

The Standard for Childhood Practice Revised 2015





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Introduction

The first benchmark Standard for Childhood Practice was developed in 2007 following consultation with the sector. Childhood practice was based on the then National Occupational Standards for Children's Care, Learning and Development (Skills for Care, online) and Playwork (Skills Active, online). Each specified the knowledge, skills and values required and provided guidelines for programmes of work based learning that would enable workers to demonstrate that they had achieved the appropriate level of practice competence.

In practice, the Standard (QAA, 2007) and the work based learning leading to it have worked well. By 2014 more than 1400 workers had been awarded either a Bachelor of Arts degree by a university, a postgraduate Master of Education or a Professional Development Award by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (online a). Additionally, the impact of the Standard was assessed favourably by two independent enquiries: Making the Difference. The impact of staff qualifications on children's learning in early years (Education Scotland, 2012) and Taking the First Steps – is Childhood Practice Working? (Scottish Social Services Council, 2014a).

Developments in policy and practice since 2007, however, made it desirable for a review of the Standard for Childhood Practice to be carried out. A widespread consultation process revealed that there was general agreement that while the Standard and the guidelines for courses and programmes were substantially still appropriate, there was a need for some revision to take account of more recent developments.

The revision of the Standard for Childhood Practice consists of two sections:

Part one: The Standard for Childhood Practice

Part two: Guidelines for programmes providers and their partners.

Part one: The Standard for Childhood Practice

The Standard for Childhood Practice programmes in Scotland will inform all awards and qualifications in the integrated qualifications and professional development framework.

The Standard for Childhood Practice contains:

- **benchmarks** that specify what is expected of a learner who has completed a programme in childhood practice and so meets the qualification requirement for registration as a manager/lead practitioner with the SSSC. The elements also specify the design requirements for programmes. Benchmarks are numbered for ease of reference.
- **expected features** that are intended to clarify and illustrate aspects of learner performance which the programme is designed to achieve. These features will be used by programme providers in designing assessment strategies to ensure that the requirements for learner performance are met. Expected features are shown in bullet points following the benchmark.

Professional values and personal commitment

1 Managers/lead practitioners value and demonstrate a commitment to inclusion, diversity, social justice, anti-discrimination, and protecting and caring for children and young people.

They:

- respect and value children and young people as unique whole individuals and their right to participate and be consulted
- have high expectations for all children and young people and a commitment to ensuring that they can achieve their full potential
- respect the rights of all children and young people without discrimination as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Unicef, online), the Children (Scotland) Act (1995), the National Care Standards for Early Education and Child care up to the age of 16 (Scottish Government, 2005a) and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014)
- have a commitment to promoting and supporting the Protecting Children and Young People: Framework for Standards (Scottish Government, 2004)
- demonstrate an awareness of the significance of race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability, sexuality and other social backgrounds and the interactions between them in the development of individual children and young people
- value and respect the diversity of identities and the importance of their interactions

- promote fairness and justice and adopt anti-discriminatory practices which challenge inequalities of race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability, sexuality and other social backgrounds and their interactions
- safeguard the children and young people in their charge and promote and support their wellbeing and development in accordance with The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2014a).

2 Managers/lead practitioners value themselves and others by taking responsibility for their own professional learning and development and that of the workers for whom they are responsible.

They:

- demonstrate the standards of conduct and practice set out in the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers (SSSC, 2003)
- value and develop an environment for learning that enables and supports learning for themselves and for others and where reflective practice is valued and developed
- show a commitment to the learning and development of workers for whom they are responsible, including volunteers and students on work placements
- show a commitment to reflection, critical self-evaluation and continuing professional development and research, as means of improving practice and broadening expertise
- collaborate on continuing professional development with others in the service and in other children's services
- contribute to, influence and respond to changes in the service and in other children's services.

3 Managers/lead practitioners value, respect and show commitment to the parents and carers, families, communities, and other agencies and partnerships with whom they work.

They:

- value and respect the contribution of parents and carers to their children and young people's learning and development
- establish a culture and climate to promote positive, non-discriminatory and inclusive relationships with and between each child and family
- promote and advocate a high quality service for each child and family
- provide a service that reflects clear and shared values and respect for individuals
- promote and respond to partnerships with children and young people, parents and carers, families, other agencies, colleagues and other professional workers
- provide opportunities to foster children and young people's understanding of different beliefs and cultures
- promote developing communities, community involvement and active citizenship.

Professional knowledge and understanding

Children and young people and childhoods

4 Managers/lead practitioners have a broad and balanced knowledge and understanding of children and young people and childhoods which underpins their practice and is used to inform their leadership of others.

They:

- demonstrate a critical understanding of how childhood is conceptualised and experienced in today's society by drawing on a range of theoretical disciplines including sociology, social policy and psychology
- have a critical understanding of how concepts of childhood are evident and influence policy and legislative documentation and practice
- are able to analyse, critically evaluate and support the contribution of parents and carers, families and communities to children's childhoods and the contribution of children and young people themselves
- can draw on different disciplines and different theoretical perspectives to inform and challenge their understanding of concepts such as child care and playwork and the blurring of boundaries between care, education, health, social welfare and play in a changing society
- have a critical understanding of children and young people's personal, social and emotional development and know how to use it to support children and young people's wellbeing and development
- have a critical understanding of children and young people as autonomous thinkers and active learners and can link this to decisions about provision and consultation with children and young people
- demonstrate an understanding of the concepts and models of health relevant for work with children and young people and their families.

Frameworks and programmes

5 Managers/lead practitioners have a critical understanding of the content of relevant organisational frameworks and statements of principles for supporting and enabling play, rest and other opportunities and experiences.

They:

- demonstrate secure knowledge, understanding and practical skill in relation to the content of a range of organisational frameworks used by the service for supporting play and learning
- know how to select, prepare and use a range of resources to engage, support, stimulate and challenge children and young people and to meet/match their developing needs
- know how to plan and provide safe and appropriate child led and adult initiated experiences, activities and play opportunities in indoor, outdoor and out of setting spaces, which enable children and young people to develop and learn

- have detailed knowledge of how to make effective personalised provision for children and young people taking account of their experiences and perspectives as shaped by race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability, sexuality, age, interests and abilities and their interactions, while promoting social justice
- demonstrate knowledge of the progressive nature of play and learning and be able to identify appropriate next steps in children and young people's play and learning experiences
- can identify the range of influences and transitions within a play space or setting which affect children and young people and their behaviour and link these to appropriate strategies to underpin policy and practice.

6 Managers/lead practitioners have a critical understanding of concepts and theories of curriculum and pedagogy.

They have knowledge and understanding of:

- concepts of curriculum
- factors that drive the learning of children and young people
- the settings in which children and young people learn
- concepts of wellbeing, communication and creativity, inquiry and curiosity, as determinants of effective learning on the part of children and young people
- circumstances and events conducive to effective learning
- the developmental process in the delivery of specific concepts
- the role of rest in ensuring that children and young people have the necessary energy and motivation to participate in play and creative engagement
- how play opportunities can be maximised to enhance the learning process.

7 Managers/lead practitioners have a critical understanding of the theories and principles required to analyse and critically evaluate the programmes provided by the service.

They:

- demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding of methods and underlying theories and are able to justify the content of programmes in relation to their relevance for children and young people's development
- know how to evaluate and further develop programmes in order to maximise the opportunities for effective engagement by children and young people.

8 Managers/lead practitioners have a broad and integrated knowledge and understanding of the scope and nature of relevant organisational frameworks and their ongoing development.

They:

- show an understanding of the principles that underpin organisational frameworks and policy statements in the service and consequently are able to encourage enjoyment, challenge, choice and relevance of provision for children and young people while responding to and supporting the requirements of families

- demonstrate informed knowledge of current innovations in framework and programme development and how these may be integrated into practice
- understand the power of reflection on evidence to drive innovation and change
- know how to critically evaluate the process of framework and programme development and they can make links and connections to framework development in related sectors and to developments both in other parts of the United Kingdom and internationally.

Systems and professional responsibilities

9 Managers/lead practitioners have a critical understanding of the principle features of local, national and international systems, and of policies, practices and legal requirements relevant to the service.

They:

- demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of the implications for the service of current legal requirements, national policies and guidance on, for example, employment law, health and safety, and on safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people
- are able to use their understanding of relevant legislation and policy to establish a culture that promotes children and young people's rights, difference, equality, inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice in all aspects of practice
- can critically consider links between theory, policy and practice through analysing and critically evaluating the relationship of their service to relevant quality standards and policy initiatives
- can use their understanding of local community resources and inter-professional involvement to build the capacity of the service and contribute to wider strategic developments within children's services
- have knowledge and understanding of the main features, differences and commonalities within and between early learning and child care provision across the voluntary, private and public sectors.

10 Managers/lead practitioners have a working knowledge of the breadth of the service and the professional roles and responsibilities of early learning and child care workers within it.

They:

- demonstrate an understanding of breadth of the service and the range of systems which underpin provision within it
- demonstrate an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of early learning and child care workers in the service and the range of professional development opportunities available to them
- know about and understand the societal context, including the economic and political climate, within which the service is provided and can analyse and evaluate its impact on provision and professional roles

- demonstrate a critical understanding of the evolving nature of the service and its workforce and the likely implications of this for systems and for professional responsibilities.

11 Managers/lead practitioners have a critical understanding of the contribution of other professionals to the service and to other children's services.

They:

- demonstrate an understanding of the professional attributes, roles and responsibilities of the range of other professionals who work in the service and in other children's services
- know about a range of concepts and models of working with other professionals, including inter-professional and inter-agency approaches, and have a critical understanding of how these may contribute to service developments in the future.

12 Managers/lead practitioners have a critical understanding of the principles, theories and concepts of leadership and management practice relevant for their role.

They:

- demonstrate an understanding of models of leadership and leadership styles and can reflect on the implications of these for their current and future roles and practice
- are able to analyse a variety of approaches for developing the vision and culture of an organisation and for developing and implementing policy and practice to suit strategic objectives
- demonstrate an understanding of a variety of strategies for communicating, building and managing teams, and supporting individual worker development
- can analyse the complexities of the management role in relation to managing self and others, as well as physical and financial resources and can identify the management skills required
- can analyse priorities and risks in developing and implementing business and operational plans and can identify approaches for managing these in practice.

Evidence informed practice

13 Managers/lead practitioners have the knowledge and understanding needed to support evidence informed practice.

They:

- know how to access and apply relevant research and enquiry-based findings
- know how to reflect on and engage in the systematic investigation of practice giving due consideration to the ethics of engaging in such activities

- can make informed choices among particular research methods and methods of evaluation
- draw on a range of sources of evidence to analyse and evaluate practice
- draw on relevant principles, theories and approaches to inform their practice
- demonstrate the ability to share and discuss with others the principles and perspectives that underpin their own professional practice
- understand the need to be flexible and to respond to a continuing changing social and political landscape.



Professional skills and abilities

Supporting play, learning opportunities and experiences

14 Managers/lead practitioners co-ordinate and lead the provision of environments that are safe, secure, caring and nurturing and inclusive.

They:

- provide environments and play spaces that are comfortable, welcoming and accessible to each child and her/his family and promote children and young people's wellbeing and development
- develop policies and practices to provide a safe, secure environment for each child which meet all regulatory requirements and where each child can develop skills and knowledge to keep him/her safe
- understand and carry out responsibilities in relation to child protection by having procedures for child protection in place that are understood and implemented by all staff and also by having an ethos of trust where staff feel confident and supported in raising concerns about child protection issues
- establish and maintain relationships with other agencies and ensure that workers understand their responsibilities and arrangements for liaising with other agencies when appropriate.

15 Managers/lead practitioners lead and support the development of positive and caring relationships with each child and family.

They:

- enable good relationships to be established with each child and family and build the ethos of the service around respect for and commitment to each child and family, workers, other colleagues and visitors
- encourage workers to listen and pay attention to what children and young people communicate, value and respect their views, and provide them with opportunities to express their views and make decisions
- support sensitive and effective communication with all children and young people
- demonstrate the values, attitudes and behaviour expected from children and young people
- create environments and play spaces where relationships with each child are positive and affirming and each child's confidence and resilience is promoted
- provide opportunities for children and young people to develop positive and supportive relationships with each other.

16 Managers/lead practitioners co-ordinate and lead the provision of balanced and flexible programmes that support play and learning opportunities and encourage children and young people to be healthy, active and achieving.

They:

- plan, implement and justify balanced and flexible programmes that provide enriching learning experiences and promote children and young people's play, learning and development, using national and local guidelines
- promote children and young people's active participation in programmes and their planning
- develop and make available resources to support programmes and their ongoing development
- demonstrate the continuous development of an environment to meet the needs of each child, informed by how children and young people develop and learn and with a clear understanding of possible next steps in development and learning
- provide opportunities for sustained shared thinking with children and young people and support the development of children and young people's language and communication skills
- enable constructive and sensitive feedback to and from children and young people to help them understand the process of their learning, what they have achieved and what they could do next
- demonstrate that they can develop positive strategies to promote children and young people's behaviour, self-control and independence.

17 Managers/lead practitioners co-ordinate and support the tracking of children and young people's progress and the planning and management of transitions.

They:

- develop and implement relevant ethical procedures for using observation and other strategies to document and record children and young people's experiences, development and progress; enable children and young people to participate and contribute
- use the information gained from observation and other strategies to inform planning and to improve and develop practice
- have procedures in place for producing reports on each child's achievements and progress for others, including parents and other professionals, in line with national and local guidance
- critically evaluate different models of assessment, recording and reporting
- identify and co-ordinate support for children and young people whose progress is affected by changes or difficulties in their personal circumstances and know when to refer them to colleagues for specialist help
- enable children and young people's planned and managed transitions within and between settings, providing relevant information to children and young people and families and working with other services as appropriate
- establish effective links with services that children and young people move from and to.

18 Managers/lead practitioners engage in professional reflection for continuing improvement.

They:

- identify and analyse routine professional problems and issues by drawing on a range of sources of evidence to question and be critical of practice
- support the use of reflection on and in practice to act on and improve their own practice and that of colleagues
- involve children, young people and families in reflection for continuing improvement of practice
- produce written reports that are well structured, convincingly argued and evidenced and technically accurate.

Communication, collaboration and partnership

19 Managers/lead practitioners lead and support teamwork and collaboration.

They:

- establish and develop a culture of collaboration and co-operative working between colleagues both within their own professional area and from other disciplines
- ensure that colleagues understand their role, are involved appropriately in supporting children and young people and understand their role when liaising with other agencies
- demonstrate their ability to work together with colleagues on policy development, to identify examples of good practice and on the establishment of a culture of continuous development and learning
- lead, influence and shape the policies and practices of their workplace and promote a collective responsibility for their implementation, including the practice of distributed leadership in learning.

20 Managers/lead practitioners promote and actively lead others in working with partners and carers, families and communities.

They:

- confirm and empower parents and carers in their role and promote their involvement and engagement with the service in a range of contexts
- establish fair, respectful, trusting and constructive relationships with parents/carers and families, communicate sensitively and effectively with them and in so doing ensure that parents' and carers' contributions are listened to and addressed
- provide a service that can be accessed by and meets the needs of each child and family
- demonstrate that they can work in partnership with families and parents/carers at home and in the setting to improve outcomes for children and young people

- promote the involvement and engagement of parents through the provision of formal and informal opportunities through which information about their children and young people's learning and development can be shared with parents/carers
- provide parents/carers and families with information about additional support services and support them to access specific services where appropriate
- establish effective partnerships with the local and wider community and provide opportunities to support children and young people's developing understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens.

21 Managers/lead practitioners lead and support collaboration with other agencies and other children's services to build capacity and develop services.

They:

- enable workers in the service to understand how their service fits within the wider context of children's services
- are proactive in developing or contributing to integrated working and inter-professional collaborative practice with other professional workers and with agencies, networks and organisations in order to strengthen support for children and young people and families and improve co-ordination across services
- actively participate in and contribute to joint service planning with other agencies to build the capacity of services and develop them for the future
- contribute to, and where appropriate lead, the work of a multi-professional team and co-ordinate and implement agreed programmes and interventions on a day-to-day basis.

Leadership and management

22 Managers/lead practitioners take responsibility for identifying and supporting their own personal learning and professional development needs.

They:

- demonstrate the use of a range of communication, information and communication technology and numeracy skills
- demonstrate some advanced and specialised skills to support their work with children and young people and wider professional activities
- reflect on, review and evaluate their practice, modifying approaches where necessary
- take a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation and change and adapt their practice if benefits and improvements are identified
- demonstrate the skills required to work in multi-professional teams and joint service planning and to develop personal networks
- demonstrate their capacity to manage their own resources and to identify and undertake continuing professional development, taking account of registration requirements.

23 Managers/lead practitioners take responsibility for identifying and supporting the learning and professional development needs of workers for whom they are responsible and for supporting students learning in and through the workplace.

They:

- establish effective working relationships with learners
- create an environment for learning that enables and supports professional learning and where practice is valued and developed
- encourage and facilitate others to reflect on existing and new principles and practice, to share knowledge and evaluate their learning
- manage the quality of what workers do with children and young people and identify gaps in their professional learning
- work with colleagues to identify their continuing professional learning needs and plan and co-ordinate the delivery of appropriate learning programmes
- lead arrangements for the support, mentoring and supervision of new workers and students on work placements.

24 Managers/lead practitioners take responsibility for the delivery and ongoing development of a high quality service for each child and family.

They:

- seek to ensure that all workers are aware of the core values, vision and culture of the service and have opportunities to contribute to their development
- develop effective management and communication strategies so that each worker is clear about her/his role and responsibilities within the service
- develop and maintain processes for developing, implementing and reviewing policies and operational plans for the service and for researching and evaluating innovation, impact and change
- develop systems to support continuous quality improvement and effectiveness of the service for each child and family
- foster innovation and manage change
- provide leadership, motivation and support to colleagues in ongoing self-evaluation
- co-ordinate and support the revision of policies, procedures and practice for registration and inspection and be accountable for them
- provide opportunities to share and contribute to the development of integrated services and joint planning of services with other agencies and the community.

25 Managers/lead practitioners engage with the business management of the services they provide.

They:

- develop procedures for effective administration of the service provided, including promoting the effective use of technology
- have procedures in place to manage the physical resources of the service including the physical environment and health and safety
- develop procedures for the safe selection, recruitment, induction and retention of workers
- plan and control budgets, identifying and managing priorities and risks
- undertake organisational and workforce development planning, taking account of the individual learning plans of workers
- develop, implement and evaluate relevant business, operational and work plans as appropriate to their role.



Part two: Guidelines for programme providers and their partners

1 Introduction

1.1 Guidelines for the development of courses and programmes

These guidelines are intended to primarily be of use to programme providers, employers, managers and other stakeholders.

They support:

- the continued development and delivery of programmes of learning that will enable participants to demonstrate that they have achieved the knowledge, skills and values defined in the Standard for Childhood Practice
- the continued development of an integrated qualifications and professional development framework for workers in the early learning and child care services
- the processes of approval within providing bodies
- the process of approval of programmes by SSSC.

1.2 Definition of awards

Within The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland (QAA Scotland, 2014) a bachelor's degree is defined as requiring at least 360 credits of which a minimum of 60 is at level 9 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Individual universities may require students to undertake more than this in order to exit with a degree from their institution. Typically, the 360 credits will be gained during a programme of learning where learners will have been assessed at SCQF levels 7, 8 and 9. The validation of a bachelor's degree or other appropriately approved award should therefore include the recognition of learning assessed at SCQF levels 7, 8 and 9.

These guidelines assume that these awards will be built on and explicitly include learning assessed at SCQF levels 7 and 8.

Graduate diplomas are defined as requiring a degree or equivalent as an entry qualification followed by at least 120 credits of learning assessed at the minimum of level 9. The SSSC additionally requires those with a degree plus the Post Graduate Diploma (PGD) in Childhood Practice to hold a practitioner qualification as part of the registration process. The validation of awards of this kind should

therefore meet these criteria. Other types of award that meet the requirement of the Standard for Childhood Practice will be considered as they are proposed for development.

1.3 Qualifications and a professional development framework

From 2011, registration as a manager/lead practitioner has required a qualification that meets the Standard for Childhood Practice and has the appropriate volume of credit. The definition of the Standard for that qualification provides a benchmark for the development of an integrated qualifications and professional development framework that builds on existing qualifications at levels 7 and 8 of the SCQF (Scottish Qualification Authority, online a).

Programmes of learning such as Higher National Qualifications (HNQs), Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) and Professional Development Awards (PDAs) provide practitioner qualifications and continuing professional development for workers. They can contribute to the professional progress of workers towards the degree or other level 9 award. The focus of the award in childhood practice is on leading learning and on supporting the development of workers in the sector.

1.4 Work based learning and professional development

Work based learning means learning closely bound to the work role and often, but not always, located in the workplace itself. An important aspect of work based learning is that through the experience of performing the work role, complemented by other activities such as directed reading, researching and group work, it is possible for learners to achieve planned learning outcomes that can be evidenced and assessed.

All programmes of learning that enable participants to demonstrate that they have achieved the professional knowledge, skills and values required of managers/lead practitioners in the early learning and child care service will include learning that takes place in and through the workplace.

2 Guidelines for the approval of programmes

2.1 Approval by the SSSC

The SSSC will approve only those programmes that meet the following conditions:

- programmes must be subject to normal institutional validation and review processes
- programmes must meet the requirements of the SSSC for registration as managers/lead practitioners.

2.2 Requirements of all programmes:

- programmes for managers/lead practitioners must allow learners to meet the Standard for Childhood Practice and assess their achievement of it
- have an appropriate volume of learning credit
- be grounded in work based learning, both current and planned
- have an appropriate balance of learning related to professional knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, and values and personal commitment
- contain clear arrangements for updating in accordance with national developments
- accept the need for flexibility in provision for learning and aim to take learning to the learners
- have effective procedures for the recognition and accreditation of prior learning
- have appropriate arrangements for quality assurance
- provide explicitly for the whole range of early learning and child care settings.

2.3 Partnerships

Work based learning and assessment require clear and robust arrangements for co-ordination between levels in the learning process and between programme providers and work place managers. Programmes for managers/lead practitioners must have effective partnership arrangements with employers or workplace managers and, where appropriate, with other programme providers. Arrangements should include:

- ensuring that there is a common understanding of standards and assessment and quality assurance approaches and the contribution each partner is making
- establishing appropriate arrangements for sharing information and engaging in the development of programmes
- providers ensuring that partners have the opportunity to feed into the ongoing quality assurance processes.

2.4 Mentoring

Mentoring in the workplace is an important element in ensuring support for learners. Training providers and their partners must provide for work based mentoring that has:

- a clear vision and purpose that is shared with, and understood by, all stakeholders
- ongoing support from employers and senior managers who understand the basic concepts of mentoring, and who are clear about the purpose and intended outcomes of the programme
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities for mentors and learners
- channels for communicating information to all staff in an organisation, whether they are taking part or not, about who is running the scheme and about the processes involved.

Organisations or establishments lacking the capacity, resources or the necessary skills to create an in-house mentoring scheme could consider partnership with other childhood practice organisations, national organisations, small community groups, networks or peer groups.

2.5 Accessibility

Professional workers in early learning and child care services work in a wide range of geographical locations in Scotland and in a variety of forms of service delivery. Programmes of learning will be required that are available to workers working or living in urban or rural environments and working in a wide range of settings.

3 The Standard for Childhood Practice

3.1 Purpose

The Standard for Childhood Practice (QAA, 2007) specifies what is expected of a worker seeking registration with the SSSC as a manager/lead practitioner in an early learning and child care service in Scotland.

The benchmarks of the Standard for Childhood Practice provide a set of statements that are the required outcomes of each programme of learning for managers/lead practitioners in Scotland. The statements provide a means of describing the nature and characteristics of programmes of learning in early learning and child care that lead to awards made by providers of higher education in Scotland.

The information in the Standard for Childhood Practice specifies the knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, values and commitment which programmes should address and assess. It describes the attributes and capabilities that those achieving such qualifications should be able to demonstrate.

3.2 The vision

The requirements of the Standard for Childhood Practice are based on a vision of the manager/lead practitioner in the early learning and child care service who, having demonstrated the competences/learning outcomes defined, will:

- lead and support the provision of high quality and flexible early learning and child care services
- work in partnership with families and communities
- collaborate with other agencies and other children's services.

As a result early learning and child care services will:

- enable children and young people from the earliest stages to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors who are capable of meeting their potential

- enable parents and carers to take up employment and training opportunities.

3.3 Core professional sector

Learners achieving manager/lead practitioner qualifying awards will work with children and young people between birth and 16 years of age in early learning and child care contexts.

3.4 National standards

The Standard is defined in terms of the descriptors of level 9 in the SCQF but also takes account of:

- National Occupational Standards for Social Services (Children and Young People) (SSSC, online a)
- National Occupational Standards for Playwork (Skills Active, 2015)
- National Occupational Standards for Leadership and Management for Care Services (SSSC, online b)
- Common Core of Skills, Knowledge and Understanding and Values for the Children’s Workforce in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2012a)
- Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2014b)
- Curriculum for Excellence (Education Scotland, online)
- National Framework for Child Protection learning and development in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2012b)
- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2014a)
- Standards for Social Work Education (Scottish Government, 2003) and Teaching (GTCS, 2012), and the Competencies for Community Learning and Development (Community Learning and Development Standards Council for Scotland, 2009)
- Pre-birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland’s Children (Education Scotland, 2010)
- Enhancement Themes (Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee, 2014).

3.5 The national learning context

Scotland’s Lifelong Learning Strategy (Scottish Government, 2003b) envisioned ‘the best possible match between the learning opportunities open to people and the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours which will strengthen Scotland’s economy and society’.

The revised Standard for Childhood Practice and guidelines draw on the principles for lifelong learning within that context and from other more recent strategic developments across the Scottish Government, National Priorities in Education (Scottish Government, 2003c), A Curriculum for Excellence (Education Scotland, online), A Smart, Successful Scotland (Scottish Government, 2005b), Closing

the Opportunity Gap (Scottish Government, 2002) and Choosing Our Future: Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy (Scottish Government, 2005c), the Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision (Scottish Government, 2013) and Building the Ambition (Scottish Government, 2014c).

The organising principles for the implementation of the Standard for Childhood Practice are informed by the recommendations of the report of the Leitch Review of Skills, Prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills, (HM Treasury, 2006) and subsequently the Wood review: Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (Scottish Government, 2014d). The review recommended that programmes of learning should:

- be demand led
- build on existing structures
- share responsibility between employers, providers and learners
- where possible, ensure that knowledge and skills are portable between sectors and services
- be able to adapt and respond to developing circumstances.

In addition, and crucially, learning should be work based.

3.6 The European context

Programmes of learning leading to the award of a Scottish bachelor's degree conform to the requirements of the First Cycle defined by the framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (the Bologna Process) (European Commission, 2015) and carry 180 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits. Learners achieving a bachelor's degree are also entitled to be issued with the European Diploma Supplement.

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) will additionally allow the recognition of credit and credit transfer within the vocational education sector.

SCQF level 9 is equivalent to EQF level 6 (Scottish Qualification Authority, online b).

3.7 Audience for the Standard for Childhood Practice

It is expected that the subject benchmark statement for the Standard for Childhood Practice will be useful to:

- learners undertaking programmes
- employers and prospective employers
- committee members in the voluntary and local authority sectors
- those involved in designing, approving, validating and accrediting programmes
- those who teach and assess in programmes
- those who are responsible for the assessment, review and monitoring of programmes

- those who are responsible for building opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) using the statements in this Standard, including training providers and awarding bodies
- members of other professions who have an interest in the delivery and development of early learning and child care services
- those with a responsibility for the development of policy
- parents and carers.

The Standard for Childhood Practice is also expected to inform provision and partnership by and between Scotland's universities and colleges, training providers, awarding bodies, and public, private and voluntary sector employers. Partnerships for provision may engage any or all of these.

4 Nature and scope of the Standard for Childhood Practice

4.1 Professionalism

High quality early learning and child care services benefit children and young people and their parents/carers. A well-qualified professional workforce is the most important factor in delivering the quality of services that will give children and young people the best possible start in life.

The Standard for Childhood Practice supports the establishment and recognition of the professional status of workers providing early learning and child care services. It informs the integrated qualifications and professional development framework and so impacts on the professional development of all early learning and child care workers, including those at SCQF levels 7 and 8.

The learning programmes based on the Standard for Childhood Practice are designed to enhance and improve service standards. They facilitate the development of the whole profession and in particular will support the development of managers/lead practitioners who are:

- competent to work across a wide range of settings
- confident in what they know and can do
- clear about their own professional identity and that of other professionals
- flexible and adaptable
- committed to continuous improvement
- proactive in responding to and implementing change
- able to demonstrate leadership and vision
- able to contribute to the development of the profession.

4.2 Expectations

The Standard for Childhood Practice consists of outcome statements that set out what learners must know, understand and be able to do to achieve the

qualification. Programme providers must show that the programme they offer meets the requirements of this Standard.

It seeks to encourage programme and service providers, to work collaboratively in the design and delivery of their curricula. The Standard is the specification against which providers are expected, as a minimum, to set their standards for an award.

It will be for providers to establish programmes that provide for appropriate progression through SCQF levels 7, 8, and 9.

4.3 Level of performance

The Standard for Childhood Practice describes the level of performance expected of learners who successfully complete an integrated programme leading to an award.

Programmes should enable learners to achieve a threshold level of performance in relation to each of the elements of the Standard and should allow the achievement of particular strengths in some of them. They should allow, additionally, the development of skills in specific areas that can be transferred to other areas of professional practice or further developed through continuous professional development.

5 Delivering the Standard for Childhood Practice through an integrated qualifications framework

5.1 Attributes of the qualification framework

The main attributes of the qualification structure will be:

- there will be one framework for the whole sector, covering and integrating SCQF levels 7, 8 and 9
- services will be led by SCQF level 9 qualified professionals
- there will be entry and exit points at each level
- there will be college, university and other work based provision
- prior learning will be recognised and accredited
- progression and continuing professional development will be supported
- the identification of a shared knowledge and skills base across children's services will be supported.

5.2 Recruitment to programmes

Potential recruits to programmes leading to an SCQF level 9 manager/lead practitioner qualification through the integrated qualifications and professional development framework will include:

- workers already in post as managers/lead practitioners who do not hold an appropriate qualification in childhood practice that will meet the SSSC's requirement for managers/lead practitioners
- workers moving on from SCQF level 7 practitioner qualifications such as SVQ3 and Higher National Certificates (HNCs) through additional CPD qualifications like Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), SVQ4s, PDAs, Diplomas of Higher Education, and then on to SCQF level 9
- 'direct entry' candidates with existing awards at SCQF level 9 or above eg graduates with vocational degrees eg in teaching, community learning and development, social work, health
- postgraduate students with non-vocational degrees eg in history, chemistry, media, international relations, psychology, or with other equivalent awards; these candidates will also be required to have a practice qualification (as defined by SSSC)
- workers from other workforces with relevant SCQF level 7, 8 or 9 qualifications eg in residential child care.

5.3 Possible forms of delivery of the complete framework

Among the possible forms of delivery of programmes to support the achievement of the Standard for Childhood Practice will be:

- new awards covering SCQF levels 7, 8 and 9
- new top-up awards for practitioners with appropriate HNC/SVQ3 and those with additional qualifications such as HND/SVQ4/PDA awards or new awards for candidates with degrees or equivalent
- all routes to qualification can be part time, full time or a blend of both.

6 Learning, teaching and assessment

6.1 Principles

The organising principles for programmes leading to the qualification are that they will:

- be based on learning in and through the workplace
- be delivered through partnership
- provide flexible, responsive and adaptable opportunities for learning
- be challenging and stimulating
- provide effective support for learners.

6.2 Learning in and through workplace settings

Programmes for learners who have not yet achieved practitioner status must include a minimum of two learning experiences in different and distinct child care or early learning settings. The minimum amount of time in a placement workplace setting will depend on local circumstances but it should be of a sufficient length to enable significant learning.

Programmes for learners working towards manager/lead practitioner recognition and an SCQF level 9 qualification who are already working as practitioners in the sector, will require at least one additional learning experience in an appropriate setting other than their own workplace.

It will be a requirement for approval that all programmes leading to the qualification at SCQF level 9 will include a minimum of 50 percent of learning time being spent in workplace settings. The providing organisation's procedures for the recognition of prior learning can contribute to this requirement.

It will be open to providers to use the arrangements for SVQs as part of the practice learning. Other qualifications such as Modern or Technical Apprenticeships may provide additional credit. Practice Learning Qualifications (Social Services) SCQF level 9 modules might also be included though not as contributing to credit for practice learning. Consideration could also be given to the use of virtual learning environments as one of the means of providing learning through the workplace.

6.3 Assessment

All assessment should be related to learning outcomes defined by the Standard for Childhood Practice with a substantial proportion directly connected to learning in the workplace. Appropriate arrangements should be put in place for the assessment of practice skills. Assessment procedures might include observation, reflective accounts, critical incident analyses, self and peer assessment, portfolios, learning contracts, case studies, presentations, projects and simulations. They might also include critical analyses based on reading or on lectures and tutorials. Use might be made of virtual learning environments.

It will be for the providers of programmes to propose forms of assessment that are appropriate to their particular methods of delivery.

The role of employers and placement supervisors in supporting assessment processes should be carefully considered. Their support will be central in contributing to the provision of an appropriate environment for the demonstration of the learning outcomes defined by the Standard for Childhood Practice and will be an important element in partnership arrangements.

7 Professional development

7.1 Interrelationship of aspects of professional development

Programmes leading to the qualification for managers/lead practitioners in childhood practice will promote three main aspects of professional development:

- professional values and personal commitment
- professional knowledge and understanding
- professional skills and abilities.



The significance of placing these three aspects in a single structure is to emphasise that they are not simply lists of competences or outcomes. They are inherently linked to each other in the development of the professional and one aspect does not exist independently of the other two. It is the interrelationship among all three which develops professionalism and leads to appropriate professional action. The interrelationship is illustrated above.

The design of each programme will offer a distinctive balance but will develop all three aspects.

7.2 Transferable skills

Programmes within the framework will help learners to develop skills that are transferable to other areas of learning and other areas of professional

employment. These skills are not additional to the Standard for Childhood Practice but are implicit in the outcomes that successful learners will demonstrate.

7.3 A common format

The format of the Standard for Childhood Practice parallels that used for standards in social work education and in initial teacher education as well as comparable documents for nursing, midwifery and health-visiting. This allows for the identification of common elements in the training of these different professions and for the possibility of future integrated training initiatives.

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