
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Dyddiad / Date:	05/07/2020
Pwnc / Subject:	Consultation by Social Care Wales on the development of apprenticeship frameworks at level 4 and 5 in Health and Social Care (HSC) and Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development (CCPLD).

Background information about Estyn

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

Estyn's 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 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn 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 education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

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

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has 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;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

Estyn broadly agrees with the proposals for the new apprenticeship frameworks at level 4 and 5 in Health and Social Care and Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development. In particular, we support the introduction of level 4 and level 5 pathways. These courses offer a more practical and attainable route into leadership and management positions and to higher learning for those qualified at level 3. The framework will also provide the opportunity for those learners who do not wish to become managers to enhance their skills, understanding and practice to assist them in carrying out their duties in the variety of social care settings. These issues were raised in the Estyn report: The quality of education and training in adult health and social care, May 2016.

The proposals we would suggest should be reconsidered are:

- the proposal to set the essential skills requirement at level 2 rather than level 3
- the proposal not to include digital literacy in the new framework.

We believe that essential skills communications and application of number level 2 requirement is too low, since apprentices following frameworks at level 4 and 5 often hold responsible managerial positions. They need to have strong literacy and numeracy skills to support and manage those they supervise, write reports, provide advocacy for those in care settings and to manage finances.

We recommend that digital literacy should be a mandatory part of the qualification framework. Not only is it essential that these apprentices develop secure digital skills themselves, but they are likely to be responsible for helping children and other adults develop these skills. In particular, it is also important that they are able to lead others in the safe and secure use of digital technology.

The Apprenticeship Framework Consultation document makes no reference to the Welsh language nor does it stipulate whether or not the proposed pathways are available to students through the medium of Welsh. We feel strongly that the frameworks should make the position of the Welsh language clear. All pathways should be available to learners through the medium of Welsh or at least bilingually.

Consultation questions

1. Do you agree with the proposal for 20 pathways across Health and Social Care and Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development?

Yes

The number of pathways reflect the range of settings and occupational and management skills needed for this sector. The number also enables learners to follow a pathway best suited to their professional and personal needs and preferences.

2. Do you have any specific comments about the suitability of any of the 20 pathways?

Please use the number of the pathway as a reference when responding.

No. All the pathways are very relevant and reflect the nature of the skills and approaches needed for working within particular settings.

3. Do you agree with the proposal to offer options for people to undertake the Preparing for Leadership and Management qualification, along with one of the specialist pathways in Level 4 (specifically pathways 8, 13 and 19)?

Yes

We agree with the proposal to offer options for people to undertake the Preparation for Leadership and Management qualifications alongside their chosen area of specialism at level 4. This would provide learners with useful opportunities to develop their leadership and management skills. This strategy enables learners to gain valuable insights into the work of leaders and managers and provides a foundation for them to study the level 5 Management pathway in the future. This approach helps to mitigate the current situation where those not working in management positions find it difficult to gain the practical on-the-job managerial experience that they need to pursue level 5 and higher level qualifications.

4. Do you agree with the proposal to maintain the level of essential skills at level 2?

No

The proposal suggests setting essential skills at level 2 in line with other sectors in Wales for level 4 and 5 frameworks. Although this ensures some consistency between frameworks, we believe the level is too low, especially in the case of literacy. Apprentices following frameworks at level 3 and above in these settings hold very responsible positions. They are called on to document daily activities, write reports on those they care for and complete vital incident reports. For example, those working in children's services and in settings where they advocate on behalf of mental capacity or the mental health of those in their care, need a more sophisticated level of vocabulary and grammar as these reports are used by other professionals taking important decisions about people. Those already in managerial positions often act as mentors and sometimes assessors for apprentices studying for level 2 and level 3 qualifications. Hence those working at level 4 or level 5 need to have a good command of literacy in order to support those they supervise. Managers generally need to have effective literacy and numeracy skills that enable them to manage staff and finance. Apprentices may also benefit from opportunities to develop their essential skills to a higher level in areas specific to their vocation. For example, those working in children's care, play, learning and development are likely to have considerable involvement in developing children's literacy and numeracy skills, and will need to have secure knowledge and strong skills in these areas.

5. Do you agree with the proposal to not include digital literacy as an essential skill?

No

We believe that Welsh Government and Social Care Wales should reconsider this element of the qualification framework. We recommend that digital literacy should be a mandatory part of the qualification framework.

The Welsh Government's "Born Digital" agenda sets out the need to ensure almost all learning can be accessed through digital skills in the future. Not only is it essential that these apprentices develop secure digital skills themselves, they are likely to be responsible for helping children and other adults develop these skills in their future careers in health and social care or children's care, play and learning.

Many social care settings now have electronic management and care planning systems where information about the people in their care and staff information is stored. These systems are also used for practical planning such as work rotas in children's and adults' care home settings. It is important that staff, particularly at the higher qualification levels, are able to operate systems effectively and understand basic trouble shooting, security and safeguarding issues covered in the essential Digital Literacy skills qualification at level 2. We recognise that not all childcare settings have access to the internet and this may limit opportunities for apprentices to practise their digital skills.

In adult care settings there is increasing use of ICT and telecommunications especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. Video links have often been the only way for residents to connect with loved ones. Also, most GP surgeries are now conducting video 'consultations' with care home residents. Many care homes report that this has resulted in better and more frequent interaction and communication between GPs and care homes. It is therefore essential that all staff in care settings have a good level of digital skills.

6. Do you have any other comments or observations about the proposed apprenticeship frameworks?

The introduction of the level 4 and level 5 pathways may help to retain staff in face-to-face roles in care settings. It improves the career structure and adds to the professionalisation of services that are often undervalued in society, while also giving staff the skills they need to carry out their roles more effectively.

7. We would like to know your views on the effects that all the proposals in this consultation will have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- i) Opportunities for people to use Welsh**
- ii) Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.**

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased or negative effects be mitigated?

Please provide your comments in the space below:

The Apprenticeship Framework Consultation document makes no reference to the Welsh language nor does it stipulate whether or not the proposed pathways are available to students through the medium of Welsh.

Estyn feels strongly that the frameworks should make the position of the Welsh language clear. All pathways should be available to learners through the medium of Welsh or at least bilingually. This will ensure that learners who have undertaken their pre-16 education through the medium of Welsh can continue their studies in Welsh if that is their choice. It is essential that apprentices aspiring to work in Welsh-medium childcare develop strong Welsh language skills and become good language role models to the children in their care. It will also help to ensure a supply of employees who can work through the medium of Welsh in care and education settings. This supports Welsh Government's ambition to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050 and Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's ambitions to develop more Welsh-medium apprenticeships.

In line with this, further consideration is needed to ensure Welsh-medium resources produced to support these learning pathways are released simultaneously in Welsh and English.

The ability to use Welsh in the workplace is particularly important in childcare settings and in adult social care settings where residents' first language is Welsh. It is an essential skill when caring for someone with dementia whose first language is Welsh. Most settings now promote the use of the Welsh language as well as they can.

In a sector such as adult social care where it is often hard to recruit staff, to employ staff who are well trained and proficient in Welsh poses an extra challenge. More opportunity to train in Welsh could help to alleviate this situation.