
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, we are independent of the Welsh Government.

Our principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000¹ and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, we must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by those receiving education and training in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers, including whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Our remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary, secondary, special and all age schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and initial teacher training.

We may give advice to the Welsh Parliament on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, we have set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;

¹ This act to be replaced by the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 when the quality provisions are commenced.

- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

The National Practice Framework aims to improve support for children, young people, families, and communities, with a focus on keeping families together and enhancing early help services. We agree that the key proposals outlined in the draft will strengthen the 'edge of care' offer, improve the care system's quality, and enhance services for children with complex needs. Furthermore, the framework promotes a child-first, relationship-based multi-agency approach, leveraging existing practice models. Implementation would be supported through existing mechanisms such as regional partnerships, stakeholder collaboration, and professional development resources. Processes for measuring impact should be co-constructed with stakeholders, focusing on outcomes such as care quality, service access, and reducing inequalities, with involvement from Care Inspectorate Wales.

We support the extensive work that has already taken place to ensure that the principles of the framework reflect a consensus and shared vision. It is our view that the development and implementation of a national framework could promote a shared understanding of professional and public expectations and that this could be achieved through well-defined national standards. However, we feel that a Children's Rights Impact Assessment would be beneficial.

Consultation questions

QUESTION 1.

What difference can the National Practice Framework make for children, young people, their families and their communities?

The framework could improve the support provided to families, for example, through a national, multi-agency, universal and targeted offer which focuses effectively on keeping families together, and remaining in their communities. However, it would be useful to clarify the support needed for children and young people in exceptional, high-risk situations. It is not clear from the framework how this will be defined and achieved. It will be important for internal services and the public to understand the steps that will be taken in these circumstances.

We support the aim to strengthen the 'edge of care' offer, as this could support children and young people to remain with their families and reinvest monies into family support. Further, it could support family justice reform and strengthen the connection to early help services.

It is our view that measures to improve the care system will be welcomed by services and the public across Wales, for example, by improving the status of the voice of the child, strengthening the corporate parenting system, increasing placements closer to home and developing a not-for-profit care system. Further, improving the quality of practice and decision-making in case care will be important steps, in particular, in creating more advocacy for children, parents and carers involved in the process.

We appreciate the challenges in enhancing services for children with complex needs and believe that parents and carers would welcome improvements in multi-agency commissioning, funding of support and developing a greater range of provision.

QUESTION 2.

Which changes would you like to see to the draft, including the need for longer standards with more explanation and referencing without losing impact?

We believe that services and the wider public will welcome the fact that The National Practice Framework is underpinned by a belief in children's rights and social justice. However, it may be beneficial to strengthen the clarity around the importance of local service delivery and how this will work in practice, so that the wider public understands clearly the system and processes in accessing support.

We believe that services and the public across Wales will welcome the proposal to ensure that the standards will be as direct and uncluttered as possible and be no more than two pages long. However, we query the additional proposal to include a third and potential fourth page for each standard in the final version. While it is important to produce standards that are robust, it is our experience that the wider public appreciates clear and succinct messages. Further, children and young people and adults with complex needs may also benefit from a shorter, more easily accessible version of the standards, which contains useful visuals and takes account of a total communication approach.

QUESTION 3.

How can child first, relationship-based multi-agency practice be strengthened?

We note the key principle that the framework will be compatible with existing practice models currently in use across Wales, for example, Signs of Safety, Systemic Practice, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Informed Approaches. Building upon these well-established practices can support a child first, relationship-based model. It is our experience that improving multi-agency working across services in local government, regional boards and the health service could further strengthen this practice and ensure that successful and purposeful collaboration is at every step of the child or young person's journey in Wales. This multi-agency working can be further strengthened through high-quality assessments and interventions delivered by an informed workforce that place the child or young person at the heart of all decision-making.

QUESTION 4.

How can implementation of the Standards be supported?

We aware that there are many mechanisms and systems already in existence across local government that could support the implementation of the standards. Good examples include the regional partnership and safeguarding boards. There are many useful examples of local authorities collaborating successfully with key partners to implement significant change and ensure the optimum outcomes for children and young people such as through transformation governance structures, working parties and stakeholder focus groups. It is our view, that building upon, and reviewing existing processes and systems may be a useful starting point for implementation before commissioning further structures,

as this could lead to additional levels of bureaucracy that may impede clear communication and ultimately implementation.

It may also be beneficial to develop professional development resources and to publish a realistic timeline for implementation so that the workforce is able to adapt to and ultimately embrace these new ways of working. This is especially important at this current time, as the narrative at the conclusion of the framework notes that 'delays, waiting lists and insufficient professional time to meet the care and support needs of all children, young people and their families is a likely scenario for some years to come, especially with rising demand.' The narrative also notes that most children's services professionals work more hours than they are paid. Further, workers also need protecting from some of the known consequences of over-work, such as cumulative stress and secondary trauma. Therefore, a carefully planned sequence of robust change management will be important.

QUESTION 5.

Which metrics and processes should be developed to measure the impact and outcomes of the National Practice Framework for children, young people and their families?

This question will be more easily answered when the standards have been agreed, as the metrics will need to relate directly to the standards. It will be important for any measures and evaluations of the framework to be co-constructed with children and young people, especially those who have experienced care. This could include, for example, looking at the quality of care, access to services, quality of support, outcomes of assessment and interventions and reducing inequalities. The outcomes of these measures could be used to inform, for example, finance and use of resources, influencing commissioning, supporting quality improvement work, helping with quality assurance work and monitoring and shaping future services