# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Ensuring Access to the Full Curriculum**  |
| **DATE**  | **21 January 2020** |
| **BY** | **Kirsty Williams AM, Minister for Education** |

In October 2019, the Welsh Government issued a consultation on Ensuring Access to the Full Curriculum for all pupils. We sought views on the implications of removing the parental option to prevent children studying Religious Education (RE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

After careful consideration of the responses, I can confirm that there will not be a right to withdraw from RE and RSE as part of the new curriculum. This change will require careful and sensitive implementation.

Our responsibility as a government is to ensure that young people, through public education, have access to learning that supports them to understand and discuss their rights and the rights of others. It is essential that all young people are provided with access to information that keeps them safe from harm. Today’s decision ensures that all pupils will learn about issues such as online safety and healthy relationships.

I recognise this is a sensitive matter and the consultation responses reflected strong and deeply held concerns. These went further than the question of right to withdraw itself and extended to the appropriate role of the state in education on these matters and what and how leaners will be taught.

There is clearly a need for us to work with communities and all interested parties in co-constructing the learning and teaching for RSE, developing a shared understanding of the issues and the sensitivities. This is vital to enable everyone to have confidence in how this will be implemented – we are clear that our reforms must be introduced sensitively.

The next two and half years is our opportunity to work together to agree the topics to be covered by schools and the detailed guidance to support their classroom practice. It’s also our opportunity to talk through the issues which worry us and listen to the perspectives of others. I will be putting in place structures to support this exchange of perspectives and to enable clear guidance, resources and professional learning to be made available for schools.

I am pleased to announce a Faith/BAME Community Involvement Group will be established and will meet for the first time in February. The role of the group is to engage in the development of RSE guidance and develop a shared understanding of the new curriculum. The group will also discuss the concerns raised by faith and community groups during the consultation.

We will continue to work with communities across Wales, including parents, carers and schools to balance the rights of parents to care for and guide their children into adulthood, with the work of schools in providing a broad and balanced education that serves the public good. We will build on the community engagement which accompanied the consultation with continued investment in enabling us to hear directly from communities about the issues which concern them in relation to RSE and finding ways to address them.

I want to take the opportunity to test the approach for RSE before it is included in the new curriculum. This will provide valuable intelligence to inform the refinement of our approach and will enable learners, parents and carers and communities to see it working in practice and to provide feedback. Further details on this approach will be announced in due course.