

2020 Children's and Young People's Workforce Strategy

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is:
10 March 2009

Your comments must reach us by that date.

department for
children, schools and families

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Children, Schools and Families e-consultation website (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations>).

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department. This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies. You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

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If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact Deborah Woodford on:

Telephone: 020 7925 5933

e-mail: Deborah.Woodford@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 0870 000 2288

e-mail: consultation.unit@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

Please tick one box that best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Directors of Children's Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Directors of Children and Learners	<input type="checkbox"/> School Workforce
<input type="checkbox"/> Health Workforce	<input type="checkbox"/> Early Years Workforce	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Support, Crime and Justice Workforce
<input type="checkbox"/> Further Education College staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Work and Care Workforce	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Educational Needs Workforce
<input type="checkbox"/> Parenting Practitioners	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports and Culture Workforce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other

Please Specify:

Infrastructure organisation supporting the children young people and families voluntary sector across England. This response has been compiled to include the contributions of members and partner organisations.

1 Do you support our vision for the children and young people's workforce in 2020?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

We do need a qualified and professionalised workforce but how we get there needs a diverse approach and responsive to the skills, knowledge and experience that is already in place, as well as looking to the future. The notion of a graduate-led workforce and graduate qualifications for all is something which merits further thought. Vocational work based routes to qualifications which validate competencies, when well assessed and quality assured, do offer an alternative which should be borne in mind. The graduate option will not meet the needs of all, nor necessarily best suit the requirements 'on the ground'. An academic qualification is one thing; having someone with the right skills, experience and commitment to engage in direct work with children, young people and their families/carers may be something else. We need more than one route to qualification and validation. We also need capacity on the ground and a recognition that higher qualifications will merit higher salaries and this has to be built in to the vision and planning. Currently there is a mis-match between what parents, local and central government put 'in the pot' and the increasing costs of many services. Government must address this if the vision is to become a reality.

We are broadly in agreement with the vision detailed on page 19, Box 2.1. We would however suggest that the first paragraph be deleted as this repeats points made elsewhere in the vision statement. We also believe that in the 'Respected and valued as professionals' paragraph, the second sentence should be amended to read, 'They will work in a supportive environment – have access to a broad range of high quality learning opportunities'.

2 Do you agree with the priorities we have set out for addressing issues that affect the whole workforce? How can you help to achieve them?

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

We need to value and promote the workforce positively, rewarding it appropriately and supporting it, as it develops. Leadership and management are crucial but without the right staff 'on the ground' being well supported, properly and continuously developed then the strategy will fail. The notion of accessible and achievable qualifications which meet identified need and which produces workers who best relate to children young people and families and help them achieve their potential has to be the number one key to success. Rigid, hierarchical and bureaucratic processes tend to lead to a tick box mentality and approach and not produce real or positive change. Coherent national programmes which are delivered locally through accredited and diverse routes will be central to success. Set the framework, standards and requirements and then deliver in different ways to meet different needs, ensuring quality assurance. Investment in high quality qualification routes, in service training and appropriate reward systems will pay dividends as has been proven with the teaching workforce.

Full engagement and involvement of the voluntary and community sector is essential from the word go. This sector is a major deliverer of services and employer of social care staff – it needs equal consideration to the statutory sector and adequate funding to enable it to have high quality staff to deliver the best services for children. Currently the commissioning processes used to fund an increasing number of services are not being used to improve the training and development required to meet the vision in this strategy. The economic downturn will only add to the pressures faced by all sectors and our fear is that fewer resources will make their way into the VCS and into workforce development. The present policies of CWDC and other development agencies to direct funding to all sections of the workforce through local authority structures may be easier administratively, but will not necessarily lead to the maximum resource being available for workforce development at the front line. In addition while local authorities rightly have the strategic responsibilities for their localities, they are also service providers, and when funds are scarce they will understandably prioritise the development needs of their own staff. We generally agree with the priorities set out under paragraph 3.1, and our comments below on the detail elsewhere in Chapter 3 are designed to enhance or improve the proposals.

Leadership and Management – the detail contained in paragraphs 3.4 – 3.7 captures many of the key issues in the Sector. However, the proposals contained in paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9, potentially lead to a two-speed developmental programme for leaders and

managers. A partnership group should instead be tasked with creating an integrated developmental programme for all leaders including Directors, and Senior and middle managers. This inclusive programme could model integrated working and help ensure full and meaningful engagement with the voluntary, community and private sector. The work already carried out by the CWDC 'Leadership and Management' and 'Middle Manager' User Groups, could provide a starting place and initial momentum for this important piece of work. This approach would also help address the fact that, '...we are not taking enough advantage of opportunities to bring leaders, and potential leaders, together...' (3.7)

Working Together – front line workers may well not be clear on what is meant by 'integrated working' (3.20), however, this has often been because of the way in which it has been referred to as, 'multi-agency', 'joint', and 'partnership' working and the like. We also see the role of Children's Trusts as pivotal to ensuring that integrated working is embedded into local practice (3.29). However, to be effective the T & D opportunities referred to in paragraph 3.30, need to be equitable, transparent, simple and easily accessible.

Common Core – the thrust of the measures outlined in paragraphs 3.35 – 3.46 appears to confirm the need for a 'refresh' and further integration into induction practices. We trust that the ambitious timeframe will give adequate opportunity for consultation.

Qualifications, training and progression – again while the aspirations here are laudable, we hope that the opportunities described in paragraph 3.64 are made equitable, transparent, simple and easily accessible.

3 Do you find the tables in Annexes B and C (see the download of the full version of the document 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy) setting out what integrated working means for different people in the workforce helpful?

Yes

No

x Not Sure

Comments:

Quite complicated and takes time to digest and understand – not everyone will have this; it needs simplifying and summarising. There is also too much jargon and too many acronyms which will 'exclude' some from understanding and seeing the relevance to their work. However diagrams capturing the complexities of issues like integrated working are always helpful as explanation. However, making it happen in practice will remain the key challenge for the Sector.

The resources and systems which have to respond in the ways indicated within the annexes are perhaps just not appropriately configured in terms of culture, style and accessibility. It will take some time to get the practice to 'fit' the theory and rhetoric. These are long term changes and not quick fixes and this needs to be more clearly recognised and acknowledged.

The inspection regime, with the onset of Integrated Working will require further clarification and a more joined up approach.

4 What does the strategy – including the vision – mean for how you do your job now, and what your profession will need to look like by 2020? What does it mean for how you will work with other people in the workforce?

Comments:

If we are to achieve the vision then there will have to be serious culture change across the whole childrens workforce, including those commissioning and funding services. This is not something which will happen overnight, and it is commendable that the Government has taken a longer term view on this issue, rather than trying to deliver such profound change in the life of one Parliament.

In the near future the 2020 Strategy makes things more complicated, more demanding and faster paced. We are already alienating sections of the workforce with the sheer number of new initiatives, qualifications and workforce requirements such as the common core, especially smaller employers who lack the training and HR infrastructure to manage change quickly. Even our local authority colleagues complain of the fast pace of change and the lack of understanding from policy makers about the time it takes to implement new programmes. This is not to argue for delay, but rather to underline how important it is to focus on fewer key messages at one time and to pace reforms. As an infrastructure organisation we have staff whose only job is to keep pace with workforce reform and provide clear information for the sector on the changes they need to be aware of. But our staff are overwhelmed by the web sites, documents, different deadlines, jargon and priorities which are not adequately joined up at Government Department levels or across Skills Councils and Learning organisations. How much worse is it then for organisations which are working to deliver high quality services at the same time!

We would like Government to model what it asks of us in integrated working. The picture is currently too diffuse and with too little effective co-ordination – so many projects, programmes etc in so many different places and no-one seeming to see the overall picture and how this impacts on the ground.

The success of the strategy will depend on reforming the HOW as well as the WHAT of workforce reform.

We hope that in the future the Strategy will lead to more movement of staff between sectors and a better understanding and respect for the skills and experience of VCS workers. Multi -agency settings, such as children's centres are already building better teams able to serve children and families needs in a holistic way. However practical problems of differing terms and conditions of employment, pension and job security (linked to short term funding arrangements) do serve to undermine some of the gains made and we hope that the Government will not shy away from tackling these barriers as part of the Strategy.

We believe the future of many more services will lie with the third sector and therefore their role and contribution needs to be more centre stage. Although we are enthusiastic and keen to develop both the workforce and the range of high quality services delivered by the third sector, we remain concerned that without a clear and unequivocal steer from government, the current levers of change and financial incentives will reinforce existing inequalities within the workforce.

Chapter 4 provides a useful overview of work already in progress in the professions that together comprise the children and young people's workforce. This section of the document also provides detail on 'what next' for these professions and a number of these occupational groups are prevalent in our own workforce including: social work with children and families, early years, youth justice, play, and youth support. We therefore welcome the measures outlined and the opportunities for engagement with the on-going work outlined for the professions relevant to our business. The formation of the Social Work Taskforce and the planned early publication of its findings in the summer of 2009 is also noted, as is the significance of the change programme outlined in paragraph 4.14. Is this a model that could usefully be applied to the other professions in the Children and Young People's workforce?

5 Will the strategy help you address the challenges facing you (as an individual member of the workforce, as an organisation or as a Children's Trust) now and in the future? What else do Government and its national partners need to take into account in the further plans we develop?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

We are disappointed that the role and contribution of third sector workforce across a whole range of services and professions is not recognised more clearly within the document. While there are many "warm words" which we would agree with and support, the document is very light on how these will be translated into action, or resourced. ECM has been supported by the sector as was the creation of children's trusts, but the implementation of these policies at local level is causing voluntary organisations to become marginalised and even close in the face of service "rationalisation" and a declining emphasis on preventative work.

Changing the structures for workforce development without adequate resources will not lead to improved quality. This is clearly evidenced by the problems created in the social work profession some of which are linked to changing the content and structure of the degree course, while allowing education institutions to fill courses to capacity to earn their fees, with no incentive at all to quality control applicants.

We would favour national funding mechanisms which all employers, across all sectors, can bid to or access equally for priority areas of workforce development. We would like to have far fewer sector skills councils and other development bodies to relate to and much more coherent footprints for the ones that remain, which reflect current thinking on integrated working rather than historical professional hierarchies.

We would like to see the Government actively promote and champion the children's workforce to improve the status and recognition it receives and resist adding to the negative press and media coverage which surrounds service failure and seeks to scapegoat individual workers.

In addition, more resources, energies and clarity of communications needs to be directed at the key providers of services as well as the commissioners. The third sector has much to offer but has not been adequately taken into account to date. Neither have the significant resources which are needed to better equip the workforce to meet the many challenges of the 21st century, and to support children, young people and families to do the same.

The Strategy provides a useful starting place from which to recognise and where appropriate address the significant and important differences – in skills, knowledge, career pathways, and practice - within and between professional and occupational groups. It also provides some glimpses of how the Third sector might be able to realise its potential as a real partner in the developing workforce.

The Government now needs to ensure that a ‘...new National Children and Young People’s Workforce Partnership...’ (2.19) includes the Voice of the Third Sector.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply x

Here at the Department for Children, Schools and Families we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

xYes

No

All DCSF public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DCSF consultations are conducted, please contact Phil Turner, DCSF Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 794304 / email: phil.turner@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk.

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 10 March 2009

Send by post to: Deborah Woodford, DCSF, Ground Floor, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London. SW1P 3BT

Send by e-mail to: ChildrensWorkforce.Strategy@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk