

# Review of the National Occupational Standards for Playwork 2024/25

## Information sheet #1

As Chair of the UK Playwork National Occupational Standards Consortium, I am delighted and proud to announce that the consortium has been approved to take forward a much-needed review of the Playwork National Occupational Standards (NOS).

The national organisations have been meeting for some time and are combining their resources to make sure that this review is possible, on behalf of the sector, to ensure fit for purpose standards reflecting the valuable work of the sector.

This information sheet is the first in a series of updates from the consortium to ensure the playwork sector is kept well informed, consulted, and engaged throughout the process.

Jane Hawkshaw

### What is happening?

The UK Playwork NOS Consortium has been approved to take forward a review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for playwork during 2024 and 2025.

### What are NOS?

National Occupational Standards (NOS) are statements of the standards of performance for a given sector. For playwork, they include the knowledge, understanding and skills required to be a playworker, playworker in charge or playwork manager. NOS are agreed by the sector and are used as the basis for the development of qualifications. They can also be used to support the development of job descriptions and staff appraisals.

Find out more about NOS at:

[www.ukstandards.org.uk/en/about-nos](http://www.ukstandards.org.uk/en/about-nos)

### What is the UK Playwork NOS Consortium?

The UK Playwork NOS Consortium comprises Play Wales, Play Scotland, PlayBoard Northern Ireland, Play England and the Playwork Foundation. The consortium has been meeting since October 2021 and was established to plan strategically across the four nations for the future of workforce development and sector skills initiatives, including a future review of the NOS.

There are strong links between the UK Playwork NOS Consortium and the four Playwork Education and Training Councils (PETCs) whose role is to discuss issues of strategic importance on all aspects of playwork education, training and qualifications in their respective nation.

### How are NOS used?

In Scotland, one NOS correlates directly to one unit of a Scottish/National Vocational Qualification, and these are used to develop qualifications which in turn can be offered through awarding bodies. The playwork NOS need to meet certain requirements for the resulting qualification to be registerable with the Scottish Social Services Council.

In Wales and Northern Ireland, it is a requirement that playwork qualifications are underpinned by NOS to be regulated and approved for staff working in registered settings.

For Awarding Bodies delivering qualifications across England, Wales and Northern Ireland it is an expectation that playwork qualifications are underpinned by NOS, although this is not technically a requirement in England.

## When were the playwork NOS last updated?

The last review was completed in 2016 and was undertaken by SkillsActive.

## How is the NOS development process approved?

All National Occupational Standards must be developed and approved in accordance with a three-nation quality assurance process to be branded NOS. This is regardless of whether it is publicly funded, via the UK Standards and Frameworks Programme, or self-funded.

The UK Playwork NOS Consortium was approved in April 2024 to undertake the NOS development process for playwork on a self-funded basis.

## How is this review being funded?

The UK Playwork NOS Consortium has agreed to self-fund this NOS review. This means that all members are allocating resources to the review process in terms of staff time and finance. This indicates a commitment from the four nations' play and playwork organisations to ensuring a robust and collegiate approach to the review. It also means we do not have to wait for public funding to be made available to undertake this review.

## What work has already been undertaken?

The consortium has undertaken the following preparatory work towards the NOS review:

- Commissioned a scoping exercise to establish the use of NOS across the UK, particularly in relation to NOS within regulated qualifications and required qualifications to work in regulated playwork settings
- Facilitated an engagement workshop at the National Playwork Conference 2023
- Identified resources to fund the NOS review
- Identified Play Wales as the lead organisation for the review
- Engaged with the four nations Playwork Education and Training Councils (PETCs)
- Submitted a business case for approval to take forward the review to the UK Standards and Framework Panel, which approves all NOS development activity.



## What will happen next?

There is a huge amount of work involved in this review. The UK Standards and Frameworks Panel will monitor us on sector engagement and consultation. The following outline gives an indication of the key tasks and anticipated timeframe.

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| June/July 2024                  | Recruitment of a writing group to undertake the work of reviewing and drafting the new standards. Job descriptions and recruitment processes will be shared on UK Playwork NOS Consortium members' websites.                                                                                                                                     |
| June/July 2024                  | Recruitment of Expert Reference Groups. Expert Reference Groups will include representatives from: open access playwork, out of school childcare, further education, higher education, awarding bodies and allied sectors. These groups will support sector engagement and inform a wider consultation on the draft NOS planned for Summer 2025. |
| July/August 2024                | Development of a 'functional map'. The functional map provides an overview of the planned standards and any changes to the current NOS. This is developed prior to the writing of the individual NOS.                                                                                                                                            |
| August/September 2024           | Consultation on the functional map with Expert Reference Groups.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| September 2024 to February 2025 | Development of the NOS involving regular meetings of the writing group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| February/March 2025             | Engagement with Expert Reference Groups on the draft NOS.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| March 2025                      | National Playwork Conference: engagement and update.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| April to July 2025              | UK wide consultation on the draft NOS.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| July/August 2025                | Final drafting and submission of the NOS for approval to the UK Standards and Framework Panel.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| September/October 2025          | Welsh translation of final agreed NOS. The final NOS will be published on the UK Standards website: <a href="http://www.ukstandards.org.uk/en">www.ukstandards.org.uk/en</a>                                                                                                                                                                     |

