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By email



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Dear colleagues.

### **SCQF Level 9 qualification for the residential child care sector in Scotland**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> February, my colleague Angela Constance, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, made a statement to parliament on the introduction of a new programme of work to support improvements in child protection. In support of this, she was able to announce dates for the roll out of the level 9 qualification to residential child care workers. We have arrived at a timetable which provides time for employers and workers to plan their training needs, whilst maintaining service delivery. The dates are:

Part of the register	New requirements phased in from	Time allowed to gain award
Managers of a residential child care setting and all new starts	1 October 2017 or re registration date following that. Immediate for new starts.	5 years
Supervisors of a residential child care setting	1 October 2017 or re registration date following that.	5 years
Residential child care workers	1 October 2019 or reregistration date following that.	5 years

In setting these dates we have maintained the same principles adopted for registration of other groups. Introduction of the new qualification requirement has been staged to bring in managers, supervisors and new starts first, followed by workers. This will enable managers and supervisors to support their staff using their prior experience as they go through the process. Of course, in reality workers and supervisors could enrol on the course as soon as they became available. Many people employed in this sector will already have qualifications, one of the key principles in helping to support attainment of the qualification is to recognise and take into account an individual's prior learning. It is important to note that this qualification is based on the principles of Work Based Learning which means that staff will not be absent from frontline duties for lengthy periods.

## **Background**

A well-educated and confident workforce is particularly important in contributing to the improved outcomes of our looked after children. We are making progress; the outcomes for our looked after children and young people across many indicators have been improving in recent years, but the gap with other children is still too wide. Introduction of registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has required the residential child care workforce to meet minimum qualifications, we now need to take the next step to complete the journey.

In 2008, the National Residential Child Care Initiative (NRCCI) was set up and commissioned by the Scottish Government (SG) and COSLA to carry out a review on the context of residential child care services and to make recommendations for change. The NRCCI reported in 2009, Higher Aspirations Brighter Futures, with 15 recommendations.

Of particular relevance to this piece of work was recommendation 4 which required that: "The Scottish Government should discuss with the SSSC (who will consult with employers) the settling of new registration requirements so that from 2014 all new residential child care workers would be required to hold or be working towards a relevant care qualification at SCQF Level 9."

The results from the strategic review indicated an important relationship between the quality of a service and both the qualifications and the education levels of staff. Residential child care staff reported that they are much more equipped to undertake their task and feel much more confident and competent after training and gaining relevant qualifications.

At the 2014 Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC) conference, the theme was improving the educational outcomes for looked after children in Scotland where I announced the new standards for residential child care workers. Since then the Scottish Government, SSSC, CELCIS and sector stakeholders have been working together to advance this piece of work which will underpin the new qualification.

## Next Steps

Last summer a series of information events took place which gave the sector space to meet together and discuss the timetable and way forward, it also gave a platform to develop partnership working. I hope you and your colleagues were able to take part in one of these.

During these events we found that the principle and aspiration behind this qualification was strongly supported by many in the sector, however the practicalities of implementation still required further exploration. Therefore, I am convening a short life working group (SLWG) to take place after the Scottish parliamentary elections which will involve representatives from across the sector. The aim of this SLWG will be to consider and agree actions to progress all aspects of implementation. A letter inviting representatives from the sector to take part in the SLWG will be issued in late March.

We want this workforce to have the best skills and knowledge available to understand the increasingly complex issues around child care. By introducing the qualification, we will create a workforce that is confident in their position and who create positive role models for our children.

*best wishes*

*Aileen*

**AILEEN CAMPBELL**