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Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

19 December 2023

Dear Headteachers,

Supporting children and young people during the conflict in Israel and Gaza

We are seriously concerned about the impact the conflict in Israel and Gaza is having on children and young people across Wales and are writing to you to highlight ways that you can support your learners during this time. As a country committed to creating an anti-racist Wales by 2030, we are concerned by the reports of some children and young people experiencing antisemitism and Islamophobia and racist abuse.

This letter follows our discussions with representatives of the Muslim and Jewish communities in Wales.

Given the nature of the conflict, it is likely there will be awareness of the events within your school, and the issues these are giving rise to within wider society. Some learners will want to talk about the conflict and their feelings about their concerns, fears and grief. Some will have lost friends or family members or know someone who has, and some will want to explore their thoughts to understand and make sense of what they are seeing in the press and on social media.

We know that learners, families and staff alike often do not know what to say to begin discussions in a respectful and inclusive way. Many fear saying the wrong thing and causing offence or distress to others, and many more will have views on the conflict and will want space to express those views safely.

As teachers and education practitioners, and as trusted adults within your setting, there are things you can do to support and help learners during this time. There are also a number of trusted resources and sources of information available which can help you – these are highlighted below and in the list of further resources.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Bullying and racism

Islamophobia and antisemitism are both forms of prejudice-related bullying and have no place in any part of our society in Wales. We expect allegations and incidents of racism and racial harassment to be fully investigated by education settings, with appropriate action taken to address the matter and prevent further instances from happening.

Our statutory anti-bullying guidance '[Rights, Respect, Equality](#)' includes guidance for education settings and governing bodies to tackle prejudice-related bullying and harassment. This section of the guidance is currently being updated and strengthened to provide further support for schools to tackle this issue but remains relevant in its current form.

We have heard from parents and young people that, during this time, they are unsure of how to report racist incidents and bullying. It is essential that all schools and education settings ensure their school behaviour policy and process for reporting incidents are kept updated and current, and are accessible to learners, parents and carers.

Hate crime

In some cases, an incidence of prejudice-related bullying could amount to a hate incident or hate crime, and it can be difficult to distinguish between these different categories. It is important that schools and education settings recognise these different forms of abuse to ensure they are reported accurately and addressed effectively.

The Welsh Government funds the [Wales Hate Support Centre](#), run by Victim Support Cymru, to provide free, confidential support and advocacy to all victims of hate crime, including hate crime targeted towards faith communities, 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The service can be accessed via telephone on 0300 3031 982 or via e-mail: HateCrimeWales@victimsupport.org.uk. The Wales Hate Support Centre offers a national children and young person friendly hate crime service.

The Welsh Government's anti-hate crime campaign, [Hate Hurts Wales](#), encourages victims and bystanders to report hate crime.

Victim Support Cymru has published a number of bilingual resources specifically focused on supporting children and young people – links have been provided in the list of sources, below.

Role of *Prevent*

Following the beginning of this conflict, we have heard that some young people are concerned that their discussion of the conflict will lead to them being reported to *Prevent*, and some parents are also concerned about reporting racist incidents for the same reason.

Prevent is part of the UK Government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST and is intended to address all forms of terrorism. Although not a devolved matter, tackling radicalisation requires close co-operation between the Home Office and the Welsh Government and its partners.

Schools and education settings should take care that learners understand that discussion of the conflict and seeking to understand the complexity of the conflict – both today and historically – can and should be done in a way where learners feel able to express their views and engage in respectful dialogue with their peers. Expressing sympathy, solidarity or empathy towards civilians caught up in the current conflict should not be construed as an issue that requires *Prevent* involvement.

Young people and their parents should be confident that discussion on the conflict in Gaza and Israel will not be conflated with the issues that *Prevent* seeks to address.

Role of the curriculum

The current conflict has highlighted the importance of learners engaging in respectful dialogue, both with their peers and their teachers. The role of the curriculum is essential to aid this dialogue.

We are proud that Wales is leading the way by becoming the first part of the UK to make it mandatory to teach Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic histories and experiences in the curriculum. This ensures our young people develop an understanding of others' identities and make connections with people, places and histories elsewhere in Wales and across the world. This work will reinforce the importance of teaching past and present experiences and contributions of ethnic minority peoples as part of the story of Wales across the curriculum.

Following the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, the Welsh Government brought together a [conflict in war](#) collection of resources for teachers and practitioners on Hwb – these are still relevant and useful during discussions with learners. Further Hwb resources are included in the list below.

Fundraising

We are aware that some schools and learners have wanted to do more to stand in solidarity with all innocent civilians in Israel and Gaza caught up in the escalation of violence.

For learners seeking support from their schools and teachers to fundraise at this time, there are a range of UK registered charities operating in the region that can be supported. The Welsh Government recommends that education settings focus on the values of compassion and humanitarianism, and ensure choices made in relation to fundraising reflect the concerns of your learners and the diversity of the community within your setting.

Professional Learning

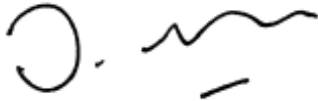
It is important that senior leaders, teachers and education practitioners feel supported in undertaking this dialogue appropriately and tackling all forms of racism. DARPL, the Welsh Government funded [Diversity and Anti-Racism Professional Learning](#) project can provide support on addressing antisemitism and Islamophobia through their training and awareness raising sessions, as well as their wider resources which are free and accessible to all working in education.

During this time, we have both been reaching out to community leaders to express our condolences and to hear from them about the impacts the current situation is having on our communities, and we will continue to do so.

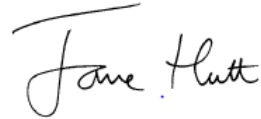
Finally, we are extremely grateful for the work you and your staff have been undertaking in support of your pupils and school communities. Against a complex backdrop, we know you are doing everything you can to ensure that every child, regardless of their background, has the support they need to reach their full potential.

We hope you and your staff have a restful break over the Christmas period.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Miles', with a stylized flourish.

Jeremy Miles MS
Minister for Education
and Welsh Language

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jane Hutt', written in a cursive style.

Jane Hutt MS
Minister for Social
Justice and Chief Whip

Tackling Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in education settings

Additional resources and information

Hwb resources

[Conflict in war resources](#)

[Online hate - Hwb](#)

[A practitioners guide to understanding online racism - Hwb](#)

[Online racism \(Primary\) - Hwb](#)

[Online racism \(Secondary\) - Hwb](#)

[Hate Crime Awareness project educational resource \(Home Office / Barnardo's Cymru\)](#) – English only

Victim Support: Children & Young People's Supporters Toolkit

[Children and Young People resource](#) (Bilingual)

["It's soul destroying" - Conversations with children and young people affected by hate crime in Wales](#)

Children's Commissioner for Wales

[Equality and Anti-Racism Resources](#)

[Tackling Islamophobia Resource](#)

Show Racism the Red Card

[SRTRC Education resources](#) – English only

UNESCO

[Addressing antisemitism through education | UNESCO](#) – English only

UNICEF

[How to talk to your children about conflict and war | UNICEF Parenting](#) – English only