Routes for Learning: Summary of feedback received during spring 2020

Context

Routes for Learning materials support practitioners in assessing learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). They were originally published in 2006 and are well-regarded across Wales, the UK and internationally. As part of wider curriculum and assessment reform, we have updated the Routes for Learning materials, which include:

- a **Routemap**, which provides an overview of the early cognitive development of these learners, their communication and social interaction, and their interaction with the environment, showing the most important milestones as orange boxes
- an **assessment booklet** which provides support on how to use the Routemap through examples of assessment activities, teaching strategies and an indication of what to look for when assessing
- **video clips** showing learners with PMLD whose responses exemplify Routemap boxes and milestones
- **guidance** which enables practitioners to identify how best to support learners with PMLD in their learning.

In April 2019 we published an amended version of the Routemap and ten videos that exemplified some of the boxes and milestones included on it. Following consideration of the comments received during an engagement event held in July 2019 and via an online form, we published further proposals to update the language used on the Routemap along with an additional ten videos and a draft version of the guidance to seek further feedback in January 2020.

Co-construction is at the heart of curriculum and assessment reform in Wales and we have continued with this approach during spring and summer 2020. As well as gathering views on the draft materials via an online form, we held practitioner engagement events in north and south Wales in February 2020. We also met with health professionals to gather their feedback. Working with members of the Routes for Learning Advisory Group[1], we have considered the comments received. A small group of researchers, practitioners and terminologists have also considered the feedback received in response to the recommended changes to the Routemap in both English and Welsh.

Taking on board the feedback received, we have now finalised the majority of the Routes for Learning materials[2].

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[1] The membership of the Advisory Group includes English-medium and Welsh-medium practitioners from special schools, as well as academics working in the field of PMLD.

[2] Please be aware that exemplification videos for all Routemap descriptors will not be available in July 2020. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, we have been unable to gather further videos to complete the suite. The full suite of videos will therefore be published as soon as possible during the 2020/21 academic year.

Key themes from the feedback received

Below is an overview of some of the key themes received as feedback in response to the January 2020 draft materials.

Routes for Learning Routemap

- There was agreement that further updates to the language and terminology used were needed to ensure clarity and accessibility. This feedback has been reflected in the updated Routemap.
- Additional clarification on the arrows which appear on the Routemap was requested. This clarification along with further information on the changes made to the Routemap can be found in the explanatory note online at hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/routes-for-learning.
- Many respondents felt that a glossary was needed to support practitioners in using the Routemap and wider Routes for Learning materials. An initial draft glossary can be found online at hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/routes-for-learning. The final version will be published during the 2020/21 academic year.

Routes for Learning exemplification videos

- Respondents welcomed the opportunity to view the videos and gave positive feedback, noting that they were a useful resource for practitioners and for supporting new members of staff. The information embedded in the videos clearly shows what is being assessed while acknowledging the very different needs and responses of individual learners.
- Feedback included a recommendation for more examples of learners to exemplify each box and milestone on the Routemap. We continue to seek additional videos to exemplify the Routemap descriptors, however, due to the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak, we have had to extend timelines to upload new videos. A full suite will be available during the 2020/21 academic year. However, we are also mindful that to ensure we have a breadth of clips to exemplify each of the 42 Routemap descriptors, this may evolve into an ongoing process with additional videos sought again at a later date.
- Respondents requested that we include additional information in the videos, explaining the learning difficulties of the individual learners shown in more detail and we have revised the texts of the videos in light of this. These videos should also be viewed alongside the assessment booklet and the guidance which will give further depth to the information provided.
- Some respondents also requested that further information about how learners should be positioned be included in the videos. This will be reflected where appropriate in the updated videos published in summer 2020 and the full suite published during the 2020/21 academic year.

Routes for Learning: Guidance

- Respondents welcomed the opportunity to view the draft guidance and gave positive feedback, noting that it was a very comprehensive, clear guide based on extensive research. It was felt that it will be a helpful resource for practitioners.
- Respondents were in agreement that case studies are helpful to illustrate the content of the guidance by providing practical examples for those working with learners with PMLD.
- Some respondents requested further information on the relationship between this guidance and the wider Curriculum for Wales guidance. This has been reflected in the final version of the Routes for Learning guidance.
- Some respondents felt that learning through play and leisure should be reflected more in the guidance. We have updated the guidance in light of this feedback with references made where appropriate.

Professional learning

- Respondents identified a clear need for professional learning opportunities for practitioners to develop their understanding of using the Routes for Learning materials to assess learners with PMLD. Work on developing professional learning materials to support Routes for Learning is underway and they will be made available along with the full suite of videos published during the 2020/21 academic year.

Further work completed since January 2020

In addition to finalising the Routemap, the guidance and many of the exemplification videos, the assessment booklet has now also been updated. It can be found online at hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/routes-for-learning.

Ongoing work and next steps

- We are developing a glossary of terms to support practitioners to use the Routemap and the wider Routes for Learning materials.
- The suite of exemplification videos will be completed during the next academic year.
- An interactive Routemap will be made available bringing the Routemap itself, the content of the assessment booklet and the exemplification videos together at the click of a button.
- Flexible professional learning materials are being developed to support the professional learning of individual or groups of practitioners, as well as professional dialogue within and between schools.
- We are aiming for the materials above to be published as soon as possible during the 2020/21 academic year.