FAQ Document May 2009: Qualifications and Training for Parent Support Staff – information from National Academy Parenting Practitioners (NAPP) and Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA)

GENERAL

Q  What qualification should a parent support worker\(^1\) have?

A  Parent support activity is currently viewed as an element of children and young people's workforce provision. The Government's aspiration is that the children and young people's workforce should be graduate-led and qualified to level 3, where appropriate. \(^2\)

The National Academy for Parenting Practitioners (NAPP) has a role to extend training provision, promote evidenced based training provision and support specific projects and developments within the parent support sector. It \textbf{recommends} that as a minimum a parent support worker should have a level 3 qualification in work with parents and that the qualification should be intrinsically based on the National Occupational Standards for Work With Parents.

Currently the only national qualifications which meet these criteria are the Support Work in Schools (Parent Support - PS) level 3 qualifications and the Working With Parents (WWP) level 3 qualifications (see below for further information).

Further to this, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) \textbf{recommends} that parent support workers operating with a school based focus should have access to the SWiS (PS) qualifications, or the mandatory units within these if they have already achieved, or are working towards, the WWP qualification at level 3.

NAPP \textbf{recommends} that parent support workers operating with a school based focus should have a level 3 qualification, which covers all the core knowledge and skills of working with parents as well as the specific knowledge and skills required for working with parents in an educational setting.

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\(^1\) The term 'parent support worker' is used to describe anyone working with parents to support them in their parenting capacity. An alternative term would be 'parenting practitioner'.

\(^2\) 2020 Children's and Young People's Workforce Strategy (2008) page 35
Q  Do parent support workers have to have a level 3 qualification in work with parents?

A  If you are working with parents to support them to become more effective parents and you do not have a graduate qualification in a helping profession, NAPP would recommend that you gain an appropriate level 3 qualification in work with parents as a minimum. TDA would recommend that whichever route is taken, the mandatory units in SWiS (PS) are covered if you are working in a school context.

It is recognised that many workers join this field without level 3 qualifications. It is recommended that workers have the opportunity to work towards them.

Q  Should parent support workers be getting any other training, especially when new to parent support work?

A  Both NAPP and TDA recommend access to training support which is based on the findings of what works (evidence based training), focusing on preventative parent support work.

TDA has made available a detailed initial training package for school focused parent support roles (the Parent Support Adviser initial training package), which gives access to generic children's workforce introductory modules (produced by the Children's Workforce Development Council) and role specific PSA modules for newly appointed workers. This initial training package is designed to be used by local authorities to give new workers a solid start in their roles. The programme is not accredited, but it has been mapped against the SWiS (PS) qualifications to enable the learning gained through the programme to be used in evidencing the assessment requirements of the SWiS (PS) qualifications.

NAPP recommends that a parent support worker should complete training in an evidence based programme or approach which is specifically designed to be a universal (preventative) intervention.

NAPP also recommends that a parent support worker should also be either supervised by a graduate in a helping profession, or be co-working with a graduate in a helping profession. Each evidence based programme will have additional guidance around appropriate supervision.
Q  What are the SWiS (PS) qualifications?

A  **SWiS (PS)** relates specifically to parent support practitioners working within the school context, aiming to support parental engagement in their child’s education with the ultimate aim of reducing barriers to learning and improving pupil attainment levels.

Two qualifications are offered, both at level 3 (National Qualifications Framework):

**Level 3 Certificate for Support Work in Schools (Parent Support) - 4 units**
Designed as a smaller ‘starter’ qualification with some flexibility: straightforward for those with the skills and knowledge to achieve, uncomplicated to deliver and assess.

**Level 3 Diploma for Support Work in Schools (Parent Support) - 6 units**
Designed to offer additional units and the flexibility to reflect more aspects of the support role.

The units within these two SWiS (PS) qualifications are drawn directly from units within a range of existing National Occupational Standards. The three sets of National Occupational Standards from which units have been drawn are Supporting Teaching and Learning, Working With Parents and Learning Development and Support Services.

The mandatory units for each of the certificate and diploma qualifications relate specifically to the school context and the needs of children and young people, plus an endorsed unit (also mandatory) drawn directly from the WWP NOS (SWiS (PS) 3 – Build and maintain relationships in work with parents).

The qualifications are based on the assessment of competence and underpinning knowledge and understanding. These work based qualifications draw on knowledge and experience developed through related training and work activities. Learners are assessed on the evidence of their competence, knowledge and understanding.

As such they provide accreditation for parent support work which reflects the school context. They are offered specifically to support workers in school contexts. The TDA provides funding to local authorities to purchase this training provision in line with local needs and priorities.
The TDA intends that the qualifications will also be offered under the new Qualifications and Credit Framework qualification which will be fully in place by the end of 2010.

Q  **What are the Work With Parents (WWP) qualifications?**

A  The Work with Parents (WWP) qualifications are accredited at Levels 2 and 3 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework. There is a level 2 Award and Certificate and a level 3 Award and Certificate. The Level 3 Certificate has a number of mandatory units and a number of optional units. The units are intrinsically based on the National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents and from April 2009 are available for all awarding bodies to offer as qualifications for the parenting workforce.

Q  **Are there any entry requirements for practitioners wanting to undertake the SWiS (PS) or WWP qualifications?**

A  There are no formal entry requirements for candidates undertaking these qualifications. As part of the assessment is based on practical activities with parents, candidates must have access to parents in a formal or informal setting. Good basic literacy and numeracy skills are also important.

**SWiS (PS) SPECIFIC QUESTIONS**

Q  **When should a worker do their SWiS (PS) qualification?**

A  It is recommended that workers access the qualification after their initial training and a period of time working in a parent support role, as this will enable them to generate the evidence required for assessment.

Q  **Which awarding bodies offer SWiS PS?**

A  Currently CACHE, Edexcel, and OCR offer the SWiS (PS) qualifications. Details can be found on their websites.

Q  **If a SWiS unit is assessed using NVQ assessment methodology, can it count towards NVQ credits?**

A  If the SWiS Unit is already a unit in an NVQ qualification the learner would need to also be registered for the relevant NVQ for it to count automatically towards the/an NVQ when assessed, though the assessment procedure would also have to match the
assessment requirements for the NVQ. The assessment centre working with the learner would ensure that this is the case.

If the situation is as above, and the learner is not registered for the NVQ as well, the assessed unit would count towards the NVQ as long as the assessment process meets the NVQ requirements. The assessment centre would look at this when considering the achieved SWiS (PS) unit against the NVQ unit, and would either accept the evidence and assessment as being valid, or advise the learner on, or support the learner in addressing, any additional assessment activity required to meet the NVQ assessment criteria.

Q How is TDA funding for the SWiS PS qualifications accessed?

A Since the SWiS (PS) qualifications have been developed to specifically meet the needs of parent support workers operating in the context of schools and education, TDA currently provides funding to local authorities to purchase training provision on behalf of parenting support workers in their schools. This funding can cover the cost of purchasing training provision for SWiS PS and WWP qualifications for PSAs and PSA equivalent roles who are employed by local authorities and work on behalf of individual schools and clusters of schools. This does not apply to PSAs, or equivalent roles, working in, or employed by, Children’s Centres as the grant funding is for school staff. It is expected that the professional development costs of parent support workers employed by the voluntary sector would be met by their employer and reflected in charges to the local authority.

TDA training funding allocations are managed through an annual process in which TDA invites those responsible for school workforce training and development to complete and return a pro-forma outlining their training, qualification and expenditure plans for the year, drawing on TDA’s guidance for using the grant funding. This return is requested usually by the end of May.

From April 2009 this funding will be provided through the school support staff training and qualifications element of TDA’s grants (2009–10) to support development of the children’s workforce in schools. Letters and support materials detailing the approach for 2009/10 were sent out in early March 2009. There is no funding in this grant specifically
ring-fenced for parent support workers; they are part of the school support staff workforce for whom this funding is intended.

*Those wishing to access such funding, or influence the content of the local authority return, should approach the person in their local authority who has responsibility for school support staff training and development. Practitioners can do this through raising the issue with their line manager in the first instance.*

**WWP SPECIFIC QUESTIONS (information from NAPP)**

**Q** Which awarding body do I use for the WWP qualification?

**A** Until April 2009 City and Guilds was the only awarding body which could offer the Work With Parents qualifications. From April 2009, any QCA awarding body can offer the qualifications.

**Q** Are the City and Guilds Work With Parents qualifications which have been part of the QCF Test and Trial still valid?

**A** City and Guilds was the first awarding body to work with LLUK to develop the Work With Parents qualifications. The original version of the qualification, which was part of the QCF Test and Trial, has now been revised and shared with all other awarding bodies. Candidates who gained their qualification when it was still part of the Test and Trial have a qualification which remains valid.

**Q** I have completed (or am completing) the original version of WWP. Do I now need to complete the revised version?

**A** If you have completed, or are completing the original version of the WWP qualifications, you do not need to take them again. Qualifications are regularly revised but previous versions are still recognised.

**Q** Is the WWP qualification a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)?

**A** No, the WWP qualification is not a National Vocational Qualification.

**Q** Can a local authority use the TDA funding to deliver the WWP qualification?
A Yes, however TDA would recommend that careful consideration be given to offering the SWiS (PS) qualifications to parent support workers employed in a schools context so that learners:

- Understand the common core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce and how these apply to their role
- Are aware of the ethos and policies of the school(s) in which they work; and
- Have access to a choice of optional units that cover aspects of the PSA role

Where learners have already demonstrated that they possess these skills and knowledge, perhaps through the achievement of other qualifications intended for school based staff, the WWP qualification can be considered.

COMPARISON / LINKAGE

Q What is the difference between the SWiS PS qualification and the WWP qualification?

A WWP units are specifically about working with parents, irrespective of the context such as a school or a children’s centre. SWiS PS has units which are relevant to the parent support adviser role in a school setting. They include some WWP units but also have additional units relevant to the school context and the support needs of children and young people.

SWiS (PS) qualification sits within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and WWP sits within the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), which will be fully operation in 2010. TDA intends to move SWiS (PS) across to the QCF during this time period.

Q I have completed the WWP level 3 certificate... do I need to do the SWiS (PS) level 3 qualification?

If you are working in a school context and already have the WWP qualification there will be some additional units from the SWiS PS suit of units which would supplement your existing knowledge and skills about working in a school setting.
Whilst there is no formal requirement for you to gain accreditation in these areas, you and your line manager might decide that to do so would be helpful and supportive of your role.

The mandatory SWiS units: *Understand and respond to the needs of children and young people SWiS CU3.1* and *Support the ethos, policies and working practices of the school SWiS CU3.2* will be the two units you will need to focus on first as these are required for the SWiS PS level 3 diploma.

**Q** I have completed the SWiS (PS) level 3 diploma... what units do I need to be able to achieve the WWP level 3 certificate?

**A** If you already have the SWiS qualification there will be some additional units from the WWP suit of units which will supplement your existing knowledge and skills about working with parents. The mandatory WWP units: *Work with parents to meet their children’s needs WWP 307*, and *Enable parents to reflect on the influences in parenting and the parent-child relationship WWP 306* and *Effective communication with parents WWP 302* will be the three units you will need to focus on first as these are required for the WWP level three certificate.

**Q** I have completed the SWiS PS level 3 qualification... do I need to do the WWP level 3 qualification?

**A** NAPP would recommend that you achieve the four units which it considers to be core parenting skills and knowledge. Two of these are in the SWiS PS qualification, but two of them are not, (WWP 306 and WWP 307).

**PROGRESSION**

**Q** A level 3 qualification does not reflect the complexity of my role, and I already have a degree (level 6) qualification... is there a higher qualification for working with parents?

**A** A range of national bodies with responsibility for parent support work are currently working together to develop a broader qualification framework for parent support work. The aim is to include qualifications from level 3 through to 5 and beyond.
New qualifications will not be available before autumn 2009.

In the meantime, there are a number of Higher Education Institutions which offer modules at university level (QCF levels 4-8). For example, De Montford University offers a foundation degree, and an MSc in Parenting Studies.

Q I've got my level 3 qualification, now what do I do next?
A A range of national bodies with responsibility for parent support work are currently working together to develop a broader qualification framework for parent support work. The aim is to include qualifications from level 3 through to 5 and beyond. Once these are available you could consider your options in more detail.

New qualifications will not be available before autumn 2009.

DELIVERY / IMPLEMENTATION

Q How do we set up the delivery of SWiS (PS) in our local authority?
A The first step is to find an assessment centre. Most local authorities have accredited training centres and many are already offering other aspects of the SWiS qualifications framework. Should this be the case in your area, approach the person responsible for school support staff training and development to discuss your needs.

If such a facility does not exist in your area you can approach the awarding bodies directly through their websites (CACHE, Edexcel, and OCR). They can advise on current accredited training centre provision and how to access support.

If you need further help contact TDA using psa@tda.gov.uk .

You may well need to work with your chosen assessment centre to develop assessment capacity, or capacity to support the assessment centre’s own assessors. You will need to secure the input from suitably experienced and knowledgeable staff to either be trained as assessors or to support the assessment process, working in partnership with your chosen assessment centre.

Q How do we set up the delivery of WWP qualification in our local authority?
The first step is to find an assessment centre. Most local authorities have accredited training centres with links to one or more awarding bodies. Access to appropriate assessment capacity, as above, will also be a consideration. NAPP have developed a recommended trainer specification, available at www.parentingacademy.org. NAPP is currently developing free resources for four of the units and these will be available from www.parentingacademy.org for trainers to download from autumn 2009.

Q Who can deliver the SWiS PS?

A Accredited Training Centres registered with CACHE, Edexcel or OCR to deliver SWiS (PS). TDA recommends that delivery is supported through local training and support, including the PSA initial training package (see www.tda.gov.uk/PSA).

Q Who can deliver the WWP qualification?

A If an assessment centre is already delivering the Children’s Care Learning and Development Qualifications, or the NVQ in Health and Social Care – Children and Young People pathway, NAPP will be able to apply for fast track approval from an awarding body to enable that assessment centre to deliver the WWP qualifications. Assessment Centres will also need appropriately experienced and qualified tutor assessors.