

Early Entitlement:

Supporting Children and Families in Wales



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Incorporating Statutory Guidance on the constitution of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships and the submission of Early Years Development and Childcare Plans issued under section 119(2) and 120(4) respectively of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (as amended by the Education Act 2002).



CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Introduction

3.1 This guidance supersedes the "Early Entitlement" guidance issued in 2002 as part of the guidance set named "Framework for Partnership", which also included an Executive Summary, Children and Young People's Framework Planning Guidance, guidance on Cymorth – the Children & Youth Support Fund, and Extending Entitlement guidance. It also replaces sections 1 and 2 of the Guidance for Local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in Wales issued under Welsh Office Circular 7/99 in respect of the constitution of the partnership and the requirements for submitting plans.

3.2 The Executive Summary of the "Framework for Partnership" guidance set made proposals for three partnerships within each local authority area. At the highest level is the Children and Young People's Framework Partnership, charged with developing a strategic plan for all children and young people up to the age of 25. Below that, the guidance advised the formation of a Children's Partnership, to create a Children's Plan for all services to the 0-10 age group, alongside the Young People's Partnership which was already required through the "Extending Entitlement" programme.

3.3 It is a statutory requirement on Local Education Authorities to set up a full EYDCP. The Education Act 2002 amended the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 so as to place the childcare requirements on a statutory rather than advisory basis. Chapter 2 below sets out statutory guidance on the membership of the Children's Partnership and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). It sets out two options for each Authority – either for the Children's Partnership to function itself as the EYDCP, or for the EYDCP to be a subgroup of the Children's Partnership.

3.4 At chapter 3, there is guidance on the format of the Children's Plan. The children's plan should not repeat material that is in the local Framework, and use should be made of appropriate cross-references.

3.5 At Annex A there is statutory guidance on Early Years Development and Childcare Plans. Each EYDCP will be required to submit a Plan to the Assembly for approval by 20 October in each year, beginning with 20 October 2003, and will cover the twelve month period from 1 April in the following year. Childcare planning will be included within the Cymorth Plan, and the Early Years Development Plan will be submitted together with the Cymorth Plan and Children's Plan.

3.6 This will enable integration of the development and submission of the Children's Plan, the Cymorth plan and the Early Years Development Plan.

3.7 Because of the consultation on the foundation stage now taking place, it is not intended at this stage to revise the guidance relating to the education elements contained within Welsh Office Circular 7/99 — Guidance for Local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in Wales. Therefore, the guidance contained in relation to those elements in section 3 of Circular 7/99 will continue to apply until issues relating to the foundation stage have been clarified and consulted upon and revised guidance has been published.

3.8 Annex B sets out a summary of the Assembly Government's policies for Education.

Background to the Children's Plan

3.9 Children between the ages of 0-10 are substantially dependent upon their families or carers to meet their needs - for nurture and the basics of home, food and care. Families also have needs - for information, advice and other support - which have a direct bearing on the quality of their children's lives.

3.10 The priorities for children at this age are:

- to ensure that they are able to develop to their full potential, particularly in their earliest years - pre-natal support is also important;
- to ensure that all the services on offer to children and families are of high quality, matched to their needs;
- to promote equal opportunities in order to counter the effects of disadvantage and ensure that all children and families are able to access quality services;
- to provide services that offer support and intervention at an early stage - to be proactive and preventative rather than reactive and restorative.

3.11 These factors will be crucial in ensuring that children are able to progress and mature to become fully rounded young people, and thence to contribute as future citizens and parents to our vision of a healthy and prosperous Wales.

3.12 The Assembly Government's policies in relation to children and families in Wales focus on a number of key themes:

- Widening opportunities for children and young people, and their families;
- Improving the quality of education for all, reducing class sizes, raising standards and creating a culture of lifelong learning;
- Creating the conditions for social inclusion and tackling child poverty, to ensure all families can access opportunities; for example through developing good quality education, childcare and family support;
- Supporting measures to ensure attendance and promote positive behaviour at school;
- Meeting the needs of children who are vulnerable or in need;
- Working in partnership to use the skills and experience of all agencies and reach the maximum number of families;
- Delivering the objectives of the Plan for Wales including improving health and well being and tackling inequalities in health.

3.13 To support these Assembly strategies, the Children's Plan should promote:

- more positive focus on prevention and investment in early intervention to avoid problems in later life;
- stronger focus on supporting families in disadvantaged communities to be able to provide appropriate levels of support to their children;
- improvements in the quality and responsiveness of the services available to children;
- more effective co-ordination and partnership at local level.

3.14 The major service sectors are health and education. Social services provide and co-ordinate services for children in need, including disabled children and children looked after, and child protection services. They also facilitate the provision of services by other agencies. The voluntary sector is a significant partner and provider of services such as childcare, play and advice. Voluntary organisations provide essential support to children and families that is complementary to statutory services, often in a partnership arrangement or service contract.

3.15 Within education children should have access to quality early years provision. This can be provided in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors and will be appropriate to the needs of all children. It is important that non-maintained settings work towards Estyn inspection arrangements to ensure parents have quality assurance within and across the education sector. A mixed economy i.e. access to settings both in the maintained and non-maintained sector will ensure parental choice and accessibility for parents. Training of staff working within education continues to be high priority and effective partnership is crucial to successful delivery. Non-maintained settings will continue to receive teacher support and parents will continue to be engaged to support the work of all settings.

3.16 Partnerships across statutory and non-statutory sectors are likely to be the most effective ways of responding to problems as early as possible and tackling them directly in the context of the family's wider needs. Support for children in Wales should be structured around an entitlement for children and families to a range of services designed to promote their health, social and emotional development.

The Role of the Assembly

3.17 The Assembly will support local planning and delivery by:

- co-ordinating policy in relation to children and families in Wales, including promoting their involvement in the design and delivery of services which affect them;
- promoting new ways of thinking about improvement in preventative work and in delivery of comprehensive services to children aged 0-10;
- encouraging the development in families of the capacity to make the most of their own lives and contribute effectively to their communities;
- monitoring progress, including commenting constructively on local 5-year strategies, and progress reports, establishing national priorities and performance indicators, commissioning activity by Estyn or other inspectorates;
- maximising opportunities for sharing and disseminating good practice across Wales and further afield.

Table 1: Examples of services provided for children:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Mainstream education services, including specialist provision for some children with special education needs. Primary schools provide a vital location for a range of early preventative interventions. The education |
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sector includes a wide range of initiatives aimed at improving the achievement of children. Legislative proposals are contained in the consultation paper "The Learning Country." Further details of these issues are set out in the Annex to this Guidance.

- Primary and community health services
- Out-of-school play and childcare services, including NOF-funded programmes to provide childcare places
- Leisure services
- Services for children in need including, disabled children, young carers, children looked after or leaving care, child protection and adoption services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Ante-natal programmes, breast-feeding initiative and post-natal support to families
- Immunisation and Vaccination
- Health Visitor service
- Support in the early years – Sure Start for 0-3 and Children and Youth Partnership funding for 4-10. From 2003-04 these will be amalgamated in Cymorth (see Cymorth guidance)
- Integrated Children's Centres (for further information see relevant section of the Cymorth Guidance)
- Family Centres
- Family Literacy and Numeracy Schemes
- Family Support Services, personal support and advice provided by health visitors, social services, voluntary sector programmes
- Improvement in infant class provision and junior class size reduction
- Services provided by the voluntary sector, including for example: Pre-school Playgroups Association, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, Homestart, the Pyramid Trust, SNAP, Scope and the RNIB

4. Partnership activities set up by Police, for example "SPLASH"

- School transport
- Cycling proficiency schemes and Safe Routes to Schools

Early Entitlement

4.1 The Assembly has established 7 core aims for all children and young people. These are set out in Annex A to the Children and Young People's Framework Planning Guidance. Based on these, every child in Wales has an entitlement to:

- a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development;
- access to a comprehensive range of educational and learning opportunities, including the acquisition of essential personal and social skills;
- enjoy the best possible physical and mental, social and emotional health, including freedom from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
- access to safe play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
- be listened to, treated with respect, and have their race, faith and cultural identity recognised;
- enjoy the benefit of a safe home and a community that supports physical and emotional wellbeing;
- intervention to ensure they are not disadvantaged by poverty.

CHAPTER 2: CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIPS

This chapter provides guidance on the constitution of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships under section 119(2) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (as amended by the Education Act 2002).

Children's Partnership

3.1 Every local authority is to be responsible for working with statutory, voluntary and independent sector partners to establish a Children's Partnership. Through the local Children's Plan, the Partnership will plan and ensure delivery of a coherent range of services for all children aged 0-10 in its area, working in close co-operation with families.

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership

3.2 Section 119 of the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act (as amended by the 2002 Act) requires local education authorities to set up Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs). Until now the childcare element has been advisory. Each Local Authority must determine whether the Children's Partnership is to function itself as the required EYDCP, carrying out the specific Early Years Development and childcare tasks as well as the wider brief of overseeing all services for the 0-10 age group, or whether the EYDCP should be organised as a subgroup of the Children's Partnership and supply required information into the more strategic body. The guidance regarding recommended membership depends on this choice, as described below.

Membership of the Children's Partnership

3.3 Each Children's Partnership will need to represent service provision, support and advice available to children and families in their area. Partners will include all organisations that have a role to play in the planning or delivery of services. Contributions will be drawn, for example, from the primary school system, childcare provision, health services and the voluntary sector. Consideration also needs to be given to the need for specialist support required by the most vulnerable children, including services to looked after children, and services provided or commissioned.

3.4 The Children's Partnership will need to consider how best it can inform and be informed by the activities of other bodies. Membership of the partnership will need to include those listed below, or a nominated senior representative with the capacity to take a strategic view and full authority to take executive decisions at partnership meetings. This list is not intended to be exhaustive and can be added to either on an ad-hoc or permanent basis.

Statutory Sector

- A Strategic Director with responsibility for Children.
- Local authority senior managers responsible for the following functions: Primary level Education, Social Services, Housing, Play Development (in some authorities, one officer's post may combine a number of these roles.)
- One Elected Member.

- Senior manager or managers representing children's services for which the Local Health Board is responsible.

Voluntary/ independent sector

- The Director of the local County Voluntary Council (CVC) or senior nominee
- A minimum of three representatives of voluntary community-based organisations, to include one representing those working with children and families and one representing the interests of parents and carers.

Others

One or more representative(s) of each of the following groups:

- primary headteachers
- school governors
- health visiting and school nursing services
- paediatric services
- early years education
- childcare
- play providers
- an operational social services manager.

3.5 Local discretion may be exercised in adding to the membership of the partnership, providing a reasonable balance in numbers is maintained between statutory and voluntary/independent sector representatives. The Partnership needs to be of a manageable size while including a broad range of organisations and maintaining a balance of numbers between sectors. Local circumstances will dictate which additional organisations are invited to join the Partnership.

3.6 The voluntary sector should be responsible for deciding who represents them. It will be necessary for local voluntary organisations which provide services for children in each local authority area to organise themselves to provide appropriate representation on the partnership, and to develop effective two-way communications systems with their representatives. This could be facilitated by the local CVC, which would ensure that all voluntary sector children's organisations, including uniformed, specialist, independent and sporting organisations are as far as possible involved in the process.

3.7 Organisations that do not sit on the children's partnership will nevertheless have an important role to play as partners in the planning and delivery of services. The partnership will wish to develop mechanisms to harness the contributions of other relevant organisations.

3.8 If the Children's Partnership is itself functioning as the mandatory EYDCP a representative of each the following, where locally appropriate, should be members of this partnership:

- National Childminding Association (NCMA)
- Wales Pre school Playgroups Association (WPPA)
- Clybiau Plant Cymru Kid's Clubs (CPCKC)
- Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM)
- Private sector nurseries
- Independent and church schools

- Community Councils for Education and Training
- Local employers
- Jobcentre Plus
- The local Children's Information Service
- Regional Office of the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (observer status with speaking rights)

3.9 Local partners are free to set up or maintain such other groups as they may wish to deal with the age range, but there will be no requirement to do so. In particular, the separate partnerships for Sure Start and the Children and Youth Partnership Fund need not be continued.

Membership of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership

3.10 If a separate EYDCP is maintained in addition to the more strategic Children's Partnership, the membership of the EYDCP should include representation of the following, where locally appropriate :

- Local authority membership from Education, Social Services and Play Development
- Maintained nursery schools
- National Childminding Association (NCMA)
- Wales Pre school Playgroups Association (WPPA)
- Clybiau Plant Cymru Kid's Clubs (CPCKC)
- Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM)
- Private sector nurseries
- Independent and church schools
- Community Councils for Education and Training
- Local employers
- Jobcentre Plus
- Play providers
- The local Children's Information Service
- Regional Office of Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (observer)

Getting the Children's Partnership Started

3.11 Partnership members will need to come together prior to setting up the partnership to establish a shared understanding as to the broad aims and to begin to identify key objectives. The process of partnership building is important. Investment in training, support and guidance to develop and establish the key characteristics of effective partnership working will result in strong, confident partnerships that are able to deliver real improvements in the lives of children in Wales. Further and more detailed information on the establishment and maintenance of partnerships is set out in the guidance on Children and Young People's Frameworks, issued simultaneously with this guidance.

3.12 Local children's partnerships must consider and agree at an early stage:

- terms of reference which make clear that the partnership's fundamental purpose is to improve the provision of services for children;
- arrangements for selection of the Chair;
- the potential for other groups focusing on specific issues which may include experts in particular fields who are not regular members of the children's partnerships;

- the means by which organisations which are not members of the children's partnership might contribute to and be informed about its activities;
- timing of partnership meetings;
- means of resolving disagreements between partners;
- ways in which the partnership will engage with children/carers, including links with the appropriate voluntary organisations and with primary school councils and local children and young people's forums as they develop ;
- arrangements for the partnership to communicate with those implementing the local children's plan, including other strategic partnerships;
- arrangements to promote synergy with other programmes such as Communities First and Health, Social Care and Well-Being Strategy;
- arrangements for information-sharing and cross-referral of client data between agencies. Guidance on information sharing has been produced as part of Extending Entitlement.

Continuing the work of the EYDCP

3.13 Where local EYDCPs are separately constituted they must consider and agree at an early stage

- terms of reference to ensure early education and childcare continue to be prioritised within an authority's plans and fulfil the targets laid down within the Assembly Government's consultation document "The Learning Country" and its Childcare Action Plan.
- Membership of the partnership - which will build on the existing good practice currently in operation
- Selection of the chair
- How and when decisions will be fed into the Children's Partnership
- The means by which organisations which are not members of the partnership might contribute to and be informed about its activities
- Timings of partnership meetings
- Means of resolving disagreements between partners
- Arrangements for information gathering and cross referral of client data between agencies
- Ways in which partnership will engage with children and their carers.

Selection of the Chair

3.14 Each Children's Partnership will need to select a suitable Chair, having regard to the message this gives in signalling attitudes of the local authority and other partners to the Partnership's responsibilities, focus and mode of operation. Partnerships may consider it desirable for a local authority Strategic Director to take the Chair. An independent Chair of similar standing might be considered as a means of demonstrating key messages about the Partnership's commitment to shared working and cross cutting membership.

3.15 The Chair must be skilled in leading effective multi-agency teamwork, must be able to take full account of local needs and priorities and must also be experienced in the exercise of public accountability.

Partners' roles and responsibilities

3.16 Partnerships will need to ensure that the contribution and expertise of each partner is utilised to best effect. Effective partnerships will work together to channel the enthusiasm, energy and resources that members bring towards the achievement of common aims and objectives. Statutory, voluntary and independent sector partners will need to recognise, respect and draw on each other's expertise.

3.17 Partnerships require a culture of shared ownership and common working arrangements across organisational and professional boundaries, as well as genuine co-operation between organisations of different sizes and ways of working. This is a vital aspect of the new arrangements and therefore a number of sources of advice are provided in the Frameworks Guidance, issued in the set of documents of which this forms a part.

CHAPTER 3 – PRODUCING THE CHILDREN'S PLAN

Scope of the Plan

3.1 In each local authority there should be a Children's Partnership dealing specifically with children aged 0-10. This partnership will be a sub-group of the Children and Young People's Framework Partnership. Its task will be to draw up a five-yearly strategic plan initially covering the five-year period from April 2003 to March 2008, based upon the strategic priorities set out in the local Framework, as the agreed statement of vision and priorities for all services for children and young people. The aims of the plan should be:

- to help every child to develop to their full potential socially, emotionally and physically, moving successfully into adolescence, engaging in education, and making successful use of facilities offered by the communities in which they live;
- to base services on the needs of children rather than the perspectives of service providers;
- to improve the quality and extend the reach of services for children and families;
- to fill gaps and remove duplication, making effective use of resources;
- to link with other relevant programmes;
- to focus on preventative and supportive services;
- to enable children and families to contribute to the design of the plan and give their opinions on its effectiveness;
- to ensure that responsibility is shared across sectors and agencies and that there is clarity about the specialist contribution of each agency;
- to focus on preventative and supportive services.

3.2 The children's plan will provide the context for other, service-specific local strategies. Early years development planning will continue to be developed to ensure specific elements relating to education remains a focus. In line with new regulations, the plan will be submitted to the Assembly for approval each October in respect of the twelve-month period commencing on 1 April in the following year.

3.3 The Children's plan will be a working and accessible document that is written, owned and understood by the Children's Partnership. It will form the main working reference document for the partnership, and should be of a manageable length, not more than 7,000 words. It should be written under the following headings and include as a minimum the elements indicated under each:

A. Introduction/Background

- Partnership members (names & organisations);

- A brief description of how the partnership will operate - roles, responsibilities and contribution of the respective partners to the implementation of the plan.

B. Current position

- Assessment and analysis of need relating specifically to this age group, set against the broad analysis in the local Framework and national and local objectives;
- Existing provision including issues of quality, feedback from users, capacity, accessibility to users (in terms of location and hours available);
- Gaps, shortfalls or over provision;
- Priorities for service development.

C. Consultation with users and eligible populations

- Reference to local Framework in respect of the mechanisms for consulting with existing and eligible users (children and families);
- Description of the key messages derived from the consultation and how these views have been taken into account in the planning and delivery of services and activities.

D. Objectives and targets

- Specify objectives, lead responsibility, outcomes for children and measurable targets. These should be a manageable number, set in the context of the Assembly's aims for children in Annex A of the Framework Planning Guidance and be capable of being used to measure the value of individual elements of the plan. Targets should have timescales for their achievement and if necessary may be broken down into a series of steps towards the target showing the progress to be made in Year 1 and following financial years (milestones).

E. Inputs and Funding

- The contribution, of each partner service that will be made in order to achieve strategic aims and priorities should be set out in the first strategic plan, and thereafter annually in the Annual Report. This should cover all forms of funding, both discretionary and specific grants, including Cymorth funds and joint and pooled budgets between the local authority and the NHS (see paragraph 2.7 below).

F. Outputs

- List activities and services against the impact objectives and targets to which they relate, with reference to the aims for children in Annex A of the Framework Planning Guidance;
- Specify time scales, processes and who has been allocated lead responsibility.

G. Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements

- Outline how progress in achieving objectives and meeting targets will be monitored and reviewed;

- List targets that will be used to measure effectiveness in achieving the specified outcomes for children;
- Outline arrangements for gathering user feedback on services and activities and suggestions for improvements;
- Explain how the process of monitoring and evaluation links to the annual review of the plan.

Annual Report

16.1 Each Children's Partnership should review its plan annually, producing an update as an annual report in October each year, starting in October 2003. The report should be concise and should contain:

- Headline progress in achieving service delivery objectives and targets;
- Areas of progress or lack of it in the work of the partnership and its two sub-groups;
- Participation of partners, children and young people and their families and key messages received through consultations; and,
- Priorities for the next year.

Funding the New Plan

16.2 Real and sustained improvements in services for children and families will require long-term commitment, particularly from statutory services with the complementary support of the voluntary sector. The children's plan is intended to provide a context for improving services through increased co-ordination of provision devoted towards meeting shared aims and objectives. Local authorities and other statutory agencies will need to continue to regard children's services as a priority for future investment of their mainstream discretionary resources if the range, quality and co-ordination of services are to improve.

16.3 Other sources of funding, including Assembly specific grants, will also need to be taken into account.

16.4 Children's Plans should make use of the flexibilities under the Health Act 1999. Given the importance of integrating health services for children into planning, it is anticipated that the section on inputs and funding will make particular reference to use of the flexibilities under the Health Act 1999. These enable statutory service providers to work together to plan, commission and provide their services in ways most appropriate to the needs of users and carers and support the delivery of services at the interface between health and local authority provision. They are therefore ideally placed to contribute directly to the shared strategic vision and common objectives agreed by Framework partnerships. A guide to using the flexibilities mechanisms has been published and is available from Martin Bell, SCP1, Welsh Assembly Government.

Timing

16.5 Children's Partnerships should submit their draft five-year strategies to the Welsh Assembly Government by 20 October each year, covering the 5 year period beginning on 1 April in the following year. The Assembly recognises that the process of planning in partnership is a new one that will need time to evolve and be embedded in local practice. The second plan, covering the period from 1 April 2004, is expected to take into account the assessments of the first plans sent to each local authority by the Assembly Government.

ANNEX A - EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT AND CHILDCARE PLAN

This annex provides guidance on the submission of Early Years Development and Childcare Plans issued under section 120(4) respectively of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (as amended by the Education Act 2002).

4.1 Consultation on the proposed foundation phase and early years development provision is planned for 2003. It is not therefore intended at this stage to revise the guidance relating to the education elements contained within Welsh Office Circular 7/99 – Guidance for Local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in Wales.

4.2 Under new Regulations the Assembly is about to make, each EYDCP will be required to submit an Early Years Development and Childcare Plan to the Assembly for approval by 1 May 2003 to cover the seven month period from 1 September 2003 to 31 March 2004. Details for the submission of the EYDC plan is found within the introduction of this document at 1.5. This will enable integration of the development and submission of the Children's Plan, the Cymorth plan and the Early Years Development plan as one planning process for Local Authorities and Partnerships.

4.3 Draft guidance on the childcare part of the plan as regards 2004-05 is contained at chapter 5 of the draft Cymorth – Children and Youth Support Fund guidance included within this consultation.

4.4 The aims of the Early Years Development part of the Plan will:

- ensure the plan enhances the education, care, development and play experiences of children including those with special needs and those with disabilities
- cater appropriately for provision in the Welsh language
- cater for the needs of the ethnic minority groups
- bring together the local authority, private and voluntary sectors in the spirit of co-operation and genuine partnership
- recognise and develop the particular strengths of the private and voluntary sectors
- recognise that these sectors often give support to and in turn are supported by parents
- have regard to the financial and other constraints on the local authority
- have regard for value for money, taking both cost and quality into account

4.5 Principles

To achieve the Assembly Government core aim that we:

Ensure that all children have a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development

The guiding principles for early years education continue to be:

Targets

That every three year old child has a part time place within an educational setting in the term following their third birthday

Provision

To enable local education authorities to secure provision for early years education the plan should highlight:

- local planning of provision through the EYDCP in each authority area involving a wide range of early years interests, which prepares an early years development plan, drawing on children's services plans, to meet the needs of children and their parents.
- Integration of early years education with childcare, in line with local childcare strategies and childcare plans, to meet the needs of children and their parents
- The processes used to secure places for three and four year old provision, taking into account the need for partnership
- Compliance by providers in the non maintained sector with specified criteria
- Acceptability of non maintained providers who charge parents top up fees for full time places, additional educational facilities or childcare services

Quality Assurance

- The involvement of a qualified early years teacher in all settings providing early years education within an early years development plan
- More uniform arrangements for the regulation and inspection of all providers
- Constantly improving educational quality through a framework of self improvement and inspection through a framework of registered inspectors and a review of the desirable outcomes
- Improvement of staff training, including the development of a "qualifications framework" for childcare, playwork and early years education

Special Educational Needs

- Inclusion wherever possible of children with special educational needs

Statement of Proposals

A clear statement that the children to be covered by it are defined on a termly basis, Summer, Autumn, Spring

4.6 Each EYDCP should review its Early years development plan annually, producing an update as an annual report in October each year, starting in October 2003. The report should be concise and should contain:

- Headline progress in achieving service delivery objectives and targets;

- Areas of progress or lack of it in the work of the partnership
- Numbers of children receiving Early Years provision and planned provision for the following year
- Priorities for the next year.

Please refer to the document –Guidance for Local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships in Wales for further guidance as this will continue to remain the statutory document for Early Years provision until further consultation later in the year.

Annex B

The Education Sector

The Welsh Assembly Government aims to ensure that all children and young people have access to a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities, including acquisition of essential personal and social skills. Services provided within the Education Sector in Wales play a central part in achieving this aim.

"**The Learning Country**" consults on a number of key policy directions, and also on legislative proposals to give effect to them, in preparation for Welsh provision in the forthcoming Education Bill. The underpinning principles are:

- **High standards and expectations** and progressively improving outcomes must feature for all learners whatever their situation, and in all sectors, to achieve world - beating excellence.
- **The interests of learners override all others.** Standards, results and outcomes matter more than inputs. All sectors and providers must plan to achieve stretching but realistic targets, sharing international best practice and setting new benchmarks for quality assessment.
- **Barriers to learning must be recognised and steadily overcome** to the benefit of learners' access and participation; support for diversity and communities; and wider opportunities and option choice.
- Every encouragement must be given to ensure that academic, technical and vocational learning pathways have **parity of esteem** to boost the options available to individuals and enhance people's capacity to become adaptable and employable in the face of national and international technological change.
- Schools should act as a **community resource**, integral to community capacity building

- Inequalities in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged areas, groups, and individuals must be narrowed in **the interests of all**. Children facing special disadvantage and poverty of opportunity must be better provided for.
- **Innovation must be supported** consistently to focus on the future needs of the economy; to enable providers to use ICT to transform teaching and learning and to customise and refine learning experiences tailored to the needs, aspirations and potential of individuals.
- The informed **professional judgement of teachers, lecturers and trainers** will be taken into account in developing the agenda.
- Policy and programme development must be undertaken on the basis of **partnership** with all those who can contribute to success using effective consultation; the least possible bureaucracy; and encouraging genuine commitment to work across organisational boundaries with partners playing to one another's strengths. Partnerships will not prevent providers from doing what they do best; they will add value by ensuring a synergy and confidence that individual partners cannot accomplish on their own.
- Policy for education and training must be **evidence based**, openly reported on and evaluated; provide firm foundations for knowledge exploitation and enterprise; and give clear demonstrations of the quantitative and qualitative return on Assembly investment.
- The agenda for lifelong learning must be applied in ways that reflect the **distinctive needs and circumstances** of Wales taking full account of the functions and capacities of local government, the contribution of business, and the vital support of the voluntary sector.

What happens in early years can have a profound effect on how well children adapt to life in primary schools. *The Learning Country* acknowledges not only the very considerable improvements in attainment which primary schools have achieved in recent years but also re-emphasises the need to sustain the momentum in the drive to raise standards year on year.

Support for Teaching and Learning

The Assembly Government continues to support teachers to improve teaching and learning through better training and focussed professional development, and the provision of information and communications technology, not least through the Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) programme.

Foundation Stage

To facilitate integration between early years provision and primary education which will, in turn, enable schools to develop their pupils' capabilities to the full, the Assembly Government has issued a consultation document on a new foundation phase extending from age 3 to age 7. This builds on advice from ACCAC and the Early Years Advisory Panel.

The National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales

Although huge progress has been made in recent years, the National Assembly's Basic Skills Strategy highlighted a continuing problem over basic skills in Wales. Around 780,000 children, young people and adults have literacy and numeracy problems that close doors to a full life and lead to social exclusion. The National Assembly will work with its partners to tackle this problem head on to reduce significantly the numbers of individuals in Wales who struggle with their reading, writing and figure work to help improve their skills, prospects and quality of life.

Education Strategic plans (ESP's)

ESP's are an essential tool in the delivery of the National Assembly's policy

for raising levels of educational attainment. Whilst the achievement of high standards is ultimately the responsibility of schools, local authorities have a crucial part to play in providing well-targeted support; and in intervening where schools have significant weaknesses or are under-performing. LEAs also have direct responsibility in relation to provision for vulnerable children and for pupils being educated otherwise than at school.

Plans have to be submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government by 31 May 2002 so that they can be approved in time for the start of the 2002-03 school year.

New requirements for 2002-05 full plans relate to:

- policy and targets for the educational attainment of looked after children
- policy on provision of English as an additional language for pupils whose first language is not English or Welsh
- arrangements for supporting pupils who are travellers' children

New requirements for 2003-04 supplementary plans relate to:

- policy on racial awareness and addressing racism in schools
- data on ethnic minority pupils
- data on travellers' children

Schools' Councils

In The Learning Country it was proposed that to build pupil confidence

statutory school councils should be formed. The intention is that all primary and secondary schools will set up schools councils to facilitate consultation between staff, the governing body and pupils. This will include involving pupils in the day to day running of the school as well as matters where a pupil has a personal interest in a decision, for instance, exclusion.

Schools' Councils are seen to have a wider value as part of the agenda to ensure that young people have right to influence directly the decisions that affect them. They will also educate and enable pupils to experience the practicalities of active citizenship and realistic decision making.