

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



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Social Care Sector Skills Review

Response to a Consultation on the Social Care Sector
(Staff in Direct Care Settings) Skills Review

Information

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Social Care Sector 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 outlines the responses received to a consultation on proposals to address skills needs within the Social Care Sector in Wales.

Action required No further action required.

Further information Enquiries about this document should be directed 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
Tel: 01792 765891
Fax: 01792 765803
E-mail: socialcareskillsreview@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Additional copies Further copies may be obtained from:
www.wales.gov.uk

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

Foreword

The Care Council for Wales has welcomed the opportunity to work in partnership with DELLS through the research, reporting and now response process to this project. The project sought to provide a better and shared understanding of what is in place and what has been achieved in terms of the social care workforce in Wales and focuses on the opportunities, challenges and barriers to fully achieving the sustainable skilled and qualified workforce needed for social care service in Wales. The messages that emerged are well known to the sector and the consultation process has confirmed that there is significant consensus across the sector on the current position and action necessary to achieve the progress sought. This process has been useful in drawing out some of the particular issues that require more thought and action from all parties who resource, provide and receive learning in social care. We have the basis within this partnership to make a real difference to the quality and experience of learning in the care sector.

It is extremely fortuitous to have this response at the same time as we are planning for the future workforce opportunities and challenges that will come from the publication of Fulfilled Lives Supportive Communities, the Welsh Assembly Government's 10 year vision for the social care sector in Wales. At the same time the Care Council are taking forward our Sector Skills Agreement process in Wales, from the research to the action phases where, as a result of this project and partnership, we will be in a stronger position to broker agreements with key stakeholders and ensure that many of the recommendations contained within this report can become a reality.

This report is also timely since it coincides with the preparation for the extension of the registration to social care workers. The proposed recommendations, together with the ongoing work of Care Council for Wales, will open some new doors to individuals and organisations to develop a culture of lifelong learning, and ensure that the skills, knowledge and competence of staff remain current and relevant.

The involvement of the social care sector and the adult learning sector, in both the research process and the consultation, has ensured authenticity and balance in the various opinions reported in this document. It also notes some of the many strategies already employed within the sector to address the issues. One thing is clear, this document provides a significant opening to support the delivery the Council's aim of securing a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce that can deliver effective and appropriate services across the whole sector and to ensure that the learning provided is focussed and relevant to the sector.

We look forward to working with DELLS, employers and other key stakeholders in taking the recommendations forward and contributing to a social care workforce fit for the demands of the 21st Century.

RHIAN HUWS-WILLIAMS,
Chief Executive, Care Council for Wales.

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Background

The Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) published a consultation document in August 2006 based on an in-depth review of skills needs within the social care sector in Wales. The aim of the Skills Review, which was conducted in partnership with the Care Council for Wales in their role as the Welsh arm of the Sector Skills Council for the social care sector, was to improve skills in the sector by widening learning opportunities, raising the quality of learning provision and improving learner achievement. It focused on 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.

The consultation document invited comments on proposals to address skills needs within the social care sector in Wales. It defined skill needs identified within the sector through independent research and made recommendations on how these needs may be addressed through action planned or already in progress through Welsh Assembly Government and Care Council for Wales's programmes and policies. Where needs may not be addressed through existing or planned activity, the consultation invited comments on what additional action might be taken.

This Report provides a summary analysis of the consultation responses received and incorporates more detailed examples of action already in progress throughout the sector and outlines recommendations for further action by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Care Council for Wales.

Summary of Consultation Responses - Overview

A total of 44 consultation responses were received from a range of organisations across the social care and learning sectors. In general, respondents welcomed the opportunity to engage in discussion regarding the skills review and broadly agreed with the issues outlined. There was a strong emphasis on the need for further partnership working between the sector, DELLS, Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (SSIW) / Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales (CSIW)¹ and learning providers, and a clear desire to build on the established and successful partnerships that already exist within the sector, for example the Regional Social Care Partnerships and the Social Care Workforce Development Partnerships. There was also a strong appreciation of the positive progress that has already been made in addressing many of the sector's issues and a desire and commitment to build on this work when taking forward actions resulting from this review. The need to align the next phase of this review with that of "Fulfilled Lives Supportive Communities", the wider ten-year strategy for social services in Wales, was clearly emphasised by many.

¹ SSIW and CSIW will be integrated to form a new organisation from April 2007

Detailed Summary of Consultation Responses, Action in Progress and Recommendations for Further Action

QUALIFICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

Q1. 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?

There was broad consensus that the research had captured the key issues. In particular, respondents emphasised the following:

- difficulties in employers releasing staff for off-the-job training;
- shortage/inconsistency of assessors (including Welsh-medium assessors) and the subsequent delays on time taken to complete qualifications;
- high rates of staff turnover (in particular to other related sectors e.g. health) leading to a disincentive for employers to invest in training;
- lack of clarity around qualifications, in particular pre-entry qualifications, and the impact on young people's ability to enter the sector which means young people are often lost to other sectors;
- Inconsistencies and difficulties in accessing funding for learning provision.

Q2. 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?

Particular issues were raised regarding a lack of clarity/suitability of pre-entry qualifications and the difficulties that this presents for both employers and potential employees (particularly, though not exclusively, for 16 to 18 year olds). It was suggested that the value of vocationally related qualifications as pre-entry should be reconsidered by the sector, within the regulatory requirements.

National Minimum Standards were cited by many as a barrier to upskilling of the current workforce due to the need to prioritise funding for qualifications that meet the regulatory frameworks and the insufficiency of NVQs as a progression qualification. Lack of career progression pathways were also cited by several respondents as a key issue for the sector.

Other barriers identified were:

- basic skills deficits;
- shortage of assessors;
- lack of understanding regarding sector qualifications generally.

Action in Progress – Care Council for Wales Social Care Accolades 2005

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council have developed innovative learning for night shift workers (by employing nightshift assessors) in the Council's residential homes to counter the difficulty this group experienced in work-based learning and access to assessors.

Action in Progress – Consultation Feedback

Cardiff Social Care Workforce Development Partnership and Coleg Glan Hafren have developed a local learning hub as the basis for partnership working between Cardiff SCWDP and Coleg Glan Hafren. They have together developed a very successful 9 day Induction Programme.

Q3. Is the current MA/FMA 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?

Respondents strongly agreed that the framework is not addressing the sector's needs. This was mainly felt to be due to the influence of National Minimum Standards training targets on employer priorities, the need to undertake learning out of the workplace (in particular in relation to the Technical Certificate and Key Skills), lack of flexibility within the framework and the difficulties that many employees experience in completing the Technical Certificate and Key Skills (which also presents problems for learning providers in needing to commit additional support for these learners). It was suggested that evidence that the framework is not addressing the sector's needs is provided through the current low completion rates. Respondents also indicated that lack of availability of FMAs is driving employers to access MAs despite staff not being capable of undertaking the level 3 qualification.

However, some felt that the framework did go some way to meeting the sector's needs and could provide a sound grounding, but that it was still too onerous on employers, and time constraints hindered completion. One respondent suggested that although reducing the additional elements required to complete the framework (i.e. Technical Certificate and Key Skills) would certainly increase completion rates, this would also serve to reduce standards/levels of knowledge and understanding.

Evidence from one local authority corporate apprenticeship scheme, however, suggested that low completion rates were "not dominantly attributable to content, overall design or delivery method but individual motivation to complete" which suggested an issue regarding selection of candidates rather than one of design of delivery of the framework.

Q4. 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?

There was general agreement on the need for social care services to be provided through the medium of Welsh, though it was acknowledged that this would vary considerably from one local authority area to another. Several respondents indicated that there was a need to increase the services currently provided through the medium of Welsh and that this would require an increase in Welsh-medium provision.

However, learning providers generally reported that take-up of Welsh-medium provision was low. There were many examples of Welsh-speaking learners who preferred to undertake their learning in English as they were not confident in doing so through the medium of Welsh, primarily due to the level of written Welsh required or due to the very technical language involved.

Several respondents highlighted issues around the increasing number of overseas workers in the sector and the impact that this will have not only on the provision of Welsh-medium services/learning but also on the need for ESOL provision.

Action in Progress – Care Council for Wales Social Care Accolades 2005

Pendine Park Care Homes and Domiciliary Agency have joined a small informal network of UK Care Providers and developed a teaching care centre in Wrexham to promote social care as a career and to value the work already being undertaken by staff. Learning programmes are offered onsite and offsite through distance learning. Learning is also available in the medium of Welsh. Trainers offer flexible working times to suit the requirements of care establishments which offer 24 hour care.

Carmarthenshire County Council have achieved substantial progress in NVQs achievement of staff in local authority provision and in services commissioned by the local authority through a well co-ordinated programmes of learning support and a strong partnership with local colleges.

Coleg Sir Gar established a project to assist private SMEs within the sector to address major drawbacks in the skills and training development. The project provided training & support, to secure a relevant skills base for the industry.

Recommendations for further action

1. Develop a better shared understanding of pre-entry qualifications throughout the sector in order to inform development of a Sector Qualifications Strategy.

1.1 Care Council for Wales to continue to work with awarding bodies to increase relevance of pre-entry qualifications

1.2 Care Council for Wales to continue to work with the sector to increase understanding and appreciation of learning acquired prior to entering the sector

1.3 Care Council for Wales to develop a work-focused learning pathway for the Social Care sector

1.4 Care Council for Wales and DELLS to work in partnership on the development of a Sector Qualifications Strategy as part of the Sector Skills Agreement process

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Q1. Has the research captured the reasons for low recruitment and retention levels within the social care sector and, if not, what additional reasons need to be considered?

There was a broad consensus that the research had captured the key issues. In particular, respondents emphasised the following:

- poor pay and conditions;
- delays in obtaining CRB checks;
- lack of clear career pathways;
- impact of competition from other sectors, in particular Health;
- social care often viewed as a 'soft option' / 'last resort' when selecting courses.

Other issues identified were:

- the requirement to complete NVQ combined with the lack of career progression leads to people leaving the sector;
- knowledge of sector is inconsistent in schools / careers;
- particular issues (especially for domiciliary care) in relation to transport needs, especially in rural areas.

Evidence from one local authority corporate apprenticeship scheme suggests that factors limiting successful recruitment included: poor information and image from schools and careers; lack of clarity and transparency on age and legal requirements for care work; and lack of joined up thinking regarding

career progression. In addition, exit questionnaires show reasons for leaving vary from personal circumstances to work-related issues e.g. hours/patterns of work.

Q2. 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?

Respondents indicated that there is anecdotal evidence to support these perceptions, including:

- a general lack of information available at a local level about careers/options available in social care;
- poor take-up of recent recruitment initiatives and high dropout rates from care courses;
- young people appearing to be unaware of the age restrictions and accessing courses not linked to the Qualifications Framework;
- accounts of learners who have been advised to pursue qualifications in care despite a lack of interest in this route.

Many felt that the lack of clear progression routes adversely affects the quality of careers information that can be provided, and several felt that the poor pay and conditions within the sector has a negative impact on perceptions of the sector both among young people and those advising them.

Action in Progress – Consultation Feedback

Mid Wales Social Care Partnership, with funding from the Care Council for Wales, have produced an information pack of five bilingual case studies targeting farming families. This project has opened up new avenues for collaboration and new working relationships, particularly within the agricultural community. The use of a local agency, Iaith Ystwyth, to research local contacts was important and the interest generated by the packs to attract people to the care sector is being monitored.

Action in Progress – Care Council for Wales Social Care Accolades 2005

Fairways Care, a company with care homes in Bangor and Anglesey employing over 110 staff, have achieved a remarkably high level of staff retention. Recruitment costs were kept exceptionally low and up to three quarters of care staff have worked with the company for longer than most clients have been resident.

Q3. 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?

There was strong agreement amongst respondents that wider choice of work experience opportunities would help to address negative perceptions of the sector. However, it was suggested that this should not be restricted simply to young people but should be extended to potential mature recruits and returnees to the labour market.

A number of key difficulties were identified in the provision of work experience within the sector. These included:

- difficulties in offering meaningful and worthwhile work experience to under 18s and general confusion regarding age restrictions;
- issues regarding the need to undertake CRB checks for those on work experience and in particular the lack of portability of these checks amongst employers which limits the ability to offer a variety of employer placements to an individual;
- capacity issues, in particular amongst smaller employers, with fewer staff available to supervise those on work experience placements;
- unsuitable working hours/shift patterns;
- the need to consider from the service user perspective;
- lack of awareness amongst employers as to the potential benefits of taking on work experience placements.

Action in Progress – DELLS Skills Development Fund

In Blaenau Gwent, a social care intermediate labour market / job match programmes offering paid work placements in conjunction with local employers and Jobcentre Plus was provided with funding from the Care Council for Wales through the Skills Development Fund. The programme matched individuals to vacancies and provided some induction training. It was deemed a positive experience by employers.

Action in Progress – Consultation Feedback

In 2006 Care Council for Wales produced Care Path, and interactive Carom that provides information and support documentation for employers, learners and teachers/lecturers on the expectations and restrictions around work placements in the social care sector. This has been distributed through schools, colleges, social care partnerships and Careers Wales

Q4. How effectively could the partnership approach to social work degree training be effectively applied to those training in social care?

In general, respondents felt that this would provide a good basis, in particular through building on the good partnerships that already exist. Indeed, in some areas such work is already being progressed.

Respondents generally felt that wider application of this approach would be heavily reliant on the commitment and flexibility of all key partners. One respondent suggested designating a certain proportion and type of posts as development opportunities under this approach.

Q5. 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?

Respondents generally agreed that lack of portability presented an issue in all aspects. Lack of clarity around pre-entry qualifications was identified as a particular issue for some, whilst others felt that entry to the sector was less of a problem due to training being provided through the Care Council for Wales Social Care Induction Framework and NVQ.

Respondents indicated that portability of qualifications would certainly help in avoiding staff having to repeat learning, in particular where they may already have higher level qualifications than the required level 2. This was identified as an issue both for young people entering the sector and for mature entrants, and was seen as particularly important given issues experienced in recruiting to the sector.

Some respondents expressed the view that the focus on NMS combined with lack of portability of qualifications hindered employees progressing within the sector. Others identified particular issues in respect of portability of qualifications for overseas workers.

Q6. What are the basic literacy and numeric 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?

The general consensus among respondents was that there was a need for further research to identify basic skills needs within the sector. Some felt that there were likely to be high basic skills needs and that these needs are often the primary reason for non-completion of NVQs, which in turn affects the ability to meet NMS requirements. The Care Council for Wales are currently commissioning a piece of research to look at basic skills needs within the sector which will identify the basic skills requirements of the sector before looking at the basic skills levels of staff.

Several respondents felt that basic skills were not an issue for those entering the statutory sector or those entering via work-based learning routes, since they will have been automatically assessed, but it is more difficult to engage the current workforce. Many felt that the needs of the current workforce must be handled sensitively.

Some respondents indicated that basic skills needs were likely to be a particular problem for overseas workers.

Progress in Action – Consultation Feedback

Many respondents welcomed the high standard of recruitment material now available, for example the Care Council for Wales' "Faces of Care". Some local/regional partnerships, for example Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, highlighted good working relationships with Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus, and others welcomed recent improvements in the provision of careers advice. In addition, it was felt that the Learning Coaches being developed as part of the 14-19 Learning Pathways will also help in raising awareness of the demands and diversity of the sector.

Several respondents welcomed the guide to work experience (Care Path) recently produced by the Care Council for Wales, and Social Care in Partnership South-east Wales reported that they are currently discussing the development of a new draft work experience model. Others are introducing taster days and 'expert classes' as a way of introducing young people to the sector.

Recommendations for further action

2. Build on research work currently underway to inform an action plan for Basic Skills within the sector

2.1 Care Council for Wales to complete work to develop a strategic plan to address Basic Skills needs within the sector and to implement an action plan to support delivery of this strategy

2.2 DELLS to support Care Council for Wales in delivering this Basic Skills strategy through enhanced links with Basic Skills Agency and promoting availability of appropriate support products e.g. Skillbuild

FUNDING

Q1. What are the main difficulties experienced in accessing public funds for learning provision within the sector?

There was strong agreement amongst respondents that the main difficulties around funding are the inconsistency/diversity of funding streams and a lack of awareness /clarity regarding the funding available. Many felt that complicated rules prevent people from accessing funding, in particular ESF, and lead to unnecessary competition amongst providers. Some suggested particular difficulties in accessing funding at level 2 and others commented that there is a need to fund older workers who may have previously missed out on funding.

Issues were reported around availability and access to SCWDP funding, in particular for the independent and voluntary sector, and some respondents reported difficulties for employers in exercising choice of training providers due to capacity and quality issues. Further Education Institutions reported issues around a lack of funding for growth.

Q2. 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?

Several respondents reported anecdotal evidence of providers delivering qualifications that are not recognised within the qualifications framework, particularly pre-entry qualifications, which causes confusion for employers and learners and which some respondents suggest may be due to a lack of clarity amongst learning providers as to the qualifications required. However, other respondents reported that they are not aware of such evidence.

Some respondents suggested a need for caution in removing such qualifications altogether as they are a recognised and valid route into Nursing and Social Work degrees. The issue is therefore suggested to be one more of selection and appropriate guidance than of the qualifications being delivered.

Recommendations for further action

3. Improve relevance of social care learning provision funded by the Welsh Assembly Government.

3.1 DELLS and SSIW to review Welsh Assembly Government funding for learning provision relevant to the social care sector, to explore opportunities with the sector to pilot pooling of funding on a local basis and to work with the Care Council for Wales to ensure that agreed funding arrangements are clearly communicated to the sector

3.2 DELLS to ensure Care Council for Wales are actively involved in development of any ESF-funded projects aimed at improving skills within the social care sector

QUALITY

Q1. What evidence is there to support concerns raised regarding the quality of learning provision in social care?

Several respondents reported variations in quality between assessment centres/learning providers/awarding bodies and issues regarding a shortage of assessors with recent, relevant vocational experience.

Learning providers reported issues in getting staff released from the workplace to undertake off-the-job elements of learning, which in turn impacts on completion rates, and difficulties in assessing quality on the basis of outcomes rather than distance-travelled.

Some respondents suggested that the problem may not be the learning experience itself but the application of learning on return to the workplace. Others suggested there are issues around the relevance of learning provision to the workplace and/or the individual job role, in particular the variations in NVQ units covered which could lead to the most relevant units being neglected. Particular issues were noted in domiciliary care where it is indicated there are likely to be particular issues for assessment by external bodies, and which may lead to duplication of effort since regulations require supervision and CPD of all employers.

Action in Progress – Consultation Feedback

Some respondents highlighted improvements in the quality of learning delivery which have been achieved through SCWDP-supported partnerships.

In Coleg Powys, interchange between learning practitioners and employers has enabled the college to provide additional specific qualifications that meet sector needs.

The new Practitioner Network on Ageing based at the Open University in Wales offers its website as a resource for practitioners working with older people to exchange and share views and practice. The website offers access to the general public and hence employers who can then be made aware of practice innovation.

Action in Progress – DELLS Quality Improvement Fund

In 2006, DELLS supported a project, through the Quality Improvement Fund, to set up a health and social care network in North Wales. The project, led by the University of Wales Bangor, aimed to support research into improving retention, training and the attainment of Modern Apprenticeships in Health and Social Care and Child Care. A key outcome from the project was the development of detailed assessment guidance packs for FMAs and MAs in Health and Social Care which are now available to download on the Welsh Assembly Government website.

Recommendations for further action

4. Develop a better understanding of the quality of learning provision within the social care sector

4.1 DELLS to commission Estyn Area Inspection of learning provision in social care

4.2 Care Council for Wales and DELLS to work with awarding bodies to improve understanding of the quality of learning delivered by independent providers

ACTION

Q1. 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?

Respondents generally welcomed these developments but felt that their impact on the sector would only be maximised if they are developed and implemented in full consultation with stakeholders, and if there is support available to ensure that these developments are sustainable. However, a concern was raised regarding what was described as “the complexity and disjointed range of initiatives”.

There was broad consensus that a clearer and wider framework of qualifications would lead to greater clarity amongst employers on the skills and knowledge expected of new entrants and their anticipated career pathway, more effective preparation and signposting by stakeholders, and greater joining up and portability of learning provision.

Specific concerns were raised regarding the availability of Welsh-medium provision/opportunities in 14 to 19 Learning Pathways.

Q2. 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?

There was a mixed response to this question, with some respondents indicating that internships or job rotation models may help to facilitate better career progression through the opportunity to gain experience and skills, whilst others indicated that they would be ineffective and particularly difficult to implement in smaller employers.

The majority of respondents felt that identification and communication of clear progression routes would have a positive impact on career progression within the sector, whilst some felt that increased portability of qualifications and better quality work placements would assist greatly.

Action in Progress – SSIW Sharing the Learning

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council use age profile and qualification data about direct care staff to identify training needs and inform succession planning. Information about vacancies is being used by a number of authorities to feed into recruitment and retention policies.

Q3. 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?

Whilst respondents generally welcomed any increase in employer engagement several expressed the view that as long as NVQs remain the focus of NMS requirements employers would not place any value on FMA/MA frameworks and that without adequate explanation these developments may simply add to the confusion.

Q4. 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?

Respondents strongly agreed that more flexible delivery would help to address the needs of the social care sector. It was felt that this would contribute strongly to an increase in attainment levels and thereby result in a more qualified workforce, whilst also enabling employers to focus on creating the potential for staff to progress within the workforce. It would also help to address current confusion and inconsistencies around funding streams.

However, some respondents reported the need for more prescriptive criteria in order to encourage employers to engage in learning outside of this flexible delivery, whilst others felt it would hinder CPD and/or that Estyn would have concerns regarding the non-delivery of other elements of the framework. Another expressed the view that if employers are not prepared to support staff through the whole framework by allocating time for learning then they shouldn't expect to receive funding.

Q5. 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?

The majority of respondents felt that this would be a positive development which would result in less unproductive competition, more focused learning delivery, a raised profile for the sector and better sharing of good practice. Some suggested that this could be facilitated through existing networks and build on current good practice.

However, some felt that there was a need for further consultation with the sector on these developments and others thought that there would be a need to ensure independent guidance for local hubs in order to assess learning providers' areas of expertise, to monitor quality, and ensure that referrals are being made appropriately.

Q6. 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?

All respondents strongly agreed that there was a need for a specific marketing/communications campaign though some felt that this could only be successful if issues around poor pay and conditions and lack of career progression were addressed. Others emphasised the need to ensure that an appropriate referral mechanism is in place and that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate any increased interest in the sector. Many welcomed the work that has already been done in this area and suggested a need to build on existing best practice and utilise existing materials.

Several respondents felt that such a campaign should be targeted at schools, colleges, training providers, careers advisors, Jobcentre Plus and parents whereas others thought the target audience should be the wider public. Some emphasised the need to focus on all ages rather than just young people, and others suggested targeting under-represented groups in the sector e.g. men, ethnic minorities and Welsh speakers.

Suggested key messages included:

- promotion of sector as complex and diverse, delivering quality services by competent workers;
- a worthwhile, satisfying, rewarding and professional career;
- a diverse and varied career;
- a career of choice with opportunities for progression;
- a career for individuals with a passion for caring for others;
- focus on service users and the relevance of the care sector to all individuals e.g. "Who will care for me now?"/ "What sort of person do you want caring for your family?" / a "can you/are you" approach;
- emphasise links / equality with Health sector;
- opportunity to stay in, and give back to, local community.

Q7. 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?

Respondents strongly agreed that the sector would benefit from such a programme, in particular recognising the crucial role of managers in recruitment, retention and progression, and in embedding a learning culture. Several respondents reported that such a need has already been identified by local/regional partnerships and that work is underway in some areas which could provide the basis for taking forward this work on a wider basis. However, one respondent felt that there were sufficient generic management development programmes in place and that there was no need for an additional programme.

Several respondents felt that there would be a need to encourage smaller employers to access this provision and in particular to ensure that take-up is not restricted to those who are already proactively engaged in learning. Affordability and addressing staff replacement issues were felt to be critical in achieving this.

Action in Progress – Social Care Institute for Excellence

The Social Care Institute for Excellence has developed a Leadership in Social Care Programme, and will shortly be making presentations of this work to managers in Wales. The programme is designed to provide an outcome-focused framework for development. It draws on participants' experiences and relates these to their work environment.

Q8. 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?

Several respondents felt that there was a need for additional targeted funding to improve quality and that this should be aligned to the specific learning needs of the sector. Some suggested that there was a need to target support for quality improvement at those learning providers who are not meeting the quality threshold, whereas others thought funding for learning provision should only be allocated to those who are meeting the quality threshold. One respondent emphasised the difficulty in evaluating the outcomes of learning provision in terms of improved outcomes for service users, and suggested that this may be an issue for regional partnerships to consider.

Some respondents thought that specific support should be made available to providers to address additional learning needs, for example basic skills. Others felt that releasing staff for off-the-job training was a particular issue that needs to be addressed.

Many agreed that regular interchange between learning practitioners and employers would be of benefit, and some cited examples of where this is already happening and is enabling sharing of best practice and more joined-up and relevant development of learning provision.

Q9. Would you support a quality mark system for social care training providers, and how might this operate?

There was a mixed response to this question with many respondents indicating that a quality mark system would be beneficial in helping to raise standards of training across the sector. Many suggested such a system could build on existing systems applied by Estyn, DELLS and awarding bodies, would require regular assessment of high criteria to ensure consistent, quality delivery, and would need to be open to all.

However, others felt that it may destabilise local market supply, lead to less accessible provision/funding, may disadvantage smaller learning providers due to the financial costs often associated with quality mark systems, and may simply duplicate work of Estyn, DELLS and awarding bodies.

Q10. 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?

Respondents strongly agreed that the sector would benefit from a more collaborative approach and that this would be facilitated effectively through building on the work of existing regional and local partnerships. However, some respondents felt that there was a need to involve the independent sector more heavily than is currently the case.

Many felt that a more collaborative approach would lead to more standardised provision for the sector whilst also ensuring that local/regional learning needs are effectively met and reducing unnecessary duplication. Some suggested that there was a need for a more formalised approach to current partnerships which could be utilised as a channel for funding for learning provision locally/regionally.

Recommendations for further action

5. Care Council for Wales, supported by DELLS, to develop proposals for a pilot project to subsidise delivery of NVQs as part of the FMA/MA framework in order to upskill the current workforce whilst also encouraging employers to engage in learning outside of this flexible delivery

6. Consideration to be given to development of a Leadership and Management Strategy for the social care sector in Wales as part of the workforce action plan being developed through 'Fulfilled Lives Supportive Communities'

7. Through the development of the 'Fulfilled Lives Supportive Communities' workforce action plan, explore ways in which employers within the social care sector can be encouraged and empowered to fulfil their responsibilities in respect of workforce development

Summary of Recommendations and Implementation Plan

A full summary of the recommended actions, responsible organisations and timescales is listed on the following pages. Implementation of the actions will be overseen by a continued partnership between DELLS, SSIW and the Care Council for Wales. The findings of the Review, and lessons learned from implementation of the recommended actions, will be fed into the Care Council for Wales' Sector Skills Agreement Process, which is running from September 2006 to November 2007. The findings will also be considered by the Welsh Assembly Government in taking forward the actions from 'Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities', the recent consultation document charting the strategic direction of social services in Wales to 2016.

Recommendations for Further Action

Ref:	Action	Responsible organisation(s)	Timescale
1.1	<i>Care Council for Wales to continue to work with awarding bodies to increase relevance of pre-entry qualifications</i>	Care Council for Wales	Ongoing from April 2007
1.2	<i>Care Council for Wales to continue to work with the sector to increase understanding and appreciation of learning acquired prior to entering the sector</i>	Care Council for Wales	Ongoing from April 2007
1.3	<i>Care Council for Wales to develop a work-focused learning pathway for the Social Care sector</i>	Care Council for Wales	Pilot to commence in September 2007
1.4	<i>Care Council for Wales and DELLS to work in partnership on the development of a Sector Qualifications Strategy as part of the Sector Skills Agreement process</i>	Care Council for Wales & DELLS	April 2007- March 2008
2.1	<i>Care Council for Wales to complete work to develop a strategic plan to address Basic Skills needs within the sector and to implement an action plan to support delivery of this strategy</i>	Care Council for Wales	Strategic Plan and Action Plan produced by April 2007

2.2	<i>DELLS to support Care Council for Wales in delivering this Basic Skills strategy through enhanced links with Basic Skills Agency and promoting availability of appropriate support products e.g. Skillbuild</i>	DELLS	From April 2007 in accordance with timescales outlined in Strategic Plan
3.1	<i>DELLS and SSIW to review Welsh Assembly Government funding for learning provision relevant to the social care sector, to explore opportunities with the sector to pilot pooling of funding on a local basis and to work with the Care Council for Wales to ensure that agreed funding arrangements are clearly communicated to the sector</i>	DELLS & SSIW	April 2007 – March 2008
3.2	<i>DELLS to ensure Care Council for Wales are actively involved in development of any ESF-funded projects aimed at improving skills within the social care sector</i>	DELLS	Ongoing from April 2007
4.1	<i>DELLS to commission Estyn Area Inspection of learning provision in social care</i>	DELLS	April 2008 – March 2009
4.2	<i>Care Council for Wales and DELLS to work with awarding bodies to improve understanding of the quality of learning delivered by independent providers</i>	Care Council for Wales & DELLS	April 2007 – March 2008

5	<i>Care Council for Wales, supported by DELLS, to develop proposals for a pilot project to subsidise delivery of NVQs as part of the FMA/MA framework in order to upskill the current workforce whilst also encouraging employers to engage in learning outside of this flexible delivery</i>	Care Council for Wales	September 2007- March 2008
6	<i>Consideration to be given to development of a Leadership and Management Strategy for the social care sector in Wales as part of the workforce action plan being developed through 'Fulfilled Lives Supportive Communities'</i>	SSIW, DELLS & Care Council for Wales	April 2007 - March 2008
7	<i>Through the development of the 'Fulfilled Lives Supportive Communities' workforce action plan, explore ways in which employers within the social care sector can be encouraged and empowered to fulfil their responsibilities in respect of workforce development</i>	SSIW, DELLS & Care Council for Wales	April 2007 – March 2008

List of Consultation Respondents

Mid Wales Social Care Partnership
Coleg Powys
Open University in Wales
Social Care in Partnership (South East)
Social Services Department, Caerphilly Borough Council
Caerphilly CCET
United Kingdom Home Care Association Limited
Expert Reference Group Domiciliary Care Wales
University of Wales Swansea
Bridgend Social Care Workforce Development Partnership
College of Occupational Therapists
Care Council for Wales
City and Guilds
Enhanced Care Training
Mind Cymru
Swansea College
Pembrokeshire County Council / Social Care Workforce Development Partnership
Neath Port Talbot College
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Gwynedd Social Care Workforce Development Partnership
Walsingham
Monmouthshire Social and Housing Services
Workforce Development Team, Directorate of Adult Social Care, Flintshire County Council
ARC Cymru Training Partnership
Welsh Language Board
Newport Social Care Workforce Development Partnership
Newport City Council
Care Forum Wales
Care Working Group, Y Gamfa Bilingualism Sub-Group
Development Department, Gwynedd Council
Age Alliance Wales
NCH Cymru
Coleg Morgannwg
Professional Development Team, Social Services Department, Denbighshire County Council
Carmarthenshire County Council
Gorseinon College
Deeside College
Torfaen Training
Northop Business Centre
Conwy County Borough Council
Action 4 Employment
Social Services and Housing Directorate, City and County of Swansea
Social Services, Health and Housing Department, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council