

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Y 1,000 diwrnod cyntaf | First 1,000 Days

FTD 51

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Gofal Cymru

Response from: Care Council for Wales

1. The Care Council for Wales is a Welsh Government sponsored body which is responsible for supporting the development of a confident and competent workforce in social services, early years and childcare. We support the sector and the Welsh Government in implementing the *Draft 10-year Plan for the Early Years, Childcare and Play Workforce in Wales*¹ and *Building a Brighter Future: The Early Years and Childcare Plan*² and the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act, 2014. The latter has a number of important provisions in relation to support for children and families.

2. Our key messages are:

- To provide effective services a well qualified workforce is needed. To support this we are working with the sector and Qualifications Wales to introduce a new set of qualifications for the early years and child care sector which will include clear references to the importance of a holistic approach to the first 1,000 days
- The workforce needs to continually improve and reflect on practice. To support this we produce a range of resources to support the early years and childcare workforce
- To support children's well-being it is vital to maintain the social care aspects of early years and childcare provision
- Sustainability in the sector is required to support children's attachment and development. There are concerns regarding the financial stability of the early years and childcare sector
- Concerns for the safety of children need to be identified early and social workers and other staff need the requisite knowledge and skills to keep them safe.

¹ [Draft 10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales](#), Welsh Government, 2014

² [Building a Brighter Future: The Early Years and Childcare Plan](#), Welsh Government, 2013

3. We welcome the committee's interest in this area. At a time when the Welsh Government is set to expand the number of childcare places, it is important that a holistic approach to the early years is maintained.

Care Council's role

4. In order to sustain and improve services for the first 1,000 days of life, a skilled and qualified workforce is required. The Care Council for Wales provides support to the early years and childcare workforce by providing training resources, by developing qualifications and by managing a sectoral network.
5. The Care Council for Wales works alongside the sector to develop resources which can be used to promote best practice within early years and childcare settings. Our resources include guides for recruiting, inducting, supervision and continued professional development³. The aim of these documents is to highlight the importance of remaining up to date with practice, and to ensure that workers are aware of new policy areas and legislation such as the importance of the first 1,000 days.
6. The Care Council has developed a multi-agency Early Years and Childcare Workforce Development Network to support its work in this area. An important part of this work is development of a new suite of qualifications to better meet the needs of the sector and to ensure child centered care is at the heart of the workforce. More information on the qualifications is provided in paragraphs 17–21 below.

Promoting and protecting the health and wellbeing of children from pregnancy

7. *Parenting in Wales: Guidance to Engagement and Support*⁴ highlights the importance of early intervention and prevention as a means of developing a relationship with expectant mothers. Programmes such as Flying Start have adopted a partnership approach to engagement with families. This includes intensive midwifery and health visiting. However this programme is a targeted programme and not a universal model. The proposed introduction of Children's Zones to tackle adverse childhood experiences could allow this model to be rolled out more widely. By establishing a relationship with

³ [Resources for early years and childcare](#): *Recruiting Well, Inducting Well, Supervising and Appraising Well, Continued Professional Development Toolkit, Continued Professional Development Toolkit, Early Years and Childcare Induction Framework*, Care Council for Wales, 2001-16

⁴ [Parenting in Wales: Guidance to Engagement and Support \(pdf\)](#), Welsh Government, 2014

expectant parents at an early stage, services are able to maintain contact with them throughout pregnancy and the early stages of a child's life.

Delivering improved child health outcomes across Wales

8. *Building a Brighter Future* outlines a commitment to ensuring children in Wales have the right foundations for good health and are actively engaged in learning and equipped with the skills to reach their full potential. Section two of this plan highlights the importance of good health and well-being during the first seven years of a child's life. The plan draws together the social, economic and environmental factors which contribute to the quality of child's start in life. Within early years and childcare settings, schemes such as the Healthy and Sustainable Preschool scheme (HSPSS)⁵ and Designed to Smile⁶ encourage children to be active, eat healthily and have good oral health. Alongside intensive health visiting; which is offered in Flying Start; these schemes aim to support achieving and maintaining a healthily weight. They also support the development of learning environments which actively promote and embed, physical, mental and social health and wellbeing. Although HSPSS is a universal programme, Flying Start areas were targeted first. With the introduction of Children's Zones, there is an opportunity to more universally roll out these programmes and support the Early Years health outcomes of children in Wales.

Tackling child health inequalities

9. Working with the sector we are developing qualifications which respond to the Welsh Government's policy priorities on tackling health inequalities. As *Building a Brighter Future* highlights, one in three children in Wales are living in poverty, with 20 percent living in absolute poverty. Prevention and intervention at an early stage in children's lives can improve their outcomes in the future. Therefore, consideration of these factors and issues such as adverse childhood experiences and knowledge of Children's Zones have been added to the core content of the new qualifications (see below for more information). There is also an optional unit within the Children's Care Learning and Development qualification which specifically focuses on child poverty and the factors which can affect children living in poverty.

Reducing child deaths and injury prevention

⁵ [Healthy and Sustainable Preschool Scheme \(pdf\)](#), Welsh Government, 2011

⁶ [Designed to Smile](#), website

10. The Care Council has a responsibility for regulating the social care workforce and promoting high standards of practice and of training. In April 2017 the Care Council will transform to become Social Care Wales. Fundamental to our work will be ensuring we safeguard children's well-being. Concerns for the safety of children need to be identified early and staff appropriately trained. The Care Council will be reviewing the social work qualifying programme next year and this will include a review of the content in regard to safeguarding.
11. The Children's Commissioner's report⁷ into residential childcare highlighted the importance of safeguarding children in residential child care. *Parenting in Wales* also highlights the importance of early interventions with parents and the use of positive parenting strategies to encourage parental behaviour based on the best interests of the child. The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act, 2014 supports this, with its emphasis on early intervention and prevention. The Care Council is supporting the social care workforce in rolling out best practice in this area, in particular around conversations with people about what matters to them.

Supporting effective child development and emotional and social well-being and improving learning and speech and language development through the home learning environment and access to early years' provision

12. The ability to support children's learning and development is fundamental to the work of the early years and childcare practitioner. Therefore, within the core units of the new children's care learning, development and play qualifications practitioners are provided with knowledge and understanding of speech and language and the role it plays in a child's development.
13. Strong, supportive families are important to build resilience in children and provide the starting place for their communication skills to develop. *Building a Brighter Future* highlights the importance of encouraging parents to provide a learning environment at home for their children. Building a child's speaking and listening skills from an early age gives them the best start in life.

Reducing the adverse impact on the child of psycho-social issues such as poor parenting, disruptive family relationships, domestic violence, mental health issues and substance misuse through effective safeguarding

⁷ [The Right Care: Children's Rights in Residential Care in Wales \(pdf\)](#), Children's Commissioner, 2016

14. A high quality workforce is key to deliver the best outcomes for children. The *Draft 10-year Plan for the Early Years, Childcare and Play Workforce in Wales* highlights how the early years and childcare workforce is wider than just those who work within childcare settings. A workforce which adopts a “team around the child” approach with services integrating and working in a joined up way to achieve the best outcomes for the child. This would include liaising with social services and health professionals who may best be able to meet the needs of a child.
15. It is important that policy makers do not lose sight of the social care aspects of early years and childcare settings in the current drive across the UK to make children “school-ready”. Whilst the school-ready approach can ease and aid transition, it is important not to lose sight of the child’s safety, overall well-being and parental engagement which can determine a child’s future development. A child who is abused or does not feel safe, is unlikely to be able to learn and develop to their full potential. There are some innovative examples of how local authorities are using their early years pupil deprivation grant to this effect.
16. Effective safeguarding involves social workers working with people and other agencies to provide the support necessary to protect children and others. The Care Council will be reviewing the social work qualifying programme next year and this will include a review of the content in regard to safeguarding. We will also be reviewing safeguarding training for the wider social care workforce.

Early years and childcare qualifications review

17. The Care Council for Wales has developed a list of required qualifications to work within the early years and childcare sector in Wales⁸ in partnership with the sector. It was published in 2009 and reviewed in 2012 and 2014. The list provides guidance for early years and childcare employers, practitioners, learning providers and other organisations about the required occupational qualifications for those working in early years and childcare with children below the age of 8 years.

⁸ [List of Required Qualifications to work within the Early Years and Childcare Sector in Wales](#), Care Council for Wales, 2014

18. Alongside a range of other social care organisations and training providers, we provided evidence to Qualifications Wales in their recent *Sector Review of Qualifications and the Qualification System in Health and Social Care including Child Care and Play Work*⁹. In response to our evidence Qualifications Wales found that there were a number of potential improvements which could be applied to the qualifications system across the sector.
19. The Care Council for Wales is now working with Qualifications Wales, the NHS' Workforce Education Development Service and other partners are developing a new suite of qualifications for the health, social care and childcare and early years sector. New draft core content for the has been developed and are currently out for consultation with the sector.
20. Within the proposed new suite of child care and early years qualifications the are optional units which aim to support early years and childcare practitioners to imbed principles from key initiatives including Healthy Child Wales; *Building a Brighter Future*; Flying Start (including language and play); the Foundation Phase; Families First and Healthy Schools.
21. Within the proposed core of the new child care and early years qualifications there is reference to play, nutrition and hydration and positive environments to support the health, well-being, learning and development of children. The core also highlights the importance of partnership working with parents and other professionals. In the development of the new qualifications, we have worked closely with our colleagues in health to ensure the key messages from Ten Steps to a Healthy Weight and Welsh Government programmes such as Healthy and Sustainable Pre-School Scheme are incorporated into the core and optional units.

Financial stability

22. The Welsh Government's 30 hour children offer could provide children who may not have the opportunity to attend childcare where they can integrate with other children and engage in early education activities. However, there are concerns within the early years and childcare sector in relation to financial sustainability. There is anecdotal evidence that settings are unable to remain open unless they are Flying Start or Foundation Phase providers. The proposed introduction of an increased free childcare offer provides an

⁹ [Sector Review of Qualifications and the Qualification System in Health and Social Care including Child Care and Play Work](#), Qualifications Wales, 2016

excellent opportunity for universal roll out to aid sustainability in the sector and provide more parental choice. This scheme is currently being piloted across Wales in various formats. It is important that Welsh Government reflect on the pilots to ensure that the universal 30 hour childcare offer best aids sustainability of provision, ensures consistency and continuity of care for the child and also supports a high quality Early Years and Childcare Workforce.