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Analysis of Consultations on Additional Curriculum for Wales Guidance

April 2022



Wavehill: social and economic research

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This report presents a summary of the views and perspectives held by respondents with regard to draft guidance and documentation that surrounds the Curriculum for Wales.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in engaging with elements of the new curriculum, practitioners and stakeholders have been co-designing the following draft guidance and documentation:

- [Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings](#)

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Respondents' views towards each element of the draft guidance are explored in this report.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 Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings

In supporting the continued development of the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings, practitioners and broader stakeholders were invited for their views towards the document.

2.1 Summary of Responses

The curriculum is intended to support those engaged in the design and delivery of early education across settings in Wales. In total, 111 respondents kindly contributed their views towards the curriculum. A further 33 practitioners and broader stakeholders attended a series of workshops exploring their views in more depth.

Findings

Across responses and in more open conversations, there was general support for the overall sentiment and orientation of the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings. This tended to centre on the importance placed within the curriculum on the whole child, development and progression, play, and authentic experience, amongst other factors, which respondents felt matched their own values and priorities.

Respondents also cited a range of broader considerations relating to the curriculum in practice. Some respondents highlighted the importance of broader resources, training and support that sit alongside the curriculum. From these perspectives, broader support would be important in enabling all practitioners and settings to engage effectively with the new curriculum.

The majority of respondents found the curriculum document itself to be clear, helpful, engaging and, in some cases, inspiring. Within quantitative responses to the online consultation, for example, respondents on average responded very positively. Across all aspects of the curriculum, the majority of respondents found the curriculum to be clear and valuable in supporting engagement with the new curriculum. Practical elements such as the reflexive questions and enhancing practice were considered to be especially useful.

Where respondents offered comments or suggestions on where the curriculum could be strengthened, these tended to be focused on minor tweaks in structure, tone, language, content and emphasis. A key theme, for example, was the inclusion of further information on certain aspects of the curriculum. Moreover, there were suggestions that sought to improve the accessibility of the curriculum for certain audiences. These included making the curriculum more accessible for those across the sector who may be less familiar or confident with the concepts and/or approaches contained within the curriculum. Suggestions included greater use of pictures, infographics and exemplars, for example, to help communicate different aspects of the curriculum and how they fit together in practice.

Overall, most respondents felt that the curriculum, as it stands, is clear and effective. Amongst all groups, the curriculum was largely considered to be valuable and informative in helping practitioners and settings to understand, reflect and act on the new curriculum. These themes and perspectives are explored in more depth across the chapter.

2.2 Introduction

Background

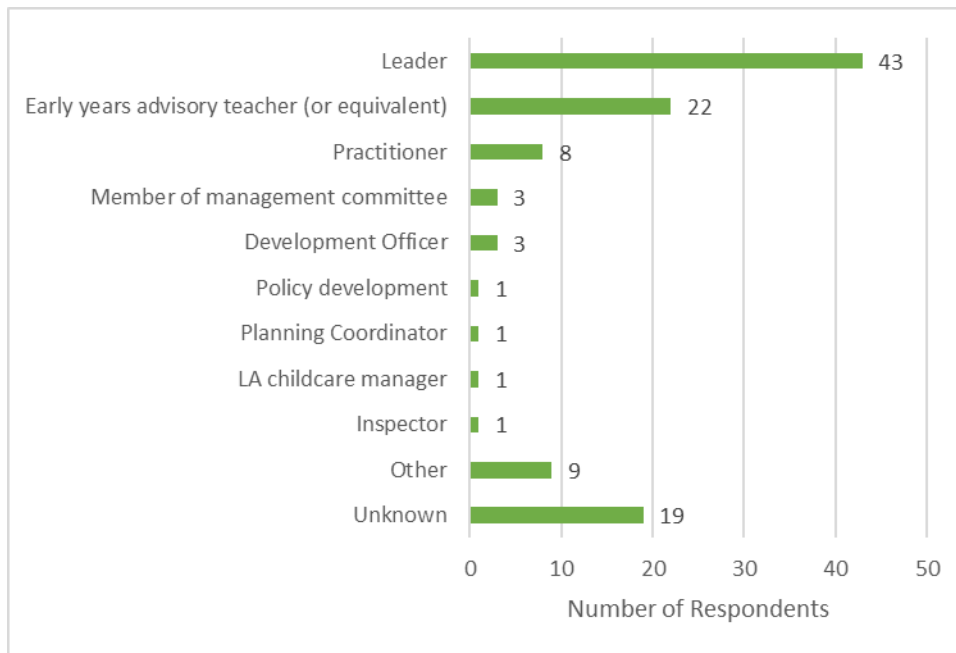
The curriculum is intended to support engagement with the Curriculum for Wales from practitioners in funded non-maintained nursery settings. The curriculum will sit alongside the Curriculum for Wales Framework and be used by settings to inform curriculum planning and implementation from 2022.

The curriculum was co-constructed with practitioners from funded non-maintained settings and in close collaboration with key stakeholders. The curriculum recognises that every child is unique and that their development is rapid between birth and five years of age. In the spirit of the Curriculum for Wales, the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings sets out to support holistic development by ensuring that the developmental needs of children are at the forefront of pedagogical practice.

For more information on the consultation surrounding the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings, please click [here](#).

Responses

In submitting their views towards the curriculum, respondents were offered a range of opportunities to provide feedback, including through online or emailed submissions, or in person through participation in workshops. Together, 111 respondents kindly took the time to submit their views within formal submissions to the consultation. These included responses from a diverse range of people and organisations, such as practitioners and leaders working in funded non-maintained nursery settings:



Responses were also received from organisations with an interest in early education, or those supporting funded non-maintained nursery settings. These included local authorities, umbrella bodies, trade unions, and Estyn (the independent regulator of nursery settings).

Workshops

In order to further understand the views and perspectives of practitioners and broader stakeholders, four workshops were convened to generate more open discussion. This included engaging parents, childminders, Welsh-medium settings, and Additional Learning Needs Lead Officers (ALNLOs). Together, 33 participants kindly attended workshops to offer their views, which are included in the following analysis.

The Representative Nature of Respondents

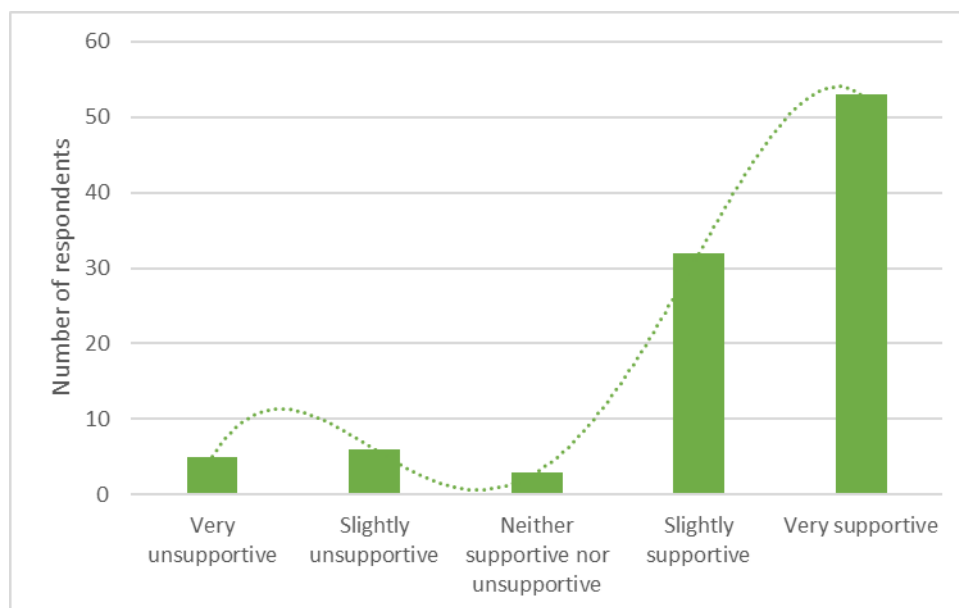
It may also be prudent to assume that respondents to the consultation are not necessarily representative of the broader workforce within the non-maintained sector as a whole. Those who submitted responses may be qualitatively different from those found in the sector overall. Respondents may have stronger motivations for engaging in the consultation, for example, or may be more motivated to engage with curriculum reform and practice improvement more generally. Some respondents from organisations that support funded non-maintained settings, for example, felt that there are those working within the sector who may not be as confident with the underlying pedagogical principles informing the new curriculum. It may be possible that these voices are underrepresented in the analysis. Therefore, this analysis should be considered as giving an indication of the views and perspectives of respondents with respect to the guidance, rather than a definitive account of the views of the early education sector as a whole.

2.3 Effective Planning

Respondents were first asked the extent to which they felt that the curriculum would support planning in funded non-maintained settings.¹

General Perceptions

Together, 85.8 per cent of respondents felt that the curriculum was supportive in helping practitioners and settings to engage effectively with curriculum planning:



Key Themes

Respondents often highlighted that they found the curriculum to be clear and supportive. It was felt to be valuable in helping practitioners and settings to interpret and act on the new curriculum, including in engaging with planning:

There is a lot within the pages that unpicks key aspects for practitioners to help them interpret the new curriculum. The links to child development and schemas are welcomed to help practitioners working with 3–5-year-olds make connections to children’s development and the learning that takes place within these years. The value of play and purposeful learning along with the importance of observation will support those practitioners who are new to the sector, as well as strengthen the current workforce.

Early Years Wales

¹ Question 2 – To what extent will this curriculum support effective planning in funded non-maintained settings?

Both in formal responses and in more open discussions, respondents often cited agreement with the general orientation of the curriculum, as well as the importance of planning in shaping practice and encouraging learning and development:

From reading the curriculum with the staff team, we feel this will be an effective tool to ensure children are provided with good-quality learning, [and] staff will reflect on their own practice and delivery by ensuring their role as a childcare practitioner gives children holistic learning experiences.

Leader, Private day nursery

We feel that the curriculum will support effective planning for provision that reflects the four purposes. We welcome the strong focus on the individuality and needs of each child, grounded in a thorough knowledge of child development, as a starting point for planning the curriculum.

Estyn

Accessibility and Further Information

Many respondents offered conditional support, recognising the importance of curriculum planning and offering suggestions on where it could be made more prominent or clearer within the document. These included slightly altering the structure and providing further information, including but not limited to how planning, observation and assessment link together:

We are pleased to see the inclusion of guidance on observation and assessment and its role within planning for learning; however, these sections would benefit from appearing earlier in the document, prior to the developmental pathways as a reminder to practitioners of what is an effective planning cycle. Effective planning, observation and assessment are integral to effective learning and development — further guidance on how to plan and thoughtfully observe [is] required.

National Day Nurseries Association Cymru

Another peripheral theme included further information on the different types of planning that should occur in support of learning and development. For one respondent, this included making the distinction between more strategic planning and planning that is part of a broader pedagogical approach that links closely to an iterative process of observation, interaction and progression:

Mae'r cwricwlwm hwn yn cynorthwyo ymarferwyr yn ein lleoliadau i gael gwell dealltwriaeth o ddarpariaeth sydd angen yn y blynyddoedd cynnar. Mae anghenion plentyn yn cael ei esbonio'n effeithiol drwy'r llwybrau datblygu ac mae hyn yn gryfder yn y ddogfen. Gyda chefnogaeth hyfforddiant, bydd yn cynorthwyo ymarferwyr i gynllunio'n fwy cyfannol a chefnogi datblygiad plant yn reolaidd. Fodd bynnag, mae angen cyfeirio yn gliriach ein bod yn caniatáu mwy o gynllunio yn y foment ac nid gormod o gynllunio ymlaen llaw ar gyfer tasgau ffocws. Mae angen nodi'n gliriach bod cynllunio yn dechrau gydag arsylwadau o blant ac ymateb i'r anghenion hynny.

This curriculum assists practitioners in our settings to gain a better understanding of provision needed in the early years. The needs of a child are effectively explained through the developmental pathways and this is a strength of the document. With the support of training, it will help practitioners plan more holistically and support children's development on a regular basis. However, there is a need to make clearer reference that we allow more momentary planning and not too much forward planning for focused tasks. It needs to be made clearer that planning begins with observations of children and responding to those needs.

Early Years Advisory Teacher (translated from the original)

Broader considerations were raised, including the confidence and skills of all practitioners to engage with the new curriculum. Some felt that not all practitioners would be familiar or confident with the principles and pedagogical approaches outlined in the curriculum. This could present a barrier to engagement with the new curriculum:

There is a lot of information but it can be confusing to see how each links to each other. I think settings will struggle to incorporate developmental pathways, areas of learning, and cross-curricular skills within their planning.

Development Officer

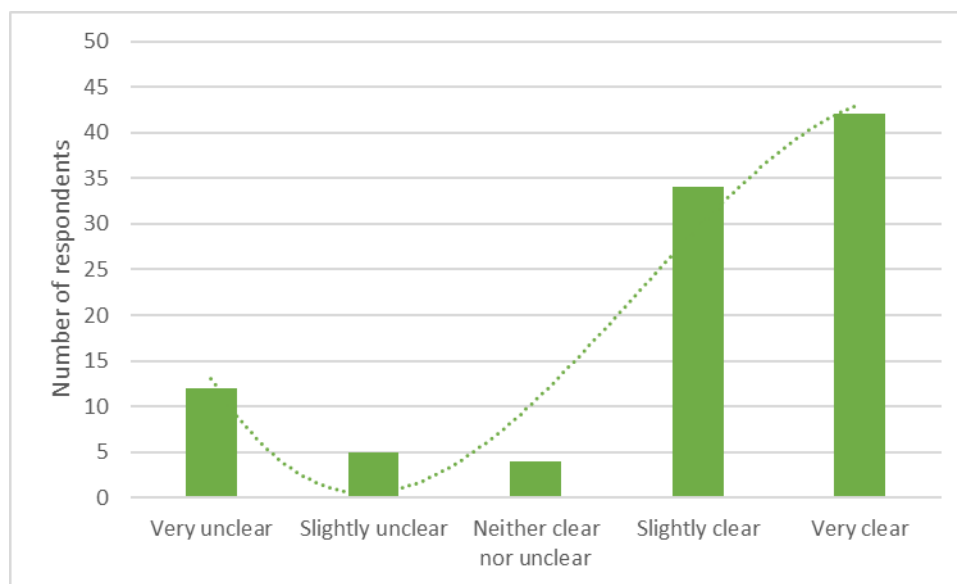
In responding to this, some respondents offered suggestions, including not only further information but also improving the accessibility of the document. In more open discussions, for example, participants (including childminders) felt that greater use of flow diagrams, pictures, and shorter summaries would be valuable. This would help them in making sense of the breadth of the new curriculum and in linking different elements together.

2.4 The Four Purposes

Respondents were then asked the extent to which the curriculum clearly outlined how the four purposes underpin the delivery of the new curriculum.²

General Perceptions

In response, 74.5 per cent of respondents felt that the guidance was clear:



Key Themes

Those respondents who offered positive perspectives and expanded on their views tended to highlight that the four purposes were clearly explained, with enough detail to interpret the role that they have in guiding practice:

The whole document blends well together and it is easy to see how the four purposes [underpin] it.

Practitioner in a funded non-maintained setting

We feel there is sufficient direct reference to the four purposes in the document. Throughout the document, suitable consideration is given to creating dispositions and supporting learning that will set learners on the path towards realising the four purposes. We do not consider that it is appropriate to make any more detailed reference to the four purposes at this stage.

Estyn

² Question 3 – Is it clear how the four purposes underpin the delivery of this curriculum?

More positive perspectives were also informed by the importance that respondents placed on a purpose-driven curriculum, the four purposes in guiding practice more specifically, as well as the broader orientation of the new curriculum as a whole:

The four purposes are explained very well and all of the development pathways clearly identify with the four purposes. All development pathways encourage children to make choices, be independent and [be] creative. The curriculum recognises that all children are unique and that they don't fit into specific ages or areas of learning. The holistic approach ensures that the four purposes will be delivered appropriately for each child.

Early Education Team, Local authority

Further Information

Some respondents felt unsure about the role and purpose of the four purposes within the curriculum. From these perspectives, the four purposes could be more clearly referenced within the curriculum. This would support understanding and engagement with the curriculum, including in placing the four purposes within planning, teaching and learning:

The four purposes are not mentioned much in detail, other than the four purposes statements within the Areas of Learning and Experience section. Given our limited knowledge of the four purposes and curriculum at this stage, we can kind of see how [they underpin] the curriculum, but it's not particularly clearly set out or tangible yet.

Leader, Playgroup

From discussions with childminders, it is clear that they agree that the four purposes underpin the ethos of this curriculum, but they are less clear how this will link to delivery.

PACEY Cymru

Other respondents offered more specific examples of where further information would be valuable. These included more explicit links within the curriculum between the four purposes and specific elements such as developmental pathways. From these perspectives, this information could support practitioners in visualising how the four purposes inform teaching and learning:

There is only one immediate mention of the four purposes headings on the opening pages. We thought that the statements underneath the headings would be mentioned or "skills" pertaining to each of these statements would be relevant and given focus in the curriculum.

Leader, Private day nursery

2.5 Statements of What Matters and Developmental Pathways

Respondents were then asked whether they felt as though the statements of what matters were reflected appropriately in the developmental pathways.³ Overall, 75.2 per cent of respondents felt that the statements of what matters were reflected appropriately in the developmental pathways.

Key Themes

Of those who were positive and offered further reflections, most simply highlighted that they felt that the links were communicated clearly within the curriculum:

Wedi darllen ac ystyried y cwricwlwm hwn mae'r cyswllt rhwng y llwybrau datblygu a'r datganiadau o'r hyn sy'n bwysig yn glir.

Having read and considered the links between the development pathways and the what matters statements, [they are] clearly communicated.

Leader, Cylch Meithrin (translated from the original)

Yes, the statements of what [matters] are reflected in the five development pathways, as they ensure the child is kept at the centre so that their needs are met, and [allow] practitioners to understand what is most important to children and what we should be considering when planning and teaching.

Practitioner, Private day nursery

Further Links, Information and Support

Respondents who felt that they were unsure or that the statements were not reflected within the developmental pathways tended to highlight that further links would be valuable:

The principle of the developmental pathways is strong. However, it is difficult to evaluate if the statements of what matters are appropriately reflected, as the documentation does not make clear overt links to the statements of what matters within the developmental pathways.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

There were a range of suggestions on how links could be strengthened within the curriculum. These included more explicit links within the developmental pathways with specific what matters statements:

³ Question 4 – Are the statements of what matters reflected appropriately in the developmental pathways?

The majority of the statements of what matters are reflected appropriately in the developmental pathways. However, there are gaps (including expressive arts and being creative).

Early Years Advisory Teacher

Others felt that further information and support could be valuable in helping practitioners to understand and engage with the developmental pathways, what matters statements, and the curriculum more broadly. This included further information that could help to familiarise practitioners with the terminology and broader ideas and principles underscoring the Curriculum for Wales. Within more open conversations, including with childminders, LAs, and ALNLOs, for example, it was raised that some practitioners are still making sense of the general orientation of the new curriculum and how everything fits together. From these perspectives, the inclusion of further information or links to broader guidance would be valuable:

Could there be a more obvious link to the what matters statements overall, especially for less experienced practitioners? Practitioners in non-maintained settings may only access this guidance and only added as an appendices is more difficult to see the link if you are unfamiliar with Curriculum for Wales documentation. An appendix does not necessarily reflect the content of the document and there is a danger that they will be dissociated from the content of this document. Is there a job of work to integrate the [what matters statements] more through the key elements of this document, highlighting the emergent strands/relevance of the content for the learners' journey?

Other, Local authority

Additionally, a few respondents felt that training and continuing professional development would be valuable in helping practitioners and settings to understand and effectively engage with developmental pathways and what matters statements.

2.6 Developmental Pathways and Progression Step 1

Respondents were then asked for their views on whether the delivery of the curriculum would ensure children's progression from the developmental pathways to progression step 1.⁴ Together, 79.3 per cent of respondents reported that it would support progression, 13.4 per cent were unsure, and 7.2 per cent felt that it would not.

Key Themes

In expanding on their views, those who responded positively tended to highlight themes such as the clarity of the curriculum in communicating how to support progression. Furthermore, there was explicit and implicit agreement with the overall sentiment of the approach to supporting progression within the curriculum:

⁴ Question 5 – Can you see how delivery of this curriculum will ensure children's progression from the developmental pathways through to the descriptions of learning at progression step 1?

[...] 'I need to [...]. I am learning to [...]. My sense of belonging is enhanced by adults who [...]' [helps] to clearly guide practitioners. The descriptions of learning support the developmental pathways with a child-centred approach.

Leader, Playgroup

Further Information

Those who were unsure tended to report that they felt as though the pathways and progression steps were quite broad in nature. From these perspectives, greater detail and further information would be helpful, including in supporting readers in understanding how to implement them in practice on a day-to-day basis:

In theory, I can see how the delivery of this curriculum will ensure children's progression from the developmental pathways through to the descriptions of learning at progression step 1. However, when mapping out the developmental pathways through to the descriptions of learning at progression step 1, there are gaps. For example, there are only three maths skills in the developmental pathways (compared to many on progression step 1). Also language and, therefore, there will be limited progression, though [settings] will also be implementing the Literacy and Numeracy Framework. Also, there is not a lot of progression from developmental pathways for children creative skills.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

Whilst the document makes clear links between the mandatory cross-curricular skills and progression step 1, this is not as explicit for the link between the developmental pathways and the descriptions of learning at progression step 1. It would be helpful if further information could be provided to clearly demonstrate the links between the developmental pathways and the pertinent description of learning at progression step 1. This would support an effective approach to tracking/assessing a child's progression and aid transition into full-time education.

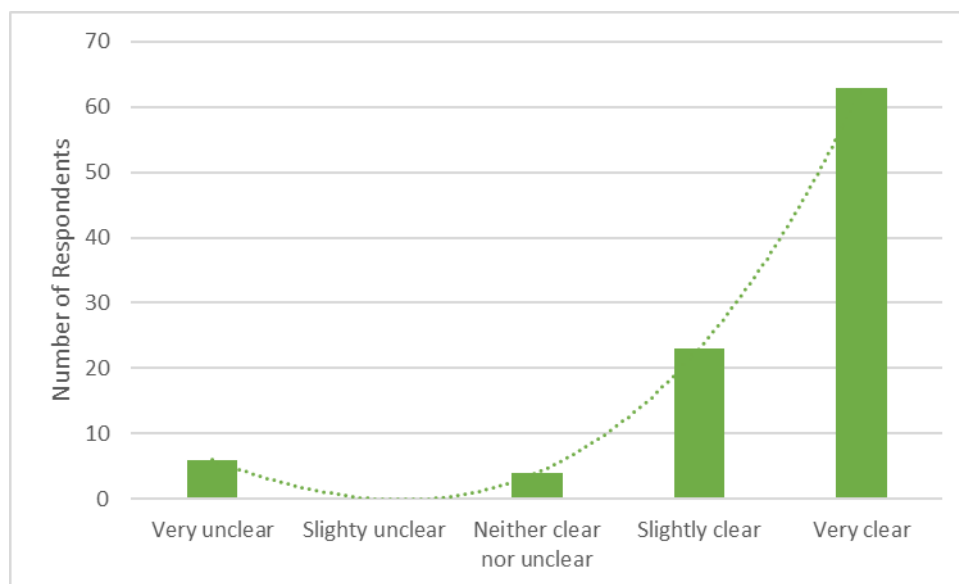
Early Years Advisory Teacher

2.7 Purpose of the Developmental Pathways

In exploring progression further, respondents were then asked whether the purpose of the developmental pathways within the curriculum was clearly explained.⁵

General Perceptions

The majority of respondents felt that the curriculum was clear in its explanation of the developmental pathways (89.6 per cent):



Key Themes

This section of the curriculum was considered to be clear and valuable by most respondents. Both in online submissions and in open conversations, respondents often really appreciated the structure and tone of the document. The following quotes are illustrative:

[It is] written as the voice of the child. To make meaningful linked observations, [one] will need to become very familiar with these, which will happen over time. I liked the link to 'my physical development is enhanced by' — i.e. the role of the adult and how the adult provides the environment and the enriching experiences.

Leader, Playgroup

Rationales for each of the developmental pathways are very clear to explain the purpose of each of them. The content within and the wording — 'I need to [...]. I'm learning to [...]. My development is enhanced by [...]' — will support practitioners to deliver education in a holistic and authentic way. It is very clear that the process children go through is the priority and far more important than any outcome. It will be

⁵ Question 6 – Is the purpose of the developmental pathways clearly explained?

[to] support practitioners to understand their role and what they should be doing to support children.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

Of those respondents who were unsure or felt that the curriculum was unclear, only three expanded on their views. These tended to focus on overarching thoughts on the curriculum, rather than on any specific issues or concerns surrounding the developmental pathways themselves. These included the observation that broader support and further guidance would be valuable in understanding and acting on the curriculum:

Including pictures/case studies/examples would help us to interpret and understand the purpose of the developmental pathways. The volume of text in this document needs to be shortened and additional documents created, instead of one very long document. Given that developmental pathways are unfamiliar to me and to other practitioners in the setting, training on the developmental pathways, [their] purpose, and the general structure of this curriculum would help us to implement it within the setting.

Leader, Cylch Meithrin

2.8 Missing Elements from the Developmental Pathways

Respondents were then asked whether anything was missing from the developmental pathways.⁶ Overall, 28.7 per cent of respondents highlighted that they felt that additional statements or further emphasis would be valuable to include in the developmental pathways.

Key Themes

Those expressing that the developmental pathways were comprehensive tended not to expand on their views. In more open conversations, participants, including childminders, felt that the structure, content and tone of the pathways were helpful, and valued the 'I need to' statements (which enabled them to visualise what they meant for practice). What is more, there was broad agreement with the general sentiment of the pathways, with a focus on the whole child (amongst other factors).

Further Statements or Greater Emphasis

Respondents often raised specific statements or themes where they felt that the developmental pathways could be expanded. A recurring theme, for example, included the importance of promoting and encouraging Welsh language development and culture in all settings within the developmental pathways:

⁶ Question 7 – Is anything missing from the statements in the developmental pathways?

It would be beneficial to include more specific reference to the Welsh context in all developmental pathways.

Estyn

Given the 2050 Welsh Government vision, PACEY Cymru would expect to see strong links to the important role the early years have to play in introducing Welsh language and culture. We feel currently these links could be much stronger.

PACEY Cymru

The use of Welsh language is implied but is not explicit enough in the document. The outdoors should feature more strongly in well-being in 'I need to [...]' and 'by adults who [...]'.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

There was also the wish to see greater emphasis and an expansion on broader aspects of child development, including well-being, within the developmental pathways:

Part of the introduction to well-being should include something about personal well-being, self-confidence, and self-esteem [...]. [It] would be good to have some wording included that notes that the list within the development pathways is not exhaustive — just because it is not written down, [it] does not [mean] that it's not something that is not or should not be happening. Overall, it assumes that practitioners using the document have an overall understanding of child development. Whilst this is good, we need to ensure that professional learning opportunities are available.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

The Children's Commissioner highlighted specific areas of the developmental pathways that could support the communication of a more meaningful approach to children's rights. The response included suggestions surrounding the inclusion of more precise definitions of children's rights, which perhaps pivots the tone slightly towards legalese:

Indeed within the guidance itself, a potential misunderstanding arises. At p.13, paragraph 4.1, the guidance states: 'The pathways represent a child's right to experience an environment where play is valued for itself and as part of learning.' I welcome the intention of this statement, but it does not accurately describe children's rights as laid out by the UNCRC. I suggest this [be] altered to read: 'The pathways enable children's rights as laid out in the UNCRC, particularly the child's rights to play, to learn, and to develop their talents and skills. The [experiences] represented through the pathways ensure play is valued for itself and as part of learning.'

Children's Commissioner for Wales

2.9 Inclusivity of Developmental Pathways

Exploring the developmental pathways further, respondents were then asked the extent to which they were inclusive of all children.⁷ There was general agreement from respondents that the developmental pathways were inclusive (82.1 per cent).

Key Themes

Positive sentiments towards inclusivity and the developmental pathways were also reflected in more open conversations. Within workshops, for example, ALNLOs generally felt that the curriculum was clear in how to support children with additional learning needs. These perspectives were also informed by agreement with and recognition of the overall approach and sentiment of the curriculum. Many welcomed the emphasis on the child, the focus on understanding and responding to individual needs, and the greater prominence of formative observation (rather than summative assessment):

[It is] extremely inclusive and takes into consideration the adults, environment and experiences, rather than [a] tick-box list of things all children need to achieve by specific [points] — can see children progressing at their own level.

Leader, Private day nursery

The developmental pathways and the way the curriculum is laid out [promote] inclusivity, as it is a learner-centred approach, focusing on the individual child and their journey through education.

Planning Coordinator, Cylch Meithrin

Promoting Further Inclusivity

A small number of respondents felt that the developmental pathways and the curriculum more broadly could be strengthened to make them more inclusive. Some ALNLOs felt that they could not visualise how the curriculum fits with other processes and duties, including through the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) approach.

Some felt that it would be valuable to expand the pathways to include more explicit recognition of diversity across races, religions and sexualities, although they were unsure as to how some of this could be achieved in practice for younger children. Another respondent felt that the phrase ‘see myself and people like me’ on page 14 could be refined to make it more inclusive. One respondent suggested that the approach could make more explicit recognition of children who may predominantly use nonverbal communication, although they did not offer any substance as to the proposal:

⁷ Question 8 – Are the developmental pathways inclusive of all children?

More [is] needed on nonverbal communication.

Care Inspectorate Wales

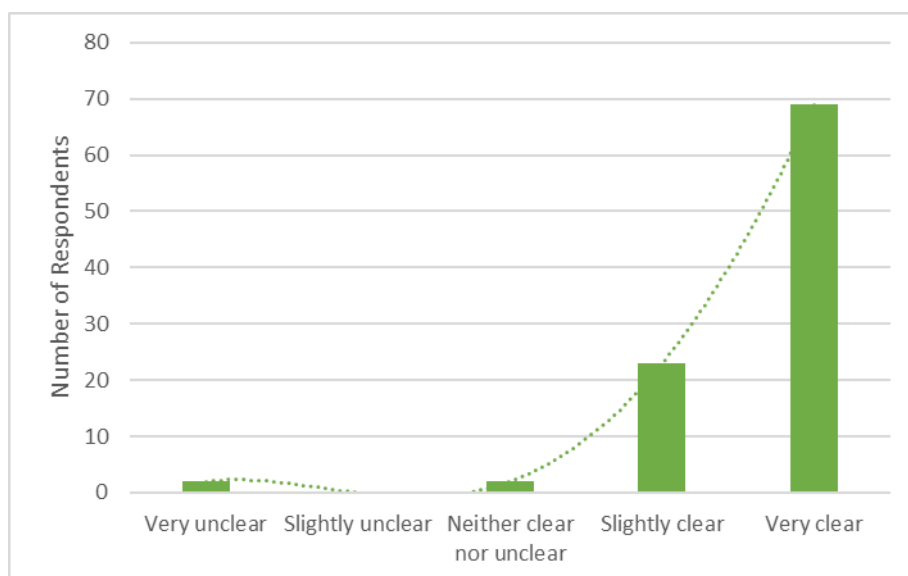
ALNLOs also highlighted a range of broader issues beyond the curriculum itself that support inclusivity within early education settings. These included the importance of early identification and intervention, the relative coherence of support offered, and the skills and expertise of practitioners to support all children effectively.

2.10 Roles of the Practitioner, Environment and Experiences

In expanding on their views more broadly, respondents were then asked whether the curriculum clearly explained the roles of the practitioner, environment and experiences.⁸

General Perceptions

As with other parts of the curriculum, respondents were (on the whole) very positive about the clarity surrounding the roles of the practitioner, environment and experiences:



Key Themes

Only four respondents, for example, were unsure or felt that the document was unclear. It was not always entirely clear from more open responses as to how this element could be improved. One respondent wished to see a greater emphasis on the natural environment and on supporting practitioners in engaging children in meaningful outdoor experiences:

⁸ Question 9 – Are the roles of the practitioner, environment and experiences clearly explained?

Enabling educators and learners to embed normalised pro-environmental behaviours must be a principal driver for all Curriculum for Wales guidance. While NRW welcomes the parity given to use of the outdoors (alongside indoors) as opportunities for holistic child development and learning, with explicit references to the natural environment, there is insufficient guidance on the multiple benefits of learning in, learning about and learning for the natural environment [...]. Currently, staff working within non-maintained settings do not have sufficient access to high-calibre, professional learning opportunities focusing on outdoor learning pedagogy [...]. NRW strongly recommend that outdoor learning pedagogy [have] an overarching position within the guidance, i.e. placed into a standalone section within this guidance, rather than worked in separately into the [Area of Learning and Experience] sections, or section 8.2 (“being outdoors”), as per other Curriculum for Wales guidance for maintained schools and settings.

Natural Resources Wales

2.11 Pathways and Roles

Exploring this further, respondents were then asked whether the links between the pathways and the roles of the practitioner, environment and experiences were clearly explained.⁹

General Perceptions

Overall, there were similar levels of sentiment surrounding the clarity between the pathways and the roles of the practitioner, environment and experiences. Together, 91.9 per cent of respondents felt that this aspect of the curriculum was clear.

Key Themes

Again, only four respondents highlighted that they felt unsure or that the curriculum was unclear. One respondent, for example, felt that this element introduced new concepts and ideas with which some may find difficult to engage; however, they did not offer any substantive suggestions on how the document could be improved.

2.12 Developmental Pathways and Cross-Curricular Skills

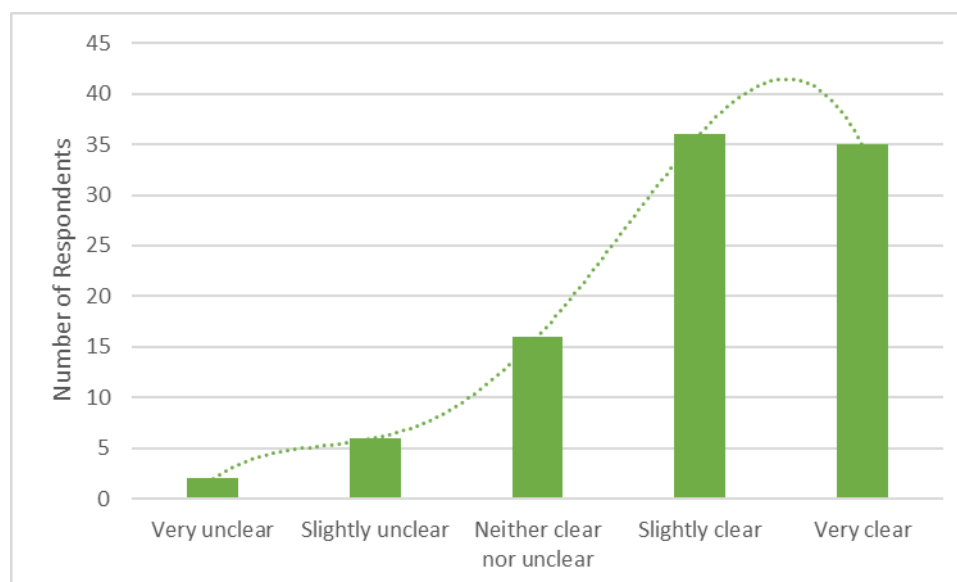
Turning to cross-curricular skills, respondents were asked the extent to which they felt that the developmental pathways were clear in how they could support their development.¹⁰

⁹ Question 10 – Is the link between the pathways and the roles of the practitioner, environment and experiences clearly explained?

¹⁰ Question 11 – Does this curriculum clearly explain how the developmental pathways will support development of the mandatory cross-curricular skills?

General Perceptions

Whilst 74.7 per cent of respondents felt that the links between the developmental pathways and cross-curricular skills were clear, relative to other aspects of the curriculum, this element received the most hesitancy. This was largely driven by 16.8 per cent of respondents who reported that they felt as though the curriculum was neither clear nor unclear:



Key Themes

The majority of respondents did, however, find the curriculum to be clear in how the developmental pathways could support the development of cross-curricular skills:

It was good to see that this was broken down into paragraphs to explain clearly to practitioners — nothing seems to have been missed out and [it was] very lovely to see that play and playful experiences along with authentic and purposeful experiences have been included to ensure these are what we lead with and change practices.

Leader, Private day nursery

Further Information

Of those feeling that the curriculum could be clearer in its links between the developmental pathways and cross-curricular skills, a key theme centred on the inclusion of further information and detail within the document. Suggestions on where the curriculum could be strengthened included fairly minor adjustments to the way in which certain cross-curricular skills are communicated within the developmental pathways:

It could make the process easier if the cross-curricular skills could be highlighted within the development pathways. Literacy skills are clearly identified; numeracy and digital skills are not quite so easy to cross-reference.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

For some, further detail that improves the links between the pathways and cross-curricular skills would be valuable in raising the consistency of approach across practice:

The links between the developmental pathways and cross-curricular skills and their place in the planning process should be made clearer in the document. Due to skills in the cross-curricular sections being specific, there is a danger that some settings may use them in preference to the developmental pathways without realising the link between them.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

Some suggested that infographics or other elements could be valuable in communicating the links between different aspects of the curriculum, including cross-curricular skills and the developmental pathways.

Variation in Approach to Cross-Curricular Skills Development

There were some who expressed broader considerations surrounding the development of cross-curricular skills and how they will be embedded and promoted by practitioners and settings. These included implicit and explicit concerns surrounding the possibility of high variation in the interpretation and implementation of cross-curricular skills development. One respondent, for example, highlighted the importance of further information, guidance and support to help practitioners and settings to engage effectively with the development of cross-curricular skills:

[We] believe that although the document states that the cross-curricular skills should be considered within planning to ensure children have opportunities to apply, develop and extend them using the developmental pathways, further guidance is required on how.

National Day Nurseries Association Cymru

2.13 Cross-Curricular Skills and Holistic Practice

Exploring cross-curricular skills further, respondents were then asked the extent to which they felt that the curriculum was clear that these should be embedded within holistic practice across the curriculum.¹¹

General Perceptions

Again, whilst the responses were positive overall, views towards the cross-curricular and holistic practice were slightly less favourable overall, relative to other elements. Seventy-one

¹¹ Question 12 – Is it clear that development of the mandatory cross-curricular skills should be embedded within holistic practice across the whole curriculum?

point five per cent of respondents felt that the curriculum was clear, and 16.8 per cent felt that it was unclear.

Key Themes

More positive perspectives, both in online submissions and in open conversations, tended to support the overall ambition and importance of cross-curricular skills and holistic practice advocated within the curriculum. Some also highlighted that they felt as though this approach was already firmly embedded within practice. From these perspectives, a holistic approach was familiar and the curriculum clearly articulated how this could be achieved in practice:

[It is] clear that through a holistic approach we can achieve much more of a cross-curricular curriculum, touching on many aspects in one experience.

Planning Coordinator, Cylch Meithrin

Further Information and Links

For those responding that they thought that the guidance was unclear, this (again) tended to centre on the links between different elements of the curriculum within the document. From these perspectives, the document could be strengthened by making links between different elements of the curriculum clearer and more explicit, including a section on planning, and through greater use of diagrams and summaries to communicate the relationships between different elements together. One response was illustrative of these issues:

Mae angen i hwn fod yn gliriach er mwyn cynorthwyo ymarferwyr i ddeall bod angen cynnwys profiadau sy'n datblygu'r sgiliau trawsgwricwlaidd. Byddai cynnwys infograffeg i ddangos sut mae'r sgiliau traws-gwricwlaidd yn cael eu cynnwys yn y cwricwlwm o gymorth. Gellir defnyddio hwn wedyn pan fydd cysylltiad clir iddynt yng nghorff y cwricwlwm (fel sydd yn y cwricwlwm ar gyfer blynyddoedd cynnar Yr Alban 'Realising the ambition'). Byddai gosod adran cynllunio o gymorth mawr i ymarferwyr gan gynnwys esiamplau i ddangos yn glir y cysylltiad rhwng y llwybrau datblygu a'r sgiliau trawsgwricwlaidd. Byddai esboniad clir i'r ymarferwyr pa ddogfen sydd angen iddynt ddefnyddio wrth gynllunio yn ddefnyddiol- llwybrau datblygu/ sgiliau trawsgwricwlaidd neu'r ddau. Mae angen mwy o gyfeiriadau/ esiamplau o ddefnyddio profiadau digidol, caffael y Gymraeg, defnydd o fathemateg mewn bywyd go iawn.

This needs to be clearer to help practitioners understand the need to include experiences that develop the cross-curricular skills. Including an infographic to show how the cross-curricular skills are integrated into the curriculum would be helpful. This can then be used when they are clearly linked in the main body of the curriculum (as in the Scottish early years curriculum). The inclusion of a planning section would be of great help to practitioners, including examples to show clearly the link between development pathways and cross-curricular skills. A clear explanation to practitioners of what document they need to use when planning would be helpful — cross-curricular development/skills pathways or both. We need more references/examples of using digital experiences, acquiring Welsh, [and] use of mathematics in real life.

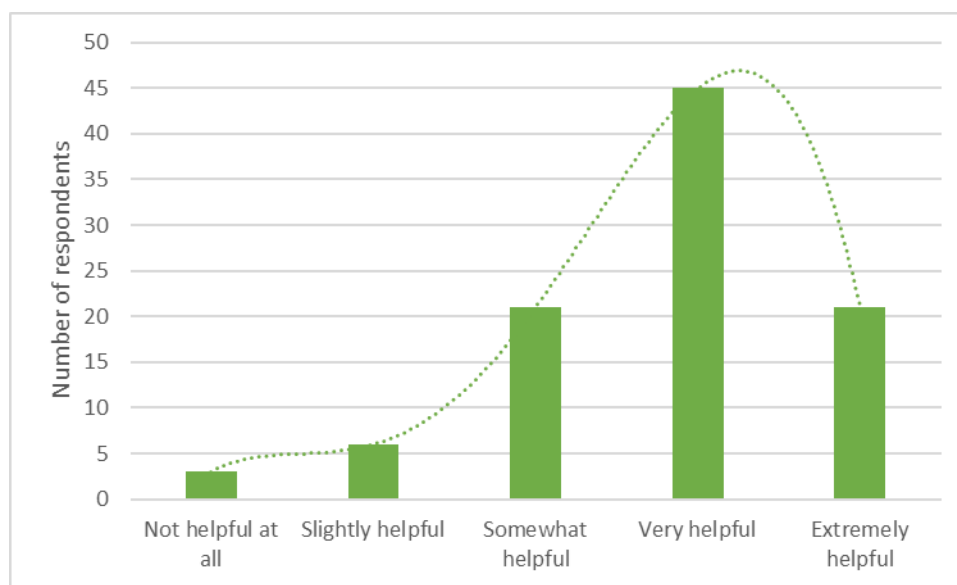
Early Years Advisory Teacher (translated from the original)

2.14 Incremental Statements and Cross-Curricular Skills

Respondents were then asked to what extent they felt that the incremental statements for the mandatory cross-curricular skills were helpful in supporting practitioners in understanding how children develop these skills.¹²

General Perceptions

The majority of respondents felt that the incremental statements were very or extremely helpful in supporting practitioners in engaging in the development of cross-curricular skills:



Key Themes

Those expressing that they found the curriculum to be most helpful tended to highlight the clarity of the document and agreement with the general approach to developing cross-curricular skills:

It shows appropriate opportunities for progression for the children's skills in these areas. They support practitioners to differentiate more easily.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

Continuing Professional Development

A key theme amongst those who felt that the incremental statements were less helpful included the importance of continuing professional development. From these perspectives,

¹² Question 13 – To what extent are the incremental statements for the mandatory cross-curricular skills helpful in supporting practitioners to understand how children develop these skills?

further training would be valuable to practitioners in helping them to understand and engage effectively with the development of cross-curricular skills:

Although the incremental statement is clear, supportive training for practitioners will help build confidence and help bring practice alive.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

Consistency and Clarity

Another, more marginal theme included the importance of consistency and clarity within the statements and the curriculum more broadly. Some felt, for example, that the incremental statements were lengthy, which made them difficult to engage with. Others felt that there was a slight difference in approach between the incremental statements and the developmental pathways that may make the incremental statements more difficult to interpret and follow. The theme of consistency across the document was raised by a number of respondents, including in the use of consistent terms such as 'I can' and 'I am beginning to' across all competencies:

The focus is more on the skills themselves than how they develop, which feels very different to the developmental pathways approach, which has a stronger focus on how children develop and the role of the practitioner and environment in supporting this. As the cross-curricular skills are more focused on the skills than how they are developed, this is at risk of becoming a checklist which practitioners will use — that could become [narrow-focused].

PACEY Cymru

Several leaders within Cylch Meithrin highlighted that they could not visualise how the incremental statements could work in practice:

Ar ôl darllen y datganiadau fesul cam ar gyfer y sgiliau Rhifedd / Llythrennedd / Cymhwysedd Digidol sy'n rhan o'r fframwaith yma (tudalennau 29–46), rwyf yn deall sut i sicrhau fod pob plentyn yn datblygu y sgiliau yma, mae'n glir fod y camau yma yn cynrychioli pob plentyn sydd yn mynychu ein darpariaeth. Rwyf yn meddwl y bydd y camau hyn yn ein cefnogi i symud y plant ymlaen (n)ac i ddatblygu eu sgiliau trawsgwricwlaidd ar hyd y continwwm dysgu. Rwyf yn gweld bod y disgrifiadau fesul cam yn rhy benodol (prescriptive).

After reading the incremental statements for the numeracy/literacy/digital competence which form part of this framework (pages 29–46), it is not clear to me that these increments represent each child who attends our provision. I do not think that these steps will support us to move the children forward, nor will they develop their cross-curricular skills throughout the learning continuum. I see these incremental statements as being too prescriptive.

Leader, Cylch Meithrin (translated from the original)

2.15 Additional Information

Respondents were then asked if they felt that any additional information would be helpful to include in the curriculum.¹³ Some respondents interpreted this question as referring to additional information across the curriculum as a whole, whilst others interpreted it as referring more specifically to information surrounding the development of cross-curricular skills.

Key Themes

Cross-Curricular Skills

For those offering focused observations on the cross-curricular skills, they tended to raise similar suggestions. These included improving the clarity and consistency within the curriculum, such as with the developmental pathways and incremental statements. Others spoke of the potential value of simpler language with which to articulate the incremental steps:

Cross-curricular skills could easily encourage practitioners to use these as planning tools (rather than concentrate on learning experiences). Writing the incremental steps in language that can be understood by all will make it less daunting and cause less misunderstanding.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

Broader Reflections

For those offering broader reflections, a number of key themes emerged. These included greater use of diagrams, as well as the consolidation of broader curriculum guidance within a single document:

A summative pictorial flow diagram was suggested in the network meeting. Expansion of the four purposes, I feel, would be beneficial. There are other documents of this, but being all together in one place would be useful as a single document.

Leader, Playgroup

Another theme was the importance of access to high-quality, consistent learning opportunities in understanding and acting on the curriculum. Within more open conversations, for example, high-quality training and CPD were consistently thought to be critical. There was the widespread perception that the quality and consistency of training available to practitioners and settings were highly variable:

The provision of training needs to be consistent across Wales to ensure this guidance works. It is vital to ensure confidence and consistency. Some aspects will be unfamiliar, such as physical literacy, schema, observation, importance of play, observation, authentic learning, and effective transition.

Leader, Private day nursery

¹³ Question 14 – What, if any, additional information would be helpful?

2.16 Observation and Assessment

Turning to observation and assessment, respondents were then asked the extent to which these were clear in the curriculum.¹⁴

Key Themes

Together, 89.4 per cent of respondents felt that the curriculum was clear. Those that offered broader reflections tended to highlight their support for the overall approach to observation and assessment outlined in the curriculum:

The importance of observation is clear in the document. There is suitable emphasis on getting to know children well, although the phrase ‘detailed understanding of each child’ on page 47 may encourage practitioners to focus on recording information (rather than developing a rounded picture) of the child. The section explains clearly how observation can benefit practitioners to adapt provision to encourage individualised learning. The document refers to a range of observation techniques and while we appreciate that listing the range here could have unintended consequences and drive behaviours unhelpfully, we feel that some reference to techniques would be useful possibly as a link to Welsh Government training modules. The function and importance of assessment is also clear, as is the important connection between the two elements. In this section, we feel that the reflective questions included for practitioners and leaders are practical and helpful.

Estyn

Further Information and Training

Some respondents highlighted that they felt as though further information would be valuable. As with Estyn’s response, this included information that would help practitioners to implement the approach to observation and assessment in practice. Suggestions included the use of exemplars, as well as exploring effective strategies and approaches through training and professional dialogue with peers:

My team have become very used [to] FPPs and doing weekly observations. We feel more information and examples of how best to carry out observations and assessments [are] needed. Meetings with other settings to discuss this would also be appreciated.

Planning Coordinator, Cylch Meithrin

Within more open conversations, there were some who felt as though the role and approach of assessment could be given greater attention within the curriculum. This was especially apparent in how assessment fits with existing practice and inspection regimes, which some

¹⁴ Question 15 – To what extent are the separate functions of observation and assessment, as well as the link between them, clearly explained?

felt could sit in tension. From these perspectives, there was the perception that established behaviours and inspection could drive assessment practices, and without further information and support this could lead to divergence from the approach outlined in the curriculum:

There may be a jarring between ongoing observation/assessment and the one-off nature of FPP and other assessments undertaken currently.

Other, Local authority

2.17 Enhancing Practice

Respondents were then asked the extent to which they felt the section on enhancing practice to be helpful.¹⁵

Key Themes

Together, 79.1 per cent of respondents found the section on enhancing practice to be very or extremely helpful. This tended to focus on the practical orientation of the section, which would help practitioners and settings to engage in reflexive practice:

[A] useful overview on many aspects of provision may provide the motivation for settings to follow up with own reading and training. Again, [there ought to be] good use of reflective questions. All reflective questions will be really useful for EYAT visits and for self-evaluations in settings.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

Balance and Detail

Those who felt that the section on enhancing practice could be strengthened tended to offer conflicting suggestions on how it could be improved. Some, for example, felt that the section made the document too long and unwieldy. From these perspectives, the section could appear in a separate document:

This could be a separate document to supplement the curriculum [...]. The headings could be included in [the] curriculum with explanations on a separate supplementary document, which can be updated as and when necessary and new initiatives/approaches are introduced.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

There were others who felt that the document could be fleshed out, including in providing more practical guidance:

¹⁵ Question 16 – To what extent is the section on enhancing practice helpful?

Throughout these sections there is a lack of depth. This is all fine if you are an experienced practitioner [...] but without the how of enhancing practice, this isn't really guidance — it is more instructions.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

2.18 Additional Information on Enhancing Practice

Respondents were then asked if any additional information would be helpful in the section on enhancing practice.¹⁶

Key Themes

Not many respondents offered reflections on how the section on enhancing practice could be strengthened. Those who did offered a diverse range of perspectives and suggestions, including expanding the section to include a greater emphasis on or explicit reference to certain provisions or considerations. Suggestions included, for example, the inclusion of attachment theory and early years theorists, through to more explicit reference to statutory obligations under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010. Further suggestions included signposting other materials and guidance that could support engagement with enhancing practice.

Welsh Language and Culture

A key theme raised by some respondents included greater reference to and emphasis on the development of Welsh language proficiency and familiarity with Welsh culture. This included in encouraging and expanding opportunities to develop and embed bilingual practice.

2.19 Reflective Questions

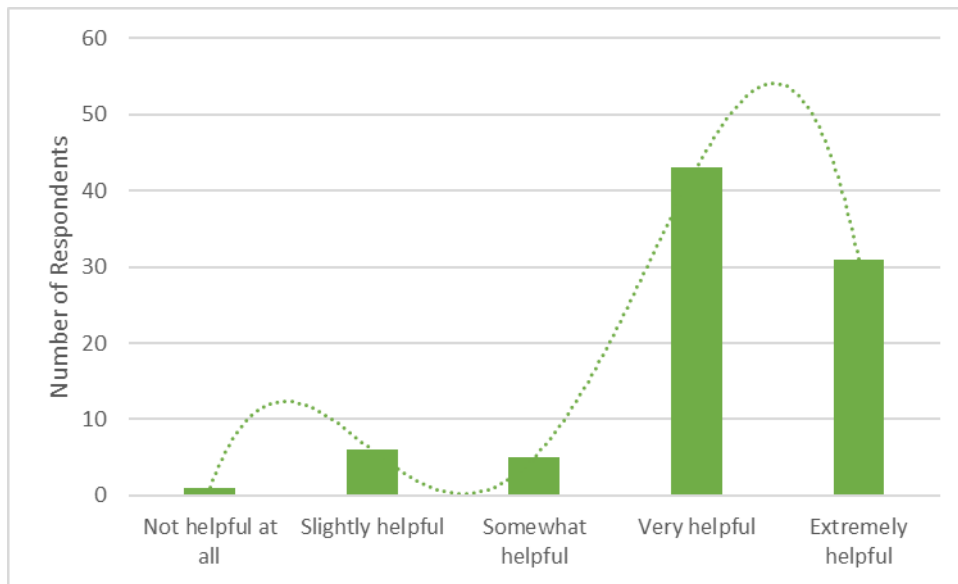
Respondents were then asked whether the reflective questions were helpful in supporting planning, prompting practitioners to consider their knowledge and skills, and supporting continual improvement in practice.¹⁷ Overall, the reflective questions were very well received by respondents, both in online submissions and in workshops.

Supporting Planning

Overall, a clear majority of respondents felt that the reflective questions were valuable in supporting planning:

¹⁶ Question 17 – What, if any, additional information would be helpful in this section?

¹⁷ Question 18 – To what extent are the reflective questions included throughout this curriculum helpful in: i) supporting planning, ii) prompting practitioners to consider their knowledge and skills, and iii) supporting continual improvement in practice?



In more open conversations with a range of audiences, the reflective questions were described as thought-provoking. They were felt to be valuable in stimulating discussion with peers and helping practitioners and settings to visualise how to approach planning around the new curriculum in practice:

[1] really like all reflective questions and feel they support practitioners, EYATs, setting leaders/managers, and parents. They will help support planning and provision and if shared with parents it would enable them to understand what high-quality provision and practice should look like.

Early Years Advisory Teacher

Expanding Questions

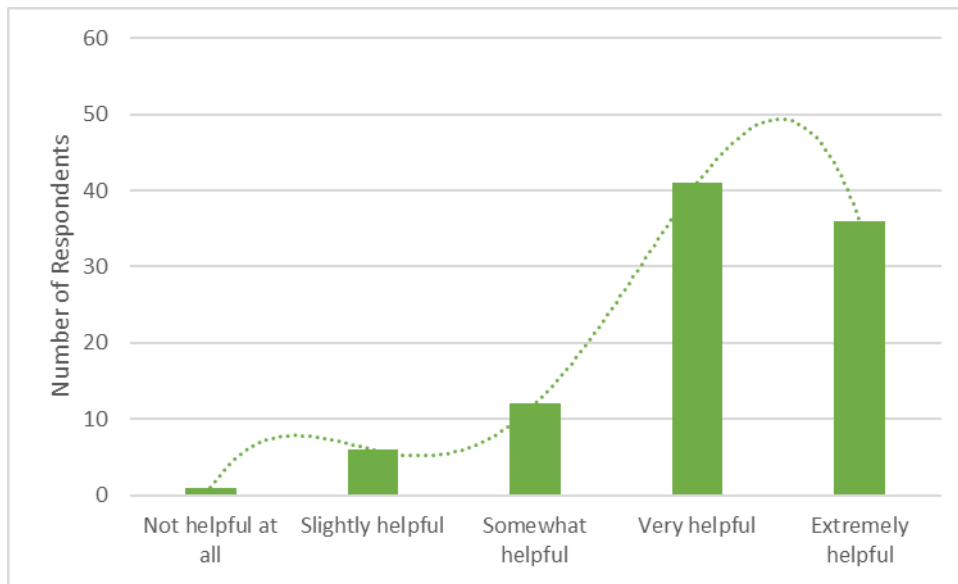
Some felt that the questions could be expanded to include other elements or topics. These included specific aspects of planning or provision within the new curriculum:

NRW recommends the inclusion of reflective questions that focus on outdoor learning pedagogy. For example: For practitioners: How well do I support learners in connecting to nature through playing and learning outdoors? For leaders: How well do I support and maintain high-quality outdoor learning pedagogy to maximise the multiple health and attainment benefits of learning in, about and for the natural environment?

Natural Resources Wales

Knowledge and Skills

Again, respondents (on the whole) found the reflective questions surrounding knowledge and skills to be helpful:



Across the consultation, there was broad recognition of the important role that knowledge and skills play in shaping practice and in supporting engagement with the new curriculum. The reflective questions surrounding knowledge and skills were well received, providing a useful prompt for practitioners and settings:

[They are a] great way of supporting practice, and also allowing for some responsibility and acknowledgment for practitioners to continue to develop practice.

Practitioner, Playgroup

[They] will allow staff to reflect on their own practice and help to identify areas of strength and where training or support may be required.

Leader, Playgroup

Access to Training

Of those respondents who suggested that the questions could be strengthened, they tended to offer broader reflections. These included the importance of high-quality training and continuing professional learning opportunities to support the engagement of practitioners and settings with the new curriculum. This issue was reflected in workshop discussions, including with childminders who highlighted barriers to accessing training, including a lack of opportunities. Others raised more specific training needs which they felt could be strengthened, including in supporting skills development surrounding specific aspects of the curriculum (such as cross-curricular skills development and outdoor learning):

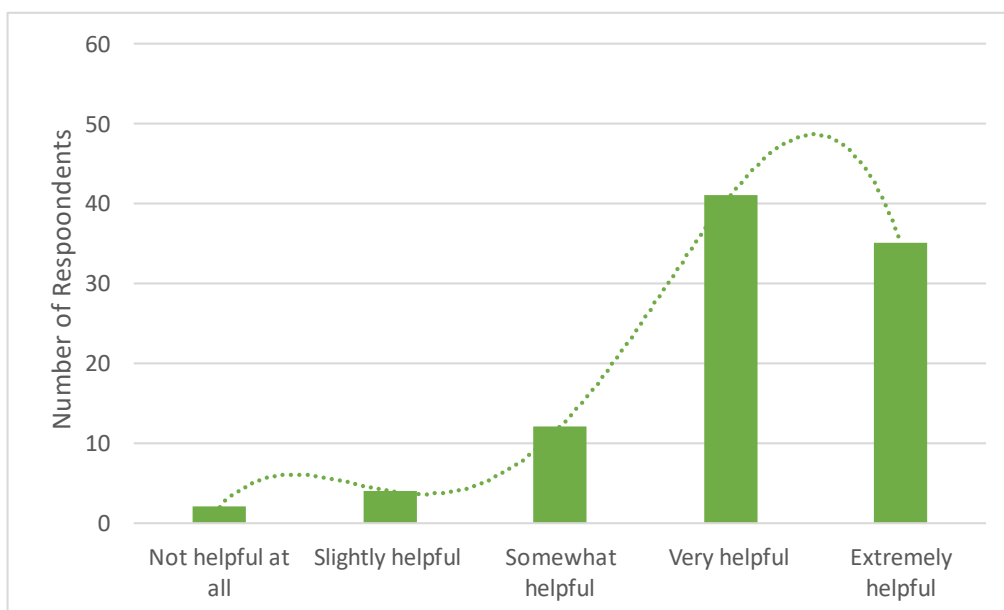
Currently, staff working within non-maintained settings do not have sufficient access to high-calibre, professional learning opportunities focusing on outdoor learning pedagogy. Few non-maintained settings have sufficient suitably skilled and knowledgeable staff to enable a whole-setting approach to embedding normalised

pro-environmental behaviours and protecting and enhancing the setting's grounds or utilised natural outdoor spaces.

Wales Council for Outdoor Learning (WCfOL)

Supporting Continual Improvement in Practice

For reflective questions relating to supporting improvement in practice, the majority of respondents (again) found them to be very or extremely helpful:



Many respondents appreciated the practical orientation of the questions, including in prompting considerations in supporting improvement in practice. Some respondents restated the importance of developing knowledge and skills in supporting practice improvement:

They will be useful for identifying training needs and for self-evaluation and action planning, as they highlight what good-quality practice and provision should look like.

Leader, Private day nursery

Others highlighted the importance of professional dialogue and collaboration in supporting practice improvement. From these perspectives, the reflective questions were valuable in supporting discussions and agreeing on objectives:

The reflective questions will help us assess ourselves, our practice and our setting. We can use the questions to help us move our practice forward, [looking] at what we would like to achieve and [using] it to improve our practice.

Planning Coordinator, Cylch Meithrin

2.20 Impact on Welsh Language

Respondents were then asked a series of questions exploring the potential impacts of the curriculum upon the Welsh language.

Key Themes

Welsh-medium settings reported no substantive concerns surrounding the curriculum and its impact of immersion or bilingual provision. They tended to raise broader concerns such as the ability to recruit staff with Welsh language proficiency.

For other settings and practitioners, however, there was a very consistent theme with regard to raising the profile of the Welsh language and culture within the document. This included the importance of not only raising the profile of the Welsh language and culture in nursery settings but also supporting settings in providing greater Welsh language provision:

We do not feel that the curriculum has 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. The curriculum does not consider well enough the different contexts of developing the Welsh language in all areas of Wales, e.g. the use of immersion techniques to develop the Welsh language skills of children from predominantly English-speaking homes. In general, we feel that the Welsh context of this curriculum could be strengthened in many areas, such as when promoting the Welsh identity of children in the [section on belonging].

Estyn

NDNA Cymru believes that the requirement to support children in their learning and development of the Welsh language does not appear clearly within this curriculum. There [have] been missed opportunities to link Welsh language development to the development pathways and promotion and learning of the Welsh culture and Cynefin. NDNA Cymru believe that, unfortunately, the document does not present as a curriculum that promotes bilingual learning and development within the non-maintained sector. Although the Languages, Literacy and Communication AoLE includes development of the Welsh language, this does not translate strongly enough into this curriculum, and the mandatory requirement to support Welsh language development may not be apparent to practitioners.

NDNA Cymru

[...] we do not consider that this curriculum provides adequate guidance on how the Welsh language should be introduced in nursery settings (particularly in relation to English-medium settings). Our concerns relate specifically to how English-medium settings should introduce the Welsh language to children [...]. The easiest way to achieve [this in our view] is to include a specific section that deals with this in the curriculum for nursery settings. Rather than having to repeat this throughout the document when referring to literacy or communication, a specific section dealing with

the bilingual nature of education in Wales should be included. This guidance should reflect the Curriculum and Assessment Act for Wales in relation to the immersion model of education up to the age of seven, and the statutory requirement for all nursery settings and schools to learn Welsh from 3–16 years old [...].

Welsh Language Commissioner

This was consistently raised across all stakeholder groups (except for Welsh-medium settings themselves), including childminders, LAs, and ALNLOs. Another theme raised in workshops, albeit not apparent within the emailed responses, was that some found the Welsh language version of the document to be difficult to understand. It is challenging to understand the significance of this finding — whether it is widely held or if in fact it relates to the content itself (rather than the translation). There is broader evidence, including from other consultations, that Welsh translation can be formal and almost academic in tone. This can serve to cloud the more natural and accessible tone taken within the curriculum.

2.21 Conclusions

Across responses and in more open conversations, there was general support for the overall sentiment and orientation of the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings. This tended to centre on the importance placed within the curriculum on the whole child, development and progression, play, and authentic experience, amongst other factors, which respondents felt matched their own values and priorities. In open conversations, childminders, for example, often expressed that they felt as though the curriculum was an exciting development, one that held them in parity of esteem with other practitioners across the educational community, which they welcomed.

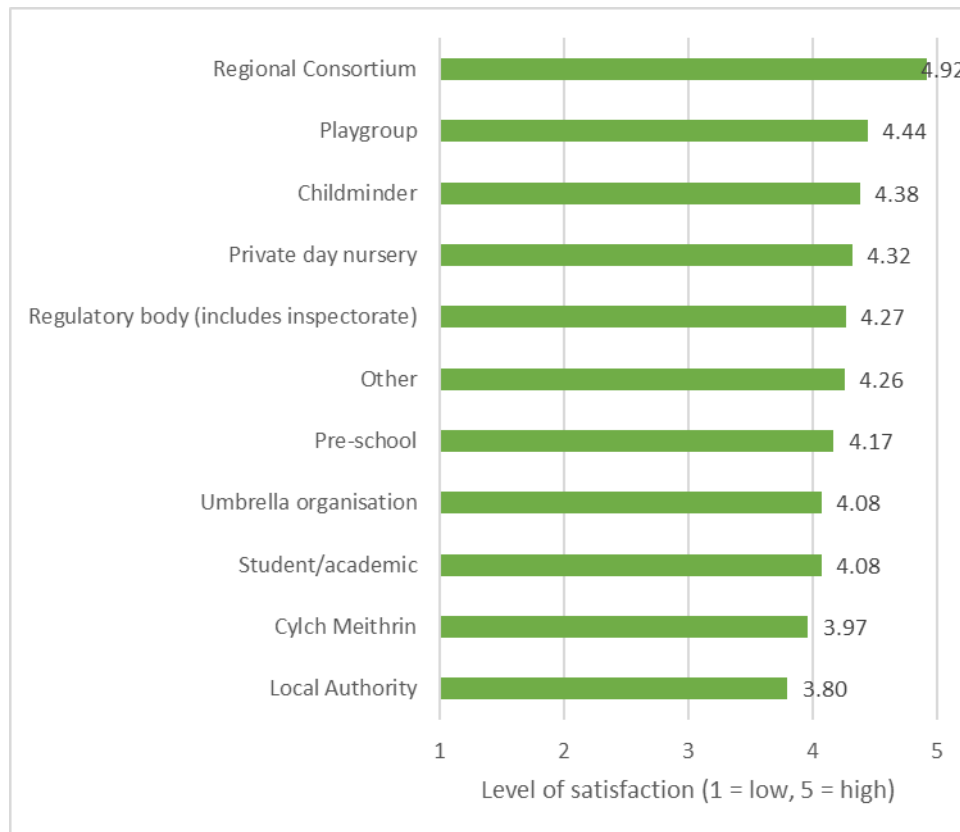
Respondents also cited a range of broader considerations relating to the curriculum in practice. Some respondents highlighted the apparent tensions between prevailing practices, systems and challenges and the new curriculum, for example. These concerns often focused on pre-existing or longstanding questions and challenges facing the non-maintained sector, including but not limited to:

- access to consistent and high-quality training opportunities,
- recruitment and retention of practitioners,
- highly variable underlying skills and expertise within the community,
- highly variable remuneration across the sector,
- resources, including time, facilities and materials, to engage in practice change and improvement, and
- coherence and compatibility with other systems and processes, including inspection, accountability and transition arrangements.

The Curriculum

On the whole, respondents found the curriculum document to be clear, helpful, engaging and, in some cases, inspiring. Within quantitative responses to the online consultation, for

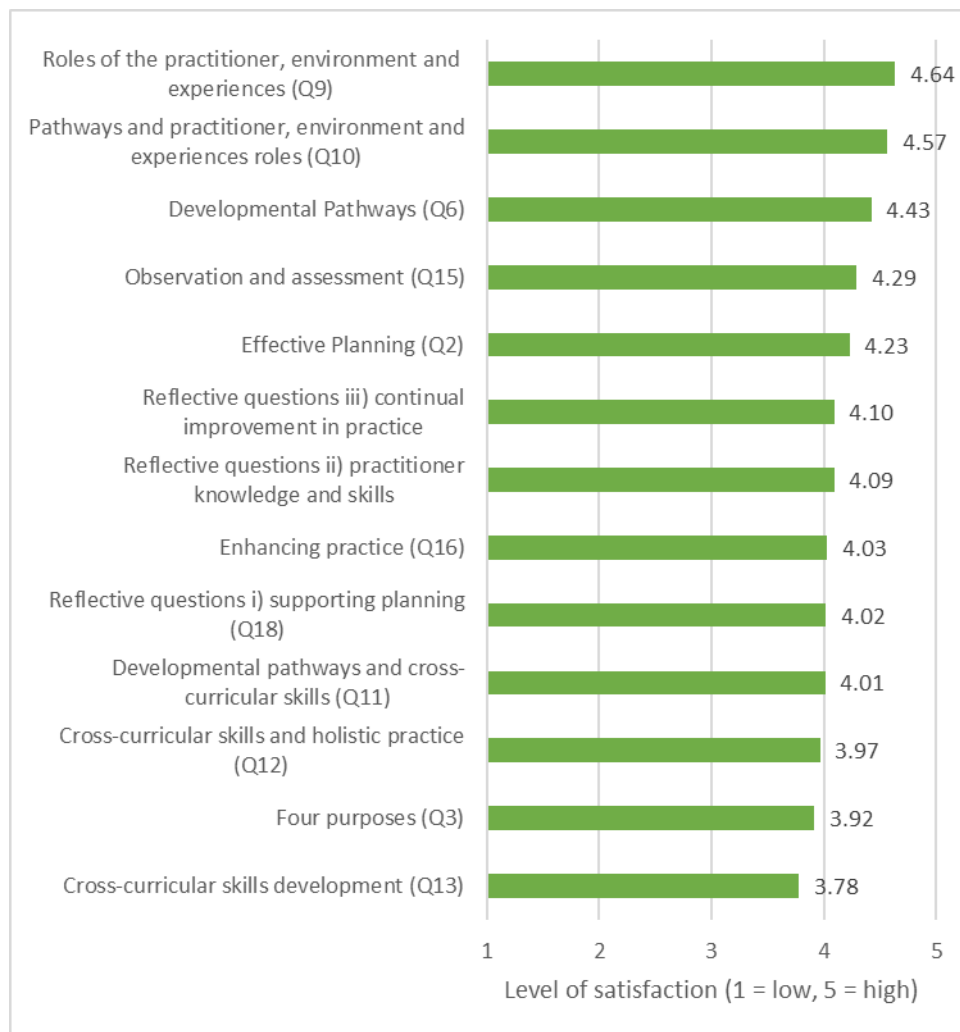
example, respondents (on average) responded very positively. There was slight variation in general perceptions towards the curriculum amongst different groups of respondents. Bringing quantitative responses together to examine global perceptions of the curriculum as a whole, those responding as regional consortia, playgroups, childminders, and private day nurseries tended to view the curriculum most positively:



In contrast, those responding from local authorities and Cylch Meithrin were slightly less positive than other respondent groups. It should be noted that these groups still felt that the guidance was generally clear and helpful, just that this was not as strongly held in comparison to other groups.

Mapping this together with insights from workshops, LA representatives often spoke of high levels of variability in engagement and skills across the non-maintained sector. Some felt that not all practitioners or settings would have the resources, skills or confidence with which to engage effectively with the new curriculum. From these perspectives, they tended to suggest that greater simplification and higher levels of prescription or exemplars within the document would be valuable in supporting engagement.

There was also variation in the general perceptions of respondents as a whole with regard to different elements or sections within the curriculum. As described within the curriculum, the roles of the practitioner, environment and experiences, as well as the developmental pathways, were thought of most favourably, relative to other aspects of the curriculum document:



Whilst all sections (on the whole) were considered to be clear and helpful, those elements or sections that tended to be thought of slightly less favourably included the development of cross-curricular skills and the four purposes. These elements are perhaps more practically complex and abstract in nature, which may account for some of the variation in views over and above how they are communicated within the curriculum.

Strengthening the Curriculum

Where respondents offered comments or suggestions on where the document could be strengthened, these tended to be focused on minor tweaks in structure, tone, language, content and emphasis. A key theme surrounding suggestions, for example, concerned those that seek to improve the accessibility of the document for certain audiences, especially those across the sector who may be more unfamiliar or not confident with the concepts and/or approaches contained within the document. These included suggestions such as greater use of pictures, infographics and summaries, for example, to help communicate different aspects of the curriculum and how they fit together.

There were some areas of disagreement amongst respondents regarding how the curriculum could be strengthened. These included the level of prescription and detail contained within the document. Whilst most felt that the document got this more or less correct, some felt

that the document was too long, and would welcome shorter summaries to help readers to navigate the content. Others felt that the document would benefit from greater depth and detail in certain places so as to help practitioners and leaders to understand how to respond to the curriculum in practice.

There were also respondents who would like to see the document simplified, including the language and concepts used to communicate aspects of the curriculum, as well as the overall structure and presentation. Both in online responses and in open conversations, terms such as pedagogy were felt to be challenging for some — it was felt that such terms should be simplified. Conversely, there were others who felt that it was important to support and encourage engagement with more in-depth concepts and ideas that inform practice. From these perspectives, the document in many areas presented a balanced account of what effective practice looks like, and to which all practitioners should aspire.

Another substantive theme centred on the idea of differentiated communication. This included effectively communicating the new curriculum to different audiences. Parents and carers, for example, whilst not the main audience for the document, largely found it to be difficult to understand. When the main thrust of the curriculum was communicated, parents and carers were largely very supportive. They were keen to know about what their children were learning, and most felt that they would welcome more practical examples of the activities in which their children were engaged as a route to understanding the curriculum and what it means for their children. Practitioners and nurseries were the most trusted source of this information, and parents felt (on the whole) that this should be more regular and consistent.

There were also suggestions that went beyond the document itself. These included, amongst other suggestions, the importance of providing printed versions of the document for those who prefer hard copies. Others felt that hyperlinks could be embedded into digital versions to signpost further support or materials that may be valuable in helping readers to understand and navigate the new curriculum.

Overall, most respondents felt that the curriculum, as it stands, is clear and effective. Amongst all groups, the curriculum was largely considered to be valuable and informative in helping practitioners and settings to understand, reflect and act on the new curriculum. Moreover, there was recognition from some respondents regarding the process of developing the new curriculum, which was seen to be positive:

The developmental pathways clearly feed into progression step 1 and outline what children innately need at this stage of development. It has clearly been written by practitioners who have a sound understanding of child development and the pedagogy of play. This is a refreshing change! A bottom-up approach has clearly been applied and the curriculum is inclusive [of] all children attending our setting.

Leader, Private day nursery

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