

Early Years Outcomes Framework

Consultation response form

Your name: Sue Williams

Organisation (if applicable): Natural Resources Wales

e-mail/telephone number: 0300 065 3000

Your address: Clawddnewydd, Ruthin, Denbighshire LL21 9HP

Responses should be returned by **15 January 2015** to:

Early Years Team
Department for Education and Skills
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Or completed electronically and sent to:

earlyyears@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is the largest Welsh Government public sponsored body with just under 2000 staff, an operating budget of £17 million and manages 7% of the land in Wales. Our purpose is to ensure that the environment and natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, enhanced and used, now and in the future.

Natural Resources Wales aims:

“..... to play a central role in delivering sustainable development for Wales. This means bringing the management of our natural resources and environment together in a balanced and integrated way, to deliver benefits for the people, environment and economy”

Natural Resources Wales welcomes the opportunity to comment on this consultation. Our aim is to highlight the importance of natural resource management, the need to embed the environment and sustainable development in the widest sense within the curriculum and the importance of out of classroom learning for all key stages.

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

Yes

No

Unsure

Supporting comments

NRW is also using the RBA approach to plan future work and if implemented correctly this approach should help identify where early years policies and programmes are making a difference

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

Yes

No

Unsure

Supporting comments

**NRW feels that the seven outcomes listed are relevant and appropriate, but notes that some are far more difficult to measure than others e.g. levels of happiness and resilience.
The list could also be expanded to make other outcomes explicit rather than implicit.**

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

To reflect one of the key themes of the Foundation Phase, all children in the early years:

**Should have an awareness and appreciation of their natural environment
Should have access to outdoor spaces and quality natural environments
Should have regular access to hands on learning and play experiences in these environments**

Experiences in the natural environment can contribute to 5 out of the 7 listed outcomes:

- 1. “are and feel safe” - children require regular access to the natural environment in order to feel comfortable and safe in an environment they may not experience as part of family life**
- 2. “are resilient, capable and coping” - learning experiences in the natural environment can allow for managed risk taking contributing to children becoming resilient, capable and able to cope**
- 3. “are healthy” - the physical and mental health benefits of time spent in the outdoors are well documented and the increased opportunities for physical activity in the outdoors at a young age can contribute to a future healthy adult lifestyle**
- 4. “learn and develop” - The benefits of learning and developing in the outdoors are well documented (ref Module 6 of the Foundation Phase**

Training Pack and document number 0022/2007 – Out of Classroom Learning)

5. “are happy” - Although harder to measure, learning and playing in the natural environment is beneficial for those children who are not as comfortable in a formal classroom setting and these experiences could contribute to increased levels of happiness.

From NRW’s point of view, we feel it is essential for all children and young people to grow up valuing and feeling connected to the natural environment, in order to understand its importance to society. If this is embedded at an early age, the later acquisition of skills and the application of these through employment opportunities will contribute to the essential sustainable use and management of Wales’ natural resources in the future.

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

Yes

No

Unsure

Supporting comments

NRW agrees with the points raised in past stakeholder meetings and detailed on page 9. We would question how “happiness” can truly be measured and would agree that the other listed outcomes, plus access and experience of the natural environment would all contribute to a child’s overall level of happiness.

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

No comment

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

If suggestions in Q3 are included:

Should have an awareness and appreciation of their natural environment

Should have access to outdoor spaces and quality natural environments

Should have regular access to hands on learning and play experiences in these environments

The RSPB Connection to Nature Index can be used.

Question 7 – Can you see how your contribution to the early years in Wales fits into the Framework?

Yes

No

Unsure

If not, what is missing?

NRW can see how our contribution to the early years in Wales fits into the Framework but are concerned that the role of the natural environment or learning outside the classroom is not mentioned at any point in the document. It also wasn't mentioned in the "10-year plan for the early years, childcare and play workforce in Wales". However with the Environment Bill, Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill and the formation of Natural Resources Wales as a major component in the solution to the sustainable management of our natural resources now and in the future, NRW feels it is essential to make the importance of the natural environment and its natural resources explicit in all government documents. The children that this Framework will affect will be the future generation with responsibility for the sustainable management of Wales' natural resources and it is imperative that ESDGC messages are woven into early years practice from the start – access and experience of the natural environment through learning and play is the easiest way to ensure this.

NRW manages a variety of sites across Wales, woodlands, nature reserves and also helps manage in partnership many other green spaces. Many of these sites are easily accessible and include trails, play areas and education activities.

NRW's Education, Learning and Sector Skills team also offers supported visits and training for practitioners wishing to self-lead or develop activity ideas for play and learning in the natural environment.

Through the Wales Woodlands for Learning Team, NRW has supported the writing of Module 6 and the subsequent training of Foundation Phase Practitioners and continues to train Foundation Phase staff, child minders, play workers and has links to Flying Start and Healthy Schools staff and provides a facilitated network through Outdoor Learning Wales where any practitioner can join the local group, gain support and take advantage of opportunities for CPD.

NRW would be happy to discuss ways to work with the Early Years Department in the future to jointly help support the Framework and NRW's outcomes.

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

No comment

Question 9 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

As per question 7, Out of Classroom Learning and outdoor play are key components of Early Years education and previous early years documentation has highlighted the importance of the use of the natural environment as a safe and stimulating setting.

The children that that this Framework will affect will be the future generation with responsibility for the sustainable management of Wales' natural resources and it is imperative that ESDGC messages are woven into early years practice from the start – access and experience of the natural environment through learning and play is the easiest way to ensure this.

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: