

Knowledge Acquisition

A study of knowledge acquisition methods currently used to support candidates taking SVQ Social Services and Healthcare at SCVF level 7 and/or in SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF level 7

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Thank you to contributors and confidentiality statement

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this study, your contributions are much appreciated.

We have treated all responses to this study in confidence and we do not identify any of the assessment centres or individual contributors.

1.0 Executive summary

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) commissioned this study in response to employers' interest in making sure Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) provide the fullest possible assessment experience for candidates and in particular that the body of knowledge which underpins professional practice is embedded in assessment leading to the awards: SVQ in Social Services and Healthcare and SVQ in Social Services (Children and Young People) at Scottish Qualification and Credit Framework (SCQF) level 7. The study seeks to explore methods used to enable candidates to acquire knowledge in preparation for assessment.

Research methods included an online survey of assessment centres approved to offer the awards, together with small scale randomised emailed questionnaire survey of SVQ candidates, assessors and internal verifiers, specific questions for external verifiers returned by email and a small scale randomised email survey of social service employers. There were also structured telephone interviews with representatives of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and City and Guilds (the SVQ awarding bodies awards in Scotland).

Findings showed social service employers were generally satisfied with the knowledge acquisition processes currently used; however, concerns were raised about candidates' readiness for assessment and the satisfactory demonstration of some areas of knowledge in practice. These areas were the law, policy and guidance which inform practice, specialist knowledge and theories for practice.

Assessment centre respondents reported that multiple methods and approaches are currently used to determine candidate's knowledge acquisition needs and support them to take on board the underpinning or professional knowledge necessary for SVQ assessment. It was also clear that several approaches can be operational in individual assessment centres. This was considered indicative of approaches to knowledge acquisition that are customised to meet the needs of candidates.

Views gathered through emailed questionnaires, questions and telephone interviews generally supported these findings, although the methods of knowledge acquisition reported sometimes varied and some people expressed concerns relating to equality of learning opportunities. Satisfaction levels related to knowledge acquisition processes provided a positive picture, ranging from mid-point to high levels of satisfaction.

There was general consensus over the areas of knowledge that should be included in current approaches to knowledge acquisition; these necessarily reflect the National Occupational Standards (NOS). Most assessment centres reported that they matched their knowledge acquisition processes to the SCQF level 7 descriptors and said they expected evidence of underpinning or professional knowledge generated through knowledge acquisition processes to be included in candidates' SVQ portfolios. A few areas of knowledge which might be topics for inclusion in future knowledge acquisition processes were identified, these were; working with individuals who have English as a second language, working closely with other professions together and the transfer of knowledge between contexts of care.

In relation to the impact of universal or common knowledge on knowledge acquisition processes, assessment centres said they appreciated the benefits of holistic assessment and avoidance of over assessment, however in practice it could be difficult to find the right assessment balance between integration with unit specific evidence and other approaches to evidence gathering. Views gathered through emailed questionnaires, questions and telephone interviews indicated similar uncertainties could be present and were acknowledged.

The topic of what might support knowledge acquisition for future SVQ candidates gave rise to many suggestions. Some of these were free, however the high cost implications of others were acknowledged. A potentially costly enhancement involved the development of free to access online learning designed to reflect the NOS and for all SVQ candidates and assessment centres. The possibilities for inter-agency working were also mentioned.

Findings suggest that further in depth research might be beneficial in exploring and developing insights into knowledge acquisition processes to better support candidates for SVQ in Social Services and Healthcare (SVQ SSHC) and/or SVQ in Social Services (Children and Young People) (SVQ SS (CYP)) at SCQF level 7.


An at a glance look at the methods of data collections, satisfaction levels and suggestions for the future from a study of knowledge acquisition methods currently used to support candidates taking SVQ Social Services and Healthcare and/or SVQ in Social Services (Children and Young People) both at SCQF level 7.

Suggestions for candidates

1. Taking time to build up necessary experience and knowledge.
2. A positive study ethos and willing to learn.
3. Taking responsibility for own learning and making full use of the resources available.
4. A working knowledge of National Care Standards and SSSC Codes of Practice, workplace policies and relevant legislation and guidance.

Suggestions for assessment centre staff

1. Promoting access to good support materials.
2. Encouraging candidates to use online resources.
3. Working with employers in an integrated way and developing clear progression routes.
4. One-to-one assessor and candidate learning sessions.
5. Themed courses linked to the NOS.



A snapshot of types of support suggested by people involved in SVQ delivery

Suggestions for employing organisations

1. Providing study time in the workplace.
2. Mandatory standards of in-house training.
3. Planned workplace induction that matches the NOS.
4. Employers understanding about the amount and depth of knowledge candidates require.
5. Providing candidates with free copies of important documents.
6. Raised commitment to staff learning and development and a fuller understanding of the SVQ assessor's role.

Suggestions for external organisations

1. Online learning that is free and regularly updated.
2. Publication of a book/course specific to Scottish law.
3. SSSC learning apps to be accessible across a range of devices.
4. Free resources that don't need a computer.
5. Links from one relevant online site to others.
6. Nationally certificated induction for care.

2.0 Introduction

This study was carried out in response to employers' interest in making sure SVQs provide the fullest possible assessment experience for candidates and in particular that the body of knowledge which underpins professional practice is embedded in assessment leading to the awards: SVQ SSHC SCQF level 7 and SVQ SS (CYP) SCQF level 7.

2.1 Background

Over recent years there has been a significant drive towards developing the confidence and competence of the social service workforce. This process has highlighted the importance of SVQs as qualifications which reflect role relevant competences inclusive of social services values, professional knowledge and practice skills. The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 established the requirement for the social service workforce in Scotland to be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). A primary condition for registration is the achievement of identified, role specific qualifications SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) SCQF level 7 are benchmark qualification criteria for staff who are employed as practitioners in adult and some child care social services. In the case of staff based in adult social services, an SVQ SSHC may be the single qualification they are required to hold. Social service employers from the independent, voluntary and statutory sectors have invested in the provision of SVQ assessment and there is a widespread infrastructure supporting delivery of these awards. It is important that SVQ assessment has a positive impact on social services in terms of both qualification achievement and ongoing good practice.

3.0 Aims of the study

The aims of the study were to:

1. capture a snapshot of knowledge acquisition processes, such as the methods and approaches currently in use to determine candidates' knowledge acquisition needs and support them to gain knowledge in preparation for SVQ assessment towards SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7
2. gain an overview of employers' satisfactions and concerns about knowledge acquisition
3. explore views about areas of underpinning knowledge included in current approaches to knowledge acquisition and the evaluation of learning
4. gather any expressed views about the impact of universal or common knowledge on knowledge acquisition process
5. gather views on what can be done to support knowledge acquisition for future SVQ candidates.

4.0 Contextual documents for the study

The following documents provide context for this study.

4.1 **Assessment Strategy for Scottish Vocational Qualifications in Social Services and Healthcare SVQ 2, 3 and 4 and Social Services (Children and Young People) SVQ 2, 3, and 4 at SCQF level 7**

This provides guidance relevant to the assessment of knowledge and understanding.

2.2 Holistic assessment

Integration of knowledge and practice is a fundamental feature of work in the social service and health sectors. When planning for assessment it is essential that assessors and candidates identify opportunities to integrate a number of activities and knowledge. It is not generally necessary to provide separate pieces of evidence for each performance criteria. However, assessors and candidates need to be satisfied that all performance criteria and knowledge are covered.

2.3 Assessment of knowledge and understanding

To assist consistency and reduce repetition universal knowledge and understanding is included in each unit to underpin competence and support candidates to question and reflect on their practice. Each unit has additional knowledge and understanding relevant to the specified area of practice.

Assessment of knowledge and understanding should, wherever possible, be carried out during performance to ensure integration of theory and practice. Evidence of knowledge and understanding should be clearly identified within the audit trail.

Assessors need to ensure that the candidate is able to apply knowledge and understanding within the context of the units. Assessors may use holistic assessment to establish the knowledge and understanding required to support competent practice. Holistic assessment should be used as outlined in part 2.2 of this strategy. This will support establishing knowledge and understanding within and across units.

More information is online at: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/68650.html

4.2 Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is designed to promote understanding of qualifications in Scotland, by demonstrating the way in which different types of qualifications relate to each other and providing recognition of a wide range of learning types. The level of difficulty, the number of academic credits and the length of time it takes to complete are the measures used to determine the level of a qualification or learning programme.

There are 12 SCQF levels which outline the general outcomes of learning under five headings:

1. knowledge and understanding (mainly subject based)
2. practice (applied knowledge and understanding)
3. generic cognitive skills (eg evaluation, critical analysis)
4. communication, numeracy and IT skills
5. autonomy, accountability and working with others.

The descriptors allow comparisons between qualifications and make it possible for learners, employers and others to review the skills and knowledge related to each level. The SCQF level 7 descriptors are summarised as follows.

Learners must demonstrate and/or work with:

1. an overall appreciation of the body of knowledge that constitutes a subject/discipline/sector
2. knowledge that is embedded in the main theories, concepts and principles of the subject/discipline/sector
3. an awareness of the dynamic nature of knowledge and understanding
4. an understanding of the difference between explanations based on evidence and/or research and other sources and of the importance of this difference.

More information is online at: www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/SCQF-LevelDescriptors.pdf

4.3 The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001

The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, established registration requirements for many groups of social service workers, and placed specific responsibilities on both workers and employers. The requirement to be registered brings social service workers in line with professional colleagues, such as nurses, and teachers, who are also required to register with their own regulatory bodies so they can work in their field. The registration of social service workers is regarded as having an important role in both raising public confidence and improving standards for people who use services.

Qualifications such as the SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ in SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7 are part of the role related criteria enabling social service workers who are employed as practitioners in adult, children and young people services to register.

More information is online at:

webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20080915101357/opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2001/asp_20010008_en_1

5.0 Methodology

This study made use of descriptive and analytical strategies to get a picture of the knowledge acquisition processes currently used to support candidates being assessed for SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7.

5.1 Models of evaluation

The study methodology was loosely based on Kirkpatrick's (1994) conceptual learning evaluation model. This model indicates exploration of learning at four levels :

- Level 1 – responses to learning
- Level 2 – what has been gained from the learning
- Level 3 – the differences as a result of the learning
- Level 4 – the impact of the learning on SVQ assessment and continuing good practice.

Kirkpatrick's model has been widely used in the evaluation of different kinds of learning. The evaluation of developmental programmes frequently uses levels one and two but levels three and four are used less often. This may be due to factors such as, workplace circumstances which might support or reduce the impact of learning and issues of subjectivity associated with self-reporting in terms of application of learning to practice. All of the evaluative levels have been influential in this study. Hicks and Hennessy (2001) suggest that defined performance outcomes may offer an enhanced way to determine the transfer of learning to practice. This is very much in line with SVQ assessment which regards competence as a practical blend of values, performance and professional knowledge and this evaluative model has also been influential. Similarly the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) guidance on the evaluation of learning (2015) advises that effective evaluation requires clarity about learning objectives, so you can accurately measure impact. The NOS, which are fundamental to SVQ processes provide a paradigm of competence which realises this evaluative function.

5.2 Contributors to the study

To fulfil the aims of the study we gathered the views of stakeholders and participants in SVQ assessment processes. The following groups and individuals have had an opportunity to contribute to the study.

1. All SVQ assessment centres in Scotland currently approved to offer SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7.

2. A random selection of SVQ candidates who are either currently in assessment for, or have recently completed, one of the above awards.
3. A random selection of SVQ assessors who are experienced in working with one or both of the above awards.
4. A random selection of SVQ internal verifiers who are experienced in working with one or both of the above awards.
5. SVQ external verifiers who have an overview of assessment practice and are experienced in working with one or both of the above awards.
6. Representatives of the awarding bodies in Scotland.
7. Social service employers.

The groups and individuals who took part in the study represent, or are aligned to, assessment centres which were self-characterised as follows:

1. college based
2. based in a voluntary organisation that provides social services
3. local authority based
4. based in an independent organisation that provides social services
5. an independent learning and development (or training) organisation
6. part of a health care service
7. part of an independent organisation that provides health or nursing care
8. company assessment centres
9. private training centres
10. part of a voluntary organisation delivering training as a social enterprise.

6.0 Data collection methods

We collected data using the following three methods:

1. online survey
2. emailed responses to questions and questionnaires
3. structured telephone interviews.

6.1 Online survey

We invited all of the SVQ assessment centres in Scotland currently approved to deliver SVQ SS HC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7 to complete the online survey. The survey was open throughout the study period, from January to February 2016.

At the time of the study, there were two awarding bodies in Scotland providing access to the awards; the SQA and City and Guilds. Both were represented in the study, although no differentiation between contributing assessment centres was made. The awarding bodies carried out the vital role of sending invitations to take part to all their assessment centres. :

SQA: At the time of the survey 162 assessment centres were approved to deliver SVQ SSHC and 124 centres were approved to deliver SVQ SS (CYP).

A total of 286 centres received an invitation to take part in the study.

City and Guilds: At the time of the survey no centres were approved to deliver SVQ in SSHC and three centres were approved to offer SVQ SS (CYP).

A total of three centres received an invitation to take part in the study.

6.2 Emailed responses to questions and questionnaires

We also carried out a smaller scale random study of the views of SVQ candidates, assessors, internal verifiers, external verifiers and social service employers.

For this part of the study we randomly selected assessment centre contact details from public facing information on the awarding body websites (such as the 'Where Can I do

this Qualification' page on the SQA Care website). For social service employers, the helpful support of organisations such as, Scottish Care and the Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS) allowed us to randomly select participants through their systems.

We asked the randomly selected assessment centres to invite SVQ candidates, assessors and internal verifiers who have experience of working with SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) SCQF level 7 to complete confidential questionnaires and return them by email to the researcher. Overall we asked 5% of assessment centres approved to deliver the awards to take part in this small scale random survey and they sent 45 role linked invitations on our behalf. Invitations to take part included representation from voluntary organisations, independent organisations, local authorities and college based SVQ assessment centres. Organisations based in different geographic locations across Scotland including; rural, island and urban settings were included.

We asked nine social service employers, who have experience of working with SVQ in SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7, to take part, representing employers in voluntary, independent and statutory organisations, based in different geographic locations including rural, island and urban settings across Scotland.

We asked external verifiers (EVs) to take part. The SQA Social Services and Health Care External Verifier Team was invited to respond to a set of questions distributed during a scheduled EV meeting, with confidential responses to be returned by email. We also asked the City and Guilds EV Team to take part through an emailed questionnaire. The full number of EVs operating within SQA and City and Guilds is not known. We received five responses.

6.3 Structured telephone interviews

We carried out a series of structured telephone interviews to gather the views of key representatives from SQA and City and Guilds. A total of eight people took part in telephone interviews.

6.4 Data requested

In line with the aims of the study (part 3.0 of this report) we asked participants for their views and comments on the following:

1. knowledge acquisition processes : the methods and approaches currently used to determine candidates' knowledge acquisition needs and support them to acquire knowledge in preparation for SVQ assessment towards SVQ SSHC and SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7
2. areas of underpinning knowledge included in current approaches to knowledge acquisition and the evaluation of knowledge acquisition processes
3. any views on the impact of universal or common knowledge
4. what might done to support knowledge acquisition for future SVQ candidates.

We asked social service employers about their satisfactions and concerns in relation to:

- SVQ candidates' demonstration of professional or underpinning knowledge in the workplace
- the areas of knowledge included in knowledge acquisition processes
- their thoughts on positive themes and areas for development.

6.5 Data analysis

The data gathered through the online survey, emailed questions, questionnaires and structured telephone interviews was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Data generated through the online survey was initially analysed through survey platform systems, then explored in relation to data gathered through email and the other methods. Responses were analysed thematically then double checked for accuracy. Analysis followed the four stage process below:

1. the qualitative and quantitative data generated was reviewed to build familiarity
2. the data was thematically grouped in accordance with the aims of the study
3. an initial draft was prepared, re-examined for clarity and reviewed by subject specialists
4. findings were collated into the final report.

Where possible and appropriate, quantitative data has been recorded in the form of descriptive statistics and qualitative data has been grouped to demonstrate comparative responses. 'Points of view' boxes have been included alongside the narrative to allow inclusion of comments provided by respondents which either helpfully encapsulated views more widely expressed or articulated a specific perspective. In all instances the source is unidentified to protect the identity of respondents.

6.6 Data protection

In line with the requirements and principles of the Data Protection Act 1998, all responses to this study have been treated in confidence and none of the assessment centres or individual participants have been identified.

7.0 Percentage responses received

Table 1 illustrates percentage responses to invitations to participate in this study.

Table 1: Responses received

Methods of data collection	Percentage of responses received from participator groups
Online survey	We sent 289 invitations to take part in the study. We had a 26% response.
Emailed responses to questions and questionnaires	We sent 45 role linked invitations to assessment centres. We had an overall 25% response. We sent nine invitations to social service employers. We had a 33% response.
Structured telephone interviews	Eight people took part. We had a 100% response.

8.0 Study findings

Study findings are presented thematically and in line with the aims for the study (see 3.0). The perspectives of all respondent groups are included. Findings are reported under the headings listed below.

This study was carried out in response to employers' interest in making sure SVQ candidates receive the fullest possible assessment experience and in particular that there is an appropriate focus on the body of knowledge that underpins professional practice. The satisfactions and concerns expressed by the social service employers who contributed to the study are first. These provide the contextual basis for other findings.

8.1 Findings: references numbers and headings

- 9.0 Employers' satisfactions and concerns
- 10.0 Knowledge acquisition processes
- 11.0 Areas of underpinning knowledge and evaluation of learning
- 12.0 The impact of universal or common knowledge on knowledge acquisition processes
- 13.0 What might be done to support knowledge acquisition for future SVQ candidates?

9.0 Employers' satisfactions and concerns

Points of view

These points of view were expressed by social service employers who contributed to the study.

'The majority of underpinning knowledge is included in our foundation courses, as this knowledge is seen as essential to good work practice ie legislation/policy/safeguarding /rights/New Managers Foundation Course/ Introduction to Practice (Support Workers).'

'As part of (SVQ) candidate induction, we have a short session on the major pieces of legislation that relate to social care eg Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001/Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007.'

'It's important that staff receive additional training in the specialist areas prior to beginning the SVQ assessment programme to enable them to evidence specialist knowledge contained in the units.'

'It's important that candidates evidence their understanding of knowledge and how this relates directly to their work practice, they do this by linking performance criteria to common knowledge and specific knowledge. I think that this is good as candidates not only have to demonstrate what they do but also why they do it that way.'

'We require staff to undertake specific SVQ preparation. This takes a variety of forms eg the achievement of HNC Social Care/Social Services/Early Education this is in place for all new residential workers and some workers in non- residential settings.'

'When looking for workers we often find that applicants believe that they are more qualified and knowledgeable than they are.'

All the social service employers who responded had experience of employing staff who were either candidates for, or had achieved, SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7. All responses provided are in the context of these awards (the awards are sometimes called SVQ to avoid repetition). Employer respondents represented voluntary organisations (33.3%), independent organisations (33.3%) and statutory organisations

(33.3%). In this group 33.3% were working with assessment centres external to their organisations and 66.6% were working with internal assessment centres.

9.1 Employers' satisfactions

Social service employers identified the following areas of satisfaction.

Overall levels of satisfaction

We asked employers to rate their overall satisfaction levels in relation to the sufficiency with which SVQ candidates and those who have achieved SVQ, appear to demonstrate areas of professional or underpinning knowledge in the workplace on a scale of one to ten (low to high). All responses received (100%) were in the range of eight to nine and this is considered to be indicative of high overall satisfaction levels.

Satisfaction with areas of underpinning knowledge included in knowledge acquisition processes and methods of knowledge acquisition currently used

Employers' responses indicated the areas of underpinning or professional knowledge included in the National Occupational Standards (NOS) were universally important to good practice in the workplace. They further noted that most of the identified areas of knowledge were seen to be satisfactorily demonstrated in the workplace.

The areas of knowledge employers considered to be satisfactorily demonstrated and those which were considered to be less than satisfactorily demonstrated are shown in table 2 for comparative purposes.

Table 2: Areas of knowledge considered by employers to be demonstrated satisfactorily and less than satisfactorily

Areas of knowledge considered to be satisfactorily demonstrated	Areas of knowledge considered to be less than satisfactorily demonstrated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social service values, principles and ethics. • Legal and work setting requirements on equality, diversity, discrimination and rights. • Candidates' roles in promoting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The law, policy and guidance which informs practice; such as the law in relation to community care. • Theoretical models such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ methods of social work or social care assessment

<p>individuals' rights, choices, wellbeing and active participation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health, safety and wellbeing. • Effective communication. • Effective record keeping and the legal requirements, policies and procedures for the security and confidentiality of information. • Safeguarding. • Theoretical models such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ human development and child development ○ social influences ○ person-centred practice ○ methods of intervention ○ methods of promoting personal and professional development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ methods of evaluating or reviewing social work or social care services. • Areas of specialist knowledge such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ extremes of challenging behaviour ○ multiple physical and or emotional issues.
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Satisfaction with the knowledge acquisition methods and approaches currently used

A diversity of knowledge acquisition methods were reported to be currently used in the organisations represented and one or more of the following examples are currently operational and working satisfactorily in each.

1. SVQ candidates presenting with an existing knowledge, due to having already achieved a relevant qualification.
2. Formalising and extending the workplace induction programme to include preparation for SVQ assessment.
3. Use of workbooks to prepare candidates for practice and make sure they are ready for SVQ assessment.
4. In house foundation and/or developmental courses.
5. Common knowledge log books that candidates complete as they progress through SVQ.

Positive themes

Employers' responses indicated that processes of knowledge acquisition in preparation for SVQ assessment are highly desirable and all employers who contributed said new workers in particular were likely to need support to prepare for SVQ assessment. The support enables candidates to meet both the practice and underpinning knowledge requirements and helps them to commit to, and complete their SVQ assessment.

All respondents noted the importance of candidates for SVQ being consistently able to demonstrate knowledge of what they do and why they do it. They further highlighted the importance of candidates in practitioner roles (workers who are required to gain an SVQ for SSSC registration) being able to use their professional knowledge in day-to-day practice and emphasised the view that professional knowledge is part of good workplace practice.

9.2 Employers' concerns

Social service employers identified the following areas of concern.

Areas of underpinning knowledge giving rise to concern

As shown in table 2, social service employers identified some areas of underpinning knowledge that were more of a concern and considered to be less than satisfactorily demonstrated in the workplace. There were a mix of views with some employers considering the knowledge area satisfactorily demonstrated, whereas others did not; the comparative percentages are as follows.

The law, policy and guidance which informs practice: 33.3% of participants regard this area of underpinning knowledge to be satisfactorily demonstrated in the workplace, 66.6% considered it not.

Theoretical models such as methods of social work or social care assessment and methods of evaluating or reviewing social work or social care services: 66.6% of participants regard this area of underpinning knowledge to be satisfactorily demonstrated in the workplace, 33.3% considered it not .

Areas of specialist knowledge such as extremes of challenging behaviour, and multiple physical and or emotional issues: 33.3% of participants regard

this area of underpinning knowledge to be satisfactorily demonstrated in the workplace, 66.6% considered it not.

Less than positive themes identified by employers

Employers who contributed to the study said the following less positive themes could be a cause of concern.

Rushing to get started

Respondents indicated there can be a tendency for workers (especially new workers) to wish to start their SVQ assessment before they have gained sufficient professional knowledge and work experience to demonstrate competence in their role. Employers were clear all candidates for SVQ should have the necessary learning and experience in place before assessment starts; 66.6% of respondents specifically said the reason for this was so candidates are in a position to complete the process once they start.

Not making use of professional knowledge in the workplace

Respondents indicated concern that staff who are candidates for, or have achieved SVQ, may not always make use of their professional knowledge in the workplace; 33.3% of respondents said SVQ candidates did not always seem to make full use of the professional knowledge that was known to be part of their SVQ assessment.

Not being aware of knowledge and experience gaps

One respondent said job applicants who have another role relevant qualification before starting employment and who go on to do SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7 might sometimes have an unrealistic view of their pre-existing level of knowledge and experience. As a result when they start SVQ assessment they may find they have knowledge or experiential gaps which need to be addressed.

10.0 Knowledge acquisition processes

We asked contributors about methods currently used to determine candidates' knowledge acquisition needs and support them in preparing for assessment towards SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7.

10.1 Online survey of assessment centres

10.1.1 Determining SVQ candidates' knowledge acquisition needs

Points of view

These points of view were expressed by contributors via the online survey of assessment centres, together with contributions made via email and telephone interviews.

'For other qualifications it could be seen differently but for SVQs readiness is shown in every day practice and needs to be demonstrated daily.'

'If it ever was, it's not realistic now to expect candidates to have all the knowledge they need before their assessment starts.'

'Pre-assessment checklists and/or a learning needs analysis have a place in showing where the candidate is in their readiness for assessment and to identify any knowledge gaps.'

'The learning needs to be targeted; it's not effective to keep going over the same ground.'

'I had done my HNC, and it was all I needed.'

'Candidates for SVQ have similar learning needs, usually its legislation, policies, procedures and theory for practice.'

'It's not always possible for candidates to have all the knowledge they need before assessment, some of it has to be gained as they go.'

Assessment centre respondents reported that a wide range of methods are currently used to determine SVQ candidates underpinning or professional knowledge acquisition needs in preparation for assessment towards SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7 (figure 1 below).

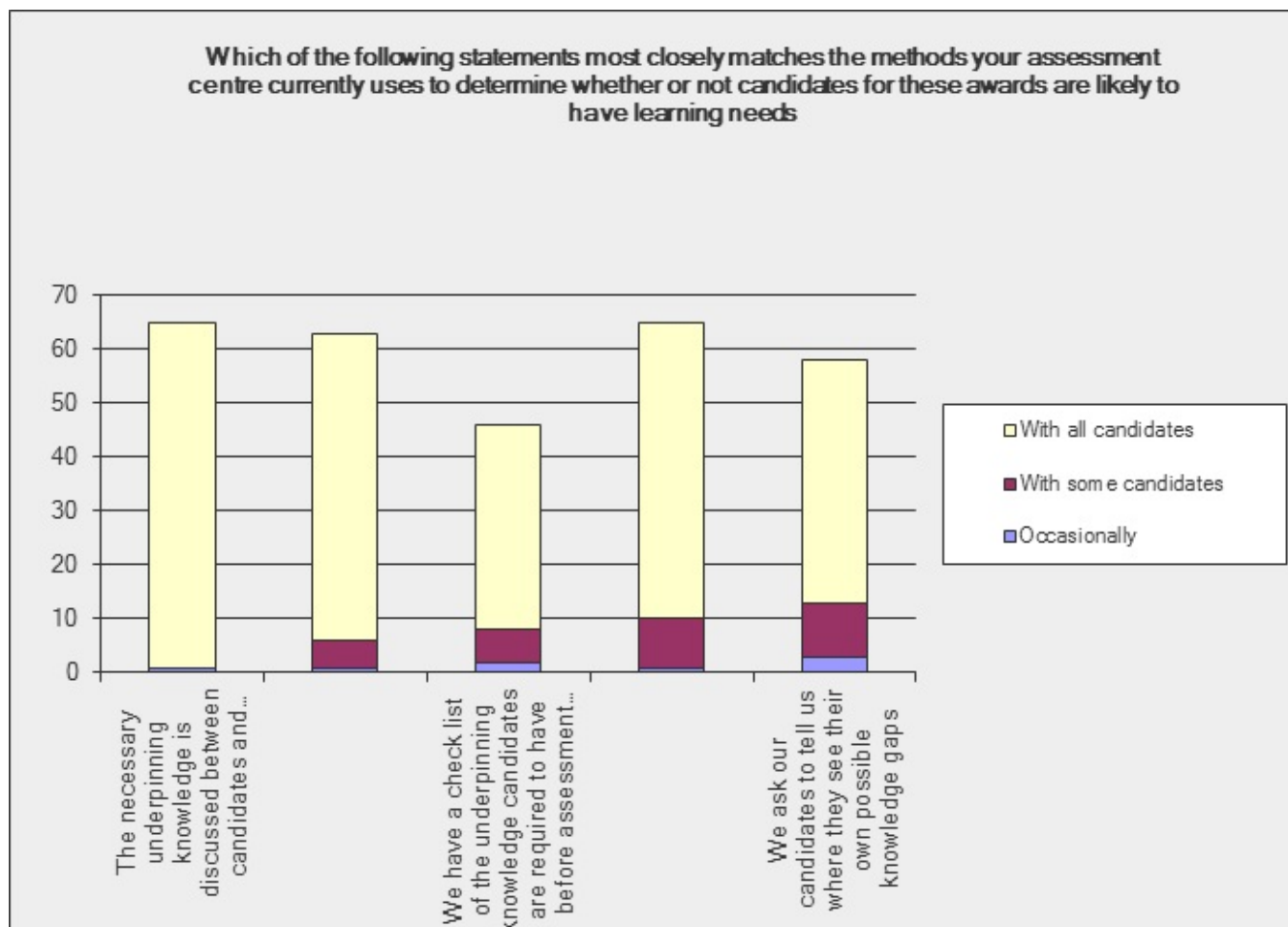


Figure 1

Assessment centres use a range of methods to determine SVQ candidates' knowledge acquisition and it is likely a variety of methods are used within individual centres. This suggests individualised processes in which methods of determining candidates' knowledge acquisition needs are personalised to their learning needs and circumstances. Comments provided by assessment centre respondents confirm that individualised approaches are seen as appropriate due to candidates' differing levels of knowledge and experience and because 'what works for one person will not necessarily work for someone else'. They further expressed the view that a full SVQ induction can enable candidates to become more aware of where their learning needs lie; making it easier to address any knowledge gaps early on.

Most frequently reported methods of determining knowledge acquisition needs

The most frequently reported methods, ie those used with all candidates, some candidates or occasionally and mentioned 50 or more times were:

1. discussion between candidates and assessors during SVQ induction
2. taking account of prior learning, then planning for any necessary new learning
3. asking line managers to confirm that candidates are ready for assessment, inclusive of underpinning knowledge (used for candidates who are in employment)
4. asking candidates to explain where they see their own possible knowledge gaps to be.

A fairly frequently used method was a check list of the underpinning knowledge candidates need to demonstrate to meet the NOS, together with planning for any necessary developmental areas; a total of 46 responses indicated this was used with all candidates, some candidates or occasionally.

Table 3 shows the methods currently used to determine SVQ candidates' knowledge acquisition and the number of assessment centre respondents that reported the use of each. Due to the nature of responses a percentage finding has not been attempted.

Table 3: Methods used by assessment centres to determine SVQ candidates' knowledge acquisition needs

Methods used by assessment centres to determine SVQ candidates knowledge acquisition needs	With all candidates	With some candidates	Occasionally
1. Discussion between candidates and assessors during SVQ induction	64	0	1
2. Taking account of candidate's prior learning, then planning for any necessary new learning	57	5	1
3. A check list of the underpinning knowledge candidates need to meet the NOS, together with planning for necessary developmental areas	38	6	2
4. Asking line managers to confirm	55	9	1

candidates are ready for assessment, inclusive of underpinning knowledge (for candidates who are in employment)			
5. Asking candidates to tell us where they see their own possible knowledge gaps	45	10	3
6. Job matches and readiness for assessment discussions along with regular study sessions	1	0	0
7. Electronic portfolio system	1	0	0
8. Personalised learning and support plans	1	0	0
9. Mandatory attendance at underpinning knowledge courses (which helps to determine gaps in knowledge)	1	0	0
10. Elearning and practical face-to-face training	1	0	0
11. Readiness is determined through the application process	1	0	0

10.1.2 Approaches to knowledge acquisition currently used

Points of view

These points of view were expressed by contributors to the online survey of assessment centres, together with contributions made via email and telephone interviews.

‘Each candidate has different needs and ways of acquiring knowledge and different methods are used in accordance with their needs.’

'Candidates need time, experience and a willingness to learn.'

'Candidates get a good understanding from attending taught courses and they get to see how ready they are (this also applies to SVQ 2 and 4) though courses can be costly and it's not always viable in the more rural locations.'

'Online learning and use of learning platforms can help to equalise the learning and keep costs down, this is probably the way of the future.'

'There is no one size fits all.'

'There is a lot available on the internet but not all candidates have good IT skills.'

'Online learning works because I work shifts and can do it when I have time.'

'Guided access to good text books and internet learning works well and it gives candidates a chance to take responsibility for their own learning.'

'Giving candidates lists of books or online resources with no guidance and support is not effective.'

'Candidates need to understand the links between knowledge and practice.'

The study indicated that a wide variety of approaches to knowledge acquisition are used by assessment centres to support candidates in acquiring necessary underpinning or professional knowledge to prepare for assessment towards SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7. There was widespread acknowledgement that many (or most) intending SVQ candidates are likely to need support to meet the underpinning knowledge requirements in the NOS. As noted in relation to methods of determining candidates knowledge acquisition needs, it is apparent there can be a diversity of approaches in regular use in individual assessment centres and many of the approaches are reported to be in use with some candidates, all candidates or occasionally. This is also considered indicative of customised approaches that are matched to candidates' needs and circumstances.

Most frequently reported approaches to knowledge acquisition

The most frequently reported approaches to knowledge acquisition, ie those used with all candidates, some candidates or occasionally and mentioned 50 or more times were:

1. the assessor assuming the role of guiding and supporting candidates' learning
2. provision of SVQ self-study materials or workbooks
3. provision of information about online resources
4. provision of library facilities.

More fairly frequently used approaches, ie those used with all candidates, some candidates or occasionally and mentioned 30 to 50 times were:

1. learning and development courses provided to social service staff in the organisation, such as moving and handling or safeguarding
2. taught SVQ courses delivered in the organisation
3. formal mentor or buddy arrangements.

Table 4 shows the approaches to knowledge acquisition currently used in assessment centres and the number of assessment centre respondents reporting the use of each. Due to the nature of responses a percentage finding has not been attempted.

Table 4: Methods of knowledge acquisition currently used

Methods of knowledge acquisition currently used	With all candidates	With some candidates	Occasionally
1. Candidates are expected to have the knowledge needed for assessment before SVQ induction takes place	33	8	4
2. The assessor assuming the role of guiding and supporting candidates' learning	55	8	3
3. Learning and development courses provided to social service staff in the organisation, such as moving and handling or safeguarding/protection	18	17	8
4. Taught SVQ courses which are delivered in the organisation	22	8	5
5. Taught SVQ courses which are delivered externally to	3	7	7

the organisation (such as at college or through distance learning)			
6. SVQ self-study materials or workbooks that can guide candidates' learning	49	8	1
7. Provision of information about online resources	62	2	1
8. Provision of library facilities	46	1	3
9. Formal mentor or buddy arrangements so candidates have someone in their workplace to help guide and support their learning	19	11	9
10. SVQ workshops following workplace induction	1	0	0
11. One-to-one meetings and study sessions which include training sessions and ongoing training sessions for all to participate in as required	1	0	0
12. A blend of underpinning knowledge classes, learning materials, library facilities and a virtual learning environment	1	0	0
13. Regular drop in support and peer support sessions, learning materials and a virtual learning environment	1	0	0
14. A MOODLE course specifically for SVQ candidates	1	0	0
15. The common knowledge reflective log	1	0	0

10.2 Knowledge acquisition processes satisfaction levels

When asked to rate the effectiveness of the knowledge acquisition processes currently used (inclusive of methods used to determine candidates' knowledge acquisition needs and approaches to knowledge acquisition) on a scale of one to 10 (low to high) assessment centre respondents were generally positive. The average rating was 7.27 and all assessment centre respondents who contributed to this part of the study (81%) rated effectiveness between five and 10.

10.3 Response to supplementary question

We asked assessment centre respondents to answer a supplementary question relevant to knowledge acquisition processes (see figure 2 below).

Study time: is there specific study or learning time in the workplace which is set aside for SVQ candidates to acquire the underpinning knowledge they need to prepare for assessment?

- 42.6% said that study or learning time is available.
- 57.4% said study or learning time is not available.

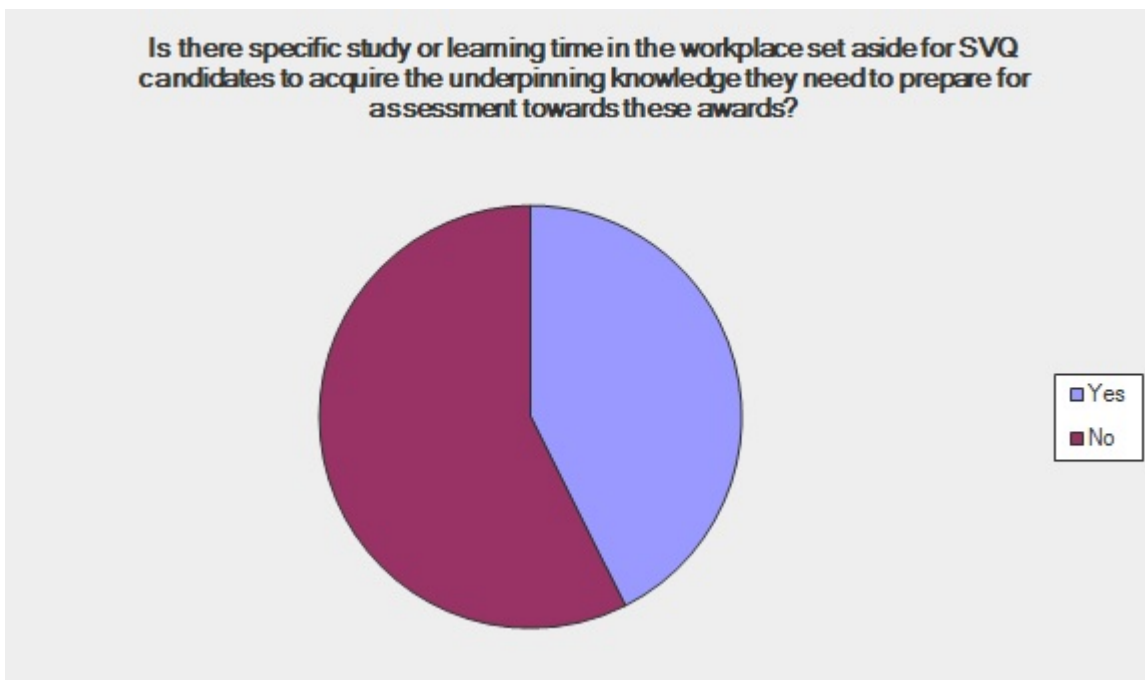


Figure 2

10.4 Views gathered through emailed responses to questions and questionnaires

Contributors to this part of the study gave their views and comments in relation to their experiences of knowledge acquisition processes.

Candidates' views

Candidates supported the view that assessment centres use individualised approaches to determining knowledge acquisition needs and to knowledge acquisition. One respondent indicated that, having already achieved a Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Social Care, they felt they were sufficiently prepared for SVQ assessment without any additional

learning, although they had undertaken learning and development courses (of different kinds) provided by their employer and used online resources. All candidates said they had direct experience of three or more of the following methods of knowledge acquisition:

1. learning and development courses provided by their employers, such as moving and handling or safeguarding
2. a specific taught SVQ course (or courses) delivered within the employing organisation
3. a taught course (or courses) delivered externally to their employing organisation
4. self-study materials or workbooks
5. use of online resources
6. use of library resources.

All candidates said they had experienced items four, five and six on the list. Half the respondents had experienced one, two and three.

Candidates' satisfaction levels

When asked to rate the effectiveness of the knowledge acquisition processes they had experienced on a scale of one to 10 (low to high) candidates' responses were generally positive, the average rating was eight (100% of the candidate respondent group contributed to this part of the study).

Assessors' views

SVQ assessor respondents supported the view that there is no such thing as one size fits all when it comes to knowledge acquisition. Assessors indicated they had direct experience of a variety of methods of underpinning knowledge acquisition and all respondents had experienced three or more of the following methods:

1. the assessor assuming the role of guiding and supporting candidates' learning
2. learning and development courses provided in the employing organisation, such as moving and handling or safeguarding
3. self-study materials or workbooks
4. use of online resources
5. use of library resources
6. formal mentor or buddy arrangements.

When asked for their views on which of the methods listed works well for SVQ candidates, 100% of assessor respondents said items one and four work well. In addition; 75% regarded item two as working well and 25% considered item three to work well.

Assessors' satisfaction levels

When asked to rate their views on the overall effectiveness of knowledge acquisition processes, using the above scale of one to 10 (low to high) assessor respondents gave a rating of five or six (75% of the assessor respondent group contributed to this part of the study).

Internal verifiers' views

As with SVQ candidates and assessors, internal verifiers indicated they had direct experience of a range of approaches to underpinning knowledge acquisition and supported the view that an individualised approach works best. When asked to specify the methods of knowledge acquisition in their experience internal verifier respondents, noted:

1. candidates being expected to have the knowledge needed for assessment before SVQ induction takes place
2. the assessor assuming the role of guiding and supporting candidates' learning
3. learning and development courses provided by their employers, such as moving and handling or safeguarding.

We also asked internal verifiers for their views on which of the methods listed works well for SVQ candidates with 100% saying item two works well.

Although internal verifiers did not indicate they had experience of other methods of knowledge acquisition, all indicated the following methods were also considered to work well:

1. providing candidates with information about online resources
2. formal mentor or buddy arrangements.

Internal verifiers' satisfaction levels

When asked to rate their views on the overall effectiveness of knowledge acquisition processes, using a scale of one to 10 (low to high) internal verifiers gave a consistent

rating of six (all of the internal verifier respondent group contributed to this part of the study).

External verifiers' views

As with SVQ candidates, assessors, and internal verifiers; external verifiers supported individualised approaches to knowledge acquisition. Respondents reported they had experienced a variety of underpinning knowledge acquisition methods and noted:

1. a specific taught SVQ course (or courses) delivered in the employing organisation
2. learning and development courses provided by their employer, such as moving and handling or safeguarding
3. internally provided SVQ self-study materials or workbooks
4. providing candidates with information about online resources
5. providing library facilities.

All external verifiers said that specific taught SVQ courses delivered in the employing organisation were an effective method of knowledge acquisition. They also noted that this approach could beneficially include assignments completed by candidates, for assessment and integration into SVQ portfolios. Forty percent of respondents noted that if the course programme did not include formalised assessment of candidates' knowledge, participating candidates might struggle with the transfer of learning to SVQ assessment. Learning and development courses provided in the employing organisation, such as those which might be part of the workplace induction programme (typically including moving and handling and safeguarding learning) were also noted by external verifiers to be important sources of underpinning knowledge for SVQ assessment purposes.

Eighty per cent of respondents mentioned self-study materials and workbooks as an approach to knowledge acquisition they had directly experienced. They noted this approach is not preferred, although there was the possibility of candidates gaining formally recorded evidence to present for assessment and potentially for inclusion in their portfolios. External verifiers also said self-study approaches might be used flexibly to take account of rurality issues and the needs of dispersed candidate groups. A high percentage (60%) of respondents commented that over time online learning may supersede workbooks and is flexible. A smaller percentage (20%) said that, in some circumstances, use of formally recorded questions to test candidates' knowledge and understanding could be an effective route to the assessment of professional knowledge.

External verifiers' satisfaction levels

When asked their views on the overall effectiveness of current knowledge acquisition processes and the assessment of underpinning or professional knowledge in relation to the NOS, 80% of external verifiers said the standard of knowledge evidence demonstration is high and the remaining 20% indicated that it is at a sufficient level. (All of the external verifier respondent group contributed to this part of the study).

10.5 Views gathered through telephone interviews

All respondents expressed their views on the importance of enabling candidates to gain the knowledge required to prepare for assessment towards SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7 through a method that is systematic and suited to their individual needs. Respondents also emphasised the importance of nurturing candidates' aptitude to take responsibility for their own learning through personal research and study. This was considered to be an important factor for continuing professional development.

In terms of approaches to knowledge acquisition, all of the respondents had a preference for taught SVQ courses delivered in the employing organisation. They considered this approach worked well for candidates and is likely to be successful in promoting knowledge acquisition. Another suggestion was that a taught course could beneficially include assignments that, once completed by candidates and assessed, might be integrated into SVQ portfolios and become part of the holistic assessment process. While views on the taught course approach were positive, there was also appreciation of the associated costs and the issues associated with rurality and the needs of dispersed candidate groups. They acknowledged these as potential barriers to the practicality of the learning course approach and also possible sources of inequality in knowledge acquisition processes.

Respondents frequently mentioned online learning and said it is a method of knowledge acquisition that has grown in popularity and use in recent years. They acknowledged the high quality of some of the free online learning materials (mentioning the SSSC Learning Zone and SQA Academy in particular). Respondents said that free online learning may represent the future for SVQ knowledge acquisition and mentioned that this approach has potential to minimise costs, deliver valuable learning and equalise opportunities for SVQ candidates across social service organisations and geographic locations.

Further methods of knowledge acquisition noted to be currently used included self-study materials and workbooks. As with the external verifier group, they acknowledged that

these are not preferred methods and respondents thought it likely that, over time, online learning might supersede them. A few respondents commented that self-study materials and workbooks can potentially provide candidates with opportunities to record and thereby evidence their knowledge ready for assessment and ultimately include it in their SVQ portfolios. They also said this approach could be used flexibly to take account of rurality issues and the needs of dispersed candidate groups. Participants reported other methods of knowledge acquisition seemed to be used less often; although all methods were seen to have a place in overall knowledge acquisition processes. For example, all respondents indicated that it can be helpful to tell candidates about resources (such as books) and this is likely to be most effective when linked to guidance that can promote effective learning, such as might be found through support from their SVQ assessor or a formal mentor or buddy system.

Telephone interview satisfaction levels

When asked their views on the overall effectiveness of current approaches to knowledge acquisition and the demonstration of underpinning knowledge by candidates for SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7, all respondents said the standard of knowledge evidence demonstration is consistently high (all of the telephone interview respondent group took part in this part of the study).

11.0 Areas of underpinning knowledge and evaluation of learning

We asked all contributors their views on areas of underpinning or professional knowledge that are included in current knowledge acquisition processes. Assessment centre respondents were also asked about the methods they use for the evaluation of learning.

11.1 Online survey of assessment centres

11.1.1 Areas of underpinning knowledge that should be included in knowledge acquisition processes

Points of view

These points of view were expressed by contributors to the online survey of assessment centres, together with contributions made via email and telephone interviews

'Having a grasp of the professional knowledge is needed for good practice.'

'Most candidates need to read up on workplace policies, legislation and guidance, be guided by their assessor and be fully supported in the workplace.'

'I would encourage candidates to read the National Care Standards and SSSC Codes of Practice and to look at their workplace policies.'

'The process should be standardised across child care and adult care.'

'Knowledge is not something we can give candidates; it's up to them to learn.'

'It's legislation, guidance, theories, research, inquiries and where to find the information.'

'What stays with me is learning about supporting service users, having more understanding of care plans, understanding relevant laws and policies and reflecting on my practice.'

'If learning does not happen as the candidate progresses, the power of what can be achieved has not really been tapped.'

'If it's not role relevant what is it for?'

'SVQ is a fusion between organisational responsibilities, good practice and reflection.'

'Developing knowledge does not always fit with milestones.'

Assessment centre respondents agreed on the areas of underpinning or professional knowledge that should be included in knowledge acquisition processes and it was clear that these reflect the NOS for SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7 (see figure 3 below). Respondents also said that they consider professional knowledge as essential to good practice.

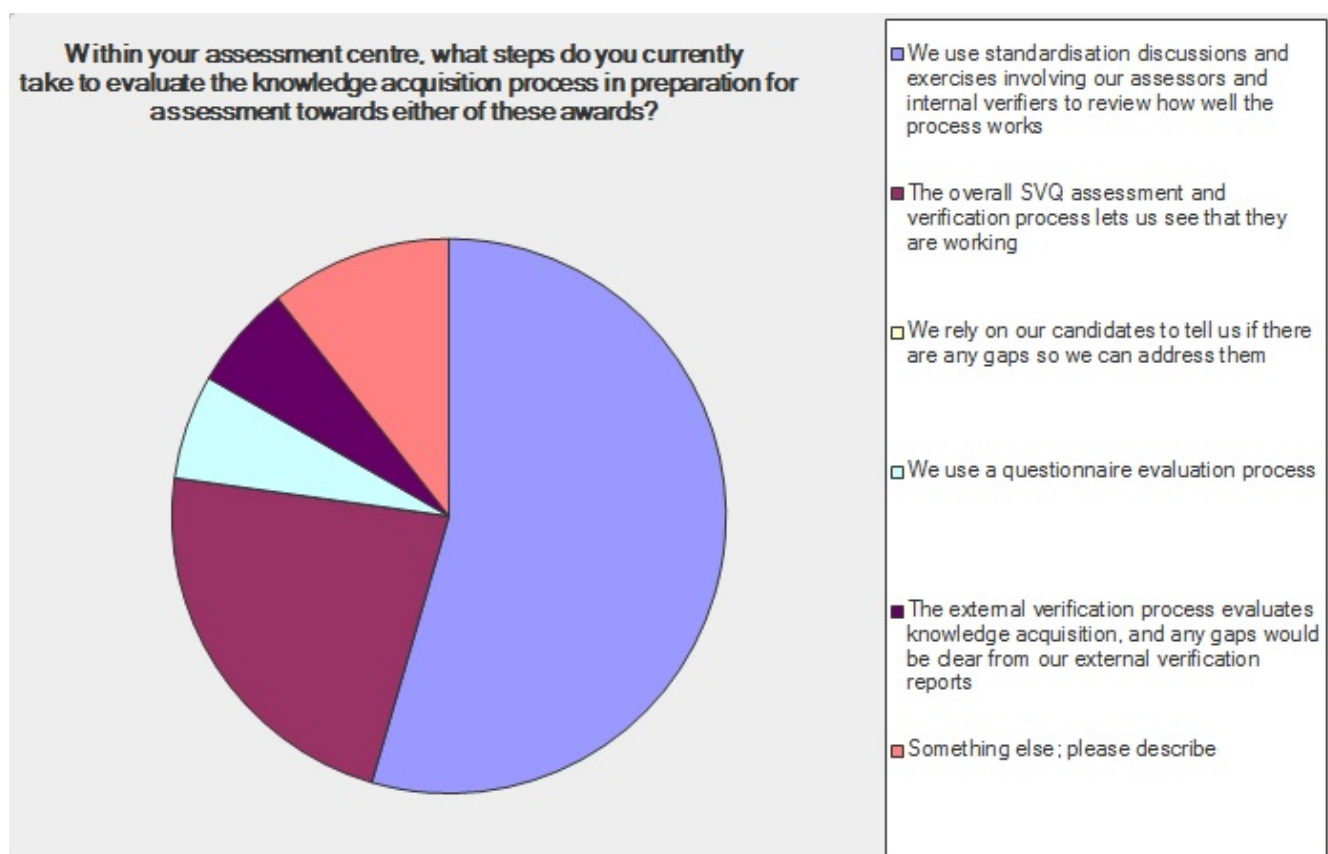


Figure 3

There was overall consensus about the essential, desirable and optional areas of knowledge which are part of current approaches to knowledge acquisition, as shown in

table 5. The table shows the total number of responses received for each area of underpinning knowledge and shows they consider most of the identified areas essential, although some were given desirable or optional status by some assessment centres (85% of assessment centre respondents contributed to this part of the study).

Table 5: Areas of underpinning knowledge included in current knowledge acquisition processes

Areas of underpinning knowledge included in current knowledge acquisition processes	Essential	Desirable	Optional
1. Social service values, principles and ethics	60	4	0
2. Legal and work setting requirements on equality, diversity, discrimination and rights	61	4	0
3. The law, policy and guidance which informs practice	60	5	0
4. Candidates' roles in promoting individuals' rights, choices, wellbeing and active participation	63	2	0
5. Health, safety and wellbeing	63	2	0
6. Effective communication	64	1	0
7. Effective record keeping and the legal requirements, policies and procedures for the security and confidentiality of information	57	8	0
8. Safeguarding (protection)	64	1	0
9. Methods of promoting personal and professional development (such as reflective practice)	55	9	0
10. Theoretical models that can promote understanding and inform practice, such as:	46	16	0
a. Human development and/or child	36	17	3

development			
b. Social influences	34	21	2
c. Person-centred practice	49	13	0
d. Methods of assessment in social care	45	10	6
e. Methods of intervention in social care	32	20	6
f. Methods of evaluation in social care	34	18	6

11.1.2 Evaluation of Learning

Points of view

Contributors from assessment centres expressed the following points of view on the online survey and via telephone interviews.

'I think knowledge becomes part of holistic good practice so that candidates may not particularly think about it but it's still there as part of what they do.'

'How do we know it's working if we do not evaluate.'

'External verifiers are active in helping us evaluate the learning.'

'I would like to think there is a positive outcome for candidates' good practice in the future, though there is no evidence to prove this, it would be a good topic for research.'

'Standardisation can be an evaluation in itself.'

'There is a need for delivery of learning but cost has a really big impact, as does geography.'

It was clear from the study that a variety of methods for the evaluation of learning are currently used by assessment centres approved to deliver SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS

(CYP) at SCQF level 7. A high percentage of assessment centres reported using essential SVQ quality assurance systems (such as standardisation, internal verification processes and external verifier visits) for learning evaluation purposes. This suggests the importance given to evaluation as a means of making sure knowledge acquisition content continues, to be relevant to the NOS and effective for candidates.

Table 6 shows the approaches to evaluation of learning reported and the percentage of assessment centres currently using them (85% of assessment centre respondents contributed to this part of the study).

Table 6: Methods of evaluation currently used

Methods of evaluation currently used	% of assessment centres
Evaluation through standardisation discussions and exercises	54.5%
Evaluation through SVQ assessment and internal verification processes	22.7%
Evaluation through a questionnaire process	6.1%
Evaluation through the external verification process	6.1%
Something else: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluation through 'skill scan' • a blend of the above methods • all of the above • pre and post-course evaluation. 	10.6%

11.2 Responses to supplementary questions

We asked assessment centre respondents two supplementary questions relating to areas of knowledge included in current knowledge acquisition processes (see figure 4 below):

- if the knowledge acquisition processes currently matched the SCQF level 7 descriptors:
 - 93.7% said they were matched
 - 6.3% said they were not
- if their centre had an expectation that assessed evidence of candidates' underpinning knowledge (such as assignments) generated through knowledge acquisition processes would be included in SVQ portfolios:

- 85.9% said they would expect to include it
- 14.1% said that they would not.

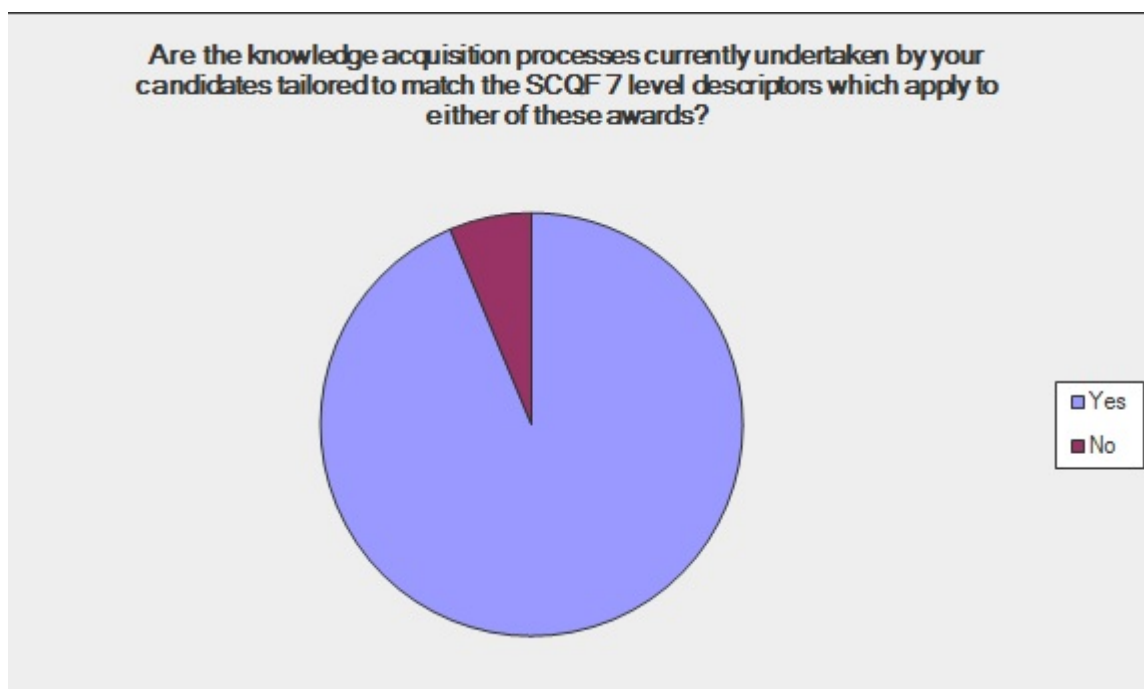


Figure 4

11.3 Views gathered through emailed responses to questions and questionnaires

Contributors to this part of the study gave their views and opinion on areas of underpinning knowledge included in current approaches to knowledge acquisition.

Candidates' views

Candidates' reported they had learned about various areas of underpinning or professional knowledge through the knowledge acquisition processes they had experienced. All candidates who responded to this part of the study said they had learned about:

1. social service values, principles and ethics
2. legal and work setting requirements on equality, diversity, discrimination and rights
3. the law, policy, and guidance which informs practice
4. candidates' roles in promoting individuals' rights, choices, wellbeing and active participation

5. methods of promoting personal and professional development such as reflective practice
6. the main stages of human development and/or child development
7. social influences
8. person-centred practice
9. methods of assessment in social care.

Fifty per cent also said they had completed learning in relation to the following areas of underpinning knowledge:

1. health, safety and wellbeing
2. effective communication
3. effective record keeping and the legal requirements, policies and procedures for the security and confidentiality of information
4. safeguarding.

All candidates said that evidence generated through the knowledge acquisition processes they had experienced was included in their portfolios and 50% said they had received time for study in the workplace.

When asked which areas of knowledge acquisition had stayed with them and had most impact on their practice they said (all candidate respondents contributed to this part of the study):

1. reflecting on practice
2. understanding more about care plans
3. feeling more able to support people who use services
4. understanding more about relevant laws, policies and procedures.

The areas of knowledge listed are not in any particular order.

Assessors' views

When asked their views on the areas of underpinning knowledge that should be included in knowledge acquisition processes and evidenced through SVQ portfolios, all assessors said they regarded the following areas of underpinning or professional knowledge as important, expected to see them well demonstrated in SVQ assessment and considered them likely to have a high beneficial impact on candidates' workplace practice:

1. social service values, principles and ethics

2. the law, policy, and guidance which informs practice
3. candidates' roles in promoting individuals' rights, choices, wellbeing and active participation
4. health, safety and wellbeing
5. effective communication
6. effective record keeping and the legal requirements, policies and procedures for the security and confidentiality of information
7. safeguarding (protection)
8. theoretical models that can promote understanding and inform practice, such as:
 - a. human development and/or child development
 - b. person-centred practice
 - c. methods of assessment in social care
 - d. methods of intervention in social care
 - e. methods of evaluation in social care.

Also 66.6% of assessors regarded the following areas of knowledge to be of the same high importance and beneficial impact:

1. legal and work setting requirements on equality, diversity, discrimination and rights
2. methods of promoting personal and professional development (such as reflective practice).

All assessor respondents said they would expect to see evidence generated by processes of knowledge acquisition included in SVQ candidates' portfolios.

When asked about any regular assessment shortfalls or gaps in relation to underpinning knowledge, all assessors identified (100% of assessors contributed to this part of the study):

1. confusion between Scottish and English law
2. application of theory in practice.

The areas of knowledge listed are not in any particular order.

Internal verifiers' views

Internal verifier responses were similar (though not identical) to those provided by assessors in relation to areas of underpinning or professional knowledge that should be included in knowledge acquisition processes and evidenced through SVQ portfolios. All

internal verifiers said they expected to see the following areas of knowledge well demonstrated through candidates' portfolios and considered them likely to have a high beneficial impact on candidates' workplace practice:

1. social service values, principles and ethics
2. legal and work setting requirements on equality, diversity, discrimination and rights
3. the law, policy, and guidance which informs practice
4. candidates' roles in promoting individuals' rights, choices, wellbeing and active participation
5. health, safety and wellbeing
6. effective communication
7. effective record keeping and the legal requirements, policies and procedures for the security and confidentiality of information
8. safeguarding (protection)
9. methods of promoting personal and professional development (such as reflective practice)
10. theoretical models that can promote understanding and inform practice, such as:
 - a. human development and/or child development
 - b. person-centred practice
 - c. methods of assessment in social care
 - d. methods of intervention in social care
 - e. methods of evaluation in social care.

Internal verifiers said they would not universally expect to see evidence generated by processes of knowledge acquisition included in candidates' SVQ portfolios; 50% said they would expect this.

When asked about any regular internal verification issues, shortfalls, or gaps in relation to the assessment of knowledge, all internal verifiers said it would make assessment and internal verification more straightforward if the universal or common knowledge number references corresponded between units. Fifty percent identified the following issues and possible shortfalls (100% of internal verifiers contributed to this part of the study):

1. theory for practice
2. potential for candidates become confused about legislation.

The areas of knowledge listed are not in any particular order.

External verifiers' views

External verifiers agreed overall with internal verifiers in relation to areas of underpinning or professional knowledge that should be included in knowledge acquisition processes and evidenced through SVQ portfolios. They described the areas of essential knowledge as the 'full range of knowledge requirements in the NOS'. All external verifiers said they expected to see the following areas of knowledge well demonstrated and robustly assessed in candidates' portfolios. They also expressed the view that these areas of professional knowledge were likely to have a high beneficial impact on candidates' workplace practice:

1. social service values, principles and ethics
2. legal and work setting requirements on equality, diversity, discrimination and rights
3. the law, policy, and guidance which informs practice
4. candidates' roles in promoting individuals' rights, choices, wellbeing and active participation
5. health, safety and wellbeing
6. effective communication
7. effective record keeping and the legal requirements, policies and procedures for the security and confidentiality of information
8. safeguarding (protection)
9. methods of promoting personal and professional development (such as reading and research, and reflective practice)
10. theoretical models that can promote understanding and inform practice, which must be delivered at the appropriate level and depth, such as:
 - a. human development and/or child development
 - b. person-centred practice
 - c. methods of assessment in social care
 - d. methods of intervention in social care
 - e. methods of evaluation in social care.

When asked to identify the areas of knowledge they regarded as having the highest importance and impact, external verifiers identified (some respondents commented on the rationale for this identification and this has been included):

1. law, policy and guidance because this might be the first time the candidate has had a chance to study these areas that should always inform their practice

2. theory for practice (which should be at the appropriate level and depth) because theory should always inform practice
3. study skills and the ability to take responsibility for own learning and research because this will promote their continuing professional development.

The areas of knowledge listed are not in any particular order.

All external verifiers who responded said they would expect to see evidence generated by processes of knowledge acquisition included in candidates' SVQ portfolios and it was noted that where candidates have evidence gained through other programmes of learning (such as a relevant HNC programme) it can be a valuable addition to portfolio development and promote holistic assessment.

When asked about any regular external verification shortfalls, gaps or issues in relation to the assessment of knowledge, external verifiers said the areas identified as highly important (law, policy and guidance, theory for practice, study skills and the ability to take responsibility for own learning and research) may also be areas of shortfall and that this is likely to be because they tend to be the most challenging areas for candidates and areas they may not have studied previously. It is considered likely that where these aspects of learning are delivered well and at the appropriate level, the beneficial outcomes are reflected in SVQ assessment and candidates' practice. Where they are delivered less well the potential for gaps and shortfalls in both assessment and practice exist (100% of internal verifiers contributed to this part of the study).

11.4 Views gathered through telephone interviews

There was wide consensus of views among those who took part in telephone interviews. Everyone who contributed to this part of the study confirmed the essential areas of knowledge for inclusion in knowledge acquisition processes are those contained in the NOS. Respondents further commented that all of these knowledge areas are regarded as likely to have a beneficial impact on SVQ candidates' workplace practice (it was acknowledged there has been no formal evaluation of these transfer processes, so further exploration would be considered valuable). Similar to external verifiers, respondents said the areas of knowledge of highest importance are also those most likely to fall short. This suggests the areas involved are considered fundamental to good practice and where they are delivered well the outcome is highly beneficial. On the other hand, where there may be issues of over or under complexity in delivery, shortfalls can occur. The areas are:

1. law, policy, guidance
2. theory for practice
3. candidates' ability to take responsibility for their own learning.

The areas of knowledge listed are not in any particular order.

Respondents confirmed that in order to be effective areas of knowledge and delivery methods they need to be appropriate to candidates' work roles and at a suitable level (as defined by the SCQF level 7 descriptors). They considered learning opportunities that fulfil these requirements to be particularly important in relation to theory for practice. They specifically highlighted the areas of human and child development as those which might sometimes be lacking in either depth or breadth or on the other hand delivered at an overly complex level. It was further mentioned that while the area of child development is included in the NOS for almost all units, in the SVQ SS (CYP) it is not mandatory for candidates to take a unit with a specific focus on this key area. They confirmed the high importance of child development knowledge to child care practitioners. All telephone interviewees said evidence of underpinning knowledge generated through knowledge acquisition processes should be included in candidates' SVQ portfolio and said that the material should 'always be easily accessible so that it can be tracked for internal and external verification purposes'.

When asked about any regular issues, gaps or shortfalls in underpinning knowledge all respondents felt that shortfalls can arise and this might sometimes be due to candidates having insufficient time for acquisition of knowledge and experience in preparing for assessment towards SVQ SSHC and SVQ SS (CYP) SCQF level 7. Respondents also said that where timed progress targets or milestones were used in the course of SVQ assessment, candidates might be unable to meet them unless they were given sufficient time for experiential and taught learning. They thought candidates who are new in role and/or have limited previous experience and knowledge to draw on were most likely to be at a disadvantage. Respondents said that although SVQs are mainly about practice, candidates always need to show they know why they work in the way they do in order to demonstrate their competence. If there was a shortfall in this essential knowledge they could not confirm their competence.

Respondents identified the following areas of knowledge that are considered to be reflective of current social service practice and not always part of current knowledge acquisition processes (100% of telephone interviewees contributed to this part of the study):

1. working with individuals who have English as a second language
2. working closely with other professions, the merging of health and social care and opportunities for different kinds of shared knowledge to be developed
3. transfer of learning and knowledge between contexts of care.

Respondents said they could address these areas of knowledge by including them in the continuing professional development opportunities available for social service staff.

12.0 The impact of universal or common knowledge on knowledge acquisition processes

Many participants in the study commented on the impact of universal or common knowledge on knowledge acquisition processes, SVQ assessment and verification. The term universal knowledge relates to knowledge specified in the NOS for SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7. The term common knowledge is used every day within SQA assessment centres. The information provided by contributors was descriptive and qualitative in nature so it is presented in narrative form.

Points of view

These points of view were expressed by contributors to the online survey of assessment centres, together with contributions made by email and telephone interviews.

'Common knowledge was introduced to get everyone thinking holistically and for avoidance of repetition.' (awarding body representative).

'It can be difficult to get the assessment balance right.'

'It was originally universal knowledge, may be this was better.'

'It would be better if the numbers linked up between the units.'

'It's difficult knowing the best way to show the candidates' underpinning knowledge across the units.'

'One of the tools I use is the common knowledge reflective log, prior to the candidate undertaking their SVQ.'

'I would like to see a standard candidate handbook with underpinning knowledge and assignments.'

'I have issues with some of the NOS because some of the common knowledge is not relevant to the standard.'

'If too many common knowledge requirements are present it can detract from the essential knowledge for the standard or unit.'

12.1 Online survey of assessment centres

Many assessment centre respondents who expressed views about the impact of universal or common knowledge said that they appreciated the importance of avoiding over assessment and the benefits of being able to assess candidates' knowledge in a more unified way. Although in practice it could be testing to find the right balance of assessment between integration into unit specific evidence and other approaches to evidence gathering such as assignments. They also indicated uncertainties about what is seen as the best approach or approaches to assessment of universal or common knowledge. A wish for clarity over these matters was widely mentioned (65% of assessment centres commented on the impact of universal or common knowledge).

12.2 Views gathered through emailed responses to questions and questionnaires

Contributors to this part of the study also commented on their experience of the impact of universal or common knowledge on processes of knowledge acquisition.

Candidates' views

Candidates had probably not experienced SVQ assessment before the introduction of universal or common knowledge and expressed no views regarding this.

Assessors' views

Assessors who expressed views on the impact of universal or common knowledge, had the same views of assessment centre respondents, saying they sometimes felt unsure of which was the best route to demonstrate and assess of universal or common knowledge. They also mentioned they would find a standardised approach helpful (50% of assessors commented on the impact of universal or common knowledge).

Internal verifiers' views

Internal verifiers reported similar views to assessors and said it could be difficult to feel assured about the right route to assessment (and confirmation of assessment through internal verification). Internal verifiers also said standardised assessment could be helpful and that universal or common knowledge assessment would be streamlined if the number references were consistent between units (100% of internal verifiers commented on the impact of universal or common knowledge).

External verifiers' views

External verifiers who expressed views on the impact of universal or common knowledge reported recognition of the uncertainties surrounding the best (or most appropriate) approaches to assessment and emphasised that their main concern is to make sure the NOS are fully addressed through assessment centre systems. They also said that, from an external verification perspective, knowledge continues to be demonstrated at a satisfactory level in most assessment centres and welcomed the increasing use of professional discussion as a route to assessment of both universal/common and unit specific knowledge.

External verifiers said that although universal or common knowledge might be acquired and assessed through macro approaches; micro level assessor judgement is always necessary to determine individual candidates' ability to apply their knowledge in the context of the NOS (60% of external verifiers commented on the impact of universal or common knowledge).

12.5 Views gathered through telephone interviews

Telephone interviewees said the term universal knowledge is used in the NOS and confirmed this is an appropriate description of knowledge requirements which arise across both mandatory and optional units for SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7. They observed that the introduction of universal or common knowledge was to encourage candidates and assessment centre staff to think holistically about assessment of essential knowledge, to avoid repetition and to reduce the possibility of over assessment.

Telephone interviewees mirrored the comments made by external verifiers and said their primary concern is to make sure the NOS are fully addressed through assessment centre systems. They also recognised the reported uncertainties regarding the balance of assessment and appropriate routes to assessment. They considered it likely these will be resolved by familiarity and over time. Respondents also emphasised the importance of unit specific knowledge requirements in terms of providing essential unit context.

Telephone interviewees recognise the challenges associated with making sure SVQ candidates can gain essential experience and knowledge to match the NOS and in particular the body of professional universal or common knowledge. Respondents observed that setting time and progress targets (or milestones) for SVQ candidates was

often unhelpful as these measures are likely to detract from overall candidate development and holistic assessment approaches. They might also place candidates and assessors under pressure, especially where there are funding links involved. They mentioned the target setting issues assessment centres could encounter working with modern apprentices.

Telephone interviewees would like a standardised approach (such as a set of assignments or similar) that could be used by assessment centres to make sure they were taking the best possible approach to the assessment of universal or common knowledge. However this was considered unlikely to be a positive route, as the development of assessment systems which match the NOS and the needs and circumstances of candidates is a quality assured assessment centre responsibility (100% of telephone interviewees commented on the impact of universal or common knowledge).

13.0 What might support knowledge acquisition for future SVQ candidates?

We asked all contributors to the study for their views on what might support knowledge acquisition for future SVQ candidates. We received a wide variety of suggestions.

13.1 Online survey of assessment centres

When asked if they could think of anything that might support knowledge acquisition for future candidates in preparation for SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7, assessment centres provided many suggestions. This suggests assessment centre staff are actively considering this topic.

There was a total of 52 suggestions (as expected there was some common ground) shown in table 7. We have combined suggestions where possible to avoid repetition. They have also been grouped into suggestions that might be considered the concerns of candidates, assessment centre staff, employers, external organisations and a small set that could potentially fit with many (or none) of those groups. There is a certain amount of overlap and we fully acknowledge that a few suggestions might be in several places. The suggestions are not in any particular order. These are not the only possible developments that could be helpful to future SVQ candidates (73% of assessment centres contributed to this part of the study).

Table 7: Suggestions received from assessment centres

Groups	Suggestions received
Suggestions for candidates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being prepared to take time to build up necessary experience and knowledge. 2. Having a positive study ethos and willing to learn. 3. Taking responsibility for own learning and making full use of the resources available. 4. Reading the National Care Standards and SSSC Codes of Practice, workplace policies and relevant legislation and guidance.
Suggestions for assessment centre staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Promoting access to good support materials and letting candidates know what is out there. 6. Encouraging candidates to use online resources

	<p>such as the SQA Academy, SSSC Learning Zone and Skills for Care resources.</p> <p>7. Working with employers in an integrated way and developing clear progression routes.</p> <p>8. One-to-one assessor and candidate learning sessions when needed and use of the common knowledge reflective log.</p> <p>9. Themed courses linked to the NOS.</p> <p>10.If possible not being funding driven.</p>
<p>Suggestions for employing organisations</p>	<p>11.Providing study time in the workplace and allowing time for candidates to gain necessary knowledge and experience.</p> <p>12.Mandatory standards of in-house training.</p> <p>13.Planned workplace induction that matches the NOS.</p> <p>14.Employers understanding about the amount and depth of knowledge candidates require.</p> <p>15.Providing candidates with free copies of important documents such as SSSC Codes of Practice.</p> <p>16.Raised commitment to staff learning and development and a fuller understanding of the SVQ assessor’s role.</p>
<p>Suggestions for external organisations</p>	<p>17.Online learning that is free and regularly updated for all candidates, assessors, verifiers and assessment centre staff to access.</p> <p>18.A standard workbook including research evidence that all candidates need to complete before assessment.</p> <p>19.Publication of a book, set of books or an online course specific to Scottish law.</p> <p>20.SSSC learning apps to be accessible across a range of devices (not specific to one type of device).</p> <p>21.Free resources that don’t need a computer, not everyone has IT skills.</p> <p>22.Links from one relevant online site to others.</p>

	23. Nationally certificated induction for care workers that links to the NOS.
Other suggestions	24. Candidates having an HNC or equivalent before the assessment starts. 25. Opportunities for candidates to develop IT skills.

13.2 Views gathered through emailed responses to questions and questionnaires

Contributors to this part of the study also gave their views on what might be helpful to future SVQ candidates as they acquire knowledge in preparation for their assessment. As above, suggestions are not in any particular order, neither is there any intention to suggest these are the only possible developments that could be helpful to future candidates.

Candidates', assessors', internal verifiers' and external verifiers' views

We asked candidates, assessors, internal verifiers and external verifiers for their views on what might be helpful supports to the SVQ candidates of future, and received a number of suggestions. They are in table 8. To avoid repetition suggestions are combined where possible (100% of the respondent groups contributed to this part of the study).

Table 8: Suggestions received from candidates, assessors, internal verifiers and external verifiers

Respondent groups	Suggestions
Candidates' suggestions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Having enough experience in the workplace. 2. Having a very good working knowledge of the organisation's policies and procedures. 3. Undertaking the learning before starting the SVQ.
Assessors' suggestions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Workbooks or resources that need candidates to reflect on the National Care Standards, SSSC Codes of Practice and the theory and legislation relevant to the SVQ and the candidate's job role. 5. Being supported in their learning by appropriately trained staff from within the candidate's employing

	organisation.
Internal verifiers' suggestions	6. Accessing the resources provided by SSSC and SQA Academy.
External verifiers' suggestions	<p>Before candidates start any SVQ assessment they should do the following.</p> <p>7. Employers and those delivering the award should make sure they are in a job role that matches the demands of the NOS and is at an appropriate level.</p> <p>8. They should have some evidence of recorded continuing professional development (which would be in line with their SSSC registration requirements).</p> <p>9. They should have formally recorded evidence of their knowledge as well as their practice (this is essential).</p> <p>10. They should have completed a full application form, including a detailed summary of their practice experience with examples (this is one way evidence of knowledge and practice can be recorded and evidenced before assessment).</p> <p>All of the above would allow candidates to be better prepared and more likely to be able to meet the NOS.</p>

13.3 Views gathered through telephone interviews

All telephone interviewees expressed their views on what might potentially support knowledge acquisition for future candidates undertaking SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7.

They confirmed the value of existing resources and examples given, such as the online learning resource relevant to Scottish legislation recently developed by and available through the SQA Academy, also the Learning Zone resources available through the SSSC website (they considered both to be high quality and free to access). They expressed the

view that 'centres need to know what is out there' and the importance of assessment centres taking a proactive role in locating and using available learning resources. They also mentioned that assessment centres could potentially keep each other informed about learning materials they found helpful.

When asked about specific ideas which might support future candidates in the acquisition of knowledge, respondents agreed with the following suggestion:

Ideally a free online learning course (or courses) for all SVQ candidates. This would mean all candidates had equal access to the underpinning knowledge learning resources they need for their SVQ and would not add to the associated costs for organisations.

They said that if such a resource was developed, it would be an effective contribution to the development of a shared SVQ learning culture, with benefits for all participants and stakeholders.

While this was considered, the costs, time and resource commitments necessary to design, establish and maintain such a learning resource were highlighted and the possibilities for inter-agency working was mentioned (100% of telephone interviewees contributed to this part of the study).

Full list of suggestions received

A full list of suggestions received for the future support of knowledge acquisition is in Appendix 3.

14.0 Conclusions and recommendations

The study generated a great deal of qualitative and quantitative information regarding the views of assessment centre respondents, SVQ candidates, assessors, internal verifiers, external verifiers and awarding body representatives about processes of knowledge acquisition in current use and other relevant factors.

The following points of view are not considered conclusions as such, however they represent the comments made by study participants in relation to the role and importance of knowledge acquisition in terms of assessment towards SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7 and for continuing good practice, so are relevant to include.

Points of view

These points of view were expressed by contributors to the online survey of assessment centres, together with contributions made via email and telephone interviews

'Having a grasp of the professional knowledge necessary for good practice is essential.'

'The relationship between underpinning knowledge, SVQ assessment and ongoing good practice is that knowledge is necessary for good practice.'

'Knowledge is of high importance but it needs to be relevant to the standard and the focus of the unit.'

'I believe that candidates do carry their knowledge forward to their practice.'

'The best thing about knowledge acquisition is when candidates can apply their knowledge to practice and really get it.'

'It's not working when there is a surface understanding and nothing to back it up.'

Study conclusions are in accordance with the aims for the study and are in part 3.0.

1. To capture a snapshot of knowledge acquisition processes, such as the methods and approaches currently used to determine candidates' knowledge acquisition needs and support them to acquire knowledge in preparation for SVQ assessment towards SVQ SSHC and SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7.

2. To gain an overview of employers' satisfactions and concerns in relation to knowledge acquisition.
3. To explore views about areas of underpinning knowledge included in current approaches to knowledge acquisition and the evaluation of learning.
4. To gather any expressed views about the impact of universal or common knowledge on knowledge acquisition process.
5. To gather views on what might support knowledge acquisition for future SVQ candidates.

14.1 Employers' satisfactions and concerns about knowledge acquisition processes.

Conclusions

Social service employers generally said they were satisfied with the knowledge acquisition processes currently used. However, they raised concerns about candidates being sufficiently ready for assessment and about them sufficiently demonstrating some areas of knowledge in workplace practice. These areas were: the law, policy and guidance which inform practice, specialist areas and theories for practice.

Recommendation: that a broader survey of social service employers' satisfactions and concerns is carried out to further explore employers' perspectives and priorities for the future.

14.2 Knowledge acquisition processes

Conclusions

Most assessment centres use pre-assessment methods to determine the knowledge acquisition needs of candidates undertaking SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7 and they currently use a diverse approach to knowledge acquisition. It was clear that multiple approaches are currently operational and may be in use in individual centres. Responses indicated that assessment centres often customise approaches to knowledge acquisition to meet the particular needs and circumstances of candidates. The most frequently reported methods of knowledge acquisition were: the assessor assuming the role of guiding and supporting candidates' learning, use of self-study materials or workbooks and provision of information about online resources or library facilities. Views gathered through emailed questionnaires, questions and telephone interviews generally

supported these findings, although the methods of knowledge acquisition reported varied and they expressed concerns relating to equality of learning opportunities. Satisfaction levels related to knowledge acquisition processes revealed a positive picture, ranging from mid to high point levels of satisfaction.

Recommendation: that further research be carried out to establish the most effective methods of knowledge acquisition for candidates undertaking SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7 (and potentially other social services and healthcare SVQ awards).

14.3 Areas of underpinning knowledge and evaluation of learning

Conclusions

Assessment centres reported a wide consensus over the areas of knowledge included in current approaches to knowledge acquisition and these reflected the NOS. There was a degree of variance relating to areas considered essential, desirable or optional. Most assessment centres said they matched the learning they provided to the SCQF level 7 descriptors and expected evidence of underpinning or professional knowledge generated through knowledge acquisition processes to appear in SVQ portfolios.

There was shared identification of the areas in which knowledge was needed. These were: the law, policy and guidance needed to inform practice and theory for practice. The same areas were also identified as those in which a shortfall was most likely. This change suggests these areas of knowledge have a high beneficial impact when delivered at an appropriate depth and level; shortfalls can occur if they are delivered less well.

It was clear most assessment centres take steps to evaluate knowledge acquisition processes; the most frequently reported evaluation method arises naturally through essential SVQ systems and was 'through standardisation discussions and exercises'.

Views gathered through emailed questionnaires, questions and telephone interviews were supportive of these findings and respondents confirmed their belief that knowledge acquisition processes have a high beneficial impact on workplace practice (although they acknowledged there has been no formal evaluation).

Contributors suggested some areas of knowledge which might be topics for inclusion in future knowledge acquisition processes. These were; working with individuals who have English as a second language, working closely with other professions together with opportunities for shared knowledge to be developed and the transfer of knowledge

between contexts of care. The high importance of child development knowledge for child care practitioners was emphasised.

Recommendation: that further research is carried out to explore areas of knowledge included in knowledge acquisition processes, for the purpose of making sure they continue to reflect current social service practice and the NOS.

14.4 The impact of universal or common knowledge on knowledge acquisition processes

Conclusions

Comments made by assessment centres generally expressed their appreciation of the benefits linked to avoidance of over assessment and assessing candidates' knowledge in a more streamlined way. They also reported uncertainties about the balance of assessment and what might be regarded as the most appropriate approaches to assessment of universal or common knowledge. A desire for further guidance over these issues was widely expressed. Views gathered through emailed questionnaires, questions and telephone interviews indicated similar uncertainties amongst assessors and internal verifiers, which external verifiers and awarding body representatives acknowledged. They thought it likely that familiarity and time would resolve the uncertainties and confirmed that the responsibility for developing and maintaining systems which fully address the NOS continues to lie with assessment centres.

Recommendation: that consideration is given to methods of promoting familiarity with the body of universal or common knowledge and perhaps to the sharing of experiences relevant to suitable assessment approaches.

14.5 What might support knowledge acquisition for future SVQ candidates?

Conclusions

We received a wide range of suggestions relating to steps which might be taken by SVQ candidates, assessment centres, employers, external organisations and others. Views gathered by email and telephone interviews were generally supportive of these suggestions and provided additional contributions. While some of these suggestions were free, respondents acknowledged the potential high costs of others.

Recommendation: that in the shorter term consideration is given to researching assessment centre views on the most helpful way to promote awareness of relevant online and other learning materials that are already available and free to access. In the longer term consideration might be given to researching the potential benefits and resource commitments associated with development of SVQ specific online learning (ideally this might also be printer friendly to promote access for individuals who prefer paper based learning methods or do not have access to information technology).

List of tables

Table number	Page number	Description
1.	14	Percentage of responses received from respondent groups.
2.	17	Areas of knowledge considered by employers to be satisfactorily and less than satisfactorily demonstrated.
3.	22	Methods used by assessment centres to determine SVQ candidates knowledge acquisition needs.
4.	25	Methods of knowledge acquisition currently used.
5.	32	Areas of underpinning knowledge included in current knowledge acquisition processes.
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7.	44	Suggestions received from assessment centre respondents.
8.	46	Suggestions received from candidates, assessors, internal verifiers and external verifiers.
9.	59	Appendix 3: Full list of suggestions received.

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Hicks, C. and Hennessy, D. (2001), An Alternative Technique for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Continuing Professional Development Courses for Health Care Professionals. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 9, 39-49.

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Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) www.cipd.co.uk

City and Guilds www.cityandguilds.com

Scottish Qualifications Authority – SQA Academy www.sqaacademy.org.uk

Scottish Qualifications Authority – SQA Care www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45285.html

Scottish Social Services Council – Learning Zone learn.sssc.uk.com

APPENDIX 1

Brief case study examples

A few respondents to the randomised emailed questionnaires, questions and structured telephone interviews chose to provide brief case study examples of the ways in which underpinning or professional knowledge can promote good practice. These are reproduced for illustrative purposes. Please note that we don't identify respondents, SVQ candidates, assessment centre staff or people who use services in these brief case studies.

Case study 1

This candidate worked in a resource centre service for people who have mental health issues. While she was studying relevant legislation for her SVQ, she developed a real interest and expertise, so she became a resource for people who use the service, her colleagues and other professionals. As her assessor I learned a lot from her.

Case study 2

I was working with a candidate employed in homeless services. He hadn't had much chance to study theory before and it was a struggle to find time to get down to it but when he did, it made sense to him and helped him see his work with people who use the service in a new way. He showed through his assessment that he could apply his knowledge to his practice and it was clear to me that this was something he got a lot out of.

Case study 3

One of the areas that I sometimes find candidates in residential or day service settings struggle with is relating the safeguarding unit to their practice. This is because they tend to assume the people they work with do not have safeguarding needs. Supporting them to think about when people's rights have been infringed, such as by someone going into their space uninvited or when someone is not really listened to, helps them to put the unit in context and makes them think about how they practise.

Case study 4

In child care settings staff who do not have an understanding of child development are at a disadvantage. Supporting them to learn about the developmental stages makes a massive difference to their practice and also supports them to progress through their SVQ assessment. You can use a whole range of methods to support them; often just

giving them a good child development book to read, one that is at the right level and depth, starts them off.

APPENDIX 2

Assessed samples

As part of the study we provided the (anonymous) SVQ knowledge evidence samples presented on the following pages to assessment centres and asked respondents to give their views on the acceptability of each one. The boxes at the foot of each sample indicate the outcome, along with a few related feedback notes that you might address to the fictional candidate.

Please note that no details about people who use services, SVQ candidates or assessment centre staff have been included in these samples and the initials used to indicate people who use services are entirely fictional.

The samples relate to knowledge evidence from two mandatory SVQ units which appear in the undertaking SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) at SCQF level 7:

SCHDHSC0034 - Promote the safeguarding of children and young people

Knowledge 22 - Theories underpinning our understanding of child development and factors that affect it.

SCDHSC0035 - Promote the safeguarding of Individuals

Knowledge 22 - Theories underpinning our understanding of human development and factors that affect it.

Sample 1

In my work with TB, I have always considered his individuality and development. I feel there are a range of life factors that have affected his progress, in particular his transition to young adulthood. For example, he has tended to experience difficult family relationships throughout his life. The family household has always seemed to be quite chaotic and people come and go in TB's life in an unanticipated way, such as when his birth father spent time in prison and when he and his siblings are sent to stay with extended family for periods of time. I think this has affected his ability to trust as indicated in Erikson's theory of ages and stages of human development, because his relationships and experience of family life has been inconsistent. Erikson's theory includes the development of people at all life stages from infancy to adulthood and states that the individual must resolve different issues at different life stages, such as issues of trust which if not resolved, can have negative consequences throughout life, eg by affecting the individual's ability to trust others. Freud also wrote about human and child development and said that the first few years of life are vital to the way a child's or adult's personality develops, as TB seems to have had these issues throughout his life I feel this is also relevant here.

This would be acceptable	78.6	This would not be acceptable	21.4
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73% of assessment centres participated in this part of the study.

Possible feedback notes

- It is good to see you are applying your knowledge of theory to the work you are doing with TB.
- It would be good if you could be a bit more specific about Erikson's ages and stages and where you see TB's development in this context. You could also do the same for your reference to Freud.
- Also could you give a date to these theories?

Sample 2

In working with KR I have made use of my learning about child development to help me consider and review my practice and my contribution to the goals we are working towards. KR is a young adult who has had a difficult experience of family life. She lives with her mother who has physical and psychological health issues, seldom leaves the family home and frequently looks to KR to provide support for her. This has meant that KR missed a lot of school days and did not have many opportunities to build friendships with her peers or to socialise. As a result she seems to be quite isolated and now that she has left school is struggling to consider her options about further education or employment. KR has also told me she feels guilty when she goes out and leaves her mother home alone for any period of time, even although she knows her mother is safe in this environment and she finds it difficult to be with her. She says she feels confused by her feelings and also cannot think of a way to make changes. I attended a learning and development course about child development which introduced me to the work of Brigid Daniels and I got her book out of the library (*Child Development for Child Care and Protection Workers*, 2010) this made me more aware of resilience and attachment. I learned that resilience is largely founded on attachment and where attachments are insecure children and young people may show one of four patterns 'avoidant, ambivalent, disorganised or anxious preoccupation'. I believe that KR is showing signs of disorganised attachment as she shows contradictory behaviours in that she does not seem to feel she should spend time away from her mother and does not find it easy to be with her and is feeling confused by these responses. Having reflected on this I have been part of developing goals for working with KR, one of which is to encourage her towards feeling she can have time for herself and to gradually build her resilience through broadening out her opportunities. It is hoped this also might in the longer term benefit her relationship with her mother. Another theory I have drawn on is the 8 stages of Man psychosocial model developed by Erik Erikson (*Insight and Responsibility*, 1964) as a young adult KR is at the life stage Erikson calls 'identity v role confusion' where the main question she is likely to ask herself 'who am I' and what social relationships are likely to be very important as she progresses to adulthood. For KR to make this transition she needs to have an opportunity to have time for herself and to think about what she wants to do.

This would be acceptable	91.1%	This would not be acceptable	8.9%
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73% of assessment centres participated in this part of the study.

Possible feedback notes

- You did well to link the work you are doing with KR to your knowledge of theory and I think this has been insightful.
- It's good you have provided a reference; this helps me to see some of the research you have done.

Sample 3

NS is a young adult who lives in emergency accommodation; he has had no recent contact with his family. As NS's key worker I have been very concerned about what I see as his self-esteem issues. For example, he tends to isolate himself from others and does not seem to find it easy to relate to his peers or to go out and about. I feel this may be related to his difficult family background as NS has experienced a great deal of loss in his life and I think he may be feeling that because he is alone no one is interested in him. My role is to encourage NS to work towards achieving an independent housing tenancy and to consider his options about lifestyle, continuing his education and possible employment. I recently saw information on the internet about the theory that low self-esteem is something that often affects young adults who have no family contact or who are homeless and I read how important it is for them to experience being treated positively as this can help them to see themselves more positively and therefore progress their development. This is something I am using in my work with NS and to which I think he is responding quite well. I am also aware from training courses I went on that, while NS was homeless his needs were not being met, however NS's basic needs are now being met because he is in emergency accommodation and the theory states that this also will help him to feel more secure about himself and this can raise his self-esteem and help his development.

This would be acceptable	17.5%	This would not be acceptable	82.5%
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73% of assessment centres participated in this part of the study.

Possible feedback notes

- This is an excellent start and it's good to see that you are undertaking research relevant to your work and your SVQ.
- There is evidence of your advanced thinking here and this will be a help in your work with NS.
- We need to think about how you can give a source for your research into theory, this will help you work towards completing this reflective account
- In my assessment you are working towards two examples of relevant theory here and this is important as the knowledge requirement specifies theories (plural).

Let's talk about this when we meet and perhaps plan for some professional discussion.

APPENDIX 3

Table 9

Full list of suggestions received for the support of knowledge acquisition for future candidates undertaking SVQ SSHC and/or SVQ SS (CYP) SCQF level 7.

<p>Suggestions for candidates</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being prepared to take time to build up necessary experience and knowledge. 2. Having a positive study ethos and being willing to learn. 3. Taking responsibility for own learning and making full use of the resources available. 4. Reading the National Care Standards and SSSC Codes of Practice, workplace policies and relevant legislation and guidance.
<p>Suggestions for assessment centre staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Promoting access to good support materials and letting candidates know what is out there. 6. Encouraging candidates to use online resources such as the SQA Academy, SSSC Learning Zone and Skills for Care resources. 7. Working with employers in an integrated way and developing clear progression routes. 8. One-to-one assessor and candidate learning sessions when they are needed and use of the common knowledge reflective log. 9. Themed courses that are linked to the NOS. 10. Not being driven by funding.
<p>Suggestions for employing organisations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Providing study time in the workplace and allowing time for candidates to acquire necessary knowledge and experience. 12. Mandatory standards of in-house training. 13. Planned workplace induction that matches the NOS. 14. Employers understanding the amount and depth of

	<p>knowledge candidates need.</p> <p>15. Providing candidates with free copies of important documents such as SSSC Codes of Practice.</p> <p>16. Raised commitment to staff learning and development and a fuller understanding of the SVQ assessor's role.</p>
Suggestions for external organisations	<p>17. Free online learning and regular updates for all candidates, assessors, verifiers and assessment centre staff to access.</p> <p>18. A standard workbook including research evidence that all candidates need to complete before assessment.</p> <p>19. Publication of a book, set of books or an online course specific to Scottish law.</p> <p>20. SSSC learning apps to be accessible across a range of devices (not specific to one type of device).</p> <p>21. Free resources that don't need a computer, not everyone has IT skills.</p> <p>22. Links from one relevant online site to others.</p> <p>23. Nationally certificated induction for social service workers that links to the NOS.</p>
Other suggestions	<p>24. Candidates having an HNC or equivalent before assessment starts.</p> <p>25. Opportunities for candidates to develop IT skills.</p>
Candidates' suggestions	<p>26. Having enough experience in the workplace.</p> <p>27. Having a very good working knowledge of the organisation's policies and procedures.</p> <p>28. Getting the learning before starting the SVQ.</p>
Assessors' suggestions	<p>29. Candidate workbooks or resources that require candidates to reflect on the National Care Standards, SSSC Codes of Practice and the theory and legislation relevant to the SVQ and the candidate's job role.</p>

	30. Being supported in their learning by appropriately trained staff from within the candidate's employing organisation.
Internal verifiers' suggestions	31. Accessing the resources provided by the SSSC and SQA Academy.
External verifiers' suggestions	<p>32. Before candidates start any SVQ assessment they should do the following.</p> <p>33. Employers and those delivering the award should make sure the candidate is in a job role that matches the demands of the NOS and is at an appropriate level.</p> <p>34. They should have some evidence of recorded continuing professional development (which would be in line with their SSSC registration commitments).</p> <p>35. They should have formally recorded evidence of their knowledge as well as their practice (this is essential).</p> <p>36. They should have completed an application form, including a detailed summary of their practice experience with examples (this is one way evidence of knowledge and practice can be recorded and evidenced before assessment).</p> <p>All of the above would allow candidates to be better prepared and therefore more likely to be able to meet the NOS.</p>
Telephone interview suggestions	37. Ideally an online learning course (or courses) might be developed which would be available free of charge to all SVQ candidates. This would mean all candidates had equal access to the underpinning knowledge learning resources they need for their SVQ and would not add to the associated costs for organisations.



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