

Children's Workforce Strategy

Building an Integrated Qualifications Framework

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Introduction

1. This pamphlet describes arrangements to develop an integrated qualifications framework for the children's workforce. The framework will support the development of a more competent, more flexible workforce, with improved career pathways and better progression opportunities, delivering better outcomes for, and reducing the inequalities amongst, children and young people.

2. In *Children's Workforce Strategy: building a world-class workforce for children, young people and families*, Government sets out how, with our partners, we will be taking work forward in response to the consultation last year on the Children's Workforce Strategy. This pamphlet is referred to in Chapter 3. It is intended for two key audiences:

- **Sector Skills Councils and employers, awarding bodies, regulatory bodies and training providers** – key stakeholders and delivery partners in the implementation of the *Children's Workforce Strategy* – to clarify our expectations of the lead role they will play in developing the framework; and
- **Professional bodies, leaders, managers and practitioners in organisations working with children and young people** – those individuals across all sectors for whom the integrated qualifications framework is being developed – to provide information on these developments and encourage them to get involved as stakeholders.

3. In *Children's Workforce Strategy: building a world-class workforce for children, young people and families* we acknowledge the need to consider the impact of an integrated qualifications

framework on the judgements employers make when devising and revising reward packages. These issues will be reflected in the report the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) will be producing in the Summer. We will carefully consider their evidence and recommendations as the framework is developed.

4. Our ambition is to create a qualifications framework relevant to practitioners working across the range of services engaging with children, young people and their families and covering the majority of occupational roles in the children's workforce. We need a framework founded on a thorough review of occupational standards in each sector; that recognises and enables the accreditation of prior skills and knowledge; and that actively encourages and promotes movement within and between sectors.

5. The establishment of the framework will support the *Children's Workforce Strategy* and the reform programme set out in *Every Child Matters*. This pamphlet identifies the issues to be addressed, sets out the action required, and describes the next steps in the process.

Why do we need an integrated qualifications framework?

6. The environment in which the children's workforce operates is changing. To respond to the demands set by the reform programme initiated by *Every Child Matters*, and to provide the level and quality of service that parents and carers demand, we need a stable, committed and highly competent workforce. In addition to needing to attract new people into the workforce, we must improve the representation of people from minority ethnic groups, and of men.

7. We also know that a flexible, skilled and motivated workforce is a major factor in the provision of better services.¹
8. However, existing qualification arrangements are too complicated. The range and number of different qualifications and assessment and accreditation requirements is confusing for employers and practitioners. It can also be bewildering for those seeking to enter the workforce.
9. The current position inhibits movement between work in different kinds of setting and service. It can fail to provide a mechanism for recognising and accrediting experience, education and skills gained in different sub-sectors of children's services. As a result, many committed people leave the workforce because they cannot see enough options for developing a career that is both emotionally and financially rewarding.
10. This is a waste of talent, skills and experience in vital services that already experience high staff turnover and low levels of qualified staff.
11. We need a qualifications framework that recognises knowledge, skills and experience gained in a variety of settings, alongside essential specialist knowledge required in particular job roles.
12. The establishment of an integrated qualifications framework will:
 - support the drive for a better qualified, more competent workforce;

1 Source: *EPPE Project: Summary of findings from the Pre-School period*. A summary of findings is available to view or download on the DfES website www.dfes.gov.uk

- allow individuals to develop rewarding careers;
- support service managers in determining appropriate team and individual roles within services; and
- support employers' reviews of organisational structures and the simplification of rewards packages and progression routes for staff.

What will the framework look like?

13. There is no blueprint. The final framework will be the product of consultation and collaboration with stakeholders. It will, though, be founded on design principles that:

- reflect revised National Occupational Standards incorporating the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge²;
- recognise and accredit core and specialist skills and knowledge;
- support work-based routes to Higher Education;
- support the accreditation of prior learning and experience;
- are future proofed, accrediting competence in roles independent of the model of service delivery;
- support post-qualification professional development; and
- support community-based learning and accreditation.

2 www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

14. A framework based on these principles will support a system that provides:

- **for new and potential entrants to the workforce** the opportunity for, and expectation of, a career working with children and young people with visible career paths and opportunities for progression;
- **for members of the existing workforce** formal recognition of prior knowledge and experience and the opportunity to build a career and achieve across the range of settings in the sector;
- **for post graduate professionals** a framework that reflects and accredits specialist and cross-sector professional development.

15. The framework will not only support individual members of the workforce, it will also provide a resource for leaders and managers to assist their workforce planning.

16. The following scenarios describe how an integrated qualifications framework might support an employer and a member of the workforce.

Jan has just been registered as a childminder. She has a good deal of experience working with children and young people as she has assisted in her own children's playgroup and in an after-school club. Jan is a qualified computer analyst with a young family of her own and wants a career change that allows her to work with children and young people from home. She has researched working with children and knows if she becomes a childminder this will give her an opportunity to get started on the qualification ladder whilst not closing her options to other types of work with children.

Chris is the Head of an extended school and wants to ensure that induction and development programmes for the school reflect the range of skills and disciplines of her workforce. Chris employs playworkers to lead after school provision but a number of teaching assistants are also involved. She is planning to use the integrated qualifications framework to guide the development programmes for her teaching assistants to enable them to work more effectively in after-school provision. The Framework will help her identify the additional skills and knowledge required.

What happens next?

17. Through discussion with partners, and in conjunction with the Children's Workforce Network (CWN), the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) will draw up and publish, in March 2006, a detailed Implementation Plan setting out:

- the outcomes required to establish the framework;
- activities to deliver the outcomes;
- principal delivery partners;
- timescales for achievement of outcomes;
- milestones; and
- monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

18. We expect the Plan to include arrangements for addressing the following issues:

- defining the scope of the framework, including specifying the occupational roles and National Occupational Standards to be covered;
- arrangements for conducting research and gathering evidence about workforce opportunities, expectations and aspirations, existing career pathways, workforce and recruitment trends and drivers;
- arrangements for engaging with, and ensuring coherence with, Higher Education provision and post qualification training and professional development provision;
- arrangements for communicating with, and consulting, the workforce;

- arrangements for engaging with, and identifying benefits for, employers;
- arrangements for engaging with children, young people and families.

19. The Implementation Plan will also set out the roles and responsibilities of individual stakeholders and delivery partners. It will represent a public commitment, by the organisations that make up the Children's Workforce Network, to delivery of the Plan.

20. CWDC will establish steering arrangements, involving members of CWN and other key stakeholders, including awarding bodies and professional associations.

How will this work link with other reforms?

21. The work to develop the framework cannot be carried out in isolation from other activities and developments, including reforms being led by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). It is essential that what is developed is compatible with, and complementary to, arrangements across the UK and in Europe.

22. In particular it will be important that the Integrated Qualifications Framework meets the specification of the Framework for Achievement³ being developed by QCA and maps to the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework.⁴

3 www.qca.org.uk

4 www.dh.gov.uk

23. The development of an integrated qualifications framework for those working with children, young people and families also fits within the national strategy of QCA to develop Sector Qualifications Strategies.⁵ It will link the individual strategies of the sector skills councils (SSCs) that are members of the Children’s Workforce Network, in the interest of integrated working across early years, childcare, playwork, education, culture, sport, play, social care, youth services, youth justice services, and children’s health services.

24. An important part of the work that CWDC will lead, therefore, will be to undertake the necessary scoping action to agree how a fully integrated framework will be embedded in sector-specific strategies, based on guidance QCA is producing for SSCs and awarding bodies.

25. The work should incorporate:

- an assessment of current and future skills needs – detailed analysis providing clear evidence of current trends within the sector;
- an assessment of current provision – assessment of the effectiveness of current qualifications and/or other learning provision in meeting the current and future requirements of the sector; and
- a gap analysis – analysis of the gaps and weaknesses in current qualifications and/or learning provision in the light of sectoral needs and analysis.

5 www.qca.org.uk

Where are we now?

26. We are not starting from scratch. There is a sound infrastructure on which to build:

- the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge, covering six areas of expertise for those working with children, young people and families, was published in April 2005;
- the Children's Workforce Network has been established, providing a platform for partnership and collaboration;
- the Children's Workforce Development Council has been established as part of the SSC for Social Care, Children and Young People.

27. CWDC has established arrangements to lead the initial, scoping work to develop criteria for common core compliance, as National Occupational Standards are reviewed, to support the development of the Implementation Plan. This work will be informed by the findings of the Sheffield Hallam University project, commissioned by DfES, to map qualifications and training developments across the children's workforce.

28. There is also experience to build on, based on work already undertaken or underway:

- National Occupational Standards for Learning Development and Support Services bring together standards for staff employed in the Education Welfare Service, Connexions Service and Learning Mentor roles; and
- common mandatory units between sectors have been developed as part of the review of National Occupational

Standards for Children’s Care Learning and Development and for Playwork.

29. Collectively, therefore, CWDC and its delivery partners have considerable expertise and experience on which to draw. They are equipped to design a system that reflects progress made to date and is able to adapt to future requirements.

Conclusion

30. Respondents to the Children’s Workforce Strategy consultation supported strongly the proposal to develop an integrated framework built around a common core of skills and knowledge. In reply, in *Children’s Workforce Strategy: building a world-class workforce for children, young people and families* we make the following commitments:

- by 2008, National Occupational Standards across all sectors of the Children’s Workforce will incorporate the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge; and
- by 2010, an integrated qualifications framework will be in place.

31. The establishment of a framework is not an end in itself. It will only have value if it supports improved career pathways and enables movement and progression within the children’s workforce, so that the workforce as a whole is better equipped to deliver positive outcomes, and reduce inequalities for children, young people and families. In this way it will help ensure that:

- **children, young people and their families** are confident that all members of the workforce, in every sector and in every setting, have the appropriate skills, knowledge and qualifications to respond to their needs;

- **practitioners in the workforce** are equipped to meet the high standards of service required by their clients, are able to maintain and develop their competence, and have the opportunity to develop and progress their career; and
- **leaders and managers of services** have a flexible, motivated workforce across the whole range of sectors and disciplines with the capacity and capability to deliver high quality, client-centred services.

32. This pamphlet sets out an ambitious programme of work to shape future qualifications arrangements for those who work with children, young people and families. This will bring benefits for individuals, who will see clearer career pathways and progression opportunities. It will aid employers in reviewing organisational structures and job design. Most important of all, it will support the delivery of better outcomes and reduce inequality for children and young people.

33. We look to our partners in the Children's Workforce Network, led by the Children's Workforce Development Council, and with the support of other stakeholders, to continue the initial work already underway and to deliver a system to support the world class workforce that children, young people and their families, deserve and demand.

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Please quote ref: 0159-2006DOC-EN

PPOAK/D16(6469)/0206/

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