

Best Practice Guidance for Learning and Assessment

in Social Care, the Care of Children and Young
People and Early Years in Wales



Noddir gan
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Welsh Government

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Introduction, values and principles

Where has it come from?

In June 2012 the Deputy Minister for Social Services, Gwenda Thomas announced a Bill would be brought forward in Wales on Regulation and Inspection in Social Care¹. The White Paper *Future of Regulation and Inspection of Care and Support in Wales* followed in 2014 with the *Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Bill* laid before the Senedd in February 2015. This legislation further extends the powers of the Care Council for Wales (Care Council) to regulate social care training when it becomes Social Care Wales in 2017.

During 2012 the Care Council conducted research to identify the experiences of employers and learning providers on the quality of training and education and its outcomes. This research found some excellent practice, but also identified inconsistency in practice and outcomes that required standardisation to ensure best practice and public assurance.

What does it do?

This best practice guidance begins the process to improve and standardise quality. It identifies expectations and best practice in the delivery and assessment of qualifications and training in the social care, early years and child care sector in Wales. This is intended to be applicable across the whole sector and will assist individuals who use services to be confident and feel safe that the people providing care and support are suitably trained, qualified and properly assessed. Additional standards for quality improvement will be identified for learning and assessment for those in the social care workforce who are regulated and registered by the Care Council. These standards will follow.

Whistleblowing

If anyone involved in education and learning in the sector (including individuals who use services, employers or learners) has concerns that the best practice described in this document is not being followed, please contact the Care Council through whistleblowing. learning@ccwales.org.uk.

¹ Consultation on the Bill published 30 September 2013



Who is it for?

Awarding bodies that award, or plan to award, qualifications in Wales are already regulated by Welsh Government through the General Conditions of Recognition². General Conditions of Recognition are regulatory powers from the *Education Act, 1997* that include such things as making sure that the organisations that offer qualifications are suitably resourced to do so; that the qualifications themselves are fit for purpose and that standards are maintained over time.

This best practice guidance is a technical document intended as a means of clarifying quality improvement expectations and benchmarks to awarding organisations, learning providers, assessors, verification staff, teachers and tutors. More accessible documents are available for employers and learners.

The expectations in this best practice guide are additional to General Conditions for Recognition requirements (www.gov.wales/educationandskills) and work continues to identify ways to put into effect some enforceable standards around assessment practice that will support the application of this guidance.

The guidance is primarily focused around the learning and assessment for recommended or required qualifications for the sector (Diplomas). There are however common principles for other learning.

It is the responsibility of those involved in assuring and improving quality at all stages of the 'learning journey' to be familiar with this best practice guidance and to seek to achieve the expectations it contains. The responsibility for ensuring quality learning standards is rooted with those who lead, manage social care and children and young people services. The basis for this is clear in *Practice Guidance for Social Care Managers Registered with the Care Council for Wales* (paragraphs 35, 37 www.ccwales.org.uk/practice-guidance-for-managers).

² At time of writing The General Conditions for Recognition 2012 have been updated, and issued to awarding organisations but have not been published.



Values and principles

These guidelines are written in the context of the values and nine principles contained in *Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action 2011* (www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/guidance1/services/?lang=en)

- A strong voice and real control for citizens
- Supporting each other
- Safety
- Respect
- Recovery and restoration
- Adjusting to new circumstances
- Stability
- Simplicity
- Professionalism

Understanding and practice of core values and attitudes in social care needs to underpin all learning and development.

The value base embraces dignity and respect, rights, choice, equality, diversity, inclusion, individuality and confidentiality - all of which are promoted through the citizen-led approach. It is important that all workers in social care follow the *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care*. This is the foundation of current social care practice; child-centered practice offers a similar approach in the early years field. It is vital that staff not only learn the right skills and knowledge, but practice within this value base as without these principles, no amount of skills or knowledge will ensure a quality experience for the individual who uses services.

Learning and development needs to reflect the core values of social care and early years and learning providers should particularly value:

- supporting the development of excellence in services through the provision of high quality learning experiences
- equality, diversity and inclusion in relation to fair access to learning and development for all the experiences the learner brings to their own learning and to others
- putting people who use services and carers at the heart of their plans for learning and development
- reflection, evaluation and development of their own practice as providers of learning and development and the embedding of the social care and early years value base within all learning activities.



1. Best practice for awarding organisations in relation to Welsh context and language

Wales is a diverse, bilingual country. Encouraging and supporting the development of Welsh language skills in the education and training of the workforce, benefits workers, learners and the individuals who use social care and child care services. Enabling individuals to communicate with workers using their first language promotes dignity and shows respect. In health and social care the aim to actively offer everyone seeking advice, care or support a service through the medium of Welsh is important. This ensures that individuals receive more accurate assessments and appropriate, effective support and care.

The workforce also benefits from additional opportunities to use and develop Welsh language skills. The *Welsh Language Act 1993*, clarified and extended by the *Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011* places a duty on organisations in contact with the public in Wales to 'try to have enough Welsh speakers with the appropriate skills to provide a full service through the medium of Welsh'.

Awarding organisations are in contact with the public and therefore subject to the act. This is further supported by the Welsh Government's three-year strategic framework *More than just words*, the Welsh-medium Education Strategy and the Welsh Language Development Area of Learning in the Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales.

Best practice expectations for awarding organisations with provision for social care, early years and child care in Wales should include:

- Awarding organisations should aim to support assessors who can speak Welsh to use the language at work, in their dealings with each other, with their learners and ultimately with individuals who use social care and child care services
- Awarding organisations should ensure through verification processes, that centres providing training and assessment through the medium of Welsh or bilingually, have assessors and internal quality assurers (IQAs) who are able to conduct assessments and quality assurance through the medium of Welsh. (in support of C1 General Conditions of Recognition)
- Awarding organisations should encourage and support Welsh language or bilingual documentation, learning and support materials for learners and assessors and these should be promoted (in support of D2 General Conditions of Recognition)
- Awarding organisations are expected to ensure and monitor³ the use of Welsh by their centres or bilingual documents for assessment and quality assurance as required
- Awarding organisations must ensure centers⁴ use appropriate services for effective Welsh / English translation and proofreading of centre documents and learning resources

^{3,4} Under General Conditions of Recognition Condition C Arrangements with Third Parties



- Awarding organisations should hold a database of external quality assurers (EQAs) who are Welsh speaking and understand the Welsh context and culture. If necessary awarding organisations should train additional EQAs to work through the medium of Welsh where there is demand
- Qualification certificates awarded in Wales must be available in Welsh if requested by the learner or centre. This provision should be **promoted** and **made clear** to all centres and learners
- Welsh context, sector standards, regulation, legislation, policies and imperatives should be clearly embedded in qualifications, learning materials and guidance provided by awarding organisations. This may be in partnership arrangements (in support of C2.3, C2.5, D2 General Conditions of Recognition)
- Awarding organisations should actively participate in Wales – specific sector quality forums such as the Care Sector Liaison and Quality Group with Care Council for Wales (and any successor body), key stakeholders and qualification regulators. This will require the awarding organisation to meet regularly to discuss the policy and legislative imperatives that impact directly and indirectly upon social care, early years and child care services in Wales. This forum will provide opportunities to discuss initiatives to improve quality of learning delivery and consider programmes of work led by the Care Council on setting standards and strengthening the regulation of social care and early years and childcare training and assessment
- Awarding organisations should collect and share with Care Council for Wales, specific data to show the journey and achievement of learners (completion rates and time frames for completion) in the sector in Wales. The awarding organisation should use this to identify themes relating to the delivery and quality of training and learning, share these with the Care Council and work collaboratively to consider these issues and offer solutions (in support of C2.3 General Conditions of Recognition)
- Awarding organisations must provide support for their centres via sector experts with relevant knowledge of the Welsh context to give direct, accessible advice (in support of C2.3, C2.5, E4, G9, H5 General Conditions of Recognition)
- Awarding organisations must participate in a Welsh quality network to standardise assessment practice and decisions and to develop assessors and internal quality assurers (IQAs) in Wales (in support of C2.3g, C2.5, E4, H1, H2, H5, G9 General Conditions of Recognition)
- Awarding organisations must support best quality in ethical practice by ensuring their EQAs and centre assessment teams know how and to whom they would report concerns about the poor or harmful practice in the assessment team; at a centre or with learners and others in the care workplace which come to light during their quality audits (in support of B3, D4 General Conditions of Recognition and Safeguarding policy and procedures)



2. Design principles of qualifications

In 2013-14 the Department for Education and Skills delegated the responsibility for recommending qualifications in our sector for public funding in Wales to the Care Council. There is a formal scrutiny, consideration and decision making process. Qualifications need to be both **relevant** and **valued** in the sector particularly by learners, employers and individuals who use social care and child care services. The **relevance** of qualifications is seen from the perspective of employers. Relevant qualifications can be seen as those that lead to and equip learners for employment. They confirm competence in an occupational role to the standards required or expected to undertake specific roles in the sector. The **value** of qualifications can be seen from the perspective of the learner. Valuable qualifications are those that engage the learner and encourage participation in life-long learning through further or higher education, training and employment.

The Care Council has set design principles since 2008 and these are contained in the Sector Qualification and Learning Strategy 2012-2017 (and are in support of E1 General Conditions of Recognition). These design principles provide rules for awarding organisations in the development and review of qualifications within the sector in Wales and form the basis for decisions the Care Council makes to recommend support or rejection to the Department for Education and Skills of qualifications for public funding in Wales. This is a delegated role from the Department for Education and Skills to the Care Council. Support for qualifications is considered in the Care Council's Qualifications and Standards Sub-Committee (and any successor body). The criteria that the Care Council use to support the development or review of all qualifications are contained in the **Additional Information**, published separately.

Additional design principles exist for full time further education college provision (see **Additional Information**).



3. Partnership requirements and the contribution of managers / employers

The involvement of employers and managers is vital to good management and business development and also important from the learner's perspective. Social care managers should plan for and facilitate the on-going development of their staff and team and should be willing to contribute to coaching, mentoring, training and assessment activities (*Practice Guidance for Social Care Managers registered with the Care Council for Wales* 2013 paragraphs 35, 37).

Better trained and qualified staff means better services. Employers should see learning as a part of the work pattern and this should be reinforced and monitored in supervision and through learner evaluations. Learners of course will also need to invest some time and effort into their education and learning which is not paid for by their employers. Formal partnership agreements or **service level agreements** between employers, learning providers, learners and if appropriate individuals who use services could be used to clarify the expectations of each. A sample document is included in **The Employer's Toolkit**, published separately. Key areas to be addressed in these plans include:

- Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of individuals who use services
- The importance of values and the *The Code of Professional Practice for Social Care*
- How evidence will be collected and assessed including direct observations, the use of expert witnesses and witness testimony
- How opportunities will be provided to collect evidence
- What learning time will be paid for by the employer and what time learners will have to invest to achieve the qualification
- What supports exist for the learner in work and in training, through supervision, mentoring, teaching and assessing
- The involvement of management in the learning process including attending key meetings with learning providers
- The number and frequency of contacts with the assessor
- Details of contact numbers within the learning provider and complements and complaints arrangements



4. Suggested entry requirements to qualifications

While there are no specific educational requirements to enter many qualifications in the sector, a range of skills will make the achievement of the qualifications more likely. Every new worker to the sector will have to undertake induction and many employers use *The Social Care Induction Framework* or *Early Years Induction Framework* published by the Care Council. The induction period and learning provides important experience in the sector. For all of the required and recommended qualifications in social care and early years work experience is necessary (either through employment or work placement) since they all require the assessment of competence in a real work setting.

The tasks required in these qualifications involve keeping records (including statutory recordings), and high level verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Learners may be required to take tests in basic numeracy and literacy (and verbal communications skills in English and / or Welsh). Some funding schemes exist to support the development of these skills in the workplace (Essential Skills in the Workplace) and before joining apprenticeship schemes (Traineeships).

A current driving license may be an advantage and may be required for some roles, especially in rural locations.

4.1 Personal care and age restrictions in social care

National Standards (regulations for services) currently set out a range of age requirements around the delivery of personal care (including helping people to dress, wash or toilet) that will restrict what young people (under 18) can do in some settings. These are detailed in the document *Work Experience in Social Care and Early Years (2012)* (www.ccwales.org.uk/work-experience).



5. Assessment practices

5.1 Duration and minimum time in learning and assessment

Each learning journey for every learner will be unique and should be undertaken at the pace of the learner. What follows is guidance of **minimum periods of learning** for people joining the programme with no previous knowledge or experience as evidence. Learners must have access to fair and reliable assessment.

Learning providers should be able to evidence what learning opportunities have been undertaken for each learner. Good practice would be the use of a 'learning log' which includes how many hours have been spent learning on and off the job. This is already a requirement in the Apprenticeships and Professional Frameworks. The learner, employer and learning provider together should keep a record of how time is spent, showing what time is taken to complete tasks and what tasks are achieved (reflective diary, supervision notes or performance reviews and diaries can all be used as evidence).

The extensive knowledge development and consistent safe practice demanded in the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) Diplomas means that the achievement of:

- QCF Diplomas at **Level 2** should be a **minimum of six months following registration with an awarding organisation** (which must occur as soon as possible after enrolment on the programme)
- QCF Diplomas at **Level 3** should be a **minimum of nine months following registration with an awarding organisation** (which must occur as soon as possible after enrolment on the programme)
- QCF Diplomas at **Level 5** should be a **minimum of 12 months following registration with an awarding organisation** (which must occur as soon as possible after enrolment on the programme)

Where Recognition of Prior Learning (and experience) is used, these timescales may be shorter although this should be no more than 50 per cent of the qualification requirements. In each case where the qualification is completed in a shorter period these portfolios must be available for IQA and EQA sampling and clear evidence and planning must be present in the learner's records. A centre must be able to justify and evidence why they have certificated in a shorter space of time and how the learner has met all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. It is expected that a clear process of 'skill scanning' and mapping of previous learning and experiences is present for audit.



5.2 Knowledge development, learning support and the involvement of individuals who use services

Where the learner is employed, learning prior to starting the QCF qualification should include induction and role specific mandatory training. Learners should gain work experience undertaking the role prior to starting the assessed competence components of the qualification.

Learning must be appropriate for the learner and may take many forms:

- supported practice
- supervision and appraisal
- coaching
- mentoring from peers or supervisors
- reflection on experience
- training
- e-learning
- support and advice
- research

In view of the complex nature of practice for these groups of workers particularly at Level 3 and Level 5, learners need up to date specialist knowledge, the critical and analytical skills to understand their actions and the confidence and competence to carry out the complex tasks outlined in the QCF units. For higher level qualifications research skills are needed to review and implement evidence and knowledge based practice are also important.

A detailed learning plan linked to an individual's learning style should be produced for at least the mandatory units and knowledge specific units being delivered. This should identify how the learner's development needs are to be addressed and the resources that will be made available. These learning plans should then be available for IQA and EQA sampling. Learning plans can ensure sufficient thought, planning and resources are being given to support the learner's progress. This is particularly important for knowledge development where learning is undertaken through individual 'mentoring' by an assessor or tutor. In this approach it is important to cover the depth and range of knowledge acquisition and individual learner's needs.

It is important that assessors develop specialist knowledge to share with the learner. The assessor cannot make an effective assessment decision without this. Placement at specialist settings with expert practitioners who can act as peer mentors or expert witnesses, the input of individuals who use services, guardians and carers are all valuable sources of direct knowledge development in very specific and complex areas such as autistic spectrum disorders. **The use of the internet will not be enough.**



Learners (and their assessors) should be use **core texts, online or e-learning resources** appropriate for the **Welsh context**, the qualification level and the service area. Further learning resources such as reading lists and key websites should be signposted for learners.

Reflection is an essential aspect of learner and assessor knowledge development and an approach that develops the ability to carry out reflection in action (what is effective or not during practice) and **reflection on action** (how to approach a situation in the future) will be an powerful tool to improve the quality of the experiences for those who use care services.

Individuals who use services and carers' involvement in learning should be increased and learners should see individuals who use services and carers as partners in the learning process. Assessors should ensure that the voices and choices of people who use services drive their practice and that of their learner. These experiences can help to develop learning in relation to key areas such as communication preferences, barriers and styles, listening skills, values, empowerment and participation, self awareness and reflection, diversity and respect. Where possible there should be a challenge offered to power, authority, control and ideas of the 'expert professional' from the individual who uses services. Involvement of individuals who use services and carers may be through sessions that are not curriculum driven but are flexible and allow exploration of topics by all participants often in joint activities. Issues such as support, payment and being valued must be addressed appropriately.

Assessors must take responsibility for **identifying plagiarism** and taking action if it is discovered. IQAs and awarding organisations have a responsibility to support the assessor in this task. Learners must have specific information about plagiarism and what it constitutes. The information should clarify what the policy is and what the consequences would be if plagiarism is suspected or detected. **All learners must be asked to give examples of their own practice**, experiences and thinking to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism happening in knowledge evidence. **Observation and questioning by assessors** should be used to confirm authenticity and individual understanding (in support of G8 General Conditions of Recognition)



5.3 Assessment methods, recording and the involvement of individuals who use services

QCF Qualifications used in social care, child care and early years are made up of combinations of units which are either:

- **Knowledge and understanding** which may be general or specific. These will usually begin with 'understand' or 'know' and learning outcomes and assessment criteria will begin with active verbs such as: 'list', 'explain', 'describe', 'evaluate', 'assess', 'analyse'. Some verbs are only used in the higher levels of QCF qualifications e.g. analyse
- **Competence** which includes both the knowledge and skills required to demonstrate / prove an individual's capacity carrying out occupational activities or requirements. These will begin with active phrases such as 'be able to'. The unit learning outcomes and assessment criteria will also begin with active verbs which may require knowledge (as before) or skills such as 'demonstrate', 'provide' or 'support'.

These QCF units are comprised of:

1. **Learning outcomes** (LO) that set out what a learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do as a result of the process of learning.
2. **Assessment criteria** (AC) which specify the standard a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that the LOs of the unit have been achieved. The ACs are sufficiently detailed to support reliable, valid and consistent judgements that a LO has been achieved.

The majority of assessment for these competence-based qualifications **must take place in the learner's workplace under real work conditions** and as they undertake their normal work role so that evidence is naturally occurring and so minimises the impact on individuals who use services and their families and carers. Learner evidence should include a variety of methods and not rely on one source such as workbooks.

Assessment for competence LOs, must include direct observation of actual workplace performance as the main source of evidence. Performance evidence should be gathered and assessed by a qualified, occupationally competent assessor. The evidence must at all times reflect the policies and procedures of the workplace as informed by current legislation, the relevant service standards and codes of practice for the sector. The learner will need to produce evidence for assessment against each AC and LO and a holistic approach to assessment is encouraged.



5.4 The use of digital communication such as Skype and social networking media

These technologies may provide valuable methods to facilitate discussion and feedback between assessor and learner. However great care must be taken to use them appropriately and sensitively for evidence gathering and assessment and to protect the privacy and dignity of individuals who use services, their families and carers. For example a professional discussion with a learner may be done effectively via 'Skype', video link or similar but these technologies should not normally be used in direct observation involving the users of services and their environments. Filming of performance evidence may have a role to reduce stress and intrusion for individuals who use services in a minority of situations and only when permission is gained from all parties. If used the following must apply:

- learner planning records show why this method is required or beneficial
- how quality, reliability and authenticity are ensured
- how it is ensured that privacy, dignity and confidentiality have not been compromised
- how consent has been gained should be recorded for audit
- no audio / visual digital recording be undertaken for aspects of personal care e.g. bathing
- any filmed assessment should be auditable; kept confidentially and securely or destroyed after full assessment records have been made.



5.5 Direct observation of learner performance in a real working environment

Observation is the **main source of evidence** for competence based Learning Outcomes and it is expected that this competence is assessed as reliable and consistent. Observation of the **learner's direct involvement** with individuals who use services, carers or children and young people is expected **at all levels**. It is not sufficient to see learners working only with other colleagues or processes and procedures. To achieve this range there will need to be **a series** of detailed observations planned and undertaken. It is expected that observations will see learners in a variety of their work situations, with different people and focus particularly on direct work with a variety of individuals who use services (if possible given the work role). The learning journey should occur over a period of time. This will ensure practice is assessed to be consistent and sufficiently competent. Individuals using services can be confident that the people providing care and support are suitably trained, qualified and properly assessed. **Single observations are never sufficient or acceptable.**

The assessor must observe the learner carrying out real activities in their working environment and the performance is formally recorded (normally by the assessor). This should happen over the course of the learning, to examine progression and development of competence. The observation record can be used to evidence a number of different units and this 'mapping' must be clear on the record for internal and external audit and against the specific LO and AC that are being claimed. The IQA and EQA should not have to search for the evidence; it should be closely mapped.

Expert witnesses must only be used for the minority of observations where the assessor is not occupationally competent to assess a particular unit, or where the sensitivity of the activity does not allow them to be part of that activity. Where there is extensive use of expert witnesses for observations IQA and EQA sampling must take place and clear planning must be present in the learner's records as to why this has occurred. **A centre must be able to justify this arrangement (see later section on Expert Witnesses).**



5.6 Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

Recognition of prior learning is the term adopted within the QCF to describe:

A method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.

(From 'Using the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) Report to the Skills Funding Agency' NIACE April 2013)

Credit transfer and exemption relate to previously **certificated** achievement which can be inside or outside the QCF. Within the QCF, RPL relates to previously **uncertificated** learning. Experienced workers must be able to draw on their previous or current work experiences and learning as this may have equipped them to move forward with the learning and assessment required and avoids duplication. However RPL evidence must meet the same standards and be subject to the same assessment process and recording as other assessment methods used.

Assessors and IQAs (and EQAs) will need to ensure the RPL evidence is:

Valid – Relevant to the standards / criteria against which the learner is being assessed

Authentic – Being the learner's own individual work

Reliable – Learner can consistently achieve the same results and standards

Sufficient – Enough evidence as specified in Assessment requirements to fully meet the LO / AC.

Current – the evidence is still relevant at the time of the assessment and has been maintained and updated

The RPL assessment process in Diplomas must be carried out by occupationally competent assessors and fully involve the learner throughout, particularly in the planning. RPL should include additional learner statements of reflection or discussion with the learner to establish **currency** and **reliability**. Centres must record how much evidence is being claimed as RPL and total RPL should not normally exceed **50 per cent** of the full qualification's LOs and AC.

If RPL is not **sufficient** to cover all LOs and AC in a unit then alternative assessment methods should be used to provide further evidence (such as observation or professional discussion). Records of assessment must be maintained in the usual way and include the judgement of transferability and the assessment decisions. RPL sampling must be present in the sampling strategy and standardisation activities if it is used in a centre.

Awarding organisations must produce guidance and training opportunities for assessors and IQAs to develop consistency and understanding in RPL assessments.



5.7 Learner statements (reflective accounts)

Learner statements can be wide ranging and may draw on newly acquired learning resulting from personal research and teaching or reflective accounts. They are particularly useful in providing evidence of knowledge and understanding and using real work examples and personal experience. Learner statements are an individual's own description and consideration of their thoughts and actions. They can provide an insight into the current understanding, values and motivation of individual learners. Background understanding of legislation, policy, procedure and detailed methods or techniques to support individuals who use care services can be evidenced through learner statements. Learner statements can be closely matched to the required LOs and AC or more general reviews which can then be mapped to relevant LO / ACs. Reflections can be used effectively to show in depth understanding and review of a topic, issue or work role where this is unlikely to emerge from observation and questioning. However **learner statements alone would normally be insufficient** if used without other assessment methods as authenticity and application may be an issue.

5.8 Professional discussion / discussion with the learner

The key difference between this assessment method and informal oral questions is that it should be a pre-planned and usually will be an in depth discussion which has a clear focus on evidence for specific LOs and AC. It is particularly suited where the knowledge and practice is detailed, technical or complex. The learner should know what is going to be discussed in advance and the requirements they will be addressing. They should have time to prepare and to gather any information needed. Learners can refer to their notes or other documents but should not just read out answers or quote from texts they have. The assessor should make sure that there are links to specific practice examples of the individual learner in the discussion. Assessors should use language and terminology which is suitable for the level at which that learner is working at. The discussion including questions should be recorded in writing or as an audio / visual record which can be easily audited. Answers given by the learner should be 'mapped' or referenced to specific LO / ACs. The discussion should not be conducted as a 'question and answer' session and the use of open questions is encouraged.

Professional discussion / discussion with learners can be considered advanced assessment practice and it may take time for assessors to build the required skills and technique. Initial experiences could be linked to filling in 'gaps' in evidence so that both learner and assessor can gain experience and confidence. IQA and EQA should actively sample this assessment method.



5.9 Witness testimony

Witness Testimony can be a very useful way to establish both **reliability** and **authenticity** of a learner's practice and knowledge evidence. The role of managers and employers is vital and their contribution is greatly valued by learners and assessors.

Witness testimony taken from individuals who use services and carers must be carefully obtained and tokenism avoided. Specific AC may be targeted to involve individuals who use services and carers to ensure honest feedback is obtained.

5.10 Expert witnesses must meet the following criteria:

- Be occupationally competent in their area of expertise.
- Have a working knowledge of the QCF units on which their expertise is based.
- **EITHER** hold any qualification in assessment of workplace performance **OR** have a professional work role which involves evaluating the everyday practice of staff

This will often be the manager / supervisor of the learner. Expert witnesses **should only be used** for the **minority** of observations where the assessor is not occupationally competent to assess a particular unit, or where the sensitivity of the activity does not allow them to be part of that activity. Where there is extensive use of expert witnesses for observations, **IQA and EQA sampling must take place** and clear planning must be present in the learner's records as to why this has occurred. An assessor and centre must be able to justify this arrangement.

The plan for the learner should identify where any expert witnesses are to be used and a record of their involvement maintained. Their ability to meet the needs of the requirements above should be recorded. The expert witness's observations must be recorded and authenticated by the assessor. **The final assessment decision remains with the assessor who must evaluate the expert witness evidence alongside any other evidence provided for the specific LOs / AC.**



5.11 Oral or written questions

Questions have an important role in evidencing knowledge and understanding. Questions following observations can help to confirm competence and that there is understanding behind the practice. Questions draw out why actions are chosen and investigate the depth and breadth of knowledge, including specialist knowledge. Questions may be oral or written but in either case a record must be made of both the questions asked and the learner's answers. Questions do not need to be planned in advance as they may be used to elicit additional information from the learner to gain clarification and assurance for **sufficiency, authenticity and reliability** of their evidence.

Written questions based directly on knowledge AC of units may be formed into 'workbooks'. This method can be useful but does not suit all learners and should not be compulsory. Assessing the answers to written questions should be carefully undertaken looking particularly at any need for plurals, multiple components to the AC (such as 'and' 'or') and what would be expected for the unit level and verb definitions (see section on Sufficiency of Evidence and Glossary). However knowledge should never be assessed in isolation and must be linked to practice and competence to ensure safety.

The interests and perspectives of the individuals who use services should be present in answers.

5.12 Examining products of the learner's own work

Work products are resources that have been produced by the learner in their work setting or where they have made an **identifiable and significant contribution**. Examples would include minutes of meetings, letters, emails, reports, individual assessments, and completed accident forms. It does not include producing an existing document e.g. health and safety policy. **Work products must be matched to the AC** they are being used to evidence and a discussion with the assessor to show understanding and the contribution of the learner is expected (and should be recorded). Often work products are produced by a group and the assessor must establish **authenticity and the actual contribution** of the learner. Seeing work products in the work setting does not constitute observation of practice though it can clearly contribute towards the provision of evidence for both competence and knowledge criteria. Normally these documents are not included in portfolios (for confidentiality purposes).



6. Sufficiency and reliability of evidence in assessment decisions

These can be defined as:

Sufficient – Enough evidence as specified in the assessment requirements to fully meet the LO / AC

Reliable – Learner can consistently achieve the same results and standards

The QCF **level descriptors** outline the expectations for each of the levels in relation to the dimensions of: knowledge and understanding, application and action, autonomy and accountability. These are included in the **additional information**. These provide fundamental thresholds for initial assessment of learners to ensure the level is correct and subsequent judgement of the evidence produced. The Additional Information contains **verb definitions** with expectations for assessing and summaries of the **QCF Level Descriptors**.

Sufficiency judgements need to be standardised between assessors, in teams, with IQAs and preferably by inter centre meetings and practical discussions. Best practice in EQA activity should provide assessment teams with detailed feedback on their assessment decisions in relation to sufficiency and reliability using examples from sampled units.



7. Expectations of assessors

7.1 Assessment decisions

Assessors must be able to justify the assessment decisions that they have made and may be required to do so in cases of serious misconduct, service failure and abuse of individuals who use services.

All assessors must:

- Be **occupationally competent**. This means that each assessor must be capable of carrying out the functions covered by the units they are assessing to the standard described within them according to current sector practice. This experience should be credible and maintained through clearly the demonstrable continued learning and development. Specialist skills and knowledge must be identified and if the assessor is not knowledgeable and / or competent another assessor or expert witness will need to support the learners development and assessment
- Assessors should **undertake 30 hours of continuing professional development (CPD)** each year. Where possible best practice would include undertaking some work in practice
- The observation of modern working practices through direct observation with learners and reflective accounts on this experience are also useful
- **Assessors must be professionally qualified** (see Care Council for Wales required and recommended qualifications to practice www.ccwales.org.uk/qualifications) to the equivalent level or above as the learners they are assessing and have worked in the sector at that level. For this to be credible experience this should be for more than 1 year in practice at that level. Hold or be working towards the appropriate assessor qualification (currently QCF Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement TAQA). Achievement of the qualification will need to be within a two year period. Assessors who are not yet qualified with the assessor qualification must be supported by a 'qualified' assessor
- Have **knowledge of the settings, regulation, legislation and code of practice** for the service and the requirements of Welsh standards at the time any assessment is taking place
- Have **knowledge of and adhere to this best practice guidance** and be able to assess the values contained and embedded in the qualifications



7.2 Continuing professional development for assessors:

CPD records should be kept at the centre which detail the activities, duration, what has been learnt and how this will be used in the future. A suggested format has been produced by the Care Council (www.ccwales.org.uk/continuing-professional-development).

Centres must take responsibility for providing appropriate training, support and / or development opportunities to enable assessors to meet their responsibilities (in support of G9, H2 General Conditions of Recognition) see Addition Information for more details.

Centres must also allow assessors sufficient time to fulfill their duties. Case loads of assessors are crucial to their ability to perform effectively. These vary widely and are affected by many factors such as experience, qualification level being assessed, learner needs, distance to learners / rurality, hours of work, additional responsibilities (e.g. teaching, assessing employee rights and responsibilities, IQA). However it has been widely requested that guidance for benchmarking be offered. There has been consistent feedback that **35** learners per assessor should be a maximum where no other special factors apply.



8. Expectations of Internal Quality Assurance

All Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) must:

- Be occupationally knowledgeable in respect of the units they are going to quality assure prior to commencing the role. It is crucial that IQAs understand the nature and context of the assessor's work and that of their learners. In view of the complex nature of practice for these groups of learners, it will be essential to ensure IQAs have the appropriate specialist, practice, research and theoretical knowledge base to be able to judge that learning and assessment decisions are sufficient and to the right depth and level.
- Possess relevant knowledge and understanding of the settings, regulation, legislation and code of practice for the service and the requirements of Welsh standards at the time any assessment is taking place
- Hold or be working towards the appropriate IQA qualification (currently Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice TAQA).
- Occupy a position that gives them authority and resources to coordinate, support and monitor the work of assessors; provide authoritative expert advice; monitor assessment and delivery of practice; lead standardisation activities; identify and address quality issues and trends; carry out all other internal quality assurance roles.
- Have knowledge of and adhere to this best practice guidance and be able to quality assure the values contained and embedded in the qualifications

Specialist skills and knowledge must be identified and if the IQA is not knowledgeable and competent another IQA or expert witness will need to support the internal quality assurance.

Learning providers should have documented, robust internal quality assurance including risk banding for all assessors and detailed guidance behind this. It may be helpful to use the term **support level** rather than risk rating. Centres should document how they identify the risk of an assessor in terms of their practice and what action they take if they identify any risks / support needs and how this can be progressed higher or lower.

All assessor and IQA support particularly for new or unqualified staff should be recorded in the centre records which can be externally audited. Observation of assessors by the IQA should take place at least annually and be planned in the IQA strategy.

IQA sampling should take place for some aspect of each learner's assessment / evidence unless the IQA strategy identifies why this is the case. IQA sampling must be at different stages of the assessment process and not just at the end.

Standardisation meetings should occur **three times per year as a minimum**.

Standardisation activities should include assessors and IQAs comparing assessment decisions and sharing knowledge and good practice. The record of the meeting should show what has been undertaken and how any actions will be followed up.



9. Expectations of External Quality Assurance

All External Quality Assurers must:

- Be occupationally knowledgeable and have gained their knowledge working in the sector or appropriate professional / occupational area and demonstrate updating through CPD activities
- Hold or be working towards the appropriate EQA qualification. Achievement of the qualification will need to be within appropriate time scales
- Have knowledge of the settings, regulation, legislation and code of practice for the service and the requirements of Welsh national standards at the time any assessment is taking place
- Understand the context of the Welsh language and Welsh culture
- Use a proactive, problem solving approach which can be supportive to assessment teams and centres
- Share good practice, resources and assist in standardisation of qualifications by their input and reports (in support of C2.3, C2.5, E4, H1, H2, H5, G9 General Conditions of Recognition)
- Support best quality in ethical practice by ensuring they know how and to whom they would report concerns about poor or harmful practice in the centre assessment team or learners and others in the care workplace which come to light during their quality audits (in support of B3, D4 General Conditions of Recognition and Safeguarding policy and procedures)

10. What happens now?

Most awarding organisations have supported the best practice outlined within this document and all have been invited to adopt it as best practice. If as an assessor, employer, or learner your experience differs significantly for this, please let the Care Council know about it on whistleblowing.learning@ccwales.org.uk. Improving and assuring the quality of training, learning, assessment and development in the sector is a responsibility that every worker must take seriously.

Further regulation of training in social care will follow and the expectations described in this document will inform the development of standards that will be requirements for some education and training in the future.



Appendix 1 Glossary

Apprenticeships	This is a job with an accompanying skills development programme designed by Care Council for Wales in partnership with employers and learning providers in the sector.
Assessment Centre (Centre)	An organisation or department recognised by an awarding organisation to delivery their qualifications. This may be a learning provider, school, college or training company or a vocational qualifications in-house department in some larger organisations.
Assessment Criteria (AC)	Specify the standard a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that the learning outcomes of the unit have been achieved. They are sufficiently detailed to support reliable, valid and consistent judgements that a learning outcome has been achieved.
Assessment decision	This is a result that indicates if the learner has met the learning criteria for each learning outcome required.
Assessor	A person who evaluates if the learner has completed all of the requirements (learning outcomes and assessment criteria) for a unit of learning or qualification. The assessor also has responsibility for coordinating and evaluating assessment contributions made by others through e.g. witness testimony or expert witness. The final assessment decision always lies with the assessor.
Authentic evidence	The learner's own individual work
Authenticity of evidence	A process in which students are observed or questioned directly in performing real-work tasks and can demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills
Awarding Organisation	An organisation recognised through the General Conditions or Recognition by Department for Education and Skills to provide regulated qualifications in Wales. They are responsible for checking your learning provider keeps to required standards and will issue your certificate.
Care Sector Liaison and Quality Group	An sub group of the Workforce Development Committee of the Care Council for Wales delegated to support communication and sharing of good practice and quality improvements in workforce development, education and learning the sector.



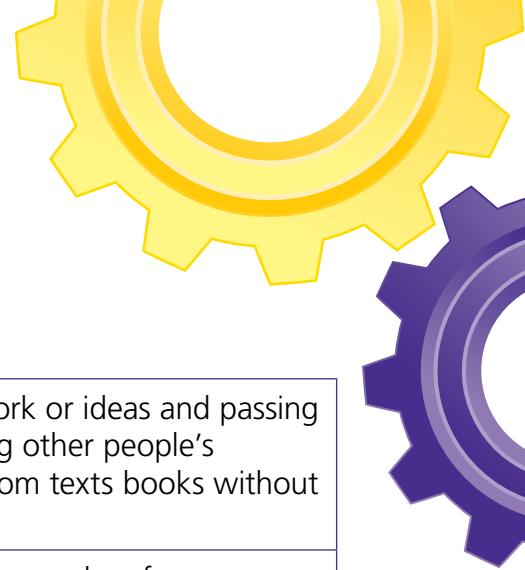
Centre	An organisation or department recognised by an awarding organisation to delivery their qualifications. This may be a learning provider, school, college or training company or a vocational qualifications in-house department in some larger organisations.
Continuous Professional Education and Learning (CPEL)	This is the means by which people maintain their knowledge and skills related to their professional lives. It is sometimes referred to as Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
Credit Transfer	This relates to the use of previously certificated learning that fully meets the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the current learning. This means that the learning does not have to be repeated and can be transferred directly into a unit completion. Where the learning is related but does not fully meet the outcomes then professional discussion or questioning must be used to ensure all the assessment criteria have been met.
Current evidence	The evidence is still relevant at the time of the assessment and has been maintained and updated
DfES	The Department for Education and Skills of Welsh Government have regulatory powers in respect of awarding organisations and regulated qualifications derived from the <i>Education Act, 1997</i> .
Direct observation	This is a method of collecting evaluative information and assessment evidence where the assessor watches the learner in his or her usual work environment without altering that environment.
EQA	External Quality Assurers, also known as an External Verifier, or Standards Verifier. Individuals employed by an awarding organisation to ensure standardisation across centres and compliance with awarding organisation policy and practices.



Expert witness	<p>This is a person who has specialised knowledge and skills that would normally be used only in optional units.</p> <p>Expert witness: An expert witness must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a working knowledge of the QCF units on which their expertise is based; • be occupationally competent in their area of expertise; • have EITHER a qualification in assessment of workplace performance OR a professional work role which involves evaluating the everyday practice of staff. <p>Expert witnesses can be used for direct observation where they have occupational expertise for specialist areas or the observation is of a particularly sensitive nature. The use of expert witnesses should be determined and agreed by the assessor. The expert witness provides a view or opinion on competence but the assessment decision rests with the assessor.</p>
Individuals who use services	<p>This is the generic term used instead for service user, citizen or, children and young people etc.</p>
IQA	<p>Internal Quality Assurers, employed by the learning provider or centre to ensure standards by the assessors reach agreed standards and are consistent within the training organisation.</p> <p>The Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) is the driver of quality assurance in qualifications, both within national frameworks and within the quality and management systems of each approved centre. The role, in terms of managing assessment so that it consistently meets national standards, is central to maintaining public confidence in each and every qualification issued. Internal quality assurance is a key factor in managing 'risk' and ensuring that when certificates are claimed for learners the requirements of the national standards have been consistently and reliably met.</p>
Learner statements	<p>Also known as reflective accounts draw on a wide range of information for a particular activity or task. They will include explanations of what happen, how it happened, why it happened, if it could or should have happened differently or produced different outcomes, the thoughts and feelings of the learner and any other parties involved in the exchange</p>
Learning log	<p>This is a note of the work undertaken and the achievements completed. It should note time and content of off the job training and on the job activities that may provide evidence for the completion of units.</p>



Learning Outcome	Learning outcomes are statements that describe what a learner will be able to know and do as a result of learning
Learning Plan	This document should identify how the learner's development needs are to be addressed and the resources that will be made available to support their learning.
Learning Provider	An organisation, college, school or private training company or in some case a department providing education and training within a larger social care or childcare organisation.
Level descriptors	Outline the expectations for each of the 7 levels used in The Qualification and Credit Framework in relation to the dimensions of: knowledge and understanding, application and action, autonomy and accountability
Mentoring	Mentoring is a supportive learning relationship between an individual who shares knowledge, experience and wisdom with another individual who is ready and willing to learn
Minimum periods of learning	This offers the minimum length of time a learner with no previous experience or knowledge will take to demonstrate the required competencies for the qualification.
Occupationally competent	This means that each assessor must be capable of carrying out the full requirements within the competence unit/s they are assessing. Being occupationally competent means the assessor is also occupationally knowledgeable. This occupational competence should be maintained through clearly demonstrable continuing learning and professional development. This can be demonstrated through occupational competence qualifications or current professional registration.
Occupationally knowledgeable	This means that each assessor should possess relevant knowledge and understanding, and be able to assess this in units designed to test specific knowledge and understanding, or in units where knowledge and understanding are components of competency. This currency of occupational knowledge should be maintained through clearly demonstrable continuing learning and professional development.
Oral questions	Questions asked by the assessor during or following direct observations or other assessment method to clarify or confirm learning outcomes or the application of knowledge and understanding in practical situations.



Plagiarism	The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as your own. This includes using other people's portfolios or examples, copying words from texts books without making references.
Professional Discussions	Pre-planned in-depth discussion which has a clear focus on evidence for specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria. It is particularly suited where the knowledge and practice is detailed, technical or complex. Learners should prepare for the discussion and show evidence of knowledge, values, skills and reflection.
Professional Frameworks	In social care, early years and child care this refers to a funding mechanism to enable people to undertake level 5 required or recommended qualifications.
Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF)	The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) is a credit recognition and transfer system. It recognises qualifications and units by awarding credits which relate to the amount of time taken to complete the learning and levels that relate to the knowledge, experience, autonomy and understanding of the activity.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Experience (RPEL)	The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the process for recognising learning that has come from experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning. It does not usually relate to previously certificated learning. Where only experience is offered as evidence towards competence this is known as RPEL.
Reflection	Be able to think about what is effective or not during practice how to approach a situation in the future. Also the ability to analyse, describe and explain the actions of the individuals in any situation and the effects of behaviours and actions.
Relevant Qualification	Relevant qualifications are those that lead to and equip learners for employment and are therefore relevant to employers.
Reliability of evidence	This is evidence that you can trust, that has been observed, witnessed, attested, examined, confirmed.
Reliable evidence	Evidence that is consistent and accurate



Simulation	This involves creating artificial situations, role plays etc. Simulation may only be utilised as an assessment method for learning outcomes that start with 'be able to' and where this is specified in the assessment requirements of the unit. The use of simulation should be restricted to obtaining evidence where the evidence cannot be generated through normal work activity.
Sufficiency of evidence	This means that all components of the learning outcomes have been achieved and all assessment criteria have been met.
Sufficient evidence	Enough evidence as specified in assessment requirements to fully meet the LO / AC.
TAQA	Training, Assessment and Quality Assurance: this relates to the current assessor and verifier qualifications required by all assessors working in the sector
Valid evidence	Relevant to the standards / criteria against which the learner is being assessed
Valuable Qualifications	Qualifications that engage the learner and encourage participation in life-long learning through further or higher education, training and employment
Witness testimony	Is an account or description of your performance of some tasks that has been witnessed or experienced by someone else. It provides supporting information or evidence to the assessor who will use this to assist them in making assessment decisions. It must never be used as the only evidence competence.
Work products	This is a range of documents or other tangible products produced by the learner in the course of their work. It could be policy, practice notes, records, minutes, posters etc.
Written questions	Questions should be used to draw out why actions are chosen and investigate the depth and breadth of knowledge, including specialist knowledge.

Bibliography and resources

Care Council for Wales (2012)	Sector Qualification and Learning Strategy: Professionalising the Workforce 2012-2017
Care Council for Wales (2012)	The Social Care Induction Framework www.ccwales.org.uk/induction-frameworks/
Care Council for Wales (2012)	Work Experience in Social Care and Early Years www.ccwales.org.uk/work-experience/
Care Council for Wales (2015)	Practice Guidance for Social Care Managers Registered with the Care Council for Wales www.ccwales.org.uk/practice-guidance-for-managers
Care Council for Wales (2013)	The Early Years Induction Framework www.ccwales.org.uk/induction-frameworks/
Care Council for Wales (2015)	Code of Professional Practice for Social Care
Cavendish, Camilla (2013) (for the Department of Health)	The Cavendish Review: An Independent Review into Healthcare Assistants and Support Workers in the NHS and social care settings (London) www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/236212/Cavendish_Review.pdf
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