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## Consultation – summary of responses

# Early Years Outcomes Framework

Date of issue: June 2015

# Early Years Outcomes Framework

<b>Audience</b>	The Early Years Outcomes Framework is aimed at everyone who leads, commissions and delivers services for children and families from pregnancy up to age seven (the end of Foundation Phase) in Wales. This includes midwives, health visitors, school nurses, childcare workers, play workers, teachers, teaching assistants, social workers, doctors, dentists, regional consortia, local authorities, local health boards (LHBs) and health trusts through to government and national partners.
<b>Overview</b>	<p>In <i>Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan</i> we made a commitment to develop and consult on an Early Years Outcomes Framework. The consultation document set out the draft framework which will be used to help us understand the extent to which our policies and programmes are making an impact. It is also the intention that the framework will be used by everyone across the early years sector in Wales as a tool to drive improvements. It will provide evidence of whether they are making a positive difference to the lives of 0 to 7-year-olds and their families.</p> <p>This document provides a summary of the responses that were received, as well as the Welsh Government's response.</p>
<b>Action required</b>	None – for information only.
<b>Further information</b>	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Early Years Team Department for Education and Skills Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ e-mail: <a href="mailto:earlyyears@wales.gsi.gov.uk">earlyyears@wales.gsi.gov.uk</a>
<b>Additional copies</b>	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at <a href="http://www.gov.wales/consultations">www.gov.wales/consultations</a>
<b>Related documents</b>	<p><i>Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan</i> (2013) <a href="http://www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/building-a-brighter-future-early-years-and-childcare-plan/?lang=en">www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/building-a-brighter-future-early-years-and-childcare-plan/?lang=en</a></p> <p>Early Years Partnership Board <a href="http://www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/early-years-partnership-board/?lang=en">www.gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/early-years-partnership-board/?lang=en</a></p>

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## Introduction

On 16 October 2014 the Minister for Education and Skills, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty and Minister for Health and Social Services launched a consultation on the proposed Early Years Outcomes Framework. It was open for responses until 15 January 2015. A total of 8 questions were included in the consultation document. These were set out in a separate, proforma style document with an additional question asking for any other comments, for ease of email and postal returns.

In addition, a youth friendly document was published through Pupil Voice Wales on 20 January. This set out the purpose and definition of an outcomes framework and asked 4 questions which sought to test whether the proposed outcomes in the framework are the most important outcomes to children. This consultation ran for 6 weeks and 12 responses were received.

## Breakdown of consultation responses

In total, 51 responses were received for the full consultation. The breakdown of responses by sector, is as follows:

Sector	Responses
3 <sup>rd</sup> sector organisations	11
Health Organisations	12
Higher Education Institution	2
Inspectorates	2
Local Authorities	9
Miscellaneous	10
Teachers' Union	5
Total	51

## Analysis of responses

The following provides an overview of comments for each question as well as specific examples of responses. All responses have been considered fully and have been taken into account as we develop the Early Years Outcomes Framework.

Percentages within the tables are based on the number of answers per question.

On 23 April the main themes that have come through the responses to the consultation were discussed at the Early Years Partnership Board<sup>1</sup>. The changes that should be made as a result were agreed and described below.

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<sup>1</sup> Details of the Early Years Partnership Board can be found at the following link - <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/early-years-partnership-board/?lang=en>

## Overall comments on the responses

### **Question 1: Will this framework help to identify where early years policies and programmes are making a difference?**

Answer	Number of responses	Percentage of those answered
Yes	28	62%
No	0	0%
Unsure	17	38%
Not answered	6	-

There was general agreement with the proposed framework in the consultation. The “strong focus on measuring and acting on outcome data in Welsh policy” was welcomed. Many respondents recognised that as the data will be collected year on year it will take time to see a difference.

The importance of the use of performance measures in order to gauge whether any one is better off as a result of the services provided across the early years was also highlighted. It was suggested that both qualitative and quantitative data should be used for this. As set out in the consultation document, performance measures are specific to organisations and / or services which is why just a number of examples of performance measures that could be used were included in the Framework, for illustrative purposes only. However, it is recognised that, if the Framework is to make a difference right across the early years sector, and ultimately to the outcomes we want for children, further guidance, case studies or areas of good practice could be useful tools for Welsh Government to publish.

It was encouraging to hear support for “genuine commitment to shared responsibility and accountability so that the impact of multi-agency working might be maximised.”

One respondent advised “the outcomes, and the data being used to measure them, should be subject to regular review and be capable of adapting as our understanding of the needs of early years changes.” Welsh Government strongly agrees with this statement. In order to drive improvement there needs to be clarity in terms of accountability and scrutiny. It has been agreed that the Early Years Partnership Board will be accountable for the implementation and ongoing scrutiny and review of the Framework. This will involve consideration of the following:

- that the production, management and presentation of the data meets the requirements of Welsh Government, public services and the service users
- that the indicators in the Framework provide meaningful, relevant and timely information
- that the Framework continues to align with other relevant outcomes frameworks and initiatives
- that the Framework is driving improvements at national and local levels
- that Welsh Government is supporting effective implementation of the Framework

**Question 2: Are the seven outcomes representative of what is important to children aged between 0-7?**

Answer	Number of responses	Percentage of those answered
Yes	26	54%
No	8	17%
Unsure	14	29%
Not answered	5	-

A significant number stated that all outcomes are representative except “all children in the early years are happy”. This is further discussed under question 4 below.

Two respondents highlighted that the outcomes should also reflect the 7 Core Aims for Children. It is agreed that the publication of the Framework is an opportunity to promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC will be referred to in the Framework document.

The consultation document stated that a specific Aim relating to the provision of Welsh was not included as it is integral to everything we do and that Welsh language provision is encapsulated by the Aim “Services are accessible and available which meet parents’, families’ and children’s needs”. However, some respondents were of the view that the provision of, and access to Welsh medium should be reflected in the Framework in a more explicit way. As a result of this an additional Aim focused on the provision and access to acquiring and developing Welsh skills will be added to the final version of the Framework.

**Question 3: If the outcomes are not representative, what is missing?**

66% of respondents answered this question

*Emotional and mental health*

A number of respondents highlighted the importance of the outcome “all children in the early years are healthy” encompassing both emotional and mental health as well as physical health. Current available data for emotional and mental health such as data from school counselling services are performance measures, at local level. However, it is agreed that mental and emotional health should be reflected in the Framework. This will be done with a link to the *Together for Mental Health*<sup>2</sup> strategy. It is also the intention to publish examples of performance measures that are used for mental health services for children and families.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://gov.wales/topics/health/nhs/wales/healthservice/mental-health-services/strategy/?lang=en>

## *Play*

The importance of providing play opportunities for children was emphasised in a number of responses. For example, one respondent commented, “Play affects every aspect of a young child’s life, it is their means of making sense of and getting through their everyday experience, it is fundamental to all aspects of learning, all aspects of growth and is a key means of communication in the absence of sufficiently developed cognitive and verbal ability in the very young.” Indeed Welsh Government remains committed to encouraging the creation of high quality ‘compensatory’ play provision that is appropriate, local, stimulating and challenging for all children in Wales, in line with the UNCRC.

The Aim “continue to improve opportunities for all children in play in safety” was included in the proposed Framework and will remain. This spans across all outcomes, showing that the importance of play is cross-cutting right across the early years and can impact on all the outcomes we are aiming to improve. The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 requires that all local authorities in Wales carry out regular Play Sufficiency Assessments. Local authorities are required to undertake and publish information about play opportunities for children in their areas. The data gathered from this will be able to be used as a performance measure, at local level. This will be reflected in the final version of the Framework.

## *Poverty*

A significant number of respondents argued that ‘poverty’ should be defined. To remain consistent, the same definition that is given in the Welsh Government’s revised Child Poverty Strategy (2015)<sup>3</sup> will be used for the outcomes framework:

“By poverty we mean a long-term state of not having sufficient resources to afford food, reasonable living conditions or amenities or to participate in activities (such as access to attractive neighbourhoods and open spaces) which are taken for granted by others in their society.”

A number of respondents recommended that the outcome should not just reflect economic poverty but also the impact of poverty. As a result of these comments the outcome will be changed to “all children in the early years do not live in and are not disadvantaged by poverty”. Not being disadvantaged by poverty better reflects the strategic objectives of the Welsh Government’s revised Child Poverty Strategy. This Strategy has its own set of indicators which are focused on measuring the outcomes of low income households. Given the relevance, the final version of the Framework will include a link to both the Child Poverty Strategy and Tackling Poverty Action Plan.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/child-poverty/?lang=en>

**Question 4: Should ‘all children in the early years are happy’ be included as a standalone outcome?**

Answer	Number of responses	Percentage of those answered
Yes	7	15%
No	20	43%
Unsure	20	43%
Not answered	5	-

Given the results above, the outcome “children in the early years are happy” will not be included in the final version of the Framework. A number of reasons were listed in support of this across the responses received, including the following:

- There is no agreed definition of happiness for this age group
- The difficulties measuring happiness outweigh its usefulness as an indicator
- Children’s happiness would be the result of a combination of outcomes, not an individual one in itself
- The aim of the early years policies and programmes should be to create the conditions to enable children to be happy. It is important to ensure that children’s wellbeing, and the capacity of providers to support this are what is measured
- Happiness is a subjective judgment
- “One child might feel happy and display being happy because he has been fed today or not been hit today. Another might feel and display happiness because they are going to Disney”

**Question 5: If ‘all children in the early years are happy’ is a standalone outcome what are the most appropriate indicators?**

A number of suggestions were made for appropriate indicators of children in the early years being happy. These include the following:

- The extent to which the child has had access to / been able to play, feels safe, respected and feels listened to and feels that they belong
- Non verbal communication such as child/parental interaction, interaction with others, whether they are sleeping well, diet, how they play, behaviour problems, intuition and eye contact
- Relaxed and confident relationships
- Good energy levels
- Able to make confident choices
- Ability to talk to adults
- Expressing emotions and feeling safe in doing so
- Playing spontaneously



- Progression towards targets/milestones
- Willingness/demonstration of having fun/take delight in their surroundings and activities
- Being motivated to be self-starters
- There could be an opportunity to combine some happiness measures with the Early Years Development Assessment Framework that is in development in Wales

Others argued that some of the other outcomes in the Framework contribute to this result, for example a child feeling safe, supported and cared for.

As noted above, “children in the early years are happy” will not be included as a standalone outcome in the Framework. However, it is the intention that there will be a reference to the importance of children’s happiness and well-being.

**Question 6: Are you aware of any other tools / mechanisms / data that could be used to measure the population outcomes?**

A number of suggestions were submitted, including the following:

- rates of breastfeeding
- the number of children attending early years settings that are part of the national Healthy and Sustainable Pre School Scheme
- uptake of the Healthy Start scheme by eligible families
- proxy indicators of dietary intake e.g. fruit and vegetable consumption
- percentage eligible families benefitting from the Healthy Start scheme including women and children receiving Healthy Start vitamins.
- percentage of women who commence pregnancy with a healthy weight (using NICE, 2006 BMI classifications)
- percentage of parents of young children who report an increase in taking children to spaces for playing
- percentage of children with opportunities to play outside and experience the natural environment
- measures included in the Welsh Dads survey
- qualitative measures to include the perceptions of the child and family

These are all examples of data that can be used to determine how well a service is performing and if anyone is better off as a result. They are therefore examples of performance measures, rather than national / population indicators.

The way in which the Early Years Outcomes Framework can make a difference across the sector, in all organisations that lead, commissions and delivers services for children and families from pregnancy up to age seven, was discussed at the Early Years Partnership Board. Although we are not being prescriptive about what specific performance measures different organisations should use to drive improvements, we

will develop and publish a bank of case studies. These will show how the use of Results Based Accountability approaches can lead to tangible changes in outcomes.

It is acknowledged that it will be useful for service planning if the data that is collected at national level can be broken down to the lowest geography possible.

**Question 7: Can you see how your contribution to the early years in Wales fits into the Framework? If not, what is missing?**

Answer	Number of responses	Percentage
Yes	28	61%
No	3	7%
Unsure	15	33%
Not answered	7	-

It is encouraging that the majority of respondents can see how their contribution to the early years in Wales fits into the Framework. Of the 7% that indicated 'no' only two rationales were given. The first was that, if the Framework reflected the importance of play more, then that organisation would be able to see their contribution. The other believed that the Framework does not emphasise the role of fathers adequately enough. The Framework has been developed to focus on the outcomes that we want for all children, regardless of the gender of their parent/s and carers.

**Question 8: It is the intention that the outcomes framework will be a useful tool for planning and evaluation which will support improvements where needed. What are the potential challenges, if any, with the early years outcomes framework on a practical level?**

The main challenges that were identified were as follows:

*Accessibility*

Some noted that in order for the Framework to be successful, i.e. real improvements made to the outcomes, it needs to be "workable, accessible and relevant" and "not just a tool for high level reporting to Welsh Government".

*Availability and quality of data*

A number of respondents highlighted the importance of data being available for all children, not just those that are benefitting from specific programmes, such as Flying Start. In order to drive improvements in the population, the Framework has to allow us to gather information about what is happening across the whole population and not simply at the highest level of need. It was noted that "at present, many of the

population indicators only show us what is happening at a crisis point and we do not have a clear picture of what is happening at lower levels of need.”

The way in which children are assessed throughout the early years needs to be consistent on a national basis so that the data collected is comparable and useful.

The data that is collected needs to be robust and that all data is inputted in a timely way. The systems and devices that are used across the sector should enable the upload of data as efficiently as possible. One respondent gave the following example, “some areas have hand held devices i.e. use the PARIS system which is conducive to enabling an efficient, accurate data collection, not relying on several different people being involved from practitioner, administration, post, sorting office, data inputter etc.” It was recognised that this will be a challenge given present resources.

One respondent emphasised the importance of recording the gender of the parent or carer accessing services.

#### *Importance of regular review*

As outlined in the “Context” section of the consultation document, there are already a number of other frameworks and / or initiatives in place that relate to or have an impact on the early years. One respondent emphasised this in the following comment, “This Framework will need to be regularly reviewed and refreshed in order to ensure that it is fully aligned with any new policy/strategic drivers/developments e.g. Future Generations Bill, development of EYDAF, integrated inspection framework for care and education, learning from pilot study of CSSIW’s Quality Judgement Framework, any further DWP Welfare Reforms etc.”

As noted under question 1, the Early Years Partnership Board have taken responsibility for regularly reviewing the Framework. This includes ensuring ongoing alignment with other related initiatives and policy developments.

#### *Communications*

The way in which the Framework is presented, disseminated and publicised will be an enabler to ensuring ‘buy-in’ from stakeholders. Some felt that it will be a challenge to prevent stakeholders seeing this as another layer of assessment rather than a tool that brings other improvement and development Frameworks together to look at common features. It was felt that “if guidance is clear and sufficient support/training is made available then Early Years providers can be supported to make the links between the different elements of their work”. This will help to embed the use of the Framework across all early years practices.

Some felt that from a Welsh Government perspective, the challenge of quality assuring the Framework reporting for consistency of understanding will be a challenge.

### *Sharing of information*

A significant number of respondents emphasised the importance of the effective sharing of information across the early years to improve outcomes for children and families. It was recommended that information sharing protocols should be agreed, where appropriate to support the process. This would be across sectors such as health and education.

One respondent believed, “There remains the need for individual tracking, unique to each child. The effective transference of information between all agencies involved remains a crucial consideration.” It was also felt that, “school leaders are often powerless to insist that other agencies deliver what is appropriate for a child. The outcomes framework might give them more information to use at the planning stage in determining what support would be helpful to the child/family but unless they have the power to hold others to account as well as be accountable, schools have no means of evaluating the contribution (or lack of it) by the agency providing the service.”

The Early Years Development Assessment Framework (EYDAF) was referred to in the consultation document (p6 and p11). This is being developed in order to provide a single, overarching assessment framework from pre-birth to age 7. It will facilitate consistency across assessment points for all children during their early years. It will be supported by strengthened approaches to key transition times for a child and their family.

### *Resources*

Some respondents were concerned that the Early Years Outcomes Framework will create unsustainable workload pressures on practitioners across the early years sector. One respondent advised that “It should not be onerous, bearing in mind that many staff in non-maintained settings receive little, if any, paid time to carry out administrative work.”

### *Other challenges to be mindful of*

Other comments included:

- Too high a level to evaluate programmes at practical level
- Many influences that have impact on outcomes are outside influence of public services in Wales.
- Routinely collected data frequently has limitations and is often poorly defined (everyone does not collect the same thing in the same way) and frequently has a number of quality issues.
- A few months can make a significant difference to children’s achievement in the early years, care needs to be taken in measurement at comparable points for individual children e.g. measurements taken during a school year at a single time point will capture children who may be several months difference

in age. While this may be appropriate over time for measuring population trends it is not appropriate when considering outcomes for individual children.

## **Youth friendly Early Years Outcomes Framework consultation**

A teacher of a class of Year 2 children uploaded the document on an interactive whiteboard and it was discussed as a class. 12 written responses were submitted from that class. The responses supported the proposed outcomes, with the majority emphasising the importance of a good education, being cared for supported and valued and not living in or not being disadvantaged by poverty.

### **Next steps**

The development of the Early Years Outcomes Framework was overseen by the Early Years Partnership Board (<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/early-years-partnership-board/?lang=en>). The Board has considered the points raised through the consultation exercise and agreed what changes need to be made to the Framework, as presented in this report.

The final version of the Framework will be published in the coming months and used to support the annual reporting cycle for the Programme. The data that is included in the Framework will be collated and presented with the Early Years and Childcare Plan annual progress report in July 2015. A data development agenda will sit alongside the Framework.

Taking into consideration all of the feedback received through the consultation exercise we will work with members of the Early Years Partnership Board to develop case studies. These will demonstrate how the Early Years Outcomes Framework can be used to make improvements to the services in which they work, and make a contribution to improving the overarching outcomes that we want for all children in Wales.