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# Draft 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales

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## Audience

This draft plan is aimed at individuals who have a direct responsibility for the childcare or education of children in the early years, (children aged 0 to 7), in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors. This includes early years and childcare practitioners and managers, childminders, leaders and assistants of playgroups and out-of-school clubs, Flying Start practitioners, as well as Foundation Phase assistants and teachers. It is also relevant to those who take a leadership role in education and children's services, including consortia, local authorities and headteachers, and to childcare and play organisations.

## Overview

In *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan* the Welsh Government committed to consult on the right approach for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales in respect of minimum qualification levels, graduate leadership, continuing professional development (CPD) and career pathways.

This draft plan sets out our proposed 10-year strategic plan for this workforce. The draft plan also responds to workforce and training recommendations from two independent reports: *An independent stocktake of the Foundation Phase in Wales* (Foundation Phase Stocktake), led by Professor Iram Siraj, and *Independent review of childcare and early education registration, regulation and inspection* (Graham Review), led by Professor Karen Graham.

## Action required

We are seeking views on the proposals set out in this draft plan. Please respond to the questions asked in the consultation on this draft plan by completing and returning the consultation response form. This response form is available at the weblink below.

Stakeholders are also welcome to attend one of a series of consultation events which will be taking place throughout the autumn. For further information on these events, please contact the Early Years team.

## Further information

Enquiries about this document should be directed to:

Early Years Team

Department for Education and Skills and Department for Communities and Tackling Poverty

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

e-mail: [earlyyears@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyears@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

## Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at [www.wales.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.wales.gov.uk/consultations)

## Related documents

*Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan* (2013); *An independent stocktake of the Foundation Phase in Wales* (2014); *Independent review of childcare and early education registration, regulation and inspection* (2014)

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## Ministerial foreword

As set out in last year's Early Years and Childcare Plan, our ambition is for every child in Wales to have a bright future. We recognise those who teach and care for our youngest children play a vital role in helping us achieve this aim. We recognise high-quality early years education, childcare and play, leads to better outcomes for children, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Through this consultation, we are seeking views on our draft plan to support and develop our early years, childcare and play workforce.

The plan offers proposals under three key themes: up-skilling the existing workforce, attracting high-quality new entrants, and developing leaders and future leaders in the sector. We must ensure all those caring for our young children are equipped with the necessary skills and competencies to support children to develop physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively.

The important role of dedicated early years, childcare and play workers in providing a safe and stimulating environment for the children in their care is often undervalued. We want to raise the status of these professions. This document sets out how we intend to progress from where we are now to where we want to be in 10 years' time, working towards a sector which is highly regarded, well-led, able to recruit high-quality applicants and to retain a skilled workforce which is actively pursuing continuous professional learning.

Our vision is for early years, childcare and play to be a career of choice, for potential entrants to feel informed about the range of opportunities available to them within the sector and in the wider children's workforce. We want to attract entrants with the appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours to provide high-quality care, education and play opportunities for children.

We need to ensure training and qualifications are both accessible and offer the best possible preparation for our workforce; helping them to fully understand how children learn and develop, enabling them to structure activities, time and environments to support all children to develop to their full potential.

We want to support the existing workforce to gain the skills they need to progress in their careers and access more employment opportunities. In return, we will expect those working in early years, childcare and play to be proactive learners in their own right and to be able to demonstrate that they have been undertaking a programme of learning.

We remain committed to developing a bilingual workforce, allowing parents/carers to access childcare in either English or Welsh. To achieve this, we propose to encourage those who wish to improve their skills in the Welsh language and offer training to increase the confidence of workers in English-medium settings in using basic Welsh in their day-to-day routine.

As we look to fulfil our long-term aspirations for early years, childcare and play workers in Wales, we recognise that we are operating within a difficult financial climate, resulting in substantial budget constraints. We need to make wise decisions about how we can best invest the resources that we have, and find efficiencies and streamline processes where we can in order to do more with less.

Our plans for the early years, childcare and play sector are ambitious, but essential if we want to improve the quality of care we offer our children and to fully realise the potential of this committed workforce. We welcome your views on the proposals set out in this draft plan and look forward to working with you to realise these ambitions.



Huw Lewis AM  
**Minister for Education and Skills**



Lesley Griffiths AM  
**Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty**

## Introduction

This section clarifies the scope of the *Draft 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales*. It asks a series of questions to establish who is likely to be affected by the proposals set out in subsequent sections of the plan, describes what we know about the current landscape in terms of workforce qualifications and requirements, and makes the case for a strategic and long-term approach to workforce development for this sector. The section concludes by setting out the Welsh Government's vision for where we want this workforce to be in 10 years' time.

### Who are our early years workforce?

This plan is primarily focused on supporting individuals who have a direct responsibility for the childcare or education of children in the early years (children aged 0 to 7). This group will be described throughout this plan as our **core early years, childcare and play workforce**. We understand that some professionals in this workforce will also care for children aged eight and over, but the proposals in this plan will be directed towards achieving better outcomes for children in the early years.

The core early years, childcare and play workforce is comprised of a variety of occupations working across a spectrum of settings. These are set out in Figure 1 (see page 8). We know that the needs of those working in the variety of provision across the sector are likely to be different. This plan does not attempt to apply a one-size-fits-all approach to the workforce. Instead, it aims to tailor proposals to the needs of each part of the sector, while ensuring that the whole workforce is moving towards the same goal of providing higher quality education and care for young children.

We also want to acknowledge a **wider workforce** of professionals who may be involved with a family during the early years of a child's life: midwives, health visitors, speech and language therapists or social workers, to name just a few. As we stated in *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan* (Welsh Government, 2013), we want a well-trained, highly skilled and supported workforce that works together taking a Team Around the Family (TAF) approach.<sup>1</sup> Many aspects of workforce development and training for this wider workforce are covered in other plans, including *Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action* and

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<sup>1</sup> Team Around the Family (TAF): Multi-agency groupings, comprising two or more partners, ensuring a whole-family approach to improving the outcomes for families and family members, identifying and building on the family's strengths. A TAF is expected to take account of the needs of the whole family and involve the coordination of multiple agencies in delivering a seamless service for the individual family. There is typically a key worker who is the main point of contact for the family and is responsible for coordinating the inputs and support from other professionals. A TAF aims to pull together the right people, from the right agencies to ensure that a family receives the right advice, help and support in a timely manner.

the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.<sup>2</sup> For health professionals, workforce development is being taken forward through the three-year integrated medium-term planning process in respect of local health boards and trusts. NHS Wales, though *Working Differently – Working Together* (2012) also has in place a framework for organisational development that highlights the need for a twenty-first century health workforce.<sup>3</sup>

We want to see a more joined-up approach across children's services as we work together to improve outcomes for our youngest children. To support this, we are in the process of developing an **early years outcomes framework** which will help us understand where our early years policies and programmes are making a difference. It will also help to identify where further improvement is needed and where we will need to prioritise in the short, medium and long term. We hope that the development of an outcomes framework will also bring about additional benefits, both at national and local level, including:

- improved, collaborative services
- identification of areas for improvement
- a unified approach to planning, delivery and evaluation
- better use of evidence, tools and processes
- help to focus resources on activity that has been shown to have a positive impact on the outcomes for the early years.

The early years outcomes framework will go to open consultation in October 2014 and we would encourage those involved in the core and wider early years workforces to shape the development of this framework in partnership with Welsh Government.

This will be an overarching framework for early years. A combined outcomes framework for the Communities First, Families First and Flying Start programmes is also due to be launched in October 2014. Although this framework goes much wider, a key theme is early years. The outcomes and indicators from each of the frameworks will align to ensure commonality.

Likewise, the development of a **early years development and assessment framework** (EYDAF) will provide an important mechanism to support a consistent national approach to the assessment, tracking and monitoring of children's developmental progress, as part of the wider early years agenda to raise standards in early years education and care.

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<sup>2</sup> *Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action*, (Welsh Government, 2012).

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/socialcare/guidance1/services/?lang=en>

The Social Services and Well-being Act became law in Wales on 1 May 2014. For further information see:

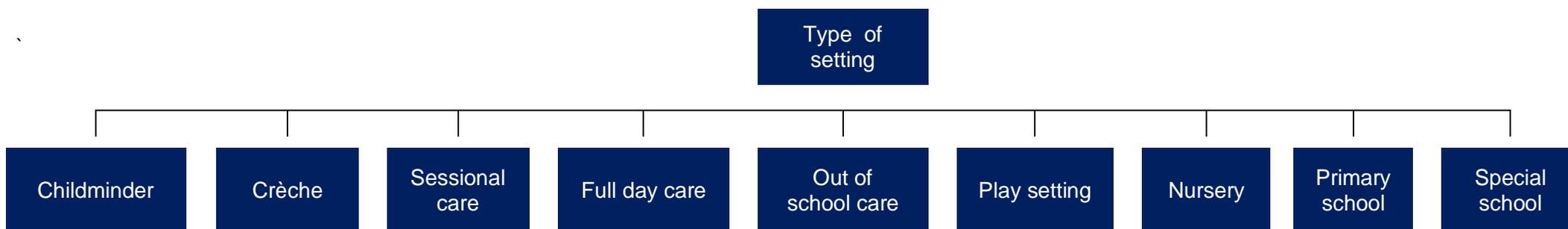
<http://wales.gov.uk/legislation/programme/assemblybills/social-services/?lang=en>.

<sup>3</sup> *Working differently – working together*, (NHS Wales, 2012).

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/strategies/working/?lang=en>

**Figure 1: The core early years childcare and play workforce**

**By setting**



**Flying Start** and the **Foundation Phase** may be delivered in a variety of settings.

**By occupation**

Childcare and early years	Play and out of school care	Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childminder</li> <li>• Assistant practitioner</li> <li>• Practitioner/supervisor</li> <li>• Manager/leader</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playworker</li> <li>• Playworker in charge</li> <li>• Play ranger</li> <li>• Play officer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning support staff</li> <li>• Higher level teaching assistant</li> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Advisory teachers</li> </ul>

Recent Welsh Government legislation has paved the way for further opportunities for workforce development and training in respect of play. In view of the importance of play in children's lives, and its benefits in terms of growth in children's cognitive, physical, social and emotional development,<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government have placed a **duty on local authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas.**<sup>5</sup> The forthcoming guidance, *Wales: a Play Friendly Country* (2014) will set out what local authorities need to undertake to secure and develop the play workforce in their areas.

The duty on local authorities requires them to secure the managerial and delivery functions necessary to achieve sufficient play opportunities. This includes the coordination of the required assessment of the cross-cutting policy areas; the development of a Play Action Plan; and the delivery of the play agenda by a sufficiently resourced, sized and qualified workforce.

It is our intention that any 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce should be a living document. While it will set out our direction of travel and level of ambition, it will also need to be flexible enough to be able to absorb and adapt to change as policies develop. We will consider the findings of the **evaluation of the Foundation Phase**, being conducted by WISERD and Cardiff University, which will assess the impact and implementation of the Foundation Phase across Wales when it reports in the new year.

Another important factor in shaping elements of this workforce plan will be the outcome of Professor Graham Donaldson's **independent review of the national curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales**. The remit of this review is to articulate a clear, coherent vision for education in Wales from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4. The review will also consider workforce capacity to deliver any new arrangements. Professor Donaldson will report his findings and recommendations to the Minister for Education and Skills at the turn of the year, and we will look to address and incorporate relevant recommendations for the Foundation Phase workforce. Meanwhile, subject to feedback from the consultation process, we will continue to make progress on other proposed elements set out in this draft plan ahead of the publication of a final version in April 2015.

## **Where are our early years, childcare and play workforce employed?**

While this plan aims to address the workforce development needs of workers across all types of provision, at present the workforce is often grouped into the categories of maintained or non-maintained provision.

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<sup>4</sup> Tim Gill, *The Play Return: A review of the wider impact of play initiatives*, (Children's Play Policy Forum, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> *Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010*, section 11, Play Opportunities and *Creating a Play Friendly Wales*, (Welsh Government, 2012). <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/play/?lang=en>

The **maintained sector** is largely made up of nursery, primary and special schools, which receive funding to deliver the Foundation Phase statutory curriculum to children aged 3 to 7 and are inspected by Estyn, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. The Foundation Phase is the Welsh Government's flagship policy of early years education which advocates a developmental, experiential, play-based approach to learning and teaching. This workforce is supported by a wider programme of school-wide continuous professional learning, including an ongoing commitment to professional development for school support staff.

In the maintained sector, this plan should be read alongside both the 'New Deal' to support and raise the status of the education workforce in Wales, announced by the Minister for Education and Skills in June 2014, and the School Support Staff Action Plan, launched last October. This action plan commits the Welsh Government to:

- work with school workforce unions and employers to identify appropriate qualification requirements for learning support staff working at different levels within the classroom
- link the work with consideration of the professional and/or occupational standards that should apply at each level, and the range of qualifications currently available, for learning support staff including the Apprenticeship in Supporting Teaching and Learning
- ensure that this work takes account of current NJC job profiles as well as a range of other relevant evidence (reports and research) including the current Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) standards. The work should also aim to develop a continuum to enable those learning support staff who wish to do so to have clear pathways to develop their careers
- consider whether it is desirable to introduce minimum requirements for qualifications for learning support staff working in specific roles and, if so, how such requirements might need to be phased in. Where this requires practitioners to improve their level of qualification, consideration needs to be given to how this might be made available to those staff that are currently in post.

This work will support and underpin the delivery of the proposals set out in this document, which considers the skills and competencies required by staff working in the Foundation Phase.

The workers in the **non-maintained sector** who form part of this plan work in a range of settings: in private, voluntary, independent and/or local authority childcare provision; or as childminders. Those working as playworkers may be employed by local authorities, out-of-school clubs, private playschemes or adventure playgrounds. Providers offering more than two hours of care a day to children aged under eight must register with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW). This regulatory body also sets ratios of staff to children, which vary according to the age of the children in the setting.

Non-maintained settings may receive funding from local authorities to deliver Flying Start to children aged 2 to 3, or the Foundation Phase to children aged 3 to 4, and in such cases these settings are provided with additional training and support from advisory teachers. Where settings are providing the Foundation Phase, they are also subject to Estyn inspections.

In the rest of the non-maintained sector challenges to providers vary, but may include operating settings as sustainable businesses, particularly where settings are small and draw heavily on support from volunteers or voluntary committees. Furthermore, ratio requirements mean that if staff are released to attend training, a supernumerary member of staff must take their place within the setting, which can result in an additional cost burden. For the play workforce, it can be a challenge for staff to undertake qualifications if they are employed on a part-time or seasonal basis.

However, despite the differences in the infrastructure of maintained and non-maintained settings, and the particular delivery challenges which may result, we want to emphasise that the goal of better outcomes for children in the early years is common to both kinds of provision. The proposals set out in this document are tailored to the specific needs of each type of provision, with the aim of achieving greater parity in terms of quality across all schools and settings in Wales.

As Figure 1 illustrated, the early years childcare and play workforce encompasses a wide variety of occupations and job roles. In this document when referring to the general workforce we use the term '**practitioner**' to cover all of these roles. Where a proposal only applies to a particular tranche of the workforce this will be indicated in the text.

## What do we know about our core early years, childcare and play workforce?

Around 23,300 people work with our youngest children in childcare and Foundation Phase settings.<sup>6</sup> The majority of the workforce is aged 25 to 40, with the exception of Out of School Childcare which currently employs more under-25s.

More women than men are employed in the early years and childcare workforce, with an average of eight female staff to one male worker in each setting. This ratio is less extreme in play settings where there are, on average, between three and four men to nine women.

At present, a very high proportion of our workforce identifies as White Welsh/British, illustrating that those providing education and care are unlikely to reflect the ethnic diversity of children and families across Wales.<sup>7</sup>

We also know that those working in early years, childcare and play hold a variety of qualifications at a range of levels. Figure 2 demonstrates this variation in relevant childcare qualification levels.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 2: Average percentage of staff recorded in each qualification group by provider**

Type of provider (total number of responses: 641)	No qualification	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5 or above	Unsure
Full day care (136)	7%	8%	67%	18%	0%
Sessional day care (191)	11%	14%	62%	12%	2%
Childminder (96)	17%	12%	47%	19%	6%
Out-of-school childcare (44)	19%	16%	51%	12%	1%
Flying Start (59)	2%	7%	66%	25%	0%
Foundation Phase maintained (49)	4%	13%	40%	37%	6%

<sup>6</sup> Dallimore, D. *The Early Years & Childcare Workforce in Wales: 2012* (Care Council for Wales, 2012). This figure also includes the 5,800 Foundation Phase classroom assistants.

<sup>7</sup> *Early Years, Childcare and Play Workforce Survey 2014* (Care Council for Wales, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Relevant childcare qualifications are set out by the Care Council for Wales in their *List of Required Qualifications to work within the Early Years and Childcare Sector in Wales* [www.ccwales.org.uk/qualifications/](http://www.ccwales.org.uk/qualifications/).

Source: Early Years, Childcare and Play Workforce Survey 2014, Care Council for Wales. This survey was completed by managers in 641 settings across Wales. As population weights are not available, the table reports sample proportions. As a result caution should be used when interpreting findings. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Sub-groups of less than 30 responses not included in the table: Crèche; Registered open access play setting; Unregistered open access play setting and Foundation Phase funded non-maintained setting.

At present, all non-maintained early years, childcare and play settings registered with CSSIW are subject to staffing, and other requirements as set out within the *Child Minding and Day Care (Wales) Regulations 2010*. Registered persons must also have regard to the *National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care (NMS)* which include adult:child ratio and qualification requirements.<sup>9</sup> These requirements vary according to the category of provision, but typically allow a setting to employ a certain proportion of staff who are at Level 3, Level 2 or unqualified. Owing to the range of practitioners within the sector, the NMS do not at present specify particular qualifications that must be obtained at each level, but instead refer to lists of approved qualifications published and maintained by two sector skills councils: The Care Council for Wales (CCW) and SkillsActive.<sup>10</sup>

For practitioners based in schools, there are currently no statutory qualification requirements for learning support staff; however it is a condition of the Foundation Phase Revenue Grant that all practitioners working in the Foundation Phase hold, or are working towards, a relevant Level 3 qualification.

Requirements for those working within Flying Start settings differ again. Flying Start is the Welsh Government's targeted early years programme for families with children under four years of age in some of the most deprived areas of Wales. High-quality childcare provision is regarded as a vital support to these families, complemented by an enhanced health visiting service, early language development and access to parenting programmes. Practitioners in Flying Start settings should be qualified to Level 3 and setting leaders/managers qualified to Level 5.

However, the NMS and other recommended qualification levels only represent an acceptable minimum standard – they are not reflective of the full extent of the aspirations we have for our early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales.

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<sup>9</sup> National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care (Welsh Government, 2012).

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childreneyoungpeople/publications/regulatedchildcare/?lang=en>

<sup>10</sup> The Care Council for Wales takes on the role of the sector skills council (SSC), Skills for Care and Development, in Wales. The SSC is responsible for adult and children's social care and the Early Years and Childcare workforce. The Council work as an SSC in partnership with Skills for Care in England, the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, and the Scottish Social Services Council. SkillsActive is the UK-wide Sector Skills Council for Active Leisure, Learning and Well-being. Active Leisure, Learning and Well-being is made up of seven sectors: sport, fitness, outdoors, playwork, caravans, hair and beauty.

We want to support the workforce to continually develop their practice. For some individuals, the initial focus will be on progressing to a Level 3 in a relevant early years qualification. Others will wish to pursue opportunities to extend their knowledge through higher-level qualifications or to specialise in a particular area of practice. We strongly believe that a workforce who are continuously learning and furthering their skills will be best equipped to provide a high level of childcare and education to children.

## **Why do we need to develop the workforce in the early years, childcare and play sector?**

Evidence demonstrates that high-quality early education and childcare makes a significant difference to children's outcomes, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the quality of this provision is a crucial factor.

The Sutton Trust's *Sound Foundations* report concludes that while early years provision has:

significant potential to narrow the attainment gap and improve outcomes for children, the research evidence is clear that developmental benefits will only be achieved if children are able to attend good quality provision.

The report also observes that there is:

strong evidence that low quality childcare produces either no benefit or negative effects for young children, particularly when children attend for very long hours early in their lives.<sup>11</sup>

The workforce is central to improving the quality of early years care. The *Effective Pre-School and Primary Education* (EPPE) study emphasises the importance of the quality of adult-child interactions, staff knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and how young children learn, and how they support children's learning at home as features of a good pre-school setting.<sup>12</sup> In settings that view educational and social development as complementary and of equal importance, children tend to make better progress, particularly where staff have higher qualifications, including some trained teachers.

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<sup>11</sup> Mathers, Sandra et al, *Sound Foundations: A Review of the Research Evidence on Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care for Children Under Three. Implications for Policy and Practice*, The Sutton Trust (2014): pp. 4 and 13.

<sup>12</sup> Sylva, K et al, *Effective pre-school and primary education: findings from the pre-school period*, Teaching and learning Research Briefing no.24. (2007).

Where staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and behaviours to provide high-quality education and childcare, the effects on children can be profound, with particular benefits for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, or for children who are disabled or have special educational needs (SEN). For example, in recent research with high needs families, parents/carers reported the high quality of the Flying Start childcare settings and cited the positive impact this had on their children.<sup>13</sup> For children with SEN, early identification and effective provision of support is key to preventing the development of more significant needs in the future and also ensures children with SEN can achieve their potential.

As we look to develop a strategy for the next 10 years, we recognise that we are operating within a tough economic climate and that these circumstances are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. The recently published *Skills implementation plan* highlights that in order to secure a sustainable skills system, the Welsh Government will implement a policy of co-investment for post-19, employed status, learning delivery. This will place more responsibility on employers and individuals to contribute towards the cost of training.<sup>14</sup> Alongside these financial challenges, we need to take action now to invest in our early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales, in order to secure a high-quality childcare system which can in turn support economic growth by enabling parents/carers to return to work. As such, we need to find efficiencies and streamline processes where we can, to maximise available funding to benefit the greatest number of individuals and make wise choices about investment in our practitioners.

In developing the skills of our early years, childcare and play workforce, our ultimate goal is to provide a higher level of education and childcare and secure better outcomes for children in Wales.

## **Progress to date**

We recognise that much positive progress has already been made to build workforce capacity and skills and we applaud the dedication of practitioners who have sought to extend their learning, often in their own time and at their own expense. We also value the support of childcare and play membership organisations, who have all put programmes of learning and development in place for their members. Equally, much work has been done in partnership with both local government and sector skills councils to improve the advice and guidance available to those working with young children. However, there is further to go and more to be done if we are to fully realise our ambitions for our youngest children.

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<sup>13</sup> Ipsos Mori, *Flying Start qualitative research with high need families* (Welsh Government, 2013).  
<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/national-evaluation-flying-start/?lang=en>

<sup>14</sup> *Skills implementation plan: Delivering the policy statement on skills* (Welsh Government, 2014).  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/policy-statement-on-skills/skills-implementation-plan/?lang=en>

## Where we want to be in 10 years' time

Our vision for the early years, childcare and play workforce is ambitious, but we feel it is right to expect the best possible care and opportunities for children in Wales. We recognise that these changes will take time and it is for this reason that we are setting out our expectations in the context of a long-term, strategic plan. This plan outlines our goals for the early years, childcare and play workforce and sets out how we intend to support this direction of travel.

In 10 years' time we want to have a highly skilled early education, childcare and play workforce that:

- is highly regarded (a career of choice)
- understands how children learn and develop
- structures activities and time to support all children to develop to their full potential
- are proactive learners in their own right
- is bilingual.

One of the considerable challenges we face is to raise the status and value placed on caring for young children to the level of other early years occupations where career pathways are more defined. We will look to promote the range of opportunities available in the early years, childcare and play sector and also how these can be stepping stones to careers in the wider children's workforce. We will look to attract high-quality new entrants, including graduates.

Working in childcare is about so much more than just supervising children: while practitioners may work with children and families in a way that seems effortless, in order to do this well they need to be trained professionals with a high level of skills, knowledge and behaviours. We believe that qualifications must contain the necessary content to enable practitioners to acquire knowledge in order to fully understand children's development, and how best to support this through activities; planning; and creating environments to support both child-initiated and adult-led learning through play. We propose to support practitioners to raise their skill levels by progressing to a higher-level qualification.

Establishing a career pathway and a career-long programme of professional development will ensure that our practitioners continue to enhance their skills, and are able to specialise in areas of practice like SEN, or early language development (ELD). We know that there is a desire in the early years, childcare and play sector to improve practice through learning and development, so we will look to practitioners to take the lead in identifying their training needs and maintaining a record of their learning; a practice we want to see developed across the workforce. To ensure that learning is accessible to all, we propose, as far as is practically possible, to support local delivery of training at times which suit the working patterns of those in the

sector and to look to secure a consistent training offer across Wales. Equally, drawing on evidence of what works in our Flying Start and Families First programmes, we believe we need to encourage the development of local networks to support professional development and the sharing of good practice.

We want to give parents/carers the choice of accessing childcare in either English or Welsh. In support of this, we will look to build capacity in our workforce in Welsh language skills. We will support those who wish to improve their skills and confidence in the Welsh language in order to support children's learning in English-medium settings, as well as those working in Welsh-medium provision who have identified a need to further develop their Welsh language skills.

The remainder of this document sets out these proposals in more detail, under three themes.

- Leadership.
- Attracting high-quality new entrants.
- Raising skills and standards in the existing workforce.

This consultation draws on evidence and recommendations regarding the early years workforce from two recent independent reviews: *An independent stocktake of the Foundation Phase in Wales* (Foundation Phase Stocktake), led by Professor Iram Siraj (Institute of Education, University of London) and the *Independent review of childcare and early education registration, regulation and inspection* (Graham Review), led by Professor Karen Graham (Glyndŵr University). While both reports offered a wide-ranging and comprehensive set of recommendations, it is those which relate to the workforce and to training which are being considered as part of this consultation on the Draft 10-year workforce plan. This document sets out our proposed response to these recommendations and invites your views and comments.

# 1. Leadership

## What we want to see

Investing in leadership has been identified as a vital component of our drive to improve the quality of the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales. We are looking to improve both the leadership skills of individual practitioners and the operational effectiveness of the leadership structure. By investing in and supporting leaders in the early years, childcare and play workforce, we believe that we will improve accountability and the sharing of good practice, and create a culture of increased professionalisation.

Three key changes we want to see are set out below.

- The early years, childcare and play sector operating as a self-improving system – it should work in a coordinated and interconnected manner which encourages collaboration.
- Increased capacity and capability at all levels of leadership – strategic, managerial, advanced practitioner and aspiring leaders.
- Recognition and status for our most highly qualified and experienced staff.

## The evidence to support this

### Working collaboratively

There is a body of evidence on systems leadership which suggests that shared learning networks can play an important role in workforce development. In a report for the National College for Teaching and Leadership in England, Iram Siraj and Chee Wah Sum advocate a ‘culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing’ in order to build leadership capacity in the early years sector. They also argue that aside from building capacity, there are obvious economies of scale if settings operate as clusters to share knowledge and resources.<sup>15</sup>

The importance of networks or partnerships between settings is also recognised as a key factor in raising standards across the sector in a recent report by the think-tank, Policy Exchange. This report recommends the establishment of networks, based on the Teaching Schools model, ‘to help early years leaders connect with other settings and develop their workforces’.<sup>16</sup> The Teaching Schools programme selected 100 primary and secondary schools in England to share their expertise and good practice with other schools and nurseries.

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<sup>15</sup> Iram Siraj-Blatchford and Chee Wah Sum, *Understanding and advancing systems leadership in the early years*, National College for Teaching and Leadership (2013).

<sup>16</sup> Harriet Waldegrave and Lucy Lee, *Quality Childcare: Improving early years childcare*, Policy Exchange (2013).

In his role as Champion of the Welsh Government's flagship programme to raise attainment, Schools Challenge Cymru, Mel Ainscow has published five lessons from research for self-improving systems in education. We see these points as equally applicable to childcare settings.

Lesson 1: Schools have untapped potential to improve themselves.

Lesson 2: Networking is a means of sharing effective ways of working.

Lesson 3: School partnerships are a powerful means of fostering improvements.

Lesson 4: Leadership has to come from within schools.

Lesson 5: Local authorities have important roles in making sure this happens.<sup>17</sup>

### **Building leadership capacity and investing in capable practitioners**

The importance of collaboration should be seen alongside the quality of leadership within a setting. We know that there is a clear relationship between higher-level staff qualifications and higher-quality education and care for young children. As a report on the early years workforce from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) notes, 'compelling evidence demonstrates that highly skilled practitioners are the decisive ingredient for improving early years quality'.<sup>18</sup>

The Nuffield Foundation's recent study of provision for 3 to 4-year-olds in England, underlined the importance of access to graduate leadership for all settings. The report found that settings with a graduate member of staff scored more highly on all quality measures in private, voluntary and independent settings (PVI) and suggested that 'graduate leadership was associated with a narrower quality gap between PVI settings located in deprived and more advantaged areas'.<sup>19</sup>

### **What we propose to do**

In this section, and taking clear direction from the evidence noted above, we set out the changes we want to see in the early years, childcare and play workforce over the next 10 years. We also respond to relevant recommendations from the Foundation Phase Stocktake and the Graham Review.

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<sup>17</sup> Mel Ainscow, *Developing self-improving school systems: Five lessons from research*, (Welsh Government, May 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Graeme Cooke and Kayte Lawton, *For Love or Money: Pay, progression and professionalisation in the 'early years' workforce*, Institute for Public Policy Research (2008), p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Sandra Mathers and Rebecca Smees, *Quality and Inequality: Do three- and four-year-olds in deprived areas experience lower quality early years provision?*, Nuffield Foundation (2014), p. 21.

## Strengthening strategic leadership

The 10-year workforce plan aims to set out a long-term strategic vision for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales. The development of this strategy is in response to an action in *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan* (Welsh Government, 2013). In doing so, it fulfils the following recommendation for a workforce strategy set out in the Graham Review.

Recommendation 14: We recommend that the Care Council for Wales is commissioned to build on existing workforce strategy and the ambitions of *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan* to develop the workforce strategy further as outlined in the full recommendations.

The CCW has been a key partner in the development of the 10-year workforce plan, both in chairing an external reference group and working with us to test and develop proposals. It is likely that they will continue to be closely involved with the further development and delivery of the plan.

We are aware that it will be essential to call upon leadership at a high-level to oversee the implementation and delivery of the plan. The ministerial-level **Early Years Partnership Board** will consider how this could most effectively be taken forward, including establishing a sub-group if necessary.

In addition to this high-level oversight, we will look to regional leaders in education consortia and leaders of early years and children's services in local government to engage with and embed the final proposals, providing support, guidance and resources to those delivering early years, childcare and play provision. Local authorities (LAs) are already required to establish a Play Monitoring Group, with a remit which includes monitoring the play workforce, and the development and implementation of plans to secure sufficiency. We propose asking consortia **to set out their approach to the Foundation Phase and the early years agenda in their business plans**. We will also use Foundation Phase Expenditure and Delivery Plans which are provided as part of the terms and conditions of the Foundation Phase Grant, as an opportunity to ask more robust questions on workforce development and receive information to help us to monitor progress. As an important first step in streamlining and better coordinating the support available to practitioners, we propose to **commission a mapping exercise of early years, childcare and playwork training available across Wales**, allowing us to address gaps in provision.

At a school leadership level, we would endorse and encourage the adoption of the following recommendation from the Foundation Phase Stocktake.

Recommendation 16: Ensure the Foundation Phase co-ordinators in maintained schools have sufficient knowledge and experience to understand the principles and practices within the Foundation Phase. In addition, recommend that they are graded at a sufficient leadership level (such as members of the senior management team, deputy head, etc.) to make decisions and support the strategic direction of the school.

We need school leadership to fully understand the principles of the Foundation Phase and how, if delivered well, this early education approach can have a positive impact on attainment throughout a school career. Where this is properly understood, the support available to Foundation Phase practitioners is likely to be greater and the quality of learning higher as a result.

In light of this, we also propose to take the following Foundation Phase Stocktake recommendation into consideration as we refresh the Foundation Phase Training Pack.

Recommendation 4: Consider compulsory training for leaders across the sector including strategic leaders in the Country, consortia, primary head teachers, advisory staff, leaders of funded non-maintained settings and services to support their understanding of the principles and practices of the Foundation Phase. The training should be bespoke to the audience taking into account their history and previous experiences and include research showing how effective implementation of the Foundation Phase can support standards and impact on social and economic growth generally.

While the resources to support this training would be part of the scope of the Foundation Phase Training Pack, and would be accessed by all leaders of funded non-maintained settings, we would look to consortia to take the lead in identifying and training those in key leadership positions. This should be taken into account as consortia look to develop leadership provision under the new National Model for Regional Working.

**Question 1:** Do you agree that there should be compulsory training for leaders to support their understanding of the principles and practices of the Foundation Phase?

## **Establishing networks for shared learning and collaborative working**

The early years, childcare and play workforce is spread across a diverse sector and employed in a wide variety of settings and schools. There is much to learn from this diversity of experience and we want to help to facilitate better connections and opportunities for shared learning between settings. We believe that a more joined-up approach to learning and workforce development will ensure that the quality of early education and childcare is raised across the whole sector, rather than just in pockets of good practice. Enabling practitioners to take the lead in building learning communities will allow them to identify particular training needs and ensure that training is delivered locally, in a way that is fully accessible and will contribute to a system that is both self-sustaining and self-improving.

This vision of a more collaborative workforce is set out in a number of recommendations from the Foundation Phase Stocktake.

Recommendation 3: Identify settings/schools of excellence to support continued professional development (CPD) and training of all staff. Identify methods of sharing best practice between maintained schools and all non-maintained settings and vice versa.

Recommendation 6: Develop training that emphasises and exemplifies the progression of skills across the Foundation Phase. Models of effective implementation of the Foundation Phase should be shared and evaluated across the entire age range. Ensure these models and examples are readily available for individual maintained schools and non-maintained settings to access (perhaps online and/or to visit).

Recommendation 13: Consider strengthening transition arrangements through training all staff involved in them together (staff from all non-maintained settings, Flying Start, Foundation Phase staff, Key Stage 2 staff, etc.). Training should include current research and theory together with practical examples of good transition practice.

Recommendation 19: Promote closer working relationships between, for example, advisory staff and initial teacher training (ITT) providers and between ITT providers themselves to support consistency of initial teacher training and quality of teaching of newly qualified teachers (NQTs). Identify maintained schools where the Foundation Phase is implemented well for students to visit and/or for placements.

Recommendation 21: Clarify and define the role of the 10% teacher supporting funded non-maintained settings. Care should be taken to ensure all eligible funded non-maintained settings receive this support and that it is effective. Where resources allow, this support should be increased to 20%.

While we would endorse all of the recommendations above as integral to the sharing of best practice within the sector, our preferred approach is to go further than sharing best practice in the Foundation Phase between maintained and non-maintained settings.

We will encourage ITT providers to share best practice and work collaboratively across the sector to support high-quality and consistency of teacher training across Wales. We will consider what changes are required to the statutory ITT entry requirements which set out what is required of an ITT provider in the delivery of effective training, including establishing effective partnership arrangements with schools and early years settings. We will also review the statutory quality assurance requirements to ensure that ITT providers establish and maintain their quality assurance procedures to cover all aspects of provision, particularly the quality of training, assessment and management arrangements.

To encourage shared learning and collaborative working, we propose to support the development of **early years learning hubs** in centres of recognised excellent practice. Initially, these hubs would be based in high-quality Flying Start settings or Foundation Phase settings/schools, but they would focus on drawing in a wealth of experience from different kinds of settings, and from childminders in a local area, not just on promoting learning from these specific programmes. The learning hubs would be recognised as centres of effective and innovative practice and would act as a local hub for learning and development, offer opportunities for coaching and mentoring, high-quality placements, and serve as a network for sharing good practice and driving improvement.

All practitioners linked to a learning hub would be able to benefit from the expertise of higher-qualified practitioners (Level 5), as well as Flying Start and Foundation Phase Advisory Teachers. We propose **that the role of these teachers should be clarified and their remit expanded to provide support to as many practitioners as possible**. We will look to draw on evidence from a forthcoming Estyn Thematic Survey on the impact of the 10 per cent advisory teacher time in funded non-maintained settings.

Within the learning hubs, there would be a clear focus on developing the whole workforce, whether through continuous professional learning/development (CPD), communities of practice to support those up-skilling through qualifications, or by providing mentoring and development for aspiring leaders and advanced practitioners. The shared training offered through the learning hubs would facilitate improved transition arrangements between Flying Start and other non-maintained settings and the Foundation Phase. The learning hubs would look to draw in local childminders to share their experience and take part in learning opportunities.

We propose to trial this model of collaborative working across a limited number of settings and schools initially, looking to refine and further develop this approach based on feedback after an initial two-year period. The school-to-school, setting-to-setting and peer-to-peer networks clustered around the learning hubs would be complemented by **virtual resources on learning and development**, available to all early years, childcare and play practitioners via the Learning Wales website.

**Question 2:** Do you agree that the Learning Hub model as set out in the Draft 10 Year Plan would encourage greater collaboration in the early years, childcare and play sector and help to support a self-improving network?

Figure 3 illustrates how we envisage this collaborative approach working in practice.

**Figure 3: Early years learning hub model**

Overall aim: raising skills and standards among early years and childcare practitioners in order to improve outcomes for children through access to high-quality early education and care.

**Oversight role**  
Consortia  
LA FS  
coordinators/childcare  
leads

**Inputs/resources**

- Advisory teacher time.
- Local training needs analysis.
- LA training on Foundation Phase and Flying Start.
- Induction and CPD framework.
- Early years graduate trainees.
- Links with Level 5 advanced practitioners.
- Community of practice for those enrolled accredited training courses.
- Links with local childminder networks and other practitioner networks.
- Early years section on Learning Wales website developed as a central source for online training and learning resources.

**Early years  
learning hub**

**Outputs/results**

- Training sessions accessible locally, to meet local needs.
- Induction process in place for all new practitioners.
- Personal development plan in place for all practitioners and CPD Log maintained.
- Postgraduate route into the workforce.
- Coaching and mentoring undertaken, development of emerging leaders.
- Experience of practice in other settings (including for childminders).
- Quality placements with training and assessment opportunities.
- Improved collaborative working through school-to-school, setting-to-setting, peer-to-peer approaches.

## Building leadership capacity

We want our early years, childcare and play workforce to be proactive learners, taking responsibility for their own professional development. To support and incentivise this CPD we need to ensure that a defined career pathway exists across the sector, and that talented and able practitioners are encouraged to up-skill beyond Level 3 qualifications.

It was a recommendation of the Graham Review that all managers of settings hold a higher-level qualification:

Recommendation 15: We recommend that Welsh Government ensures that regulations are revised to require appropriate Level 5 qualifications for leaders of all newly registered settings from 2018, and all settings from 2020.

Recommendation 16: We recommend that Welsh Government introduce regulations that require larger settings (registered for 20 children or more) to have a supernumerary manager should also require that manager to hold an appropriate Level 5 qualification (with specific leadership modules) by 2020 and a Level 6 qualification by 2024.

**Question 3:** Do you agree with these recommendations?

While we propose to encourage up-skilling to Level 5 and the **development of an advanced practitioner role at this level**, our aspirations for the early years and childcare workforce go further than this. In 10 years' time we want this sector to be led by graduates with specialist knowledge of children's development. For this reason, we propose to work with the CCW to develop a benchmark for accreditation of **Level 6 work-based learning qualifications** aimed at experienced practitioners and aspiring leaders in the sector. This approach has been carried out in Scotland with early success – the Childhood Practice Award is felt to have contributed to increased professionalisation of the early years and childcare workforce, and research indicates that practitioners with this qualification 'feel they are working on a par with other professionals involved in the care, learning and development of children'.<sup>20</sup> It is our intention that the Level 6 qualification could be undertaken through both a work-based learning and a higher education institution route, providing options for part-time or full-time study.

**Question 4:** Do you agree that the proposed level 6 qualification would equip practitioners with the necessary knowledge and skills to lead and deliver high quality practice?

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<sup>20</sup> *Knowledge, Confidence and Leadership: Childhood Practice in Action* (Scottish Social Services Council, 2014).

The Graham Review also recommended the development of an early years specialist route to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Recommendation 19: We recommend that a new competency based early childhood specialist route to Qualified Teacher Status should be introduced specialising in child development in the years from birth to seven and the Foundation Phase. This should run concurrently with the development of a work based learning Level 6 ECEC leadership qualification.<sup>21</sup>

This recommendation calls for a specialist route of ITT leading to QTS to be introduced which specialises in child development from 0 to 7 and the Foundation Phase, along with attainment of a work-based qualification. At present, to become a qualified teacher in Wales an individual would need to meet the QTS standards. These are a set of statutory outcome statements which define what a teacher should know, understand and be able to teach for the age range for which they are being trained to teach, to become a qualified teacher.

The QTS standards set out what is required to be able to teach the Foundation Phase curriculum, and ITT providers are also able to offer the opportunity for trainees to specialise – for example, in early years; Key Stage 2; literacy and numeracy, mathematics, or arts and science. Obtaining QTS is the first stage in a teacher’s career, and many teachers go on to specialise in a particular field or area, or gain a work-based qualification, once qualified as part of their continuous professional learning.

We do not intend to develop an early childhood specialist route to QTS, as we regard the proposed Level 6 qualification as an approach which would equip practitioners with the necessary knowledge and skills to lead and deliver high-quality practice. We also regard this qualification as a potential route into the teaching profession, if that is appropriate for the individual, following an additional year of post-graduate study to gain QTS.

However, we would encourage ITT providers to offer more opportunities for focused and specialist early years experience in as wide a range of settings as possible. We would promote learning hubs as an opportunity for those undertaking ITT to gain experience in both maintained and non-maintained settings.

At a teacher-led level, the Foundation Phase Stocktake made two recommendations in support of the delivery of the Foundation Phase in schools, both of which we would endorse and encourage schools and local authorities to adopt or further promote.

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<sup>21</sup> ECEC: Early Childhood Education and Care.

Recommendation 20: Consider making it compulsory that a qualified Teacher should lead practice in all Foundation Phase classes in maintained schools (including nursery classes).

We would reaffirm that it is a statutory duty for all classes in schools, including in maintained nursery schools, to be led by a qualified teacher.<sup>22</sup> Higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) should provide additional and occasional support, and should not replace the role of a teacher.<sup>23</sup>

Recommendation 22: Promote further training and qualifications of teachers within the Foundation Phase to Masters Level, including the Masters in Education Practice (MEP) Programme. Learning at this level should be designed to support and improve practice in the Foundation Phase and impact on leadership and effective deployment of TAs as well as support further understanding of the Foundation Phase pedagogy and practice, critical thinking, evaluation and recording skills.

The new Masters provision (offered to all teachers from September 2016) will include stand-alone Masters-level modules to support the delivery of the Foundation Phase.

The Foundation Phase Stocktake also made a more general recommendation about learning and development for leaders across the sector:

Recommendation 15: Develop specific bespoke training on leadership designed to support leaders across the sector, both within maintained schools and non-maintained settings, but especially including primary headteachers.

Leadership training will be embedded in the level 5 and 6 qualifications for advanced practitioners and aspiring leaders, and leadership mentoring and support will be provided through the learning hubs. The learning hubs will look to adopt an approach to professional learning which is aligned to the key characteristics of the Welsh Government's **Professional Learning Model** for schools: coaching and mentoring, effective collaboration, reflective practice and effective use of data and research evidence. Leadership development in schools will similarly be aligned to these characteristics and the regional education consortia, and increasingly schools

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<sup>22</sup> The Education (Specified Work and Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 provide that the following may only be done by a qualified teacher:

“Specified work -

- (1) Each of the following activities is specified work for the purposes of these Regulations—
  - (a) planning and preparing lessons and courses for pupils;
  - (b) delivering lessons to pupils;
  - (c) assessing the development, progress and attainment of pupils; and
  - (d) reporting on the development, progress and attainment of pupils.

<sup>23</sup> This is not a statutory requirement, but is set out in guidance on the role of HLTAs: *(Revised) Professional Standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistant Status in Wales* (Welsh Government, 2008).

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/circulars/2672720/?lang=en>

themselves, will very much be the main delivery agents in the implementation of the **Leadership Development Pathway** that is being developed with the help of the National Leadership Development Board. The aim of the pathway is to introduce a progressive, practice-based, career-long development of leadership for all. The leadership development options available to practitioners will be flexible so that practitioners can access them according to their circumstances, needs and aspirations.

## **Summary**

To strengthen leadership within the early years, childcare and play workforce, we propose to:

- establish a high-level workforce group to monitor implementation and delivery of the 10-year workforce plan
- call upon consortia to outline their oversight role of the Foundation Phase and how this supports the wider early years agenda, and review the monitoring information for Foundation Phase funding
- commission a mapping exercise of available support and training across Wales
- support the development of early years learning hubs through an initial trial
- develop the early years of advanced practitioner role (Level 5) to recognise higher-qualified and experienced staff
- develop Level 6 work-based learning qualification and support programme for aspiring leaders in the sector.

## 2. Attracting high-quality new entrants

### What we want to see

Our vision is for early years, childcare and play to be a career of choice and for potential entrants to the sector to feel informed about the range of opportunities available to them within the core and the wider children's workforce. We want to attract entrants with the ability to acquire and demonstrate an appropriate level of skills, knowledge and behaviours to provide high-quality care and education for children.

A perception we have been looking to test and challenge is that careers in early years, childcare and play can be considered as a suitable employment route for school leavers who are less interested in other, more academic careers. It is misleading to present working with children as an easy career option and evidence suggests that higher-qualified individuals are better equipped to provide high-quality care.

However, when considering an individual's suitability to work in early years, childcare and play, there is a balance to be struck between their level of knowledge, as demonstrated by academic qualifications, and their skills and behaviours which indicate they would be well-suited to working with young children. It is crucial that we get this balance right.

We also need to recognise that individuals enter the early years, childcare and play sector through a variety of different routes and at various life stages. The recent CCW survey of the workforce found that a near-equal proportion of new entrants came from raising a family or care responsibilities (23 per cent) as from full-time education or training (26 per cent).<sup>24</sup> Learning and development programmes must be responsive to the needs and circumstances of this diverse workforce.

We want to move towards presenting a more realistic picture of the challenges of working with very young children, but also the many very rewarding opportunities that this career path can offer. Better information about working in the early years, childcare and play sector would help to ensure that entrants are motivated to work in this area and improve staff retention in the workforce. On entry, we want to ensure that there is a structured induction available which establishes a continuous learning approach to professional development, with additional support where needed to gain practitioner-level qualifications, and to create momentum to progress further if desired.

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<sup>24</sup> *Early Years, Childcare and Play Workforce Survey 2014* (Care Council for Wales, 2014).

## The evidence to support this

Stakeholder engagement during the development of this draft plan suggested that the range of opportunities offered by a career in childcare, and the potential progression routes through the sector are not clearly and routinely communicated to new entrants or to the existing workforce. Similarly, IPPR's research with focus groups of early years practitioners highlighted that 'there was limited awareness or understanding of opportunities to progress into wider children's services'.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, the Flying Start evaluation highlights that the additional training required for practitioners had 'reportedly had a positive impact upon their professional lives'.<sup>26</sup>

In her 2012 review of early years education and childcare qualifications in England, Professor Cathy Nutbrown noted the importance of establishing a structured career path through early years occupations, suggesting that this would contribute to increased professionalism within the early years and childcare workforce.

As well as supporting the development of a more engaged and informed workforce, evidence suggests that a higher-qualified workforce can improve early years outcomes. Nutbrown also stated that a Level 3 qualification 'is the ideal minimum requirement for all staff working with babies and young children', and those practitioners holding lower-level qualifications should not be considered fully qualified. Level 3 childcare qualifications were considered by Nutbrown to be the minimum level of qualification to provide the appropriate depth and rigour of study, in relation to the development and care of young children, to enhance children's early years experiences.<sup>27</sup>

Both of the Welsh Government's flagship programmes for young children in Wales, Flying Start and the Foundation Phase, recommend that practitioners are qualified to Level 3 as a minimum. We want to see the rest of the sector match this standard for high-quality care. Taken together, we are persuaded by evidence nationally and internationally that higher qualifications make a difference to outcomes for children. The high standards for the quality of care we rightly demand for our children must be matched by high expectations around practitioner qualifications, and the skills and capabilities of new entrants to this workforce.

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<sup>25</sup> IPPR (2008), p.27.

<sup>26</sup> *National Evaluation of Flying Start: Area Case Study Synthesis Report*, (SQW, 2013), p. vi and p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> Cathy Nutbrown, *Foundations for Quality: The independent review of early education and childcare qualifications* (2012) p. 31.

## What we propose to do

This section sets out the changes we want to see to attract new entrants to the early years, childcare and play workforce who have the appropriate skills and capabilities to deliver high-quality care. It also proposes how prospective entrants could be provided with better information when considering a career in early education or childcare and the support they should expect on entering the profession to enable them to continue their professional learning.

Good-quality careers advice is essential in attracting appropriate entrants to the early years, childcare and play workforce. We want to see **better promotion of existing resources** on working with young children which have been produced by the CCW and others (including the *Careers in Early Years and Childcare* booklet and *A Question of Care* careers guidance tool), and to ensure that these resources are linked to Careers Wales. The ongoing refresh of Careers Wales' online content provides a timely opportunity to state clearly the required skills and expected behaviours necessary for a career in early education, childcare or playwork.

Through traineeships, 16 to 18-year-olds can benefit from a range of structured placements which could include an introduction to working in childcare. Equally, the Jobs Growth Wales programme provides a variety of job opportunities for unemployed young people for a six-month period paid at or above the National Minimum Wage. The bursary strand of this programme can offer support to those wishing to set up their own which could include a childcare or childminding business. We also want to build on relationships with Jobcentre Plus to provide up-to-date information to those who may be looking for, or returning to, employment and to maximise opportunities for recruitment to the early years and childcare sector.

We recognise the value of face-to-face conversations about the realities and rewards of working with young children. The CCW's Early Years Ambassadors scheme offers visits to schools and colleges, attendance at recruitment fairs and conferences, as well as conducting mock interviews with young people. In the play sector, SkillsActive is working directly with employers and through employer networks to support the development of the workforce through online tools and guidance on qualifications. We also regard the **pre-entry information sessions** routinely held for prospective childminders as a good example of engagement with potential entrants to the sector. We are interested in your views as to how these sessions could be extended and delivered to cover the requirements and opportunities of working in all types of early years and childcare settings.

**Question 5a:** Do you agree that it would be beneficial for pre-entry information sessions to be extended to cover the requirements and opportunities of working in all types of settings in the early years, childcare and play sector?

**Question 5b:** If you agree, please provide information as to how these sessions could most effectively be extended and delivered.

Further to these promotional and engagement activities, we also propose that the CCW should work with key partners to **map progression routes to other professions in the wider children's workforce**. We want to see better connections made between early years and childcare and teaching, social work, speech and language therapy, among others. Ideally, entrants should understand how their role contributes to a larger support structure for young children, value the transferable skills it will enable them to acquire and gain support to pursue the additional qualifications necessary for progression to other professions.

As set out previously, we want to encourage a culture of self-improvement and ongoing professional learning among practitioners. This should commence on entry to the workforce. The *Early Years and Childcare Induction Framework* produced by the CCW provides a structured start for workers in their first 12 weeks of employment and helps to identify development needs. We would propose that a **structured induction process** should be the first stage in a personal development plan for all new entrants to the sector and that completion of this should be recorded in a CPD portfolio. More information on how this CPD portfolio would operate is outlined in the following section of this document.

**Question 6:** Do you agree that a structured induction process should be the first stage in a personal development plan for all new entrants to the sector and that completion of this should be recorded in a continuous professional development (CPD) portfolio?

As noted in the previous section, evidence points to higher-level qualifications among practitioners as a significant factor in contributing to better outcomes for children. It has been a concern for some time that early years and childcare degrees in Wales do not contain the necessary competency qualifications to enable university graduates to be employed as practitioners on entry to the sector. We are working with higher education institutions (HEIs) to address this matter as a new Level 6 (degree-level equivalent) work-based learning qualification is developed. However, it is also our intention that this new qualification should be complemented by a **Graduate Level Certificate in Leadership in Childhood Practice**. This would allow university graduates from various degree routes to gain the necessary competence to practice in early years and childcare settings at a level which is appropriate to them and which takes into account the higher-level skills they have developed over the course of their degree qualification.

**Question 7:** Do you agree that any future level 6 qualification should be complemented by a Graduate Level Certificate in Leadership in Childhood Practice to enable graduates to gain a competency

qualification at an appropriate level and to practice in the sector on completion of their degree?

The Graham Review made two specific recommendations regarding the appropriate level of qualification for all practitioners in early years and childcare settings:

Recommendation 17: We recommend that all ECEC practitioners counted within regulated ratios should be appropriately qualified to, or above, Level 3 or working towards a work-based learning qualification at Level 3 to be achieved within a three-year period. This should include childminders (although they should be allowed three years from their initial registration to achieve this).

Recommendation 18: We recommend that in funded Foundation Phase (in schools and non-maintained settings) or Flying Start services practitioners counted within ratios should be appropriately qualified to Level 3 and undertake at least five days of continuous professional development training annually.

We support the ambition to see **Level 3 in a relevant qualification become the acceptable standard for all practitioners in the sector over time**. We propose amending the NMS to reflect this, through a phased process, in two stages over a 10-year period. In the meantime, we will actively support as many practitioners as possible to up-skill to this level (our plans for this are set out in more detail in the following section).

**Question 8a:** Do you support the ambition to see Level 3 in a relevant qualification become the acceptable standard for all practitioners in the sector over time?

**Question 8b:** Do you agree with the phased introduction of this requirement, in two stages over a 10 year period?

As we are aware of the challenge of demonstrating practical competence unless in employment, we will not stipulate that new entrants must hold a full Level 3 qualification, but rather that they must be enrolled on a work-based learning course or programme to achieve this qualification within a three-year period. In agreement with the Graham Review, we would stipulate that this qualification level should also apply to all registered childminders, to be achieved within three years of their initial registration.

**Question 9:** In your view, is it appropriate for childminders to achieve a relevant Level 3 qualification within 3 years of their initial registration?

With regard to Recommendation 18, we would emphasise that Level 3 is already the recommended level of qualification for Foundation Phase and Flying Start practitioners. We would expect employers (schools, local authorities and/or their contractors) to be meeting this requirement at recruitment, or ensuring practitioners are enrolled on work-based learning pathways by September 2016 to achieve this qualification level by 2018. We would look to the ongoing activity under the School Support Staff Action Plan to identify any additional training or learning appropriate for learning support staff. Our proposed approach is designed to achieve parity across the sector, supporting settings to move gradually towards the same qualification requirements as Foundation Phase and Flying Start and offering equally high-quality early education and care. The CPD element of this recommendation will be discussed in the next section.

We recognise that some new entrants to the workforce may need longer to achieve a Level 3 qualification and to demonstrate the necessary competence to work unsupervised as practitioners. For this reason, we see Level 2 as a valuable introductory qualification to early years and childcare for those working under supervision as assistant practitioners and as a helpful first step on a continuous professional learning pathway. Again, this qualification should be achieved within a three-year timescale and managers should assess on completion whether the assistant practitioner could progress onto a Level 3 qualification and be included within the ratio of Level 3 staff in the setting. As Level 2 signals the need for supervised practice, we do not regard it as an appropriate qualification for registered childminders.

## **Summary**

To attract individuals capable of delivering high-quality early education and childcare into the workforce, we propose to:

- improve the quality of careers advice and increase the provision of pre-entry information sessions
- map and promote career pathways into the wider children's workforce
- support the use of the CCW's Induction Framework and resource pack for new settings
- attract degree-level applicants by ensuring that graduates can gain the required assessment of competency to practice
- use Level 2 qualifications as the minimum requirement for assistant practitioners (those working under supervision in the non-maintained sector)
- revise National Minimum Standards to state that Level 3 is the expected practitioner-level qualification for all staff included in ratios (phased in with 10 years' lead time).

### 3. Raising skills and standards across the existing workforce

#### What we want to see

As set out in the previous section, and guided by the Graham Review and other research at a UK and international level, we are proposing to up-skill all early years and childcare practitioners to a relevant Level 3 qualification over the next 10 years.

Currently, we have a workforce with varying levels of qualifications and skills. Therefore, we cannot impose a ‘one-size-fits-all approach’ by mandating a certain level of qualification by a certain date – we need to offer support to individuals to up-skill gradually. This is why the workforce plan will cover a period of 10 years.

A recent survey of the early years, childcare and play workforce illustrated that a very low proportion of practitioners were currently working towards a qualification at a level higher than that which they currently held. Approximately three-quarters of staff in settings across the range of provision in the sector are not engaged in up-skilling with a qualification outcome. Collectively we need to unpick the possible reasons for this and consider how we can incentivise continuous learning and encourage practitioners to prioritise their individual professional development.

**Figure 4: Average percentage of staff working towards the next qualification up**

<b>Type of provider (total number of responses: 641)</b>	<b>Working towards the next qualification up</b>	<b>Not working towards the next qualification up</b>
Full day care (136)	23%	74%
Sessional day care (191)	21%	74%
Childminder (96)	19%	75%
Out of school childcare (44)	23%	74%
Flying Start (59)	27%	73%
Foundation Phase maintained (49)	14%	80%

Source: Early Years, Childcare and Play Workforce Survey 2014, Care Council for Wales. This survey was completed by managers in 641 settings across Wales. As population weights are not available, the table reports sample proportions, as a result caution should be used when interpreting findings. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding and a small number of 'unsure' responses. Sub-groups of less than 30 responses not included in the table: Crèche; Registered open access play setting; Unregistered open access play setting and Foundation Phase funded non-maintained setting.

While we want to encourage and support opportunities for practitioners to develop their skills through completing qualifications at higher levels, we also recognise that some practitioners will want to broaden their skills at their current level, or to specialise in particular areas of practice. Continuous professional learning and development programmes should be personal and flexible enough to support these forms of ongoing learning.

As explored in the previous section, a series of unhelpful and misleading assumptions about working with young children may have contributed to childcare being perceived as a suitable employment route for school leavers without academic qualifications in GCSE English and Mathematics; qualifications which would typically be regarded as entry requirements for many other professions. Therefore, within the early years, childcare and play workforce, a number of employees may lack, or lack confidence in using, a basic level of literacy and numeracy skills.

A workforce that is confident in using literacy and numeracy skills is vital to enable the development of these skills in children, and as a result we want to see all practitioners holding an academic qualification which signals competence in these skills, or being supported to complete an equivalent vocational qualification as part of their CPD.

The 10-year workforce plan is key to realising our high-level aim of a bilingual workforce which enables parents/carers to access childcare in English and Welsh. To do this, we need to consider existing levels of communication skills in Welsh-medium settings, as well as support practitioners to enhance their Welsh language skills in both Welsh- and English-medium settings. The *Childcare gap analysis for Wales* (Cordis Bright, 2014) identified a range of gaps in Welsh language provision across all 22 local authority areas. These gaps, as identified in local authorities' latest Childcare Sufficiency Assessments, relate to accessibility, availability and range of provision. Our approach to developing a bilingual workforce needs to take account of identified gaps in a variety of different settings across Wales so that children can be supported to develop their Welsh language skills. At the same time, workforce development needs will have to be flexible to match the needs and demand of local provision.

## The evidence to support this

### Career progression

IPPR's 2008 qualitative study of the early years workforce presented a picture of an aspirational sector, looking for more structured support around progression and development. Key findings from this study included:

- the vast majority of participants wanted to remain in the early years sector for the foreseeable future, with over half aspiring to progress in their careers. The widely held notion that early years workers are unambitious (and unskilled) appears to be wide of the mark
- over half of people wanted to progress from their current role. For some this was quite a general aspiration, without a clear action plan
- perceived lack of job opportunities, unsupportive employers and money were seen as barriers to progression – while there was limited awareness or understanding of opportunities to progress to wider children's services.<sup>28</sup>

Professional development for this sector needs to be structured around a clear progression route which supports gradual and continuous up-skilling over the course of an individual's career.

### Essential Skills

Literacy and numeracy are two of Welsh education's top three priorities: the other being reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment. These will be reiterated in the forthcoming strategy *Qualified for life*, due to be published in October 2014.

We published the National Numeracy and National Literacy Programmes in 2012 and set out clearly the actions that we, and our partners, are undertaking to achieve a step-change in standards over a five-year period. Some of the programmes' key actions include the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF), the National Support Programme (NSP) for literacy and numeracy and National Reading and Numeracy Tests.

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<sup>28</sup> IPPR (2008), p. 27.

The Areas of Learning for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills, and Mathematical Development, and the programmes of study for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics have been revised following consultation to bring them in line with the LNF in terms of structure and standards, and to focus on the full Foundation Phase age range (3 to 7).

The important role for practitioners in supporting early language development and emerging numeracy in their work with young children was highlighted in the Foundation Phase Stocktake, which observed the following:

Staff need guidance on how best to support language, literacy and numeracy development through both independent and focused learning activities. They need to understand how to organise the environment to provide numerous opportunities for children to practice their language, literacy and numeracy at an appropriate level for them. In addition, they need to feel confident to teach aspects of literacy and numeracy at the appropriate levels and to support parents/carers in developing their children's literacy and numeracy in the home learning environment.<sup>29</sup>

While this report raised the need for focused training around the Welsh Government's LNF, the author also recommended training in literacy and numeracy skills for those that required this additional support within the Foundation Phase. Where there is an identified need around literacy and numeracy skills, practitioners need to be able to access support to enable them to feel confident in their role of encouraging children's learning and development.

Furthermore, two research reports on successful interventions and practice of early language development (ELD) for Flying Start highlighted the importance of effective training for all professionals working with children to understand the value of early language development.<sup>30</sup> The reports underlined the importance of ensuring that all staff have the knowledge and skills to interact with children in a way that promotes language development. The authors recommend that all Flying Start staff should receive a minimum level of training relating to ELD norms and good practice in adult-child interaction. These findings and recommendations are relevant and applicable to all early years professionals to ensure consistency across the early years workforce.

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<sup>29</sup> Iram Siraj, *An independent stocktake of the Foundation Phase in Wales* (Welsh Government, 2014), p. 51.

<sup>30</sup> Arad Research and the National Centre for Language and Literacy, *A Review of Research Evidence on the effectiveness of different approaches to promoting early speech and language development* (Welsh Government, 2014); Arad Research and the National Centre for Language and Literacy, *A review of practice in the implementation of the early language development support element within Flying Start* (Welsh Government, 2014).

## Welsh language skills

Welsh Language Development forms one of the Areas of Learning of the Foundation Phase. A 2013 Estyn report into the delivery of this area noted ‘when practitioners’ own Welsh is fluent, children’s progress in learning Welsh is better . . . Where there are no confident Welsh-speaking practitioners in a school or setting, the use of Welsh by staff is usually more limited. This means that children hear less Welsh and have less opportunity to practice it.’<sup>31</sup> The link between staff ability and confidence in using the Welsh language and children’s Welsh language skills is also supported by early findings from the Foundation Phase evaluation.<sup>32</sup>

Beyond Foundation Phase provision, a recent survey of Welsh language skills needs in eight sectors highlighted that employers in the childcare sector were the most likely of all sectors to consider Welsh language skills important (84 per cent). Welsh language skills among staff were regarded as desirable by parents/carers and contributed to improved customer service, in addition to supporting Welsh language development among children. This survey also demonstrated that while there was a significant level of Welsh language skills in the sector, this tended to be at a basic level, with 68 per cent of childcare employers indicating that increased Welsh language skills would be beneficial.<sup>33</sup>

A workforce that is confident in using their Welsh language skills at all levels will make a positive contribution to children’s Welsh language development. Building Welsh language capacity within the sector will also give parents/carers greater choice in accessing early years and childcare provision through the medium of Welsh.

## What we propose to do

This section sets out the changes we want to see to increase capacity in the workforce in terms of child development skills and qualifications, as well as the support available to those wishing to develop their literacy, numeracy or Welsh language skills.

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<sup>31</sup> *Welsh Language Development in the Foundation Phase*, (Estyn, 2013), p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Key Findings on Welsh Language*, (Welsh Government, 2014).  
[www.wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/evaluation-foundation-phase/?lang=en](http://www.wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/evaluation-foundation-phase/?lang=en)

<sup>33</sup> *Welsh language skills needs in eight sectors* (Welsh Government, 2014), pp.11-13.

## Continuous learning and professional development

As illustrated above, we have a workforce with varying levels of qualifications and skills, and therefore we need to ensure that opportunities are available to individuals to up-skill gradually and continuously. Practitioners should know what skills are expected of them at their current level of employment and what areas of practice they need to develop in order to progress. While we are aware that many settings have personal development plans in place for all staff, we believe that a set of CPD principles, applicable to all those working in early years childcare and play will bring greater clarity in terms of career progression. We propose to commission a **development pathway and overarching CPD principles for the sector**, which builds on the recent work to develop a CPD framework for Flying Start Practitioners.

Alongside this pathway and framework, we are recommending that an online **CPD portfolio** should be made available to, and maintained by, all practitioners, enabling them to record and evidence their learning and development. CPD portfolios would also allow practitioners to demonstrate and reflect on learning outside of qualifications or formal training, recognising the value of mentoring and job-shadowing opportunities, for example.

**Question 10:** Do you agree that the workforce would benefit from a set of overarching CPD principles and individual online portfolios to record learning and development?

Ideally, this CPD record could form part of a **workforce registration process**, where practitioners would be required to demonstrate a record of learning and development activities to support re-registration. This process could help to establish a culture of CPD in the early years, childcare and play sector, as well as contributing to greater professionalisation and a more defined career pathway, as practitioners would be able to register at a particular level, commensurate with their qualification level and job role. This approach is being taken forward for learning support staff in schools through the new Education Workforce Council, with this system expected to be in place by 2016. As one of our objectives is greater parity between the maintained and non-maintained sectors, we would want to learn from this process and look to apply similar principles to the non-maintained childcare workforce, if appropriate and feasible. We will also look to the voluntary model recently introduced by SkillsActive for play workers in England, which also includes a recorded CPD portfolio. We would invite your views as to the potential impact and benefits of professional registration for the childcare workforce.

**Question 11a:** In your view, should there be a system of professional registration for the non-maintained sector?

**Question 11b:** If yes, how could this system be monitored?

The importance of CPD for early years and childcare practitioners was highlighted by both the Graham Review and the Foundation Phase Stocktake. As part of a broader recommendation on qualification levels, recommendation 17 of the Graham Review stated that Foundation Phase and Flying Start practitioners should 'undertake at least 5 days of Professional Development Training annually'. The opportunity to access up to five days of CPD is already a commitment within the Flying Start Programme, but we would want to see this approach replicated throughout the sector. Early years learning hubs will coordinate this CPD activity in a way that is accessible and meets the needs of local practitioners.

These support mechanisms and CPD opportunities will also help to fulfil the following recommendation from the Foundation Phase Stocktake.

Recommendation 17: Ensure that Teaching Assistants (TAs) benefit from continued professional development (CPD) processes and support within maintained schools and that literacy and numeracy training is available for those that need it. Develop a career path for those practitioners working in the funded non-maintained settings and for TAs within maintained schools. Promote these opportunities and review the terms and working conditions of TAs to attract well-qualified staff.

As set out in the preceding section, we are advocating a defined career progression route through the early years, childcare and play sector, with links to other professions working with children. It would be our intention that this would encompass a career pathway for learning and teaching assistants within the maintained schools and include progression routes to the teaching profession. While we cannot respond on the matter of terms and conditions for learning support staff as this is not devolved to Welsh Ministers, we would encourage local authorities to recruit Foundation Phase assistants at the appropriate level set out in guidance (Level 3). We support further development of literacy and numeracy skills among early years and childcare practitioners. Our response to the call for literacy and numeracy training within this recommendation is outlined in detail below (page 46).

As well as ensuring that practitioners are supported to set aside time to focus on their professional development and learning, we want to ensure that the content of training is both relevant and useful. The Foundation Phase Stocktake made a number of specific recommendations around the training which should be delivered to Foundation Phase teachers and practitioners.

Recommendation 5: Ensure that all modules/training are underpinned by theory and research making clear the value of effective early education. Links between theory and practice and the important role of the adult need to be explicit.

Recommendation 8: Develop training that ensures all staff have a good understanding of how language, literacy and numeracy develop and how to support children's development across the Foundation Phase including the important role of the adult.

Recommendation 9: Develop training which includes clear guidance and examples of how the LNF fits within the Foundation Phase, 3–4 and 5–7. For example in the 3–4 guidance how songs and nursery rhymes can emphasise understanding of sounds in rhyme and alliteration.

Recommendation 11: Consider supporting progression and continuity throughout the Foundation Phase by developing some additional training and guidance to the LNF on practice in language, literacy and numeracy for 3- and 4-year-olds, ensuring this is appropriate for these children. It should follow their individual learning and development needs, and fit with the experiential Foundation Phase philosophy and practice.

Recommendation 12: Develop training that ensures all staff understand the research on the effects of disadvantage and poverty and the possible ways to close the achievement gap. Sharing good practice from those maintained schools and funded non-maintained settings where this is working well should be part of the training and so should research on supporting the home learning environment (HLE). Maintained schools could be asked to devote some of their Pupil Deprivation Grant (or similar) to support staff development here.

These recommendations will be considered as part of a future refresh of the Foundation Phase Training Pack, and associated guidance. This guidance is due to be published by September 2015. We are committed to supporting schools to implement the LNF. Currently, the NSP offers direct support to schools. Every school in Wales has an NSP partner who will act as a mentor to ensure that they receive the necessary hands-on support and training to effectively implement the requirements of the LNF.

The NSP partner will first discuss and record the progress of schools in implementing the LNF. They will then help to establish the skills deficits priorities (e.g. response and analysis in the Foundation Phase) and offer tailored and targeted support for the priorities identified by the school. We have also developed a suite of guidance and training materials to support in planning and developing literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

With regard to Recommendation 12 specifically, we would envisage that the early years learning hubs would facilitate sharing good practice on the effects of disadvantage, particularly in terms of learning from Flying Start settings. We are seeking views on what this training should potentially include, and the most effective mechanism for delivery.

**Question 12a:** Would training on the effects of disadvantage be of benefit to practitioners and teachers in the Foundation Phase?

**Question 12b:** Who would be best placed to develop and deliver this training?

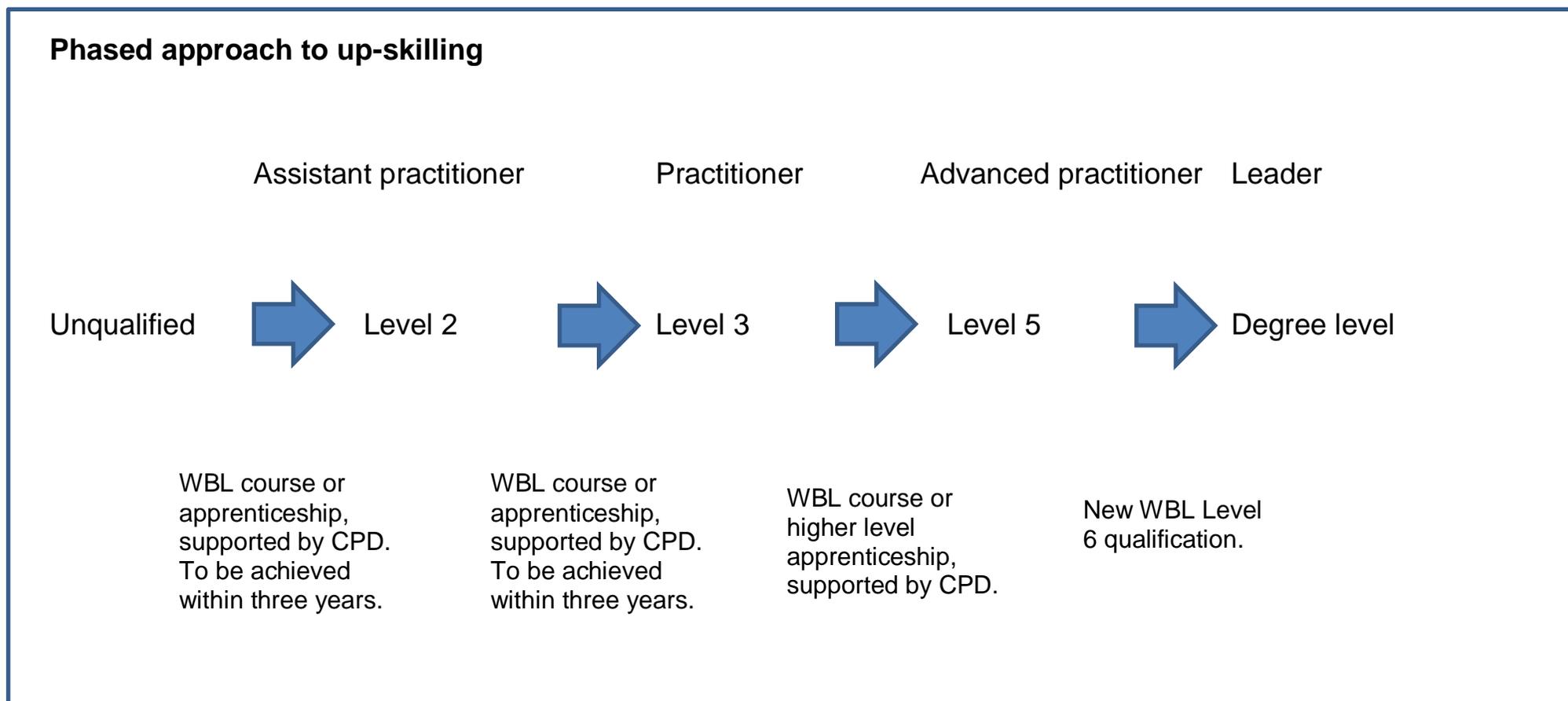
Training on supporting children with SEN is also being considered by Welsh Government. A workforce development exercise is underway across the general education workforce in Wales focusing on raising the capacity of teachers and schools at the universal level to better meet the learning needs of children and young people with SEN, including those in the early years. Following the outcome of this exercise, we will look to introduce in 2015 SEN-related training, guidance and materials which will help to increase the confidence and skills of all those who provide support to children with SEN. This, in conjunction with our developments for CPD of teaching staff, should lead to increased access to suitable provision at a local level and help drive up standards for some of our most vulnerable learners.

### **Developing skills through qualifications**

Our suggested 'stepped approach' to up-skilling is illustrated in Figure 5 (see page 45). This approach would ensure that appropriate programmes of support are in place to enable individuals and settings to up-skill ahead of the proposed changes to the National Minimum Standards outlined in the previous section. This approach also demonstrates our ambitions for this sector do not end with all practitioners achieving a relevant Level 3 qualification – the proposed development pathway extends beyond this to higher level qualifications, and to leadership roles which recognise a high level of skills and experience.

**Question 13:** Do you agree that that the proposed 'stepped approach' to up-skilling could potentially help to address the appetite within the early years, childcare and play workforce to further learning and development?

Figure 5: Phased approach to up-skilling for the early years, childcare and play workforce



Our expectation is that the higher-qualified workforce which we are working towards will be better-equipped to provide high-quality education and childcare to young children. The Foundation Phase Stocktake emphasised that the quality of a practitioner was of greater importance than the number of adults present in a setting.

This report suggested that for certain classes in schools, recommended **ratios of adults to children could be altered** without compromising on quality.<sup>34</sup> The author advocated that the cost-saving of any ratio change should be reinvested in workforce training and development to secure a higher-qualified workforce. The recommendation is set out in full below:

Recommendation 18: Review the current adult to child ratio in reception classes. Currently it is 1:8, primary schools' staff, advisors and inspectors agreed that it could be increased to 1:10 without affecting quality. However, some schools may need to apply for an exception where, for example, they are situated in very rural areas or where they have a considerable number of children with additional needs such as SEN or E/WAL as it would not be practical to increase the ratio.

Within our current climate of financial constraint, altering Foundation Phase recommended ratios within reception classes as outlined above could enable us to offer greater support for workforce development and training across the Foundation Phase. We would like to invite comments on this proposed ratio change, its likely impact, and the benefits of the additional resource which would be released and used to support workforce development.

**Question 14:** Do you agree with this recommendation to change adult to child ratios in reception classes in schools?

## **Essential Skills**

Underpinning higher levels of knowledge of children's learning and development, we want practitioners to feel confident in their own communication and numeracy skills in order to encourage emergent literacy and numeracy among the children in their care. We propose that strengthening essential skills in the sector should be considered a priority. Our aspiration would be for all practitioners in the sector to hold a minimum of GCSE grade C in English Language or Welsh (First) Language and Mathematics, but we recognise that this is a longer-term ambition. Practitioners without these qualifications should access support available through Essential Skills Wales **to gain an equivalent Level 2 qualification in Communications and Application of Number** (revised and updated for delivery from September 2015) while working in the sector. We suggest that achieving these qualifications within a

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<sup>34</sup> Foundation Phase Stocktake, p. 35.

specified time period should form part of the mandatory CPD requirements for the workforce and be set out in the new sector-wide CPD principles.

It is envisaged that from September 2015 the new National Welsh Baccalaureate (Level 2) will provide future entrants to the workforce with the opportunity to demonstrate qualifications in both literacy and numeracy. Apprenticeship programmes currently incorporate a requirement for the attainment of Essential Skills at a level commensurate with the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales (SASW) an assessment of essential skills. As apprenticeship frameworks are reviewed by the sector, we would suggest that Level 2 becomes the minimum standard for all essential skills embedded within early years and childcare apprenticeships at Level 3.

**Question 15a:** Do you agree that a Grade C GCSE, or equivalent, is the appropriate minimum level of essential skills for those working within the early years, childcare and play workforce?

**Question 15b:** Should these skill levels be a requirement on entry to the sector (rather than achieved while working, within a fixed time period)?

### **Welsh language skills**

To **increase practitioner confidence in the use of Welsh in English-medium** early years and childcare settings, we will look to expand the successful sector-led introductory Welsh language course 'Un, dai, tri – hwyl a sbri'. This six-week course and supporting interactive resources focuses on basic Welsh language and activities which can be used when working with young children.

Support will continue to be available for those working in the maintained sector to further develop their Welsh language skills through the National Sabbatical Scheme, while Geiriau Bach provides an accredited Welsh language course for practitioners in non-maintained settings.

Practitioners in Welsh-medium settings can also access support to up-skill to a Level 3 Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development (CCLD) taught through the medium of Welsh, delivered by Cam Wrth Gam. In addition, early years practitioners can also access Welsh for Adults courses, ranging from beginner to advanced levels, which are offered at various locations for anyone wishing to develop their Welsh language skills.

**Question 16:** Do you agree that the Welsh language support as set out in this draft plan would help to promote greater use of the Welsh language in schools/settings?

## Summary

To better equip the early years, childcare and play workforce to provide high-quality education and childcare to young children, we propose to:

- commission a development pathway and CPD principles for the sector
- consider and evaluate a potential system of professional registration for the non-maintained sector and a means of monitoring individual CPD portfolios
- encourage a stepped approach to up-skilling through qualifications
- strengthen essential skills, including literacy and numeracy, prioritising those without a grade C in GCSE English/Welsh (First) language and Mathematics
- extend provision of successful introductory Welsh language course (English-medium settings)
- support up-skilling of Welsh language skills

## Overview of proposals and timeline

The table below summarises the proposals set out in the draft plan, the anticipated outcomes and gives an indicative timeline for implementation. This timeline will be further developed depending on the outcome of the consultation on the draft 10 year plan.

Proposal	Anticipated outcome	Date of proposed implementation
<b>Leadership</b>		
1. Establish a high-level workforce group to monitor implementation and delivery of the 10-year workforce plan.	Strategic oversight for the delivery of the 10-year plan, as well as providing accountability for progress.	April 2015
2. Call upon consortia to outline their oversight role of the Foundation Phase and how this supports the wider early years agenda, and review the monitoring information for Foundation Phase funding.	Better workforce intelligence on the Foundation Phase and how it is embedding both within the maintained and funded non-maintained sectors.	By end of 2015
3. Commission a mapping exercise of available support and training across Wales.	Gaps in training and provision are identified and training needs met.	By end of 2015
4. Support the development of Early Years Learning Hubs through an initial trial.	Development of a self-improving network for early years, childcare and play practitioners. Mechanism for sharing good practice and securing opportunities for collaborative working.	2015–17
5. Develop the Early Years Advanced Practitioner Role (Level 5) to recognise higher qualified and experienced staff.	Setting/Learning Hub benefits from the higher-level knowledge, skills and experience of the Advanced Practitioner.	2015–17
6. Develop Level 6 work-based learning qualification and support programme for aspiring leaders in the sector.	Greater parity with other graduate-level professions in the wider children's workforce. Improved outcomes for children as a result of high-quality leadership.	Scoping phase: 2014–15 Implementation: September 2016

<b>Attracting high-quality new entrants</b>		
1. Improve the quality of careers advice and increase the provision of pre-entry information sessions.	Greater awareness of challenges and rewards of a career in early years, childcare and play.	From 2015 onwards
2. Map and promote career pathways into the wider children's workforce.	Roles in early years, childcare and play perceived as a 'stepping stone' to other professions which involve working with children, and to a career-long pathway for learning and development.	By end of 2015
3. Support the use of Care Council for Wales' Induction Framework and resource pack for new settings.	Training and development needs identified and addressed at an early stage through structured induction. Better promotion of existing resources and guidance for managers and practitioners.	From 2015 onwards
4. Attract degree-level applicants by ensuring that graduates can gain the required assessment of competency to practice.	Sector will benefit from high-level of academic knowledge and interest of those who have undertaken degree-level study. Early years graduates will be more employable having gained an assessment of their practice.	September 2016
5. Use Level 2 qualifications as the minimum requirement for Assistant Practitioners (those working under supervision in the non-maintained sector).	All practitioners will have, or be working towards, this level of training as a minimum, ensuring a continuously developing workforce.	2020
6. Revise National Minimum Standards (NMS) to state that Level 3 is the expected practitioner level qualification for all staff included in ratios (phased in with 10 years lead time).	Gradually moving to a higher standard for practice will lead to improved outcomes for children and support the professionalisation of this sector.	Changes to NMS in 2020 and 2025

<b>Raising skills and standards in the existing workforce</b>		
1. Commission a development pathway and continuous professional development (CPD) principles for sector.	Clarity on progression routes and key objectives of professional learning.	By end of 2015
2. Consider and evaluate a potential system of professional registration for the non-maintained sector and a means of monitoring individual CPD portfolios.	To learn from the introduction of a workforce registration process for the maintained sector, and to consider the impact and benefit of any similar process for the non-maintained sector.	2016–18
3. Encourage a stepped approach to up-skilling through qualifications.	A continuously learning and developing workforce, where practitioners are supported to gain a relevant Level 3 qualification and to progress beyond this, either by specialising further at their current level, or by accessing higher-level qualifications.	From April 2015
4. Strengthen essential skills, including literacy and numeracy, prioritising those without a grade C in GCSE Mathematics and English/Welsh.	Practitioners are better equipped to support children's developing literacy and numeracy.	2015–17
5. Extend provision of successful introductory Welsh language course (English-medium settings).	Practitioners are more confident in using basic Welsh on a day-to-day basis, and in doing so are supporting children's Welsh language development.	By end of 2015
6. Support up-skilling of Welsh language skills.	By increasing the Welsh language skills of practitioners, parents/carers will have greater choice with regard to English or Welsh-medium childcare provision.	From April 2015