

Date: Wednesday 4 February 2004

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

Title: The Care Council for Wales Annual Report 2002-03

The primary purpose of the Care Council for Wales, which started its work in October 2001, is to secure higher standards of conduct, practice and training across the social care workforce. As the first ever Regulatory Body for Social Care workers the Care Council's work is part of a wider agenda to improve the quality of social care services and protect people who need to use those services in Wales.

Our Annual Report for 2002-03 sets out our achievements during the Care Council's first full year of business. We met all our targets and established a sound foundation for our future work.

Some examples of the key successes were:

- Codes of Practice for Social Care Workers and their Employers which are now widely available
- Regulatory Framework to begin the process of registration of qualified social workers
- User involvement has been vital in our standards setting work. Our user consultation model involves service users directly in consulting on defining the standards in the Codes and in our National Occupational Standards.
- The Induction Framework and the updated Qualifications Framework

were produced with employers in response to their request for guidance and common benchmarks for their workforce.

Working with the Minister's Task and Finish Group on Workforce Issues we:

- Produced, publicised and disseminated the Faces of Care recruitment resource pack

- Developed a workforce data set template to improve workforce planning across all employers
- Established cross sector partnerships at regional and national level

Finally as a new Assembly Sponsored Body we put in time to create ourselves as a competent business organisation with strong governance arrangements. This involved working closely with our sponsors SSIW, and also compliance division in the Assembly and our lawyers. We appointed internal auditors early on and valued the constructive working relationship with them as well as with the National Audit Office, our external auditors. We were pleased to have received positive reports from both.

Our style has been one of working in partnership with the sector including service users and carers, with the Assembly and other key organisations. Council itself has developed into a strong partnership of people bringing the perspectives of service users, carers, general public, trade unions and professional associations, employers, education and training providers.

1. Progress in 2003-04

The focus this year has been on consolidating the development work, breaking new ground in regulation and we are continuing to build a safe business organisation, which is required to deliver our work.

1.1 Regulation

Registration of qualified social workers began on target in April. There are nearly 500 qualified social workers now registered. There continues to be a steady response to the invitation to register.

The All Wales Seminar for Employers was very successful and we are now developing protocols with them on information sharing and dealing with allegations of serious misconduct. We are also developing protocols on information sharing with the Police Authorities and CSIW.

The Care Council acknowledges that the schedule for introducing registration to other groups of social care workers announced by the Minister this month is demanding. However we accept the sense of urgency about improving public protection through an inclusive register.

One of the challenges in registering social care workers will be to make sure the criteria for registration, (the training requirements in particular), make it clear that there are standards (or thresholds) that have to be met but for those standards not to be a barrier to achieving registration and improved public protection. We are therefore looking at whether the Induction Framework could be a threshold initially for some groups.

Regulation of Training – The new degree for social work will start later this year and we are already working with programmes that want to offer the degree.

The Council's development agenda focuses on the three big challenges facing the sector – reliable workforce information, improved recruitment and retention and a better qualifications attainment.

The Council's Sector Skills Plan sets out some key messages for the first time about the size and the trends in the social care workforce.

This is important information in the context of the Wanless Review.

We continue to work with the regional partnerships on initiatives to tackle recruitment and retention, and are looking to complement Faces of Care with a career resource pack aimed at the 14-19 year old group.

In terms of qualifications attainment there are two main areas of progress to report.

We have made significant progress with ELWa this year culminating in the announcement that the Social Care Sector will be one of the priority sectors to be included in its sectoral reviews to commence in 2004/05. There will also be a review of work-based learning which will also be important to the sector. We look forward to working with them on these reviews.

We are concluding our review of the Health and Social Care Awards. The outcome of the review we believe will be a much more flexible approach to National Vocational Qualifications with a more user-friendly pathway leading to more people qualifying.

2. Conclusion

As a new organisation with a unique and exciting role within the Assembly's overall strategic agenda the Care Council for Wales has worked hard to establish itself as a competent, well governed and confident organisation, which has credibility with all our partners. We know that our work can make a real difference to both staff and service users. Our first annual report has set down our achievements and success and enabled us to properly understand some of the challenges that will face us in future years. We look forward to tackling those challenges and continuing to implement both the regulatory and developmental framework that we believe is so critical to social care in Wales in coming years.