their child from receiving RE and RSE lessons also be stopped under the old curriculum from September 2022? (This would only have implications for learners in year 8 to 11 in 2022, year 9 to 11 in 2023 and so on.) You are asked to choose from “Yes”, “No” or “Not Sure” and to provide a reason for your choice.

We recommend that you choose “No”. We suggest you could also make the point that the parental right of withdrawal from both RE and RSE must be upheld according to the provisions of the European Convention of Human Rights (now incorporated into the Human Rights Act 1998).

Question 4

What is an appropriate name for ‘religious education’, to accurately reflect the broader scope proposed in the new curriculum? You are asked to choose from “No Change”, “Religion, views and ethics”, “Religions and Worldviews”, “Other (please specify)”, providing reasons for your choice.

For the reasons cited as part of the answer to Question 1, we are not advocating for any changes to the subject name of Religious Education. You could bring in some of the points that may not have been mentioned under Question 1. Alternatively, you may reiterate some points made under Question 1.

Questions 5 and 6

These questions falls outside of the remit of the work of VfJUK. It may be left blank.

Question 7

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any issues related to this consultation, which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

This is your chance to make the point that the proposals are tantamount to ideological indoctrination. You may wish to sum up the points made that formed part of your answer to Question 1.

¹ See para., 30, *Consultation on proposals to ensure access to the full curriculum for all learners*, Welsh Government Consultation Document, Issued 3 October 2019, Number: WG39139. (<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-10/consultation-document-ensuring-access-to-the-full-curriculum.pdf>)

² Protocol 1, Article 2.

³ For general insight into the research on brain development and age, see: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-24173194>; <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=141164708&t=1572270478649>.

⁴ This is a medical condition in which an individual experiences a conflict between their birth sex and their psychological experience of their gender identity.

⁵ See an official government response from the Department of Health and Social Care to Voice for Justice UK’s campaign against medical interventions for under 18s: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/voice-for-justice-uks-campaign-about-gender-reassignment> (20 February 2018)

⁶ For an overview of some of the serious medical risks to health, consider Lord Winston’s appeal to the medical literature, (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/11/01/transgender-people-can-end-badly-damaged-says-lord-robert-winston/>). It should be noted that increasing numbers of gay-identified people do not recognise that one’s birth sex can be changed. Consider the *LGB Alliance*, an emerging breakaway group from Stonewall (the leading UK LGBT campaigning group) that advocates rights for lesbians, gays and bisexuals but rejects transgender ideology; they state that they are “not anti-trans” but recognise that sex is binary and not on a spectrum (<https://mailchi.mp/2be6fcaac112/lgballiance>), accessed 31 October 2019. See also a report covering the launch of this new group: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/23/stonewall-splits-accused-promoting-trans-agenda-expense-gay/>

⁷ <https://www.transgendertrend.com/puberty-blockers/>

⁸ <https://www.brook.org.uk/>

⁹ <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/> It should be noted that Stonewall Cymru (Welsh branch), as the UK’s leading LGBT activist group, was among the organisations consulted by an Expert Panel, whose recommendations form the basis of the Welsh Government’s proposals on renaming Relationships and Sex Education to Relationships and Sexuality Education. See: *The Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales: Recommendations of the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel*, December 2017, p. 25, WG32816. (<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/the-future-of-the-sex-and-relationships-education-curriculum-in-wales.pdf>)

¹⁰ <https://www.sexwise.fpa.org.uk/>