



Impact Assessment of the Support Work in Schools (SWiS) Qualification

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Final Report

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Executive Summary

Pye Tait Limited was commissioned by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) to carry out an impact assessment of the Support Work in Schools (SWiS) qualification. The research involved conducting online surveys and telephone interviews with a range of target groups:

- **Telephone discussions** with 16 key stakeholders (including SWiS Regional Advisors)
- **Online surveys** involving:
 - 340 learners
 - 74 training providers
 - 65 line managers/CPD coordinators
 - 49 headteachers/school leadership teams
- **Telephone interviews** with:
 - 200 headteachers/school leadership teams
 - 108 local authorities
 - 21 assessors
 - 9 verifiers

The key findings from the research are summarised below.

Impact of SWiS

Overall, the impact of SWiS has been very positive for those involved in the research.

Learners have developed their skills and knowledge, as well as building their confidence, which appears to have had a subsequent positive effect on their colleagues and schools as a whole.

Having developed a greater understanding of school policies and procedures, and receiving greater recognition for the role they carry out within the school, members of support staff who have completed SWiS are delegated more responsibility by their colleagues and have also developed closer working relationships with those around them.

Anecdotal evidence from interviews and surveys with local authorities and schools suggests that this has created a more positive environment for school pupils as well as the wider workforce – with pupil behaviour management and support being shared between teaching and support staff.

Ways in which school leaders suggest SWiS could be improved further are:

- SWiS could provide greater development opportunities
- Communications could be improved between training providers and schools
- The burden on schools for completing expert witness testimonies could be reduced, particularly through further guidance on requirements

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- Schools should be more involved in selecting which members of support staff are most suitable for the SWiS qualification

Promotion and marketing

The qualification is promoted to schools and members of support staff by local authorities in a variety of ways. The most common methods for publicising SWiS are flyers and newsletters sent out to named school contacts by local authorities. Information is generally sent out on a monthly or termly basis, particularly in the period before funding for SWiS becomes available. School leaders feel that these communications from local authorities are the most appropriate way of being informed about SWiS.

To help with their promotion of SWiS, local authorities would like further information from TDA on a number of areas, such as how SWiS fits with other qualifications, especially on the Parent Support Advisor (PSA) route. Guidance on effective communication with schools is another area on which local authorities have requested guidance.

Information and guidance made available by local authorities to schools and line managers is received positively, but could be improved with further clarity on the practicalities, such as dates, timings and locations of training. Schools and line managers would also appreciate more information on how SWiS fits with other qualifications and progression routes. Producing witness testimonies is another area that was mentioned.

Most learners undertake SWiS to gain recognition or develop existing skills and knowledge. Others wish to achieve an up-to-date, relevant qualification.

Funding

Schools report very few difficulties in accessing SWiS funding, although three suggest that it is not clear whether funding for Level 3 training will be made available for learners progressing from Level 2.

Few local authorities report difficulties with funding. However, reductions in funding have meant that ten will be altering their promotional activities to target specific cohorts of learners or levels of the qualification in future.

Two thirds of local authorities view TDA's funding arrangements as effective, although five find the 'single pot' approach causes difficulties when allocating specific budgets to SWiS and HLTA status.

To help with the planning of budgets and allocating numbers of candidates onto SWiS training, local authorities have requested that in future they receive notice of the amount of funding available to them from TDA earlier than they do at the moment.

Access and initial assessment

The initial assessment of a candidate's needs before they embark on SWiS seems to be conducted differently depending on the type of provider. Local authorities are more likely to conduct an interview and ask a candidate to complete a questionnaire. Further Education (FE) colleges, on the other hand, are most likely to conduct a basic skills test.

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There is slight disagreement between training providers and learners as to how much involvement providers have in helping learners choose their optional units. Learners say that they are left to choose optional units by themselves more than providers suggest – showing that there may be additional work required to help learners feel less alone with the choices that they make.

Training delivery

The majority of SWiS training is delivered within learners' schools – the preferred location of school leaders. Where there are difficulties attending training these generally relate to:

- Commitment to the qualification not being possible, either as a result of workload or other issues, such as childcare arrangements
- Timing issues whereby schools are unable to arrange for release from work or provide cover staff

Clearer information about the training and more regular communications by providers and mentors in terms of learner progress could be beneficial not only to learners, but also in improving relationships between schools and providers.

Support

Where the quality of training delivery is rated highly by learners this is mainly due to good relationships with training providers, mentors and line managers. Where learners feel they have received little support, or not been in regular communication with providers and mentors, they regard the quality of their training as lower.

The most appreciated forms of support have come in the form of regular visits and mentoring from providers and line managers – and where these are not experienced by learners they are the most requested. Guidance between sessions, such as communication by email and telephone is popular with learners.

Line managers appear to require greater support and guidance from providers in terms of:

- Completing expert witness testimonies
- Receiving regular feedback from providers on learner progress
- Timetabling of visits to schools
- Clarification of the role of mentor

Assessment and verification

Clearer information on the SWiS qualification and its assessment methodology is still required by some training centres.

However, the current assessment methodology is thought by verifiers and assessors to be robust and clear, with observation in schools a well-liked aspect of the training.

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

The quality of witness testimonies varies; providers report that witnesses can be either reluctant to spend the time preparing written testimonies or are not always completely clear on what is expected of them.

Although for the majority of support staff roles, the number and range of units available is adequate, those in catering, administration and midday supervisor support staff roles indicate that they believe there are some shortfalls.

Progression

Popular progression routes are from Level 2 to Level 3 SWiS. A wider range of opportunities is generally offered by schools than is currently being taken up by members of support staff. Where school leaders are aware of the progression opportunities available, they do not always seem to appreciate which ones are most appropriate for different support staff roles.

According to local authorities, opportunities for volunteers in support roles to undertake SWiS appear to be limited, mainly due to a lack of funding or because volunteers are generally not in schools for many hours per week. However, responses from schools suggest not all demand from volunteers for SWiS is being met.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The school support staff workforce is made up of approximately 326,000 full-time equivalents (FTE) in state-funded schools – 177,000 of which are teaching assistants and the remaining 149,000 are administrative staff, technicians and other support staff.¹

In the local authority maintained sector, there are approximately 322,000 members of support staff (176,000 teaching assistants, 68,000 administrative staff, 24,000 technicians and 54,000 other support staff).²

The growth in the number of school support staff – such as site and midday supervisors, caterers, librarians and technicians, administrators, teaching or classroom assistants, and pupil support staff – has been one of the most notable recent developments in the educational sector.

There were just fewer than 95,000 support staff in England in 1992, and this had already risen to around 133,000 by 1997³. An even greater rate of increase has since been sustained as a result of government policy, which identified support staff as being of key importance in improving the quality of state education in the UK⁴.

In the 1998 Teachers Green Paper⁵, the Government set out the policy agenda that has since informed this area. Funding would be provided for an additional 20,000 teaching assistants (TAs); more attention would be given to managing and developing the careers of support staff; and additional technical and administrative support would be provided to enable teachers to concentrate on their core business of teaching.

The same broad themes were reiterated in 2001 in the Schools Green Paper, but there was a perceptible shift of emphasis towards using support staff to cut bureaucracy rather than to give direct classroom support⁶. This transition became more marked in the course of 2001-2 when the Government began to address teacher workload and educational standards in earnest, a development signalled by the publication of *Time for Standards: Reforming the School Workforce* in 2002⁷. The key focus of this paper was cutting bureaucracy so that teachers could focus on teaching, with a corresponding emphasis on the importance of increasing the number and responsibilities of support staff:

¹ DfES, Statistical First Release: School Workforce in England January 2008 (Revised) [online]. Available: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000813/SFR26_2008.pdf

² Ibid.

³ DfES, Statistical First Release, Pupils, Teachers, Education Support Staff, Pupil:Teacher And Pupil:Adult Ratios in Maintained Schools in England: January 2002 (Provisional)

⁴ DfES Green Paper, Schools* Building on Success (2001) [online]. Available: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/buildingonsuccess/pdf/schools.pdf>

⁵ DfES *Teachers: Meeting the Challenge of Change* (1998)

⁶ DfES Green Paper, Schools* Building on Success (2001) [online]. Available:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/buildingonsuccess/pdf/schools.pdf>

⁷ DfES, *Time for Standards* (October) [online]. Available: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/3181/DfES-Time%20for%20Standards.pdf

‘Without the far-reaching support staff reforms we are proposing, we cannot help teachers with their workloads, or deliver the contractual changes we want to introduce’⁸.

The much broader role envisaged for support staff in *Time for Standards* implied the development of more formalised job roles, greater clarity over pay scales and better professional development for support staff. This was confirmed early in 2003 with the pioneering National Agreement between the Government, the major teaching and support staff unions, and local authorities. This provided the foundation for a coherent and consensual approach to remodelling the school workforce in order to meet the new goals set out by the Government⁹.

Between 1998 and 2002 an extra £350 million was given to the then Local Education Authorities to enable them to recruit the additional 20,000 TAs¹⁰. In 2004-05 schools were given a new single grant, the School Development Grant, worth £647 million, of which £279 million was specifically intended to contribute to support staff salaries and £51 million intended for their training and development¹¹. In the subsequent period, funding has been sustained and the number of support staff has continued to rise, reaching more than 213,000 by 2002 and nearly 306,000 in 2007¹². Increases have occurred in the number of staff occupying almost all support staff roles, but the most significant increases have taken place in the number of teaching assistants, and more recently, administrative staff.

1.1.1 Origins of the SWiS qualification

In October 2002, the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) issued a consultation document outlining plans to develop three basic career and development routes for support staff¹³:

- The pedagogical route
- The administration and organisation route
- The behaviour and guidance route

In June 2003, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) signalled its commitment to actively support the Government’s agenda for school support staff by helping to provide them with appropriate training linked to career development. In October 2003, the DfES and LSC jointly issued a *Support Staff Guidance* document to Local Education Authorities and local LSCs, and established a target of supporting the training of 1,000 support staff in 2003-04¹⁴.

⁸ Time for standards, foreword, p. 2

⁹ *Raising Standards, Tackling Workload: A National Agreement* (January 2003) Available:

http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/na_standards_workload.pdf

¹⁰ Blatchford, P., Russell, A., Bassett, P., Brown, P. and Martin, C. (2006b). The Role and Effects of Teaching Assistants in English Primary Schools (Years 4 to 6) 2000 – 2003: Results from the Class Size and Pupil-Adult Ratios (CSPAR) KS2 Project (DfES Research Report 605) [online]. Available:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR605.pdf> p. 4

¹¹ <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/supportstaff/>

¹² DCSF, School Workforce in England January 2007, Statistical First Release (revised)

http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000743/SFR29_2007v3.pdf

¹³ DfES, *Developing the role of school support staff* (2002) [online]. Available:

http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/3180/Standards1.pdf

¹⁴ LSC, *School Support Staff Sector Plan for 2004-5 and Beyond* (2004) [online]. Available:

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/pre2005/learningopportunities/employers/lsc-school-support-staff-sector-plan-for-2004-05-and-beyond.pdf>

At the same time, the Government commissioned Sheffield Hallam University to undertake systematic mapping of the qualifications available to support staff. This research concluded that, although there were over 600 qualifications directly relevant to support staff, fewer than 50 had been specifically developed for them. While the pedagogical route was reasonably well supplied with specific, targeted qualifications, the remaining routes had some relevant national qualifications but few specifically intended for people working in schools. In addition, the qualifications that were available were not well integrated into a career development framework for support staff¹⁵.

This research was the background for the development of a specific, targeted initial qualification for school support staff, which was announced by the LSC in its sector plans for 2004-05. The qualification would at first be available at Level 2 and subsequently at Levels 3 and 4¹⁶. This proposed qualification was subsequently incorporated into DfES policy¹⁷.

The Support Work in Schools (SWiS) qualification was subsequently developed by the Learning and Skills Council and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to fulfil these requirements. The Level 2 qualification was piloted in 2004-05 and the Level 3 in 2005-06, with funding distributed by the LSC. Some local authorities were also able to fund additional learners through the European Social Fund (ESF).

1.1.2 The TDA and SWiS

The TDA was established by the 2005 Education Act through a merger of the Teacher Training Agency and the National Remodelling Team. Its principal aim is to 'to secure an effective school workforce that raises educational standards, provides every child with the opportunity to develop his or her potential, and thereby improves children's life chances'¹⁸. This means that the TDA has an overarching role to support the career development of the whole school workforce, and since 2005 this has included the continuing professional development of support staff. Part of the TDA's remit is, therefore, to ensure that the support staff qualifications constitute a coherent offer that is integrated with appropriate career and development frameworks.

This led to the establishment of the *School Workforce Development Board* (SWDB), consisting of the TDA and a range of partners including the DfES, LSC, local authority representatives and others. With the advice of the SWDB, the TDA prioritised removing the barriers to taking up training and development and ensuring that there was a good supply of high quality training and development opportunities. It announced that LSC funding for up to 15,000 support staff would be available in 2005-6 to enable them to progress to Level 2 or above qualifications, among which was the SWiS qualification¹⁹. It committed to evaluating the LSC's new SWiS vocational qualification and contributing to the development of the Level 3 SWiS²⁰.

¹⁵ Johnson, S et al, 2004, *Systematic mapping exercise to show how existing qualifications fit with the proposed career progression framework for school support staff* (Brief RB518), DfES, London [online]. Available: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR518.pdf>

¹⁶ LSC, *School Support Staff Sector Plan for 2004-5 and Beyond* (2004) para 1. LSC, *School Support Staff Sector Plan for 2004-5 and Beyond* (2004) [online]. Available: <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/pre2005/learningopportunities/employers/lsc-school-support-staff-sector-plan-for-2004-05-and-beyond.pdf>

¹⁷ DfES, *School Support Staff Training and Development: our plans for 2004-5* (2004) [Online] Available: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/6389/5403-DFES-SchoolSupport.pdf

¹⁸ TDA, *Annual report and accounts 2006-07* (2007) [online]. Available: http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/ttda_annual_report_2007_web.pdf

¹⁹ TTA/SWDB, *Building the School Team: our plans for support staff training and development 2005-06* (2005), p. 10; <http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/s/swdb-1yp.pdf>

The LSC continued to fund the SWiS qualification into 2006-07, but in April 2007 sole responsibility for funding the qualification was transferred to the TDA, and funding increased to provide for 7,500 enrolments in 2007-08²¹.

1.1.3 SWiS within the context of other support staff qualifications

In addition to SWiS, there is a wide range of qualifications, as well as a status and an apprenticeship, relevant to support staff²². Examples of these are:

- A large variety of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) based on National Occupational Standards (NOS) for specific occupations, in a wide range of areas (such as catering and administration) that are not specifically aimed at school support staff, but are highly relevant to certain job roles. The TDA itself is responsible for one suite of NOS, in Supporting Teaching and Learning, which covers a range of support staff roles.
- The Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) programme enables teaching assistants to be assessed against a recently updated set of standards defining the competences needed for higher level classroom support roles
- The Certificate and Diploma in School Business Management (C/DSBM), is aimed at school administrators such as bursars, offered jointly by the TDA and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and accredited by the Institute of Administrative Management (IAM)
- Foundation degrees – university-level awards roughly equivalent to the first two years of an honours degree. There are several hundred existing or planned foundation degrees with an educational focus, most of them focusing on early years or care and development, and teaching and learning support – of these around 200 are specifically for support staff.
- An apprenticeship scheme for teaching assistants

These qualifications can broadly be divided into *competency-based* and *knowledge-based* qualifications. Knowledge-based qualifications are more traditional academic qualifications, usually assessed through formal examinations or coursework. Assessment for competency-based qualifications, like the NVQ, requires the candidate to produce a portfolio of evidence that demonstrates they have attained the skills and competences as described in the National Occupational Standards that form the basis of the qualification.

The SWiS qualification has been designed to provide an introductory competency-based qualification for school support staff who are not well-catered for by other qualification routes. This includes support staff such as site staff, catering staff, administrators (unsuited or unready for the C/DSBM) and lunchtime supervisors, as well as any others who do not wish to, or are not yet ready to, undertake qualifications such as NVQs.

²⁰ TDA, *Building the School Team: our plans for support staff training and development 2005-06* (2005) [online]. Available: [online]. Available: [http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/doc/f/faqs-\(plan-for-website\)-\(word\).doc](http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/doc/f/faqs-(plan-for-website)-(word).doc)

²¹ A comprehensive evaluation of the SWiS pilots was undertaken by HOST policy research, working first for the LSC and then for the TDA. This was completed in 2007 and can be accessed here: <http://www.tda.gov.uk/support/qualificationsandtraining/swis/SWiS%20research.aspx>

²² See TDA, *Sector Qualifications Strategy* (draft)

1.1.4 Test and trials for the Qualifications and Credit Framework

The development of SWiS is taking place against the background of the national programme for the reform of vocational qualifications. Integral to this reform programme is the revision of vocational qualifications so that they can be integrated into the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The TDA's draft Sector Qualifications Strategy includes plans to incorporate a range of units in the QCF that will meet a large number of support staff training and development needs in a way that enables learners to work flexibly at their own pace and gain credit for individual achievements.

A key element of this will be smoothing the path from the SWiS to NVQs. Many of the SWiS units are based on units from NVQs, so learners who have completed those SWiS units should be in a good position to show that they have the relevant competences to gain the corresponding NVQ unit. At the moment, it is usually possible to use the evidence gathered for SWiS units in combination with additional evidence to gain the relevant NVQ unit. However, this possibility is not automatic or formally recognised.

To standardise this situation, it is proposed that the SWiS and NVQ offers are formally integrated through the QCF, thus creating a new competency-based framework for support staff. Qualifications would be available at Levels 2 and 3, and as Awards, Certificates and Diplomas depending on the number of units studied at each level. The Award would be a small, initial, top-up or specialist qualification, the Certificate would be a larger qualification for staff with specialist or multiple roles, and the Diploma would be roughly equivalent to an NVQ.

The use of the QCF would also potentially facilitate transfers between the school workforce and other sectors. In particular, it may be possible to integrate the qualifications with the Integrated Qualification Framework (IQF) currently being developed for the entire children's workforce.

Tests and trials

As part of the two-year QCF test and trials, the QCA and the awarding body CACHE are trialling a QCF version of SWiS, as developed by CACHE, to see how this could be integrated into the QCF. The QCF units have been devised to accord with the requirements of the QCF unit template. The trials indicate a new challenge to come when the QCF qualification is rolled out in 2010, when it replaces the existing National Qualifications Framework.

1.1.5 Future development of SWiS

The TDA's *Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS)* has been drafted and at the time of writing is the subject of an ongoing consultation. The SQS is intended to ensure that there is a coherent framework of professional development available to school support staff, with clear pathways available between qualifications that reflect the needs of different support roles.

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

During the research and consultation for the development of the SQS, a number of barriers to participation in support staff training and development became evident, among which were difficulties with²³:

- Selecting the most suitable qualifications or training opportunities from the wide range on offer
- Selecting appropriate optional units within the qualifications
- Understanding the nature of competency-based qualifications, such as NVQs and SWiS, which some saw as 'tick-box and paper chase' exercises

There has also been some concern that many of the relevant qualifications for support staff contain very similar generic units. These and other related concerns have led to recommendations for a unified and integrated structure of qualifications for support staff, and this is likely to shape the future development of SWiS.

The TDA has agreed with Awarding Bodies and other stakeholders that the SWiS suite of qualifications will be reviewed on an annual basis in the light of changes to the relevant NOS and in order to fill gaps and review units with limited take up.

²³ TDA, *Development of a sector qualification strategy for the wider school workforce: Summary of Tribal's report and recommendations to the TDA* (April 2007) [online]. Available: http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/doc/s/sqs_summaryreport_01.doc

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Project aims and objectives

The aim of this piece of work is to assess the impact of the SWiS qualification training delivery and assessment process on the learners undertaking the qualification, their line managers, teachers in their schools, their school leadership teams and the school as a whole.

The findings from this research are intended to inform the TDA's training delivery, funding and communications strategies as well as future standards and qualifications. In addition to this, the TDA will use the results to guide the future development of the SWiS qualification and feed into other wider workforce programmes.

The methodology for this impact assessment aimed to fulfil a number of objectives, which were to:

- Examine the ways in which the SWiS qualification is publicised and how schools and learners first heard about the qualification
- Understand learners' experiences of accessing and undertaking the qualification, and how well the qualification met their expectations
- Identify the different methods of training delivery and assessment, including the support available to both learners and their schools
- Review the funding arrangements in place and the extent to which this influences take-up of the qualification
- Examine the detail of the qualification, the take-up of units, how these are chosen, their relevance to support roles and the benefits of undertaking SWiS for both learners and their school as a whole

1.2.2 Stakeholder interviews

The research was initiated with a series of stakeholder interviews, based on a range of open, broad questions. As each of the stakeholders' interests and involvement in the qualification varied, the set of questions was tailored to suit each respondent.

These interviews, or conversations, were conducted with 16 organisations and individuals identified with the TDA²⁴:

- 2 TDA regional advisors
- 1 SWiS National Consultant
- 4 Awarding bodies
- 2 Training providers
- 2 Local authorities (one of which also offered SWiS training)
- Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR)

²⁴ The target was 20 interviews, to include TDA regional advisors, however during the interview period regional advisor contracts were under review and interviews with these contacts were therefore curtailed.

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

- Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
- National College for School Leadership (NCSL)
- Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC)
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

The purpose of these interviews was to understand the background and history of the qualification, its proliferation and its contribution to the development of the wider school workforce. The findings of these interviews also helped to inform the drafting of research tools for the main body of the work.

1.2.3 Contacting Local Authorities

This piece of work was aimed at all of the schools that currently offer SWiS or have done so in the past – the first critical objective being to identify those schools.

The key to this impact assessment was to gain the support and cooperation of the local authorities that offer the SWiS qualification. Prior to project inception (during late Autumn 2007) the TDA contacted all of the 152 local authorities involved with the qualification and asked for their participation – 123 responded positively and agreed to take part in this impact assessment.

Based on predicted numbers provided by 149 local authorities in their funding requests, this involved a potential pool of approximately 9,000²⁵ support staff candidates. However, this pool was reduced somewhat by 29 local authorities opting out of the research.

Concurrently with the stakeholder interviews, the first phase of the work involved contacting all of the local authorities that had agreed to participate in the research. The purpose was, firstly, to obtain numbers of support staff in the respective local authority area who had taken, or were currently taking, the SWiS qualification. Further to this it was made possible, courtesy of the local authorities, to identify both the schools at which these learners were based and the SWiS contact at each school. Details of the providers who had offered, or were currently offering, the SWiS qualification were also collated; this equated to 99 training providers in the local authority regions involved in the research.

1.2.4 Online surveys

Four online surveys were developed to gather feedback from the range of stakeholders involved in the SWiS qualification, in order to meet the objectives outlined above. These surveys were aimed at:

- SWiS learners (ie school support staff)
- Training providers
- School Continuing Professional Development (CPD) coordinators, or line managers of the SWiS learners
- School headteachers, or members of senior school leadership teams

²⁵ Based on estimates of learner numbers for the full year 2007-2008 from 'Candidates undertaking a SWiS qualification in 2007-08', TDA (based on data from 149 LAs).

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The online surveys were publicised by a direct mailing to each of the schools identified by the local authorities as being either current or past participants in the SWiS qualification. The mailing contained 'postcards' aimed at SWiS learners, to be distributed by members of school management teams.

Two mailings were conducted in order to encourage participation. In total over 15,000 postcards were distributed to schools, training providers and local authorities.

The four online surveys were conducted between April and early July 2008 and solicited the following responses:

- 340 SWiS learners from a pool of 5,003 identified by local authorities (a response rate of approximately 7%)
- 65 CPD coordinators/line managers from 1,624 schools (4%)
- 49 headteachers/senior leaders from the same 1,624 schools (3%)
- 74 training providers from a total of 99 (ie 75% of all SWiS providers in the local authority regions participating in the research)

The survey questionnaires are provided in a separate Annex to this report.

1.2.5 Telephone surveys

To add depth to the findings of the online surveys, a number of qualitative telephone surveys were conducted with local authorities, assessors, internal and external verifiers, and schools.

These interviews provided a large amount of data and in-depth feedback on the range of issues identified by the TDA for investigation. The purpose of the telephone interviews was to follow up in greater detail the findings of the stakeholder interviews and online surveys with schools.

The following table shows a breakdown of completions for the telephone surveys.

Table 1: Number of telephone interviews completed

School contact	200
Local authority	108
Assessor	21
Verifier	9

1.2.6 Findings

The findings from the above surveys are combined in this report and discussed thematically from chapter 3 onwards.

1.3 Respondents

The section that follows provides further background information on survey and interview respondents. Additional information is available in Appendix 2.

1.3.1 Learners

A total of 340 SWiS learners responded to the online survey, representing at least 64 local authority areas.

Of the 324 learners providing information on the school in which they work:

- 196 (60%) are based in primary schools
- 109 (34%) in secondary schools and
- 19 (6%) in community special schools

In terms of the job roles, teaching assistants and midday supervisors/play workers are the most common among learner respondents. Looking at which secondary activities are carried out the most often by survey respondents, ICT support was selected most frequently (please see tables 2 and 3).

Table 2: Number of SWiS learners responding to the online survey by job role carried out frequently

	Carried out frequently
Teaching assistant	144
Midday supervision/play work	132
General administration	90
Special needs support	85
Behaviour, guidance, support	57
Science/Design Technology support	30
Financial administration	26
ICT support	20
Language support	19
Early years support	15
Parent support adviser	13
Cover supervisor	12
Site support e.g. caretaking	11
Catering	10
Librarian	10
Sports coach	9

Base: 683 responses – learners could choose more than one role

Table 3: Number of SWiS learners responding to the online survey by job role carried out as secondary activities

	Carried out occasionally
ICT support	34
Behaviour, guidance, support	27
General administration	27
Midday supervision/play work	23
Special needs support	18
Teaching assistant	18
Parent support adviser	17
Early years support	15
Language support	14
Financial administration	9
Science/Design Technology support	9
Site support e.g. caretaking	7
Cover supervisor	6
Librarian	6
Catering	4
Sports coach	2

Base 236 responses – learners could choose more than one role

In terms of their present position, most respondents are currently studying for a SWiS qualification (48%). A further 43% have completed their qualification, and 8% have achieved Level 2 and are now progressing onto Level 3. Only 4 learners said that they had started SWiS training but finished early without achieving the qualification.

The majority of respondents (59%) started their SWiS qualification in 2008, with another 26% having started after April 2007.

The remaining 15% started between 2005 and April 2007.

Most learners responding to the survey are working towards a Level 2 Certificate (please see table 4).

Table 4: Type of qualification currently being worked towards by survey respondents

	Percentage of respondents
Level 2 Award	23%
Level 2 Certificate	43%
Level 3 Award	6%
Level 3 Certificate	10%
Level 3 Diploma	17%
Parent Support endorsed pathway Level 3 Certificate	1%
Parent Support endorsed pathway Level 3 Diploma	0%

Base (learners): 268

Seventy-three learners of the 340 responding to the survey said that they are currently taking part in the SWiS tests and trials for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). Caution should be used with this figure as to whether learners will be fully aware of the tests and trials, and their involvement in them.

The average number of units learners are taking in total (including mandatory and optional units) is four. The minimum number of units a learner reports taking is 2 and the maximum is 10.

Equality and Diversity Monitoring

Learners who responded to the online survey are predominantly White British females aged between 35 and 54. Only two respondents said that they considered themselves disabled, and 6 said that they do meet the Disability Discrimination Act definition of a disabled person.

Other age and gender groups responded to the survey, however the numbers of respondents from these groups was too small for reliable analysis by these variables.²⁶

1.3.2 Training providers

A total of 74 training providers responded to the online survey, just under half of which (47%) are local authority training centres. Further Education colleges and private training centres made up most of the other respondents (27% and 25% respectively), with one other from a school-based assessment centre.

Half of the providers involved in the survey have been delivering the SWiS qualification for over two years, with 32% having delivered it for one year or less. The remainder have delivered SWiS for between one and two years.

The support roles that most providers have delivered SWiS training and assessment to are midday supervisors, teaching assistants and general administration assistants (please see table 5).

²⁶

A full breakdown is available in Appendix 2.

Table 5: Support roles for which providers have delivered SWiS training and assessment

	Proportion of providers delivering SWiS training and assessment
Midday supervision/play work	88%
Teaching assistant	83%
General administration	82%
Site support e.g. caretaking	65%
Special needs support	49%
ICT support	43%
Cover supervisor	40%
Behaviour, guidance, support	39%
Librarian	35%
Catering	34%
Science/Design Technology support	33%
Financial administration	31%
Language support	28%
Early years support	27%
Sports coach	21%
Parent support adviser	17%

Base (training providers): 72 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

A large majority of providers responding to the online questionnaire deliver the Level 2 Certificate (92%) or Level 2 Award (83%). Least commonly offered are the PSA pathways at Level 3 (please see table 6).

Table 6: Types of SWiS qualification providers currently offer to learners

	Proportion of providers currently offering the qualification
Level 2 Award	83%
Level 2 Certificate	92%
Level 3 Award	49%
Level 3 Certificate	54%
Level 3 Diploma	53%
Parent Support endorsed pathway Level 3 Certificate	17%
Parent Support endorsed pathway Level 3 Diploma	17%

Base (training providers): 72 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Only four providers said they are currently taking part in the SWiS tests and trials for the QCF.

The majority of providers offer all optional units at both Levels 2 and 3 – a detailed breakdown of the units offered by providers can be found in Appendix 3.

Parent Support endorsed pathways

Sixteen providers said that they do currently offer Parent Support units at Level 3. All sixteen offer the mandatory unit *Build and maintain relationships in work with parents*.

Fourteen offer the *Build and maintain relationships with the wider community* option unit, and thirteen offer the *Provide services that meet parents' needs* unit.

Thirteen of the sixteen providers offer all option units for the Level 3 PSA Diploma.

Equality and Diversity monitoring

Provider respondents are predominately White British females aged 45-54. Only one considers themselves disabled, and two state that they do meet the Disability Discrimination Act of a disabled person.²⁷

1.3.3 Line managers

A total of 65 line managers responded to the online survey. Each have line managed or supported an average of 5 SWiS learners so far (including current and past learners). The maximum number of learners a line manager has supported is 35; the minimum is 1.

Over three-quarters of line managers (77%) have acted as an expert witness or training mentor for members of support staff undertaking the SWiS qualification.

²⁷

A full breakdown is available in Appendix 2.

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Equality and Diversity monitoring

The vast majority of line managers responding to the survey are White British females aged 45-54. One person stated that they are disabled, and one stated that they meet the Disability Discrimination Act definition of a disabled person.²⁸

1.3.4 School leaders

A total of 49 school leaders responded to the online survey, with a further 200 taking part in the telephone interviews (these were headteachers or other members of the school leadership team with knowledge of the SWiS qualification).

Among online survey respondents 84% are headteachers; the remainder are deputy or assistant headteachers. Among the telephone respondents, 31% are headteachers, 22% are CPD coordinators and 10% are deputy headteachers. The remainder are composed mainly of line managers or other individuals in the school workforce responsible for SWiS, such as Support Staff Managers, School Administrators and HR Managers.

Equality and Diversity monitoring

The majority of survey respondents are White British females aged 45-54. Only two consider themselves to be disabled, and four state that they meet the Disability Discrimination Act definition of a disabled person.²⁹

Of school leaders participating in the telephone interviews:

- 65% are from primary schools
- 25% are from secondary schools
- 10% are from community special schools

The majority (69%) have been offering the opportunity for support staff to take the SWiS qualification for one year or less; 16% have been offering the opportunity for between one and two years, and 15% for more than two years.

1.3.5 Assessors and verifiers

A total of 30 assessors and verifiers working across England were interviewed as part of the SWiS impact assessment (21 assessors and 9 verifiers); 12 of the assessors (57%) have been assessing SWiS for a year or less, with 5 of the verifiers (56%) verifying SWiS for over two years.

All verifiers reported verifying other qualifications such as NVQs, Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and BTEC Awards. Three-quarters of assessors said they also assess NVQs. Three of those interviewed said that they assess other vocationally-related qualifications.

Three of the verifiers work on a regular basis for local authorities, with six of the assessors working in local authority training centres. Arrangements for communicating with local authorities however, are reported by verifiers to be regular, via email, telephone and one-to-one discussions. Three verifiers commented that their relationship with local

²⁸

A full breakdown is available in Appendix 2.

²⁹

A full breakdown is available in Appendix 2.

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authorities has been positive, whilst two others said that they would appreciate greater interaction and communication with their local authorities.

Ten assessors work for private training centres, and the other five work for further education (FE) colleges.

In terms of the regions in which they work, it is clear that assessors generally only work within one region, whereas verifiers work across a wider geographical area.

There were two verifiers interviewed per Awarding Body (ie two each for CACHE, City and Guilds, Edexcel and OCR).

Units assessed

Assessors were asked to provide details on the level of SWiS qualification they assess, and the various units they assess within each level. This information is provided below.

Of 20 assessors, all stated that they assess Level 2 SWiS and 14 assess Level 3.

In terms of the individual units assessed:

- 79% of respondents currently assess all Level 2 Information Option units
- 70% currently assess all Level 2 Resource Option units
- 83% currently assess all Level 2 Support Option units

At Level 3, thirteen of fourteen assessors assess all General Option units and Information Option units, and twelve assess all Resource Option units and Support Option units.

Only one assessor taking part in the interviews currently assesses SWiS PSA units at Level 3 – they assess all units available for this route (including mandatory and optional units).

1.3.6 Local authorities

A total of 108 local authorities were interviewed as part of this impact assessment; 48% of which have been offering the SWiS qualification to schools for over two years. A further 41% have been offering SWiS for one year or less, with the remaining local authorities offering SWiS for between one and two years.

2. The impact of the SWiS qualification

This section of the report draws together the findings from all surveys and interviews to assess the overall impact that the SWiS qualification has had in a number of areas. It helps us to understand the role of SWiS in a broader context: how it impacts on the school as a whole and the extent to which it has changed the perception of support staff among other members of the school workforce. It also sheds light on the value of the SWiS qualification to schools in terms of the contribution that support staff are able to make as a result of undertaking the qualification.³⁰

The survey identified a range of benefits of the SWiS qualification:

- **Benefits to schools:** learners having a greater understanding of school policies, values and procedures; improved working relationships; increased confidence, motivation and professionalism of staff; more effective running of the school; better support available for pupils
- **Benefits to line managers:** support staff have developed skills and knowledge; progressed within their role and developed improved working relationships with colleagues
- **Benefits to school pupils:** better behaviour management and increased respect shown towards staff; increased support available for pupils with additional needs, or in specific areas such as IT; pupils have role models for learning and improved working relationships between members of staff, creating a more positive learning environment
- **Benefits to teachers:** improved working relationships mean teachers can rely more on support staff; behaviour management of pupils is shared between teachers and support staff; increased understanding of the value and role of support staff; being able to delegate tasks and focus more on lessons with pupils

The majority of learners say that the qualification has helped to develop their skills and knowledge and build their confidence – line managers generally agree with this assessment.

Local authorities have noticed an increased awareness of the *Every Child Matters* agenda, with a subsequent impact on the knowledge and awareness support staff have of individual pupil needs; local authorities think that this is developing confidence among pupils as they now feel more supported at school.

The surveys also asked questions about whether participation in SWiS has met expectations; the majority of school leaders and learners say that it has.

³⁰ These findings are based on responses to online surveys from 340 learners, 65 schools CPD coordinators/line managers, 49 headteachers and 74 training providers; telephone surveys of 200 headteachers, 9 verifiers, 21 assessors, 108 local authorities and 16 stakeholders.

2.1 Meeting expectations

When initially offering SWiS training, school leaders most commonly say that their expectations of the qualification were that it would:

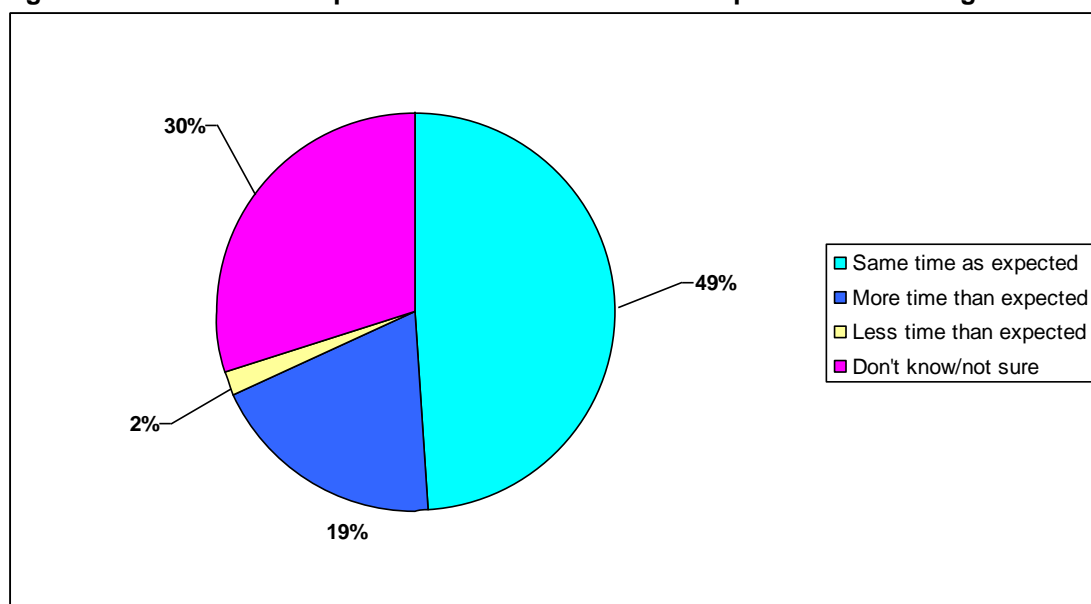
- Help candidates gain a wider understanding of the school and how it works, as well as developing the skills and knowledge related to their role (20%)
- Provide an opportunity for career progression and personal development (15%)
- Improve the confidence of support staff and their standard of work (13%)
- Offer support staff recognition of their skills and the role they carry out (10%)

(Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants and are therefore not reported here)

Encouragingly, when asked whether their experience of the SWiS qualification has met their expectations, school leadership teams participating in the telephone interviews were very positive, with 84% of schools stating that SWiS has met their expectations. Where these expectations have not been met, this is mainly due to a perceived lack of support or poor communications from local authorities and/or training providers.

During the online survey, nearly half of school leaders (49%) stated that SWiS training has also met their expectations in terms of the amount of time it has taken for support staff to complete the qualification (please see figure 1).

Figure 1: School leader expectations of time taken to complete SWiS training



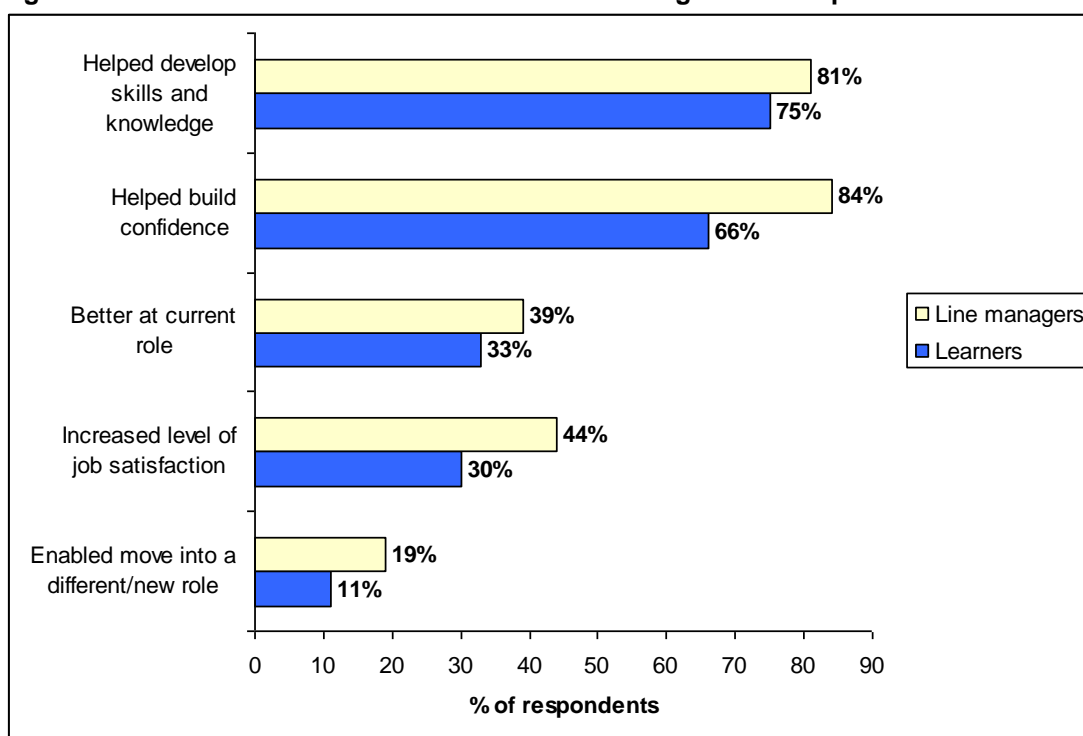
Base (school leaders, online): 47

2.2 Benefits to learners and schools

When asked what the main benefits of taking the SWiS qualification have been to them personally, three-quarters of learners (75%) report that it has helped them to develop their skills and knowledge. For those who cite this as their main reason for undertaking SWiS, the vast majority (87%) say that they have achieved their objective.

In addition, two-thirds of learners (66%) say that it has helped them to build their confidence (please see figure 2).

Figure 2: Main benefits to learners as a result of taking the SWiS qualification.



Base (line managers): 65; base (learners): 284 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Line managers are in agreement with the majority of learners that there are several benefits to the SWiS qualification, although a slightly higher proportion of line managers believe that SWiS training has helped learners build their confidence (84%), with 81% reporting that SWiS training has helped learners develop skills and knowledge.

Although the main impact of the SWiS qualification is generally reported by learners to be an increase in confidence or further development of skills and knowledge, the SWiS qualification has also enabled 100% of learners frequently carrying out financial administration roles as part of their working routine (19 individuals) to move into new and different job roles altogether (please see table 7).

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

Table 7: Main benefits to learners of taking SWiS – by job role

	Built confidence	Moved into new/different role	Better at current role	Developed skills/knowledge	Increased job satisfaction
Midday supervision/play work (125)	71%	16%	42%	78%	30%
Teaching assistant (124)	76%	17%	38%	74%	34%
Language support (16)	81%	44%	44%	81%	38%
General administration (68)	54%	6%	16%	71%	27%
Site support (11)	73%	9%	36%	73%	36%
Catering (10)	70%	20%	40%	80%	30%
ICT support (15)	53%	20%	27%	73%	47%
Behaviour/guidance support (51)	63%	24%	37%	86%	35%
Parent Support Adviser (13)	54%	46%	23%	85%	31%
Cover Supervisor (12)	83%	33%	33%	75%	42%
Science/Design Technology support (26)	69%	15%	31%	77%	42%
Special needs support (72)	74%	21%	47%	79%	49%
Early years support (15)	73%	20%	40%	87%	40%
Financial administration (19)	47%	100%	16%	68%	11%
Librarian (8)	75%	13%	36%	75%	50%
Sports coach (8)	63%	38%	25%	88%	25%

(Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

School leaders, local authorities, verifiers and assessors generally regard SWiS as being a useful 'stepping stone' for support staff to other training and qualifications, suggesting that they consider it to be an appropriate entry route to NVQ training.

For the majority of school leaders, this is one of the most positive aspects of the SWiS qualification, with support staff being offered an opportunity to achieve a qualification and recognition for the role that they carry out within the school. As 21 local authorities (19%) pointed out during the interviews, SWiS is one of the first opportunities some members of support staff have had to gain recognition for the work that they carry out in schools, as well as being a qualification that will help them progress further if they wish.

The increased confidence and self-esteem that SWiS learners gain by taking part in the qualification is believed by local authorities, assessors and school leaders to raise the profile of support staff within the school, and improve the working relationships between members of support staff and other school colleagues.

As a result, members of support staff can feel 'part of a team' and 'get to know others in the school they would not normally be in contact with'. Ten percent of local authorities suggest that this then helps to motivate other school colleagues to participate in personal and professional development activities, having a positive impact on the standards and professionalism of the school workforce as a whole.

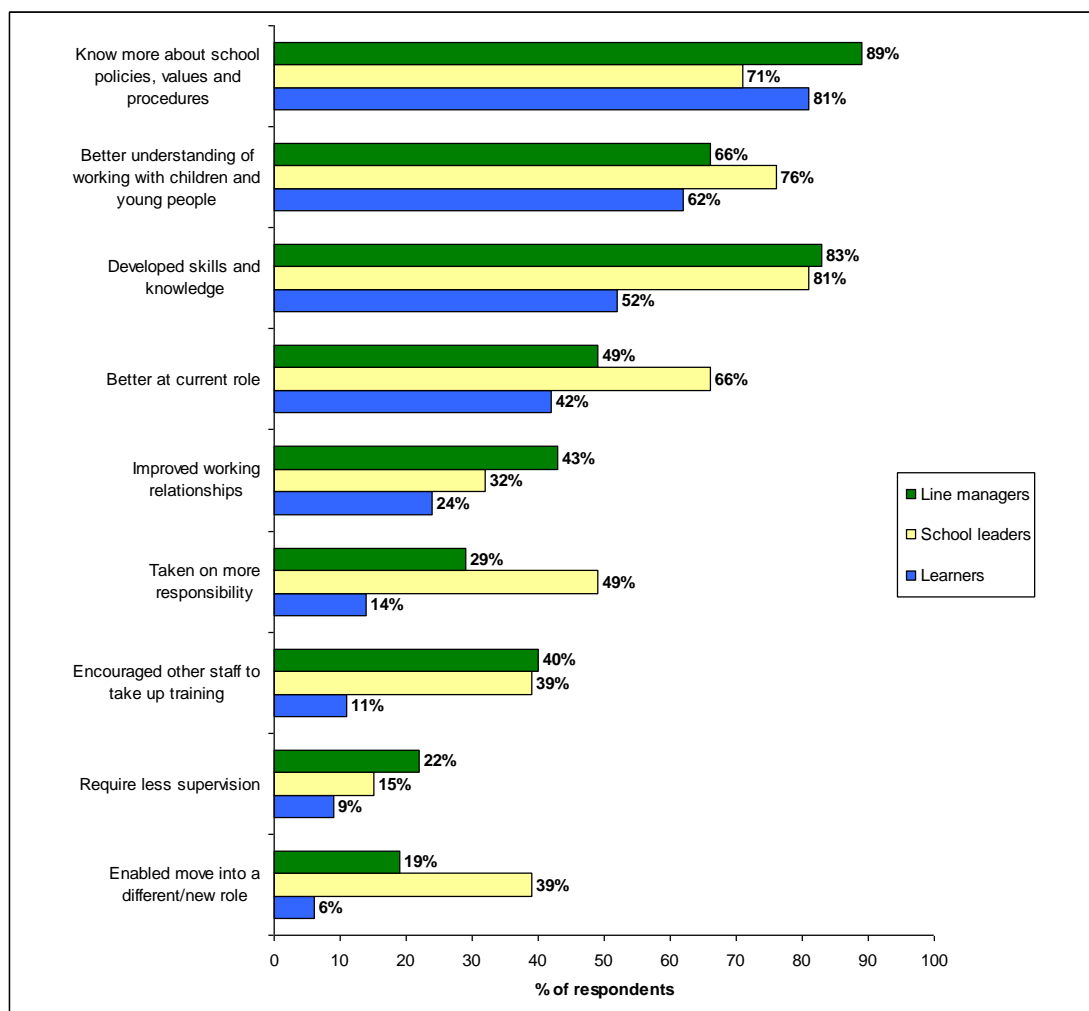
Furthermore, school leaders taking part in the telephone interviews report that as a result of their increased confidence and self-esteem, members of support staff achieving SWiS are able to take on more responsibility and provide more help around the school (9%) and show an increase in motivation and morale (10%).

Interviews with school leaders also highlighted improved working relationships within the school workforce (11%), and an improved understanding among learners and other members of the workforce in relation to the role support staff have within the school (10%).

2.3 Benefits to schools

By far the majority of learners regard their increased knowledge of school policies, values and procedures (81%) as being the main benefit to their school from taking part in the SWiS qualification. However, school leaders are most likely to view the development of skills and knowledge as being one of the main benefits to the school of SWiS training (please see figure 3), and given their position in the school, school leaders may be able to offer a more accurate overview of the benefits of SWiS to the school as a whole.

Figure 3: Main benefits for schools as a result of SWiS training

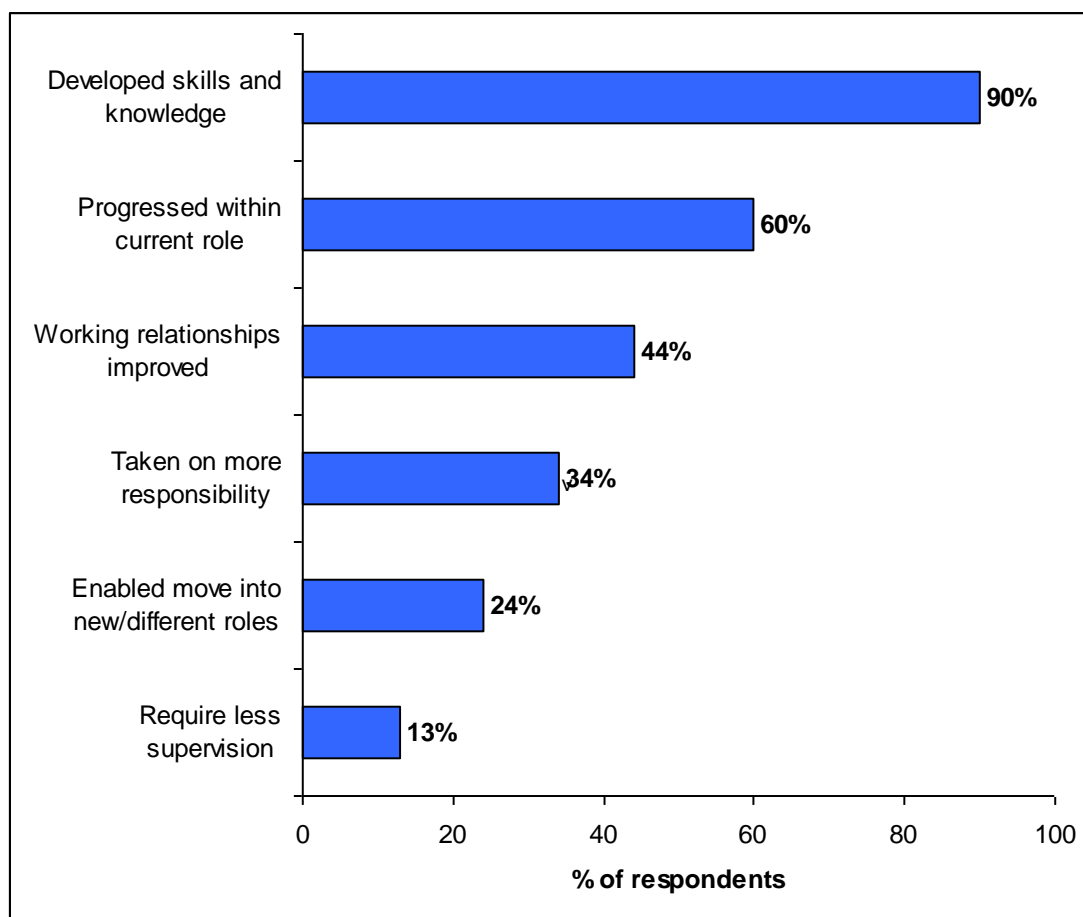


Base (line managers): 65; base (school leaders, online): 41; base (learners): 300 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

2.4 Benefits to line managers

The vast majority of line managers (90%) state that one of the main benefits of SWiS to them as a line manager or CPD coordinator is that members of support staff have developed their knowledge and skills in relation to their role. Other main benefits noted by line managers are that support staff have been able to progress within their current role (60%), and that working relationships between different members of staff have improved (44%) (please see figure 4).

Figure 4: Main benefits to line managers of support staff receiving SWiS training



Base (line managers): 62 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

2.5 Impact on pupils and teachers

Where school leaders are able to identify an impact on pupils and teachers as a result of the SWiS qualification, the main benefit to both pupils and teachers seems to have been improved communications and understanding from, and among, different members of staff (please see table 8).

Table 8: Impact of SWiS on school pupils and teachers

Impact on pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication between pupils and members of support staff, with greater respect being shown by pupils and support staff able to manage pupils' needs and behaviour more effectively (37%) • Greater support available for pupils, in terms of providing additional tuition (eg reading sessions, Special Needs support), meaning that pupils are becoming more motivated, responsive and confident (25%) • Improved working relationships between support staff and teaching staff creates a more positive school environment for pupils (23%) • Role models for learning can now be found among support staff, which has a positive effect on the pupils' attitudes towards learning (11%)
Impact on teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved working relationships and better communication and respect between teachers and support staff mean that teachers are able to confidently rely on support staff more/give them more responsibility (68%) • Increased understanding of the value of support staff in school, the roles they undertake and assistance that they can provide – often meaning that some tasks can be delegated to support staff, allowing teachers to focus on lessons (30%) • Behaviour management of pupils is easier for teachers, as support staff can provide additional help in this area (22%)

Base (school leaders, telephone – impact on pupils): 151; base (school leaders, telephone – impact on teachers): 147 (Note: percentages do not total 100% as multiple answers were given)

Local authorities in particular (7%) have noticed an increased awareness among SWiS learners of the *Every Child Matters* agenda, which thereby has a subsequent impact on the knowledge and awareness support staff have of individual pupil needs. Further to this, 15% of local authorities also report support staff having a better understanding of how to work with pupils, subsequently meaning that pupils themselves are becoming more confident and feel more supported.

Only twenty-two local authorities were able to identify any impact of SWiS on teachers, but there was a suggestion that support staff are able to provide more support than they previously could to teaching staff (32%).

3. Promotion and marketing of SWiS

This chapter focuses on the methods used by those involved with SWiS to promote the qualification; this includes a range of organisations, from the TDA, local authorities and providers to schools themselves.³¹

Local authorities mainly use flyers and newsletters to publicise SWiS to schools and learners. Targeting materials to CPD coordinators is also a common method, with information being personalised so as to avoid it being regarded as junk. Materials are distributed on a regular basis (monthly or termly), with publicity drives also focused at key times such as in the term prior to funding becoming available.

School leaders and line managers mainly find out about SWiS via the local authority, with the majority being satisfied with the initial information and guidance they receive about the qualification. However, they would also like more clarity on issues such as training dates and venues, how SWiS fits with other qualifications, clearer guidance on expert witness testimonials and the perception that SWiS is more suited to mainstream education rather than specialist provision.

Local authorities were asked their thoughts on the communications they have had with the TDA and how they would rate this. They are generally positive about the quality and responsiveness of TDA communications, with acknowledgements of positive relationships with individual TDA colleagues. However, they would appreciate further information from TDA on how SWiS fits with other qualifications and links to occupational standards, ways to communicate effectively with schools about SWiS, case studies for SWiS, and specific information on the PSA route.

School leaders agree that direct communications from the local authority are the most appropriate format for receiving information about SWiS. Schools are most likely to highlight the benefits to the individual of taking part in SWiS and opportunities for progression when informing members of support staff about the qualification.

The promotion of SWiS is an important area to investigate as the level of awareness of the qualification, and its perception, has a direct impact on levels of uptake. It is also vital to understand the messages that are communicated about SWiS in order to assess accurately whether those who offer and undertake the qualification have realistic expectations of it.

Early concerns from stakeholders (identified during the initial interviews) about how local authorities might not recognise the value of SWiS do not appear to have materialised, with local authorities deciding to offer SWiS because they see it as an opportunity for support staff to gain recognition for their work, or embark on future career development.

To encourage this, and combat barriers, schools requested more funding to help provide cover staff, changes in delivery so that SWiS can be offered out of school hours and better tailored to specific job roles.

³¹ These findings are based on responses to online surveys from 340 learners, 65 schools CPD coordinators/line managers, 49 headteachers and 74 training providers; telephone surveys of 200 headteachers, 9 verifiers, 21 assessors, 108 local authorities and 16 stakeholders.

3.1 Reasons for undertaking SWiS

The main reasons why learners decide to participate in the SWiS qualification are fairly varied, with three main factors being to:

- Further develop skills and knowledge (26%)
- Gain recognition for existing skills and knowledge (21%)
- Gain a relevant/up-to-date qualification (18%)

Smaller proportions of learners indicate that their decision to undertake SWiS was influenced by a member of the school leadership team (14%), a desire to improve career prospects (12%) or to gain a better understanding of their job role (7%).

3.2 Offering SWiS to schools

During the initial scoping interviews with key stakeholders, concerns were raised that local authorities may initially have been unable to see the value of the SWiS qualification – a concern that seemed particularly rooted in the perceived status it held in relation to more traditional training routes for support staff, such as NVQs.

Encouragingly, however, when asked what influenced their decisions to start offering SWiS to schools, local authorities identified a range of factors, which does include the relationship between SWiS and other training routes. The most commonly given responses are outlined below:

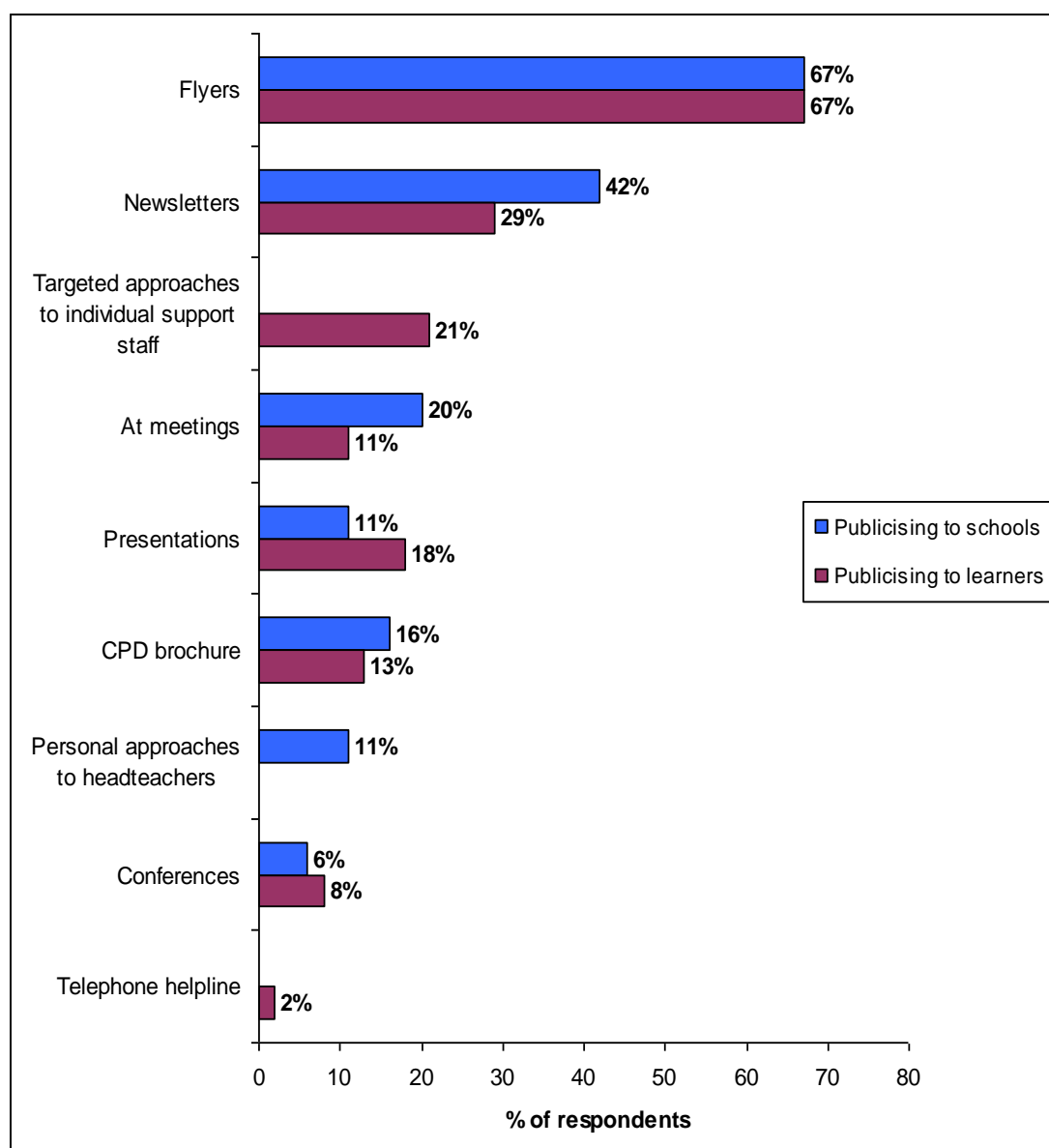
- An opportunity for support staff to gain recognition for their work, identify a progression route for their future development and to develop a culture of training among this cohort (40%)
- Funding was made available for them to do so (28%)
- Being part of the original pilots and realising an opportunity to develop the training being made available to support staff in their area (14%)
- SWiS fits appropriately with other qualifications on offer through the local authority, covering a wide range of support staff that may have been overlooked in training opportunities before (10%)

(Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants and are therefore not reported here)

3.3 Publicising SWiS

Local authorities use a range of methods to publicise SWiS to schools and learners, with the most common methods being the distribution of flyers and newsletters (please see figure 5).

Figure 5: Methods local authorities use to publicise SWiS



Base (school leaders, telephone): 90; base (learners): 63 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Local authorities also make use of their websites, CPD networks, letters and emails to schools to market SWiS. Direct approaches to CPD coordinators within schools is a common method of contacting schools, personalising flyers and leaflets so that they are better targeted and less likely to be regarded as 'junk' by school contacts.

The majority of local authorities say that their efforts to publicise SWiS are ongoing throughout the year, with newsletters, leaflets or other forms of publicity being distributed to schools on a regular basis – ie either monthly or termly.

Where key times for SWiS publicity have been identified by local authorities, these are often a term before funding is available, in June or July to target the cohort starting in September, or in the months leading up to a new cohort of learners starting if this is at another point in the school year.

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

Local authorities indicate that they would appreciate further guidance from TDA on certain aspects of SWiS so that they are able to promote it more appropriately and successfully – eg by showing how it fits with the wider qualifications offer available to schools, links to occupational standards and examples of case studies and good practice.

In particular, local authorities appear to be keen to obtain further information on the PSA route, as well as guidance on how to direct communications to schools most effectively, so that the information reaches the appropriate people.

3.4 Communications with the TDA

Local authorities were asked to rate the communication they receive from the TDA regarding SWiS.

Just less than a quarter of local authorities (24%) rate communications regarding SWiS as extremely good and 39% select the next highest rating. Ratings for TDA responsiveness to SWiS enquiries during 2007/08 are similarly positive (please see table 9).

Table 9: Local authority ratings of communications with TDA

Rating	Communications regarding SWiS overall	TDA responsiveness to SWiS enquiries (07/08)
1 (very poor)	2%	1%
2	9%	2%
3	26%	15%
4	39%	55%
5 (extremely good)	24%	26%

Base (local authorities rating communications): 106; base (local authorities rating responsiveness): 87. (Please note figures for responsiveness do not total 100% due to rounding).

Overall, local authorities are very positive about the levels of communication they receive from TDA, and the responsiveness to queries. There were mentions of specific TDA colleagues by name, commenting on how these individuals are particularly helpful and that working relationships with them are 'excellent'.

Where local authorities have experienced problems with communications from the TDA these have been predominantly related to the late receipt of funding information (please see table 10).

Table 10: Reasons given by local authorities for their ratings of TDA communications

Reasons why TDA communications are rated highly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional meetings, focus groups and workshops are a useful way to network (good relationships with regional and national advisors) (20%) Leaflets and the TDA website are very informative (16%) Queries are dealt with quickly and efficiently (14%)
Reasons why TDA communications are rated poorly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on funding announced late, having an effect on allocating budget and numbers of candidates (32%) Lack of information on the resources and materials the TDA make available (e.g. packs for download on the TDA website) (18%)

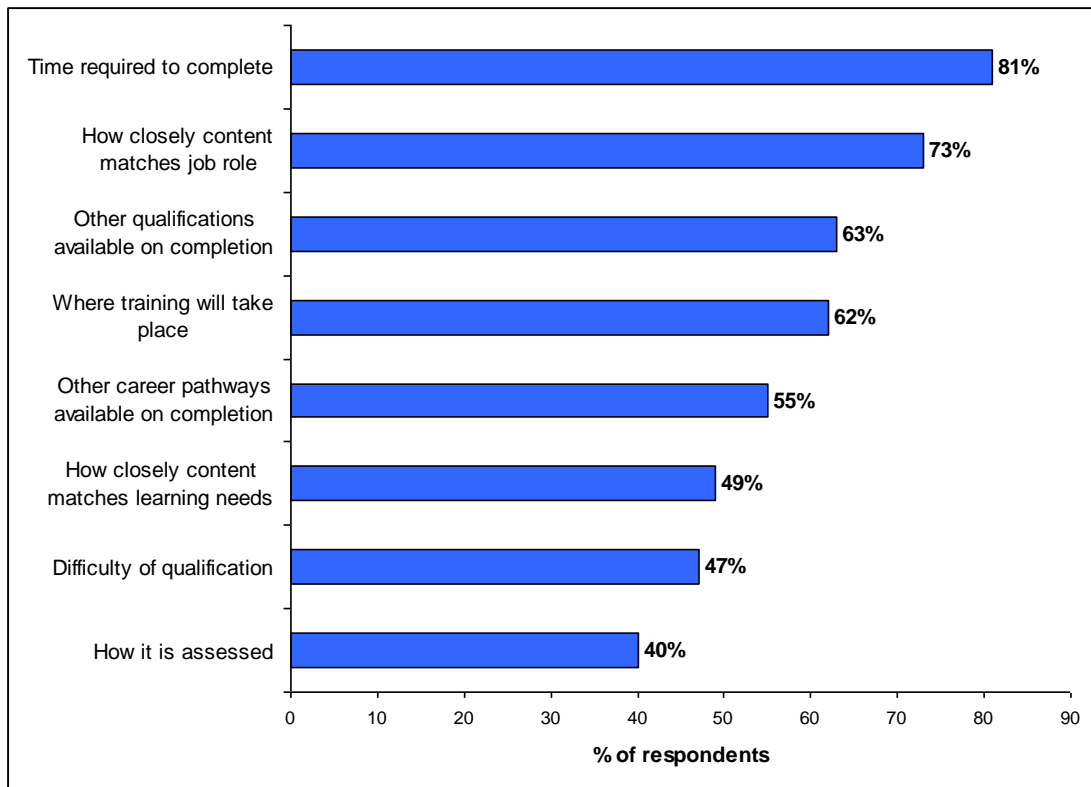
Base: (local authorities giving high ratings): 64; base: (local authorities giving low ratings): 34 (Please note that figures do not total 100% as other reasons were reported by a minority of respondents, and are therefore not included here)

3.5 Information for learners

Just over half (52%) of assessors think that the majority of learners are sufficiently well informed about the SWiS qualification before they enrol. A further 29% think that some learners are sufficiently well informed. Nevertheless, 67% of assessors do think that learners could benefit from further information regarding SWiS before embarking on the qualification.

Learners themselves believe that a range of initial information is important to know before undertaking a qualification, with 81% thinking it is important to know how much time the qualification will take to complete (please see figure 6).

Figure 6: Information learners think it is most important to know before undertaking a qualification

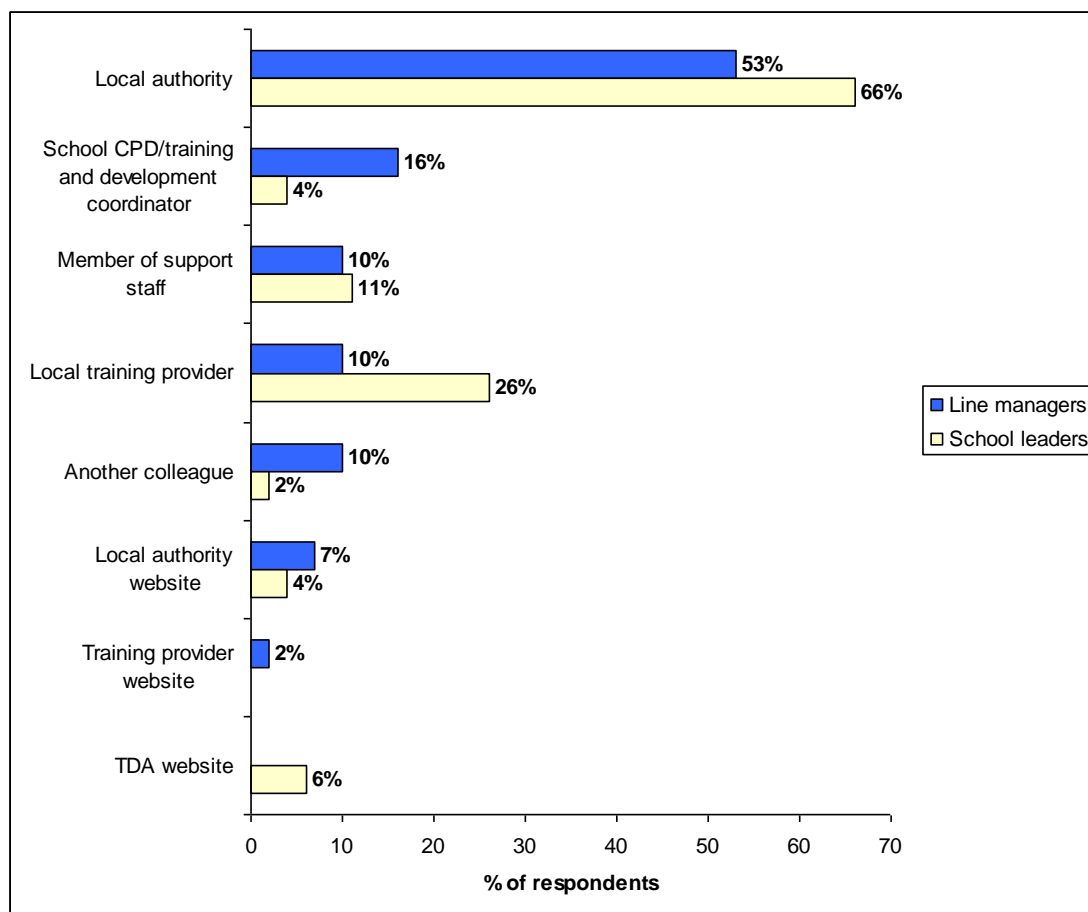


Base (learners): 333 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

3.6 Information and advice for schools

School leadership teams and line managers mainly obtain initial information and advice about SWiS from the local authority (please see figure 7).

Figure 7: Means by which schools obtain initial information and advice from Local Authorities regarding SWiS



Base (line managers): 62; base (school leaders, online): 47 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Levels of satisfaction regarding the initial information, advice and guidance (IAG) received are high among schools, with over two-thirds of both line managers and senior leadership teams reporting that they are either quite or very satisfied with the IAG they received about SWiS before the training started (68% and 67% respectively).

Arguably, a result of this satisfaction with IAG is that a high proportion of line managers and senior leaders say that they feel they know enough about the SWiS qualification to be able to advise support staff on whether or not they should pursue it (82% and 71% respectively).

3.7 Finding out about SWiS

The majority of line managers and school leadership teams taking part in the telephone interviews and online surveys found out about the SWiS qualification via direct communications from their local authority (please see table 11).

Table 11: Means by which schools find out about the SWiS qualification

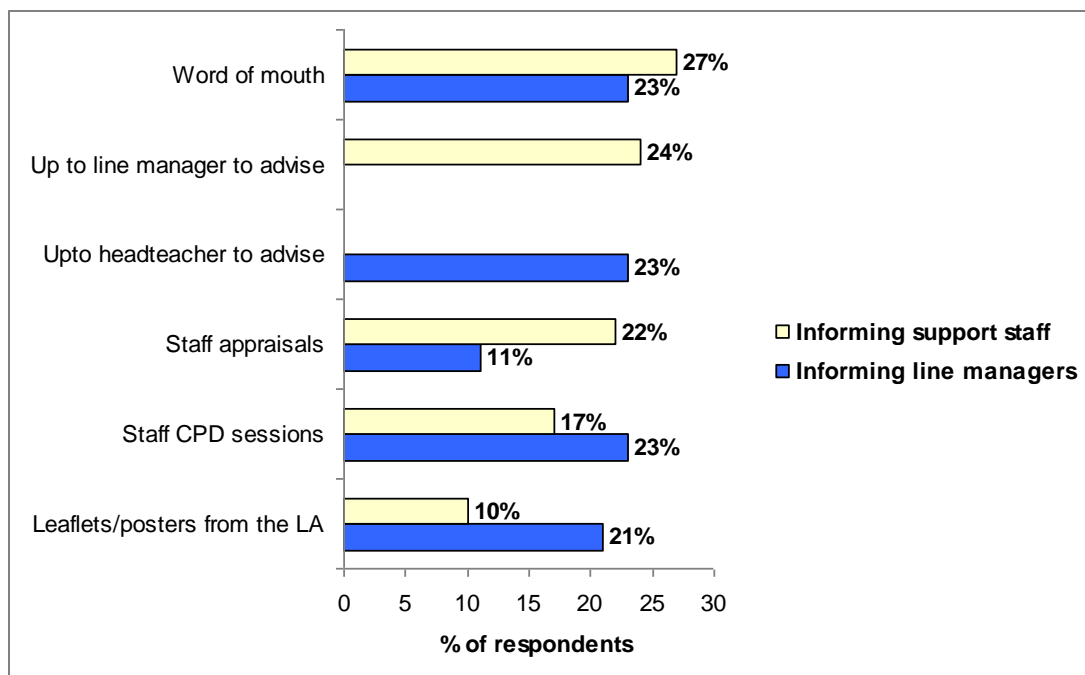
	School leadership teams (telephone interviews)	Headteachers /senior leaders (online survey)
Direct communication from local authority	71%	57%
Direct communication from training provider	4%	16%
Member of support staff	5%	12%
Another colleague	10%	4%
School CPD/training and development coordinator	5%	8%
TDA website	2%	2%
Local authority website	3%	0%
Training provider website	2%	0%

Base (school leaders, telephone): 178; base (school leaders, online): 49 (Please note percentages do not total 100% due to rounding)

When asked how LAs should contact schools that do not know about SWiS, school leadership teams mainly suggest direct communications regarding the qualification – either by email, letter or telephone. Face-to-face presentations or newsletters can sometimes be more suitable, as sometimes emails or flyers can be regarded as ‘junk’ and not passed on to the most appropriate colleague.

It is clear that once they have found out about SWiS, school leadership teams go on to use a range of methods to inform members of support staff and their line managers about the qualification (please see figure 8).

Figure 8: Ways in which school leaders inform line managers and support staff about SWiS

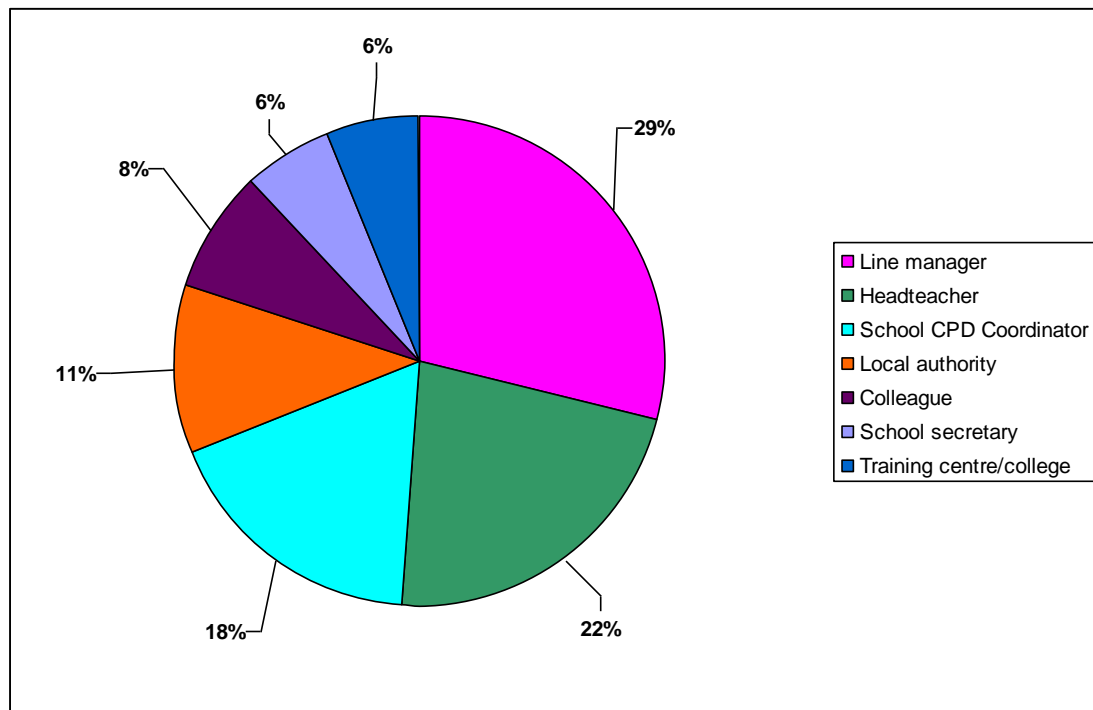


Base (school leaders, telephone – informing staff): 177; base (school leaders, telephone informing line managers): 185 (Note: percentages for line managers do not total 100% due to rounding)

When informing potential learners about SWiS, school leadership teams are most likely to highlight the benefits to the individual and the opportunities for progression to members of support staff, indicating that personal development among the workforce is a priority for many schools.

Learners participating in the online survey agree with senior school leadership teams that they mainly find out about the SWiS qualification either through their line manager or headteacher (please see figure 9).

Figure 9: Ways in which learners find out about the SWiS qualification

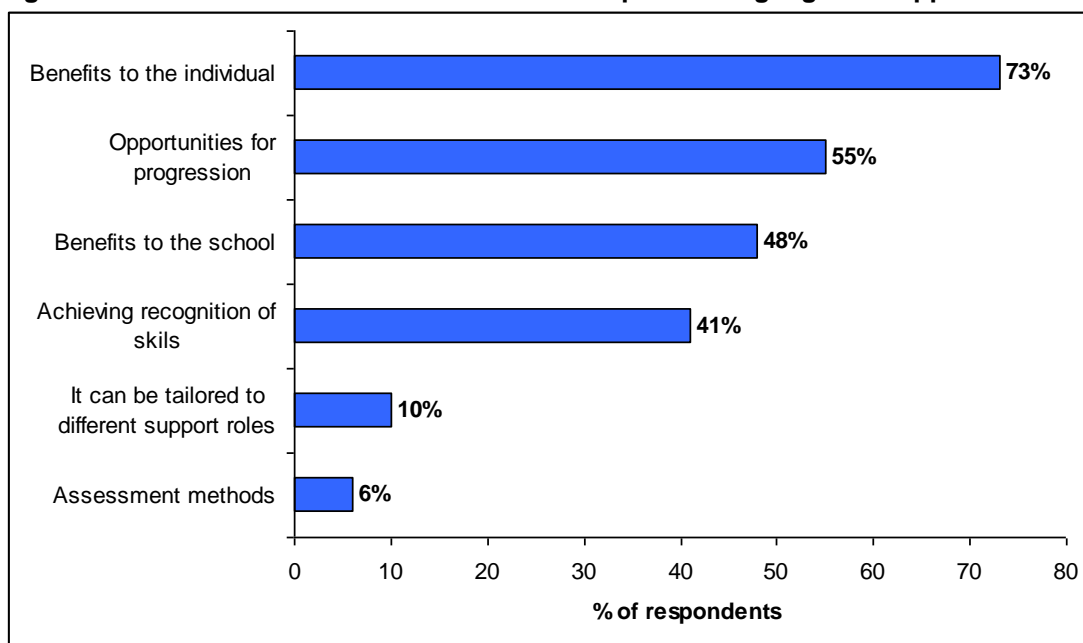


Base (learners): 301

3.8 Benefits of undertaking the SWiS qualification

School leaders say the benefits for individual members of support staff are the main reason why they decided to offer SWiS – ie professional development opportunities for staff to develop and update their skills and knowledge allow them to progress to other learning and development opportunities, and to provide recognition to support staff of the value of the work they carry out (please see figure 10).

Figure 10: Benefits of SWiS that school leadership teams highlight to support staff



Base (school leaders, telephone): 177 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

3.9 Barriers to schools offering SWiS

School leaders taking part in the telephone interviews did highlight some barriers they have experienced in offering SWiS training to support staff. These are mainly:

- Timing issues: arranging for cover staff can be difficult, and timetabling of training can clash with lesson times and other support staff priorities; this has been difficult for smaller schools, with numbers of support staff participating in training at any one time being limited as a result (25%)
- Financial aspects: for example, if funding is no longer made available to them for SWiS (21%)
- Relevance to job role: 13% of school leaders state that it has been difficult to make some of the components of SWiS (namely the mandatory units) feel relevant to all job roles

(Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants and are therefore not reported here)

A further 10% of schools report difficulties in communications between the school and local authority or provider, or a lack of space in which to deliver training.

To tackle these barriers, schools rearrange timetables, reschedule lessons or provide cover where necessary and available.

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

When asked what help they would appreciate in combating the barriers they face in offering SWiS, schools commonly request:

- Changes to delivery: school leaders request that centres either make training feel more relevant to specific job roles, offer training out of school hours, or offer training in a central location (30%)
- More funding: particularly to enable them to provide cover staff (20%)
- Improved communications: for example receiving further information on the requirements of SWiS (10%)

These are clearly issues that are generally related to local authority and provider operations, although it may be that the TDA can monitor these areas of SWiS management and delivery to ensure that barriers to schools wanting to offer SWiS are minimised as much as possible in future.

4. Funding

Before April 2007, funding for SWiS was managed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). However, funding arrangements have now changed, with local authorities receiving their funding grant direct from the TDA. This grant can be used by local authorities to cover the costs of purchasing or delivering training to learners and setting up SWiS promotions and delivery in their area. Since April 2007 local authorities have provided to the TDA estimates of learner numbers expected to embark on the SWiS qualification; this information is provided at key periods – March and October – and informs the size of the grant provided by the TDA.³²

During the impact assessment, questions were asked about the ease of access to funding and whether or not the arrangements for this are clear. These questions were mostly directed at local authorities in order to understand how the money allocated for SWiS is used and to identify any reasons why the full grant allocation might not be spent.

The majority of local authorities report fully utilising their 2007-08 SWiS grant allocation, with targeted marketing and promotion campaigns and the offer of full funding attracting demand from schools and learners.

Overall, the majority of local authorities do think the TDA's funding arrangements are effective and not overly bureaucratic. They particularly appreciate the flexibility of the funding – combining SWiS finances in a single pot with those available for HLTA status.

The reduction in the amount of funding available to local authorities is causing a little concern that they will not be able to meet demand in future – ten are considering changing promotional activities accordingly, so that only specific cohorts of candidates or levels of the qualification will be targeted. There is some indication that less funding will be made available by local authorities for learners wishing to progress from Level 2 to Level 3 SWiS.

Only four school leaders have experienced difficulties accessing funding. Schools' main problems appear to be related to learners wanting to progress from Level 2 to Level 3 in areas where the additional funding for this is not made available through the local authority. Stakeholders suggested that some local authorities have been unable to confirm numbers of learners to TDA before required deadlines, and consequently have not always received enough funding to meet actual demand for SWiS in a given year.

However, just over half of school leadership teams anticipate there being fewer learners undertaking SWiS during the next academic year. This is a result of many support staff now having achieved qualifications, the qualification not being appropriate for any other members of staff, or previous negative experiences causing reluctance for schools to take part again.

³² These findings are based on responses to online surveys from 340 learners, 65 schools CPD coordinators/line managers, 49 headteachers and 74 training providers; telephone surveys of 200 headteachers, 9 verifiers, 21 assessors, 108 local authorities and 16 stakeholders.

4.1 Difficulties accessing funding

Of 49 school leaders responding to the online survey, only 4 (8%) have experienced difficulties in accessing funding for the qualification; 10 (20%) did not know, and the remainder have not experienced any difficulties at all.

Three school leaders said that they had not applied for any funding as they were not aware that this was available to them. Similarly, they state that once learners have achieved Level 2, there is no funding made available by the local authority for them to progress onto Level 3.

In addition to this, key stakeholders involved in the initial scoping interviews reported that local authorities experienced problems in being able to return confirmed numbers of learners to TDA in time for the deadline, meaning that they may not have been able to receive as much funding as they required to meet actual demand for SWiS in a given year.

4.2 Use of SWiS grant allocation

The majority (65%) of local authorities have fully utilised their 2007-08 SWiS grant allocation, while just over a third (35%) at the time of data collection have not.

The significant majority of local authorities (84%) use monies from the TDA's support staff training and development grant to promote the SWiS qualification, with 30% using their own continuing professional development fund (please see table 12).

Table 12: Local authority use of their 2007-08 SWiS grant allocation

<p>Ways in which local authorities achieved full use of their SWiS grant allocation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, regular marketing and promotion (32%) • Word of mouth increasing demand for SWiS training (32%) • Offer of full funding attracts demand from schools/learners (16%) • Targeting specific cohorts of support staff (eg midday supervisors) (11%) • Targeting specific areas of the local community (eg Asian communities and those with English as a Second Language (ESOL), embedding additional support such as literacy and other Skills for Life training (9%)
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Barriers preventing local authorities from fully using their SWiS grant allocation

- Lack of response from schools/learners (61%)
- Receiving funding late (31%)
- Starting the training midway through the school year (7%)

Base (local authorities – use of grant): 71; base (local authorities – barriers): 34 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to rounding)

4.3 Meeting demand

Initial scoping interviews with key stakeholders indicated that early take-up of the SWiS qualification was cautious, although it increased as funding arrangements and assessment processes stabilised. A need for this stabilisation to continue over a longer period of time was cited by stakeholders and verifiers keen to see the qualification given time to 'bed in' before undergoing any further changes.

School leaders

During this academic year, ten school leaders, each from different schools responding to the survey, said that they have 1 member of support staff undertaking SWiS in their school. The findings from the survey show this as the spread of learners:

- 1 learner – 10 schools
- 2 learners – 7 schools
- 3 learners – 2 schools
- 4 learners – 4 schools
- 5 learners – 5 schools
- 6 learners – 7 schools
- 7 learners – 0 schools
- 8 learners – 3 schools
- 9 learners – 0 schools
- 10 learners – 1 school

However, just over half (51%) of school leadership teams taking part in the online survey anticipate there being fewer learners undertaking the SWiS qualification in their school during the next academic year (2008/2009).

The most common reasons why school leaders believe that there will be less demand for SWiS training in future include:

- All school staff now have SWiS or other qualifications (50%)
- No support staff in the school who need to access the training (16%)
- The qualification is not appropriate for any other members of staff (12%)
- Previous negative experiences with the course, or previous lack of support, makes them reluctant to become involved again (8%)

(Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants and are therefore not reported here)

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

Local authorities

Just over three-quarters of local authorities (76%) do believe that demand can be met for SWiS this year. Five agree with school leaders that demand will be lower than previous years due to many schools now already having highly trained members of support staff.

This being said, local authorities are attempting to increase exposure of SWiS to new schools and word of mouth is helping to boost demand from schools for the qualification. Some 10% of local authorities are developing relationships with additional training providers so as to meet the demand from learners and increase training capacity available.

However, where there are concerns among local authorities that demand will not be met this commonly relates to reductions in the amount of funding available in relation to previous years. Again, 10% report that they are applying for additional funding but are concerned that they will be unable to offer all candidates a place on the training.

As a result, ten local authorities are considering changing their promotional activities so as to only target a specific cohort of support staff, or a particular level of qualification.

Subsequently, further information and guidance on funding has been requested during the survey by local authorities from TDA:

- Guidance on funding criteria and applying for additional monies (18%)
- Guidance on procurement of training to enable local authorities to identify the best value provision (18%)
- Marketing guidance (17%)
- Guidance on the Parent Support Advisor role (15%)
- Notice on funding levels earlier in the year to help with planning (11%)
- Guidance on qualification specification (10%)
- Information on location of providers (8%)

(Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants and are therefore not reported here)

4.4 Funding arrangements

Slightly more than two-thirds (67%) of local authorities taking part in the interviews think that the TDA's funding arrangements are effective; although in some instances, they were felt to be confusing and frustrating for local authorities where guidance or information from TDA is perceived to either not be made available, or is late arriving.

Twenty-two local authorities commented during the interviews that the TDA's funding arrangements are clear – the limited amount of paperwork is much appreciated, with local authorities generally viewing the TDA's arrangements as not being overly bureaucratic.

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

One of the key aspects that local authorities seem to appreciate is the increased flexibility in how the money can be used, particularly being able to combine SWiS financial arrangements with those in place for HLTA status. However – this ‘one pot’ approach is not appreciated by all local authorities, with five reporting that this makes it more difficult for them to allocate budgets to specific aspects of support staff training.

Recent cuts in funding have been received quite negatively by local authorities, particularly now that word of mouth and marketing of SWiS is perceived to be starting to generate widespread interest in the qualification among schools and members of support staff.

4.5 Funding for volunteers

Twenty-one local authorities (20%) state that the SWiS qualification is made available to volunteers undertaking support roles in their schools.

For the majority of school leaders (68%), any demand for SWiS training among volunteers is said to be met via local authority funding.

Nevertheless, three local authorities did note that although they make SWiS available to volunteers, this is on condition that the volunteer becomes an employee of the school – even if this is on a minimum contract of a few hours per week – so that they can access funding for training and development opportunities.

Where local authorities do not offer SWiS to volunteers in support roles, the main reason for this is a lack of funding or limited funding being available (46%).

This is somewhat corroborated by the fact that over a quarter of schools (27%) provide the funding themselves for volunteer training. A lower proportion of schools (10%) say that local authorities will provide funding via a different source, and 2% report volunteers funding themselves through SWiS.

5. Access and initial assessment

When a member of support staff expresses an interest in taking the SWiS qualification, an initial assessment of their suitability is undertaken. The arrangements for conducting these initial assessments are currently quite flexible.³³

In some cases the school will conduct an assessment, which might be carried out via a self-assessment by the learner themselves or in conjunction with a member of school staff, such as the school CPD Coordinator.

Local authority providers are most likely to conduct an interview with learners or ask them to complete a questionnaire to identify their initial needs, whereas FE colleges are most likely to conduct a basic skills test. Nearly half of line managers say that they are involved in the initial assessment by having an informal conversation with candidates about their needs. In contrast, 28% of learners report that they identified their training and development needs on their own.

In cases where providers identify candidates unready for SWiS, those incorporating additional support into the training or offering advice on other opportunities available are most likely to be local authorities. FE colleges are most likely to offer basic skills training so that candidates can take part in SWiS in future.

Once a candidate has been accepted for the SWiS qualification there are a number of ways in which they can choose their optional units. Training providers say they are involved with choosing a learner's optional units more than learners themselves report having had help. Nearly half of learners say that they choose their units by themselves.

There appears to be a range of barriers to the different target groups initially accessing SWiS – the most common being insufficient information about the qualification.

- **Local authorities:** insufficient information about the qualification; difficulties in accessing funding and no suitable providers in the local area; confusion about funding and changes in policy
- **Centres:** limited occupational competence of assessors; insufficient information about SWiS; difficulties accessing funding; inability to offer a sufficient range of units
- **Schools:** insufficient information about SWiS; not recognising the value of the qualification or offering development opportunities to support staff; lack of flexibility in allowing staff to attend training in school hours; no previous history of engaging with formal CPD opportunities
- **Learners:** fear of re-entering education following a long break; insufficient information about the qualification; lack of time available to commit to the training; lack of basic skills; location and timing of the training; mandatory units not being relevant to a specific job role (eg caretakers, cleaners and administration staff); difficulties accessing computer equipment

³³ These findings are based on responses to online surveys from 340 learners, 65 schools CPD coordinators/line managers, 49 headteachers and 74 training providers; telephone surveys of 200 headteachers, 9 verifiers, 21 assessors, 108 local authorities and 16 stakeholders.

5.1 Initial assessment

In terms of carrying out an initial assessment of a learner's needs and abilities before the start of SWiS training, 47% of training providers conduct an interview with each learner to identify their needs; 44% say that learners are given a basic skills test, eg in literacy and numeracy (please see table 13).

Table 13: Ways in which different training providers carry out an initial assessment of a learner's needs before SWiS training

	Further Education	School – based	Private provider	Local Authority	All providers
The assessment is conducted by the school, not the training provider	6%	0%	7%	9%	7%
The assessment is conducted by the local authority, not the training provider	17%	100%	0%	0%	7%
Learners are given a basic skills test	67%	0%	36%	35%	45%
Conduct an interview with each learner to identify their needs	44%	0%	64%	44%	48%
Learners are asked to complete a questionnaire to identify their needs	17%	0%	29%	44%	30%

Base (training providers): 56 (Please note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Local authority providers are most likely to conduct an interview with learners or ask learners to complete a questionnaire (59% and 37% of all providers offering these options respectively), whereas FE colleges are most likely to conduct a basic skills test with learners (48% of all providers offering this option).

Learners, however, appear to have a somewhat different view as to how their learning needs were identified before they started their SWiS qualification. In comparison to providers, only 19% of learners indicate that they had met with somebody from their training centre to talk about their training and development needs. They were more likely to suggest that they had:

- Identified their training and development needs on their own (28%)
- Met with their line manager to talk about their needs (24%)
- Met with their school headteacher or a senior colleague to talk about their needs (22%)

(Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants and are therefore not reported here)

Learners are just as likely (19%) to say that they did not identify any training and development needs beforehand as they are to say that they met with a training centre representative.

Whereas nearly half of providers state that learners sit a basic skills test, only 6% of learners responding to the online survey (ie 18 learners) report having taken such a test before they started their SWiS training.

In addition, nearly half of line managers participating in the online survey (49%) stated that they are involved in helping learners identify their training needs though an informal conversation; just more than one third (35%) are involved in an appraisal process, and 20% are involved via a training needs analysis. Fifteen percent of line managers report that learners identify training and development needs by themselves.

5.2 Candidates where SWiS is inappropriate

Fifty-three providers say that they do at times identify individuals who have applied for the SWiS qualification but for whom it is inappropriate.

In these cases, the large majority of providers (87%) offer support by giving advice on other training and development opportunities. Under half (45%) offer basic skills or other training so that the individual can take SWiS in the future, and one quarter (25%) still accept these candidates onto the SWiS qualification, but incorporate extra support into the training process.

It appears that local authority training centres are most likely to offer these candidates additional support or advice, compared with other types of provider, whereas FE colleges are most likely to offer additional training.

- 58% of providers incorporating additional support into the training process are local authority providers
- 53% of those offering basic skills training so that candidates can take SWiS in future are FE colleges

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- 51% of those offering advice on other training and development opportunities available are local authority providers

(Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as multiple responses were given)

5.3 Choosing units

Over half of training providers taking part in the online survey (59%) say that they help learners choose their units, without also consulting others such as line managers (please see table 14).

Table 14: Ways in which learners choose their optional units³⁴

	Proportion of training providers	Proportion of learners	Proportion of line managers
Training providers help learners choose their units	59%	30%	0%
Providers only offer specific units for each job role/ provider chooses units	20%	12%	0%
Providers help learners choose, and consult with their line manager	19%	0%	19%
Learner chooses in consultation with their line manager	12%	7%	36%
Line manager/member of school leadership team chooses units for the learner	0%	3%	0%
Providers help learners choose, and consult with the school leadership team	10%	0%	0%
Learner chooses by themselves	3%	46%	0%
Learner chooses the units in consultation with another member of the school leadership team	3%	2%	5%

Base (training providers): 74; base (learners): 318; base (line managers): 64 (Please note percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses).

Nearly half (45%) of line managers taking part in the online survey say that they have not been involved at all in helping learners choose their optional units.

³⁴ Note: the disparities between learner and provider responses could be attributed to the types of respondents who felt motivated to complete the survey – ie providers may have helped many other learners who didn't respond to the survey to choose units

Where providers only deliver specific units these appear to be the mandatory units plus Health and Safety. The latter two options in table 14, where learners either choose by themselves or in consultation with their school leadership teams were only picked by two providers each – suggesting that in general, training providers believe that they have at least some level of influence on the optional units learners choose.

However, learners are not as positive about the level of involvement training centres – or colleagues at school – have in helping them choose their optional units, with 46% saying that they chose their units by themselves. This disparity between the views of providers and learners may be explained by fact that providers are not necessarily commenting on the exact same learners taking part in the impact assessment.

5.4 Barriers to accessing SWiS

Local authorities

Three out of nine verifiers suggest that insufficient information is a common reason why local authorities do not participate in the SWiS qualification. Other barriers that verifiers could identify were (only one response received for each):

- Difficulty in accessing funding
- No suitable providers in the local area
- Confusion about funding and changes in policy
- A lack of clear marketing of SWiS to local authorities

Centres

Five verifiers say limited occupational competence of assessors is a common barrier to centres being able to offer SWiS. Other barriers identified for centres (and cited by two verifiers each) are:

- Insufficient information
- Difficulty in accessing funding
- Inability to offer a sufficient range of units

Schools

Local authorities and verifiers report that insufficient information available to schools about SWiS is a common reason why schools do not participate in the SWiS qualification, with information not always being 'filtered down' or able to 'penetrate school systems'. Some say that SWiS is not always deemed suitable by the school, which may partly be a result of a lack of knowledge and understanding about SWiS.

Fifteen local authorities suggest that school leadership teams do not always recognise the value of the qualification, or in developing members of support staff. Not having a previous history of engaging in formal training and development is also reported by local authorities and verifiers as being a barrier to schools taking up the qualification. It is suggested by local authorities (19%) that a lack of flexibility in allowing support staff the time to attend training sessions in school hours also poses a barrier for schools engaging with SWiS.

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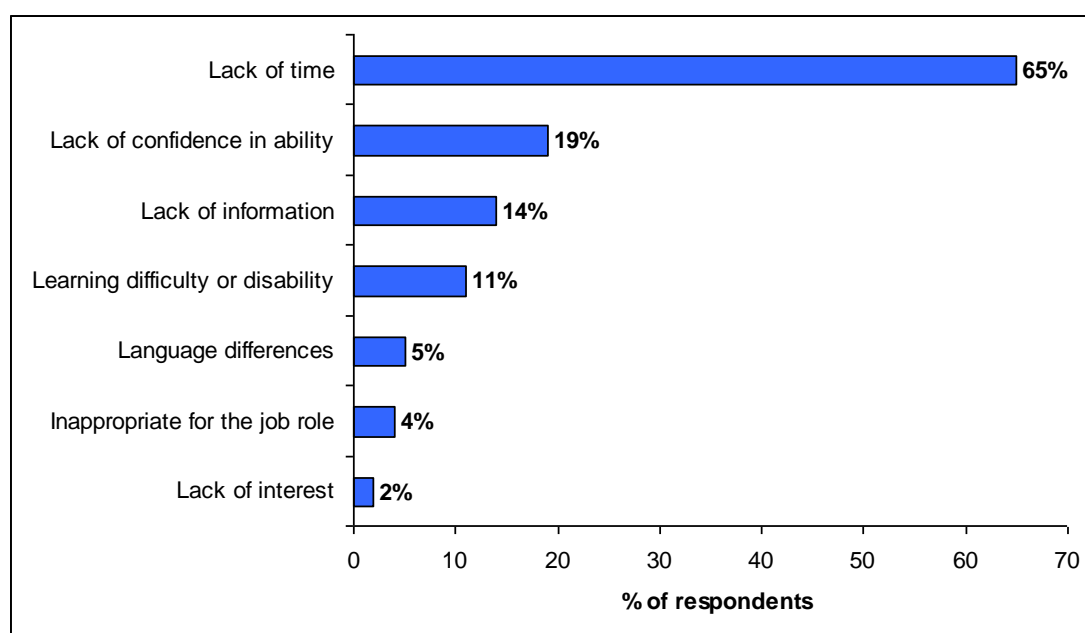
Learners

A fear of re-entering education is the most common reason verifiers give for learners not participating in SWiS (reported by 6 out of 7 verifiers). Insufficient information and a lack of time were also cited by three out of nine verifiers as being barriers to learners. Other barriers to learners accessing SWiS, each identified by one verifier are:

- The qualification not being seen as suitable as it does not fit with a school's workforce development plan
- A lack of incentive to learners, for example if they are not clearly able to achieve an increase in income or promotion on completion of the training

Furthermore, just under two-thirds of school leaders (65%) say that the main barrier is a lack of time for learners to commit to the qualification (please see figure 11).

Figure 11: Barriers to learners accessing SWiS (identified by school leadership teams)



Base (school leaders, telephone): 57 (Please note percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses).

Furthermore, local authorities taking part in the telephone interviews identified many of the same barriers to take-up among learners:

- Lack of communication/information about SWiS being filtered to the correct people within the schools (32%)
- Time constraints – support staff often work part-time and have to attend training in their own time, particularly where the school is unable to release them or arrange for appropriate cover (30%)
- Lack of understanding (23%)
- Fear of re-entering education, having not participated in formal training for a considerable length of time (20%)

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- Basic skills needs or having English as a Second Language (14%)
- Mandatory units not being relevant for specific job roles (eg caretakers, cleaners and administration staff) (13%)
- Location of the training – difficulties in accessing transport (9%)
- Difficulties in being able to access computer equipment or being IT literate (8%)

(Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 as some respondents stated more than one issue)

5.5 Reducing barriers

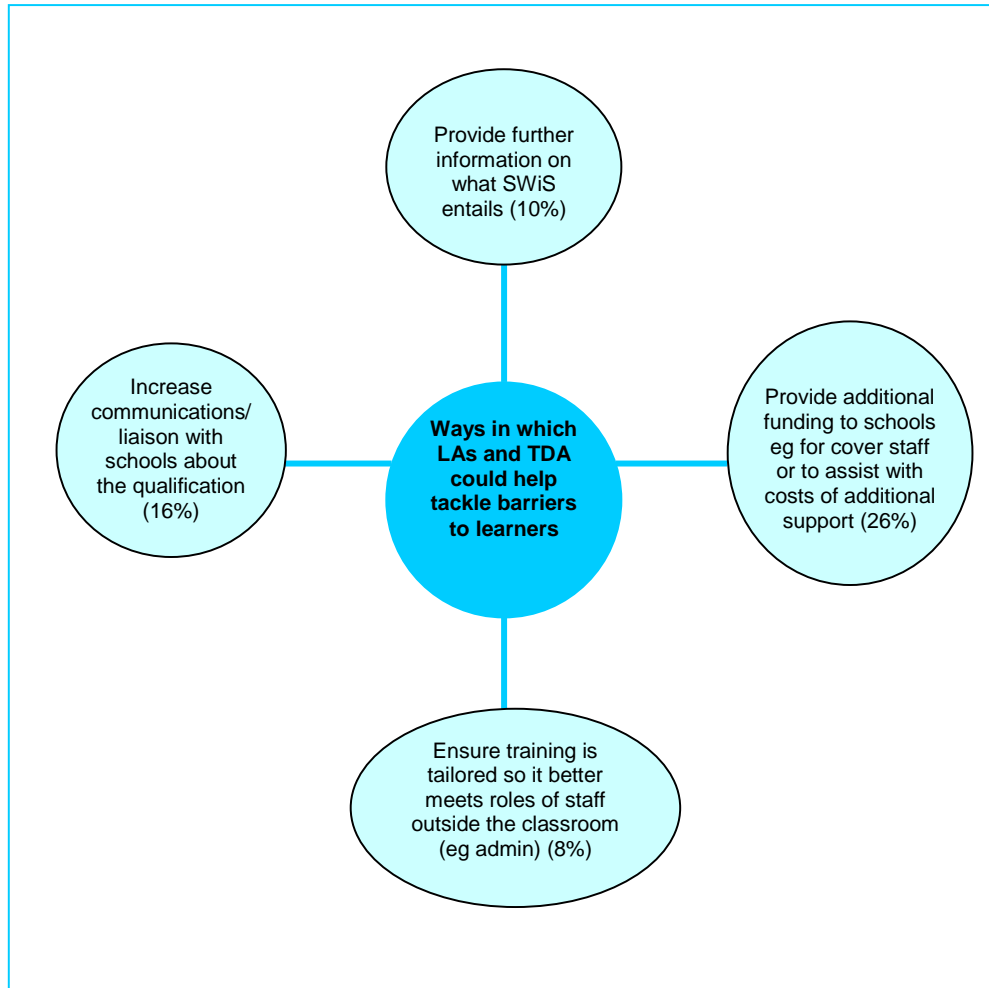
In terms of helping members of support staff overcome or reduce the barriers they face when trying to access SWiS, schools do offer a variety of solutions or support structures. The most common include:

- Providing translation or support with written work for members of support staff with basic skills issues or English as a Second Language (32%)
- Ensuring line managers regularly meet with members of support staff to review progress (17%)
- Renegotiating timings of training sessions so it is more convenient for members of support staff to attend (11%)
- Arranging cover staff to be available in order to allow members of support staff to attend training (9%)
- Providing transport to enable support staff to travel to training sessions (4%)
- Encouraging members of support staff to work together and support each other through the qualification (4%)

(Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 as some respondents stated more than one issue)

Schools were also asked to suggest ways in which their local authority, or the TDA, could help. These are given below in figure 12.

Figure 12: Ways in which schools think LAs or TDA could help tackle barriers in accessing SWiS



Base (school leaders, telephone): 51 (Note: percentages do not total 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants, and are therefore not reported here)

6. Training delivery

An integral part of this impact assessment is an examination of the ways in which the training to support the SWiS qualification is delivered and how training providers are selected to offer the SWiS qualification.³⁵

Local authorities mainly select training providers as a result of previous good working relationships or the provider's experience of working with schools. They are often closely involved in the delivery of SWiS contracts – marketing the qualification, offering mentoring and providing verifiers and assessors. Maintaining communications with providers is also essential to local authorities.

As achievement of the qualification is based on an assessment of occupational competence, it is vital that any training offered to support this is focused on developing skills and knowledge needed for the role in question. It is also important that the method of delivering the training is in tune with the needs of the candidate, is aimed at the appropriate level of ability and takes into consideration the resources at the disposal of the candidate and their school.

The majority of learners are satisfied with the quality of the training they receive, highlighting the importance of support systems in shaping their experience of the qualification (eg in the form of mentor, line manager, tutor and assessor support).

Learners did state that they had experienced barriers undertaking SWiS, such as:

- A perceived lack of relevance to their job role (particularly administration and caretaking staff, or those working outside mainstream education)
- Timing of sessions being inappropriate
- Support lacking from training providers or mentors, particularly where the learner has additional needs or a lack of basic skills

The majority of provider time is spent delivering training to classes of learners drawn from different schools, with individual tuition being offered where required. This enables learners to share their experiences with each other, whilst at the same time tailoring their portfolios and receiving additional support where they need it.

This section of the report brings together the feedback from all of those involved in the delivery process: learners, school leaders and line managers, providers and local authorities.

It takes into consideration many different factors such as the type of qualification taken (or offered), the range of units and the type of delivery involved, along with other factors such as the location where training takes place.

The large majority of SWiS training is delivered within learners' schools, with school leaders indicating this as their preferred location – probably because many learners will attend their training during school hours. Sometimes learners can experience difficulties attending training, often where schools are unable to release them or arrange for cover staff.

³⁵ These findings are based on responses to online surveys from 340 learners, 65 schools CPD coordinators/line managers, 49 headteachers and 74 training providers; telephone surveys of 200 headteachers, 9 verifiers, 21 assessors, 108 local authorities and 16 stakeholders.

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Sixty-three of the 108 local authorities interviewed (58%) offer SWiS training through a training provider; forty-three (40%) offer training through the local authority itself and only two use both methods.

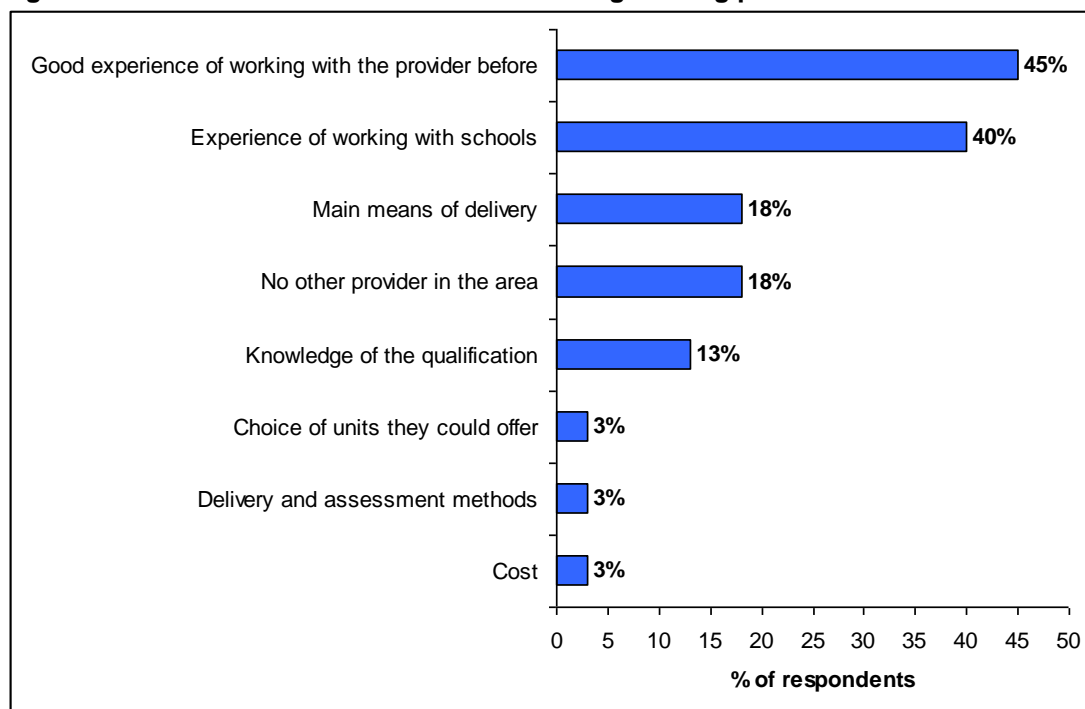
However, responses from school leaders differ somewhat, with 92 (48%) saying that SWiS training is delivered and/or assessed by a local authority provider, 72 (36%) using another type of provider (such as a private training provider), and 13 (7%) using a combination of these.

School leadership teams participating in the online survey again mainly identify the local authority as their training provider (46%) or a private training provider (25%). Further Education colleges and school-based assessment centres are reported by 15% of school leaders each. Five (10%) school leaders undertaking the online survey do not know the type of training provider used for their SWiS training.

6.1 Selecting training providers

Having a good experience of working with a provider, a training provider's experience of working with schools, and the provider being the current main provider of training offered by the local authority ('main means of delivery') are the main reasons why local authorities select providers to deliver SWiS training (please see figure 13).

Figure 13: Reasons for local authorities selecting training providers for SWiS



Base (local authorities): 38 (Please note percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses).

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In addition, local authorities seem to recommend providers to each other, or they will work from recommendations or suggestions received from (previously) LSC, and now TDA. Providers also approach local authorities directly, or may already work with them in delivery of other training such as NVQs.

Not only do previous positive experiences affect the choice of provider – any negative experience of providers in the past also appears to influence the decisions by local authorities to work with particular centres in future.

Although 20% of local authorities say that they have little active involvement in the contract with training providers, the remainder are often very much involved in SWiS management and delivery processes – either through marketing, mentoring learners, attending training sessions or providing verifiers and assessors.

Regular contact with providers appears to be essential to local authorities, so that they are aware of progress and any issues that may need resolving.

6.2 Location and style of delivery

Location

Training providers report that on average, 73% of their training and assessment for SWiS is delivered in the learners' schools. Learners support this finding with 84% saying that they have received training for the SWiS qualification either at the school where they work, or at a different school – 83% went on to say that this was the main location for their training.

Table 15: Location of SWiS training delivery

	Proportion of training delivered by provider in this location	Proportion of learners reporting they receive training in this location	Proportion of learners reporting this as the main location for their training
In school	73%	84%	83%
At a local college/university	4%	7%	5%
Providers training centre	23% (please note this includes local authority and private training provider centres)	16%	12%

Base (providers): 52; base (learners): 322 (Please note percentages do not total 100% for learners due to multiple responses).

School leaders

When asked where they think it would be best for SWiS training to be delivered, 69% of school leadership teams state on site at school and a further 25% opt for a local authority training centre.

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Three school leaders (6%) suggest a local FE college as a suitable training centre. None feel that another school or the premises of a private training provider would be the best option for SWiS training delivery.

The preference for these locations may well be linked to the fact that 47% of school leaders report that learners in their school attend formal SWiS training during school time. This could make the delivery of SWiS more convenient for schools if they do not need to release members of support staff from the premises to attend training.

However, there have been difficulties for learners in attending training sessions for SWiS, the most common of these being:

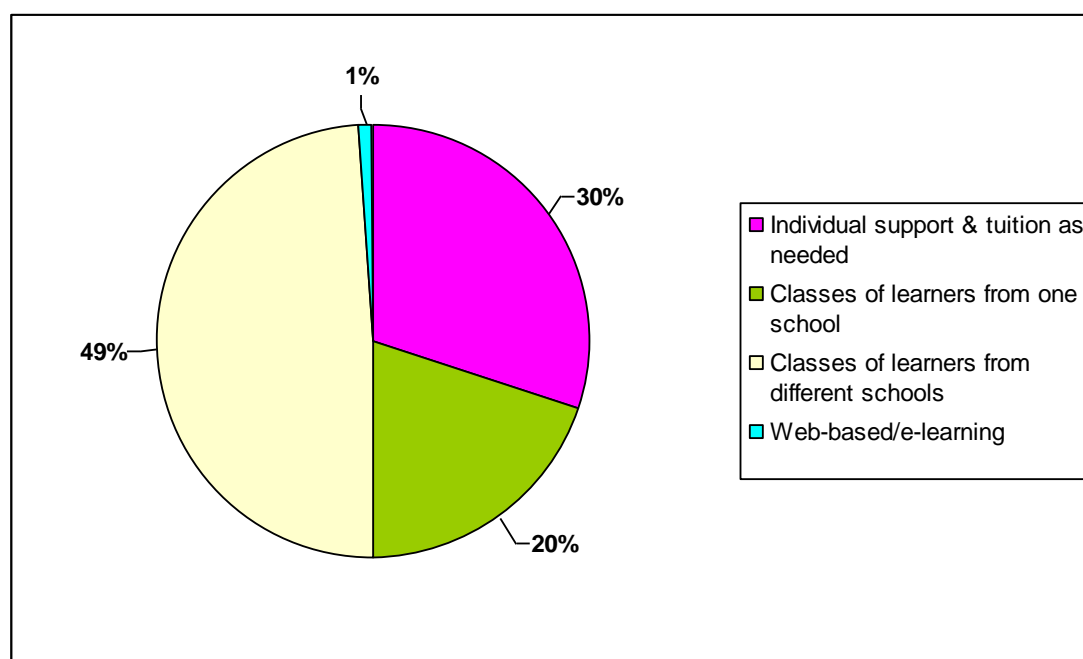
- Not always finding it possible to be released from school/class commitments to attend training sessions (49%)
- Lack of staff cover for when they are at training (14%)
- Having to make childcare arrangements in order to attend training (12%)
- Having to work overtime as a result of attending training (9%)

(Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants and are therefore not reported here)

Style

In terms of how SWiS training is delivered, training providers spend an average of 49% of their contact time with learners, delivering to classes of learners drawn from different schools (please see figure 14).

Figure 14: Average proportion of time providers spend per SWiS learner on various delivery methods



Base (training providers): 52

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A mixture of workshops of learners (either from different or the same school), accompanied by individual tuition where required, appears to be the most common way in which providers deliver SWiS training to learners. Providers also set up 'buddying' systems between learners so that they can mentor and support one another, and offer telephone support to assessors and mentors.

The various different delivery methods are chosen by training providers for a variety of reasons (please see table 16).

Table 16: Reasons why providers choose various delivery methods

	Benefits
Classes of learners from different schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to network with support staff from other schools (28%) • Brings different experiences/contexts that learners can share with each other (eg primary and secondary) (27%) • More financially viable for the provider to bring learners from different schools together (9%) • More practical for learners where they may be the only one in their school taking the qualification (5%)
Individual support and tuition as needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolios are tailored to job role so one-to-one support helps this aspect (21%) • Candidates can work at their own pace and flexibly to meet their own needs (19%) • Learners who have not participated in formal training for some time receive extra support (4%) • Paperwork can be daunting for some learners (2%)
Classes of learners from one school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners feel comfortable in a familiar environment (9%) • Learners can easily see the connection between the training and the role they carry out in that environment (9%) • Saves learners having to travel to their training (7%) • Delivery is timetabled to suit the needs of the school (4%)
Web-based/e-learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables access for learners who cannot be released from school (12%)

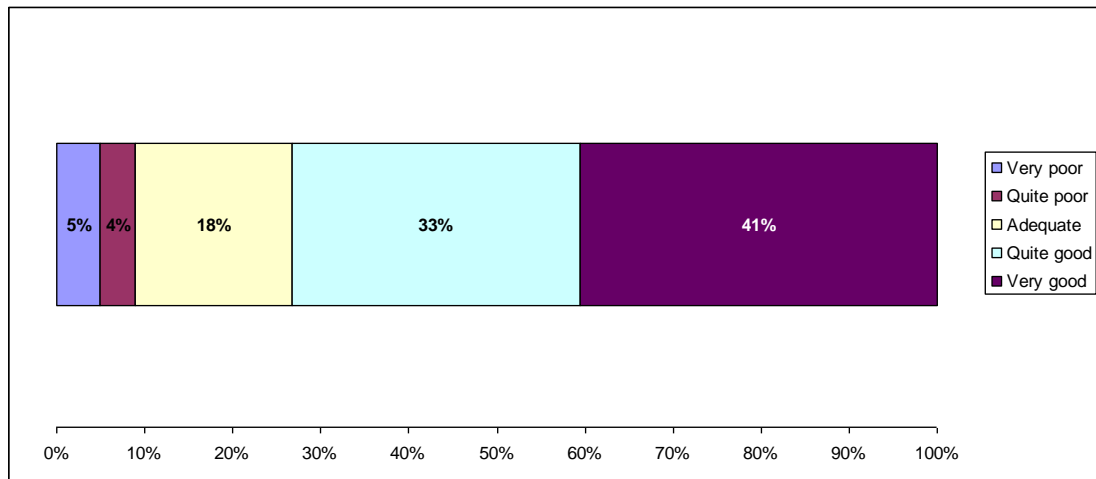
Base: 74 (Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as respondents used more than one method of delivery)

6.3 Quality of training

Learners

Overall, SWiS learners appear to be satisfied with the quality of the training received, with just less than three-quarters (74%) rating the quality of training as being good or very good (please see figure 15).

Figure 15: How learners rate the quality of training received



Base (learners): 325 (Please note that figures do not total 100% due to rounding).

Learners are able to provide a variety of reasons for the ratings they gave for the quality of their SWiS training (please see table 17).

Table 17: Learner reasons for rating quality of training provision

Learner reasons for positive ratings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive and knowledgeable assessors (29%) • Tutors helpful, friendly and encouraging (29%) • Course delivery good with content relevant to the job role (19%) • Ability to contact tutors/assessors whenever necessary (19%) • Regular updates and feedback on progress (10%) • Support from mentors, schools and line managers (5%) • Flexibility to fit in with the working day (5%)
Learner reasons for negative ratings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paperwork very time consuming and sometimes repetitive (48%) • Lack of clear information on requirements (46%) • Lack of support or communication – feeling alone with the training (19%) • Portfolio/folder of work hard to follow and unclear (19%) • Training has lasted longer than anticipated, sessions cancelled frequently by provider (14%) • Not feeling that any training was received, but reflected on skills already obtained (14%)

Base: base (learners giving positive ratings): 238; base (learners giving negative ratings): 28 (Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as multiple responses were given).

It is clear from these responses that the impact of tutors, assessors and other support systems (such as line managers and mentors) is fundamental to learners' perceptions of their SWiS experience. Where they believe support or communication to be lacking, learners rate the quality of the training lower than those who have received regular updates and feel encouraged and motivated by those around them.

The location of the training does not appear to be an influencing factor in how highly learners rate the quality of the training they have received – over 70% of learners from each different type of training location regard their training as being of good or very good quality. Of the thirteen learners reporting that the quality of training was very poor, twelve receive the training at the school where they work, and one at a local college/university.

Learners undertaking the Level 3 Diploma or the Parent Support endorsed pathway Level 3 Certificate are most likely to rate the quality of their training as being very good – 52% and 100% respectively, although the latter represents only a very small number of learners (please see table 18).

Table 18: Quality of provision by type of qualification (learner ratings)

	1 Very poor	2 Quite poor	3 Adequate	4 Quite good	5 Very good
Level 2 Award (62 learners)	8%	8%	18%	31%	36%
Level 2 Certificate (111 learners)	6%	3%	16%	35%	40%
Level 3 Award (16 learners)	6%	0%	25%	56%	13%
Level 3 Certificate (27 learners)	0%	0%	41%	26%	33%
Level 3 Diploma (44 learners)	0%	0%	18%	30%	52%
Parent Support endorsed pathway Level 3 Certificate (2 learners)	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

(Please note that percentages for the Level 2 Award do not total 100% due to rounding)

Seventy-three learners participating in the online survey say that they have been told that they are taking part in the SWiS tests and trials for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF); only four training providers report that they are involved.

Just over two-thirds of these learners taking part in the tests and trials (67%) say that the quality of the training they have received has been either good or very good – a slightly lower proportion than all learners in total (74%).

School leaders

The majority of school leaders are positive about the relationship their school has with the SWiS training provider – when asked to rate this relationship, 54% of schools say it is either quite or very good.

Relationships with local authority providers receive the highest proportion of 'very good' ratings. Overall, those receiving the most 'quite good' or 'very good' ratings are FE colleges and school-based assessment centres. However, the highest rating for 'very poor' is also for FE colleges (please see table 19).

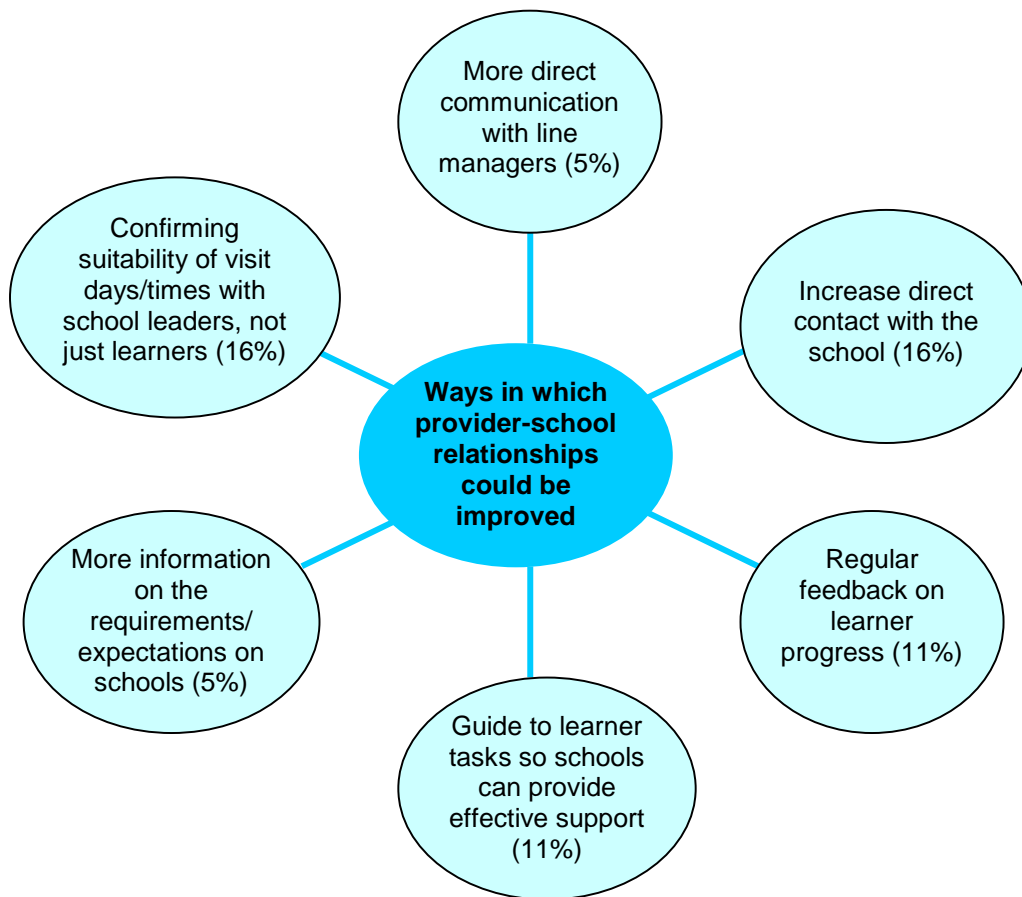
Table 19: How school leaders rate the relationship between school and SWiS training provider

	1 Very poor	2 Quite poor	3 Adequate	4 Quite good	5 Very good
Further Education College (FE)	14%	0%	14%	43%	29%
School-based assessment centre	0%	0%	29%	43%	29%
Private training organisation	8%	0%	50%	8%	33%
Local Authority	9%	9%	27%	23%	32%
Not known	0%	0%	75%	0%	25%

Base (school leaders, online: 47 (Please note that figures do not total 100% due to rounding)

Despite these positive ratings, school leaders are able to highlight a number of ways in which the relationships between schools and training providers could be improved in the future – the main issue being a need for an increase in clearer and regular communications directly between the training provider and the school (please see figure 16).

Figure 16: Ways in which school leaders think relationships with providers could be improved



Base (school leaders, online): 19 (Note: figures do not total 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants, and therefore are not reported here)

6.4 Changes to training delivery

Of 50 providers responding to the question whether they had made any changes to the delivery of SWiS training and assessment, under half (46%) say that they have not made any changes at all.

Where changes have been made by providers these are as follows:

- Increased the amount of formal training delivered (18%)
- Decreased the amount of formal training delivered (14%)
- Increased the number of optional units available (12%)
- Introduced additional basic skills classes (10%)
- Changed the range of units available (10%)
- Reduced the number of optional units available (8%)
- Introduced more initial skills assessment (6%)

(Note: figures do not total 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants, and therefore are not reported here)

The reasons that providers gave for these changes are generally focused on meeting the needs of learners either in terms of the style of delivery they prefer, or the amount of support they may require to complete the qualification.

Two external verifiers are aware of changes providers made to SWiS delivery or assessment, with the one specific change being by a centre that originally provided a 'very elaborate workbook' to learners, which has since been reduced. Another verifier suggested that a centre had been confused about the SWiS qualification and 'too prescriptive' with the units. As a result, the verifier said that this training centre needed to amend their practice so that it fits in line with SWiS criteria.

6.5 Barriers to undertaking SWiS

Assessors

Over half of assessors (57%) indicate that the majority of learners have found the SWiS qualification more difficult than expected.

The reasons given by assessors for learners finding the qualification more difficult than expected are:

- Understanding the process of evidence gathering (5 assessors)
- The time needed to undertake the qualification (4 assessors)
- The types of evidence they have to gather (4 assessors)

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Nevertheless, levels of motivation among learners are still quite high according to assessors asked to rate the motivation of learners (please see table 20). Nearly half (40%) say that learners are very motivated, with the remainder still scoring learners fairly highly for motivation.

Table 20: Assessor ratings of learner motivation

1 – not motivated at all	0%
2	0%
3	30%
4	30%
5 – very motivated	40%

Base (assessors): 20

School leaders

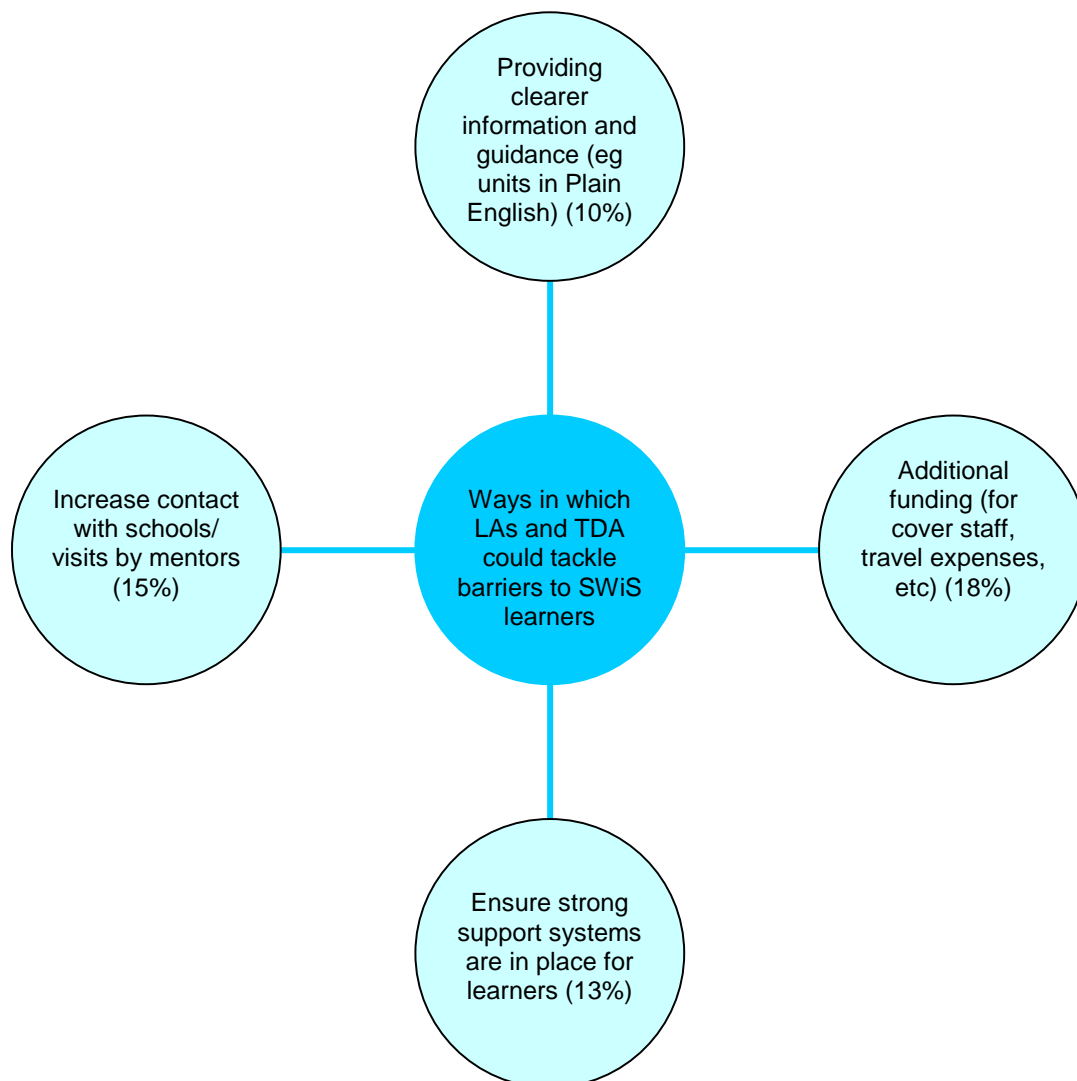
When asked about the sorts of barriers that support staff experience when undertaking the SWiS qualification, school leaders highlight a number of areas where their support staff have suffered difficulties. The most common are outlined below:

- Timing issues (20%): these are thought to be a problem when training sessions are scheduled for times when learners are not available, or where learners are unable to commit to completing the amount of paperwork required for SWiS due to other circumstances
- Lack of relevance to job role (8%): this appears to have been perceived to be a particular problem for administration and caretaking staff, or where support staff are working outside of mainstream education (eg in a Special Needs school)
- Support (8%): a lack of support or mentoring has caused difficulties, particularly where there has been little contact from training providers/mentors; a lack of support appears to be particularly concerning for schools where learners may have additional needs or lack basic skills

(Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as a number of other responses were given by participants and are therefore not reported here)

Where possible, schools have provided extra support, mentoring and assistance to members of support staff who have required it and have tried to rearrange training times so that they are more convenient. Nevertheless, there are also ways in which school leaders believe that local authorities or the TDA could help further in tackling the barriers faced by these SWiS learners (please see figure 17).

Figure 17: Ways in which school leaders think local authorities and TDA could tackle barriers experienced by learners undertaking SWiS



Base (school leaders, telephone): 40 (Note: figures do not total 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants, and therefore are not reported here)

Six of the 9 external verifiers interviewed say that centres do experience common problems or issues when delivering the SWiS qualification. These are:

- Problems with witness testimonies: too much burden of paperwork on the expert witness; or schools being unable to commit members of staff to the expert witness role (3 verifiers)
- Problems with units: either in terms of being unable to offer the full range and therefore only attracting a limited number of occupational roles to the SWiS qualification; or units are sometimes very specialised making them difficult for providers other than large colleges to deliver or assess them (3 verifiers)

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- Understanding delivery: clarity of the SWiS delivery model is reported to be a problem; or in terms of understanding the difference between a vocational qualification such as SWiS in relation to others such as NVQs (4 verifiers)

6.6 Leaving training early

Where training providers have experienced learners leaving their training early, or delaying their training, this is generally attributed to the learner leaving the school (58%). In contrast, most line managers suggest that this is as a result of training and assessment being more difficult than the learner anticipated (40%) (please see table 21).³⁶

Table 21: Reasons given why SWiS learners leave training early or have delays in their progress

	Percentage of training providers	Percentage of line managers
Health and personal problems, such as family bereavement	59%	N/A
Learner left the school	58%	20%
Training and assessment more difficult than the learner anticipated	36%	40%
Learner changed their role	39%	13%
Support systems in school either not being set up, or failing	14%	N/A
Learner did not have time to complete the qualification	8%	13%
Units not perceived as being suitable for an individual's job role	8%	N/A
Learners experiencing difficulties as a result of their level of basic skills	8%	N/A
Timing of training was inconvenient	6%	13%
Learner could not gather enough evidence for the assessment process	11%	7%
Location of training was inconvenient	3%	0%

Base (providers: 36; base (line managers): 19 (Note: figures do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

³⁶ It should be noted that line managers and providers responding to the surveys have not necessarily worked with exactly the same learners as those responding to the learner survey. Therefore, the training provider and line manager results in table 21 can not be directly compared and should not be taken as the reasons given by respondents to the learner questionnaire for why a specific group of learners may have left early or experienced delays in their training.

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Learners

Seven learners taking part in the online survey say that they left their training before completion, due to (each 3 responses, 43%):

- Finding the training too difficult (3 responses)
- Not finding the time to do the necessary work (3 responses)
- Training not meeting expectations or needs (3 responses)
- Personal circumstances (3 responses)

Line managers

The highest levels of support have been received by line managers who have experienced SWiS learners leaving early (32% of these line managers say that they receive a lot of support from their training provider).

6.7 Overcoming barriers

Verifiers were asked to identify examples of good practice in training delivery, providing ideas as to how barriers to learners undertaking SWiS may be tackled in future. The following are single responses from verifiers:

- Workshops and group sessions: help to develop learner confidence
- Work book examples and templates: help learners who have not been in education or training for a long period of time, and demonstrate how evidence needs to be 'personalised' and specific to their job role
- Provider communications: where providers go into the school and speak to the management team, this helps explain delivery and ensure there are 'no hidden extras that are going to crop up'
- One-to-one sessions: or a low number of students per member of training staff

7. Support

The online surveys and telephone interviews both asked questions about the support that those involved in the qualification received.³⁷

Local authorities and assessors were questioned about the information that they received from the TDA and their opinions on the speed of responses to issues such as funding and promotion of the qualification.

Sixteen out of 21 assessors do not receive any support from TDA, with 9 also saying that they do not receive any from local authorities either.

Schools involved in the SWiS qualification receive support both from their local authority and from their training provider. The survey examined the level of support that mentors and expert witnesses received from their training provider and how satisfied they were with the level of support offered.

Line managers appear to receive little support from training providers and indicate that they would like more advice on completing expert witness testimonies, reports of learner progress, timetables of visits to the school by assessors and providers, regular contact with providers and further clarification of the role of mentor.

Local authorities appear to provide more support to school leaders, with mentoring, information and guidance, regular meetings and visits, funding and group workshops all being offered by local authorities to schools.

Importantly, the survey also asked questions of the learners undertaking the SWiS qualification to identify what kind of support they received from their school and from their training provider. This is a critical element of a learner's experience of undertaking SWiS as it may influence their decision whether or not to pursue other CPD opportunities.

In terms of the support that learners require, regular visits and mentoring are considered key by most groups taking part in the research, with learners who do not currently receive mentoring saying that this is the sort of support that they would most appreciate. Most line managers say that they spend up to six hours of their time supporting an individual member of support staff over the duration of the qualification.

Learners would also appreciate:

- Meetings with other learners undertaking the same units
- Meetings with individuals who have already completed the SWiS qualification
- Additional time during school hours to complete paperwork, collect evidence and conduct research

³⁷ These findings are based on responses to online surveys from 340 learners, 65 schools CPD coordinators/line managers, 49 headteachers and 74 training providers; telephone surveys of 200 headteachers, 9 verifiers, 21 assessors, 108 local authorities and 16 stakeholders.

7.1 Discussing progress

A key element of the support offered to learners is a review of their progress by training providers – with just less than half of training providers (49%) reviewing progress with learners on a fortnightly basis, and 29% doing so on an ‘ad hoc’ basis (please see table 22).

Table 22: Ways in which different providers review learner progress

	Further Education	School – based	Private provider	Local Authority	All providers
Keep contact outside of formal training to a minimum to avoid burdening schools	7%	100%	8%	4%	7%
Review learner progress on a monthly basis	7%	0%	25%	16%	17%
Review learner progress on a fortnightly basis	29%	0%	42%	60%	46%
Review learner progress on an ad hoc basis	50%	0%	25%	20%	28%
Don’t discuss progress with learners directly – provide updates to the school	8%	0%	0%	0%	2%

Base (providers): 51 (Note: figures due not total 100% due to rounding.)

7.2 Support and guidance for assessors

In terms of the support and guidance assessors receive, 16 of the 21 report not having received any from TDA and nine report not having received any from local authorities.

Where it has been received, support and guidance from TDA is rated by three assessors as being good and by two as being poor. Support and guidance from the local authority is rated more positively, with nine assessors rating this as being very good and another three rating this good or quite good.

7.3 Support offered by schools

Assessors

For 43% of assessors, the main support that learners commonly need in order to achieve the SWiS qualification is mentoring and clear support from their school, other colleagues and peers undertaking the qualification. Workshops or discussion sessions with other learners are thought to be particularly beneficial among 10% of assessors.

Regular visits to learners from centres are identified as a need by 14% of assessors, to ensure that progress is well tracked and to offer guidance where necessary (eg for evidence requirements).

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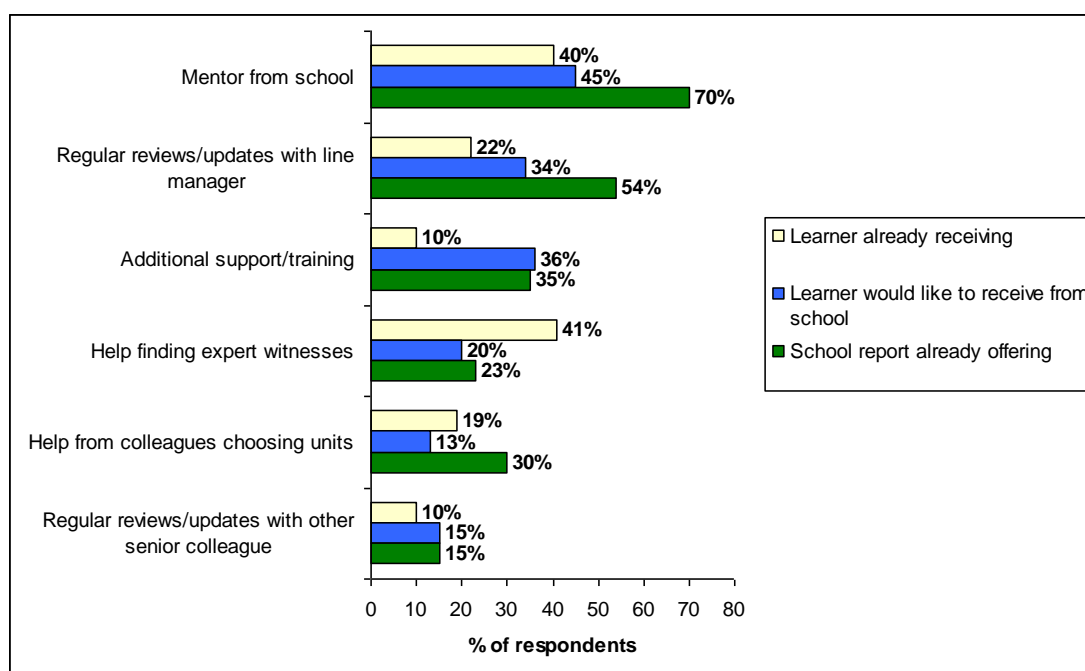
Assessors report running workshops with learners (17%) and maintaining regular communication with the learner and their school to monitor progress and prepare for assessment (28%). This includes conducting one-to-one briefing sessions or tutorials if the learner requires this individual support (22%) and providing additional support to learners who may have problems in areas such as literacy (11%).

Learners

Learners participating in the online survey have highlighted a range of ways in which their schools offer support to them whilst undertaking their SWiS qualification. The most common forms of support from schools have been in helping learners find expert witnesses (41%) and mentoring (40%).

Learners also report working with other members of support staff in the school taking part in SWiS at the same time, so that they can support one another through the qualification and discuss the requirements of the work (please see figure 18).

Figure 18: Support SWiS learners receive, and would like to receive, from their school



Base (schools offering support): 46; base (learners wanting to receive support): 152; base (learners receiving support): 290 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

A total of 58 learners (20%) say that their school does not offer any extra support to SWiS learners.

When asked what other sorts of support that they would like to receive, learners suggest meeting with other learners undertaking the same units or with individuals who had previously completed the training. A common request (21%) is for additional time in the working day or week at school to allow them to complete the necessary paperwork, collect evidence or conduct research.

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As figure 19 shows, when asked about support not currently available within the school, SWiS learners would most like to receive mentoring throughout their training period (45%).

School leaders

Mentoring is a form of support that 70% of school leaders participating in the online survey say is already being offered to learners, with most line managers (49%) reporting that they spend up to six hours of their time supporting an individual learner over the duration of the SWiS qualification.

7.4 Support offered by local authorities

School leaders suggest the following forms of support from local authorities to learners are the most common:

- Encouragement to complete the work and achieve the qualification (20%)
- Mentors visiting and conducting sessions with learners and other members of school staff (20%)
- Direct communication by email or telephone (15%)
- Regular meetings with members of support staff/school leadership teams (15%)
- Running training sessions for learners to attend (10%)

(Note: figures do not total 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants, and therefore are not reported here)

During the telephone interviews, the local authorities who engage with schools during SWiS say that they conduct school visits to discuss progress and run briefing sessions (21%), hold meetings with school leaders (5%), or offer additional support or tutorial sessions for learners with additional needs such as learning difficulties or English as a Second Language (5%). Mentoring, verification and assessment are also offered by local authorities to schools (12%).

7.5 Support offered to line managers

The majority of line managers (59%) responding to the online survey report that they have received either not much or no support from the SWiS training provider, either as a line manager or an expert witness.

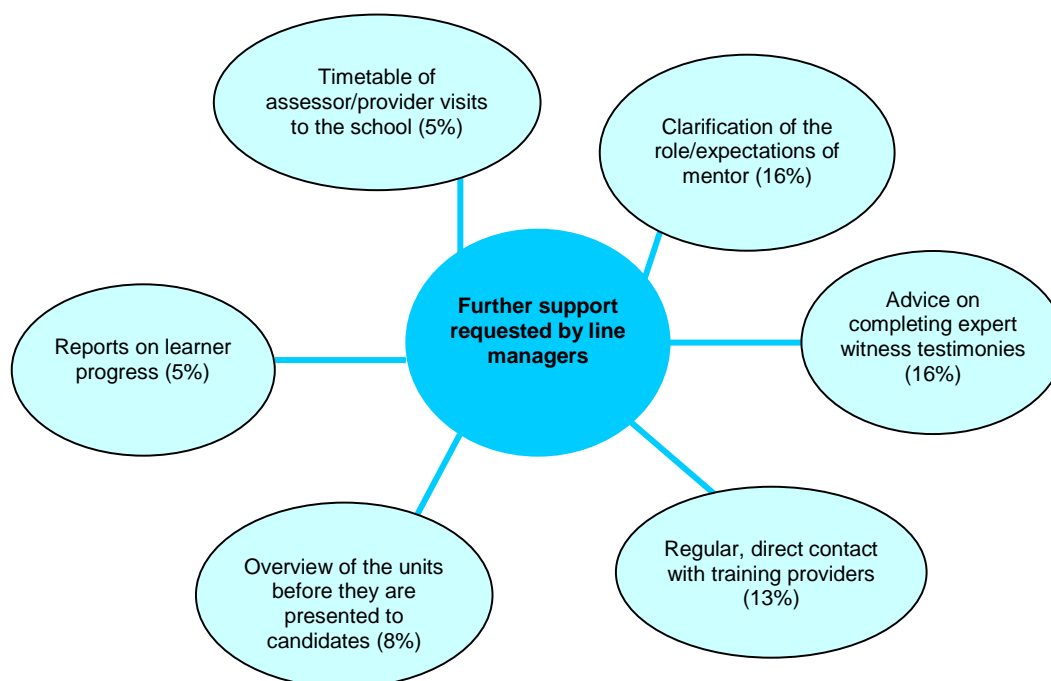
Among those who have received support from training providers, either as a line manager or an expert witness, this has included:

- Email and telephone support (35%)
- Regular meetings and updates (26%)
- Attending a training day for line managers/expert witnesses (22%)
- Clarification of how to complete expert witness requirements (22%)

(Note: figures do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

In addition, line managers would appreciate receiving more support from training providers in their role of mentoring members of support staff undertaking the SWiS qualification (please see figure 19).

Figure 19: Further support line managers would like to receive from training providers



Base (line managers): 38 (Note: figures do not total 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants, and therefore are not reported here)

7.6 Support offered to schools

There is generally no difference in the kinds of support school leaders receive from local authorities or other types of provider. When asked what this support comprises, local authorities indicate a range of services, the most common being:

- Information and guidance, including an initial induction and general information sessions regarding SWiS, as well as information on other training opportunities available for support staff (22%)
- Group sessions/workshops with learners and other members of school staff (10%)
- Providing assessment such as observation visits and feedback on learner progress (10%)

Fourteen school leaders taking part in the interviews indicate that support from local authorities is minimal or that it is only available on request from the school, rather than being directly instigated by local authorities themselves.

8. The assessment and verification process

As part of the research, those involved in the assessment and verification of SWiS were interviewed by telephone – this involved a number of internal assessors and verifiers based at training providers, and external verifiers from the four Awarding Bodies involved in the SWiS qualification.³⁸

Detailed questions were asked in order to understand these stakeholders' experiences of the qualification and what development, if any, they had needed in order to meet the requirements of the Assessment Strategy. It was also important to understand assessors' and verifiers' views on the range of units offered in each qualification (Award, Certification and Diploma) and how relevant they considered them to be to learners' needs and abilities.

Assessors involved in the research take more training in preparation for SWiS than verifiers, with training undertaken in specific areas such as child protection, or time in school to support occupational competence. Although verifiers do offer to providers training and explanation on how assessment structures work, centres still require further information and guidance on the SWiS qualification itself, as well as advice on fully understanding the support needs of individual learners.

The questionnaires asked about the clarity of the assessment process and any barriers to learners that respondents had identified.

Assessors and verifiers generally agree that the assessment methodology for SWiS is robust and clear. Training providers and line managers agree that the assessment methodology is appropriate. Observation in schools is one aspect of assessment that works particularly well.

There can be problems for providers in obtaining expert witness testimonies, with local authority training centres finding this most difficult. The quality of the testimonies is thought to generally be adequate, although this can vary between witnesses, especially where they are not clear about the qualification or exactly what is required from their testimony.

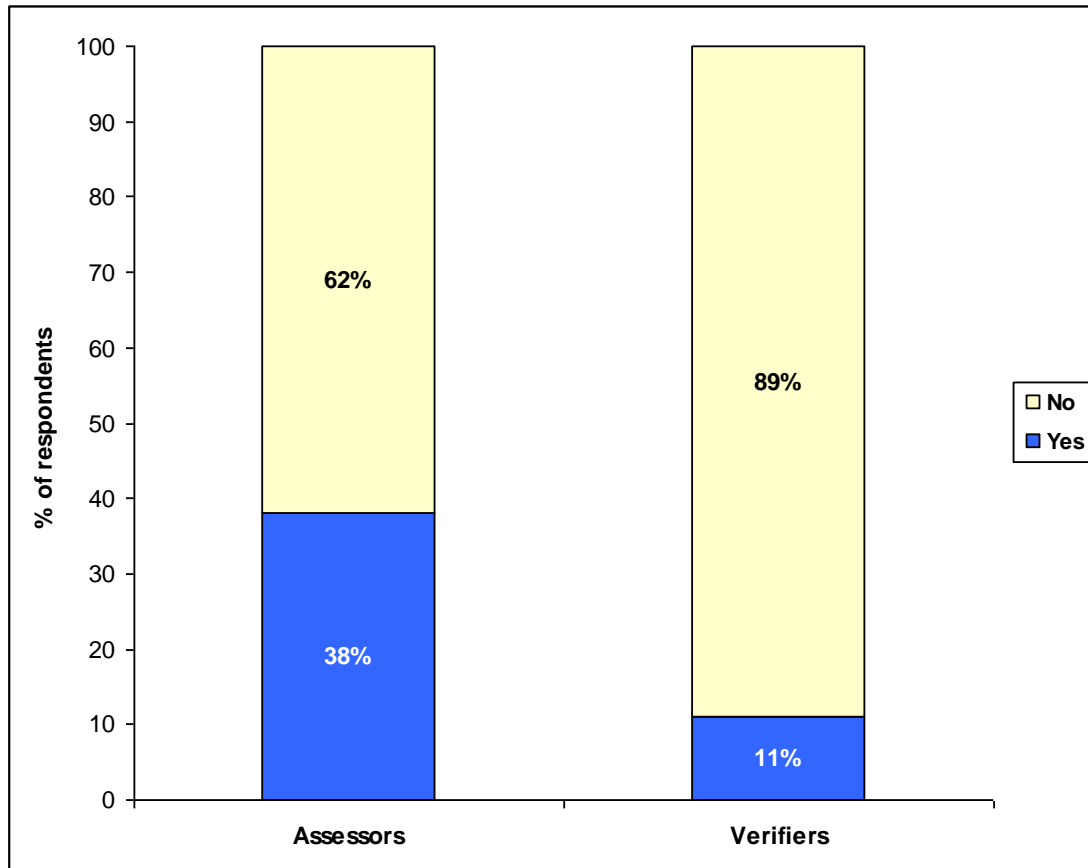
Where there are problems with the number or range of units available to learners, these have been identified by assessors and school leaders as particularly affecting catering and administration staff and midday supervisors. There is also suggestion of difficulties for finance officers, IT technicians, behaviour management or family support roles and careers guidance roles.

³⁸ These findings are based on responses to online surveys from 340 learners, 65 schools CPD coordinators/line managers, 49 headteachers and 74 training providers; telephone surveys of 200 headteachers, 9 verifiers, 21 assessors, 108 local authorities and 16 stakeholders.

8.1 Training required for assessing SWiS

The majority of assessors and verifiers have not required further training to work on the SWiS qualification, although the numbers of verifiers taking part in the interviews was small (please see figure 20).

Figure 20: Was further training or development required to become a SWiS assessor/verifier?



Base (assessors): 21; base (verifiers): 9

In preparation for SWiS, 8 assessors have undertaken training; these examples were given by one assessor each:

- A1 Award/Certificate
- Discussions with colleagues about the qualification and processes involved
- European Computer Driving Licence and training on IT software packages
- Child Protection training
- Health and Safety course
- Training days in schools to support occupational competence

8.2 Support required by centres

By far the most common suggestion among verifiers in terms of the support needs of training centres is a requirement for further information and guidance on the SWiS qualification itself, the amount of evidence required for assessment, and advice on the actual assessment process (86%).

One verifier did acknowledge that centres can obtain guidance from handbooks and on websites, but overall there are requests for greater clarity and availability of this guidance.

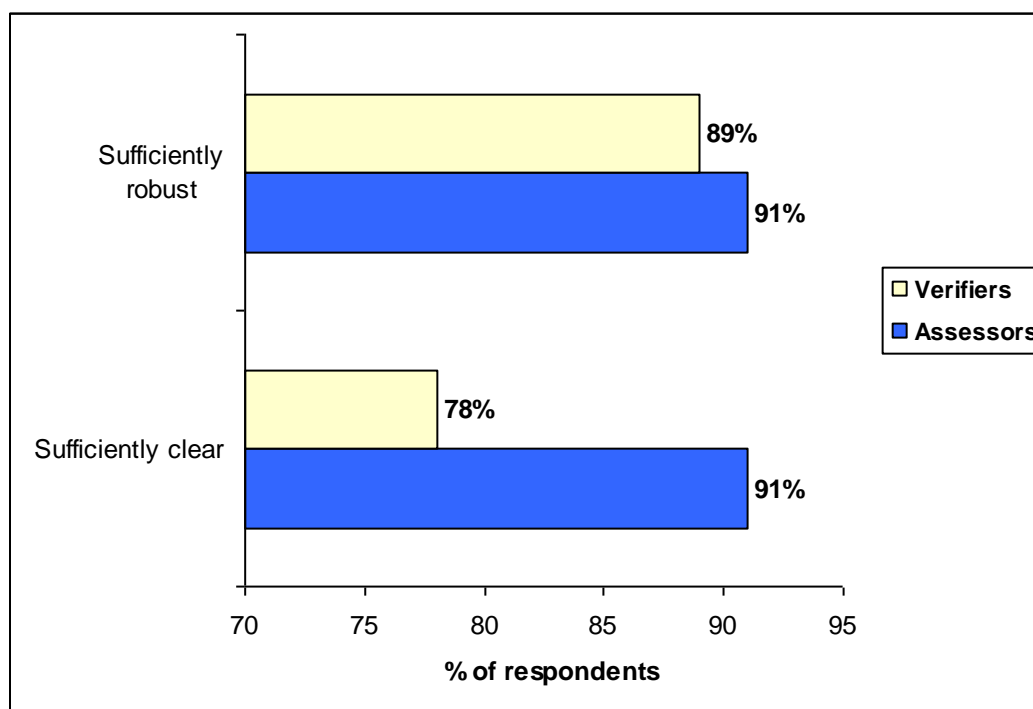
Verifiers themselves support centres by offering training sessions to explain how assessment structures work or on a more ad hoc basis as and when issues may arise within schools. One verifier said that they facilitate networking sessions between centres to share good practice.

8.3 Assessment methodology

As can be seen from figure 21, the majority of assessors and verifiers believe that the assessment methodology for SWiS is sufficiently robust. One verifier emphasised that observation in schools is a particularly positive aspect of the assessment process

Assessors are in agreement that observation in schools is an aspect of SWiS assessment that works well, with another saying that the learner log books can work well if structured so that learners can clearly see how to evidence aspects of their work.

Figure 21: Verifier and assessor views on the SWiS assessment methodology



Base (assessors) 21; base (verifiers): 9

Verifiers

A slightly lower proportion of verifiers than assessors feel that the methodology is sufficiently clear (a lack of clarity was reported by two of the nine verifiers interviewed).

Two verifiers raised concerns about the need for two witness testimonies per unit, with one suggesting that a ‘more holistic approach’ is required in this respect, so that testimonies can be used across units. Another has already ‘fine tuned’ the amount of evidence required within the portfolio, with one also mentioning that they felt the guidance on assessment was ‘very complex’ and needed to be simpler. These findings highlight misunderstandings by assessors and verifiers – eg only one witness testimony is required and can be used across units.

Assessors

Assessors report some difficulties in gathering two witness testimonies per unit, or experiencing conflicting advice on witness testimonies from external verifiers. Again, these findings highlight misunderstandings by assessors and verifiers. Specific problems are noted by two assessors in relation to midday supervisors, where members of teaching staff were unable to provide witness testimonies as a result of not being aware of the role the supervisors undertake. Learners in midday supervision roles are reported to find it difficult to ‘talk about their work, as no one talks to them about it’, or because there can be little structure in place in schools in terms of support or mentoring for midday supervisors.

Providers

Training providers are generally positive about the current assessment methodology, with 92% agreeing that it does allow them to make secure judgements about whether or not candidates have achieved the learning outcomes in each unit.

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

Furthermore, over three-quarters of line managers (77%) find current assessment methods for SWiS learners either quite or very appropriate, 9% think the assessment methods are not that appropriate and 14% say they are not sure (please see table 23).

Table 23: Line managers' views on assessment methods

Why assessment methods are appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments match the level of qualification being worked towards/job role of the learner (32%) • The range of assessment methods gives every learner a chance to gather evidence (23%) • Observation is a clearer indication of a learner's commitment (16%) • On-the-job assessment keeps learners feeling comfortable about the training (16%) • Regular feedback/assessment boosts morale of learners who otherwise feel quite isolated in their job role (13%)
Why assessment methods may not be appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment framework needs to be clearer (42%) • Increased observation would provide 'more precise overview of a learner's abilities' (36%) • Need more examples of how to set out written work (22%)

Base (line managers – appropriate):50; base (line managers - not appropriate):6

8.4 Expert witnesses

Verifiers

Six verifiers identified common problems with gathering specific types of evidence – three of these report witness testimony as the most problematic evidence to gather due to workloads and time restrictions on other members of staff.

Providers

Among training providers there is some agreement with this – 39% indicated that it has been difficult to obtain expert witness testimony for assessment purposes, with 44% of local authority training centres finding this difficult.

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

Learners

However, 84% of learners taking part in the online survey say that they have found it either quite or very easy to identify appropriate expert witnesses, which may be a reflection on the support that learners say that schools give them in finding these witnesses.

Providers

Half of training providers participating in the survey report the quality of expert witness testimonies to be adequate. A further 30% believe the testimonies to be robust with only 5% stating that they are of poor quality. The remainder either did not know or had not used expert witness testimonies as part of SWiS assessment.

That said, the majority of providers have experienced difficulties with expert witnesses, or identified changes they are going to make to the witnessing process. In terms of the former, the main problems are reported as:

- Workloads of expert witnesses meaning they are too busy to give adequate time to writing their testimony (55%)
- Expert witnesses do not always understand the qualification, or what is required from their testimony (32%)
- The quality of the testimonies vary between witnesses (23%)
- Expert witnesses can be reluctant to carry out the additional work (15%)

(Note: figures do not total 100% as multiple responses were given)

8.5 Gathering evidence

Verifiers suggest that poor literacy levels among learners can cause difficulty with compiling personal statements, and that evidencing knowledge of policies and procedures is problematic since this generally involves the learner copying school paperwork rather than specifically demonstrating their knowledge.

Just over half of assessors (52%) say that there are specific units that are difficult for learners to evidence.

8.6 Appropriateness of units

Number of units

Generally, assessors are positive that the Level 2 and Level 3 Awards and Certificates are made up of the appropriate number of units. Only two suggest that the Level 2 Certificate contains an inappropriate number of units, with comments suggesting that there is a lack of applicable units for the role of midday supervisors, or that there is an imbalance between units in terms of the number of elements.

Three assessors do not think the number of units in the Level 3 Diploma is appropriate, having experienced difficulties in identifying appropriate units for midday supervision and administration roles.

Of the 16 assessors commenting on the Parent Support endorsed pathways, 14 (88%) do not know whether or not the numbers of units in each qualification is appropriate. The remaining two assessors agree that they are appropriate.

Range of units

In terms of the range of units being sufficient for the diversity of support roles available, assessors are again generally in agreement that the range of units is sufficient at Level 2 (81%) and Level 3 (65%).

The large majority of school leadership teams taking part in the interviews (83%) also agree that the range of SWiS units offered to the school covers the range of support roles adequately.

As with the comments above on the number of units available however, there are a few support staff roles where assessors and school leaders sometimes feel that an inadequate range of units is available – particularly among administration staff and midday supervisory roles as detailed in table 24.

Table 24: Roles with an inadequate range of SWiS units

Roles where <u>assessors</u> feel the range of units is inadequate	Roles where <u>school leaders</u> feel the range of units is inadequate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2: Midday supervisors; Supporting Teaching and Learning (56%) • Level 3: Administration; Finance Officer; Midday supervisors (44%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration staff (32%) • Behaviour management (19%) • Caretakers/cleaners (16%) • Midday supervisors (10%) • IT technician (10%)

Base (assessors): 9; base (school leaders, telephone): 31; (Note: figures for school leaders do not total 100% as other responses were given by a minority of participants, and therefore are not reported here)

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School leaders

The main criticism among school leaders is that the units are sometimes too biased towards support staff based in the classroom or those who have direct involvement with school pupils – with office personnel being at a particular disadvantage.

Local authorities

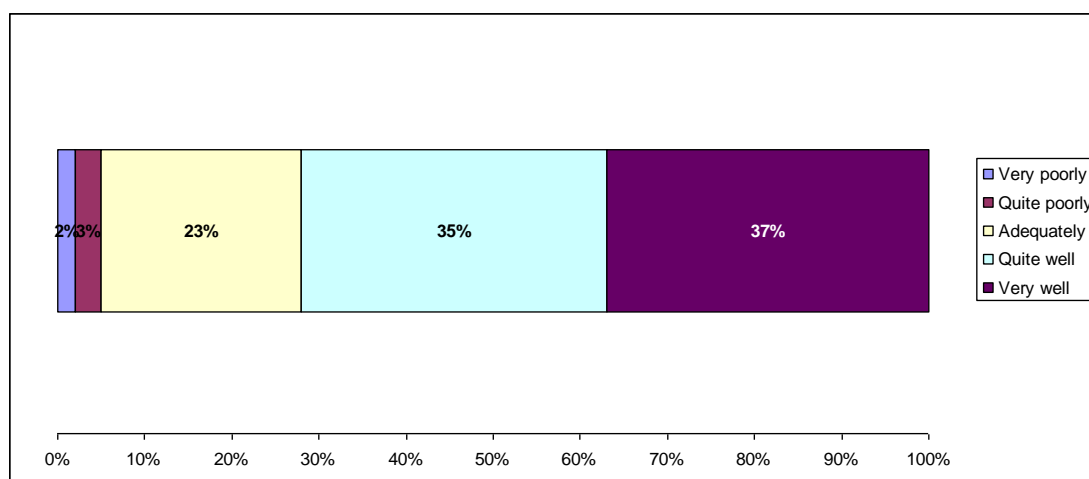
The vast majority of local authorities (92%) think that the SWiS units offered to schools adequately cover the range of support staff roles.

Learners

When asked about the units they have taken, or are taking, learners themselves are very positive about how well they cover the main aspects of their job role, with 72% of learners saying that their job roles are covered either quite or very well (as shown in figure 22).

Those undertaking site support roles are the most likely to say that the units available cover their roles very poorly (although still only 9%).

Figure 22: How well learners feel their units cover the main aspects of their job role



Base (learners): 325

8.7 Language of units

During the initial scoping interviews it was identified that, as a result of SWiS units being imported, the differing styles of the various units is a cause of concern among stakeholders (eg Regional Advisors).

Assessors also appear to have concerns regarding the language in which the units are written, with 16 out of the 21 interviewed (76%) saying that the language of the units is unclear for learners.

The main criticism towards the language of units from assessors is the use of jargon and a more 'academic' style than may be appropriate for SWiS learners.

For assessors, this difficulty with the language means that the units appear to be 'more demanding than they are' and can lead learners to misconstrue the meaning or 'put them off' the unit altogether.

Two assessors have rewritten or simplified units to help learners and others have spent time 'explaining' or 'interpreting' units for learners so that they can understand them better.

Due to restrictions imposed by the approvals body regarding the alteration of units, this is an issue that assessors and verifiers will continue to face. However, providing guidance to learners on interpreting the units is a helpful method of countering the reported variations in the way the units are written.

8.8 Problems with units

Five verifiers highlight problems with specific units:

- Unit 2 (Levels 2 and 3): *Policies and Procedures*, as this can be dependent on the candidate's role and therefore there are different requirements relating to the underpinning knowledge of these
- Equal balance: there is not an equal balance of work required (for example *Support Children's Social and Emotional Development* includes five elements, whereas most others have a maximum of three)
- Assessors: not all assessors can be occupationally competent in all units, which then determines which units are offered by centres and therefore which units learners can choose

Where they offered more detail, four verifiers think these problems are inevitable in a qualification that attempts to cover a wide range of support staff roles. As a result, for some candidates, it is thought that aspects of the work are not going to be suitable or engaging. During the initial interviews key stakeholders indicated concern that due to incremental review of NOS, the units imported into SWiS will also require continual review and updating to ensure that they remain in line with current occupational standards.

9. Progression

A key part of the research focused on how learners' experience of undertaking the SWiS qualification impacted on their desire to pursue further CPD opportunities offered by their school.³⁹

School leadership teams do not always appear to be fully aware of the progression opportunities available from SWiS to other qualifications, training or development. Where they are aware of these opportunities, they are not always sure as to which ones are most appropriate for members of support staff.

Questions were asked of schools to understand the range of opportunities offered to support staff in schools; training providers were asked their opinions of how likely they thought SWiS learners were to undertake further training and development as a result of participating in the SWiS qualification.

Popular routes for learner progression appear to be from Level 2 to Level 3 SWiS and onto NVQs. However, it seems that more schools are offering a wider range of opportunities than learners themselves have decided to take up – suggesting that more work can be done to raise awareness among SWiS learners of the various other training and development opportunities available to them. This is particularly important as nearly one third of learners report being undecided as to the qualifications or training they may progress onto on completion of SWiS.

Assessors did highlight issues in identifying appropriate progression opportunities for support roles such as midday supervisors, where routes may not be as clear compared with those, for example, for teaching assistants progressing to HLTA status.

The survey also asked questions about voluntary roles in schools and how these are catered for in terms of workplace training provision and CPD.

A third of school leaders report demand from volunteers to take up SWiS training, with over half of these saying that this demand is met.

Where schools do not offer SWiS to volunteers this is generally because support staff are not in school for much time in the week, or a lack of information has prevented schools from passing the opportunity on to volunteers.

Local authorities generally do not offer the opportunity to volunteers, due to a lack of funding.

Apart from SWiS, other CPD opportunities offered to volunteers by school leadership teams most commonly include:

- NVQs
- HLTA status
- Coaching and mentoring in school
- Training courses in specific areas such as child protection, First Aid, basic skills and behaviour management

³⁹ These findings are based on responses to online surveys from 340 learners, 65 schools CPD coordinators/line managers, 49 headteachers and 74 training providers; telephone surveys of 200 headteachers, 9 verifiers, 21 assessors, 108 local authorities and 16 stakeholders.

9.1 Learning undertaken before SWiS

When asked about the types of qualifications learners have completed before they undertake the SWiS qualification, assessors did not identify any qualifications that all learners have completed beforehand. However, as table 25 shows, the majority of assessors did report that some learners will have undertaken previous learning such as basic literacy and/or numeracy, GCSEs and NVQs.

Table 25: Qualifications assessors report that learners complete before undertaking SWiS

	No learners	Some learners	Majority of learners	Don't know
Basic literacy/numeracy	19%	76%	0%	5%
ESOL	55%	30%	0%	15%
GCSEs	14%	67%	19%	0%
A levels	52%	48%	0%	0%
NVQs	33%	67%	0%	0%
Other NQF level 1	57%	29%	0%	14%
Other NQF level 2	52%	29%	0%	19%
Other NQF level 3	62%	24%	0%	14%

Base (assessors): 21 (Note: figures do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

One assessor went on to point out that learners taking part in the SWiS qualification may not have studied for many years and that 'SWiS is their first route back into education'.

9.2 Learner progression

Assessors

According to assessors, there are three main popular routes for progression among learners after undertaking the SWiS qualification:

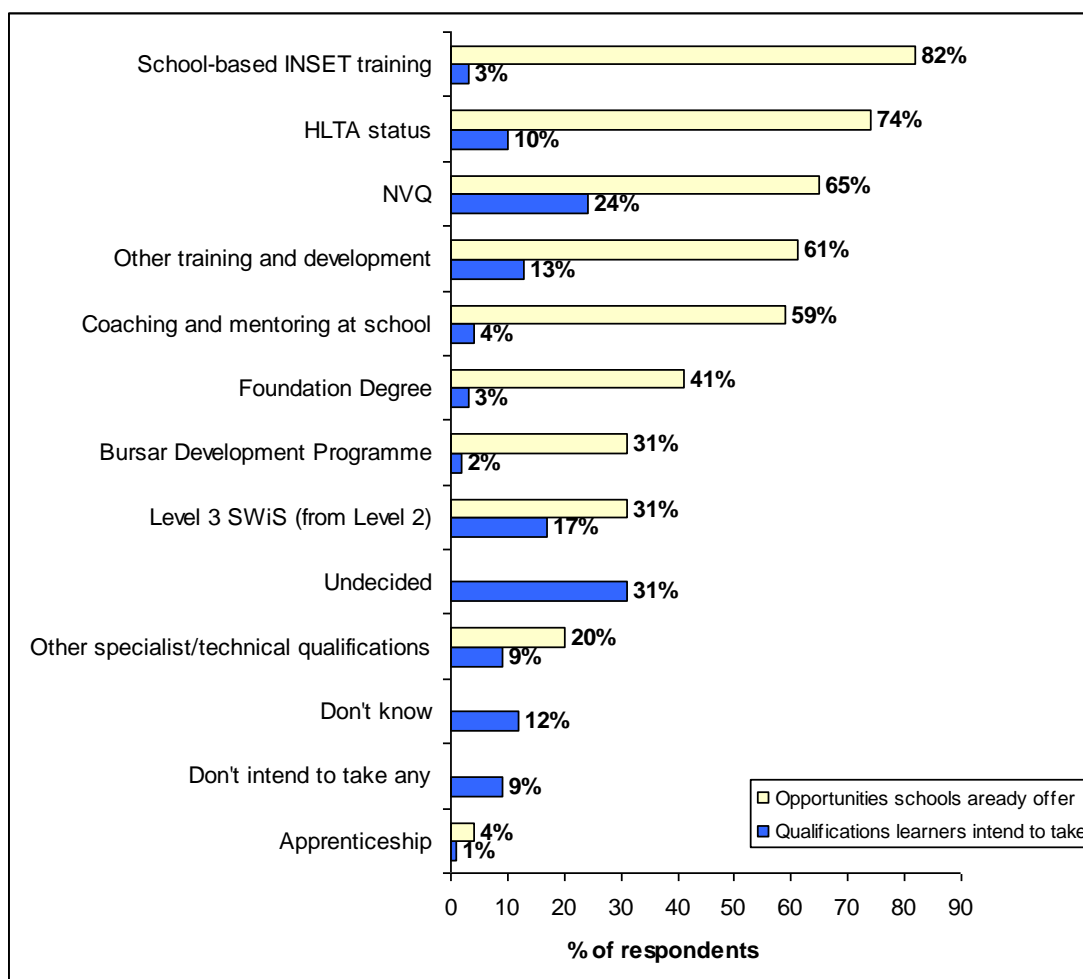
- An NVQ (15 assessors)
- Level 3 SWiS qualification, progressing from Level 2 (13 assessors)
- Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status (8 assessors)

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Learners

This is supported by the qualifications that learners themselves have indicated they may progress onto on completion of SWiS, with NVQs being by far the most popular choice among 24% of learners who have decided on future training (please see figure 23).

Figure 23: Other development opportunities SWiS learners intend to take up/schools already offer



Base (school leaders, online): 49; base (learners): 312 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

As figure 23 shows, schools do currently offer many of the other development opportunities available to SWiS learners on completion. However, numbers of schools offering these opportunities are in direct contrast to the much lower proportions of learners intending to take them up. It is therefore possible that more work needs to be done (either by schools, providers, local authorities or TDA) to raise awareness among SWiS learners of the various other training and development opportunities available to them. This seems particularly important when 31% of SWiS learners report that they are currently undecided as to the qualifications or training they may progress onto on completion of SWiS.

9.3 Understanding progression opportunities

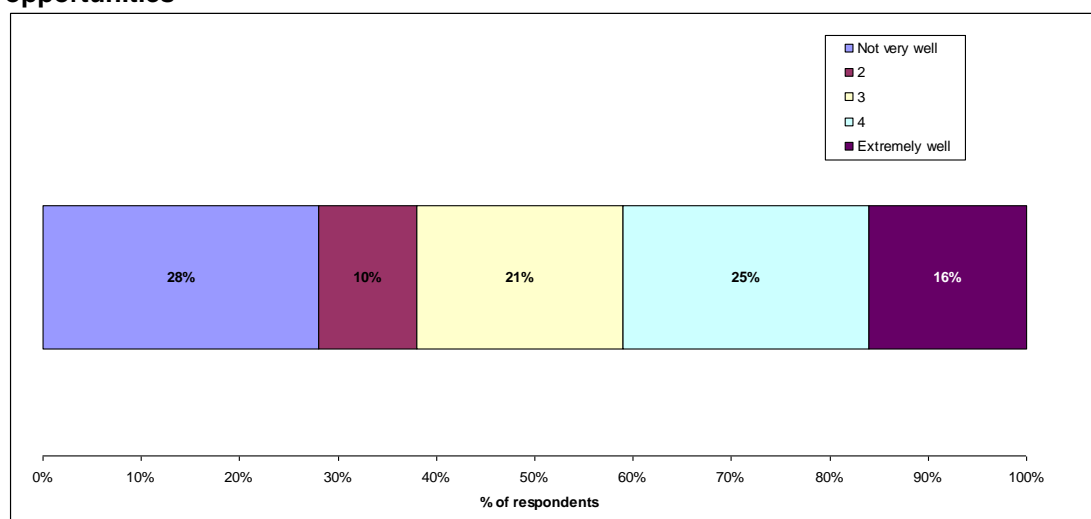
School leaders

Of the 71 training providers responding to the question, 97% conduct next step training and development discussions with learners completing the SWiS qualification. Of these, 48% are local authority training centres.

However, it is clear from the interviews with school leadership teams that they do not always have a thorough understanding of the progression opportunities available from SWiS to other qualifications, training or development.

During the telephone interviews, school leadership teams were asked to rate their understanding of progression opportunities. As figure 24 shows, nearly 40% of schools rate their understanding low at either 1 or 2 out of 5.

Figure 24: How well schools understand progression between SWiS and other opportunities



Base (school leaders, telephone): 193

Ten school leaders indicate that although they are aware that opportunities for progression are available, they are not sure about which ones are suitable for members of support staff or they have received very little information regarding the opportunities available following SWiS. If as a result, school leaders are unable to provide advice on which routes are suitable for members of support staff, this may go some way to explain why low proportions of learners intend to take up progression opportunities available to them, as seen in figure 24.

Twelve school leaders say that further information from local authorities and/or training providers would be helpful to them in understanding progression routes.

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

Assessors

Assessors participating in the telephone interviews are generally quite positive about the possibilities for progression from SWiS onto other qualifications, or even into new job roles. The ability for SWiS to build the confidence of learners who may have been out of education or training for a fairly lengthy amount of time is regarded positively by assessors, the result of which being that SWiS is perceived to provide the 'confidence to progress'.

However, a caveat was placed on this – that progression opportunities for SWiS learners are dependent upon the job role they undertake within a school. Most notably, specific issues were raised regarding the opportunities available to midday supervisors, as progression within this role is not necessarily as clearly defined as, for example, teaching assistants wishing to progress onto HLTA status.

9.4 CPD opportunities offered to volunteers

School leaders

In terms of demand from volunteers in schools for SWiS, one third of school leaders interviewed say that volunteers wish to undertake the qualification, with 57% of these going on to say that the demand from volunteers is met.

Where demand among volunteers is not met this is generally attributed (by 65% of school leaders) to the fact that there is no demand for SWiS training for volunteers in the first place; 23% regard SWiS as inappropriate for volunteers, and 16% report that funding is not available. This appears to particularly be the case for schools where learners have completed a Level 2 SWiS qualification, but are then unable to access funding for Level 3 from the local authority.

Of the 117 school leadership teams indicating that they do offer CPD opportunities to volunteers in support roles, the most common opportunity is to undertake an NVQ (51% of schools). Following this, SWiS is the next most common opportunity for volunteers, offered by 44% of schools (please see table 26).

Local authorities

In terms of the opportunities local authorities offer to volunteers in support roles, 46 say that they do not offer any – where they give a reason, this is generally due to a lack of funding (11%).

Table 26: CPD opportunities offered to volunteers in support roles in schools

	Percentage of schools
NVQs	51%
SWiS	44%
Higher Level Teaching Assistant status preparation	26%
Coaching and mentoring at school	16%
Other training and development opportunities	14%
Foundation Degrees	12%
Joining school-based INSET training	9%
Other specialist or technical qualifications and training	5%
Bursar Development Programme	4%
Apprenticeships	4%

Base (school leaders, telephone): 117 (Note: figures do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Appendix 1 Summaries by respondent type

1.1 Learners – 340 responses

There are three main reasons why learners decide to participate in the SWiS qualification – to develop skills and knowledge, to gain recognition for existing skills and knowledge and to gain a relevant or up-to-date qualification. The latter reason seems to be particularly important for cover supervisors and sports coaches. The seven learners who had left their training early did so because they found the training too difficult or it did not meet their expectations, they could not find the time to do the necessary work, or due to personal circumstances.

The vast majority of learners (87%) think it is important to know how much time the qualification will take to complete before embarking on training. They also think it is important to know how closely the content will match their job role, progression routes available on completion, the workload required and the benefits to them in taking the qualification.

Most learners (28%) say that when it came to identifying their initial learning needs and choosing their optional units, they carried out these activities by themselves without the help of their training provider or line manager.

The majority of learners (84%) receive training for SWiS either at the school where they work, or at a different school. There have been some difficulties for learners attending training, such as not always being able to be released from school commitments, lack of cover staff, having to make childcare arrangements or working overtime as a result of attending training.

Overall however, learners are satisfied with the quality of the SWiS training they have received. It is clear that effective support systems (eg via line managers, mentors and providers) are key to learners' positive experiences during the training. Where ratings on the quality of the training are lower, this is generally among learners who feel the paperwork has been time-consuming, or that they received a lack of support or information, with little guidance on how to complete their work or the requirements of the training.

Learners say that the support schools offer them during their training commonly includes helping identify expert witnesses (41%) and mentoring (40%). Where mentoring is not currently available to learners, this is the form of support they would most like to receive from their schools (45%).

Nearly three-quarters of learners (72%) say the optional units they have undertaken cover the main aspects of their job role quite or very well.

On completion of SWiS, learners most commonly intend to progress onto an NVQ (24%), although they do not appear to be taking up opportunities for further training and development as widely as they are made available by schools. This suggests a need for awareness to be raised among learners as to the opportunities available to them – particularly important when 31% of learners are currently undecided as

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

to the qualification or training they may progress onto on completion of SWiS.

The majority of learners (75%) said that the main benefit to them of taking SWiS has been the development of their skills and knowledge, with 66% saying that it has increased their confidence.

1.2 School leaders – 249 responses (200 telephone and 49 online)

The majority of school leaders (66%) find out about SWiS via their local authority, and agree that these direct communications are the most appropriate way for schools to find out about SWiS. Levels of satisfaction about the initial information, advice and guidance available from local authorities are high, and subsequently they feel they know enough about SWiS to pass on information to support staff.

The main barriers schools have experienced in offering SWiS have been timing issues (eg cover staff arrangements, training clashing with other support staff priorities) and the relevance of the training to an individual's job role (eg administration staff who have little contact with pupils). Potential financial barriers are also foreseen by school leaders, for example if there is an increase in demand for training or funding is reduced. Poor communications with the local authority or provider has also been a barrier for 10% of respondents.

School leaders commonly requested changes to training delivery so that SWiS is more relevant to specific roles, or offered outside of school hours, and additional funding to enable them to provide cover staff.

Overall, school leaders are positive about the relationship they have with SWiS training providers (54% saying it is quite or very good), although they do suggest that clearer and more regular communications directly between providers and schools would be beneficial in improving these relationships further.

Only 4 schools said that they had experienced difficulties accessing funding for SWiS. The main issue seems to be difficulty in accessing additional funding to enable learners to progress from a Level 2 onto a Level 3 qualification (or in one case, from a Certificate onto a Diploma).

Just over half of schools (51%) think that there will be less demand for SWiS training during the next academic year, due to a lack of support staff available for the qualification (either because it is not deemed to be appropriate or because they have already achieved SWiS or other qualifications).

School leaders have indicated that they receive a range of support from local authorities and training providers. This includes:

- Mentoring for learners and line managers (20%)
- Regular meetings and visits to the school (and contact via email/telephone) (15%)
- Information and guidance relating to the training and assessment of SWiS, and the opportunities for progression available to learners (22%)

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

School leaders do not appear to be very clear on the progression opportunities available to learners on completion of SWiS, with 40% indicating that their levels of awareness are low.

Overall, school leaders did state that SWiS had met their expectations both in terms of the time it took to complete the qualification and in other areas such as:

- Helping candidates gain a wider understanding of how the school works (20%)
- Providing an opportunity for career progression (15%)
- Showing recognition to support staff (10%)

The lasting benefits for schools were reported by school leaders to include increased knowledge of school policies, values and procedures, improved working relationships among school colleagues, improved understanding among support staff of working with children and young people, and better teamwork between teaching and support staff.

1.3 Line managers – 65 responses

Line managers suggest that information about SWiS needs to be made more easily accessible for schools, providing clarity on the nature of the qualification, how it fits with other qualifications, and the requirements for successfully completing the training.

Nearly half of line managers (49%) are involved in helping learners identify their training needs by having an informal discussion with them, and 35% are involved in a formal appraisal process. However, line managers do not seem to have as much involvement in helping learners choose their optional units, with 45% saying that they have no involvement in this process at all.

The majority of line managers (59%) said that they receive little or no support from SWiS training providers, either as a line manager or an expert witness. Further support that they would appreciate from providers in future includes:

- Clarification of the role/expectations of a mentor
- Advice on completing expert witness testimonies
- Timetables of assessor/provider visits and regular contact with providers
- Reports on learner progress
- More information on SWiS units

Line managers generally agree that current assessment methods are appropriate (77%). Where line managers are less positive about assessment methods, they have requested clearer guidance on the assessment process (42%), increased observation (36%) and more examples of how written work should be set out (22%).

Line managers say that the main benefits of SWiS is that members of support staff have developed their skills (90%), progressed within their current roles (60%) and developed improved working relationships between themselves and their colleagues (44%).

1.4 Providers – 74 responses

Just under half of providers responding to the survey (47%) are local authority training centres. Further Education colleges and private training centres made up most of the other respondents (27% and 25% respectively), with one other from a school-based assessment centre.

When carrying out an initial assessment of a candidate's needs, local authority providers are most likely to conduct an interview (44%) or ask the candidate to complete a questionnaire, whereas FE colleges are most likely to ask candidates to sit a basic skills test (67%). If a candidate is thought to be inappropriate for SWiS, local authority providers will generally incorporate additional support into the SWiS training (58%), or provide advice on the other opportunities available to support staff (51%). FE colleges are most likely (53%) to offer basic skills training so that candidates can undertake SWiS in the future.

Approximately 73% of providers' training and assessment for SWiS is delivered in schools – the preferred location of school leaders. A mixture of group tuition (generally a mixture of learners from different schools) and individual support is commonly delivered by providers. The benefits of these approaches are reported by providers to include enabling learners to bring different experiences and contexts to the training sessions, which they can share with other learners, whilst at the same time allowing candidates to tailor their portfolios and receive any additional support they may require to meet individual needs.

Just under half of providers (46%) have not made any changes at all to training delivery. Where they have made changes, the most common is increasing the amount of formal training being delivered. This is generally because learners have appreciated working together in groups, have required more formal input on certain topic areas such as policies and legislation, or have needed additional support or tuition (for example where they have basic skills needs).

A key element of SWiS is the support offered to learners, and most providers (49%) review progress with learners on a fortnightly basis.

The majority of providers (92%) agree that current assessment methods allow them to make clear judgements about whether or not learners have achieved their learning outcomes. However, they do think there are some difficulties with expert witness testimonies – although they are generally thought to be adequate or robust, the quality of testimonies is reported by providers to vary considerably between witnesses (23%). Other problems include expert witnesses being too busy or reluctant to spend time on the additional work of writing a testimony (55%), and witnesses not always understanding the SWiS qualification or the requirements of their testimony (32%).

1.5 Assessors and verifiers – 30 responses

Assessors are more likely to have undertaken specific training before their involvement with SWiS than verifiers (38%), which has comprised training sessions on specific areas such as Child Protection, Health and Safety or to support their occupational competence in schools.

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

The majority of assessors (67%) think that learners could benefit from additional information on SWiS before embarking on the qualification.

Over half of assessors (57%) indicate that learners have found the SWiS qualification more difficult than expected – mainly attributed to difficulties gathering evidence, or not being able to find the time required to commit to the qualification. Despite this, assessors still believe that learners remain motivated throughout their training, with 40% stating that learners are very motivated.

Sixteen of 21 assessors say they receive little support and guidance from TDA in relation to SWiS, and nine of the 21 do not appear to receive any support or guidance from local authorities. Where they do receive support, assessors are more positive about that received from local authorities.

Most assessors (43%) suggest that learners particularly need mentoring and clear support from their school when undertaking SWiS, although they themselves do run workshops with learners and report maintaining regular communications with learners and their schools to monitor progress and prepare for assessment.

The large majority (86%) of verifiers highlight that training centres require further clarification on assessment procedures, more general information and guidance on the SWiS qualification overall (and greater visibility or promotion of this guidance where it is available).

Assessors and verifiers are in agreement that the current assessment methodology for SWiS is clear and robust, with 91% of assessors saying it is both clear and robust, 89% of verifiers saying it is robust, and 78% of verifiers saying it is clear.

The range and number of units available to candidates are generally thought to be appropriate by assessors, although specific difficulties were highlighted with units for administration and caretaking staff and midday supervisors.

Sixteen of 21 assessors raised specific issues with the language and style of SWiS units, suggesting that they need to be revised so as to simplify the language and layout for learners. Two assessors have already rewritten or simplified units themselves, and others have spent time explaining and 'interpreting' units for learners. There were calls for the units to be written in 'Plain English', to be jargon-free, avoiding ambiguity or terminology that learners who have been out of education for some time might not understand.

1.6 Local authorities – 108 responses

Local authorities mainly publicise SWiS to schools and learners by distributing flyers (67%), either monthly or termly – and at least in the term before funding for SWiS becomes available. Direct approaches to CPD coordinators in schools are thought to help reduce problems of promotional materials being disregarded as junk by schools. To help with this marketing, local authorities would appreciate further information from TDA on:

- How it fits with the wider qualifications offer available to the schools workforce

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

- Links to occupational standards
- Case studies and examples of good practice
- How to communicate effectively with schools about SWiS
- More detail on the PSA route specifically

Communications with TDA are regarded very positively by 81% of local authorities, although the late receipt of funding information and recent reductions in funding limits has caused some disruption.

The majority of local authorities (65%) have fully utilised their 2007-08 SWiS grant by carrying out regular marketing and promotion of the qualification. Where they have not fully utilised their grant, this is generally attributed to a lower response from schools and candidates than expected, receiving funding late or starting training midway through the year.

More than three-quarters of local authorities (76%) think demand for SWiS training will be met during the next academic year. Those that do not are trying to increase awareness of SWiS among schools not currently engaged in the training, and developing relationships with new training providers so as to increase the training capacity available.

More than two-thirds of local authorities are happy with funding arrangements, saying that they are clear and generally not too bureaucratic. The flexibility in how funding is used is appreciated, although five local authorities find the 'single pot' approach makes it difficult to allocate specific budgets to HLTA and SWiS training activities.

SWiS is only made available to volunteers in support staff roles by 21 local authorities. Where SWiS is not made available to volunteers, this is generally attributed to a lack of funding (46%).

In future, local authorities would appreciate more guidance on funding criteria and how to apply for additional monies, earlier notice from TDA of the amount of funding being made available to them, and guidance on the procurement of training to enable them to identify the best value provision.

Appendix 2 Equality and diversity monitoring

Learners

Table 27: Learners – gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Base	326	100%
Male	15	5%
Female	310	95%
Prefer not to say	1	Less than 1%

Base (learners): 326

Table 28: Learners – age

Age	Number	Percentage
18-24	7	2%
25-34	41	13%
35-44	145	45%
45-54	105	32%
55-64	24	7%
65+	1	Less than 1%
Prefer not to say	2	1%

Base (learners): 325

Table 29: Learners – disability

Consider themselves disabled	Number	Percentage
Yes	2	1%
No	322	98%
Prefer not to say	2	1%

Base (learners): 326

Table 30: Learners – meeting the Disability Discrimination Act definition

Meet the Disability Discrimination Act definition	Number	Percentage
Yes	6	2%
No	275	96%
Prefer not to say	5	2%

Base (learners): 286

Table 31: Learners – ethnicity

Ethnic Origin	Number	Percentage
White: British	300	92%
White: Irish	2	1%
White: Other	9	3%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	1	Less than 1%
Mixed: White and Black African	0	0%
Mixed: White and Asian	0	0%
Mixed: Other	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Indian	3	1%
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	3	1%
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Other	0	0%
Black/Black British: Caribbean	3	1%
Black/Black British: African	1	Less than 1%
Black/British: Other	1	Less than 1%
Chinese	0	0%
Other	1	Less than 1%
Prefer not to say	3	1%

Base (learners): 327

Senior Leadership Team

Table 32: Senior leaders – gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	9	18%
Female	39	80%
Prefer not to say	1	2%

Base (school leaders, online): 49

Table 33: Senior leaders – age

Age	Number	Percentage
18-24	0	0%
25-34	3	6%
35-44	10	20%
45-54	23	47%
55-64	11	22%
65+	0	0%
Prefer not to say	2	4%

Base (school leaders, online): 49 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to rounding)

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

Table 34: Senior leaders – disability

They consider themselves disabled	Number	Percentage
Yes	2	4%
No	46	94%
Prefer not to say	1	2%

Base (school leaders, online): 49

Table 35: Senior leaders – meeting the Disability Discrimination Act definition

They meet the Disability Discrimination Act definition	Number	Percentage
Yes	4	8%
No	43	90%
Prefer not to say	1	2%

Base (school leaders, online): 48

Table 36: Senior leaders – ethnicity

Ethnic Origin	Number	Percentage
White: British	43	88%
White: Irish	1	2%
White: Other	1	2%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0	0%
Mixed: White and Black African	0	0%
Mixed: White and Asian	0	0%
Mixed: Other	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Indian	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Other	1	2%
Black/Black British: Caribbean	0	0%
Black/Black British: African	0	0%
Black/British: Other	0	0%
Chinese	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Prefer not to say	3	6%

Base (school leaders, online): 49

Line Managers

Table 37: Line managers – gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	6	9%
Female	59	91%
Prefer not to say	0	0%

Base (line managers): 65

Table 38: Line managers – age

Age	Number	Percentage
18-24	0	0%
25-34	8	12%
35-44	11	17%
45-54	33	51%
55-64	11	17%
65+	0	0%
Prefer not to say	2	3%

Base (line managers): 65

Table 39: Line managers – disability

Consider themselves a disabled person	Number	Percentage
Yes	1	2%
No	64	98%
Prefer not to say	0	0%

Base (line managers): 65

Table 40: Line managers – meeting the Disability Discrimination Act definition

They meet the Disability Discrimination Act definition	Number	Percentage
Yes	1	2%
No	59	98%
Prefer not to say	0	0%

Base (line managers): 60

Table 41: Line managers – ethnicity

Ethnic Origin	Number	Percentage
White: British	64	98%
White: Irish	0	0%
White: Other	0	0%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0	0%
Mixed: White and Black African	0	0%
Mixed: White and Asian	0	0%
Mixed: Other	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Indian	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Other	0	0%
Black/Black British: Caribbean	0	0%
Black/Black British: African	1	2%
Black/British: Other	0	0%
Chinese	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Prefer not to say	0	0%

Base (line managers): 65

Training Providers

Table 42: Training providers – gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	6	10%
Female	54	89%
Prefer not to say	1	1%

Base (providers): 61

Table 43: Training providers – age

Age	Number	Percentage
18-24	0	0%
25-34	3	5%
35-44	13	21%
45-54	26	42%
55-64	17	27%
65+	1	2%
Prefer not to say	2	3%

Base (providers): 62

Table 44: Training providers – disability

Consider themselves disabled	Number	Percentage
Yes	1	2%
No	60	97%
Prefer not to say	1	1%

Base (providers): 62

Table 45: Training providers – meeting the Disability Discrimination Act definition

Meet the Disability Discrimination Act definition	Number	Percentage
Yes	2	4%
No	42	93%
Prefer not to say	1	2%

Base (providers): 45 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to rounding)

Table 46: Training providers – ethnicity

Ethnic Origin	Number	Percentage
White: British	58	94%
White: Irish	0	0%
White: Other	2	3%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0	0%
Mixed: White and Black African	0	0%
Mixed: White and Asian	0	0%
Mixed: Other	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Indian	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0	0%
Asian/Asian British: Other	0	0%
Black/Black British: Caribbean	0	0%
Black/Black British: African	0	0%
Black/British: Other	0	0%
Chinese	1	2%
Other	0	0%
Prefer not to say	1	2%

Base (providers): 62 (Note: percentages do not total 100% due to rounding)

Appendix 3 Detail of units offered and SWiS structure

The structure of the SWiS qualification

The SWiS qualification at Levels 2 and 3 of the National Qualifications Framework is now awarded by several Awarding Bodies (CACHE, OCR, City and Guilds, and Edexcel). The structure of the qualification has been designed to ensure that the common core of skills and knowledge needed by all school support staff is developed and assessed. At the same time, it has also been necessary to incorporate sufficient breadth and flexibility to take account of the wide range of roles and contexts for support staff.

In order to meet these needs, the SWiS qualification is built around a combination of mandatory and optional units, with several different kinds of award available at each level according to the number of units completed. At both Levels 2 and 3, the core of the qualification is the completion of two mandatory units developing and testing generic skills for school support staff. After the initial pilot phase, the mandatory units of the qualification were revised. The first unit, on supporting pupils, was originally a unit from the suite of qualifications designed for Teaching Assistants; this was subsequently revised to take into account the specific needs of the full range of school support workers. The second unit is now based on knowledge and understanding of school policies and procedures, rather than supporting colleagues. These mandatory units are supplemented by a choice of additional units drawn from the broad fields of information, support activity and resources, all of which are based on existing NVQ units.

At Level 2, those completing the mandatory units and one optional unit are eligible for a Level 2 Award, while those additionally completing a second optional unit receive the Level 2 Certificate. At Level 3, those completing the mandatory units are eligible for a Level 3 Award. This is seen as suitable for school staff who may already hold a Level 3 qualification but are perhaps relatively new to working in schools. The Level 3 Certificate is achieved through completion of the two mandatory units and two optional units, and the Level 3 Diploma is based on the mandatory units and a total of four optional units.

Methods of learning and assessment are derived from those used in existing NVQs, notably the assembly of a portfolio of evidence of occupational competency by the candidate for assessment purposes. The qualification also builds on a number of innovative features derived from NVQs but rarely used to such an extent previously. The most notable include the use of senior colleagues to act as 'expert witnesses' who can provide testimony of the candidate's competence for assessment purposes, and the use of 'training mentors' to provide support and assistance to candidates. Both of these are designed to give busy support staff the back-up they need to gain and secure recognition for the skills they use at work, without subjecting them to excessive additional training and assessment burdens.

Impact Assessment of the SWiS qualification

Another flexible feature of the SWiS programme is the ability to choose a selection of units applicable to support staff who work in more than one role.

In addition to the general SWiS qualification, a specialist 'endorsed pathway' Level 3 SWiS has subsequently been developed for Parent Support Advisors. This follows the same basic pattern of mandatory and optional units used in the other SWiS qualifications. However, in addition to the two mandatory units in the general Level 3 SWiS, learners opting for this route must complete a third 'endorsed unit'. This is specifically designed for Parent Support Advisors and focuses on building and maintaining relationships with parents. To achieve a Level 3 Certificate, the learner must also complete one of two optional units. To achieve a Level 3 Diploma, the learner must complete three optional units; this must include at least one from the two available at Certificate level with the remainder chosen from an additional list of diploma-specific optional units.

In 2007-08 the TDA conducted a pilot of the SWiS (Parent Support) endorsed pathway in 20 local authorities involving 717 learners working across 1,167 schools. This is now being rolled out nationally with funding specifically to support a further 1,000 training places in 2008-09.

Optional units offered by training providers at Levels 2 and 3.

Table 47: Proportion of providers offering Level 2 Information Option units

	Proportion of providers currently offering the unit
All units	86%
Prepare and print documents using a computer	10%
Communicate information using telephone and fax	7%
Photocopy, present and distribute complex documents	5%
Enter, retrieve and print data in a database	5%
Produce documents from your own notes	5%
Don't know/not sure	5%
Receive and assist visitors	2%
Record, store and supply information using a paper-based filing system	2%
Maintain the arrangement of material to facilitate retrieval	2%
Issue and recover loan material	0%
Identify and provide information and material required by users	0%

Base (providers): 58 (Note: figures do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Table 48: Proportion of providers offering Level 2 Resource Option units

	Proportion of providers currently offering the unit
All units	63%
Ensure your own actions reduce risks to health and safety	27%
Help with classroom resources and records	16%
Email	16%
Maintain the provision of materials, equipment and resources	13%
Process requests to support learning	13%
Maintain resources	12%
Maintain site security	12%
Operate a computer	12%
Internet and intranets	12%
Maintain grounds	10%
Control the use of resources	10%
Controlling stocks of laboratory materials and equipment	9%
Control the use of premises by customers and contractors	9%
Software installation and upgrade	8%
Working with ICT hardware and equipment	8%
Clean toilets and washrooms manually	8%
Don't know/not sure	8%
Bespoke/specialist software	6%
Clean carpets and soft furnishings	6%

Base (providers): 67 (Note: figures do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Table 49: Proportion of providers currently offering Level 2 Support Option units

	Proportion of providers currently offering the unit
All units	68%
Provide support for learning activities	16%
Support literacy and numeracy activities in the classroom	16%
Support children's social and emotional development	16%
Support children and young people's play	13%
Contribute to health and safety in the play environment	13%
Contribute to the support of student activities	12%
Support children's physical and development needs	10%
Contribute to children and young people's healthy eating and personal hygiene	9%
Technical advice and guidance	7%
Remote support for products or services	7%
Don't know/not sure	6%
System operation	4%
Maintain food safety when storing, holding and serving food	3%
Prepare cook and finish healthier dishes	3%
Maintain food safety when storing, preparing and cooking food	2%

Base (providers): 68 (Note: figures do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Table 50: Proportion of providers offering Level 3 General Option units

	Proportion of providers currently offering the unit
All units	75%
Reflect on and develop your practice	10%
Don't know/not sure	10%
Develop productive working relationships with colleagues	8%
Provide leadership for your team	5%
Provide leadership in your area of responsibility	5%
Liase effectively with parents	5%
Provide learning opportunities for colleagues	3%
Support competence achieved in the workplace	3%

Base (providers): 40 (Note: figures do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Table 51: Proportion of providers offering Level 3 Information Option units

	Proportion of providers currently offering the unit
All units	73%
Don't know/not sure	14%
Use IT to exchange information	11%
Research, analyse and report information	8%
Organise and coordinate events	8%
Use specialist or bespoke software	5%
Provide displays	5%

Base (providers): 37 (Note: figures do not total 100% due to multiple responses)

Table 59: Proportion of providers offering Level 3 Resource Option units

	Proportion of providers currently offering the unit
All units	72%
Maintain a healthy, safe and productive work environment	14%
Don't know/not sure	14%
Procure products and services	8%
Contribute to the safety, security and maintenance of the site	8%
Provide technical support	6%
IT trouble-shooting for users	3%
IT security for users	3%

Base (providers): 36 (Note: figures do not total 100% due to multiples responses)

Table 60: Proportion of providers offering Level 3 Support Option units

	Proportion of providers currently offering the unit
All units	70%
Develop and promote positive relationships	18%
Support pupils during learning activities	18%
Contribute to the management of pupil behaviour	13%
Establish and maintain relationships with individual pupils and groups	13%
Assist in preparing and maintaining the learning environment	13%
Observe and report on pupil performance	13%
Don't know/not sure	13%
Promote children's development	10%
Contribute to the planning and evaluation of learning activities	10%
Protect and promote children's rights	8%
Maintain a supportive environment for users	8%
Contribute to children and young people's healthy eating and hygiene	3%
Control practices for handling payments	3%
Maintain food safety when storing, preparing and cooking food	0%
Ensure appropriate food safety practices are followed whilst food is prepared, cooked and served	0%
Prepare, cook and finish healthier dishes	0%
Contribute to the development and introduction of recipes and menus	0%

Base (providers): 40 (Note: figures do not total 100% due to multiple responses)