



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

RR/KS/JM

Jeremy Miles MS
Minister for Education and Welsh Language
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

16 September 2021

Dear Minister,

Re: Support for teaching of CPR in Wales

Having campaigned to make the teaching of CPR compulsory in Welsh schools, I was thrilled with the Welsh Government's decision to make the teaching of lifesaving skills a requirement in the new school curriculum in Wales last year. However, while it is a positive first step, if the teaching of CPR is to be successful, we need to ensure that it is consistent across all schools. Consequently, I am writing to ask if clarification will be given to schools, and if further support will be provided, to ensure the teaching of CPR in Wales is effective.

Sadly, out of hospital cardiac arrests impact too many families in Wales, including the Maguire family in my constituency. Shockingly, Wales has one of the lowest survival rates for out of hospital cardiac arrests in not only the UK but Europe as well, with a survival rate of just 4.6%. In comparison, in England, survival rates are 9.4%, 10.2% in Scotland and as high as 25% in Norway. Therefore, it is imperative that more people in Wales are taught CPR, to ensure that the health and lives of the people of Wales are not at a disadvantage simply because of their location. As CPR is such an important skill to learn, it is right that proper thought and care is given to how it is taught, whether that be regarding frequency, resources, or staffing.

While I am pleased that the Welsh Government have made the teaching of lifesaving skills compulsory, I am aware of the added pressures this will put on schools. Consequently, I surveyed the local schools in my constituency, to understand how this change to the curriculum should be implemented. While 83% of the schools were 'Pleased' or 'Very Pleased' to see it added to the curriculum, 67% of the respondents were uncertain if they had sufficient support to teach these skills. Therefore, some of the extra support that schools called for included: extra staff training, extra resources, and further guidance from external organisations. Moreover, with 83% of local schools agreeing that it should be taught annually, it is clear that schools are committed to teaching it, even if guidance and support is lacking. From looking at the views of local schools in Delyn alone, it is evident that further support is needed from the Welsh Government, to ensure that the teaching of CPR is a universally beneficial experience for all pupils in Wales.



Primarily, I believe further clarification is needed in the statutory guidance to schools, to make the teaching of CPR consistent and fair. At present, the wording within the guidance is vague, stating that learners should “be able to safely intervene to support others who may be at risk”. Without clarifying which skills should be taught, and by when or how often, it leaves the teaching of it up to interpretation, and risks creating a divide in the levels of understanding on this issue. In comparison, statutory guidance in England is clear, with explicit objectives for pupils at both primary and secondary level. For instance, by the end of secondary school, pupils in England should know “life saving skills, including how to administer CPR”. As the new curriculum in Wales will be taught from September 2022, now is the right time to give some further detail on teaching lifesaving skills in schools, including teaching it annually, and specifying the skills to learn such as CPR and how to use a defibrillator.

While I am encouraged by the extra funding to the Government’s Save a Life Cymru initiative, I would welcome further investment which is targeted and specific to schools. With estimates that over 6000 people have an out of hospital cardiac arrest in Wales every year, it is crucial that more people are taught CPR before cardiac arrest survival rates are expected to improve. While many schools, including schools in my constituency, depend on support from external charities to teach CPR, this will limit the opportunity for every school to benefit, as charities are under a huge amount of pressure and reduced funding due to the pandemic. Consequently, investment is needed on a national level direct to schools, to give every pupil the same opportunity to learn, and to give schools the flexibility to teach it to best suit their needs.

I hope the Welsh Government will take on board not only my views, but above all, the views of my local schools – who will be directly responsible for the correct teaching of such important skills. With Wales being the last of the UK nations to make the teaching of CPR compulsory, I hope it can now be one of the first to set out clear guidance to schools on how and when skills should be taught, as well as providing targeted support and resources. Ultimately, it is in all our best interest to ensure CPR is taught effectively, to give all pupils in Wales the very best chance to learn how to save someone’s life.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Roberts', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Rob Roberts MP
Member of Parliament
Delyn