



# Consultation Response

FROM THE RSPCA IN WALES

## RSPCA Cymru consultation response Draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 July 2019

### AUDIENCE

DO YOU WORK IN OR SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF EDUCATION?	Yes
IF YES, WHAT IS YOUR ORGANISATION	Third Sector
WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY ROLE?	The RSPCA provides initial teacher training on animal welfare, provides online educational resources, including lesson plans, for teachers to use across the progression steps, and works closely with local authorities and schools on events that further promote animal welfare education across Wales and England, for example The Great Debate. Additionally, as part of our education programme, the RSPCA's Generation Kind project aims to promote kind, compassionate and responsible behaviour in young people through learning about animals and animal welfare issues.
ARE YOU PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON BEHALF OF AN ORGANISATION OR GROUP?	Yes
IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY	On behalf of RSPCA Cymru

## SECTION A - GENERAL QUESTIONS

QUESTION A1. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE THAT THE DRAFT CURRICULUM FOR WALES 2022 GUIDANCE WILL HELP CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME:

- AMBITIOUS, CAPABLE LEARNERS
- HEALTHY, CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS
- ETHICAL, INFORMED CITIZENS
- ENTERPRISING, CREATIVE CONTRIBUTORS?

STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE/NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE/DISAGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE

Agree

The draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 guidance provides the foundations for young people to meet the four purposes as laid out above. The flexible approach offered allows students to progress at an appropriate pace and the 'What Matters' statements help provide clear guidelines with regards to what should be taught in order to help young people to become ambitious, healthy, confident, informed and creative contributors.

However, RSPCA Cymru would like to see animal welfare included within the curriculum on a more permanent and statutory basis, to ensure that young people are taught from an early age the value of animals and how best to look after them in a compassionate and kind manner, providing skills which can help inform the four purposes and skills for life.

Interacting with a range of animals and learning how to properly care for them and live alongside them, encourages individuals to become ambitious and capable, healthy and confident, ethical and informed and enterprising learners, through a prism of learning which is cross-curricular and has compassion, kindness and responsibility at its core.

RSPCA Cymru believes that the introduction of animal welfare education - and direct reference to it via the guidance - as a principal element of the new Welsh Curriculum will support Wales' next generation to become ethical, informed citizens and consumers. While the RSPCA is already pursuing such an education through our Generation Kind Programme, we see the value of young people learning about kind and compassionate behaviour towards themselves and others, including animals, within the classroom environment to ensure that the achievement outcomes noted in the Health and Wellbeing AoLE are achieved in their entirety.

QUESTION A2. LOOKING AT THE WHAT MATTERS STATEMENT, TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE THAT THESE SUM UP THE PRIORITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING?

STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE/NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE/DISAGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE

Agree

The 'What Matters' statements neatly summarise the core elements of the six Areas of Learning and Experience, whilst providing a flexible approach for teachers, allowing them to tailor their lesson plans to suit the needs of different classes and individuals. Additionally, the breakdown of progression steps makes the achievement outcomes easy to understand, which is useful for both teachers, students and other interested parties.

RSPCA Cymru is particularly interested in the Health and Well-being 'What Matters' statements, as we believe that animal welfare fits nicely into that particular AoLE. We were pleased to see that one of the achievement outcomes for Progression Step 5 was:

- *“I can empathise with others which helps me to be compassionate and kind towards myself and others.”*

RSPCA Cymru firmly believes that “others” should incorporate animals, yet we are disappointed not to see a direct reference to animals or animal welfare incorporated into the guidance for teachers.

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 'What Matters' statements for the Health and Well-being AoLE.

As such, we would recommend the wording of such a statement be changed to read:

- *“I can empathise with others which helps me to be compassionate and kind towards myself and others, including animals and all sentient beings.”*

We would welcome this addition to make clear to practitioners the potential for including animals and their welfare into their teaching, and because of our clear belief that study and exploration of animals is a central way in developing the targeted qualities of compassion and kindness in young people.

This statement sits within Progression Step 5, which is the last step. RSPCA Cymru believes that if such an objective is to be achieved then the curriculum will have to introduce animal welfare education at the earliest possible stage (1).

This is an example of how RSPCA Cymru would like to see the Health and Well-being AoLE 'What Matters' statements developed - at the final stage - to incorporate other sentient beings. Incorporating animal and animal welfare references should be taken across all of the progression steps within the Health and Wellbeing AoLE in order to make the achievement outcomes attainable and realistic; and to ensure these qualities are built-up and developed through an individual's educational journey.

**QUESTION A3. DO YOU THINK THE DRAFT CURRICULUM FOR WALES 202 GUIDANCE COULD BE IMPROVED?**

**YES/NO**

**IF YES, HOW DO YOU THINK IT COULD BE IMPROVED?**

Yes

RSPCA Cymru believe that the Curriculum for Wales 2022 guidance could be improved by placing animal welfare directly within the curriculum.

The issue of animal welfare cuts across the different Areas of Learning and Experience, 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 adding animal welfare to the Curriculum, like sex and relationship education, would provide opportunities for cross-curricular learning as well as helping to create a society in Wales that understands and cares for animals in a kind and compassionate manner.

RSPCA Cymru encourages the addition of animal welfare into the curriculum in a number of forms. We strongly believe that it should be taught as a topic in its own right, in a compulsory capacity. However, we would also like to see direct references to animals and animal welfare incorporated into the 'What Matters' statements in the Health and Well-being AoLE, as noted in our response to **A.2** - i.e the addition of "including animals and all sentient beings" to the "*I can empathise with others which helps me to be compassionate and kind towards myself and others*" achievement outcome. This small but powerful change could make a very powerful statement as to the importance the Welsh Government attaches to animal welfare, and the role it can play within the educational system.

RSPCA Cymru believes that education is vital to ensuring kind and compassionate behaviour. Indeed, this ethos extends across the whole RSPCA organisation, with a focus on education and working with owners a central tenet of our Inspectorate's approach to preventing animal welfare issues from manifesting. While the RSPCA is seeking to instill such behaviour in students across Wales through our Generation Kind programme, we wish to see this supported through the introduction of animal welfare references into the new curriculum guidance for Wales, which would provide a clear opportunity to instill such behaviour in young people across Wales, whilst teaching a subject which is exciting, cross-curricular and resonates with many.

## SECTION B - DETAILED QUESTIONS

### B1. HOW HELPFUL WOULD YOU FIND THE DRAFT CURRICULUM FOR WALES 2022 GUIDANCE IN DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM FOR YOUR LEARNERS?

EXTREMELY HELPFUL/VERY HELPFUL/MODERATELY HELPFUL/SLIGHTLY HELPFUL/ NOT HELPFUL AT ALL

Moderately helpful

While this particular question may be of greater interest to teachers, RSPCA Cymru believes that the draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 guidance is helpful in developing a curriculum due to the wide scope of learning that it allows for. However, RSPCA Cymru is disappointed to not see animal welfare currently incorporated into the curriculum guidance in any capacity.

RSPCA Cymru provides educational resources, including lesson plans, to support teaching across Wales. At present, these are primarily aimed at primary schools; though elements of the RSPCA's Generation Kind scheme are targeted at secondary school pupils too - such as The Great Debate, which a number of teachers across Wales have incorporated into their teaching plans to develop skills in compassion, empathy, communication and citizenship.

The RSPCA is open to developing these teaching materials to align with the new curriculum and believe that due to the position that animal welfare holds in that it covers a wide range of cross-curricular issues, as well as playing a large role in supporting health and well-being, that the guidance should reflect this.

We would like to see animal and animal welfare references incorporated into the 'What Matters' statements for the Health and Well-being AoLE as noted in our response to **A.2** and animal welfare education incorporated as a compulsory part of the new curriculum, alongside sex and relationships education, in order to achieve the outcomes noted in the Health and Well-being 'What Matters' statements.

### B2. HOW WELL DO YOU THINK THE DRAFT CURRICULUM FOR WALES 2022 GUIDANCE ALLOWS FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO GAIN A BROAD RANGE OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES?

YOU MAY WANT TO CONSIDER LEARNING ACROSS THE DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES AND SUBJECTS WHICH FORM PART OF AN AREA OF LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE.

EXTREMELY WELL/VERY WELL/MODERATELY WELL/SLIGHTLY WELL/NOT WELL AT ALL

Moderately Well

The draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 guidance clearly allows children and young people to gain a broad range of learning experiences. The six AoLEs provide real flexibility and scope for teachers to cover numerous topics, however potentially acts as a double-edged sword. The flexibility offers potential for animal welfare to be covered, but the ambiguity and lack of specific subject areas means the issue could easily and unnecessarily be overlooked.

We would like to see more specific references to animals and animal welfare incorporated into the 'What Matters' statements of the Health and Well-being AoLE as noted in our response to **A.2**. Ultimately, RSPCA Cymru believes that animal welfare education as a subject should be offered compulsory status on the curriculum. RSPCA Cymru would happily work closely with Welsh Government on this, to draw up

relevant lesson plans for the relevant progression steps and ensure that kind and compassionate animal ownership is taught throughout Wales. Such lesson plans are already available on the RSPCA Education page. Additionally, the tools and resources that are used within our Generation Kind programme that helps young people think more proactively about animal welfare and the importance of kind and compassionate behaviour would also be available for use within the new curriculum.

### B3. HOW WELL DO YOU THINK DRAFT CURRICULUM FOR WALES 2022 GUIDANCE ALLOWS FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO SPECIALISE FROM AGE 14 IN A PARTICULAR DISCIPLINE OR SUBJECT?

EXTREMELY WELL/VERY WELL/MODERATELY WELL/SLIGHTLY WELL/NOT WELL AT ALL

Slightly well

The draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 guidance does not directly promote opportunities for young people to specialise in animals, be it animal health or animal welfare. We know that a large proportion of young people want to work closely with animals in Wales. Because of this, the RSPCA is committed to providing tools - potentially incorporating education packs, Inspector visits and school events - that allow young people to gain a better understanding of the work that we do and the type of work that they too can become involved with.

We would like to see animal welfare as a topic introduced so that this large number of young people are given the greatest possible opportunity to immerse themselves in the issue and understand what opportunities will be available to them as they progress through their education. This would have clear benefits for their own development, nurturing skills in empathy and compassion which, in turn, would encourage them to become the ethical citizens the Welsh Government wants the education system to create.

Additionally, as noted in our response to **A.2**, we would like to see animal and animal welfare references incorporated into the 'What Matters' statements for the Health and Well-being AoLE. Many young people have strong, positive relationships with animals, and this can help them deal with a range of emotions and health issues, including those surrounding mental health. There is an undeniable link between animal ownership and improved welfare, and studies have shown that having pets can help individuals become more kind, compassionate and responsible, helping individuals to manage their own wellbeing through pet ownership. If we wish our young people to grow up to become kind, compassionate and responsible individuals, we have to show them how to care not only for themselves and their peers, but "others" which includes all sentient beings.

### B4. THE DRAFT CURRICULUM FOR WALES 2022 GUIDANCE IS INTENDED TO SUPPORT PRACTITIONERS AND TEACHERS TO DESIGN A CURRICULUM SPECIFIC TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE. TO WHAT EXTENT WILL PRACTITIONERS AND TEACHERS HAVE THE FLEXIBILITY AND SUPPORT TO DO THIS?

STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE/NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE/DISAGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE

Neither agree nor disagree

While the draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 guidance provides clear flexibility for teaching professionals to design a curriculum specific to young people it is arguably overly-ambiguous in its approach. While the flexibility to teach a range of topics may provide opportunities for animal welfare to be taught in a cross-curricular manner, the possibility of it being overlooked in favour of other topics is high. As such,

RSPCA Cymru would like to see animal welfare education introduced into the curriculum as a statutory aspect, alongside sex and relationships education and religious education. Additionally, we would like to see direct references to animals and animal welfare incorporated into the 'What Matters' statements of the Health and well-being AoLE as noted in our response to **A.2** - which we believe is the most tangible way to ensure an increased focus on animal welfare within the remit of the Welsh Government's current proposals.

The statutory introduction of animal welfare education would still allow for the flexible approach to teaching that has been incorporated into the curriculum due to its previously-referenced cross-curricular approach, whilst ensuring that we are teaching young people to be kind, compassionate and responsible individuals, with an emphasis on health and well-being, therefore helping students to achieve the objectives referenced in the Health and Well-being AoLE 'What Matters' statements.

**B5. HOW WELL DO YOU THINK THE DRAFT CURRICULUM FOR WALES 2022 GUIDANCE SUPPORTS LEARNERS TO DEVELOP SKILLS IN THE CROSS-CURRICULAR RESPONSIBILITIES (LITERACY, NUMERACY AND DIGITAL COMPETENCE) AND OTHER CROSS-CUTTING THEMES (E.G. WELSH DIMENSION AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE, WIDER SKILLS, CAREERS AND WORK-RELATED EXPERIENCES, RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION)?**  
**EXTREMELY WELL/VERY WELL/MODERATELY WELL/SLIGHTLY WELL/NOT WELL AT ALL**

Moderately well

The draft curriculum for Wales 2022 guidance supports cross-curricular learning moderately well, removing the stand alone subjects in favour of an approach that provides context and therefore potentially greater understanding of those subjects - and scope for factoring issues such as animal welfare into the fray to support this learning on a cross-curricular basis.

It is the view of the RSPCA that animal welfare education can further support cross-curricular learning. By learning about animal welfare, pupils will be given the opportunity to learn about different cultures around the world, the different job opportunities available to those wishing to work with animals, the politics of devolution and the role this has played in further solidifying animal welfare within Wales, as well as digital competence and the different tools that are used in caring for and looking after an animal. Further to this, RSPCA's Great Debate project allows young learners to discuss animal welfare in a wider context. It looks at whose responsibility animal welfare is, touching on politics, citizenship and sociological discussions, whilst also helping students to practice their public speaking skills. The RSPCA also provides many of our resources in Welsh, , thus supporting Welsh-medium or bilingual education.

Accordingly, RSPCA Cymru was disappointed by the lack of attention given to animals and animal welfare within the draft Curriculum for Wales 2022 guidance and would like to see, specifically, direct references to this issue within the 'What Matters' statements of the Health and Well-being AoLE as noted in our response to **A.2**.

**B6. HOW COULD THE CROSS-CURRICULAR FRAMEWORKS (NATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY FRAMEWORK AND THE DIGITAL COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK) BE REFINED TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY, NUMERACY AND DIGITAL COMPETENCE ACROSS THE NEW CURRICULUM?**

Please refer to our comments left of Question B5.

**B7. HOW WELL DO YOU THINK THE GUIDANCE FOR EACH AREA OF LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE WILL SUPPORT CHILDREN DURING THE FOUNDATION YEARS?  
EXTREMELY WELL/VERY WELL/MODERATELY WELL/SLIGHTLY WELL/NOT WELL AT ALL**

Moderately well

RSPCA Cymru has always been committed to providing animal welfare education resources for teachers and teaching practitioners, from foundation phase to Key Stage Four. We believe that it is important for animal welfare to be introduced to students' learning as early as possible, to ensure that they understand the importance of compassion and kindness to both their peers, family members and others, including animals of all types and sizes. This emphasis on the importance of early years learning was reiterated by Welsh Government in their 2013 Report, *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan*, where it is stated that "there is widespread agreement that early childhood experiences are crucially important for children's long-term development and their achievements in later life"<sup>1</sup>.

Accordingly, RSPCA Cymru would like to see animal welfare education taught to foundation phase students, as well as incorporated into the 'What Matters' statements through the Health and Well-being AoLE, so as to ensure that the message of compassion and kindness is reiterated throughout a student's progression from three to 16 and therefore helping them to achieve the outcome noted in the Health and well-being AoLE 'What Matters' statement for Progression Step 5:

- *"I can empathise with others which helps me to be compassionate and kind towards myself and others."*

Such an outcome can only be achieved by early intervention and consistent teaching on such an issue. However, it is the view of the RSPCA that this statement should be amended, as referenced in **A2**, to read:

- *"I can empathise with others which helps me to be compassionate and kind towards myself and others, including animals and all sentient beings."*

RSPCA Cymru is open to further adapting our online resources to ensure that teachers across the progression steps have access to the relevant animal welfare resources that fit with the new curriculums' emphasis on cross-curricular learning and flexibility - including at the Foundation Phase. Our materials are already linked to Wales' curricula, and include early years resources - and RSPCA will endeavour to ensure these can be adapted to fit with the Welsh Government's new curriculum and associated guidance.

**B8. HOW WELL DO YOU THINK THE DRAFT CURRICULUM FOR WALES 2022 GUIDANCE SUPPORTS AND ENABLES LEARNERS TO PROGRESS AT AN APPROPRIATE PACE FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE AREA OF LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE FROM AGES 3 TO 16?  
EXTREMELY WELL/VERY WELL/MODERATELY WELL/SLIGHTLY WELL/NOT WELL AT ALL**

Very Well

While this is not directly an area for RSPCA to comment on, we believe that the introduction of progression steps and the removal of Key Stages provides greater opportunities for students to learn at their own pace. Accordingly, RSPCA Cymru is open to updating our own resources to reflect these

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government, 'Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan, 2013, p. 6

changes, so that teachers have the greatest opportunities to introduce animal welfare education to their students at a pace which is appropriate.

**B9. HOW WELL DO YOU THINK THE DRAFT CURRICULUM FOR WALES 2022 GUIDANCE WILL PROVIDE A BASIS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE PROGRESS BEYOND THE AGE OF 16? EXTREMELY WELL/VERY WELL/MODERATELY WELL/SLIGHTLY WELL/NOT WELL AT ALL**

Slightly well

While the draft curriculum for Wales 2022 guidance provides the opportunities for learners to study a broad range of topics within the six Areas of Learning and Experience and therefore progress beyond the age of 16, RSPCA Cymru believes that the introduction of animal welfare education would benefit the curriculum in achieving this.

Providing opportunities to learn about science, politics and citizenship, maths, communication skills and the importance of health and well-being, animal welfare education is a strong basis to help develop core skills that are essential for post-16 learning. Additionally, learning about animals and animal welfare provides young learners with an insight into working with animals, an area that many wish to go into but get little exposure to, encouraging them to further their studies.

Crucially, an education system should play a central role in helping to develop well-rounded, empathetic citizens, who enter the world beyond the age of 16 with these ideals at their core. An understanding and appreciation of animal welfare can be key in achieving this.

Accordingly, whilst the RSPCA welcomes the flexible approach taken within the curriculum guidance, we believe that by introducing animal welfare as a core element of the new curriculum, Welsh Government would be solidifying its position that places emphasis on cross-curricular learning, compassion and progressing at individual paces, as well as helping young people to progress beyond the age of 16.

## SECTION C - SPECIFIC: AREAS OF LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE

C1. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC FEEDBACK RELATING TO ONE OR MORE SPECIFIC AREAS OF LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE, PLEASE MAKE A SELECTION AND ADD YOUR COMMENTS BELOW.

### Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience

RSPCA Cymru would like to pay particular attention to the Health and Well-being Area of Learning Experience. Whilst it is our view that animal welfare could potentially be incorporated into a number of the AoLEs, Health and Well-being provides the clearest route for further promoting animal welfare education across Welsh schools.

The Health and Wellbeing AoLE contains five 'What Matters' statements:

1. Developing physical health and wellbeing has lifelong benefits
2. How we process and respond to our experiences affects our mental health and emotional wellbeing
3. Our decision making impacts on the quality of our lives and the lives of others
4. How we engage with different social influences shapes who we are and our health and wellbeing
5. Healthy relationships are fundamental to our sense of belonging and wellbeing.

These 'What Matters' statements summarises the core elements of the health and wellbeing AoLE, and the RSPCA is disappointed to see no reference to animals or animal welfare within them. As noted, animals, the keeping of animals and animal welfare provides individuals with a real-life education in compassion, kindness and responsibility. It helps individuals to develop their own emotional-wellbeing as well as encouraging physical activity, keeping both the animals and the owners physically and mentally fit and healthy.

As such, animal welfare education should be seen as a key factor in helping to develop and ensure an individuals health and well-being and should be specifically mentioned in the 'What Matters' statements and guidance.

For example, under Progression Step 5 within the Health and Wellbeing 'What Matters' statements one of the achievement outcomes is:

- *“I can empathise with others which helps me to be compassionate and kind towards myself and others.”*

While this does provide scope for animal welfare to be considered, RSPCA Cymru remains disappointed at the lack of direct references. We believe that such an outcome should read:

- *“I can empathise with others which helps me to be compassionate and kind towards myself and others, including animals and all sentient beings.”*

This, we believe, allows for individuals to understand that animals deserve empathy and kindness as much as humans. We also believe that in order for such an achievement outcome to be successful animal welfare education must be introduced into the Health and Well-being AoLE from the earliest possible step (1). This provides opportunities for pupils to engage with animals across the progression

steps, interacting with an engaging and real-world issue, whilst also developing their own health and well-being in order to achieve the outcomes as mentioned in the 'What Matters' statements.

As previously noted, the RSPCA believes that education is the best tool to inform young people of the importance of kind and compassionate relationships with animals. Our Generation Kind programme has effectively sought to engage with schools and young people across Wales, providing them with an insight into animal welfare, animal ownership and the impact our actions have on animals. However, we value the importance of learning about such an issue within the classroom and therefore believe that animal and animal welfare references need to be incorporated into the curriculum guidance, across the progression steps, in order to ensure that the achievement outcomes set out in the Health and Wellbeing AoLE are successfully achieved.

## C5. HOW WELL DOES THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AREA OF LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE GUIDANCE SUPPORT A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO SUPPORTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

### Slightly Well

The Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience guidance supports a whole school approach to supporting health and well-being in that it provides guidance that is clearly aimed across the progression steps. Additionally, by providing context within different areas, e.g. numeracy, science and technology, digital competence and the Welsh and international perspective, it allows for health and wellbeing to be discussed in real world scenarios rather than as a stand alone subject.

RSPCA Cymru, however, believe that animal welfare and health and wellbeing are synonymous. Caring for and loving an animal provides real companionship for many individuals and teaches individuals compassion, kindness and responsibility. The RSPCA is committed to ensuring all individuals gain this understanding and believe that it would be hugely beneficial for students if it was introduced as a compulsory aspect of the new Welsh curriculum. - Additionally, RSPCA Cymru believe that the 'What Matters' statement within the AoLE should make direct reference to animals and animal welfare, due to the important relationship between animal welfare and an individuals health and wellbeing, highlighted in our response to **C.1**.

### IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD OR FEEDBACK ON?

RSPCA Cymru welcomes the introduction of this more flexible, pragmatic curriculum in Wales, and the leverage it delivers for issues of importance to be taught through the prism of animal welfare.

It provides greater scope and opportunities for learning which will help develop young people into ambitious, capable learners, enterprising and creative contributors, ethical and informed citizens and healthy and confident individuals.

Yet, we are disappointed to see that animal welfare has not been given more attention. It is the view of the RSPCA that animal welfare education provides real opportunities for cross-curricular learning, cutting across the humanities, health and wellbeing, science and technology, mathematics and numeracy and communication Areas of Learning and Experience, whilst also providing learning opportunities for digital competency and professional development alongside introducing young people to kind and compassionate behaviours.

Irrespective of the flexible opportunities for students to learn about animal welfare within the new curriculum, RSPCA Cymru believes that animal welfare education needs to be introduced into the new curriculum as a compulsory topic, alongside sex and relationship education and religious education and we believe that references to animals and their welfare needs to be incorporated into the 'What Matters' statements of the Health and Well-being AoLE to ensure that we are encouraging kind, compassionate and responsible behaviour in young people as they progress from ages three to 16 along this new and transformative curriculum, see our response to **C.1**.

Sadly, 2018 saw Wales reaching a record high in the number of prosecutions brought against animal welfare offenders. The majority of these prosecutions were under Section 4 or Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, relating to the suffering of animals. This only highlights the importance of seeking to prevent such behaviours manifesting themselves in the next generations; a purpose central to RSPCA's Generation Kind project. Indeed education is the best way to combat this troubling trend of animal cruelty in Wales, and by introducing a statutory education on animal welfare, the Welsh Government and the Welsh education system would be setting a positive international example. The RSPCA also witnesses many cases of animal neglect where individuals involved had the best of intentions for their animals. However, due to an ignorance of how best to care for their pets and ensure their welfare needs are met, often RSPCA intervention is necessary. With young people, the RSPCA's education team undertakes very challenging work with some young offenders who have 'accidentally' neglected or harmed animals due to either a lack of understanding of their needs, or a lack of awareness as to their sentience and the implications of cruelty. It is the view of the RSPCA that all such occurrences could be avoided by improved education for young learners within the classroom environment.

The National Survey for Wales 2014-2015 found that 47% of households owned a pet. What this data tells us is that a large proportion of Wales' society are pet owners. Accordingly, it is vital that Wales' new curriculum guidance incorporates animal and animal welfare references so that young people growing up in families with pets are made aware of their responsibilities as owners, as well as learning about kind and compassionate behaviour towards their pets.

On the other side of this data, 53% of households in Wales in 2014-2015 did not own a pet. In many cases, this may see a greater need for animal and animal welfare education to be incorporated into the curriculum guidance. RSPCA Cymru firmly believes that by gaining a greater understanding of pet ownership through education, young people without pets can still learn how to be kind, compassionate and responsible to others, including animals and all sentient beings.

What is also clear is that it is necessary for proper education to be provided to help ensure both the safety of the owners and the animals themselves. Animals can carry a number of diseases, and these are often passed to humans through bites, scratches and a lack of cleanliness in homes. As such, we feel that by providing clear educational resources the Welsh Government would be helping to further ensure public safety of the people of Wales, as well as the safety of animals, whilst creating generations of learners that are ambitious and capable, healthy and confident, ethical and informed, and enterprising and creative through this new transformative curriculum.