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Consultation Document

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

Date of issue: **22 September 2014**

Action required: Responses by **15 December 2014**

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

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 consultation seeks views on a proposed 10-year strategic plan for this workforce. The *Draft 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales* 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.

How to respond

Responses to this consultation should be e-mailed/posted to the address below to arrive by **15 December 2014** at the latest.

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 and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request.

The consultation documents can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.wales.gov.uk/consultations

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)

Contact details

For further information:
Early Years Team
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Data protection

How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

1. What is the purpose of this consultation?

Our *Draft 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales* sets out how we aim to support individuals who have a direct responsibility for the education or care of children in the early years (children aged 0 to 7). The plan looks to address the workforce development needs of all types of registered early years, childcare and play provision, in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors.

This consultation seeks views on the proposals suggested in the draft plan and invites comments on their potential impact and benefits.

We have an ambitious, long-term vision for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales. In 10 years' time we want to have a highly skilled 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.

If we secure these aims, it is our belief that we will improve outcomes for young children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We will also raise the status of careers in early years, childcare and play, to a level which better reflects the vital role these practitioners play in supporting children's development. 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.

The draft plan outlines our goals for the early years, childcare and play workforce and sets out how we intend to support this direction of travel. We want to use this consultation to seek views and feedback on our suggested proposals.

2. Where are we now?

We recognise that much positive progress has already been made to build workforce capacity and skills among early years, childcare and play practitioners, and that there is an appetite within the sector to continue professional learning and develop expertise.

However, we also know that those working in early years, childcare and play in Wales hold a variety of qualifications at a range of levels. 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 our youngest children.

3. 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, with poor quality childcare contributing to negative effects in young children.

We regard the workforce as central to improving the quality of early years provision. 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 trained teachers.

Research which supports the need for workforce development of the early years, childcare and play workforce is set out in detail in the 'Introduction' of the draft plan.

4. What are we proposing to do?

The *Draft 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales* sets out proposals under three themes.

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

Proposals include:

- the development of early years learning hubs to support collaboration and workforce development
- a progression route through the sector to Level 6
- improved pre-entry information and a structured induction on entry to the workforce
- changing the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care (NMS) to reflect Level 3 as the required standard for practitioners
- changing recommended adult to child ratios for reception classes in schools
- a 'stepped approach' to up-skilling through qualifications and an ongoing record of continuous professional learning.

Please refer to sections 1 to 3 of the draft plan to understand these proposals in full.

5. How to participate in this consultation

To respond to the proposals and recommendations set out in the *Draft 10-year plan for the early years childcare and play workforce*, please complete and return the consultation response form. Both the draft 10-year plan and the consultation response form can be accessed on the Welsh Government website at www.wales.gov.uk/consultations

Please return completed forms by e-mail to: earlyyears@wales.gsi.gov.uk or by post to: Early Years Team, Department for Education and Skills and Department for Communities and Tackling Poverty, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ. The closing date for responses is **15 December 2014**.