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Analysis of Consultations on Additional Curriculum for Wales Guidance

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1 Introduction

This report presents a summary of the views and perspectives held by respondents with regard to draft guidance and documentation that surrounds the Curriculum for Wales. In order to support settings and schools in engaging with elements of the new curriculum, practitioners and stakeholders have been co-designing the following draft guidance and documentation:

- [Enabling Pathways](#)

In understanding how helpful and clear these documents were, the Welsh Government sought the views and perspectives of the educational community. Each element of the guidance and documentation was put to consultation. The feedback and perspectives have informed the continued development of the documents and guidance, before the Curriculum for Wales is rolled out to settings and schools in September 2022.

Respondents' views towards each element of the draft guidance are explored in this report. This includes a summary of the responses, followed by a detailed examination of the views and perspectives expressed by respondents.

2 Enabling Pathways

Alongside the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings, practitioners and broader stakeholders were also invited for their views towards the Enabling Pathways guidance.

2.1 Summary of Responses

Respondents were also consulted on the Enabling Pathways guidance. The guidance supports practitioners in settings and schools in planning, designing and implementing an appropriate curriculum for all learners, including those at the beginning of a learning journey leading to progression step 1. Together, 79 respondents kindly took the time to share their views. Responses were received from a diverse range of individuals and organisations, including practitioners and senior leaders working across nursery settings as well as primary and special schools.

Findings

Overall, respondents found the guidance to be helpful and informative. There was general agreement that the guidance was accessible and that the document was clear and concise. Furthermore, there was broad support for the overall sentiment and orientation of the approach contained within the guidance. This stemmed from the understanding that the approach advocated in the guidance is appropriate and effective in supporting all learners, including those working towards progression step 1.

Respondents offered a number of suggestions as to where the guidance could be strengthened. These tended to centre on the inclusion of further information or more explicit links to other guidance, including the Curriculum for Wales. Some also suggested the inclusion of more practical information such as exemplars that could support engagement from practitioners. Examples of how observation could be embedded in teaching and learning, for example, would help practitioners to visualise and act on the guidance. Others felt that further information or more explicit reference to certain aspects such as children's rights and promoting the Welsh language would be valuable. Moreover, it was felt to be important that the guidance be accompanied by the provision of broader support and training.

2.2 Introduction

Background

The Enabling Pathways guidance has been developed to support practitioners in settings and schools in planning, designing and implementing an appropriate curriculum for all learners. The guidance forms part of the Curriculum for Wales Framework, setting out the beginning of a learning journey leading to progression step 1.

The guidance communicates the key principles that are essential for ensuring holistic and meaningful learning for all learners during this period. Fundamental to this are three 'enablers', described in the guidance as Enabling Adults, Enabling Experiences, and Enabling Environments. An effective curriculum design should also ensure that the enablers provide consistent opportunities for key features of successful pedagogy, including:

- play and playful learning
- being outdoors
- observation
- authentic and purposeful learning.

An understanding of child development is also essential for curriculum planning, design and implementation appropriate to all learners. The Enabling Pathways guidance further explores how this understanding should be applied to support progression for all learners.

For more information on the consultation document, please click [here](#).

Responses

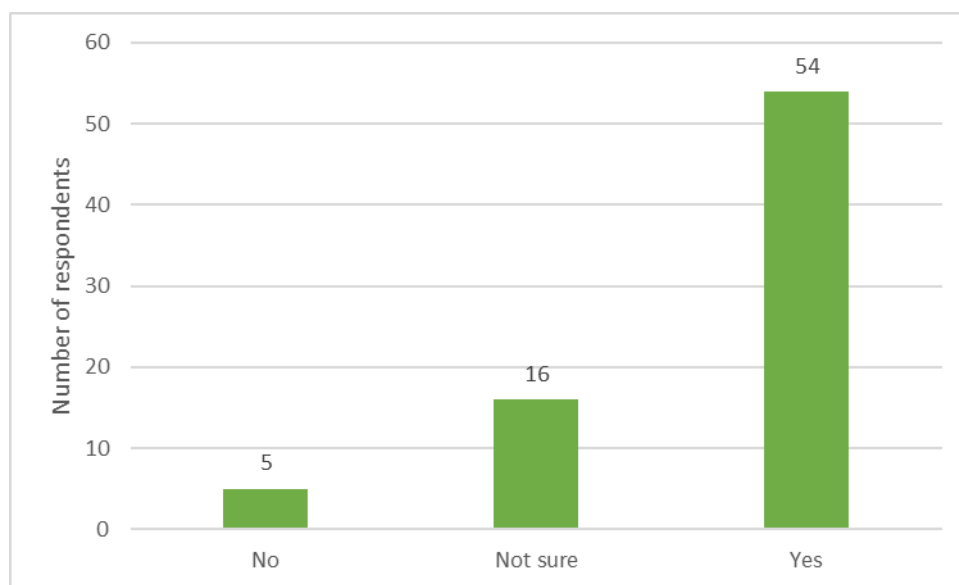
In order to understand the views of practitioners and other stakeholders regarding the Enabling Pathways guidance, respondents were invited to provide feedback online or via email. Together, 79 respondents kindly took the time to share their views. Responses were received from a diverse range of individuals and organisations, including practitioners and senior leaders working across nursery settings as well as primary and special schools. Furthermore, responses were received from individuals and organisations supporting learners and the educational community more broadly, including parents/carers, ALNLOs, and Early Years Advisory Teachers. Responses were also received from regional consortia, local authorities, and other agencies with an interest in the Enabling Pathways guidance.

2.3 Relationships Between Enabling Pathways and the Curriculum

Respondents were first asked whether they felt as though there was a clear relationship between Enabling Pathways guidance and broader Curriculum for Wales guidance and documentation.¹

General Perceptions

The majority of respondents felt that there were clear links and internal consistency between the Enabling Pathways guidance and the Curriculum for Wales as a whole:



Key Themes

Within open responses, there was general agreement that the Enabling Pathways guidance complemented the Curriculum for Wales and would be valuable in informing practitioners' engagement with learners:

The guidance supports the curriculum guidance well. They complement each other and can support practitioners to deliver an effective broad curriculum.

Early Years Advisory Teacher, Private day nursery setting

We agree that (overall) the document clearly reflects the ambition of the Curriculum for Wales, putting learners at the centre of the learning experience with a clear drive to embed the four purposes of the curriculum.

¹ Question 2 – Is there a clear relationship between this draft guidance and the published Curriculum for Wales guidance?

From these perspectives, respondents also recognised and valued the approach to supporting learners as outlined within the guidance. This suggested support for the overall orientation of the Enabling Pathways guidance and the curriculum more broadly:

It has a strong link to a purpose-led curriculum, with clear expectations on schools to continue to respond to individual pupil needs, whilst realising learning that promotes a purpose-led curriculum. The focus on the development [of] knowledge, skills and experiences through the support of enablers is very clear and concise and not too prescriptive.

School Improvement Officer, Local authority

There is clear alignment of both the Curriculum for Wales and the draft guidance. The ethos of the Curriculum for Wales has been maintained throughout with the additional support of reflective prompts for leaders and practitioners in the non-maintained settings.

Early Years Wales

Further Information

Those who felt that the links between the Enabling Pathways guidance and the broader curriculum could be strengthened often highlighted that further information within the guidance would be valuable. This included elements such as more explicit reference to the four purposes and to AoLEs within the guidance, as well as other information that could support the engagement of practitioners:

There is a clear relationship between the Enabling Pathways guidance and the published Curriculum for Wales guidance [...]. The guidance reflects the values of the Curriculum for Wales whilst considering the specific settings which are leading learning towards progression step 1. There is scope to strengthen this draft guidance with the addition of further information on the topics highlighted in the introduction to this response, as well as case studies from innovation or professional learning schools to support the understanding and implementation of best practice.

Estyn

Stronger Links

Some respondents also highlighted the volume of guidance with which practitioners needed to engage as a potential barrier. From these perspectives, practitioners needed to situate a range of information across a number of documents in understanding and responding to the new curriculum. These respondents tended to advocate more explicit links within the Enabling Pathways guidance:

Both documents explain that the curriculum will be based on the four purposes, and provide key principles, but, apart from that, they feel very different. This document is more concise and user-friendly but it says very little about the six areas of learning and experience or the mandatory curriculum elements, whereas these are covered in depth in the published Curriculum for Wales guidance. [It is] not clear on the purpose of this document and if it should be read instead of the published Curriculum for Wales guidance or in conjunction with it.

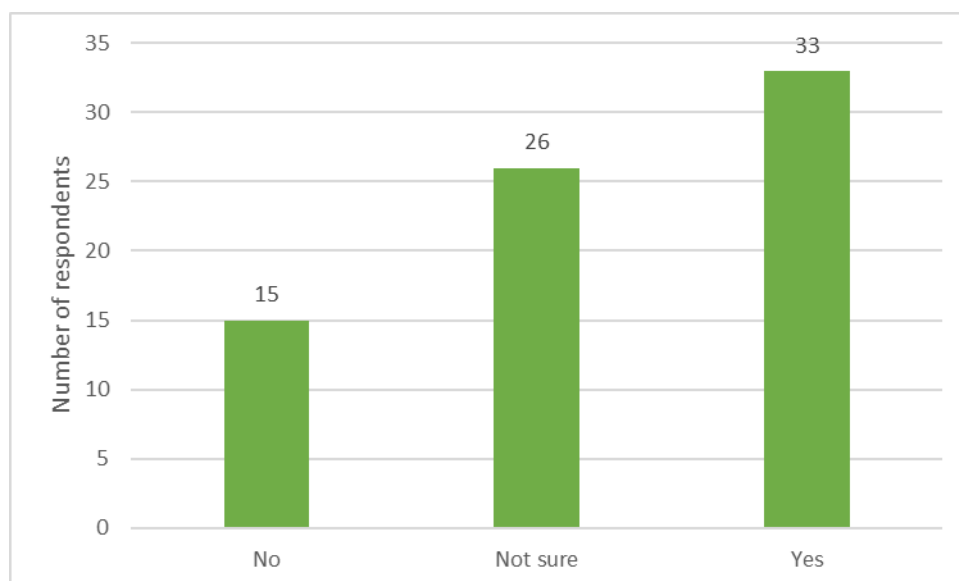
Early Years Manager, Local authority

2.4 Issues Facing Practitioners

Respondents were then asked whether the draft guidance sufficiently addressed the issues facing practitioners working with learners who are working towards progression step 1.²

General Perceptions

Overall, 44.5 per cent of respondents felt that the guidance sufficiently addressed the issues facing practitioners. A further 35.1 per cent were unsure, and 20.2 per cent felt that it did not:



Key Themes

In more open responses, those who felt as though the guidance was sufficient tended to outline their broader support for the approach advocated within the Enabling Pathways guidance. This included the centrality of the learner, as well as the pedagogical principles

² Question 3 – Does this draft guidance sufficiently address the issues facing practitioners working with learners in the period of learning leading to progression step 1 when planning, designing and delivering the curriculum and assessment for learners?

underscoring the approach. From these perspectives, the guidance provided an effective approach to supporting all learners. What is more, respondents felt that the clarity and accessibility of the guidance helped practitioners to visualise and act on the curriculum:

This guidance is excellent and fits very closely with what I believe is needed in [early years] and with what my experience and own research [conclude]. It fits so well with the “in-the-moment planning” approach I follow [...]. It builds on the principles of the foundation phase and allows and enables the practitioner to work with young children in the way they know to be right — i.e. in the moment, at the child’s level, [and] facilitating learning in a rich, varied and open-ended environment as much outside as inside. It is excellent guidance.

Teacher, Primary school

Broader Support and Resources

A key theme amongst respondents who felt unsure or that the guidance was not sufficient was the importance of broader support and resources that would be required to support practitioners’ engagement with the new curriculum. This included the importance of continuing professional development in imparting the skills and confidence with which to effectively support all learners, including those experiencing developmental delays or additional learning needs. Respondents felt that this was especially important for less experienced colleagues, as well as in supporting practitioners who are less familiar with some of the principles and processes underscoring the approach, including the curriculum design. From these perspectives, training would be valuable alongside the Enabling Pathways guidance:

Experienced teachers will be able to understand and implement this guidance. I think it is too vague for [newly qualified teachers] or those teachers at the start of their career. Some examples of evidence and ideas (photos/videos) would certainly be beneficial to all staff.

Teacher, English-medium school (primary)

It depends which issues/practitioners you are referring to. Some will have a very clear idea of the issues that need addressing when designing and developing a curriculum, while others will just be beginning to understand the expectations and aspirations of [the Curriculum for Wales]. Curriculum design is not something which many practitioners will have experienced and it will, no doubt, be a daunting prospect. Many may feel they are already “doing” [the Curriculum for Wales] without understanding the pedagogical shift required, and may not feel changes are needed. Depending on which setting you liaise with, the “issues” will differ; for example, the perceived issues in a mainstream early years setting may differ from those in a special school.

Director, Private training provider

Another theme was that of the resources available to practitioners, settings and schools to support delivery of the new curriculum. Some respondents, for example, felt that they did not have access to outdoor environments that would enable them to deliver on the aspirations of the guidance to support outdoor learning:

The role of the enablers is clearly explained and this is extremely helpful in terms of focusing on what is important when planning, designing and delivering the curriculum and assessment for learners. [I am] not sure it addresses issues facing practitioners such as how they create an enabling environment if they are in a community building with limited access to the outdoors.

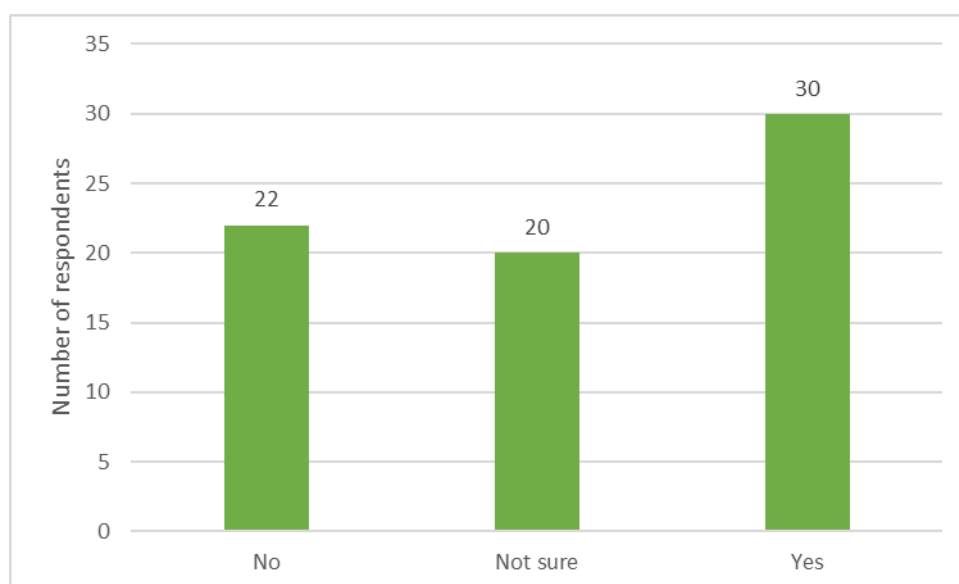
Early Years Manager, Local authority

2.5 Planning, Designing and Implementing the Curriculum and Assessment

Turning to planning, designing and implementing curriculum and assessment arrangements, respondents were asked whether the guidance adequately supported practitioners in engaging with the curriculum.³

General Perceptions

There was a more pronounced disagreement amongst respondents regarding whether the guidance adequately supported planning, designing and implementing the curriculum and assessment prior to progression step 1:



³ Question 4 – Does this guidance adequately support and help in planning, designing and implementing the curriculum and assessment for learners in the period of learning leading to progression step 1?

Key Themes

For those respondents in agreement, most restated that they felt as though the guidance was clear and helpful, including in planning and delivering the curriculum for learners prior to progression step 1:

We feel this is comprehensive [and] easy to read to aid all staff during this period. We are glad to see [it] focuses on the children's development. The assessment aspect is appropriate for the stage of learners.

Foundation Phase Leader, Primary school

Further Information

Those offering more qualified views tended to centre on further information that may be valuable in supporting practitioners' engagement with the curriculum. Suggestions included a range of additional information, including in strengthening the links between Enabling Pathways and other guidance. Some respondents also highlighted that further practical information could be helpful to practitioners in acting on the guidance:

We agree [that the guidance] covers the main principles that are important, but [it] does not give guidance beyond these around shaping, planning and designing a curriculum. What is included is more around the theory, ethos and principles than practical examples that could support the planning, designing and implementation of a curriculum. We know that Welsh Government are keen to avoid prescription; however, [we] feel that the guidance within this document and believe that the Enabling Pathways [are] a little too general, and [that] some examples or suggestions could be included to support direction.

PACEY Cymru

The guidance could be strengthened further with the addition of case studies to support the wider understanding of best practice. For example, the guidance could include specific examples from different settings, their constraints and strengths, and how they have applied principles from this guidance to create a new and meaningful curriculum for their setting or school.

Estyn

2.6 Helpful Aspects

Respondents were then asked which aspects of the guidance they found to be most helpful.⁴

Key Themes

A key element that respondents found to be helpful concerned the general structure, tone and accessibility of the document. Moreover, there was broad support for the overall

⁴ Question 5 – Which aspects, if any, of this guidance do you feel are most helpful and should be retained?

approach advocated within the guidance, including the emphasis on observation and play. The concept of the three enablers was also consistently highlighted as being valuable in communicating and shaping effective practice:

The role of the three enablers and the key to effective learner-centred pedagogy [are] clear and their importance highlighted. These are particularly helpful for schools and practitioners in the planning process. The focus in the guidance on curriculum design and child development is a strength and effectively emphasises the importance of a progressive curriculum with the four purposes at the centre, the defining feature of the new curriculum framework.

Regional consortium

The “teachable moments” approach; the idea of adults as enablers and facilitators; the enabling environment inside and outside; the child-led learning; the awe and wonder and joy of working with young children as a skilled practitioner, allowing and facilitating children to lead their own learning, thereby developing resilience, confidence, self-esteem, decision making, and problem-solving skills, as well as developing the knowledge-based skills in the curriculum.

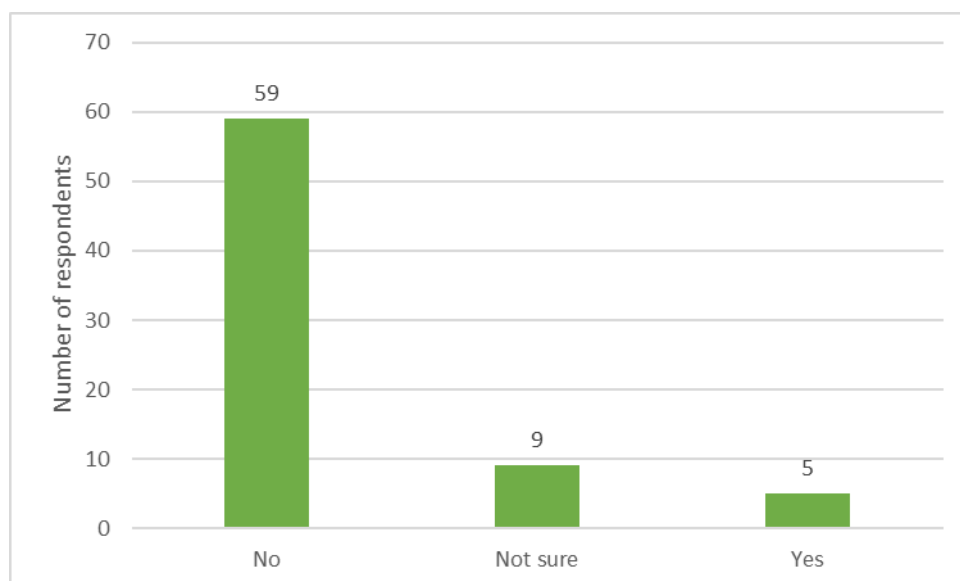
Teacher, Primary school

2.7 Prescription

In understanding whether the guidance had achieved the right level of depth, respondents were then asked whether they felt that any aspects of the guidance were too prescriptive.⁵

General Perceptions

Respondents (on the whole) felt that the guidance was not too prescriptive. This was felt to be positive, allowing for greater practitioner agency and creativity:



⁵ Question 6 – Are there any aspects of this guidance that you feel are too prescriptive?

Key Themes

Those who felt that the guidance was not prescriptive tended not to expand on their views.

Supporting all Settings and Schools

Some respondents highlighted the importance of a balance between breadth and depth and that some settings and schools would benefit from different levels of detail and prescription within the guidance. From these perspectives, confidence and skills with which to engage with the curriculum would shape subsequent responses. Those settings and schools that felt more comfortable would welcome the flexibility afforded within the guidance, whilst those that were less confident may wish to see more detailed and prescriptive guidance in supporting engagement:

We are trying to avoid generalisations. There will be settings that want to be led towards the new curriculum with guidance, scaffolding and support, and others that have the confidence and knowledge to move into the new curriculum in a positive and enthusiastic manner. Therefore, it will be within the individual if there are [aspects] that seem too prescriptive. On a personal level, I believe that there is sufficient guidance to make informed professional judgements and then to use the guidance to support and reflect upon in areas that practitioners are less confident or knowledgeable about.

Early Years Wales

Specific Examples

Some respondents offered very specific examples of where they felt that the guidance was too prescriptive. Estyn, for example, highlighted:

While we welcome the emphasis on being outdoors for most learners in schools and non-maintained settings, we consider that the sentence 'It should be the main location where learning takes place' could be too prescriptive. For example, some learners, particularly those with underlying health conditions, may not be able to spend prolonged periods of time in an outdoor environment safely. This curriculum guidance is designed to make meaningful changes and improvements for all education settings in Wales and has the capacity to do so.

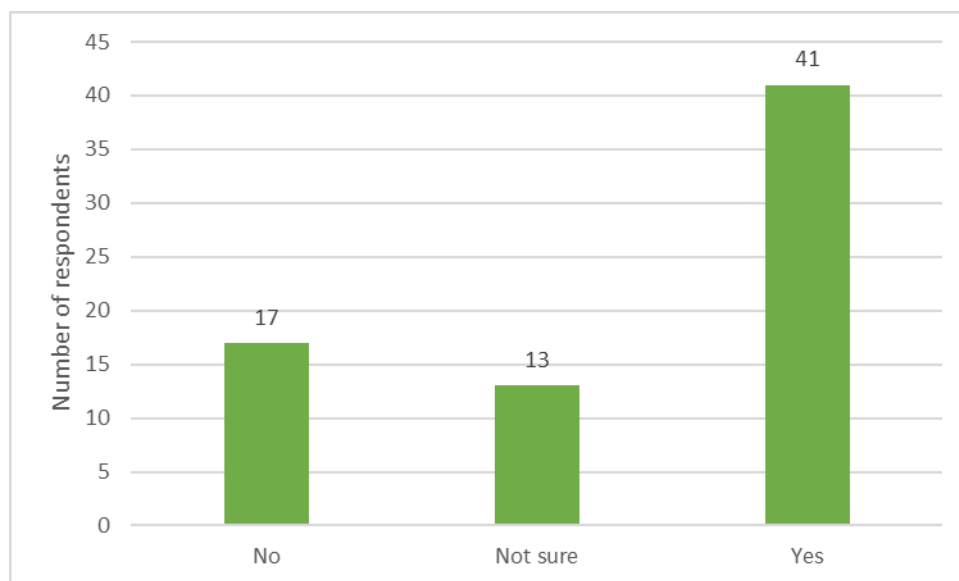
Estyn

2.8 Detail

Respondents were then asked whether any further detail would be helpful to include in the guidance.⁶

General Perceptions

Overall, 57.7 per cent of respondents felt that the guidance would benefit from further detail to support practitioners in acting on the curriculum:



Key Themes

Within more open responses, respondents offered a diverse range of suggestions in which further detail within the guidance would be valuable. Underscoring many of these viewpoints was the importance of helping practitioners to visualise and act on the curriculum in practice. One respondent typified the practical orientation that many were reading the guidance:

More information on observations could be added and examples of how to document and prioritise teachable moments would help make these clearer to practitioners.

Practitioner, Funded non-maintained setting

Observation develops professional conversation between adults in the classroom. How much time needs to be spent recording this? Can adults use digital methods of observation? More time should be spent truly observing the learners and moving their learning on not making notes, etc. Any examples of observing would be beneficial here.

Teacher, Primary school

⁶ Question 7 – Are there any aspects of this guidance that you feel are not detailed enough?

Some felt that this could be resolved by providing stronger links with other guidance. From these perspectives, respondents had understood the practical implications of the guidance but had to cross-refer to other documents to build a more rounded picture. Others, however, felt that the content and length of the guidance were valuable:

It is concise and not too lengthy, broken down into manageable chunks.

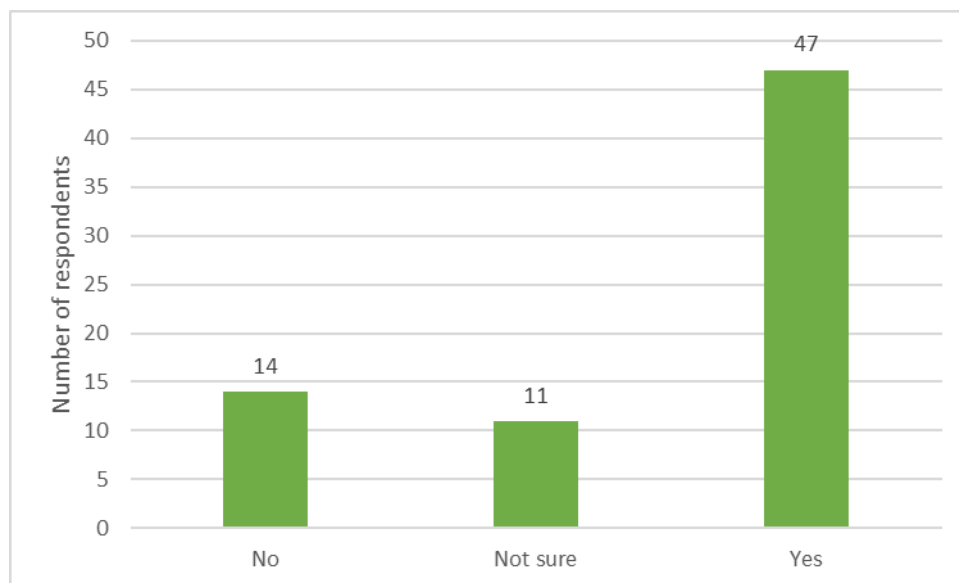
Senior Leader, Special school

2.9 Cross-Curricular Skills

Turning to the examination of cross-curricular skills, respondents were asked whether they felt that further information would be valuable within the guidance.⁷

General Perceptions

The majority of respondents felt that further information on cross-curricular skills would be valuable:



Key Themes

Greater information was considered to be valuable for a number of reasons, including in raising awareness of the importance of supporting the development of cross-curricular skills in certain settings:

Byddai cynnwys gwybodaeth fanylach yn y canllawiau Agor Llwybrau ar ddatblygiad sgiliau trawsgwricwlaidd ymhlith dysgwyr yn y cyfnod dysgu sydd yn arwain at Cam

⁷ Question 8 – Would it be helpful for more detailed information on the development of cross-curricular skills for learners in this period of learning to be included in this guidance?

Cynnydd 1 yn fanteisiol. Dyma'r unig ffordd i sicrhau bod ymarferwyr lleoliadau meithrin yn deall yr angen i sicrhau bod y sgiliau trawsgricwlaidd yn cael ystyriaeth wrth iddynt gynllunio profiadau a gweithgareddau dysgu sydd yn ateb gofynion y canllawiau a Cwricwlwm i Gymru yn ei ehangder. Nid oes digon o gyfeiriad at sgiliau Iaith Llythrennedd a Chyfathrebu, Rhifedd na Chymhwysedd Digidol yn y canllawiau hyn. O ganlyniad, nid yw hi'n amlwg bod angen cynnwys gweithgareddau sydd yn datblygu'r sgiliau trawsgricwlaidd ar draws y cwricwlwm. Gofynnwn am wybodaeth fanylach yma.

Including more detailed information in the Enabling Pathways guidance on the development of cross-curricular skills among learners in the learning phase leading up to progression stage 1 would be beneficial. This is the only way to ensure nursery setting practitioners understand the need to ensure that cross-curricular skills are considered as they plan learning experiences and activities that meet the requirements of the guidelines and Curriculum for Wales as a whole. There is not enough reference to literacy and communication, numeracy, or digital competency skills in these guidelines. As a result, it is not clear that there is a need to include activities that develop cross-curricular skills across the curriculum. We ask for more detailed information here.

Policy Manager, Mudiad Meithrin (translated from the original)

There were also more specific suggestions on where the guidance could be strengthened. A theme running through responses, for example, was greater information on how practitioners could support the development of digital competence. There was a sense from some respondents that this was sufficiently covered in other documents such as the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings. From these perspectives, the Enabling Pathways guidance could be cross-referenced or fleshed out to include these elements:

Any further guidance or case studies on the development of cross-curricular skills would strengthen this guidance and support a more comprehensive understanding by teachers and leaders. This could improve future curriculum development and design. However, when we consider the consultation document on the non-maintained curriculum, we find that this detail has been included for non-maintained settings. This is very useful for practitioners in settings. It may be useful to incorporate this additional information into all curriculum guidance documents (instead of in this standalone document).

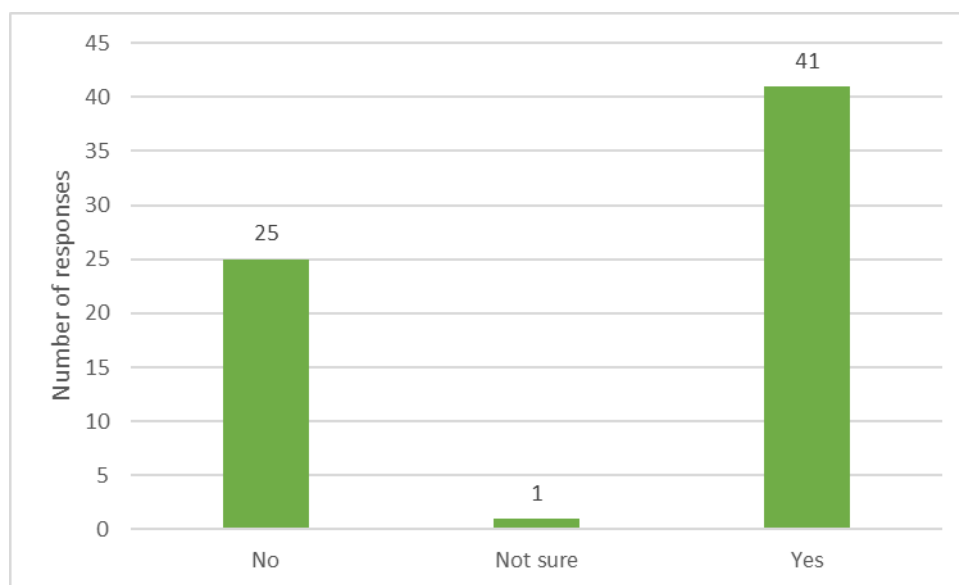
Estyn

2.10 Further Information

More broadly, respondents were then asked whether they felt that the guidance could include any further information with which to support practitioners.⁸

General Perceptions

Again, a majority of respondents highlighted that further information would be valuable:



Key Themes

Respondents offered a broad range of suggestions on where further information could be valuable. Key themes included more practical guidance, including around curriculum design and observation and assessment. From these perspectives, elements such as exemplars could be valuable in helping practitioners to visualise and act on the curriculum in practice. Other respondents highlighted specific examples of where further information or more explicit reference could be valuable, which included the Welsh language as well as children’s rights:

As Children’s Commissioner for Wales, my principal role is to safeguard the welfare and rights of children, as laid out under the UNCRC. From this perspective, this is strong guidance that has children’s holistic development, their right to play and their well-being at its heart and I welcome it. However, this can be strengthened further by making clear that these principles are underpinned by children’s human rights, as laid out in the UNCRC. This will then provide the basis for a critical understanding that these principles are not “nice to have” but are fundamental rights of all children and young people.

Children’s Commissioner for Wales

⁸ Question 9 – Is there any other information you think should be included in this guidance?

2.11 Impact on Welsh Language

Finally, respondents were asked for their views on the potential impacts of the Enabling Pathways guidance upon the Welsh language.

Key Themes

On the whole, respondents did not offer any general reflections on the impact of the guidance upon the teaching and learning of Welsh. Some felt that the guidance effectively communicated the importance of and emphasis on Welsh language provision:

There shouldn't be any effect. Opportunities to use Welsh could and should be utilised across all phases of learning. The guidance doesn't favour one language over another, [but] rather states explicitly: 'Enabling experiences should reflect and celebrate the bilingual nature of Wales and the diversity of culture in Wales.' [There is] positive reference to the promotion and the use of Welsh language and the culture and heritage of Wales and "Cynefin".

Challenge Advisor, Regional consortium

Respondents from Welsh-medium settings tended not to raise any concerns. For those who did raise concerns, issues were highlighted which were similar to those in the non-maintained curriculum. These tended to focus on Welsh language provision in English language settings, which some felt could be strengthened. From these perspectives, the Enabling Pathways guidance could make the importance of the Welsh language and culture more explicit within the document:

We do not feel that the guidance places a strong-enough emphasis on developing the Welsh language, and [we feel that it] does not outline how it supports and works towards realising Welsh Government's vision for Cymraeg 2050 [...]. In general, we feel that the Welsh context of this document could be strengthened in many areas, such as when promoting the Welsh identity of children. The document should also consider the provision of the Welsh language to meet the needs of all learners, particularly learners in special schools.

Estyn

2.12 Conclusions

Overall, respondents found the guidance to be helpful and informative. There was general agreement that the guidance was accessible and that the document was clear and concise:

It's a really well-written document.

Teaching Assistant, Nursery

Respondents raised a number of areas in which the guidance could be strengthened. A key question related to the balance between prescription and the level of detail in the guidance to enact the approach. Respondents (on the whole) felt that the guidance included an appropriate level of prescription; however, 57.7 per cent of respondents felt that the guidance lacked detail in places. Whilst the levels of prescription and detail in curriculum guidance are not mutually exclusive — guidance can be both detailed and flexible — there were those who felt that further information would be beneficial.

From these perspectives, suggestions included that more explicit links between Enabling Pathways and broader guidance were considered to be valuable, as well as more practical information that could support engagement. Some felt that further information or more explicit reference to certain elements (such as children's rights and promoting the Welsh language) would strengthen the guidance. Moreover, it was felt to be important that the guidance be accompanied by the provision of broader support including training in building skills and confidence.

As with the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings, responses to the Enabling Pathways guidance consultation suggested broad support for the overall sentiment and orientation of the approach contained within the guidance. This stemmed from the understanding that the approach is appropriate and effective in supporting all learners, including those working towards progression step 1.

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