

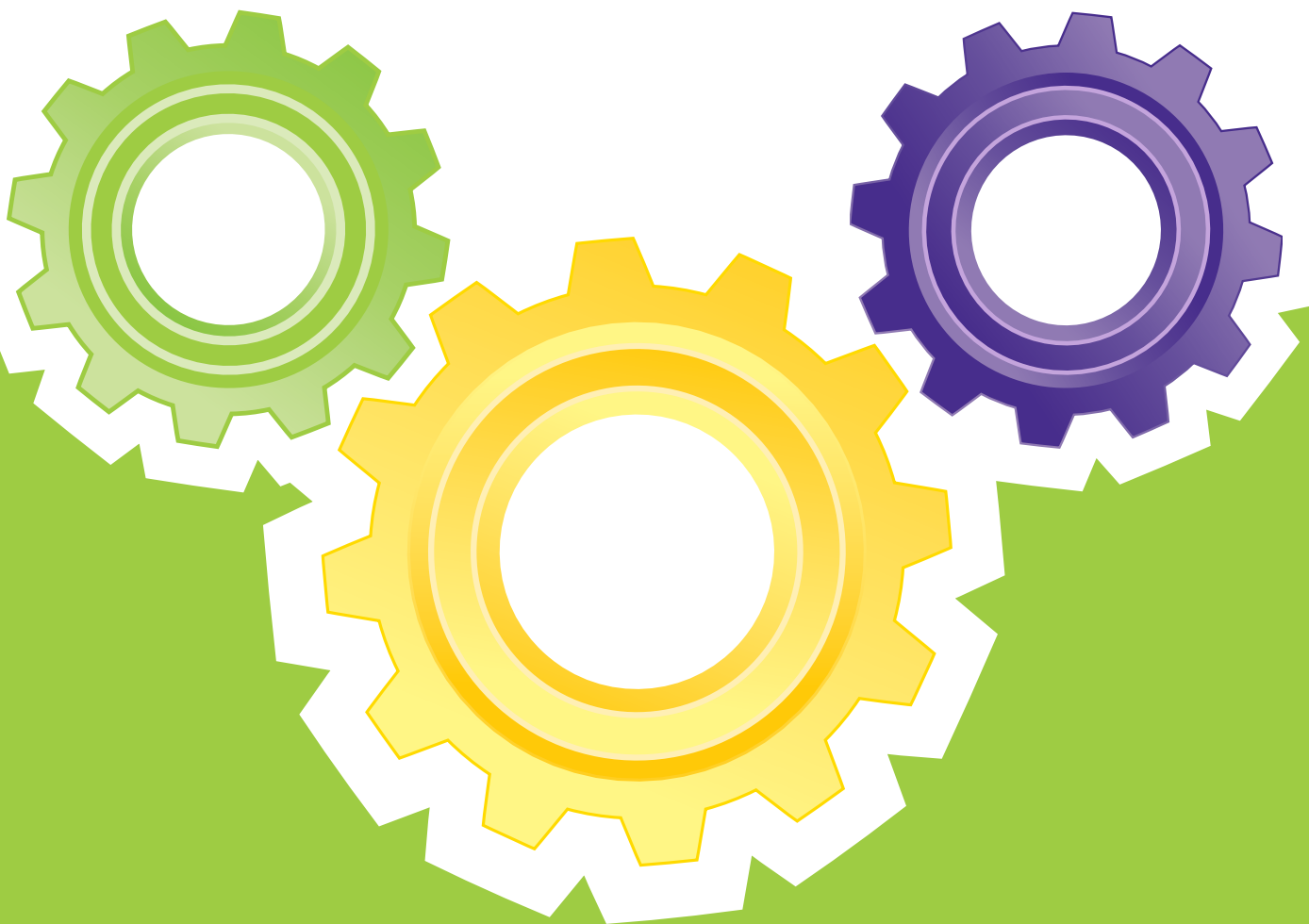


Cyngor Gofal Cymru
Care Council for Wales

Hyder mewn Gofal - Confidence in Care

Employers' Toolkit for Learning

How to identify best practice in learning
and assessment: a guide for employers
and managers



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Introduction

A skilled and competent workforce is vital to providing the best possible outcomes for individuals who use services as well as ensuring your business is effective, efficient and meets the service standards required by the inspectorate. This is also true for self-employed individuals working in social care or early years e.g. childminders. The strengthening of standards in training and assessment is vital to securing public assurance and in developing a professionalised workforce with a culture that delivers excellent integrated, citizen / child-centered and safe services in Wales.

In 2011 the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) with which you will be very familiar, were replaced by qualifications known as Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) Diplomas at levels 2, 3 and 5. Hopefully you are getting to know these qualifications. They provide unique opportunities for you, or your staff, to extend knowledge, understanding and skills whilst in work or on placements. For staff under the age of 25 (either existing staff or new recruits) you will be able to access funding to support their training through apprenticeships. This funding is accessed through learning providers or you can get support from **Careers Wales**¹.

It is important to understand that investing in your staff is a requirement in every business for owners, management and staff. Welsh Government have schemes that **support co-investment** (sharing the cost) to achieve economic goals, with business, government

and sometimes learners contributing to the costs of learning. This will mean you may be lucky and get some support until March 2017, but most employers will have to fund the training of their staff who are over 25.

Getting the right training and learning for your staff is critical and ensuring the best quality lies with you, as employers and managers. This booklet offers guidance about what you should look for in learning and assessment of health and social care, early years and child care in the QCF qualifications in Wales. It has been produced to complement the *Best Practice Guide for learning and assessment for social care, early years and child care in Wales*². This document provides details of the expectations Care Council for Wales has of learning providers and awarding organisations involved in delivering and assessing training.

¹ Further information is available in the Care Council for Wales publication *An Employer's Guide to Apprenticeships*.

² Copies of this are available at www.ccwales.org.uk.



1. Why invest in learning and development?

Service Benefits: Better for Individuals who use services

Qualifications and learning are an important mechanism that let employers and the individuals who use services be confident that the people providing care and support are suitably trained and properly assessed.

Better qualified and trained staff produce better outcomes for individuals who use services. They also develop a professional and learning culture within organisations.

- People who use services (and carers) want, deserve and expect the best possible outcomes from care and support.
- The policy documents for **social care**³ and **early years**⁴ in Wales refer to the professionalisation of the workforce and delivering the highest quality services.
- National Minimum Standards for services have qualification requirements or targets within them, used in the inspection of your services.
- Managers are required in the **Practice Guidance for Social Care Managers**⁵ to support the learning and development of their staff.
- Your contract arrangement with those who commission your services, is likely to contain a training or qualifications clause.
- Safety – You want to be sure that your workers contribute to the best quality of care and support rather than making dangerous and expensive mistakes.

³ Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action Welsh Government www.gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/guidance1/services/?lang=en

⁴ Building a Brighter Future: The Early Years and Childcare Plan www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/building-a-brighter-future/?lang=en

⁵ www.ccwales.org.uk/practice-guidance-for-managers



Business Benefits of Qualifications: Better for your Business

A modern, professional workforce

A qualified workforce is more able to respond to change, better motivated and aware of current best practice. The achievement of accredited qualifications provides external validation of the quality of your workforce for commissioners, customers and inspectors. This increases customer confidence and satisfaction and enhances the reputation of the organisation among people who use services and when recruiting new workers.

Retention of your workforce

Workers who are supported in structured learning and development feel valued and involved with their employer. They develop confidence, self-esteem and greater job satisfaction and are more likely to remain in their post. This can reduce staff turnover and save you money on recruiting new staff. Research from Skills for Care's National Minimum Dataset for Social Care (NMDS-SC) in England is revealing that organisations with a strong learning and development culture have a better qualified workforce who are less likely to leave than organisations that do not. This adds stability and consistency to your business and, in the experience of the people who use services, leads to greater quality.

Value for money

Getting the most out of your workforce by helping them reach their potential and achieve benefits for both the people who use your services and your business. Gaining qualifications can add value and help with planning and developing the business in the future. Most importantly of all, it improves the outcomes for individuals who use services, children and families.



2. What can you do as an employer or manager?

Create a Learning Culture – getting it right from the beginning

It is important that everyone in your organisation values the importance of learning and development. It is the basis for developing a professional, highly skilled and competent workforce. This starts with a good induction programme⁶ which will give workers confidence and inspire them to continue in social care or early years programmes. Having a clear understanding of the required values, standards and procedures will help workers develop a sense of company identity and pride in their work, and provide better outcomes for people who use services. To keep workers motivated and skilled to provide high quality services, they need to continually improve their knowledge and skills, so a programme of on-going training and learning for all should be offered. Workers' attitude to learning and development tends to be set by their previous experience and the attitude of their manager. This means that the organisation's approach to learning; from induction, to accredited training, to continuous professional education and learning (CPEL), is likely to affect how that worker will approach future learning.

New workers will be able to see completing an induction framework (e.g. **social care** or **early years**) as the first or next step on their

career pathway. It provides them with the basic building blocks of good, safe practice and will prepare them for starting a Diploma in Health and Social Care or Children's Care Learning and Development that will both extend and deepen their knowledge and skills and release their potential as a member of staff.

Understand the Qualifications

The QCF qualifications are based on current best practice and can be tailored to an individual's job role. This allows learners to gain the knowledge and skills directly relevant to the work they do and the people they support. You have an important role to play in helping your learner and the training provider choose the right units for the member of staff, the job and your organisation. There are a range of units that are specific e.g. to dementia care, mental health, learning disability etc. If you need help in finding what units relate to these specialisms please see our information on **mapping pathways**.

When completed through a competent training provider, the qualifications ensure that people who use services gain the best possible outcomes. These qualifications encourage learning in small bite sized chunks.

⁶ Care Council for Wales have developed Induction Frameworks and supporting materials for Social Care Practitioners and Early Years and Childcare Practitioners.



They attract credit that can be combined towards the Diploma in Health and Social Care or the Diploma in Children's Care Learning and Development. Learners can work at their own pace and balance learning with their work and family lives, as well as the needs of your business.

The toolkit in this document will help you choose competent learning providers. It provides a checklist of questions about the processes and standards they use to observe, educate and assess your learning.

Encourage Continuous Professional Education and Learning (CPEL)

Part of the learning culture is to encourage learning throughout your career and the careers of your staff. As a worker's role changes or develops over time their learning remains with them, and can be transferred, added to or extended. Units from their original qualification, or other qualifications that become relevant to a worker's role as it changes, can be undertaken as part of their continued professional development. The Diploma in Health and Social Care or Children's Care Learning and Development at levels 2 and 3 offer initial generic learning, applicable to all. They also offer opportunities to follow specialist pathways through the optional units. Specialist pathways include learning disabilities and dementia or working with babies or children with disabilities. Learners who follow these pathways can still transfer to different service types and broaden or add to their learning.

Choose the Best Quality Learning / Training for your Staff

The involvement of employers and managers in learning and assessment is vital, particularly from the learner's perspective. Managers should plan for and assist the on-going development of their staff and team and should be willing to contribute to coaching, mentoring, training and assessment activities. Employers must give sufficient time, support and help find the funding for their employees undertaking qualifications (*Practice Guidance for Social Care Managers registered with the Care Council for Wales 2013 paragraphs 34, 36*). Formal partnerships or Learning Agreements between employers, learning providers, learners and, if appropriate, citizens using services, can clarify the expectations of each party. An example of a checklist for you to develop your own learning agreement is below.



Checklist for best practice in QCF learning and assessment

Questions to ask the Learning Provider	Answers you might expect	Good / satisfactory / poor
Information and contact details You and the learner need key information about the learning company. You and the learner should know how to appeal against assessment decisions or poor assessment practices and how to complain or raise concerns.		
What are the contact details for the learning provider?	Company name and main office.	
How and when will you get the details of the assessor and the person who checks quality for the learning provider?	When training starts, you will want to know contact details for the assessor and the person who checks quality (IQA), including e-mail, phone numbers and the organisation's address.	
Which awarding organisations do they use and why?	The main awarding organisations in our sector in Wales are: City and Guilds, Pearson (Edexcel or EDI) and CACHE. Agored also offer the qualifications. Some other awarding organisations may offer the qualifications but have less well developed infra-structure in Wales.	
Confidentiality, dignity and respect for individuals who use services		
How will they incorporate the values of the profession and / or <i>Code of Professional Practice for Social Care</i> ?	Everyone involved must hold the values of the sector securely; particularly seeing individuals who use services and carers as partners in the learning process.	
How are individuals who use services involved in decisions about the learning outcomes and their participation in the process?	Ensure that the voices and choices of service users drive their practice. Do they use testimonials from people who use services or their carers, if so how are these obtained?	
How will they protect the confidentiality and dignity of individuals using services at all times?	You will want to ensure that the dignity, respect and confidentiality of people who use your service is protected at all times by the people delivering training and learning or assessing. How will they get permission to observe the learner's practice from the individual who uses services (or a carer, parent or guardian where this is not possible)?	



Questions to ask the Learning Provider	Answers you might expect	Good / satisfactory / poor
Knowledge and experience of the health and social care, early years and child care sector in Wales		
What experience does the proposed assessor have of delivering learning and qualifications in the sector and in Wales ?	They should have relevant experience in the context or area of practice. Learning and development must be informed by current policy, legislation, the relevant service standards and Codes of Practice for the sector. This must reflect the Welsh context.	
What qualifications and experience does the assessor have in this area of work?	The assessor should have at least the same level of qualification they are assessing, and preferably a higher level qualifications in social care or early years (or equivalent). They should also have an assessment qualification. For this to be credible, they should have experience in the role being assessed (or similar) for more than one year (see Care Council for Wales required and recommended qualifications to practice www.ccwales.org.uk/qualifications).	
Does the learning provider use the Care Council for Wales <i>Best Practice Guidance</i> ?	They should know about the Best Practice Guidance document and be using it to meet standards that support high quality learning and development for your learner and business.	
What evidence do they have that they provide quality training in the subject area and in Wales?	Can they supply testimonials or contact details of other companies and employers to give you an unbiased recommendation?	
Are they offering the right qualification for your staff and their roles?	Is the qualification offered appropriate for the work role in Wales and is it included in the Care Council for Wales <i>Qualification Framework for the Social Care Sector in Wales</i> or the <i>List of Required Qualifications to work within the Early Years and Childcare Sector In Wales</i> ? They should not be trying to sell you level 3 or level 5 training unless you want / need it for your staff.	
Work experience and support to learning		
Will there be a learning contract / agreement between you, the learner and the learning provider?	There must be. This should include how often meetings, learning activities, observations of practice will happen (several times over the course of the learning) and how and when assessment will happen.	



Questions to ask the Learning Provider	Answers you might expect	Good / satisfactory / poor
How will units be chosen, and by whom?	You, the learner and learning provider should choose together; select the appropriate qualification units for the individuals who use services, the learner and the business. You should not be given a list of the units the learning provider offers.	
Will mentoring or other workplace support be expected?	Learners may need to broaden their knowledge and experiences using opportunities such as placement at specialist settings, meeting expert practitioners, using the input of individuals who use services or children, guardians and carers; all of which are valuable sources of knowledge development.	
How will they use evidence gathered from the Induction Framework and other pieces of training and learning already undertaken? Known as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	Employees should complete the Induction Framework during their probationary period, or may have undertaken training in various areas already (e.g. fire safety, health and safety, food hygiene). You will want to capture this learning and make sure it is used. You will also need to think ahead about how your learner will use this learning to evidence their competence in the qualifications which follow. RPL can reduce the study time for qualifications, however it is only allowed to be used for a maximum of 50 per cent of the qualification (see below). The learning outcomes still need to be tested by the assessor.	
Training time and resources for development		
How long does it usually take for a learner to complete this qualification?	This will vary according to the experience, knowledge and competence of the learner, the availability of the assessor and access to the working situation to make assessments. Most people new to the sector, or to learning and assessment will take the following periods of time to complete the qualification: Level 2 QCF Diplomas a minimum of 6 months⁷ following registration with an Awarding Organisation (which must occur as soon as possible after enrolment on the learning programme) Level 3 QCF Diplomas a minimum of 9 months following registration with an Awarding Organisation Level 5 QCF Diplomas a minimum of 12 months following registration with an Awarding Organisation Learning providers offering significantly quicker completions must be avoided.	

⁷ For some people this may take much longer for many reasons such as learning styles, work commitments, personal pressures etc. People who have significant experience and are highly competent may be able to complete more quickly.



Questions to ask the Learning Provider	Answers you might expect	Good / satisfactory / poor
How much time is required to release staff 'off the job' for learning and assessment to take place? When and where will this happen? How will the assessment be done?	Some 'off the job' training is likely to be required in workshops, distance learning or research, but relying on attendance at workshops can lead to poor quality assessments and fewer observations of real working practice. Make sure you know exactly what this will involve. There must be several observations in practice over time. Not in one day.	
What other resources are available to support learning e.g. access to books, e-learning or digital resources, support from other tutors, individuals who use services / children / carer input, specialist training?	It is important to ensure that the extensive knowledge development required for the qualifications are supported in some way, through resources, access to materials or the internet. The use of the internet alone will never be enough, and people should always use high quality, peer reviewed or academic sites, not Wikipedia.	
When will they come to the workplace?	It should be possible to have some flexibility in how training and assessment is delivered e.g. times, places and frequency to suit your business, service users and the learner, including evenings or nights and weekends. You should avoid learning providers who are inflexible.	
How do they support people's studying and assessment in Welsh?	They should have Welsh speaking assessors and the whole process including assessment, internal and external verification should be undertaken through the medium of Welsh. If your learner needs or wants this opportunity, make sure the provider has these systems in place.	
What support is offered if your employee needs extra help with reading, writing or family commitments?	If your employee has difficulty with reading, writing or counting it may be appropriate to use Essential Skills in the Workplace to raise their competence levels before starting the qualification. Your learning providers should know about this scheme and offer it. They should offer e-portfolios and other technologies to support learners, but also note the importance of these basic skills in care and support.	
Assessment from the learning provider		
How many observations will be planned over the course of the learning to examine progression and development of competence?	You should expect monthly visits and never fewer than three visits : one at the beginning, middle and end to see progression and development of competence. Usually it will be many more than that, every month or so for the duration of the learning. Learning providers claiming to do this in fewer than three visits must be avoided.	



Questions to ask the Learning Provider	Answers you might expect	Good / satisfactory / poor
How will they undertake assessments?	<p>A variety of assessment methods should be available to your employee including written work, spoken discussion and questioning. However the main method of assessment is always observations of real work activities.</p> <p>Learning providers offering alternative primary assessment methods should be avoided.</p>	
What length of time will the assessor spend in the workplace?	This may vary depending on how often they visit; it may be a short visit to assess a particular skill or a longer visit to assess knowledge, competence and skills across a number of units. This needs to be planned in advance and communicated to the person who uses services (including seeking their permission), the learner and manager.	
Will the individuals who use services, the manager or other staff be involved in collecting and confirming evidence? If so how will this happen? On what units will it be necessary?	<p>The use of experts to confirm knowledge and competence is part of the assessment process. It is usual for all these people to have some involvement in confirming competence. These are known as Witness Testimonies.</p> <p>If you, or a member of staff, or a specialist, is to be used as an Expert Witness, they should know what learning outcomes and assessment criteria are being assessed and offer an opinion to the assessor on the competence or not of those requirements. Expert Witnesses should only be used when the assessor is not occupationally competent in specialist areas of work (e.g. Dementia Care) or where the sensitivity of the activity does not allow the assessor to be part of that activity.</p> <p>Expert Witnesses should have received some training on the requirements and the assessment process before doing this. Make sure the training provider knows the difference and expectations between these two roles.</p>	
How is the learning style of the learner identified and supported?	Do they check the learning style of your employee at the start of the learning journey and how do they make adjustments to the learning to accommodate the style?	



Questions to ask the Learning Provider	Answers you might expect	Good / satisfactory / poor
Reviewing progress and taking action		
How and when will progress be reviewed and how will the manager contribute?	You should expect that each visit or assessment contact will have some feedback for the learner on their progress and of the expectations to achieve competence. You should determine how often you want to know how it is going and ask how this will happen.	
How will the learner and manager know how well the learning is progressing and if it is meeting the needs of the learner?	You should be made aware of any practice or learning issues that come to light as soon as they do. How will the learning provider tell you about issues?	
How will concerns be identified and dealt with from any party?	There should be processes in place that enable you as the employer, to raise concerns with the training provider's organisation. They should be clear what steps they will take if they identify poor practice in your establishment, including talking to you, and raising issues with inspectors and regulators, as appropriate.	
Costs and funding		
How are issues escalated?	If concerns remain and are not dealt with by all parties what actions will take place to resolve the issues? What whistle blowing procedures are to be used to alert inspectors and regulators? Will they give you the line management systems for all concerned and their contact details?	
What are the costs for the whole learning programme?	This may be important if you are using co-investment for people 25 years and older.	



Questions to ask the Learning Provider	Answers you might expect	Good / satisfactory / poor
If there is funding, does this affect the length of time your employee has to complete the qualification?	<p>Most 'free training' is offered under the apprenticeship programme. If this is an apprenticeship, you need to know what else is included, such as Essential Skills and what time off-the-job or away from work will be required to complete the framework.</p> <p>People will usually complete apprenticeships in 9-15 months, depending on the level of the qualification and the knowledge and experience of the learner. Some people may take longer. Ask about the average completion time with this learning provider.</p> <p>See the Care Council for Wales' <i>An Employer's Guide to Apprenticeships</i>.</p>	
How can you support Essential Skills in the workplace?	<p>You may be able to support the achievement of the Essential Skills in the Workplace programme. Remember it may be more effective to contribute to training and qualifications rather than agree to a free place for your employee that is not suitable.</p>	