Consultation on Social Care Sector (Staff in Direct Care Settings) Skills Review

Consultation Document

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Yr Adran Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau
Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Title of Document:	Consultation on Social Care Sector (Staff in Direct Care Settings) Skills Review.
Audience:	Chief Executives, Directors of Education, Directors of Social Services of County and County Borough Councils; Association of Directors of Social Services; Welsh Local Government Association; Care Forum Wales; UK Home Care Association; Wales Council for Voluntary Action; Further Education Colleges; Private Training Providers; HE Institutions; Social Care Workforce Development Partnerships; Regional Social Care Partnerships; national and local learning and skills bodies in Wales
Copied to:	Care Council for Wales.
Overview:	This document invites comments on proposals to address skills needs within the Social Care Sector in Wales. It defines skills needs identified within the sector through independent research and makes recommendations on how these needs may be addressed through action planned or already in progress through Welsh Assembly Government and Care Council for Wales programmes and policies. Where needs may not be addressed through existing or planned activity, the consultation invites comments on what additional action might be taken.
Action required:	Responses to this consultation should be submitted using the enclosed response proforma by 3 November 2006 to socialcareskillsreview@wales.gsi.gov.uk or to the address below.
Further information:	Enquiries about this document should be directed to Catherine Jenkins via the contact details below.
Additional copies:	Hard copies can be obtained from: Catherine Jenkins Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Welsh Assembly Government Ty'r Llyn Waterside Business Park Clos Llyn Cwm Swansea Enterprise Park Swansea SA6 8AH Tel: 01792 765891 Fax: 01792 765803 Or email: socialcareskillsreview@wales.gsi.gov.uk Electronic copies can be obtained from www.wales.gov.uk

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Ministerial Foreword

In *The Learning Country 2*: *Delivering the Promise*, we highlighted the considerable progress that has been made in skills development in recent years, with Future Skills Wales findings reporting that:

- Half of all employers now offer off the job training;
- The number of hard to fill vacancies has halved since 1998;
- Wales now has more Modern Apprentices than Scotland and – as a proportion – more than double the number in England;
- Over 100,000 more people are in employment now than was the case in 1999 – and our unemployment rate has fallen to levels at or below the UK average;
- Average earnings have risen 10% in real terms over the last 5 years.

However, significant challenges remain, and in some sectors more than others. The social care sector is one such example, not only because of widespread skills gaps – 41% of all social care services staff hold the recommended qualification for their function – but also because an ageing population makes it a rapidly growing sector in Wales, with a 50% rise in the numbers needing care between 2001 and 2005, and a 56% increase anticipated over the next 15 years in the number of households headed by a person aged over 85.

The demographic changes are accompanied by a rise in expectations of service users and the public. Social care provision has already become more flexible and this will need to continue and expand, be responsive to the needs of individuals and be more people-centred if we are to meet these expectations. This will require greater partnership working between the health, education and social care sectors and with other public services in Wales.

Making the Connections set out our commitment to delivering just this kind of partnership working across the public service in Wales and the recently published review of local service delivery in Wales strongly reinforced the need for such a joined-up approach. We are therefore proud to present this Skills Review as the product of committed and continued partnership working between the Assembly Government's Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Department for Health and Social Services and Department for Public Services and Performance, and the Care Council for Wales in their role as the Welsh arm of the Sector Skills Council for the social care sector. We also welcome its timely publication alongside *Fulfilled Lives Supportive Communities* – a consultation document charting the strategic direction of social services in Wales to 2016.

These are significant documents in what are significant times for the social care sector in Wales. We therefore welcome your views on the issues and proposals set out in this document to help us deliver a workforce capable of delivering the social care services that Wales deserves.

JANE DAVIDSON AM
Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

BRIAN GIBBONS AM
Minister for Health and Social Services

Consultation on Social Care Sector (Staff in Direct Care Settings) Skills Review

Contents Page

Section 1 – Introduction 1

Section 2 – Background 3

Section 3 – Qualifications and Assessment 7

Section 4 – Recruitment and Retention 13

Section 5 – Funding 17

Section 6 – Quality 19

Section 7 – Action 21

Section 8 – Conclusion 29

Section 1 - Introduction

The social care sector is increasingly important to Wales, caring for about 150,000[1] people at any one time and employing around 72,000 people – 4% of the total workforce. Over 80% of the sector's workforce is female and the majority are part-time. The sector faces significant recruitment difficulties, with 23% of employers holding vacancies, 8% of which are hard to fill posts[2]. The most difficult to fill are care worker posts, representing some 60% of hard to fill vacancies. Many employers are now using agencies to recruit on a regular basis, around 19% of whom report recruiting from overseas to meet needs. There are also difficulties in recruiting staff who are able to work through the medium of Welsh.

The numbers of people receiving social care services are growing substantially, with a 50% rise between 2001 and 2005[3]. By 2021 more than 50,000 households in Wales will be headed by a person aged over 85 – a 56% increase on today's level – and 146,000 households will be headed by someone aged over 75. Despite this rising demand for their services, about 41% of all social care staff across the sector hold the recommended qualification for their function.

The very large majority of social care staff are employed in direct care settings working with adults and children to promote their independence and safety and ensure that they are able to live fulfilled lives in their communities. The main focus of this report is that group of staff.

To address Wales' social care skills needs and lay the foundation for a Sector Skills Agreement[4] with its partners and stakeholders, the Care Council for Wales and ELWa[5] agreed that the sector should be the subject of an in-depth sector assessment – a *Skills Review*.

The Review is aimed at improving skills in the sector by widening learning opportunities, raising the quality of learning provided and improving learner achievement. This will also support the forthcoming Sector Skills Agreement process commencing in the social care, children and young people's sector.

A key element in achieving this will be ensuring that the learning on offer meets the needs both of employers, in providing them with an appropriately skilled and well-motivated workforce, and learners, in enabling them to develop themselves and progress within the sector.

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[1] Chief Inspector's Report 2004-05 Published SSIW 2006

[2] Future Skills Wales 2005 – Skills for Care and Development (Draft January 2006, due for publication August 2006)

[3] Figures from Chief Inspector Reports 2002-03 and 2004-05

[4] Sector Skills Agreements are designed to deliver action to meet priority skills needs that will drive improved business performance. They provide a means whereby employers and employees in each sector can identify skills and productivity needs, the action they will take to meet those needs, and how they will collaborate with providers of education and training so that skills demand can directly shape the nature of supply.

[5] ELWa, at that time, was the Assembly Sponsored Public Body responsible for planning, funding and promoting post-16 education and training. On 1st April 2006, ELWa was merged with the Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Training and Education, along with ACCAC, the Wales Youth Agency and Dysg, to form the new Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.

In order to establish a full understanding of the sector's skills needs ELWa, in conjunction with the Future Skills Wales Partnership and the Care Council for Wales, commissioned several pieces of research (which can be accessed via www.wales.gov.uk) including learner case study research[6] by Beaufort Research/Golley Slater aimed at exploring the motivations and experiences of current and potential social care sector employees. A final report was compiled independently by Miller Research (UK) Ltd based on an audit of supply research and a wide range of interviews and workshops with employers, providers and other stakeholders.

This research has enabled the Welsh Assembly Government to identify a number of key issues for the sector in relation to skills and workforce development. A wide range of policies and programmes have already been put in place by the Welsh Assembly Government through the Social Services Inspectorate for Wales and by the Care Council for Wales aimed at addressing many of these issues (more detail on which can be found on the Care Council for Wales website www.ccwales.org.uk). In addition, the Welsh Assembly Government is publishing for consultation a 10-year strategic policy document for social services in Wales, which will map out the future direction of the sector and will be underpinned by a workforce development programme.

The purpose of this consultation therefore, is to engage with the sector and interested parties to further explore the issues, the extent to which they might be addressed by existing and/or future Welsh Assembly Government and Care Council for Wales policies and programmes and, where necessary, to identify what additional action might be needed. The Assembly Government will work with the Care Council for Wales to develop these proposals for future action through the Sector Skills Agreement process.

[6] ELWa/Care Council for Wales Social Care Sector Case Studies Research Final Report May – August 2005. Cardiff: Beaufort Research / Golley Slater (2005).

Section 2 - Background

The Sector

Key changes have occurred within the social care sector over recent years:

- the **Care Council for Wales** was set up to regulate the sector's workforce by creating a register of social care staff to improve public protection, ascertaining skills needs and promoting training. In February 2005, Skills for Care and Development was licensed as the Sector Skills Council for Social Care, Children and Young People. Care Council for Wales deliver this agenda within Wales, as one of 5 partners across the UK - Skills for Care, Children's Workforce Development Council, Northern Ireland Social Care Council and Scottish Social Services Council;

- **Social Care Workforce Development Partnerships** (SCWDPs) were created, bringing together local authorities, education, health, and social care providers to develop phased five-year human resource plans covering the whole sector in their areas;

- **National Minimum Standards** (NMS) were introduced for regulated care settings by the Welsh Assembly Government, setting workforce standards for these settings. This includes the requirement for a proportion of the workforce to hold relevant qualifications;

- **Regional Social Care Partnerships** were created, comprising employers, learning commissioners and providers and other stakeholders. Their priorities include linking workforce information to service need and working with key stakeholders to improve staff recruitment and retention. Over 1500 organisations are involved in the partnerships;

- the **Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales** (CSIW) was established as the regulator of social care, early years and private and voluntary health care in Wales;

- shared **National Occupational Standards and NVQ qualifications** were developed for both health and social care in 2004-05, recognising the common areas of activity between the two sectors.

Skills and Learning Supply

There are four main funding routes for social care skills development:

- privately commissioned and funded learning through employers' own resources;

- Welsh Assembly Government (formerly ELWa) funding for Further Education and Work-Based Learning;

- SCWDP funding from the Welsh Assembly Government through Social Services Inspectorate for Wales, distributed through local authority social services departments; and

- European Social Fund projects.

In addition there are charitable and other voluntary sources.

The Assembly Government funds Further Education, School sixth form activities and Work-Based Learning, through approved providers and sub-contractors.

Within the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are delivered, along with key skills and technical certificates which provide underpinning knowledge for the NVQ. Statistics quoted from the Care Sector NVQ take-up survey (2003)[7] suggest that the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) funds approximately 38% of the sector NVQ training needs.

Records for the academic year 2004-05[8] show a total of 14,816 learners pursuing 17,237 learning aims[9] across Further Education and Work-Based Learning in health and social care. This equates to 5% of all funded learners. 52 training providers were listed and Further Education accounted for 86% of all learners during the year.

Of the total of 6,237 work-based learners, 44% were accessing training through a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship (FMA), 43% through MAs (in health and social care) and 13% through the Modern Skills Diploma for Adults (MSDA). The shared framework with the health sector means it has not proved possible to disaggregate the figures for the social care sector alone.

Within Further Education, most provision for the sector is NVQ-focused. However, colleges also provide a wide range of supporting and pre-entry qualification aims such as Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs) and BTEC National Diplomas. These qualifications are not currently included in the Care Council for Wales qualification framework.

Most common among learning aims were level 2 and 3 NVQs, followed by the Registered Managers' Award and the NVQ 2 in Health and Social Care. This position largely reflects National Minimum Standards qualification requirements for regulated settings.

The SCWDP grant is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and managed by the Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW). In 2006-07 it is worth £8.5 million. The grant is designed to improve the quality of social care services in Wales and is administered by local authority social services, who are free to use it flexibly to increase the number of social care staff with the required qualifications, skills and knowledge across all provided and commissioned services (including the voluntary and independent sectors). Of the 11,621 learning activities supported by the SCWDP

[7] Local Government Employers Organisation Care Sector NVQ Take Up Survey
[8] Lifelong Learning Wales Record – the statutory return from FE and WBL providers
[9] Excludes Key Skills

grant across Wales, the most popular was Moving and Handling Passport training (40%), followed by Emergency Aid and Food Hygiene, all of which are essential underpinning knowledge for social care staff engaged in direct care, are reflected in the National Minimum Standards and contribute to the achievement of NVQs. In terms of NVQ provision, Health and Social Care (or the predecessor NVQ in Care) at level 2 were the most popular[10].

A number of successful European Social Fund bids for funding were identified through the research but details of learner outcomes are not yet available.

There is extensive support for care sector learning from voluntary organisations, but much is non-accredited or consists of short courses, and therefore proved very difficult to quantify within the research.

Much care sector learning is funded by employers. Many larger ones establish their own training functions, in some cases serving external clients also.

There has been concern about the quality of social care learning provision at all levels. However, most recent Estyn inspections of learning areas covering social care show a relatively even spread across grades 2, 3 and 4.[11]

The following sections explore the main skills and learning issues for the sector, illustrated by specific comments from the case study research[12], and the extent to which they might be addressed by existing and/or future Welsh Assembly Government and Care Council for Wales programmes and policies.

[10] Miller Research (UK) Ltd. *Social Care Audit of Learning Supply*, ELWa/Care Council for Wales (2005).
[11] Estyn Grades: Grade 1 – good with outstanding features; Grade 2 – good features and no important shortcomings; Grade 3 – good features outweigh shortcomings; Grade 4 – some good features, but shortcomings in important areas; Grade 5 – many important shortcomings.
[12] ELWa/Care Council for Wales Social Care Sector Case Studies Research Final Report May – August 2005. Cardiff: Beaufort Research / Golley Slater (2005).

Section 3 - Qualifications and Assessment

There are a number of key issues related to the qualifications currently available in the field of social care and their suitability for entry to and progression within the sector. This includes concerns regarding consistency of assessment and compatibility with the kind of employment / work placement opportunities available within the sector.

The existence of National Minimum Standards (NMS) and training targets for the sector, which include some requirements for specific qualifications for certain posts, is an additional factor perceived to be influencing, and at times conflicting with, more flexible qualification attainment within the sector.The existing skills gaps within the sector and the low levels of qualified staff have required employers to focus funding on achieving these basic qualifications for their staff. Equal focus needs to be given to the development of a lifelong learning culture and continuous professional development for all staff.

Whilst compliance with standards set in the National Minimum Standards is essential for the development of a more skilled and qualified workforce, there is a need to ensure that the sector now encourages continuous upskilling and progression. This is necessary in order to attract and retain people within the sector (as will be highlighted in section 4) and in order to develop the high-quality, flexible and responsive social care services that Wales will need in the future.

A robust and flexible **qualifications framework** is vital to achieving this.

The Care Council for Wales has developed and implemented a Qualifications Framework[13] setting out the required and/or recommended qualifications for social care posts in various settings. The framework is linked to NMS and as such lists qualifications that will best meet these requirements, as well as Vocationally Related Qualifications (which support the attainment of NVQs) and predecessor qualifications.

There are clear examples of how the Framework is being applied. However, awareness of the Framework is low amongst independent sector employers and there is a perception amongst stakeholders that managers within the sector need to be more aware of the Framework.

Perhaps the biggest issue relating to the Qualifications Framework within the sector is the lack of clear career progression routes. This applies both to routes into, and within, the sector.

For those who wish to enter the sector between the ages of 16 and 18 there are particular issues in terms of duties permissible for young people in care settings, which exclude personal care and manual handling. For others undertaking qualifications within Further Education with the aim of entering the social care sector directly or through Higher Education, there are also age-related barriers and issues

[13] The Qualification Framework for the Social Care Sector in Wales. Cardiff: Care Council for Wales (2003).

in the suitability and currency of qualifications gained, examples including BTEC Diplomas and Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs).

> ***Case study comments:***
>
> *"I'd have had to wait a year or two before starting…you get used to your money and you think 'I'm not going back'" (GNVQ completer who completed the course at 17 but was prevented from taking up employment in the sector until the age of 18)*
> *"You don't know what you can do with it [GNVQ qualification]. You need someone to tell you, 'With this qualification you can do this" (GNVQ lapser)*

The evidence suggests that age is a real barrier for young people wanting to obtain **work experience** in the sector. The impact of this appears to be quite significant for those who fail to complete Further Education-based social care courses, and draws the strong suggestion both from those who completed and those who lapsed that there should be more work-placed elements to Further Education-based social care courses.

> ***Case study comments:***
>
> *"More practical work would make it more interesting and enjoyable" (BTEC lapser)*
> *"I think they could do more [longer] work placements because it was for one day a week for 8 weeks and it doesn't really give you much" (AVCE completer)*
> *"You didn't really get out there enough to be able to develop skills" (AVCE completer)*
> *"Four hour lessons four days a week when we'd write notes and work on assignments, then we had the odd day here and there thrown in every term for practical work" (GNVQ completer)*

The **design of NVQs** presents difficulties for the sector in relation to career progression, as an individual is limited to the level of NVQ they are able to obtain based on their current functions and responsibilities within the workplace. For example, in order to acquire a Level 3 qualification in Care it is necessary to have a certain degree of responsibility within a caring environment. At Level 4, individuals must occupy a management role within the workplace. This presents challenges in smaller employers where opportunities to 'act up' are inevitably limited in comparison with larger employers. It is also likely to be a major factor influencing the amount of time off allowed for training, which the research highlights as a significant issue.

> ***Case study comments:***
>
> *"The reality of working in a Social Care environment is that you're always short-staffed" (NVQ4 learner)*
> *"I have to say, [my employer] didn't promote it, didn't encourage it, nor give me any information on NVQ4 at all…and they never said 'You're allowed to take 1 day off a week to study" (NVQ4 learner)*

This presents challenges also in respect of **workplace assessment**, with shortages of assessors leading to limited opportunity to carry out assessments and subsequent delays in achieving awards, as well as difficulties in maintaining standards and consistency in assessment. Such issues may well be a contributory factor in the low qualification completion rates reported by the sector. The shortage of assessors often means that support is limited, leading to difficulties for some learners.

> ***Case study comments:***
>
> *"Until I had the assessor I have now it was really poor, but this assessor is really great" (NVQ4 learner)*
> *"We'd hand in work and you'd ask 'Was it ok, do I need to add more?' and they'd say 'Don't worry, that's ok', then 3 or 4 months later you got them back and it was 'Oh, add some more in there' or 'Do this, that and the other'. Well, during that 3 months we could have been working on them!" (NVQ4 learner)*
> *"Just break it up, make people realise what they're actually asking for is quite simple" (NVQ4 learner)*
> *"When they break it down it's so simple, so why can't they ask it in that way in the beginning?" (NVQ4 learner)*
> *"If the support isn't there is can be difficult, as I found with my Level 3" (NVQ2 completer)*

It is likely too that there is a **shortage of Welsh-medium assessors** and assessment opportunities within the sector, though the research does not provide conclusive evidence. It identifies that the proportion of learners accessing provision through the medium of Welsh is 5.1%, significantly higher than the all sector average of 3.5%. Within this figure there is a large disparity between Work-Based Learning where only 0.5% accessed Welsh-medium learning against an all-sector average of 2.2%, as opposed to the Further Education sector, where a total of 9% of learners access Welsh-medium provision against an all-sector average of 3.9%.

The evidence does, however, suggest that where assessment is available through the medium of Welsh there are often issues due to insufficient resource material in Welsh or difficulties in translating questions into Welsh.

> ***Case study comments:***
>
> *"I found it easier to write in English because all the books were in English" (NVQ2 completer and fluent Welsh speaker)*
> *"I did mine in Welsh…the questions were worded quite difficultly so I had to keep going back to the English books – they could have simplified it. All the books were in English as well" (NVQ2 completer and fluent Welsh speaker)*

Figures from Future Skills Wales research in 2005[14] suggested that only 6% of the surveyed health and social care employers identified a need for Welsh language skills amongst employees in their business. This is surprising when taking into

[14] Future Skills Wales Survey – Welsh Language Skills in Seven Sectors March 2005

account the motivating factors for providing a bilingual service identified in that report, which would imply that social care would need a high level of Welsh language provision:

- the number of customers/clients who were Welsh speaking;
- provision of good customer service;
- working in a Welsh speaking area.

However, findings from Future Skills Wales research in 2003[15] identified that 33% of social care employers reported the need for intermediate and above Welsh language skills, and 44% anticipated that this level of skills would be required by 2006.

Both pieces of research were based on quite a small sample of employers and the findings clearly indicate a need for further clarity on Welsh language needs within the sector.

This emphasis on NVQs also appears to influence attitudes within the sector to the use of **Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) and Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (FMAs)** as the main programme of delivery for Work-Based Learning.

Both FMAs and MAs are based on frameworks devised by the relevant Sector Skills Councils, and include a combination of paid employment (or a placement plus training allowance on the FMA), an NVQ, a Technical Certificate accrediting underpinning knowledge and Key Skills certification.

Low completion rates have long been identified as an issue across FMA and MA programmes. ELWa's Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan[16] stated that in 2004-05, 29% of learners on the FMA and 21% of learners on the MA completed their full framework. This compares with rates in England of 35% and 33% for the equivalent programmes, and in Scotland the rate of those completing an MA was 54% in 2003-04.

There are slight differences in the design of the equivalent programmes in England and Scotland which may, at least in part, account for the higher completion rates. One such example is that the technical certificate is non-mandatory in Scotland. The next phase of the Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan is exploring the impact of these differences in more detail and will therefore generate more detailed proposals on a pan-sector basis that may of course benefit the social care sector.

Employers in the social care sector have expressed particular concerns about the requirements to complete the Technical Certificate and Key Skills elements, which would seem to be, at least in part, due to the NMS requirements to achieve only the NVQ. Indeed, the evidence suggests that many employers are using the FMA/MA route to access funding simply for the NVQ with no intention of the learner pursuing the additional elements.

[15] Future Skills Wales Generic Skills Survey 2003 – Skills for Care
[16] Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan. ELWa (2006).

Whilst it is acknowledged that there may be difficulties and concerns with the current model, there is a need to understand in more depth these difficulties and concerns regarding the current framework in order to develop longer-term solutions.

For example, it is not clear from the research whether these concerns are due to: the perception that these elements are simply not necessary or of added value; the current delivery mechanisms for these learning elements not being conducive to the sector; or whether the framework as it stands (and thereby these specific elements also) is simply not fit-for-purpose. Further investigation is therefore necessary to identify the underlying reasons behind employer attitudes to the framework and the questions below, in particular question 3, are intended to assist in exploring these issues further.

Key Questions

1. Has the research captured the key issues relating to qualifications and assessment within the social care sector and, if not, what additional issues need to be considered?

2. To what extent do the current sector qualifications address the sector's needs in relation to entry into the sector, upskilling the current workforce and progression within the sector?

3. Is the current FMA/MA Framework addressing the sector's needs in relation to Work-Based Learning and to what extent, if any, is the *framework* (either in content, overall design or method of delivery) responsible for low completion rates within the sector?

4. What are the sector's needs in relation to providing services through the medium of Welsh and does this present a need to: (a) raise levels of Welsh language skills within the workforce; and (b) increase Welsh-medium provision?

Section 4 - Recruitment and Retention

The research highlights significant problems for the social care sector in relation to recruitment and retention.The Association of Directors of Social Services Report "Social Work in Wales: A Profession to Value" (August 2005) provided important information about the social work workforce in Wales which is being reflected in local and national strategies. Not as much is known about the direct care workforce although Local Government Employers Organisation (LGEO) Survey in 2004[17] reported that 50% of all responding Welsh Local Authorities had experienced difficulty in recruiting care assistants and 83% experienced difficulty in retaining them.

However, what is not clear at this stage is whether the difficulties in retaining social care staff are *employer* difficulties or *sector* difficulties. The ADSS report highlighted that social workers were not leaving the sector but taking up similar jobs with other employers. Solutions to retention problems need to address the real issues and that is why collaboration across service providers remains of paramount importance. The sector has suffered from wide-ranging negative perceptions hindering recruitment, some of which are related to issues outlined in the previous section on qualifications and assessment and how these impact on opportunities for career progression, and others related to a lack of quality information on opportunities within the sector.

Similarly, retention issues can also be related back strongly to issues around qualifications and assessment, as well as themselves creating negative perceptions for those considering recruitment to the sector.

The 2005 Future Skills Wales Employer Survey[18] found that 23% of care sector employers held vacancies and 8% of those were hard to fill vacancies. Labour turnover and leakage to other sectors is high, especially amongst the Level 2 workforce. The main causes given for hard to fill posts were:

- not enough people interested in the job (32% against an all-sector average of 25%);
- location of the organisation and poor transport (25% against an all-sector average of 12%);
- low wages on offer (20% against an all-sector average of 10%).

The research identifies several causes for **negative perceptions of the sector.** These included pay rates, unsocial hours, the nature of duties involved, negative press and publicity surrounding the sector, lack of career structure and progression opportunities. The latter suggests that addressing the issues outlined in the previous section is likely to have a positive impact on recruitment to the sector.

> ***Case study comments:***
>
> *"You have to really want to do it though. You see people and they say 'I pity you!'" (AVCE student who wants to be a Social Worker)*
> *"It's a good career but not credited enough. A lot of people rely on us and others don't realise that" (NVQ2 learner)*

[17] Recruitment and Retention Survey 2004 Local Government Employers Organisation
[18] Future Skills Wales 2005 – Skills for Care and Development (Draft January 2006, due for publication August 2006)

Another key issue relates to the information that individuals receive about the sector, particularly at the 14 to 19 age range. **Careers information and advice** is perceived by stakeholders to be of poor quality, with young people being steered towards social care despite expressing preferences for other areas or, conversely, not being given the full range of information to help them in deciding to pursue social care as a career option. There is also a perception of social care as a 'last resort' for learners who are deemed unsuitable to pursue other routes. It is worth noting, however, that the quality of careers information and advice is certainly not helped by the current lack of clear career progression routes within the sector.

Case study comments:

"The main thing is lack of knowledge about it [Social Care] really" (AVCE completer)
"I think 'Social Care' needs to be explained a bit more. Like we said, you've got the middle bits missing [the emphasis in Social Care is old people or young children – you don't really know about the middle age group]." AVCE completer
"It wasn't what I wanted to do, I wanted more childcare. I was told it was the right route to go by someone at the Careers Centre" (AVCE lapser)
"I wanted to be a teacher and was advised this would be the best course to do" (GNVQ lapser)
"I wanted to do childcare, but when I went on the Open Day [the College Advisor] said I'd be better off doing Health and Social Care in case I changed my mind" (GNVQ completer)
"It was the only course willing to take me" (GNVQ lapser)

Work experience is another area that is currently not being maximised to full effect to help young people acquire more positive perceptions of the sector. Although we know that a number of projects have been put in place to tackle this issue across Wales there remain issues for the sector associated with difficulties in securing work experience placements and confusion about the activities in which young people are permitted to participate. This often means that young people do not have the opportunity to form their own perceptions on working in the sector and are drawn instead to other career routes. We need to learn from projects that have been undertaken already and good practice that has developed, as well as from the experience of matching social work students to suitable practice opportunities through partnership working with Higher Education Institutions.

Case study comments:

"I went to work experience in a residential home and the only thing I could do was feed them – that was about it" (BTEC lapser)
"I went to a nursing home which was ok. I did little bits but not as much as I would have liked to really – I wasn't allowed because of my age" (AVCE completer)
"[The course was] boring…too much writing and listening all the time. There was loads of writing – we didn't do any placements" (GNVQ lapser)

Barriers associated with the **lack of portability of qualifications** mentioned in the previous section may also be a significant barrier to entering the sector, particularly in current labour market conditions where competition from other sectors is heightened. This is likely to have implications for other potential sources of staff for the sector which were identified in the research, for example labour market returners and those who have taken early retirement. Although these groups are valued highly by employers within the sector because of perceived tendencies that they are more loyal, more attuned to the needs of service users and less likely to be deterred by unsocial hours or part-time work, they are also perceived to be less inclined to undertake training, particularly where they already believe themselves to be suitably qualified.

Overseas workers are another potential source of staff for the sector, many of whom have existing qualifications but again issues regarding portability are prevalent resulting in difficulties in assessing equivalence of qualifications for specific posts. There are also general language and communications problems associated with the use of overseas workers.

Lack of career progression opportunities is again a key factor in **retention difficulties** for employers within the sector, frequently because of limited opportunities within smaller employers, both in terms of promotion and completion of qualifications. The quality of learning provision also appears to be an important factor (and will be outlined in more detail in section 6).

The **make-up of the workforce** also appears to present an issue. The research quotes a study in England[19] which demonstrates the kind of barriers to learning that are accompanied with a high percentage of female and older workers. Older workers were more likely to have lower levels of basic skills and to lack confidence in their ability to achieve qualifications, whereas women often found it difficult to fit learning around caring responsibilities and shift patterns.

Case study comments:

"We're salaried and do a lot of involuntary overtime so when you need to go home and tend to the children you've got no time to do your work. Often days off are taken up with catching up with your NVQ work" (NVQ4 learner)
"I just didn't think I could cope, with the house [recently bought and needing renovating], the children and working" (NVQ2 learner)
"I just didn't think I was capable of doing it. Work has never bothered me, but getting things onto paper has always bothered me. I didn't like school" (NVQ2 learner)
"I haven't done anything like this for ages, [I thought] how am I going to get back into the swing of learning?" (NVQ4 learner)

[19] Balloch S, Banks L and Hill M (2004) 'Securing Quality in the Mixed Economy of Care: Difficulties in Regulating Training'. *Social Policy and Society*, 3, 4, 365-373

The research also drew views from employers and employees that staff who had been in post for some time are particularly reluctant to engage in training. However, other employers agreed that this group of learners were often highly motivated when they began learning and wanted to continue after their NVQ was completed.

> ***Case study comments:***
>
> *"Having a piece of paper isn't going to make me a better carer. I've been doing this job for 9 years and if I don't know what I'm doing now, well!" (NVQ2 learner)*
> *"I was trained and qualified at one time, but that's all obliterated and I'm required to do an NVQ" (NVQ4 learner)*

So it is clear to see how, with the focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable people by raising the skills and qualifications of the workforce, those who are most opposed to training may well end up opting to leave the sector for employment elsewhere.

Key Questions

1. Has the research captured the key reasons for low recruitment and retention levels within the social care sector and, if not, what additional reasons need to be considered?

2. What evidence is there to support perceptions of poor quality careers information and advice relating to the sector and to what extent does the lack of clear progression routes within the sector affect the quality of careers information that can be provided?

3. What are the main difficulties in providing work experience within the sector and how effectively will wider choice of work experience opportunities help to address negative perceptions of the sector amongst young people?

4. How effectively could the partnership approach to social work degree training be effectively applied to those training in social care?

5. To what extent does the lack of portability of qualifications present a barrier to:

    - entering the sector;
    - progressing within the sector;
    - meeting NMS training target requirements?

6. What are the basic literacy and numeracy skills needs within the sector and to what extent does this present a barrier to meeting NMS training target requirements and to retaining staff within the workforce?

Section 5 - Funding

The research identifies a **lack of clarity and transparency** in funding mechanisms. Public funding mechanisms are not clearly understood by the sector and the competitive market creates cost differentials, leading to confusion amongst employers.

This difficulty reported by employers in accessing public funds appears to cause a significant number to make their own training arrangements, which many find more cost effective but which may present quality assurance issues given that some lie outside of Estyn's inspection framework.

The biggest issue in relation to funding, however, centres on the **funding of MA and FMA frameworks** for the reasons already outlined in section 3 as care providers have focused on the qualifications element of the NMS. It is anticipated that the feedback to this consultation will assist in identifying the underlying reasons behind the difficulties and concerns expressed regarding full framework completion, which will enable the development of both short and long term solutions.

There are also perceptions that current funding mechanisms are enabling providers to fund and **deliver qualifications that are insufficient for entry into the sector.** Further clarity is therefore needed on the scale of this issue and the underlying reasons, in particular the role of the qualifications framework.

The research also drew concerns regarding the **subject area weighting** for funding of social care provision. In particular, whether or not the current weighting is an accurate reflection of demands in relation to the volume of assessment (and out of hours assessment) needed in the workplace within the sector. It should be noted, however, that consultation[20] was undertaken in the summer of 2005 on the Subject Area Weightings to be used under the National Planning and Funding System, enabling providers of post-16 learning to feedback on final refinements to the NPFS model before full implementation.

Key Questions

1. What are the main difficulties experienced in accessing public funds for learning provision within the sector?

2. What evidence is there to support perceptions that current funding mechanisms are enabling learning providers to fund and deliver qualifications that are insufficient for entry into the sector?

[20] Consultation on Subject Area Weights and Learner Cap Extension within the National Planning and Funding System (NPFS). ELWa (2005)

Section 6 - Quality

The research identifies concerns about the quality of social care learning provision at all levels. However, Estyn's Annual Report for 2004-05[21] shows that both of the two Further Education institutions inspected in the Caring and Health programme area during the year were awarded a grade 2, and of the six Work-Based Learning providers inspected in the Health, Public Services and Care learning area, one was awarded a grade 2, three were awarded a grade 3 and two were awarded a grade 4[22].

Estyn findings[23] report that most Further Education institutions offer a range of courses and different modes of study to suit full-time and part-time social care students. A growing number of institutions offer work-based training at levels 2 and 3, and increasingly at level 4. However, **provision of Welsh-medium courses** is lacking, and institutions do not adequately promote a work-based route of study to students, particularly when individuals express interest in the practical side of care.

In Work-Based Learning, care is identified as one of the learning areas with lower standards than other areas. Estyn's 2004-05 Annual Report states "This is a concern as many areas of Wales have difficulties in providing services for the health and care of young people, elderly people and vulnerable members of their communities."

In addition, and as referred to in section 5, learning provision within the social care sector is often being delivered in areas which fall outside of Estyn's inspection remit. This provision is delivered mainly by employers on an in-house basis (though often made available externally).

Case studies describe **poor standards of teaching and commitment** to social care studies in learning institutions. This appears to reinforce employer perceptions that Care is given low priority, is frequently delivered by staff with little current sector knowledge and offered to learners deemed unsuitable for more competitive subjects.

> ***Case study comments:***
>
> *"It wasn't the course, it was the lecturers…They were unenthusiastic. It was like they'd been teaching for 20 years and couldn't be bothered" (AVCE lapser)*
> *"My problem's not with the course, it's with the way it's been taught" (AVCE student)*
> *"Some have been teaching for so long…it's changed since they were practising and they're unwilling to listen to anyone else" (Degree/Diploma student)*
> *"They should go out and do some practice and see what it's like in the real world" (Degree/Diploma student)*

[21] Estyn: The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2004-05. 2006.
[22] Estyn Grades: Grade 1 – good with outstanding features; Grade 2 – good features and no important shortcomings; Grade 3 – good features outweigh shortcomings; Grade 4 – some good features, but shortcomings in important areas; Grade 5 – many important shortcomings
[23] Estyn: *Quality and Standards in Post-16 Education and Training in Wales: A Review of Further Education Inspection Cycle (1997-2002).* 2003

Key Questions

1. What evidence is there to support concerns raised regarding the quality of learning provision in social care?

Section 7 – Action

Whilst it is recognised that many of the sector's skills issues will take time to address, and will be considered as part of the sector's longer-term strategy for social services to 2016, some issues may be addressed through more short-term solutions.In particular, a number of existing or planned Welsh Assembly Government programmes and policies may provide such solutions. Equally the Care Council for Wales are already taking action to address many of the issues identified.

This section will therefore outline the range of action already underway and its potential impact on skills issues within the social care sector. It is recognised, however, that these measures may not meet all the needs identified. The questions at the end of this section are therefore intended to ascertain what additional action might be necessary.

Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan

The Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan was developed by ELWa, assisted by a sounding board of experts from partner and stakeholder groups. It provides a real agenda for reform and proposes 12 recommendations aimed at improving the quality, relevance and success of work-based programmes. The full Plan is available on the Welsh Assembly Government website at **www.wales.gov.uk** but the following recommendations are of particular relevance and therefore worth mentioning in the context of this document.

Recommendation 2 is to embed the **Apprenticeship Blueprint**[24], which will ensure that there is a clear framework to define the parameters and essential content of FMAs and MAs and which will be widely accepted by all involved in the delivery of the programmes. It will reaffirm the role of Sector Skills Councils and their employers in determining the content of FMAs and MAs within their sector, which will be vital in ensuring that the frameworks are considered fit-for-purpose.

Recommendation 3 proposes **exploring innovative approaches to increase employer engagement** in work-based learning, and will consider factors such as recognition of relevant learning outside the FMA/MA framework and new models for 'Group Training' and 'Shared Apprenticeships'. These developments could be of particular value to the social care sector in providing recognition, for example, of large employers' own on-the-job training as a substitute for elements of the FMA/MA framework. Equally, development of a Shared Apprenticeship model could prove beneficial to small employers struggling to provide the full range of evidence required for learners to complete full frameworks and the sector could be well-placed to trial such a model.

[24] MAAC (2001) 'Modern Apprenticeships: the way to work'. Report of the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee ('The Cassels Report'). Nottingham: DfES (2001)

Recommendation 4 is investigating options for **improving the delivery chain** and as such will assess the potential value of developing specialist or lead provision for certain sectors or certain learning themes, for example Welsh-medium vocational learning. Indeed the research suggests that this kind of approach may be beneficial for the social care sector through the **creation of local learning hubs**, which would build on and consolidate the existing structures within social care such as SCWDPs and Regional Social Care Partnerships to more effectively plan and deliver learning across the sector.

Recommendation 5 will consider **more flexible use of the WBL budget** within the Workforce Development Programme to deliver part-subsidised, flexible training for adults in employment, aimed at addressing cross-sector issues about a lack of flexibility regarding full framework delivery. Specifically, the Plan recommends a flexible use of funds to provide training up to level 3 within the FMA/MA framework but without the requirement for full framework delivery. Again, the research puts forward a very similar proposal for the social care sector. Caution will need to be exercised, however, to avoid the potential for costs associated with 'deadweight' (training that would have occurred anyway) and 'displacement' (replacing other training) as was found in the evaluation of the Learning Worker Pilot.[25] There would, therefore, be a need to ensure the provision of appropriate employer incentives to continue to pursue full frameworks.

Recommendation 6 is to develop a probationary period with **sector-specific, pre-entry assessment and testing**. This recommendation is in direct response to research showing that key causes of low completion rates have been identified as early drop-out and wrong choice of occupation and/or employer.

Recommendation 8 proposes **more targeted information and marketing to individuals and employers** and in particular points to issues relating to lack of awareness of Work-Based Learning in the health and social care sector. This recommendation also highlights the importance of the *timing* of information given to individuals when deciding their choice of learning route and suggests that information should be made available as part of a long-term, continuous discussion process. The Plan cross-references here with the work on 14 to 19 Learning Pathways which will ensure that young people receive long-term support and guidance from a skilled Learning Coach.

Recommendation 9 is aimed at **raising referral agencies' awareness of how to access Work-Based Learning routes**. In particular, to enable individuals to make a closer link between the learning they are being advised to undertake and an ultimate employment aim. As this document highlights, case studies within the social care sector produced strong evidence to suggest that this is currently not the case for some individuals pursuing social care courses.

Recommendation 11 will involve work with the Higher Education sector to create **new progression routes into Higher Education**, in particular for those sectors less likely to currently demonstrate clear progression routes. Again, case studies within the social care sector appear to demonstrate a clear need for such action within the

[25] Arad Consulting (2005) 'Learning Worker Pilot project evaluation: Final Report'. ELWa/WAG .

sector, reinforcing the view that the qualifications provided were insufficient in qualifying for progression to Higher Education. Indeed, of the case studies of those currently pursuing degree and diploma courses in Social Work, by far the majority had already worked in social care. Whilst this is itself encouraging as a route into Higher Education, there must be some concern at the low proportion entering via a demonstrable learning pathway.

14 to 19 Learning Pathways

The 14 to 19 Learning Pathways programme aims to **transform the education and training opportunities available to young people** through engaging and motivating young people in their learning. This will be founded on enhanced choice and flexibility, continuous and intensive personal support and increased opportunities for quality work-focused education. Crucially for the social care sector, it will drive forward the development of clearly defined progression routes.

The recently published 14-19 Action Plan[26] will focus the next phase of work on 14-19 Learning Pathways and sets out a number of major actions to take place between 2006 and 2010. In particular, a number of actions are focused on the development of existing vocational qualifications for 14-16 and 16-19 year olds in order to provide a strong vocational qualifications element within Learning Pathways. This will involve input to the UK-wide Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme set up to ensure that the **vocational qualifications recognised by the relevant statutory frameworks reflect the needs of employers and learners.**

The Plan also contains a number of actions aimed at ensuring that **young people are given sufficient information to make informed choices** about their preferred career route and learning pathway. There will be action to overcome barriers within certain sectors experiencing particular inequalities in race, gender or disability.

Action is also planned to **extend and enhance the range of work-focused experience** available to 14 to 19 year olds. It is clear that this could be of huge benefit in social care by increasing opportunities for young people to gain a better first-hand perspective of the sector. More specifically, work is underway to develop guidance on the various legislative requirements on areas including health and safety, insurance and child protection, which should help in providing greater clarity on work placements in the sector.

In addition, there will be specific action **to enhance images of the workplace** for young people. This will involve joint working between the Assembly Government's Vocational Skills Champion, Sector Skills Councils, Careers Wales and employers. Case studies highlighted some key positive messages that could help in achieving this for the social care sector.

[26] Learning Pathways 14-19 Guidance II. Welsh Assembly Government (2006) available on www.wales.gov.uk

Case study comments:

"It's nice to work with people" (GNVQ completer)
"I don't think people know what they can do – it's such a varied field. Being out there in the community, it's a tough job, but satisfying, and people aren't aware of that" (NVQ2 completer)
"If you care, you'll stay in the Care profession" (NVQ4 learner)
"It used to be, if you didn't have any qualifications, you'd get into the Care profession. It was easy and you could literally knock a door and they'd take you in. But, with the NVQ, confidence has been boosted, [workers] feel more confident" (NVQ4 learner)

Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales

The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales will bring together all accredited learning in Wales, including mainstream qualifications, into a single system which will embrace all types and all styles of learning, and all qualifications. It will enable learners to receive **credit for bite-sized episodes of learning** towards accreditation for whole qualifications. The framework has the potential to be of real benefit to the social care sector in providing much greater flexibility in the approach to learning and in tackling issues surrounding portability of qualifications which is so problematic for the sector at present.

Care Council for Wales Qualifications Framework

Section 3 has already referred to the existence of a Qualifications Framework for the sector. Work is already underway within Care Council for Wales to revise the framework, in particular to create a more unified scheme reflecting common qualifications for Health and Social Care in response to suggestions from the sector.

Climbing Frame of Achievement

Care Council for Wales are also developing the "climbing frame of achievement" approach, which aims to demonstrate **a combination of horizontal and vertical progression routes** available to sector staff, and alongside the qualification framework will enable better collaborative planning of learning amongst providers.

Sector Qualifications Strategies

Work is also underway across the UK, supported by all UK curriculum and assessment bodies, who are working with Sector Skills Councils to develop Sector Qualifications Strategies for each sector. These strategies will obviously need to **build on and take account of developments already underway within sectors to develop qualifications frameworks**. The purpose of the strategies is to:

- identify drivers for sector development in relation to qualifications and other learning provision;
- evaluate how well existing qualifications and other learning provision meets current and future sector needs; and

- make proposals for any changes required, including a plan for development and implementation.

Bilingual / Welsh-medium Learning Developments

A substantial amount of work is being progressed within the Welsh Assembly Government aimed at improving the availability and quality of Welsh-medium learning provision. The **Sabbaticals Scheme** was introduced in January 2006 aiming to give post-16 lecturers and trainers the opportunity to:

- improve their Welsh language skills;
- acquire knowledge of terminology specific to their subject area and programme; and
- gain awareness and confidence in using Welsh-medium and bilingual methodologies.

Applications for the Scheme are particularly welcomed from those in certain sectors which have been prioritised for development in recognition of their greater need for development of Welsh-medium and bilingual learning. Care is one of these sectors. Consideration is also being given to extending the Scheme to include support for training assessors and verifiers.

Other projects which may be particularly beneficial to the sector include the **Sgiliaith / CYDAG Partnership** which, in partnership with Fforwm, has already provided support and advice for teachers and lecturers in Welsh-medium or bilingual post-16 vocational education and training in schools and Further Education colleges throughout Wales. The project is now being expanded to provide:

- an established contact point for advice and information for all trainers and providers (including private training providers);
- training for staff teaching vocational subjects through the medium of Welsh;
- a database of Welsh-medium assessors and verifiers; and
- a forum for the sharing of good practice and advice on the priorities for teaching resources.

The **Bilingual Champions Pilot** project is establishing Bilingual Champions in three Further Education colleges to develop Welsh-medium and bilingual provision. The Champions will develop long-term capacity in the three colleges so that the number of subjects and/or learners studying through the medium of Welsh or bilingually at the college, and in the local provider network, will continue to increase after the project comes to an end.

Various research projects are also underway to identify the demand for Welsh-medium learning and to aid expansion of Welsh-medium provision, and the Welsh Assembly Government is also funding the production of various original and translated resources for use in post-16 learning provision. Again, these resources will be targeted at certain priority sectors, including Care. Resources currently under development include a translation of *Health and Social Care* for A2 level, online resources *Dysgu Gofalu* for Level 2 and 3 NVQ in Care to fit the new standards for NVQ, and original interactive units to be published online in 2006-07.

Workforce Development Programme

The Workforce Development Programme was launched by ELWa in November 2005 and provides a comprehensive and flexible approach aimed at meeting the needs of individual businesses. The Programme aims to realise the benefits of skills development for employers thereby **increasing employer engagement in workforce development activity**. In addition, the ongoing programme of Leadership and Management workshops provides a valuable mechanism for equipping managers with the skills and knowledge needed to engender a culture of learning amongst their staff.

This activity could clearly help in developing a culture of lifelong learning and continuing professional development amongst employers within the social care sector, though it is acknowledged that there are particular difficulties within the sector due to NMS requirements. There is, therefore, a need for balance between action to help the sector satisfy these requirements whilst also encouraging employers, and indeed employees, to see the benefits of continuing professional development.

Case studies show that even those employees who have initially been reluctant to engage in learning have ultimately found the experience hugely beneficial.

Case study comments:

"There's a satisfaction in going back to learning, particularly when you've been out of it for a long time" (NVQ4 learner)
"I found out an awful lot about myself and the career I'm doing" (NVQ4 learner)
"It's given me a sense of achievement. At the age of 55 and being a student, it's fantastic" (NVQ2 learner)
"I'm in my 50s and I haven't written so much in 25 years…It's really made me think" (NVQ2 learner)
"I've enjoyed the workshops. I've enjoyed interacting with other people" (NVQ2 learner)

National Planning and Funding System

The National Planning Framework aims to **reflect the current and future needs of individuals, employers, communities and the wider social and economic needs of Wales** through information from Future Skills Wales surveys and demand intelligence from SSCs to lever changes in post-16 learning provision through the National Funding System. The ongoing development and implementation of the National Planning and Funding System will, therefore, clearly impact on learning provision within the social care sector.

Quality Framework

The Quality Framework, developed and implemented by ELWa, has already made much progress in driving up quality and standards in post-16 learning. The Framework is focused on ensuring **more regular monitoring of performance**,

thereby enabling early identification of shortcomings and subsequent action. Significant developments to date have included the implementation of Provider Performance Review in 2005, which has enabled the targeting of support to those providers who need it most. This targeted support has included a number of dedicated projects, including one focused on working with Work-Based Learning providers to enhance delivery of key skills.

In addition, ELWa's Business Plan for 2005-2008[27] stated a commitment from 2008 onwards to only fund learning that is classified by Estyn as "satisfactory" or above (Grade 3), and to increase this further from 2010 to provision classified only as "good" or "excellent" (Grade 2).

The Quality Improvement Fund was created to support providers to undertake activities that will raise quality and standards in the delivery of learning, and specifically targeted at addressing shortcomings in post-16 learning identified in Estyn Annual Reports. One such project is the **Health and Social Care Framework Improvement Network**, which is being led by the University of Wales Bangor and delivered in conjunction with other learning providers in North Wales.

The project is aimed at raising achievement and improving leadership and management, by working with employers and Care Council for Wales to develop a unified approach to meet the needs of learners. It is also supporting research into improving retention, training and attainment in health and social care. The findings of the project will be available on DELLS' Quality webpage this summer and are likely to be of some benefit to the sector across Wales.

Estyn review of training for the Care Sector

Estyn are undertaking a review of training for the care sector during 2006-07, which will build on the research already undertaken through this Review and will make recommendations for driving up standards of learning provision within the sector. Estyn are also undertaking work to develop recommendations aimed at driving up completion rates in work-based learning, which will interface closely with progress on the Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan.

Key Questions

1. How will revisions to the sector's Qualifications Framework and developments on the "Climbing Frame of Achievement", CQFW, 14 to 19 Learning Pathways and Sector Qualifications Strategies meet the needs of the sector in developing fit-for-purpose, sustainable learning pathways and progression routes? What additional action may be necessary?

2. What additional measures, if any, are required to facilitate better career progression within the sector? How effectively might this be achieved through models based on internships or job rotation?

[27] Business Plan 2005-08 – Making Learning Work for Wales. ELWa (2005)

3. How effectively will the Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan's recommendations to raise awareness and to explore innovative approaches to increasing employer engagement help in addressing the sector's issues regarding completion of FMA/MA frameworks?

4. Would more flexible delivery of the Work-Based Learning budget to part-subsidise delivery of NVQs outside the FMA/MA framework address the needs of the social care sector? How might this be applied to upskill the current workforce in line with National Minimum Standards training target requirements whilst also encouraging employers to engage in learning outside of this flexible delivery?

5. How might the sector benefit from the development of specialist/lead provision proposed within the Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan, and could this be facilitated through the development of local/regional learning hubs?

6. Is there a need for a specific marketing / communications campaign to improve perceptions of the sector? If so, how should this be targeted and what should the key messages be?

7. Would the sector benefit from a tailored programme of leadership and management workshops aimed at equipping managers with the skills and knowledge needed to engender a culture of learning amongst their staff?

8. Is there a need for additional support to improve the quality of learning provision within the social care sector? If so:

   (a) what kind of support is needed?
   (b) how might it be targeted?
   (c) to what extent might some method of regular interchange between learning practitioners and employers help improve the quality of learning delivery?

9. Would you support a quality mark system for social care training providers, and how might this operate?

10. Would the sector benefit from the development of a more collaborative approach to improving the quality and planning of learning provision? How effectively might this be facilitated through building on the work of the Regional Social Care Partnerships?

Section 8 - Conclusion

This paper is issued for consultation. Your views are welcomed, in particular in response to the key questions outlined throughout the document and reproduced in full below. Comments should be submitted using the enclosed response proforma by 3 November 2006 to:

Catherine Jenkins
Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills
Welsh Assembly Government
Ty'r Llyn
Waterside Business Park
Clos Llyn Cwm
Swansea Enterprise Park
Swansea SA6 8AH

Or email: socialcareskillsreview@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Key Questions

Qualifications and Assessment

1. Has the research captured the key issues relating to qualifications and assessment within the social care sector and, if not, what additional issues need to be considered?

2. To what extent do the current sector qualifications address the sector's needs in relation to entry into the sector, upskilling the current workforce and progression within the sector?

3. Is the current FMA/MA Framework addressing the sector's needs in relation to Work-Based Learning and to what extent, if any, is the *framework* (either in content, overall design or method of delivery) responsible for low completion rates within the sector?

4. What are the sector's needs in relation to providing services through the medium of Welsh and does this present a need to: (a) raise levels of Welsh language skills within the workforce; and (b) increase Welsh-medium provision?

Recruitment and Retention

1. Has the research captured the key reasons for low recruitment and retention levels within the social care sector and, if not, what additional reasons need to be considered?

2. What evidence is there to support perceptions of poor quality careers information and advice relating to the sector and to what extent does the lack of clear progression routes within the sector affect the quality of careers information that can be provided?

3. What are the main difficulties in providing work experience within the sector and how effectively will wider choice of work experience opportunities help to address negative perceptions of the sector amongst young people?

4. How effectively could the partnership approach to social work degree training be effectively applied to those training in social care?

5. To what extent does the lack of portability of qualifications present a barrier to:

- entering the sector;
- progressing within the sector;
- meeting NMS training target requirements?

6. What are the basic literacy and numeracy skills needs within the sector and to what extent does this present a barrier to meeting NMS training target requirements and to retaining staff within the workforce?

Funding

1. What are the main difficulties experienced in accessing public funds for learning provision within the sector?

2. What evidence is there to support perceptions that current funding mechanisms are enabling learning providers to fund and deliver qualifications that are insufficient for entry into the sector?

Quality

1. What evidence is there to support concerns raised regarding the quality of learning provision in social care?

Action

1. How will revisions to the sector's Qualifications Framework and developments on the "Climbing Frame of Achievement", CQFW, 14 to 19 Learning Pathways and Sector Qualifications Strategies meet the needs of the sector in developing fit-for-purpose, sustainable learning pathways and progression routes? What additional action may be necessary?

2. What additional measures, if any, are required to facilitate better career progression within the sector? How effectively might this be achieved through models based on internships or job rotation?

3. How effectively will the Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan's recommendations to raise awareness and to explore innovative approaches to increasing employer engagement help in addressing the sector's issues regarding completion of FMA/MA frameworks?

4. Would more flexible delivery of the Work-Based Learning budget to part-subsidise delivery of NVQs outside the FMA/MA framework address the needs of the

social care sector? How might this be applied to upskill the current workforce in line with National Minimum Standards training target requirements whilst also encouraging employers to engage in learning outside of this flexible delivery?

5. How might the sector benefit from the development of specialist/lead provision proposed within the Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan, and could this be facilitated through the development of local/regional learning hubs?

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(a) what kind of support is needed?
(b) how might it be targeted?
(c) to what extent might some method of regular interchange between learning practitioners and employers help improve the quality of learning delivery?

9. Would you support a quality mark system for social care training providers, and how might this operate?

10. Would the sector benefit from the development of a more collaborative approach to improving the quality and planning of learning provision? How effectively might this be facilitated through building on the work of the Regional Social Care Partnerships?