

Briefing on the Education (Curriculum) (CPR and AED) Bill
17 December 2021

Introduction

1. The NASUWT is the largest teachers' union in Northern Ireland.
2. The Union is supportive of the concept of providing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and automatic external defibrillator (AED) awareness in schools.
3. However, the union does not support this legislation and considers that this Bill is unnecessary.

Existing Legislation

4. The existing legislation already provides a framework for the introduction of CPR training and AED awareness into the curriculum. Article 7(2) of the 2006 Order states: "The Department may by order specify, in relation to an area of learning and pupils in a key stage, such minimum content as it considers appropriate.
5. When the NASUWT met with the British Heart Foundation (BHF) the union directed BHF towards the DE Curriculum team and believe that this avenue should have been exhausted before bringing forward legislation. This approach would have allowed DE to engage with unions as to the practical outworking of providing training and raising awareness in schools.
6. This Bill sets a precedent in that it is the first to attempt to circumvent the role of the Minister and Department in seeking to legislate for curriculum content. The NASUWT does not support this approach.

Proposed Legislation

7. The proposed legislation fails to provide a framework for how CPR training should be implemented, who should conduct training, requirements for proficiency level of instructors, training material, length of training session. The legislation does not place a duty on DE but places a duty on schools without identifying the funding required to deliver it's aims.
8. Supporters of the legislation have cited Denmark as an approach that works. The proposer of the legislation has stated that "the introduction of similar training in schools in Denmark saw the cardiac arrest survival rate triple in the following six years". This was one of several measures but in any case, correlation does not prove causation. The committee should therefore consider the peer reviewed evidence from Denmark before deciding that a legislative approach would be effective.
9. Hansen et al¹ (2017) *Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Training in Schools Following 8 Years of Mandating Legislation in Denmark*, published by the Journal of the American Heart Association: A Nationwide Survey concluded that *"Despite mandating legislation, school CPR training has not been successfully implemented. Completed CPR training was associated with believing other schools were conducting training, awareness of mandating legislation, presence of a school CPR training coordinator, teachers feeling competent to conduct training, and having easy access to training material. Facilitating these factors may increase rates of school CPR training."*
10. The NASUWT would suggest that the requirement to undertake CPR training before receiving a driving licence along with community-based training courses open for all to attend played a bigger role in improving the cardiac survival rate in Denmark.

Summary

11. Members should reject this Bill as it is unnecessary. The Minister of Education has the authority already to set minimum curriculum content. As this training will have an impact on teacher workload the Department should Workload Impact assess the change in working practices and identify what work will be removed from teachers who are already coping with impossible

workload demands. The Executive needs to fully commit to providing schools and others with the financial resources and training so that a real difference can be made to the cardiac arrest survival rate.

12. More generally, the NASUWT are disappointed that a range of private members bills have come before the assembly which seek to mandate how teachers and other workers do their jobs and would encourage MLAs to set up a formal mechanism for consulting with trade unions before future legislation is tabled.

For further information, please contact:

Justin McCamphill

National Official (Northern Ireland)

justin.mccamphill@mail.nasuwt.org.uk

www.nasuwt.org.uk

References

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