



Response to Consultation on Qualification Requirements for Housing Support Workers

1a Are the principles set out on page three appropriate to the needs of the housing support workforce?

Yes

2a Do the job titles on this page fully describe the range of job titles used within the sector?

No

2b What other job titles should be included?

There is a huge range of job titles, reflecting the diverse range of services and levels of support which workers in the voluntary sector provide. As the use of specific titles varies dramatically between organisations, it would seem unwise to put too much emphasis on the actual title, and instead focus on the tasks for which a particular worker is responsible.

On a more basic level, it would be useful to clarify the criteria for being a housing support worker. How are housing support services defined? Is this definition in line with the Care Commission's criteria for inspecting housing support services?

Job titles can often be misleading when considering staff working in integrated services. The boundaries between care at home and housing support for example can be particularly difficult to define. Clear guidelines for staff who undertake dual roles would be welcome. It is also essential that the qualifications set for care at home staff in the next phase fit logically with the housing support criteria.

2c Do workers combine more than one job role and job responsibility, for example – housing support worker/home maker or care at home/special needs housing officer, and can roles and functions be easily defined?

Workers in the voluntary sector often work in more than one role that can span housing support, care at home and residential care. Roles are not always easily categorised into one area or another, so flexibility within the qualifications structure is essential.

3 What qualifications do you think should be expected for the following workers to be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council?

Frontline workers

A diversity of views was expressed by voluntary organisations in relation to this. There was general agreement that all of the qualifications agreed for adult residential care workers should be included, with SVQ2 in Health or Social Care, or HNC Social Care preparing people well for most roles.

One view was that there should be separate consideration of part-time and sessional workers. Foundation and induction standards could, for example, be sufficient for registration for this group. Alternatively a progression award could be developed using the four core units of the SVQ2.

A minority felt that this is such a diverse and wide-ranging group of workers there should be a split between basic grade assistants and frontline workers working at a more advanced practitioner level.

Supervisors

Again it was agreed that all of the qualifications listed for adult residential care should be included.

The majority felt that SVQ3 in Health and Social Care was among the appropriate qualifications for this group.

There was a 50/50 split between those who felt that a stand alone SVQ3 was sufficient and those who thought that there should be an additional 15 credits at level 7 or above in supervision or management as for adult residential care.

Managers

A wide range of qualifications was suggested for this group, depending on whether these managers were regarded as heads of service or managers of a group of workers. Most respondents favoured a minimum of Registered Manager Award or other SCQF level 8, 60 credit management qualification for this group and there were mixed views about whether a care or housing or other professional qualification should be required.

One large voluntary organisation felt that SVQ3 with 15 additional level 7 credits at level 7 or above was sufficient for this group, depending on who these managers are.

It was felt that there is often a further layer of management not sufficiently covered in this consultation e.g. branch managers with additional strategic responsibilities.

Please add any additional comments about housing support here.

There is concern within the voluntary sector that qualifications criteria must not 'scare off' current or potential staff.

Resources – it needs to be recognised that training and registration is an ongoing process that requires large investment in resources, both time and funding.

There are a large proportion of very part-time workers within the voluntary sector. It needs to be recognised that achieving qualifications within the set timescale can be problematic – organisations cannot always provide sufficient support within these working hours, and workers themselves may be less keen to invest large amounts of their own time in gaining a qualification.

For example, if you work 2 hours a week for £7 an hour, doing an SVQ may not seem entirely relevant. Are we in danger of driving people out of the workforce?

Setting qualifications at the lowest level allows organisations to adapt subsequent training to the needs of the worker and their specific role.

Consideration needs to be given to the impact of qualifications criteria on recruitment and retention, especially in rural areas.

This response results from a consultation by the workforce unit with voluntary sector organisations, held on June 23rd 2005 in Stirling.

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Can you describe briefly the range of services your organisation provides?

The promotion and support of the development of the voluntary sector social services workforce (not including early education and childcare)