



# National Advocacy Qualification Award project

March 20<sup>th</sup> 2007

**Welcome to the first Award Update.** This is a monthly email bulletin which will keep you informed on new developments and any decisions reached. In this first bulletin we concentrate on why an advocacy qualification is being created and how you can get involved.



## So why an advocacy qualification and why now?

It's a good question! There are lots of local advocacy courses which are available to train advocates - why create a new one?

Well the big reason why a qualification is now necessary is the introduction of the new role of an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate. The Act which introduced this role says that IMCA's must complete a Nationally recognised training award - this qualification in the long term will prepare these advocates for the role.



But the qualification could also extend to other types of advocacy and it seems sensible to consider developing nationally recognised awards for other pathways such as mental health advocacy and children's advocacy. People have also suggested developing units on peer or self advocacy, older people, ICAS, managing advocates, and advocating with learning disabled people. Nothing will be decided until stakeholders have had chance to explore the options + feedback views. ✨ ✨ ✨

## What are the benefits of a qualification?

### A qualification can:

- offer tangible evidence of quality and competency
- raise confidence of (and in) advocates
- offer career progression and opportunity to move to different specialisms
- increase profile and trust in advocacy services
- provide uniform set of competencies advocates have
- create consistent expectations from service users
- can assist with commissioning of service
- improves consistency and standards of training
- ensures relevant content of training
- creates transparency in training and assessment

### However the qualification must:

- ensure the integrity of grass roots advocacy is retained
- ensure that different models of advocacy are respected
- consider resource implications
- ensure accessibility and independence



## Who are the Stakeholders?



Firstly, **advocates, trainers and advocacy services** will need to identify what is needed within the qualification, the length and level(s) it is offered at and how people will access it. **People who have used, or who are eligible to use advocacy services** also have an essential role to play in identifying what skills advocates should have and how 'qualified' an advocate should be. User groups may also be interested in developing a pathway in self or peer advocacy. **Sector Skills Councils** manage National Occupational Standards (NOS) which describe the various tasks within a role and will be involved in mapping NOS to the training content. Lastly an **Awarding Body** will help to write the structure of the qualification and will be involved in the long term delivery.

## So, what's happened so far?



The first two months of the Award project have been spent working with Sector Skills Councils to establish the viability of developing an advocacy qualification and researching the various options that are available.

So far, we have learnt about a Vocational Related Qualification (VRQ) which assesses a person's knowledge and understanding (ie can you *explain* advocacy?) and a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) which assess a person's ability or competence to do a job (ie can you *provide* advocacy?).



There are other options which are also available including the option of developing a locally accredited programme.

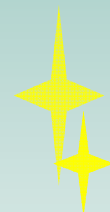
Time is also being spent to raise awareness of the project and recruit a Working Group who will inform the project.



### **...what will happen next?**

The Working Group will meet in April to discuss the project plan as well as considering initial options. We will then set up a number of regional events to consult with stakeholders. The big questions up for discussion in the early stages will be;

- Length and level of qualification
- Content (or learning outcomes)
- Pathways
- Accessibility
- How the learning is assessed and by whom



Further details on these events will be included in the next bulletin.

If you would like more info or are interested in making a nomination for the Working Group please contact [katemercer@fsmail.net](mailto:katemercer@fsmail.net). Kate is employed by CSIP to lead on the qualification.

