

Learning Disability Qualifications (LDQ) Programme

Background

Following the transfer of the Learning Disability Awards Framework (LDAF) from the Department of Health to Skills for Care in April last year, we have been working in partnership with the Valuing People Support Team (VPST), The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), Skills for Health and the 'In Control' Project to develop a new approach to learning and qualifications for people supporting people with a learning disability. The work of this partnership is coordinated through the Learning Disability Workforce Development Commissioning Group and reports directly to the National Learning Disability Workforce Development Group chaired by Rob Greig.

The Commissioning Group has agreed a new approach to learning and qualifications for workers supporting people with a learning disability with the aim of developing a flexible, inclusive and simple to understand programme.

Learning Disability Induction Award

The new Learning Disability Induction Award that covers the Common Induction Standards in the context of supporting people with a learning disability, is now available through three awarding bodies: City and Guilds, Edexcel and the National Open College Network (NOCN). Education Development International PLC is currently awaiting approval from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to also offer the award.

Completion of the Induction Award will enable workers to demonstrate that they have met the requirements of the Common Induction Standards in a learning disability context. Achievement of the award will also lead to progression within the health and social care sector and demonstrate achievement and evidence towards NVQs at the appropriate level.

Learning Disability Knowledge Sets

Skills for Care also plans to implement Learning Disability Knowledge Sets during 2007. HASCA Ltd are the consultants who have been appointed to undertake the development work for the Knowledge Sets.

Knowledge Sets are a collection of key learning outcomes for specific areas of work within adult social care. They are designed to improve consistency in the underpinning knowledge learnt by the adult social care workforce in England.

It is intended that the key learning outcomes within each knowledge set will be used by employers to develop in-house learning and by training providers, publishers and awarding bodies to produce learning programmes, resources (cd-roms, videos, workbooks) and, potentially, awards. The key learning outcomes are intended to provide minimum standardised outcomes that employers may use either to produce their own in-house learning or learning packages or as a benchmark when buying in learning provision or learning packages.

Knowledge Sets are designed to be used separately or alongside the Common Induction Standards and as part of a worker's continuing professional development. Their aim is to provide specific standardised knowledge and understanding to help social care workers undertake their role.

Employers will use knowledge sets to provide knowledge and understanding in particular subjects for their workers so that the service benefits from:

- essential learning for specific tasks
- enhanced worker practice
- staff being supported to complete their NVQs by a systematic approach to underpinning knowledge.

Social care workers will use knowledge sets to:

- assist their development of new skills to open up career options and as part of their continuing professional development
- improve self confidence
- support transition between different service settings in the social care sector
- ensure that they are working in accordance with current good practice.

An initial consultation phase designed to generate debate and interest has been undertaken in partnership with the Joint Regional Learning Disability Workforce Groups recently established by Skills for Care and the Valuing People Support Team in each of our nine regions. A more formal consultation phase will be undertaken in the late summer and to consult on draft learning outcomes, the proposed form of the Knowledge Sets and a learning and qualifications structure. These events will be full day workshops aimed at employers, senior managers, practitioners, people who use services, family carers and other stakeholders. Consultation with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and the Awarding Bodies on the development of accredited awards and qualifications has commenced and will continue throughout this process.

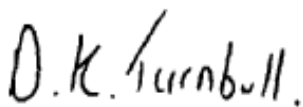
The Learning Disability Knowledge Sets will be designed in such a way as to enable their use as the basis for developing a range of packages of learning, units, awards and qualifications, thereby replacing LDAF. The future educational and training design structures required to meet the needs of those supporting people with a learning disability cannot be met by qualifications alone and it is essential that the new structure provides increased access and progression routes as required by the move towards new ways of working, including personalised services and self-directed support. The development of these Knowledge Sets is a first step in the direction of developing new ways of providing flexible learning and development that meet diverse priorities and expectations.

National Workforce Development Strategy

In addition to the work on the Learning Disability Qualifications and Knowledge Sets, Skills for Care is also working to develop national and regional workforce development strategies to ensure that employers and workers supporting people with a learning disability have access to the advice and support they need to deliver a first class service.

Joint regional Learning Disability Workforce Groups have been established by Skills for Care and VSPT in each of our nine regions. These groups will take a lead role in the implementation of the new LDQs and Knowledge Sets and are currently working on the development of regional workforce development strategies.

Skills for Care will publish comprehensive and accessible national employer guidance on the new learning and qualifications structure for learning disability workers once the Knowledge Sets have been completed.



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Frequently Asked Questions

Why is LDAF being replaced?

The current Learning Disability Awards Framework (LDAF) awards became due for revision and this provided a good opportunity to work in consultation with key stakeholders, including employers, training providers, staff and people who use services and family carers, to ensure that the learning and qualifications available for staff supporting people with a learning disability are fit for purpose.

The Learning Disability Workforce Development Commissioning Group agreed that the best approach to this revision would be to develop key learning outcomes for people working in a Learning Disability setting based on consultation with key stakeholders.

Do staff supporting people with a learning disability have to complete the Learning Disability Induction Award and the Common Induction Standards?

No, the new Learning Disability Induction Award has been mapped to the Common Induction Standards and so by completing the award a worker will also have met all the requirements of the Common Induction Standards.

Is the Learning Induction Award a requirement?

Yes, both the Commission for Social Care Inspection's National Minimum Standards and the Valuing People guidance state that workers supporting people with a learning disability should complete a learning disability specific qualification. Skills for Care recognises the Learning Disability Induction Award as the route to achieving the Common Induction Standards in a learning disability context.

What will happen to people who have already registered for LDAF Awards?

Sufficient time will be allowed for people to complete their Awards. Further information on this can be obtained from City and Guilds and the National Open College Network.

Which Awarding Bodies are offering the new Induction Award?

So far, City and Guilds, Edexcel and the National Open College Network are offering the award. However, it is anticipated that they will soon be joined by Education Development International (EDI).

What are Knowledge Sets?

Knowledge Sets are sets of key learning outcomes for specific areas of work within adult social care. They are designed to improve consistency in the underpinning knowledge learnt by the adult social care workforce in England.

How will the Knowledge Sets relate to the Health and Social Care NVQs?

The Learning Disability Knowledge Sets will be designed to provide the specialist underpinning knowledge required for staff supporting people with a learning disability. This knowledge will be mapped across to the requirements of the Health and Social Care NVQs and could, therefore, contribute directly to the achievement of an NVQ.

It is also anticipated that Awarding Bodies will use the key learning outcomes of the Knowledge Sets to construct Learning Disability Qualifications. Work is already under way with a number of Awarding Bodies to ensure that workers supporting people with a learning disability will have access to training and qualifications.

What are the benefits of developing Knowledge Sets for Learning Disability?

Knowledge Sets will provide a range of learning opportunities and can be flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs of people who use care services. We are confident that they will be of value to all people supporting people with a learning disability, including those directly employed through direct payments and individual budgets.

How long will all this take?

The first phase of consultations has now been completed and a second phase is being planned for September and October. Once the consultations have been concluded, the final Knowledge Sets will be completed. We anticipate that the Knowledge Sets will be published before the end of the year.

The Awarding Bodies will need to go through the process of gaining approval for any qualifications they develop based on the key learning outcomes and this could take up to six months to attain.

What should people do in the meantime?

Once the Knowledge Sets have been finalised employers will have access to the key learning outcomes that will provide the minimum standardised outcomes that can be used either to produce their own in-house learning or learning packages or as a benchmark when buying in learning provision or learning packages. Training providers and publishers will be able to use the learning outcomes to produce learning programmes and resources.

People who have already registered for LDAF qualifications will have adequate time for completion and we would advise speaking to the appropriate awarding body directly for further details.

Details of all the changes will be published on the Skills for Care website.