

PROMOTING WORKPLACE LEARNING

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CONTENTS

- 1. LEARNING MATTERS**
- 2. WHAT IS WORKPLACE LEARNING?**
- 3. WORKPLACE LEARNING WORKS: EVIDENCE FROM THE CASE STUDIES**
- 4. WORKPLACE LEARNING WORKS: EVIDENCE FROM OTHER SOURCES**
- 5. WORKPLACE LEARNING WORKS: PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE**
- 6. WORKPLACE LEARNING: TAKING IT FORWARD**
- 7. REFERENCES**

APPENDICES

- 1. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**
- 2. NEXT PRIORITIES FOR TRAINING AND LEARNING IN CROSSREACH AND IN THE SOCIAL WORK RESOURCE, SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL**

FOREWORD

This research report is the product of the Skills for Business Network in Scotland funded by European Structural Funds (ESF) to explore, highlight and promote the benefits of workplace learning in Scotland. The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) as part of Skills for Care and Development (the sector skills council for social services) commissioned this research which was undertaken in two organisations, one local authority and one voluntary. It is a qualitative study that draws on social service workers' experience of learning in their workplace. The workers concerned were undertaking a range of learning which included induction and SVQs in Care and in Health and Social Care. These valuable insights provide the basis of a DVD produced by the Skills for Business Network which will further bring these real experiences to life.

1. LEARNING MATTERS

Why Invest in Learning?

“Working here helps you to learn to do the job better. Doing the SVQ is really an eye opener. You’ve always been a good carer but you start to see the whole picture, like you see the importance of care plans and recording.” **Child Care Worker**

National Priorities

A Smart, Successful Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2001) places investment in people at the centre of the national drive to enhance Scotland’s dynamic economy. There are benefits to employers in raising productivity and profitability. There are benefits to employees in raising employability and earnings. There are benefits to the economy in raising competitiveness and growth.

In the social services sector with its mix of public, private and voluntary provision the benefits to employers are higher standards of provision. For employees, the benefit comes from the delivery of higher standards of service, from greater employability and higher earnings. For service users and the community as a whole the benefit comes from the enhancement of their quality of life through the provision of a workforce that is skilled, properly trained, appropriately qualified and effectively regulated.

Scottish Social Services Council

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is the regulatory body for the social service workforce in Scotland and is also responsible for regulating their education and training. In addition, the SSSC is part of the UK-wide sector skills council, Skills for Care and Development and as such has responsibility for workforce development across the social services sector. The SSSC aims for a competent, confident and valued workforce capable of delivering services in a changing environment and is committed to developing a culture of learning. It sees the promotion of learning as the responsibility of both employers and staff.

“An integral part of maintaining and improving practice in service delivery is an obligation on employers and employees to ensure that those delivering services are competent to do so. This can only be the case if employers provide opportunities for their staff to develop the relevant skills and knowledge that they need and for individuals to make the most of such opportunities.”
(SSSC, 2004a)

In achieving the objective of improving the effectiveness, quality and relevance of learning for social services staff, employers are encouraged to utilise a range of learning and development approaches (SSSC, 2004b). Among these approaches is workplace learning.

Workplace Learning

The Scottish Executive in its National Strategy for the Development of the Social Services Workforce in Scotland (2005) sets out an ambitious vision of ‘lifelong learning for life changing work’. The strategy acknowledges the challenge of meeting the full range of learning and development needs in organisations ranging from induction, core social services qualification provision and continuing employee development for all staff.

In meeting these challenges the SSSC sees workplace learning as an important tool for organisations, for staff members and for service delivery. Workplace learning is any training that relates directly to the requirements of the jobs on offer in an organisation. It includes a wide range of learning opportunities, including those offered through Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs).

The workplace learning approach provides a flexible way of delivering training as part of the induction process, a structured and standardised process for introducing staff to an organisation in a consistent way. It can also be used towards core social services qualifications for registration with SSSC and for continuing development. Convincing evidence of the benefits of workplace learning can be found from employers, managers and staff, including the benefit to service users.

South Lanarkshire Council is one of Scotland's largest local authorities and the training team of the Social Work Resource in the Council enables the training and learning of 2,700 local authority staff and works in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors on some aspects of the training and learning of their staff. CrossReach is the Social Care Council of the Church of Scotland (until 2005 known as the Board of Social Responsibility). It covers the whole of Scotland in 78 units and projects and with around 1600 full time staff and 700 part time and sessional workers, is the largest voluntary social services provider in Scotland. Employees in the two case study organisations were involved in a range of learning. For those in the project, this included induction, SVQs in Care and in Health and Social Care and the Registered Managers Award.

The project 'Promoting Workplace Learning' used three sets of organising questions:

- What is workplace learning?
- What are the benefits of workplace learning and what are its limitations?
- What are the key features of best practice in workplace learning?

The report draws together evidence from the two case studies and identifies the key characteristics of workplace learning that make it beneficial. It also provides materials which organisations can use as they develop workplace learning. In the appendices, a brief summary of the research methodology is provided and the next priorities for learning and development in CrossReach and in the Social Work Resource of South Lanarkshire Council are outlined.

2. WHAT IS WORKPLACE LEARNING?

“It is about people developing skills, best practice, in the work environment. It doesn’t mean training days, it is broader than that and includes learning in other ways such as through supervision, in meetings, in our small library.” **Unit Manager**

There is no clear and consistent definition of work based learning and although sometimes confined to learning which takes place in the workplace itself, definitions can be broader than that and include other kinds of work related learning which support particular work roles.

The training team focus group in the study expressed it in the following ways.

It’s meaningful learning. It involves making ‘sense’ of the learning that is going on in an organisation all the time. It involves looking at embedded knowledge and encouraging intentional reflection and learning transfer.

It means learning tailored to the workplace.

It means learning tailored to the individual.

It involves being coached / mentored / supported and sharing knowledge and skills. Learners are comfortable about making mistakes and are open and willing to learn. Supervision by a manager involves accountability, support, and training and development.

Members of the training team have a leadership role in building confidence and helping people feel valued and empowered.

In a study published by the Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, work based learning was described as ‘any training that relates directly to the requirements of the jobs on offer in your organisation’ (Glass, Higgins and McGregor, 2002). Used in this way it means learning opportunities closely bound to the work role and often, but not always, located in the workplace itself. This is the definition of workplace learning that was used in this study.

An important aspect of workplace learning is that through the experience of performing the work role, complemented by other activities such as directed reading, researching and group work it is possible for learners to achieve planned learning outcomes that can be evidenced and assessed. These outcomes can then be used as part of a programme of work leading to a nationally recognised qualification such as a Scottish Vocational Qualification or a college or university award.

“It is useful as it can be seen as tangible, definable and agreed. Because it is explicit, and uses the language of competence, this means that it can be planned around, pointed at and used as a way of linking learning to workplace competence.” **Training Manager**

A key aspect of workplace learning is that employers and managers are directly involved.

3. WORKPLACE LEARNING WORKS: EVIDENCE FROM THE CASE STUDIES

"It took me a while to understand the meaning of things but once you got the hang of it, it made it easier. I liked the way an (SVQ) assessor came out to evidence it. You could be working with a child for instance at tea time and she could talk to you about what you were doing. Sometimes you would write up the log and she would say you need to evidence this. Sometimes it was really simple but it was still important." **Senior Care Worker**

Managers and staff in the two case study organisations were asked about the benefits and limitations of workplace learning for their organisations, for staff and for service users.

Benefits of Workplace Learning for Organisations

There was widespread agreement in both organisations and among managers and employees that there were substantial benefits to the organisation.

- **Competent, Confident and Valued Staff**

As well as meeting the requirements of the SSSC and the Care Commission, staff in both organisations thought that workplace learning led to greater motivation and confidence. For instance staff were more likely to contribute positively in meetings and discussions. There was also agreement that employers and managers could have greater confidence in the competence of staff to meet the requirements of their work roles. Staff were qualified against agreed national standards. They were also more likely to be up to date in terms of changes in service delivery. Overall, there was agreement that the delivery of services to service users was enhanced.

"The organisation is confident that the evidence is there and that the learning is used by staff. It knows that its policy and procedures are in place." **Training Manager**

"You can see things are better at staff meetings when staff recommend improvements to procedures." **Team Leader**

"The practical things are about running the unit. Managers know staff 'are trained to the right level and can expect things from them. It professionalises the job otherwise people could walk in off the street and have so much power. The children are getting somebody who knows what they are doing." **Team Leader**

"It's beneficial for managers to know that there are reliable staff." **Senior Care Worker**

One unit manager summed up the benefits for his organisation as being:

"You get competent safe practitioners, staff who feel valued. And it positively affects retention of staff." **Unit Manager**

Benefits of Workplace Learning for Staff

- **Personal and Professional Development**

Again, within both organisations, there was general agreement that this kind of learning had substantial benefits for staff themselves. Several people commented on the personal development gains they saw in colleagues. For instance people grew in confidence. They also felt more valued. There were frequent references to a growth in a sense of professionalism. This was personally satisfying, as was the opportunity to gain qualifications. Several people commented that this enabled people to see themselves on a career path, with evidence to apply for more senior roles or to move to other specialisms.

"People feel part of something important." **Team Leader**

"People feel they are listened to and valued. This is the case both when receiving support or when helping others." **Trainer**

"It gives a sense of professionalism, sometimes staff have a feeling that as a carer you don't have special skills." **Team Leader**

"It provides ownership, they know they are providing best practice." **Unit Manager**

"They can see a future, a career path." **Trainer**

- **Flexibility and Approach**

Because workplace learning could be managed more flexibly than sending people on courses, it meant that staff did not have to wait until courses became available so it was seen as more equitable. It was more in balance with the pattern of work and individual needs.

"It creates a realistic, honest approach in relation to what can be done at any one time. You might have to wait, but you're not forgotten." **Trainer**

"Employees can go at the pace that suits them. They can get a qualification and don't have to take 'turns' in going for training. It's open to everyone." **Trainer**

Starting workplace learning can be hard, as one carer found.

"When I got my first assignment I was in a right panic. I didn't know anything about IT but my daughter came up and typed it out. She said 'I can't keep coming up and down the road' so I had to learn to do it for myself. I'm fine with IT now." **Senior Care Worker**

Benefits of Workplace Learning for People who use Services

- **Competence, Consistency and Responsiveness of Staff**

Everyone thought that service users benefited from the learning their carers were gaining. There was greater consistency in the services they provided, they knew their jobs better and they were more motivated. Carers were able to respond more appropriately to situations and on occasions to act as advocates on behalf of service users.

"Users benefit from having qualified staff who 'know their job', and are trained to meet specific needs." **Trainer**

"Service users have the reassurance that people know what they are doing and are continuing to develop." **Unit Manager**

- **Involvement of People who use Services**

In some circumstances the people who use services were involved directly in discussions, for example in giving permission for an SVQ assessor to be present, though clearly this would not always be possible. In other situations people who use services could be involved in meetings and steering groups.

"Service users can make an input into an individual's learning programme in that staff are encouraged to engage with service users." **Principal Officer**

"More people are talking about their work, talking about their job in a natural way in the workplace so service users feel involved." **Trainer**

"People can be involved in the management of the service for instance in tenant's meetings and in steering groups for the service." **Unit Manager**

"Service users feel valued and respected – that's emphasised in staff training." **Trainer**

A number of staff suggested that getting feedback from people who use services made a managers' job more difficult but that it was worth seeking.

"It can be sore but it's incredibly transparent and it has given staff confidence." **Unit Manager**

Difficulties of Workplace Learning for Organisations and Staff

While there was universal approval and support for workplace learning, there was a general recognition that there were some difficulties and problems.

- **Time and the Management of Time**

Time and the management of time, for instance, was a feature of most interviews. Both managers and staff recognised the dilemma of whether time should be given to service delivery or allocated to training, a problem that was seen as more acute in connection with part-time staff.

For managers there was an issue in the organisation of rotas and staff cover. For most staff there were problems in balancing learning and work and life and for some there were difficulties in getting access to busy line managers or assessors when they wanted advice. In one residential unit for children the difficulty was that the children were at school all day so assessment visits had to be early or late in the day.

Both organisations were recognised to be supportive but there was a general acceptance that staff give some of their own time outside work to complete their learning tasks.

"It's all about time, balancing home life, shifts, SVQ." **Team Leader**

"You're supposed to see everyone at a staff meeting but you don't always get all the staff at a meeting. People will be on holiday or off sick." **Senior Care Worker**

"Time, both the amount and the distribution of time! For instance the staff here are mainly part time so taking them off the floor to write up can be difficult." **Senior Care Worker**

"If staff are off the floor to write up then maybe service user activities can't take place." **Care Worker**

- **Resources and Capacity**

Cost was an issue for managers. There was an initial and substantial cost in developing and maintaining materials and there were subsequent costs in providing cover or release to enable staff to engage with tasks. There was also the cost of support and assessment. On the other hand there was a view that there were savings against the time and travel costs of going on courses and that better value was obtained from workplace learning.

"A major issue is the cost of providing the cover time for each member of staff. Our unit built a budget for training in at the start in 2003 but other units haven't so it is harder for them." **Unit Manager**

"There are always constraints of staffing, sickness and holidays and when seniors go off things slow down." **Unit Manager**

"We need more bank staff to let people out for training." **Senior Carer**

"Sometimes a service can't handle too much workplace learning at one time and it is important to be aware of the capacity of a workplace to release people for learning." **Training Manager**

- **Learning and the Learning Approach**

Learning can be difficult and sometimes painful. Some learners needed support with literacy and IT skills. Some found that their learning was in conflict with practice in their workplace. Some line managers felt threatened by the expectation that they would be mentors though this was eased by the provision of supplementary material for them to use. Some existing staff felt they were losing out by not being able to go on traditional courses.

"The job is often stressful and reflecting on the job at home is often not what candidates need to recharge their batteries." **SVQ Assessor**

"It can be threatening re their current practice. Development can be uncomfortable." **Trainer**

"Existing staff felt initially that newcomers were getting an advantage. They wanted 'old style courses' and didn't want to start at workbook 18." **Principal Officer**

(Workbook 18 marks the start of the staff development programme that follows on from the earlier set of workbooks of the induction process in this organisation.)

Difficulties of Workplace Learning for People who use Services

There were perceived difficulties for people who use services in some circumstances. There were issues of privacy and dignity where, for instance, people might not want to be observed while having a bath even though the focus is on the carer. Again, the service user is potentially deprived of service during any time out for professional development even though there should be a longer term benefit. There might be feelings of intrusion and that they are being used or workers might be too enthusiastic in practicing new skills.

"A key worker and an (SVQ) assessor might both be in someone's home when she gets back from day care. That might be a bit of a shock." **Carer**

"Maybe service users don't want to divulge something. Although they do have a choice to refuse to take part, making that choice can be difficult." **Carer**

"New staff arrive and the service user has to go through the process of evidence gathering again with the new member of staff. Saying 'no thanks' is difficult." **SVQ Assessor**

Managing Change

These problems and issues for organisations, staff and people who use services can be managed sensitively but managing change in itself is difficult. It helps if there is a supportive culture within the organisation.

"People can be resistant and perceive that something new is very different. There can be particular pressure on the middle managers as they try to explain that much is already happening, but it is now being given more 'structure'. Here we have senior managers who embrace change and this helps the move towards becoming a learning organisation." **Trainer**

4. WORKPLACE LEARNING WORKS: EVIDENCE FROM OTHER SOURCES

There is evidence from other employment sectors and from the social services sector that workplace learning works.

Benefits

A recent study published by the Scottish Executive Central Research Unit surveyed 270 employers and 500 of their employees, from small and medium size enterprises in six locations around the country (Glass et al, 2002). This major study demonstrated convincingly that training that relates directly to the requirements of the jobs on offer in an organisation was valued both by employers and by employees across a wide range of industries and occupations.

The top five benefits as seen by employers

Improved quality of service or product	52%
Made company more effective	25%
Helped keep up with technology	21%
Increased flexibility of employees to take on new tasks	20%
Increased productivity	19%

When employees' views on the benefits of work based learning for their employers were examined, there were some differences in the top five responses. Improved managerial or supervisory effectiveness and enhanced team working were cited as a benefit by between a third and a half of employees but did not feature in the response of their employers. These differences in responses may be because employees were closer to the point of delivery of their firm's business and more aware of their own roles and competences.

The top five benefits for employees

Better quality of product/service	79%
Able to take on new tasks	66%
Increased self confidence	64%
Can take on a wider variety of tasks	64%
Greater job satisfaction	58%

Interestingly, 37% of employees thought that work based learning would help them gain promotion within the organisation though only 5% thought this was the main benefit. 54% thought the training they were doing would help them get a better job with another employer though only 6% thought this was the main benefit. None of the over 45s cited this as the main benefit although it was mentioned by 10% of the under 25s and by 6% of the 25-44s.

The very small number of employees who felt they were not gaining any benefit cited reasons such as they already had the skills, the skills were not relevant to their job or the trainers were of poor quality.

Perceived Impact of Workplace Learning Through Vocational Qualifications

The same study cited evidence to show that employers in Scotland perceived vocational qualifications to have a significant effect upon

- the thoroughness and quality of the learning process
- the volume of work based learning carried out
- staff development and the accessibility of qualifications to staff of different ages, experiences and skill levels

- employee sense of recognition for their work, so enhancing self-esteem and confidence
- employee loyalty towards the employer, facilitating retention
- potential customers, through increased confidence in workforce skills and competences
- company performance, quality and competitiveness.

This is reinforced by a recent SQA study on the impact of SVQs in Care that showed strong agreement between SVQ candidates and their line managers that their learning had a significant impact on their performance. Candidates and line managers agreed or strongly agreed on improvements in role clarity, confidence, knowledge, applying knowledge, practice skills and on being reflective (SQA, 2004).

An earlier study by Canning (1999) cited in Glass et al (2002) found that SVQs funded by employers were well regarded and credible. Where employers allow employees work time to complete the SVQ, providing assessment practices and promoting the award in the organisation, this can lead to the fulfilment of SVQ aims.

Importance of the Workplace Learning Environment

Evidence about how to develop and sustain a learning environment that promotes workplace learning can be found through a number of sources.

A study by Boud and Solomon (2003) to find ways in which workplace learning can be more effectively utilised in organisations found that having an identity as a learner was not always compatible with being regarded as a competent worker by others. Organisations needed to recognise that it takes time and careful support for 'learning and being a learner' to be understood as a strength for an organisation and as adding value to individuals' work.

The Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (SIESWE) has published a discussion paper (Skinner, 2005) on Continuing Professional Development for the Social Services Workforce in Scotland. It suggests that continuing professional development is not simply about having flexible opportunities for training and employee development, essential though these are, but is connected with the promotion of learning cultures within the workplace, the valuing of knowledge building and skills development and a commitment to evidence based activity.

The Scottish Practice Learning Project (SPLP), established in 2004, funded by the Scottish Executive and jointly run by SSSC and the Institute has the key aim to support the development of learning organisations and continuing professional development in the social services sector (see the SPLP website for further information – www.splp.uk.com).

A study by Felstead et al (2005) found that over half of those surveyed thought that learning by doing was the most effective means of improving work performance, with 90% agreeing that they had picked up most of their skills through on-the-job experience. The activities more closely associated with the workplace - such as doing the job, being shown techniques by colleagues, engaging in self-reflection and active observation - were important to employees in raising their performance. Crucially, advice, understanding, coaching and counselling from line managers emerged as keys to the development of effective and productive staff.

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) through its Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) has commissioned a series of studies that includes a major theme on workplace learning. Part of that is a project on *Learning as work: teaching and learning processes in the contemporary work organisation*. The project is investigating, in particular, the hypothesis that workplaces which exhibit high involvement characteristics and 'expansive' learning environments provide employees with greater opportunities to engage in and attain new skills and knowledge through learning at work than would be the case for employees in low involvement ('restrictive') workplaces. It is due to produce a final report in 2007 but will produce and publish interim reports.

5. WORKPLACE LEARNING WORKS: PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

"It's about willingness to change and to test out different ways of doing things until you find something that works." **Training Manager**

Managers and staff in the case study organisations were asked to identify important characteristics of the organisations which supported the development of workplace learning practice. Staff were also asked about their experiences of workplace learning.

Commitment and Focus

In both case studies, it was clear from group and individual discussion that there was commitment to the workplace learning approach at all of the levels studied in the organisations. Achieving the registration requirements of SSSC through workplace learning was a key factor in priority setting. In each case a training team was developing the provision for training and learning.

"You need a strategy and plans, full backing of the senior management to the next level of management and on to the operational managers. It connects to the culture of the organization."

Member of a Training Team

"Carry out a training needs analysis and involve various levels in the organisation, not just the central team. A lot is generic, but you need to customise to local level. Be open, transparent and value the workforce." **Unit Manager**

Culture and Systems

Structures and systems were in place in both organisations to support the development of workplace learning provision and there was clear communication of key messages. Work was planned, organised and managed in such a way that it led to learning being valued and promoted. Capabilities and interests were acknowledged and used and there was a climate of openness and trust in which criticism or comment was not seen as threatening.

"It starts on day one. It sets culturally the tone for continuous learning. It's focused on safe and competent practice." **Unit Manager**

"There is lots of backing. It's a great organisation for training." **SVQ3 Candidate**

"There is a lot of encouragement from management. Keeping going isn't a problem. Everybody is getting it done." **SVQ3 Qualified Staff Member**

"People have confidence to challenge systems and structures." **Training Team Member**

Both organisations had become SQA assessment centres, one in partnership with a range of local voluntary and private sector organisations.

Everyone is a Learner

- **Induction and Initial Qualification**

The induction process for members of staff who were new to the organisation was well supported in both organisations. Pack based materials had been developed and provided structure, support and direction to early workplace learning. Staff members worked through the materials week by week supported by a supervisor/mentor. The learning opportunities provided by the packs served as an introduction to workplace learning and provided practice in the collection of evidence of the outcomes of learning, an important aspect of achieving a workplace based qualification. Pack materials were also linked to performance criteria and knowledge points in SVQs where appropriate.

In both organisations, members of staff that were new to the organisation but already had a qualification or were moving within the organisation to a new post were provided with an induction process that was tailored to meet their needs.

Staff who had difficulty completing induction packs were offered individual support and opportunities to take a range of other supportive learning programmes.

Both organisations continued to offer support after induction and into SVQ. In one organisation this additional support was called Personal and Professional Development (PPD) and, as in the induction phase, was based on workbook packs.

The SVQ assessors in both organisations were recognised as supportive and helpful.

"Induction is very important, particularly if staff have been out of learning for a long time."

SVQ Assessor

"The workbook process is central to the whole thing. It alleviates fear in people who have not been involved in any qualification...people begin by writing a sentence or a paragraph."

Service Manager

"Lots of staff don't really understand that they are getting a qualification and that all through the PPD they are collecting evidence for the SVQ3."

Unit Manager

"You need someone with a bit of knowledge to guide things. It is really important to sit down and make the time. If we didn't have our SVQ assessor we'd be lost."

Unit Focus Group

- **Extended Opportunities for Learning**

In both organisations there was an emphasis on capacity building and on making staff learning a priority. People were given tools, confidence and support to plan their personal and professional development. Each organisation had developed a system of performance development and review. In one organisation the system has already been implemented and in the other the system was ready for implementation.

During and after completing initial workplace based qualifications for registration, other forms of workplace related training and learning were being undertaken by staff.

After completing an SVQ there were often fewer opportunities for staff to move into roles that allowed them to undertake another level of SVQ but in both organisations there was an emphasis on post qualification training and learning and continuing to gather evidence of the outcomes of learning as evidence. In addition to internal training opportunities, a wide range of external training opportunities were being accessed from organisations such as colleges, universities and the NHS. Some staff members were also undertaking joint training with other sectors such as housing, pharmacy and mental health.

"The therapeutic crisis intervention course helps practice afterwards. I can use it for evidence for SVQ3."

SVQ3 Candidate

"With 40 staff there are no opportunities for staff to go to senior posts unless they leave the unit as we can't offer SVQ4 if they are not in an appropriate role. So the unit tends to go for 'skill sets', COSCA courses, drugs rehabilitation with Glasgow University, distance learning with Paisley University..."

Unit Manager

Collaboration and Teamwork

- **With other Staff in the Organisation**

In both organisations people worked regularly in teams and stressed the importance of learning from others in the team. This was not merely about working together and cooperating with others, but was more about collaborating. It involved trusting and respecting others and being open to their ideas and views. It was about pooling knowledge and skills to achieve a particular result.

“You can see that the seniors have more knowledge. It is a good thing and helps everyone. They are doing SVQs too. The deputy says he has been working for 12 years and is still learning. You don’t stop learning. We are all learning together and that makes a better working relationship. It attracts you to stay if you know there is training.” **Mixed Focus Group in one unit**

“ find that people are doing SVQ3 and SVQ4 and A1. Everyone is talking about it, wants to share it, talk about it. It is good to see the unit buzzing with SVQ. Even the manager is. We are all together.” **SVQ3 Candidate**

- **With the People who use Services**

The views and ideas of the people who use services were being valued in the organisations.

“This kind of learning is about the individual. The care plan is geared to the individual so individuals realise that they are at the core of the team. They get better at listening and negotiating what they want, not just what they need. Standards in SVQs put emphasis on choice and preference which goes beyond need... it considers desires and what people aspire to.” **SVQ Assessor**

This work has highlighted the need to undertake further research with the focus on evidenced outcomes for service users.

- **With other Organisations**

There were other examples of collaboration in both organisations where collaboration was taking place with other organisations rather than within the organisation. People were encouraged to build communities and networks of practice and were developing a range of types of partnership. The development of new regional and local learning networks to replace national consortia has the potential to further develop partnership working.

“Network! Don’t reinvent what already exists. Tap into other resources. All organisations who started units/housing support like ours in 2003 meet together and exchange practice. After networking comes partnership. Meet, then work with other organisations involved in the same service. Some partnerships are required, others are chosen for particular purposes.” **Unit Manager**

“We act as a broker to promote the private sector training. The capacity to lead and work in partnership, often acting as a broker, through the practice learning centre and the development of a local learning partnership will be considerable.” **Training Manager**

Experiences of Workplace Learning

Staff members were asked about their current experiences of workplace learning, their advice to new learners and about what they hoped to do in the future. The following gives a flavour of their answers.

What it's Like?

"The support is here, but when you go home and think 'oh!!'. You need to start. Watching is no good. You just have to do it." **Candidate starting SVQ**

"The SVQ is really very good for work practice. You are not just a carer. You don't just work with people. You think before you do anything. We're child care practitioners." **Achieved SVQ3**

"I've just completed the HNC... I'm very impressed with the SVQ3 and prefer the newer format. The external assessor is very helpful." **SVQ3 Candidate**

"Over the last 18 months I've been getting support from the organisation. People are starting to get qualifications and it's taking off." **SVQ4 Candidate**

"There are always opportunities for staff to learn, but they need a push. We need to be registered so we need to do it now. There is a gain at the end and for us but its hard when you're going through it." **SVQ4 Candidate**

Advice to New Members of Staff

"Start... right away. I was getting trained on the second day I was here. It was good."
Employee doing organisation's own pack, prior to starting SVQ3

"Don't stop (gathering evidence). Don't put it down." **SVQ3 Candidate**

"Some people have to wait to get on the pack and SVQs. Too many people are needing trained. You take it in turn." **Candidate nearing the end of the organisation's own pack prior to SVQ3**

"Keep at the seniors till they give you time so you can get what you want to know."
Achieved SVQ4

*"Each day you'll think 'I could use that.'" **SVQ4 Candidate***

What Next?

"Could do SVQ4, or A1 and we buy in training too. SVQ3 is very flexible so there are lots of things to do." **SVQ3 Candidate**

"I'd like to do SVQ4 and I'd like to go to College, if I could do it alongside work." **SVQ3 Candidate**

"I'd like to do the Diploma in Social Work or the RMA." **SVQ4 Candidate**

"Care is not just a job, it is more of a career. It is sold quite short, I think." **SVQ4 Candidate**

6. WORKPLACE LEARNING: TAKING IT FORWARD

'It takes years and years and years. It is not quick to become a learning organisation.'

Unit Manager

An analysis of the information from focus groups and from the individual interviews with training managers and managers of care settings made it clear that if workplace learning is to be geared to the challenges of today it needs to be built on a number of key characteristics in the organisation.

A summary of the findings from the case studies suggests a useful agenda for action for organisations to consider as they take their plans for workplace learning forward.

These action points can also be considered in conjunction with the key characteristics of a social care learning organisation described by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) in its resource pack on learning organisations.

Be Sensitive to Context

1. Understand the drivers for change.
2. Be clear about what the organisation and individuals want to achieve.
3. Recognise the starting points of individuals.

Take Account of Important Factors in the Organisation

4. Identify structures in the organisation.
5. Recognise systems that are in place.
6. Know the kind of people who are employed.
7. Understand the culture and norms that have developed.

Use a Learner Centred Approach

8. Build capacity by giving people tools and confidence to plan their personal and professional development.
9. Help people to question, innovate, interact with others in order to develop.
10. Provide workplace learning opportunities for people to gain qualifications
11. Provide career pathways.

Encourage a Collaborative Approach

12. Encourage people to build communities and networks of practice.
13. Support people to be open and trust and respect each other.
14. Involve service users.
15. Develop and maintain positive working and learning partnerships

All of these actions are underpinned by an investment in learning by the individual and by the organisation.

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APPENDIX 1

The Research Methodology

The study was based on information collected in two organisations which have developed examples of good practice in training and learning initiatives. They were:

- South Lanarkshire Council Social Work Resources
- CrossReach, the Social Care Council of the Church of Scotland

An initial contact was made to each case study organisation and a potential strategy for gathering information was explored. Evidence was collected from a number of sources. These included documents, archival records and face-to-face and telephone focused interviews with individuals and groups.

South Lanarkshire Council

A face to face interview and a follow up meeting with the Training Manager of the Social Work Resource. Four focused group interviews (staff working towards SVQ3, staff working towards SVQ4, SVQ assessors, and members of the Training Team).

CrossReach

A face to face interview and a follow up meeting with the Principal Officer, Learning and Development. A telephone interview with the manager of a supported living unit for older people. Three focused group interviews (a mixed staff group from a residential childcare unit, a mixed staff group from a unit for older people and a group of unit managers, including one service manager)

The information collected through interview was not fully transcribed, but a summary of each interview/focus group was made and this was fed back to the interviewee(s)/groups for comment and amendment. This enhanced the reliability of the data and helped the development of shared understandings.

Three sets of organising questions were used to structure the analysis of data collected in the study:

- What is workplace learning?
- What are the benefits of workplace learning and what are its limitations?
- What are the key features of best practice in workplace learning?

A small steering group, drawn from the SSSC, supported the development of the report.

APPENDIX 2

Next Priorities for Training and Learning in CrossReach

"We want CrossReach to be a great organisation to work for and stay with so we have a Strategic Plan for 2005-2008 which sets out learning objectives to be tackled over the next three years with a rolling one-year-ahead specification of key targets."

"In training, the headline objective is to equip employees to do their job, through personal and professional development. Our 3-year objectives include establishing a Learning Centre, identifying and establishing a vocational training strategy to meet qualification targets, identifying and meeting the specialist training requirements of staff and developing a strategy for continuing professional development, including qualifying training. Perhaps our most important objective is developing capable and caring managers."

"Our one-year-ahead targets include promoting the continued development of a learning culture, identifying alternative models of assessment for SVQs, identifying intermediate and advanced training for all services, developing a strategy to ensure CPD contributes to employees' self development and lifelong learning and developing and implementing an appraisal scheme."

"We have already achieved a great deal but we know we will have to continue to change and develop. Meeting targets for registration has been a major driver for us but we know we have to look beyond that and that's what our Strategic Plan is about."

Principal Officer, Learning and Development

Next Priorities for Training and Learning in the Social Work Resource, South Lanarkshire Council

"We have already achieved a great deal but we know we will have to continue to change and develop. I expect the main challenge for learning and development in the future to be supporting Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) for our registered workforce."

"A major priority at present is to establish a Learning Centre approach to practice learning to increase the number, range and quality of learning opportunities to students and workers. This should be fully operational by mid 2006 and will include in its remit the delivery of PRTL activities. We plan to redesign the Staff Development Officer role to include responsibility for both practice learning and PRTL. We see real opportunities here to further develop evidence based practice in partnership with our local university colleagues."

"Another current priority is supporting workers and managers to achieve the registration qualifications. When we meet our registration targets in 2008/09, we plan to redeploy SVQ Training Officers to supporting PRTL for residential and day care registrants."

"We intend to make improvements to our current practice. For example, our induction training needs to be more consistent and we wish to encourage and support more practitioner research. We also plan to use the emerging Local Learning Networks to increase partnership and collaborative working with our local private and voluntary sector colleagues."

"We have made real progress towards becoming a learning organisation. The job now is to encourage every member of staff to engage in learning both as a learning receiver and a learning provider." **Training Manager**