

13 October 2022

Dear

ATISN 16661 – Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Thank you for your request which we received on 14th September. You asked for:

Between March and September 2017, an expert panel, chaired by Cardiff University Professor EJ Renold, held five meetings to discuss the future of Welsh Sex and Relationships Education.

1. The Meeting minutes for the Expert Panel meetings, chaired by Professor EJ Renold for the five meetings held between March and September 2017.
2. A list of attendees for each of those five meetings.

Our response

In regard to your request for the minutes of the Expert Panel chaired by Prof. EJ Renold, I have decided that **this information** is exempt from disclosure under section **35(1) (a), formulation of government policy** and is therefore withheld. The reasons for applying this exemption are set out in full at Annex A to this letter.

In regard to your request for a list of those who attended the Expert Panel meetings, this was published as an annex to the report on 'The Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales - Recommendations of the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel'. This can be found at:

[the-future-of-the-sex-and-relationships-education-curriculum-in-wales.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

Annex A

Application of exemptions/exceptions

The Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) provide a right for anyone to ask a public authority to make requested information available to the wider public. As the release of requested information is to the world, not just the requester, public authorities need to consider the effects of making the information freely available to everybody. Any personal interest the requester has for accessing the information cannot override those wider considerations.

I have decided to withhold the following information:

Information being withheld	Section number and exemption name
Minutes of the Sex and Relationships Expert Panel Meetings, which concern policy views and options that relate to ongoing policy development.	s35(1)(a) "formulation of government policy" exemption.

This Annex sets out the reasons for the engagement of section 35 of the Freedom of Information Act and our subsequent consideration of the Public Interest Test.

Engagement of section 35(1) (a) 'formulation of government policy' of the FoIA

As the nature of the withheld information clearly concerns policy that is still being developed and informed by a range of stakeholders and continues to be refined through a co-construction approach, I would suggest, the exemption is clearly engaged.

Public Interest Test

In order to satisfy the public interest test in relation to the exemption(s), it is necessary to conclude that the public interest arguments in favour of withholding the information are sufficient to *outweigh* the public interest arguments in favour of release.

Public interest arguments in favour of disclosure

There is a public interest in supporting the public to better understand the evidence being consider by the Welsh Government as it develops policy related to RSE. This policy area is extremely sensitive - the subject of what is taught in schools under Relationship and Sexuality Education is emotive, engendering strong feelings on certain elements from differing perspectives. Disclosure could illustrate how evidence and approaches considered by the Expert Panel informed policy around provision in schools and additional support for practitioners and learners.

Public interest arguments in favour of withholding

To protect the integrity of the co-development process and all organisations and individuals involved, we are withholding some of the information requested. Co-development meant that policy discussion directly involved a range of organisations and individuals with wide ranging views and, in addition, strongly felt and conflicting views, values and opinions. Policy development in such a sensitive area with strong feeling from a range of conflicting stakeholders and individuals may be easily taken out of context.

It is an important part of this process that stakeholders can express their views in confidence. Making this information publicly available would prejudice future policy development.

Balance of public interest test

Extensive stakeholder engagement and input from different specialists, from a range of perspectives, have fed into the process of policy development for RSE. It is important that the Welsh Government can continue to draw upon the evidence and experiences provided by stakeholders, encouraging candid and honest conversations that support effective policy making. Publication of such discussions will likely dissuade stakeholders from engaging in the policy development process, negatively impacting the evidence available to officials. This is especially a concern in sensitive area of policy, such as RSE.