



ConsultationResponse

FROM THE RSPCA IN WALES

Consultation response: Home Education - statutory guidance for local authorities and handbook for home educators

October 2019

QUESTION 4 - CHAPTER 4: EFFICIENT AND SUITABLE EDUCATION.SECTION 4.15-4.18 OF THE STATUTORY GUIDANCE REFERS TO THE SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUITABLE AND EFFICIENT EDUCATION FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO CONSIDER. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU THINK SHOULD BE INCLUDED?

Yes. RSPCA Cymru welcomes the opportunity to comment on the guidance for local authorities on home schooling. While we are pleased to see that the guidance is wide-ranging and provides opportunities for a number of issues and topics to be studied in the home schooling environment, RSPCA Cymru believe that the guidance needs to incorporate wellbeing into the characteristics of a suitable and efficient education, within which animal welfare can then be taught by practitioners and studied by home learners.

Following the introduction of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, public bodies across Wales must seek to achieve the seven wellbeing goals as laid within the Act¹. One of such goals is to create a healthier Wales, which includes not only physical health but mental health also. RSPCA has long worked with student teachers, schools and other groups to further animal welfare education across Wales. Our campaign, Generation Kind, aims at ensuring young people are made aware of how their actions impact on animals, helping to ensure that we all learn how best to care for the animals around us in a compassionate and kind way. We believe that the links between mental and physical wellbeing and animals is clear and therefore believe that a direct reference to animal welfare deserves to be incorporated into the homeschooling guidance for local authorities.

The 2014-2015 National Survey for Wales found that 47% of households in Wales own at least one animal². Based on recent trends, we can assume that such an ownership figure has increased since the Survey. Accordingly, it is essential that young people in Wales are taught how to be kind and compassionate to all animals, which will help them to become kinder and more compassionate to themselves and their peers. RSPCA Cymru believe that such an education would fit well with the existing guidance, helping to further ensure students learn social skills and are prepared for later life, regardless of where their education takes place.

Further to this, RSPCA Cymru believe that animal welfare education can provide a range of opportunities for students, regardless of their learning environment. The annual RSPCA Great Debate programme

¹ [Seven Wellbeing Goals](#)

² National Survey for Wales 2014 - 2015, Pet Welfare

sees schools from across Wales entering into heats, culminating in the final held in the National Assembly for Wales where the finalist debate 'Whose Responsibility is Animal Welfare?' This allows students to build on their writing, speaking and listening skills, whilst also providing opportunities to gain social media experience. The Great Debate programme also provides opportunities for students to engage with their peers, developing their social and personal abilities, all through the prism of animal welfare.

Indeed, the issue of animal welfare cuts across a range of topics and issues, providing students with the opportunity to discuss health and well-being, humanities, science and technology, mathematics and numeracy and citizenship and politics all under the banner of animal welfare. Accordingly, RSPCA Cymru firmly believes that incorporating animal welfare into the guidance for homeschooling would provide opportunities for cross-curricular learning as well as further helping to create a society in Wales that understands and cares for animals in a kind and compassionate manner.

RSPCA Cymru makes note of the difference in environments between the school system and home-schooling. However, we believe that the Great Debate and the cross curricular nature of animal welfare education are good examples of how it can provide opportunities that students may not otherwise get. It is the view of the RSPCA that animal welfare education is a topic that should be accessible to everyone, regardless of where your education takes place.

G. DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THIS CHAPTER?

RSPCA Cymru wishes to further reiterate the importance of wellbeing and animal welfare education. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places the impetus on public bodies throughout Wales to seek to create a Prosperous Wales; a Resilient Wales; a More Equal Wales; a Healthier Wales; a Wales of Cohesive Communities; a Wales of Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language; and a Globally responsible Wales³. As a public body, Wales' local authorities have an obligation to ensure they are upholding these seven Wellbeing Goals, and RSPCA Cymru firmly believe that by incorporating wellbeing and animal welfare in the homeschooling guidance for local authorities, Welsh Government would be creating a framework in which homeschoolers contribute to such goals.

Accordingly, RSPCA Cymru believe that this new guidance for local authorities on home schooling should seek to incorporate animal welfare education as part of a larger commitment to wellbeing within the guidance, ensuring that those individuals who are home-schooled do not miss out on learning how to be kind and compassionate to themselves and others, including animals and all sentient beings.

QUESTION 12 - WE HAVE ASKED A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS. IF YOU HAVE ANY RELATED WHICH WE HAVE NOT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSED, PLEASE USE THIS SPACE TO REPORT THEM.

As per the guidance, RSPCA Cymru welcomes the features that local authorities should expect homeschooling to include, notably ensuring the child has opportunities to engage in a broad range of learning experiences, and providing opportunities to develop personal and social skills to help prepare them for later life and become engaged citizens. Such aims could easily be linked to exposure to animals and a heightened understanding about their welfare; which can play a huge role in developing compassionate, empathetic and understanding individuals.

³ [The Seven Well-being Goals](#)

However, we were disappointed to see that the guidance does not incorporate clear references to wellbeing and more specifically animal welfare. As noted in our response to question four, and above, animal welfare education provides an opportunity for kindness and compassion to be explored within the education environment. RSPCA Cymru firmly believes that by incorporating wellbeing as a feature into what local authorities can reasonably expect home-schooling to include, it will provide greater opportunities for young people who are not in school, to learn about the importance of kindness and compassionate behaviour, not only to themselves, but to their peers and animals and all other sentient beings.

RSPCA Cymru remains committed to promoting kind and compassionate behaviour across Wales. Accordingly, educational resources, to be used both in the school environment and within home-schooling, can be found on the [RSPCA Education website](#)⁴.

⁴ [RSPCA Education website](#)