



CASE STUDY

CYNGOR GWYNEDD COUNCIL

NOS underpinning training and professional development in the Social Work sector

Gwynedd Council Adult, Care and Welfare Department uses National Occupational Standards (NOS).

Background

Gwynedd Council serves a large geographical area in North West Wales which includes the old counties of Caernarfon and Meirionnydd. The current organisation was established following the re-organisation of local government in Wales in 1996 which recommended that Anglesey should remain as a separate entity. This proved to be a very unpopular decision and one of the first activities of the new local government organisation was to re-name itself Cyngor Gwynedd Council.

The Council has been governed by Plaid Cymru since 2011. Elections are held every four years. Gwynedd Council is the only local authority in Wales that conducts its internal business through the medium of Welsh. Of course, it provides services in the two languages, Welsh and English according to demand.

Gwynedd Council as an employer

The Gwynedd Council is by far the largest employer in North West Wales. It has about 3500 employees in key areas such as Education, Highways, Economic Development, Social Services and Welfare, and Planning. The Council acknowledges the importance of investing in its most important asset, its staff. Every employee can expect:

- Formal assistance to settle into a new job and yearly appraisal of performance
- A range of opportunities for training and personal development
- Contribution towards membership of relevant professional bodies

Through its training programme the Council works towards ensuring that employees have the knowledge and skills they require to carry out their jobs in the various sectors, so that the best possible services can be delivered within the resources available in a period of austerity and cuts.

The Care and Welfare Department

The Care and Welfare Department is a leader in the field of training and workforce development. It has close working relationships with Bangor University and the MA in Social Work programme. The main aim of the course is to provide a programme which meets the requirements of Framework for the Social Work degree in Wales – Care Council for Wales (2012).

The programme comprises core modules and a requirement of 200 days placement over 2 years. The modules and learning opportunities through practice are designed so as to equip graduates with the skills, knowledge and values needed to enable them to begin practising as qualified social workers. The modules are based on Social Work Benchmarks of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the NOS for Social Work (2012). The programme offers Welsh-medium as well as English routes and students may complete their studies through the medium of Welsh or English.

Work Practice placements are provided for MA students, supervised by the Council's staff development officer. Throughout the placement the students will use the NOS; they will need to prove that they have met the standard throughout the course. They provide evidence by means of their portfolio which is developed during the placement period which counts for 50% of the course requirements. NOS are also used by social workers who complete pieces of work for post-qualifying qualifications.

Student views

"The Standards provide a framework and clear guidance on expectations."

"It was difficult to use them at first when we were trying to provide evidence which met the standard for the portfolio, but as the course developed they have made more sense."

"They provide the foundation that we need to help us in preparing to become practising professional workers."

Benefits

It is agreed that there are benefits to be had from using NOS in the workplace and elsewhere. In Social Work they

- professionalise the sector and raise care standards
- provide guidance for students that sets the foundations for their career
- provide guidance for the workforce regarding the standards they need to work to
- correspond with the Code of Practice for Social Workers

It is fair to say that NOS can make an important contribution to improving the service to clients residing in Gwynedd.

Date: December 2014