

Report of the survey of Education Welfare Staff on training, progression and qualification.

Background

As part of a CWDC (Occupational Group Funding) project NASWE surveyed Education Welfare staff on training, qualification and progression issues to inform other work undertaken as part of the project by a workforce development consultant to draft a framework for qualification and progression route for the EWS that is consistent with developments across the children's workforce and addresses the common core.

1. The Sample

In total 109 responses, representing 29 local authorities, were received from those working in the Education Welfare Sector. They were asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix 1). There were a range of grades represented, including service managers, managers and those with a supervisory role, and front line staff. NASWE is a UK wide association and the survey went to around 400 members in the four nations. That data has been included but represents a very small part of the sample with just 4 respondents who were not from English local authorities.

Table 1. Breakdown of job roles among EWS respondents

Job Role	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Service Manager	11	9%
Manager/supervisory role	39	36%
Front line practitioner	59	55%

2. Range of qualifications held by respondents

The most commonly held qualification was a recognised social work award. More than a third of respondents were educated at degree or post-graduate level. Qualifications held by respondents were extensive in terms of range and subject although the majority could be regarded as relevant or related to the job role.

Of the 29 respondents holding a social work qualification, 16 of those are in management or senior management positions which may indicate there has been a past link between and social work qualification and progression.

Around 20% of respondents either stated that they held no qualifications or left the question unanswered. Responses by some indicate that there may have been some confusion over the question as although it specifically asked about professional qualifications many responded by including academic and vocational awards. Table 2 shows the range of qualifications held and the proportion of respondents. Many respondents, particularly graduates, held more than one qualification.

Table 2. Range of qualifications held by EWS respondents

Type of Qualification	No of holders	%
Professional social work (DipSW, CQSW, CSS, Degree)	29	26.6%
None or none stated	20	18.3%
Degree	16	14.7%
PG Certificate in Education.	10	9.2%
Masters Degree	7	6.4%
Cert/Dip. Management Studies or ILAM	7	6.4%
Therapeutic Awards (Counselling, Family Therapy)	5	4.6%
NVQ 4 LDSS	5	4.6%
NVQ level 3 or 4 (not LDSS)	5	4.6%
Certificate in Youth & Community Studies	4	3.7%
Nursing (General & Mental Health)	4	3.7%
Diploma in Education Welfare studies	3	2.8%
Certificate in Education	2	1.8%
Diploma in Education	2	1.8%
Connexions Diploma	1	0.9%
Diploma in Youth Work	1	0.9%
Post Qualifying Awards (Social Work)	1	0.9%
Certificate in Education Welfare Studies	1	0.9%
Certificate in Play	1	0.9%
Certificate in Residential Care	1	0.9%
BTEC award in welfare studies	1	0.9%
A- Levels	1	0.9%
NNEB (Nursery Nursing)	1	0.9%
No. of Respondents	109	100.0%

3. Qualifications recognised by employers

Although respondents were generally able to list qualifications that were recognised by their employer, they were not always clear that this resulted in additional pay; many clearly stated that they did not. There were a small number of exceptions where there were entry level qualifications and qualifications required for progression. More than 11% either left the question unanswered or stated 'none'. A further 5.5% specifically stated that they were unsure.

Table 3 shows the range of qualifications recognised by employers in the sample.

Table 3. Range of awards recognised by respondents employers

Qualification	Respondents	%
Dip SW/CQSW Degree in SW, degree in CYP services	40	36.7%
NVQ4 LDSS	35	32.1%
Teaching, Youth work	6	5.5%
Relevant degree	5	4.6%
Diploma in welfare	2	1.8%
Any HE award	1	0.9%
MA	1	0.9%
Any degree	2	1.8%
None or none stated	13	11.9%
Don't know or unsure	6	5.5%

Two qualifications are overwhelmingly represented; social work and the NVQ 4 Learning Development and Support Services (LDSS). Forty respondents said their authority recognised qualified social work status and 35 recognised NVQ 4 LDSS. Many recognised more than one qualification. In addition, smaller numbers also recognised youth work and teaching qualifications, relevant or any degree level education and any higher education award.

Table 4. Respondents' perceptions as to how well existing qualifications and access to training equip them for their job.

	No of respondents	% of total
Completely	10	14%
Very Well	34	46%
Reasonably well	28	38%
Not at all	2	3%
Did not respond	20	27%

Twenty respondents left this question unanswered so it is difficult to determine the significance of the lack of response. Of those that did, 60% believe themselves to be completely or very well equipped for their job. Further examination of the data reveals that of those who believe they are completely or very well equipped, by far the most commonly held qualification is the DipSW or equivalent. Of the 29 qualified social workers, 24 considered themselves to be completely or very well equipped by their qualification. Those holding a teaching qualification were the next most likely with 10 respondents to be completely or very well equipped. However there are a small number with both qualifications and it is not possible to disaggregate. It is difficult to draw conclusions from this as the NVQ LDSS is as yet largely untested and with only 5 holders in the survey, 2 felt it to be completely or very well equipped and one reasonably. But with so few holders it would be difficult to compare. The NVQ LDSS was subject to many comments both from survey respondents and those involved in consultation round tables. See later section.

4. Local planning and access to training and qualifications

Access to training and development opportunities at local authority level is patchy and inconsistent; a number of local authorities were either accessing NVQ4 or planning to. There are also localised initiatives, for example the Diploma in Education Welfare delivered by Nottingham Trent University and the Certificate and Diploma in Higher Education in Education Welfare Studies delivered by the University of the West of England (UWE) which is no longer available, and a diploma from Lancaster University linked to their NVQ 4 LDSS route. It is concerning that such a high number of respondents seemed unclear as to what was happening in their area, this may be due to its perceived complexity or simply poor communication within the EWS.

A small number of English authorities offer access to professional social work training but this is very limited because of budget constraints. Northern Ireland practitioners now require professional social work qualification at entry and existing staff members are given access to training. With this comes registration with the regulatory body and a requirement for and access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Attempts to deliver NVQ4 LDSS have been hampered by two factors; lack of a training infrastructure and lack of consistent funding to develop a planned programme for staff.

Some respondents mentioned general CPD opportunities within their service but most then added that these were subject to budgetary constraints. Although not covered in the survey, only one put CPD in the context of staff appraisal schemes.

5. Comments from respondents

This section is compiled from comments from survey respondents and a further 30 practitioners involved in the consultation round table events at the NASWE annual conference. Only a small number of respondents chose not to make suggestions. The comments are organised in 5 main topic areas.

- Access and resources
- NVQ LDSS
- Social work training
- Integrated working
- Degree and post graduate level qualifications

Access and resources

Issues about lack of access and resources are reflected in discussions in all the main topic areas. There were also comments from respondents highlighting their frustration with the continued uncertainty and lack of national strategy within the sector. In addition to the funding problem, the scope for time off from work to study and the lack of financial recognition when studies have been completed were issues.

No information has been given us about training although I think the NVQ is available we would have to do it in our own time and this is not possible for me. Time off would make it better

Possibly a course that can be studied in our own time, as it is very difficult to get any time off during the working day to complete assignments

There is not enough funding to ensure that staff can take time away from the workplace so even if officially time off for study is given people just end up doing extra hours to keep on top of things. Teachers get funding for cover staff why can't this be done for support staff as well?

NVQ 4 Learning Development & Support Services (LDSS)

Although there are obviously very few holders of the award because of its recent development, according to the respondents, it has become, along with professional social work qualification, one of the most commonly recognised awards by employers. Where respondents have been able to give information about training and development opportunities in their areas, developments on delivering NVQ LDSS are by far the most common.

There were many comments on LDSS, some supportive, some less enthusiastic but with many supporting it as a starting point for the EWS practitioner.

Many of the comments against NVQ LDSS come from those who already hold higher-level qualifications and see it as a retrograde step. Another more concerning issue is that whilst the NVQ 4 LDSS is seen as a useful measure of competence, it is not developmental or challenging or at a high enough level.

Although the NVQ4 LDSS appears to be gaining recognition by employers, many practitioners have reservations about its status and value. Others felt NVQ LDSS was a good starting point for a service, which should be aspiring to higher-level academic/professional qualifications. There was also concern that NVQ level 4 was not at a high enough level to give EWOs the same professional respect as those they work alongside.

With the units of the NVQ I have done, the emphasis has definitely been on affirming rather than developing, which is my fundamental problem with it. There is an element of reflection built in, but I see little element of 'moving on'. There is certainly no additional or expanding reading expected. The time seems to be taken by gathering paperwork and getting your head round the painful requirements of a NVQ

I'm doing the NVQ now and it is hard work without proper time out and with no financial reward at the end. Not sure how I could recommend this to others!

It is becoming clear that if the wealth of knowledge that exists within the EWS community is to be effectively used in the future of the children's workforce, staff need a comprehensive qualification and career structure. The LDSS is a good starting point for entry-level staff but it is not the same as a professional qualification that imparts a sound ethical grounding.

As a service manager I am unconvinced that the NVQ has added much value to my staff and does not equip them with the kind of professional skills needed to handle the complex needs of families in crisis. Increasingly social workers are being pulled away from families in need referring cases back to us as simply attendance issues which we are clear are symptoms of much wider issues.

Perhaps it would be better to widen the scope of the LDSS to include HSSWs, Careers and others working in schools to make this the standard qualification.

Professional social work qualifications.

These are the most commonly held awards and along with LDSS are the most commonly recognised awards by employers. There is very strong support both by holders and unqualified respondents and a desire for access to the new social work degree. Access to post qualifying training was rare among respondents and this appears to be due to traditional funding routes going via social care with qualified education staff unable to access resources. The social work qualification is still widely seen as a valued and relevant qualification by many. Whether this is because of perceived relevance or historical recognition and familiarity cannot be determined.

Social work qualification whilst doing the job, which, as you know, is already available – this way more EWOs could become professionally qualified and be able to transfer skills as appropriate

Over the years we have been dogged by the issue of EWO/ESW work and its relationship to the personal social services and how this has impacted on the appropriate qualification for the job. CIS/Core skills may help. BA social work leads to a beginning practice competence in social work and is the only, along with its equivalents professional qualification which guarantees GSCC registration- enough said!

Staff should all be social work qualified and CPD should reflect on-going changes in legislation policy and practice.

Specialism or integration?

Whilst there was some support for retaining a specialist EWS award both at frontline and management grades, more respondents were keen to see qualification and progression routes that had greater currency across the children's workforce.

The commonest themes highlighted by respondents relate to the need for a clear progression route that is consistent, flexible and nationally recognised.

I would love to see a position where we had a diploma/degree in Children's Services, and not a DipSW, NVQ etc. Similar to the structure that nurses have i.e. they all have a core base that allows them to do one level of generic

nursing (or in Children's Services e.g. family work) and then they can go further and specialise (social work, Education welfare, early years etc).

A qualifications Framework which take into account other qualifications and experience and allows employees to take courses in relevant missing areas would appear to be a good way to get a varied and open minded senior management in our service.

It would be good to see a comprehensive qualification structure for all education professionals including teachers, youth workers, education social workers, Careers advisors, learning mentors and home school support workers. The core skills are very similar so common modules would allow individual or modular qualifications at different levels and more transfer between careers. Better still just have one qualification with specialist PQ elements.

I'm not sure if the EWS needs to have it's own qualification as I think it is a social work function. There should be a national structure that recognises the value of professional training.

Working in partnership with social care to ensure qualification routes are transferable and relevant

I believe that any notion that the EWS should remain as an isolated profession is obsolete and fails to recognise the rapid developments in integrated qualifications. The overwhelming priority is to avoid 'dumbing down' the EWS by setting the qualification benchmark at NVQ4 level rather than dip HE level as it has historically been or better still degree level.

The Government should stop throwing out new initiatives like Connexions and consolidate the good practice going on. A recognised professional qualification at degree level for all informal educators and education support staff with specialist modules for specific posts would simplify the mess and give staff the opportunity to work in a range of specialisms without going back to stage one.

Degree and post graduate qualifications

There was a very strong view that those working in EWS should aspire to at least a degree level qualification. Those already holding a degree were also keen for there to be post graduate opportunities.

If the pastoral workers within the emerging extended schools are to have any credibility they must have access to a degree level qualification. This does not have to be specifically an EWS qualification it could be generic with specialist PQ routes in attendance, mentoring, careers guidance or youth justice.

I feel that a degree should be the minimum to aim for but the NVQ is a step in the right direction.

I'm confused as to why we are being encouraged to work towards a qualification that is of less value than we already have. Why not have a

degree/MA option for social workers, youth workers and the like as an alternative. .

I can support the LDSS as a minimum standard for transferability across the country but feel we should push for the DipSW or perhaps a new qualification at degree level as the ultimate standard.

I'm not interested in the LDSS as I already have a professional qualification and I don't think it is worth the investment as it would not increase my salary. For me an MA that included the elements for strategic management of the EWS would be far more worthwhile

Having a degree already makes me feel that an NVQ would be a waste of time - can't someone offer an MA in EWS management

I think that the NVQ is fine as an introduction but it does not have any proper academic foundation. There is no supervised practice and not enough opportunity to link theory to practice. I feel that a degree should be the minimum to aim for but the NVQ is a step in the right direction.

There is a tension between academic and professional qualifications with not all degrees that are relevant counting towards professional status. One route could be to accredit experience alongside an academic degree provided there is a sufficient level of supervision and assessment of the fieldwork.

6. Management and supervisory training

Although this issue was not addressed directly in the survey there are a very small number of respondents who hold management qualifications. Just 7 (17%) of respondents in service manager and management and supervisor roles held a recognised management qualification. A professional social work qualification is held by 16 (39%) and other professional qualifications, such as teaching and youth work by 7 (17%) of respondents in management roles. There were a small number of comments relating to management training, some saw it as a progression issue; others felt that there should be a specific EWS management qualification. Those who currently hold management qualifications hold generic management qualifications, including Diploma and Certificate in Management Studies (DMS, CMS).

7. Available qualifications specific to EWS

As part of NASWE's web site development, we have been gathering information on qualification routes available to EWS staff. There are a few specific EWS higher education awards that are regional initiatives. For example NTU working with the East Midlands consortium of EWS have a higher education diploma in Education Welfare. The University of Lancaster offer a higher education diploma alongside their NVQ 4 LDSS course.

More widespread is the delivery of LDSS. This varied with local authorities either buying in services from training providers or working in partnership with Connexions and Learning Mentors. There have been some comments on the varying quality of the underpinning knowledge inputs to the LDSS and there is also considerable

variation in fees, which may reflect differing levels of contact time with candidates. NASWE will be posting information and sign posting to providers on it's website.

Another initiative, developed by DfES is the National Programme for Specialist Leaders of Behaviour and Attendance (NPSLA-BA).

The NPSL-BA provides leadership training in behaviour and attendance. The emphasis of the programme will be on developing leadership skills and participants will be expected to have experience in the field of behaviour and attendance and be motivated to work in a self-supported group. Participants will be expected to gather evidence towards a DfES completion certificate in NPSLBA. If appropriate participants may have their work accredited as a Vocationally Related Qualification (VRQ) or gain credits towards a Master's level qualification. The VRQ is available through City and Guilds at levels 3 and 4 of the National Qualifications Framework.

Summary and conclusions

- There is strong support for a nationally recognised qualification and progression route for the EWS.
- The NVQ LDSS is gaining recognition. Whilst there are many reservations, there is support for it to be the starting qualification for the EWS.
- There is support for the idea of widening the LDSS family to support greater recognition and flexibility.
- The workforce is very diverse and as such will represent a challenge to a simple progression route and accreditation of prior experiential learning being an important issue.
- Lack of resources including training infrastructure is a significant barrier to progression
- Despite 'joining up', access to children's services training budget is not common and social work qualified staff are denied access to PQ opportunities.
- Currently, there are few incentives for staff to gain qualifications if these are not recognised with enhanced pay.
- EWS provide a valuable family support service to children and families and a significant proportion hold a recognised professional qualification. In terms of workforce planning, there is potential which perhaps need exploring, for a much more effective use of this pool of staff within the ECM delivery framework.

Jacqui Newvell & Andy Winton
NASWE

June 2007

**Education Welfare Qualification Framework
Practitioner Survey**

Name (optional)		Authority:	
Are you a:			
Front line practitioner	Specialist practitioner	Manager /supervisor	Service manager
What professional qualifications do you hold?			
Does your employer recognize this qualification with enhanced pay? Yes / No			
What year did you receive this qualification/s, and what was the awarding institution?			
Does your current qualification/access to CPD equip you for your job?			
Not at all	Reasonably well	Very well	Completely
What other qualifications does your authority recognize if any?			
Are you aware of any qualifications or continuing professional development opportunities that are being offered, or being planned in your area?			
Do you have access to these? Yes / No			
What suggestions do you have for the future development of a qualifications framework?			

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return in the envelope provided.