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West Midlands LDAF Evaluation Project

Summary Report

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This summary presents the findings from a review of the use of the original **Learning Disability Awards Framework (LDAF)** and **National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)** qualifications carried out in the West Midlands region between April and August 2007. The project evaluated the **delivery, management, assessment and support** provided, in order to make recommendations about future implementation of the new LDQ Induction Award.

This project was funded by Skills for Care West Midlands recognising the strength of LDAF delivery in the West Midlands and the importance of learning from current practice in the forthcoming implementation of the new **Learning Disability Qualifications (LDQ)**.

The introduction of **LDQ** means that this piece of research is very timely and can inform future delivery and implementation.

2. Project Background

2.1 Since the introduction of the LDAF awards in 2001 there has been little research carried out in relation to the effectiveness and impact of these qualifications.

2.2 The Care Standards Act 2000 and the Valuing People White Paper introduced a number of new requirements for organisations providing services to people who have learning disabilities, relating to the competence of their workforce. These can be summarised as follows:

- Service providers must establish and maintain a competent workforce
- All staff in learning disability services need to be trained to an appropriate level in supporting people with learning disabilities
- Training should be organised within the LDAF system that has been specifically designed for the purpose
- At least 50% of staff gain a NVQ in care at the level appropriate for their work responsibilities
- All staff new to the sector after 1st April 2002 and new to the organisation to complete an induction training programme that meets Skills for Care requirements. In learning disability services this should be done via a training programme that is approved to offer LDAF

2.3 After the start of the current project, the new Learning Disability Qualification (LDQ) Induction Awards were launched in June 2007.

The Induction Award has two levels (2 and 3) and four units:

- **Principles of Learning Disability Support**
- **Your Role as a Learning Disability Worker**
- **Health and Safety in a Learning Disability Service**
- **Protecting People who have learning disabilities from Abuse**

3. Project Objectives

- To identify those delivering LDAF qualifications in the region
- To research into how training, management, assessment and support for learners is provided
- To investigate how LDAF providers link the qualifications to NVQ assessment
- To identify different models of delivery and examples of good practice
- To develop a series of “lessons learnt” to inform training managers, care providers and others as they plan for the new LDQ qualification launched in 2007

4. Methodology

4.1 A range of research techniques was used in order to obtain information to address the key objectives for this project. These included a **questionnaire, telephone and face-to-face semi-structured interviews and a focus group.**

4.2 The project utilised existing links with a number of relevant West Midlands networks, and these in turn were used to try to identify all of the existing LDAF providers in the West Midlands. The networks used included:

- West Midlands Learning Disability Workforce Network (jointly funded by Valuing People Support Team and Skills for Care)
- The West Midlands Valuing People Strategy Group (with links to the 14 local authority learning disability leads)
- The Skills for Care West Midlands learning disability task and finish group
- The Skills for Care West Midlands sub regional organisations

We have found that doing LDAF has helped our support workers to advocate better for the people they support, also we have noticed improvements in report writing, understanding risk assessments and staff being more willing to voice concern in team meetings. Some workers have helped people they work with to achieve their ambitions such as taking a holiday or getting in touch with relatives or friends they had lost contact with.

Pam Kane and Jackie Lynch, MacIntyre

5. The number of returns from questionnaires, interviews carried out and input from the focus group

Group	Number of questionnaires received	Number of interviews carried out
Learners	38	8
Assessors/Tutors	50	8
Service Managers	24	6
Number attending focus group	40	
Number of training providers identified during research	20	

6. Key findings from the questionnaires, interviews and focus group workshop

6.1 Key Findings

This scoping study provides information on what organisations working with people with a learning disability in the West Midlands have identified as the main issues relating to LDAF. LDAF is a key element of the national strategy for developing a more highly skilled workforce, able to support delivery of higher quality services.

Findings include:

- Having sufficient time for learning, assessing and mentoring is essential
- Greater recognition of LDAF as a qualification for the sector would increase uptake
- Better links to other mandatory training, for example NVQs and Common Induction Standards, would reduce duplication and increase achievement rates.

We have set up a Warwickshire training partnership that has allowed providers to meet for their own training needs, to offer support and share ideas about delivery. Areas of good practice are identified to improve the quality of training to the sector. Now the partnership is actively looking at the involvement of individuals and family carers in the delivery of training. It is agreed that their own personal experience will add great value to the learning and development of those involved in providing services.

Sara Williams, Warwickshire Quality Partnership

7. Recommendations and practical changes for the future

From the analysis within this research we have identified a number of examples of good practice and suggested recommendations for future implementation. These highlight key lessons learnt from the 5 years experience of using the LDAF qualifications in the West Midlands.

Many respondents regarded the benefits of undertaking LDAF as huge for the whole sector and recommended that Learning Disability Qualifications become a mandatory qualification for all staff irrespective of role

a) A variety of effective approaches used to support learning have been identified

Key benefits identified by respondents–

- It took many staff back to basics and ensured reflective practice was carried out
- Learners practice improved and this then cascaded to other staff bringing great benefits to service delivery
- An improved knowledge base has been a huge benefit and offered more opportunities to support individuals effectively
- LDAF has highlighted the learning disability knowledge required and the skills needed to work within the sector
- As a result of LDAF mentors themselves also sharpened up their practice
- Time allocated for staff to undertake LDAF was key to successful learning
- Mentors and Assessors with a great deal of knowledge of the sector and individual needs really helps effective delivery of LDAF
- Involving individuals with a learning disability in training delivery added great value

“It is made clear to learners that they can contact us at any time for support”-Trainer/Assessor

Recommendations:

To ensure that:

- Both employers and training providers undertaking Learning Disability Qualifications need to think about the capacity issues in the sector to meet the learning, assessment, mentoring and coaching needs
- There are sufficient trained Learning Disability Qualifications tutors, mentors and assessors
- Adequate time must be allocated by employers to support learning and delivery
- There is more information on Learning Disability Qualifications and what is involved for managers and employers as well as learners
- People with learning disabilities are equipped to take part in the delivery of Learning Disability Qualifications

“The LDAF knowledge has been shared out and staff feel more confident” - Service Manager

b) Links between Learning Disability Qualifications and NVQs, and other mandatory training provision are currently weak, or not widely used. More effective links need to be developed.

Recommendations:

To ensure that;

- There is the provision of clear links from Learning Disability Qualifications to NVQ, and vice versa
- There is clear information about Learning Disability Qualifications for inspectors, funders and the sector as a whole

“I have used my LDAF work to check my work against my NVQ”-Learner

c) Funding was a cause for concern. There have been difficulties both in identifying funding streams and in accessing them

Recommendations:

To ensure that:

- There is additional guidance identifying streams of funding and how to access these.
- There are clear links to other mandatory qualifications to reduce duplication
- A qualification structure is developed to identify which qualifications are required by whom, to help with funding, training management and career progression for workers
- There is more efficient communication between funders and providers of both training and services to identify the actual costs and benefits to the service of Learning Disability Qualifications

“We would have been unable to commence further courses if we were not able to receive funding”- Mentor and learner

d) Increased joint working with CSCI inspectors was highlighted, as this would offer a greater depth of knowledge around Learning Disability Qualifications requirements linked to the National Minimum Standards requirements.

Recommendations:

To ensure that:

- There is information available for Commission for Social Care inspectors on Learning Disability Qualifications and the impact it has on service delivery
- There are clearer links to National Minimum Standards, Learning Disability Qualifications and NVQs to aid clarity

“Commission for Social Care Inspectors are very keen to see staff doing LDAF training” - Service Manager

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The project has enabled us to obtain detailed information about how the LDAF qualifications have been used in the region and how they are currently supporting achievement of NVQs. Examples of good practice have been identified and recommendations for future working put forward.
- 8.2 It is evident that LDAF is held in high esteem by the sector, as it supports the development of knowledge and contributes to good quality support for people with a learning disability. Important lessons can be learned from its effective delivery in the West Midlands.
- 8.3 From this research the learning disability sector will have a better understanding of how services can use qualification programmes to improve the quality of support provided for people with a learning disability and family carers.

Copies of both this summary and of the full report can be obtained from both the Skills for Care West Midlands web pages and from the BILD website.

<http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/view.asp?id=181>
and <http://www.bild.org.uk/05policyandresearch.htm>

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