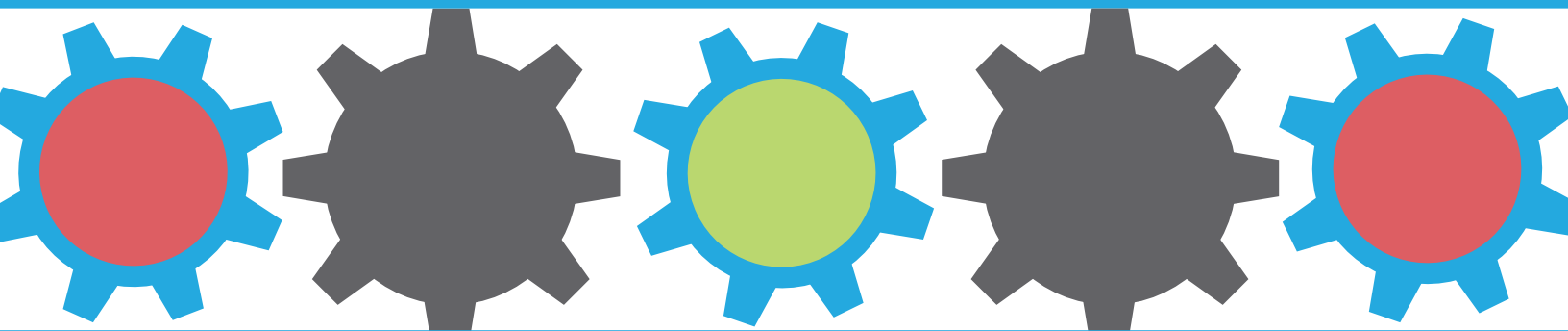

**A report on the response
to the consultation on
how Estyn inspects
education and training in
Wales**

February 2016



A report on the response to the consultation on how Estyn inspects education and training in Wales

1 Introduction

During autumn 2015, Estyn conducted a nationwide, public consultation on the future inspection arrangements of education and training providers in Wales. This consultation took three forms: an online survey, meetings with key stakeholders and a research project with hard to reach groups. The results will be used to help inform proposals for future inspection arrangements, which will commence in September 2017. Further information regarding Estyn's current inspection processes can be found in [The Annual Report of her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2014-2015](#).

2 Methodology

Estyn launched the consultation on 30 September 2015. Respondents were able to answer either the main version of the survey (referred to as the main consultation survey) or a youth friendly version. Both versions could be completed either online or via a PDF document. The consultation closed on 11 November 2015.

During the autumn term 2015, Estyn also met key stakeholders to discuss the consultation questions and gather views in a focus group format.

In November 2015, Estyn commissioned Arad research to conduct the survey with hard to reach (HTR) groups. They asked organisations to complete the youth friendly version of the questionnaire and circulate it to their service users and communities. They also completed face-to-face discussions with a group of hearing impaired people and individuals with mental health problems.

3 Profile of consultation respondents

Estyn received 1,998 submissions to the consultation survey; 1,900 of these were to the main consultation survey and 98 to the youth friendly version. However, 30 of these responses were blank, which meant that a total of 1,968 responses were analysed. Seventy-two per cent of responses were from education professionals, 12% from parent/carers, 8% from learners, 2% from members of the public and 6% from 'other' groups. The majority of responses in the 'other' category were from governors, but also included organisations such as unions, work-based learning providers, nursery managers and retired education professionals. Thirteen per cent of responses were submitted through the medium of Welsh.

Estyn facilitated a series of meetings with stakeholders, including primary and secondary school headteachers, the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW), as well as headteachers and challenge advisers from the regional consortia.

There were 88 responses to the HTR survey. These included immigrants, people with physical disabilities, people with sight or hearing impairments, people with learning difficulties, people with mental health problems, the gypsy and traveller community and people from very rural or isolated communities.

4 Consultation data

This section presents the findings from all three parts of the consultation. A comparison of the results from the main consultation survey, the youth friendly survey and the HTR survey showed very few differences in response trends, so the responses have been merged together, where appropriate, to form overall views for each question. Any key differences are highlighted in the accompanying text. The main messages from the stakeholder forum meetings are represented alongside comments from both the online surveys and discussions with HTR groups.

4.1 Planning initial inspections

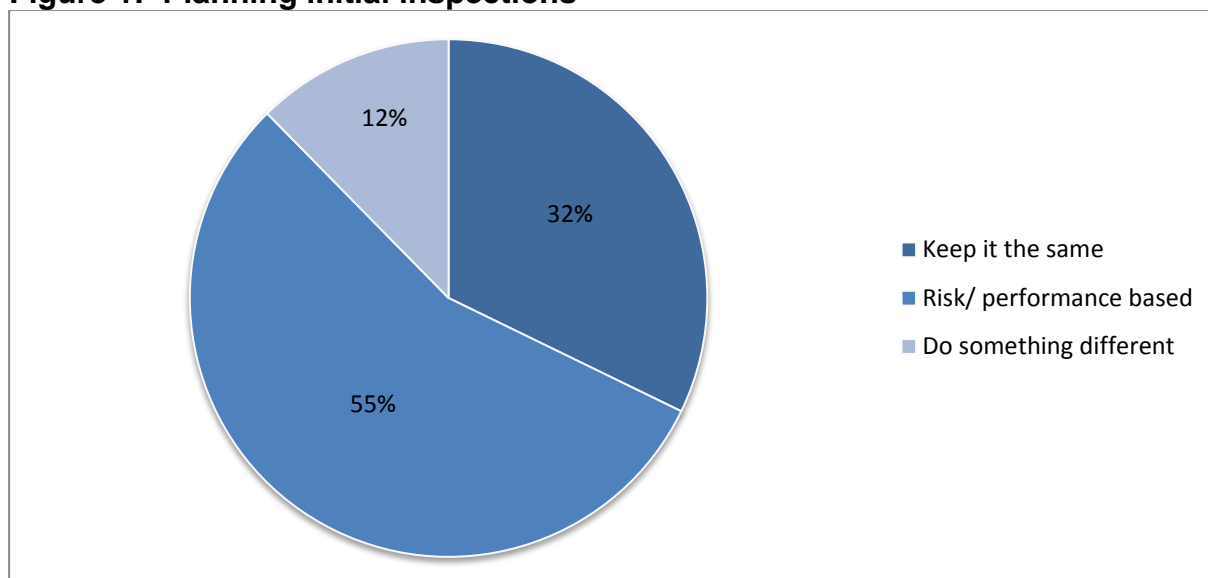
What did we ask?

Currently, all education and training providers are subject to the same inspection cycles, and are inspected in the same way. Survey respondents were asked if future inspections should continue to be planned in this way, if they should be scheduled according to how providers did in their last inspection, or if Estyn should consider an alternative method for planning inspections.

What did the respondents say?

Respondents indicated a preference towards Estyn considering previous inspection results and other information before deciding how to inspect a provider (55%). A third of respondents indicated a preference for keeping it the same and 12% felt that Estyn should plan inspections in a different way. Learners were more likely than other groups to indicate a preference for the process to remain the same. It is however important to be cautious when drawing conclusions from these responses as there is a sense of misinterpretation surrounding this question. A number of respondents referred to the inspection process in their answers, rather than the planning of inspections.

Figure 1: Planning initial inspections



Sources: Estyn consultation & Arad consultation with hard to reach groups, N=2,046

Discussions regarding the possibility of planning initial inspections based on risk were generally positive in the stakeholder forum meetings, with attendees feeling that this approach would help schools move away from the culture of focusing more on performance when an inspection is approaching.

4.2.1 Follow-up activity in schools

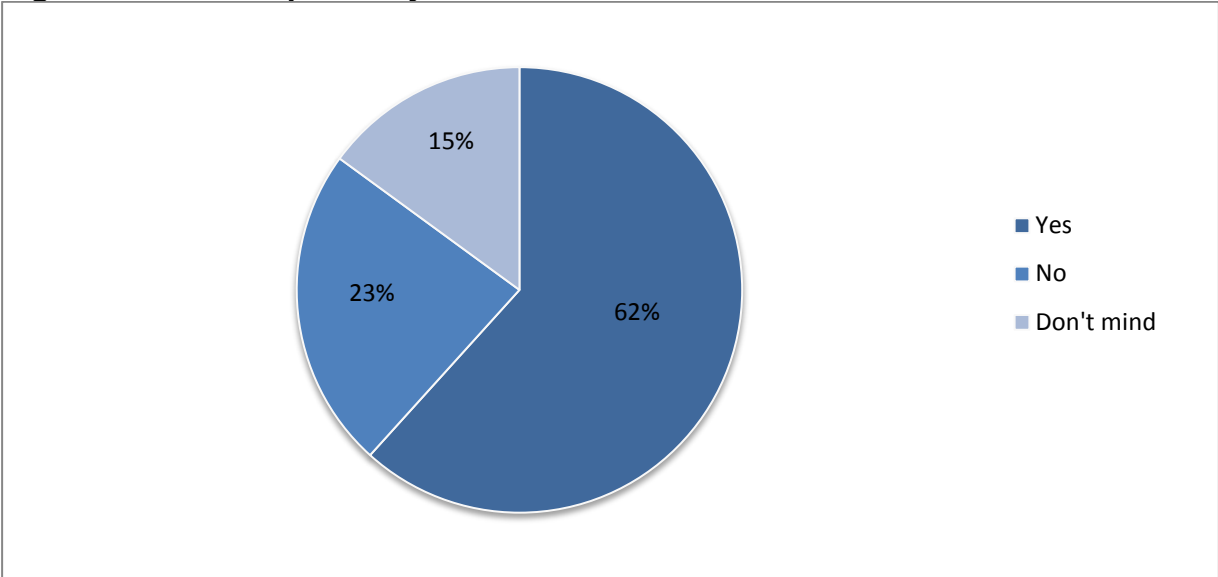
What did we ask?

Currently, if inspectors judge that a school requires further support, they can place the school into one of four follow-up categories: local authority monitoring or Estyn monitoring, and the statutory categories of significant improvement and special measures. Survey respondents were asked whether this approach was the best way of helping schools to improve.

What did the respondents say?

Two thousand and twenty-five people responded to this question, with a majority feeling that the current arrangements are effective. Learners and respondents from hard to reach groups were more likely to indicate that the arrangements are effective, whereas parents were more likely to indicate that they are not effective.

Figure 2: Follow-up activity in schools

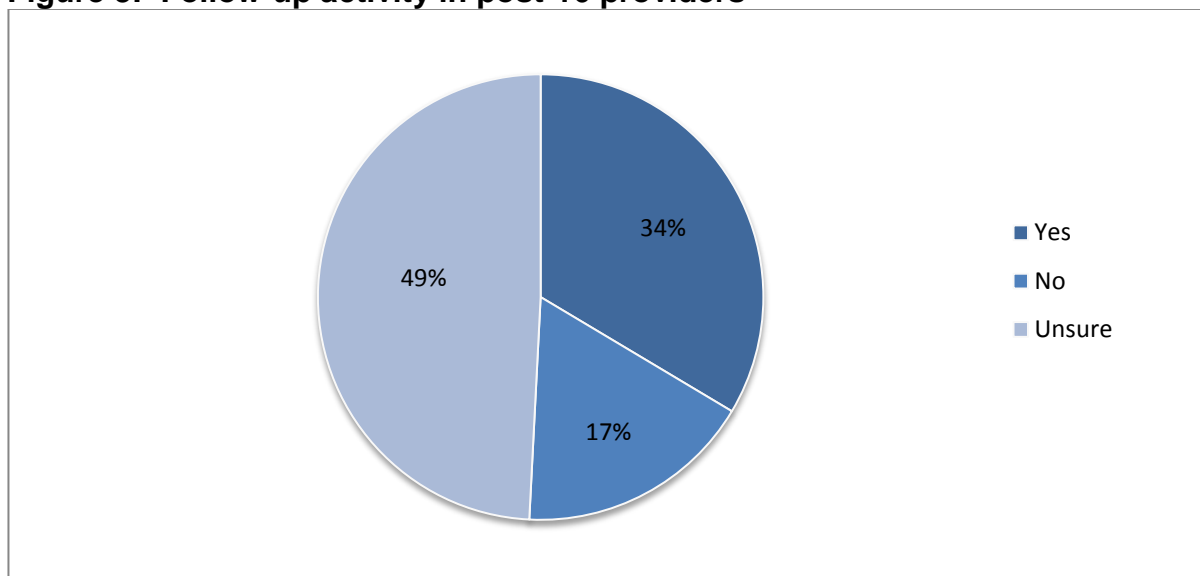


Sources: Estyn consultation & Arad consultation with hard to reach groups, N=2,025

4.2.2 Follow-up activity in post-16 providers

Currently, post-16 providers could be placed in one of two categories, Estyn monitoring and re-inspection. Respondents to the main consultation survey were also asked if current follow-up activity in post-16 providers is effective, with only a third of the 1,722 respondents agreeing. Half of respondents were unsure of their views about follow-up at post-16, which reflects the larger proportion of respondents who were more interested in the school sectors and may have been less familiar with post-16 sectors.

Figure 3: Follow-up activity in post-16 providers



Sources: Estyn consultation & Arad consultation with hard to reach groups, N=1,722

4.2.3 Follow-up activity comments

The flexibility and nature of follow-up support constituted a key theme running throughout comments in relation to this question. Many of these respondents felt that follow-up visits should be more supportive, with Estyn helping to guide the provider on their improvement journey. A very few stated that this could be achieved through having the same lead inspector from the core inspection visit the school for follow-up visits. A very few others felt that follow-up arrangements should be more flexible, with the number of visits, type of support and timescales between visits being unique to each provider to meet their needs.

Areas of concern raised by respondents about the current follow-up arrangements included reviewing the effectiveness of local authority monitoring, and having a greater consistency in approach between schools and post-16 sectors.

Attendees at the stakeholder forum meetings also welcomed a more flexible approach to monitoring visits, with some consideration about desk-based monitoring and flexible timescales being preferred.

4.3 Estyn's common inspection framework

What did we ask?

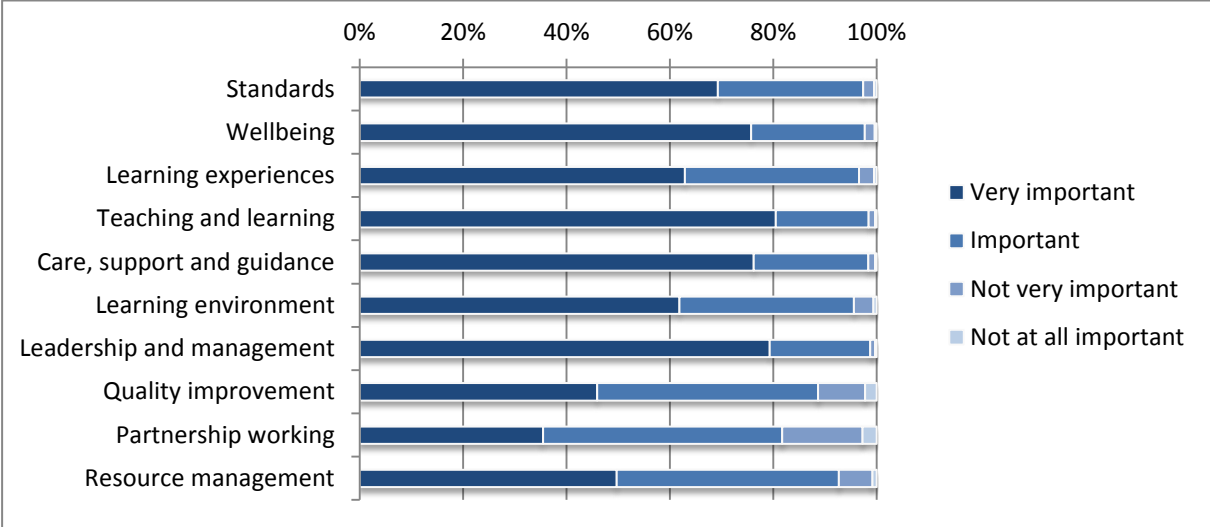
Estyn currently uses a common inspection framework (CIF) consisting of 10 areas, which are inspected in all providers. Consultees were asked how important they thought each of the areas were by rating them on a four point scale, from very important to not at all important.

What did the respondents say?

Overall, teaching and learning, leadership and management, care, support and guidance and wellbeing were considered to be the most important aspects of the

CIF, and partnership working, quality improvement and resource management were considered less important.

Figure 4: Common inspection framework



Sources: Estyn consultation & Arad consultation with hard to reach groups, N=1,978-2,015

However, there were some notable group differences. The HTR groups considered care, support and guidance, wellbeing and the learning environment as the most important areas, and placed less importance on teaching and learning, leadership and management and standards. In addition, learners placed more value on standards and less value on leadership and management when compared to other groups.

The survey and the stakeholder forum meetings both elicited similar responses in relation to various aspects of the CIF. There was a strong feeling that standards should focus more on the progress that learners make over time. There was also a strong feeling that judgements for wellbeing should not be driven by attendance data. Other respondents felt that the inspection framework should include the inspection of the areas of learning and experience (from the *Successful Futures* curriculum review, Donaldson, 2015), as well as considering staff wellbeing and workload.

Respondents also felt that the focus for ‘improving quality’ for excellent providers should be on expectations to maintain their high performance, rather than simply improving further.

4.4 Estyn’s judgement words

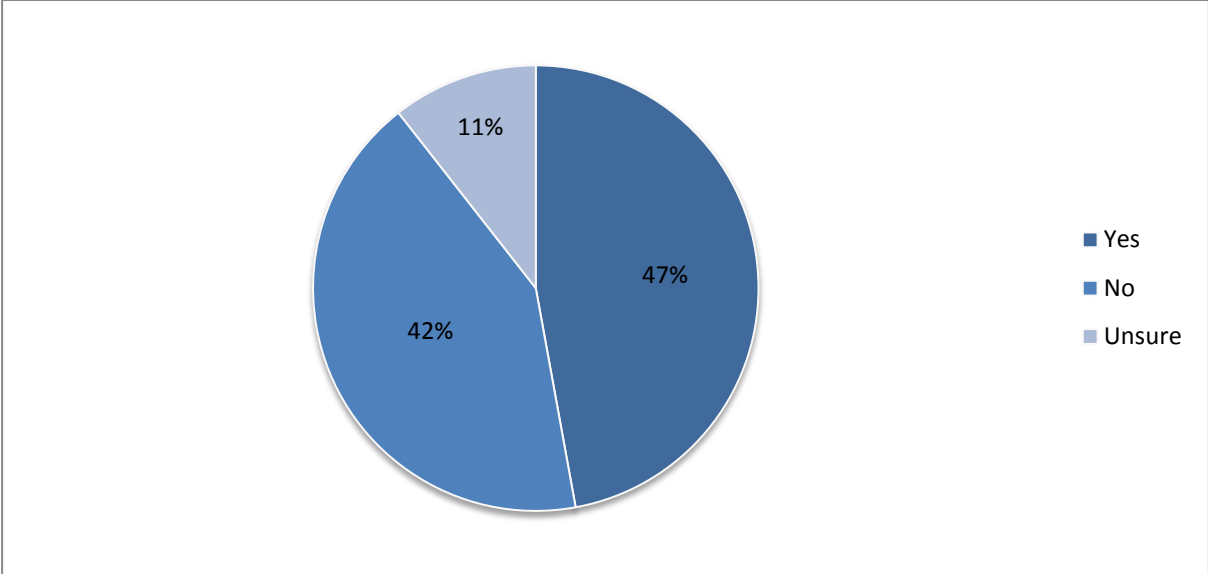
What did we ask?

Estyn currently uses four judgement words to judge the quality and effectiveness of education and training providers in Wales. These are Excellent, Good, Adequate and Unsatisfactory. Survey respondents were asked whether they thought Estyn should keep these four words.

What did the respondents say?

The question generated a mixed response with just under half of respondents indicating that the current judgement words should be kept.

Figure 5: Estyn’s judgement words



Sources: Estyn consultation & Arad consultation with hard to reach groups, N=2,024

However, there were some notable group differences with two thirds of the hard to reach group respondents indicating that the judgement words should be kept, compared to just two fifths of education professionals.

Survey respondents who indicated that the current judgement words should be revised were asked to provide suggestions for amended judgment words or scales. Just over half of the respondents who provided comments to the survey felt that the word 'Adequate' needed to be changed. Many of these respondents felt that the current definition does not reflect the word well enough. A number of respondents also expressed a preference for increasing the scale to five words to enable the 'Good' category to be refined to include 'Very Good'. The most common suggestion for a five-point scale was Excellent, Very Good, Good, Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory. There was also some uncertainty from respondents about the definition of what 'sector-leading practice' is within the Excellent judgement descriptor. These themes were also raised and discussed by attendees at the stakeholder forum meetings.

4.5 Number of judgements

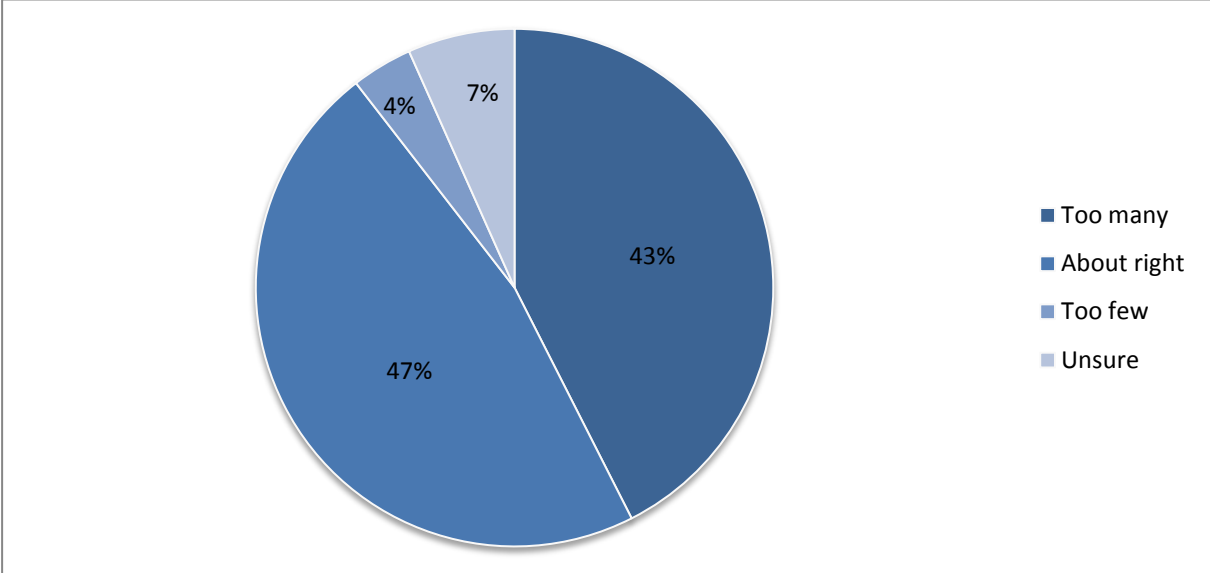
What did we ask?

Estyn currently makes 15 judgements. One on each of the 10 quality indicators outlined in the CIF above, one on each of three key questions (How good are outcomes? How good is provision? and How good are leadership and management?) and two overall judgements about current performance and prospects for improvement. Survey respondents were asked what they thought about this number of judgements.

What did the respondents say?

Just less than half felt that the number of judgements that Estyn make is about right, and 43% felt that there are too many judgements. This pattern was broadly reflected by all groups of respondents.

Figure 6: Number of judgements



Sources: Estyn consultation & Arad consultation with hard to reach groups, N=2,020

Respondents who felt that there should be fewer judgements commented that the current number of judgements was confusing for parents and needed to be simplified. Some felt that this would also make the reports more accessible and emphasise the priority areas. Those who felt that the number of judgements was about right commented on the breadth of activities that are covered and were concerned that removing some aspects could lead to these areas being overlooked by providers.

4.6 Notice period

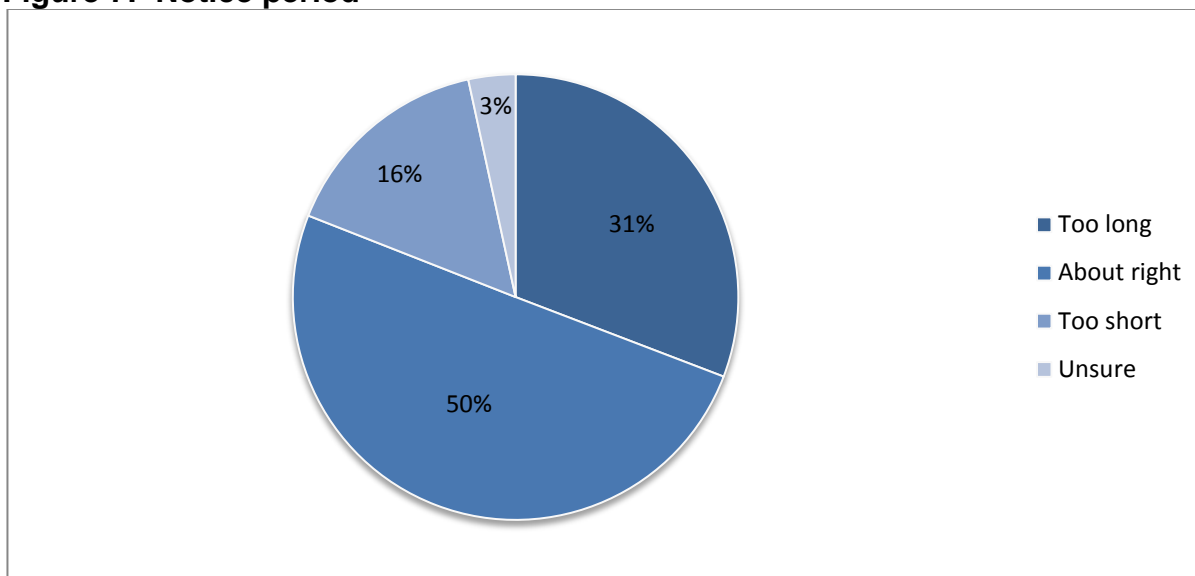
What did we ask?

Estyn currently operates a 20 working day notice period. Survey respondents were asked what they thought about the length of this notification period, and what their preferred notification period is.

What did the respondents say?

Half of respondents felt that the current notice period is about right, and 31% felt that it was too long. However, it is important to consider the differences between respondent groups: parents, members of the public and HTR groups were more likely to indicate that the current notice period is too long, whereas education professionals were more likely to indicate that the current notice period is about right.

Figure 7: Notice period



Sources: Estyn consultation & Arad consultation with hard to reach groups, N=2,022

Of the 934 respondents who stated a preferred notice period, 20% felt that there should be no notice period, 16% felt that the notice period should be less than a week and a further 7% stated it should be between one and two weeks. An additional 106 respondents stated that it should be less than 20 working days but did not specify a length.

Reasons given for reducing the notice period included seeing the provider as they are every day or reducing long-term stress and pressure on staff. Respondents who felt that the notice period should be increased felt that the current 20 days was not enough time to prepare for the inspection around existing commitments.

As well as discussions about many of the above factors, attendees at the stakeholder forum meetings were concerned that, under the new inspection arrangements, providers should not be notified before the summer holidays. They also felt that consideration should be given to schools being able to upload their self-evaluation reports more readily to facilitate any reduction in notice period.

4.7 Involving parents/carers, learners, staff and governors

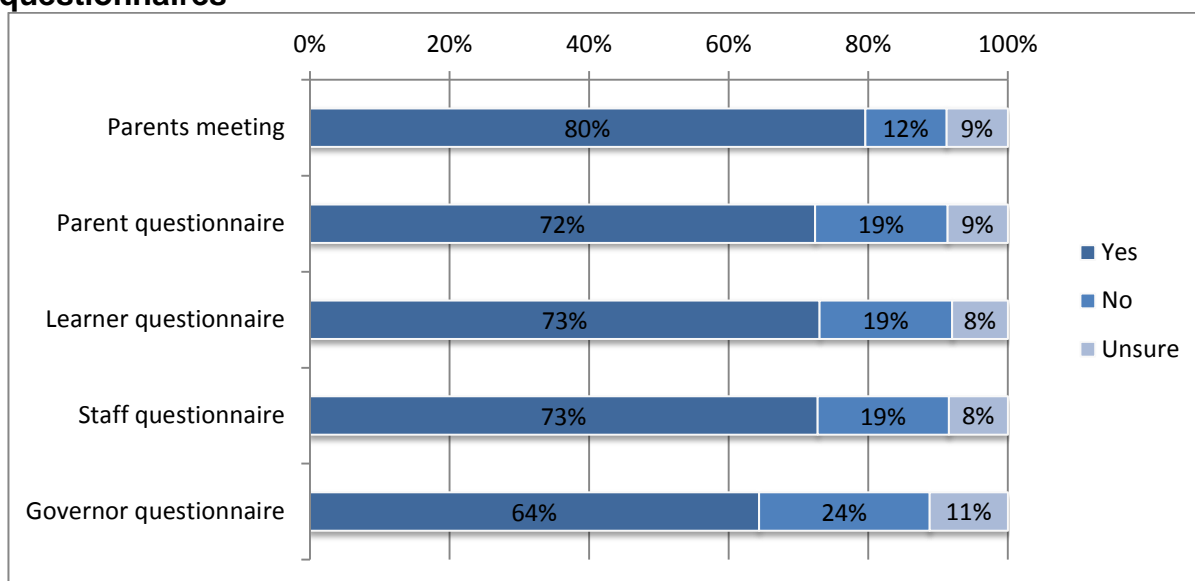
What did we ask?

Estyn currently uses online questionnaires to obtain the views of parents/carers and learners. Survey respondents were asked whether implementing similar online questionnaires for staff and governors, to ensure that they also have the opportunity to provide their views, would be useful.

What did the respondents say?

There was reasonably strong support for continuing with both the parent/carer and learner questionnaires, and implementing questionnaires for staff. There was also support for implementing governors' questionnaires, but to a lesser extent. In addition, 80% of respondents indicated that the parents' meeting should continue as part of an inspection.

Figure 8: Parents’ meeting and parent/carers, learner, staff and governor questionnaires



Sources: Estyn consultation & Arad consultation with hard to reach groups, N=2,012 – 2,030

The survey, HTR project and the meetings with stakeholders all garnered strong support for all staff and the whole governing body to be included, either through a questionnaire or through meetings. A few respondents stated that these parties currently feel undervalued as their opinions are not gathered in the same way as those of learners and parents.

The main challenges to the questionnaires regarded anonymity and the security of the current system. A few others raised general concerns about using questionnaires including misinterpretation of questions, characteristics of typical respondents (respondents to questionnaires are more likely to be very engaged in their child’s education or wish to highlight particular concerns), the impact of individual comments if the response rate is low, and the way in which they are analysed and reported on.

Attendees at the stakeholder forum meetings suggested that governors and staff could be included more through attendance at meetings that are linked to their areas of responsibility.

4.8 Inspection reports

Estyn strives to ensure that its inspection reports are timely, clear and easy to understand. They should also give the reader a clear indication of the provider’s strengths and weaknesses, and help providers to improve. Respondents to the main consultation survey were asked how far they agree that Estyn reports achieve this. The majority of respondents (60%) agreed that inspection reports achieve this to some extent, 19% disagreed and only 2% were unsure.

The wording of the question on the youth friendly and HTR surveys differed slightly to that in the main consultation survey to ensure ease of understanding, so responses cannot be directly compared. However, there is more uncertainty or ambivalence amongst these respondents, with 44% indicating that they either did not know or did not mind.

Respondents to both forms of the survey were then asked for suggestions as to how the reports could be improved. Suggestions included making reports less generic and more personal to each provider by:

- considering the context of the school and detailing areas of good practice
- providing clearer guidance on how providers can improve
- using less jargon
- reducing the length of time between inspection and publication.

Survey respondents, HTR groups and stakeholder meeting attendees acknowledged that current reports are not accessible to everyone. A common suggestion to overcome this was to provide a one page summary report, specifically aimed at parents and learners.

4.9 Lay inspectors

Estyn employs lay inspectors to provide a non-educational perspective on school inspections. Respondents to the main consultation survey were asked the extent to which they agreed that Estyn should include a lay inspector on school inspection teams. Of the 1,852 responses, 42% agreed and 33% disagreed.

Respondents to the youth friendly and hard to reach surveys were asked if they think that lay inspectors are a good idea. Responses from these groups indicated more support for lay inspectors with 75% indicating that they are a good idea.

Respondents to the main consultation survey were then given the opportunity to comment on the use of lay inspectors. Those who expressed concerns about the inclusion of lay inspectors on inspection teams stated that a lack of educational knowledge renders them unable to make informed judgements about the school's performance. Those in support of lay inspectors felt that it was important for someone to give an external viewpoint to the inspection.

4.10 General comments

There was support for retaining the role of peer inspectors and the nominee on inspections. There was also support for inspections to continue to build on the providers' own self-evaluation. A few respondents felt that, as well as making judgements and challenging practice, Estyn should have a more supportive role and offer guidance and best practice advice to providers. Attendees at the stakeholder meetings felt that removing the pre-inspection commentary sent before the inspection would reduce the pressure on providers over the weekend prior to inspection.

5 Conclusion

The consultation has shown that there is an appetite for some changes to the inspection process, such as revising the judgement scale and words, implementing staff and governor questionnaires, making follow-up activity more supportive and introducing a summary sheet of the report. However it appears that, overall, the majority of respondents are generally content with the current inspection arrangements and processes.

6 Next steps

The findings of the consultation will help to inform Estyn's initial thinking regarding the future inspection arrangements of education and training providers in Wales.

Estyn plans to discuss initial thinking regarding changes to future inspection arrangements with key stakeholders during the spring and summer term in 2016, and begin to pilot them in the autumn term 2016. In addition, Estyn may 'try out' some changes in the summer term 2016, for example by introducing staff and governor questionnaires in a few inspections.

Estyn will also conduct a second nationwide, public online consultation about proposals for changes to the inspection arrangements in the autumn term 2016.

Reference list

Donaldson, G. (2015) *Successful Futures: Independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. [Online]. Available from: <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150225-successful-futures-en.pdf> [Accessed 10 February 2016].

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