

FUTURE SKILLS ISSUES AFFECTING INDUSTRY SECTORS IN WALES



Social Care Sector

Executive Summary

Introduction

This document is one of a series commissioned by the Future Skills Wales Research Forum. The overall project aims to extend and complement the work begun by the original Future Skills Wales project, which forecast future generic skills needs across Wales using forecasting and survey data. The current project adds studies of future vocational skills needs within key sectors in Wales. Each sector study is based on desk research and qualitative interviews with practitioners and a small number of employers, and aims to provide an overview of the sector, the skills issues, and current and potential actions to further strengthen the sector.

Businesses and employees in each of the sectors studied have achieved great successes; that is why these sectors have become important for Wales. Our focus on current skills issues should not obscure these achievements or the determination of all concerned to meet current challenges.

Sector Profile

- The social care workforce of 70,000 (full-time and part-time) represents 4% of the total workforce in Wales, employing a similar number to the business and finance sector.
- The social care sector is complex. It is made up of three sub-sectors, the public, private and voluntary, delivering services in a range of home, community and residential settings to a diverse range of clients.
- The balance of public to independent provision varies across service areas and in localities. This mix is primarily driven by the commissioning and service strategies of local authorities that are developed within national policy frameworks.
- The main vocational skill areas include social work and care skills with over a quarter of employees in the sector working as care assistants.
- The majority of services delivered are publicly funded, but the independent sector has grown significantly in the last 20 years and over half of the total workforce is estimated to now work in the private sector.
- The majority of employment in social care is located in South East Wales. Between 1990 and 2000 employment in the sector in North Wales grew by 30%.
- Trends across the sub-sectors cannot be predicted at this stage as some are predicted to decline, others are expected to grow, for example the delivery of intermediate care and rehabilitation services. However, overall the social care sector is expected to grow, and at a faster rate than the Welsh economy as a whole.

Skills Issues

- A significant proportion of workers in the sector, especially in residential services sub-sectors, have no formal qualifications.
- Employers report some difficulty in recruiting and attribute this to low levels of wages that are in turn reported as being due to low operating margins. Research is currently underway assessing the barriers to entry into the sector workforce and relevance of provision to meet the needs of employers.
- Training is relatively well established in the sector but employers report difficulties in the delivery of work-based assessment, particularly in settings where services are delivered in the user's home or in a wider range of community settings. There is a need to ensure that a greater proportion of the training that does take place leads to a qualification outcome.
- There is currently limited funding support available for the independent sector to assist with embedding vocational training, although there has been considerable activity seeking to disseminate good practice in the delivery and management of work-based training.

- Vacancy rates in some occupations are reported at much higher levels than the national average and employers consulted report concern with high rates of turnover. The introduction of new national standards for the sector is expected to lead to closures amongst small independent care home operators. This may represent a challenge to the sector in ensuring that experience staff are retained within the workforce and their skills and experience re-deployed in other settings.

Current Changes and Action on Skills

- The sector is undergoing some fundamental changes. The Better Wales strategy sees the social care sector as key to the delivery of social inclusion objectives representing a shift in policy focus from targeting areas of greatest need to social inclusion.
- Across social care service areas, new policy is being developed to respond to this change and is driven by:
 - increased focus on empowerment of the user and promoting independence where appropriate;
 - the need for flexibility to meet the needs of the users to deliver services at home, in the community or in a residential setting;
 - partnership working to dovetail care services with primary health care and sectors delivering social inclusion and regeneration activities.
- There is considerable focus on the skills and competence of the workforce through the introduction of the Care Standards Act and establishment of the Care Council for Wales, which will incorporate the functions of the NTO, TOPSS Cymru, and be responsible for the registration of the social care workforce.
- Key functions of the Care Council will include the regulation of the social care workforce including establishing the qualification attainment required for the registration of social care workers. The Care Council, in partnership with government, will also develop a Skills, Qualifications and Training Strategy for the sector by 2002.
- A considerable body of research, consultation and developmental work has been undertaken and is planned by TOPSS Cymru to prepare for this transition. This includes:
 - the use and refinement of workforce information to predict with employers the skills, training and qualification needs required by the sector;
 - agreeing with employers the qualifications framework for the sector including those required at entry to the social care workforce;
 - agreeing with employers the career pathways for the sector;
 - assisting employers develop Human Resource Strategies that will meet the requirements of their service strategies;
 - progressing the Occupational Standards Strategy;
 - preparatory work for the development of the Skills, Qualifications and Training (STQ) Strategy including the creation of an Entry to the Social Care Work force Strategy.
- Given that there is considerable change underway, the exact impact on skills needs in the sector will become clearer as the new structures and strategies are developed;
- The following recommendations, therefore, focus on the actions required of relevant bodies in order to secure the resources and support that will be needed to ensure that the vision set out for the social care sector in the 21st century is achieved.

Themes & Recommendations matrix

Theme No:	Rec. No:	Action	Timescale	Key Partners
1	1a	A strategy should be adopted to increase understanding of the importance, size, nature and complexity of the social care sector in Wales, including regional differences. This will assist in strategic planning for the appropriate post 16 funding to meet the sector's skills, training and qualification needs	April 2001	TOPSS Cymru/ CETW/NafW
	1b	A strategy should be devised to inform CCETS understanding of the sector on a local basis in order to deliver the appropriate provision that will meet the sector's skills, training and qualification needs as outlined in the Entry to the Workforce Strategy and STQ Strategy	April 2001	TOPSS Cymru/ WLGA/FE/CETW
2	2a	Delivery of the STQ Strategy needs to be supported by ensuring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the development of effective work based assessment and verification; • the development of awards in full partnership with the NTO in Wales 	on-going	Awarding bodies/ TOPSS
	2b	Increased collaboration and work to ensure that the sector has access to Awards, training providers and assessment centres of the appropriate quality and variety	on-going	ACCAC/ Awarding bodies/ CETW/TOPSS
3	3a	Employers and service providers across the sector need to ensure that their employees are appropriately skilled and qualified for the work that they undertake	on-going	All
	3b	Cyngor NTO Cymru Social Sector Group to support the work in the sector by taking forward the Skills Strategy for Social Inclusion	on-going	Cyngor NTO Cymru
4		Widen dialogue on skills and qualifications issues with independent sector employers and further promote joint working to address these	on-going	TOPSS Cymru
5		Raise profile of the caring services as a positive career option	end 2002	Careers/EBLs/ TOPSS Cymru
6		Undertake wider research on market trends in independent and voluntary sector	April 2002	NafW

