Progress Report of the Disability Sector Support Worker Training Project. December 8th 2008.

The project commenced on 25 August 2008. To date the following service providers have been consulted as to their training needs and barriers that currently exist in meeting those needs.

1. Service providers consulted

Disability service providers feedback and input was obtained through a variety of strategies. Some providers responded to a survey to identify their training needs and the barriers to training while others were contacted in person or by telephone to gain their feedback. Additionally a total of 20 Service providers participated in a workshop on 5th November 2008.

> ACTIV Foundation
> Senses Foundation
> My Place
> The Centre for Cerebral Palsy
> Lower Great Southern Community Living Association
> Lower Great Southern Family Support Association.
> Pilbara and Kimberley Care Inc.
> Strive Warren Blackwood.
> Community Vision Inc.
> Westcare
> We Can Community Services
> Kira
> i.d.entity wa.
> Hills Community Support Group
> Intework
> Valued Independent People
> Directions Family Support Association.
> Rocky Bay
> Teem Treasure
> WA Blue Sky
> Autism Association
> Baptist Care
> Uniting Care West
> Life without barriers
> Peel Community Living
> South West Family Support Association
> Accessability
> Nulsen Haven
> Interchange
> Mosaic
> Perth Home Care Services
> Care Options
> Anglicare (Albany)

2. Summary of service provider feedback

a. Types of training

The feedback received identified that there several types of training for support workers which are accessed by WA disability service providers. This training ranges from formal nationally accredited training delivered by a Registered Training Organisation, in-house induction and on-going professional development training, non accredited external training on specific topics and non "nationally recognised" but accredited training. [i]

i. Nationally accredited training

The following organisations are providing nationally accredited training to support workers in the sector;

Great Southern TAFEWA
Central TAFEWA
West Coast TAFEWA
Challenger TAFEWA
C Y O'Connor TAFEWA
TR7 Training
Carealot Training College
Rocky Bay Training
Disability Services Commission Learning & Development Branch
Workpower
St. John Ambulance, Red Cross, Accidental First Aid (First Aid Training)

ii. Accredited, but not nationally recognised training

Accredited, but not nationally recognised training is provided by Silver Chain[ii]

iii. Non-accredited training

The following organisations provide non-accredited training to support workers in the sector on a range of topics;
FESA
Etc Training
P.A.R.T. Training
Independent Living Centre
Australian Association of Manutention practitioners.
Autism Association
Another Angle Consulting
SECCA
EDAC.
Perth Home Care Services (in association with) Nationwide Training Solutions.
Green Apple Development (Workpower)

Most of the service providers accessing nationally recognised training take advantage of Government incentives by registering as many eligible staff as possible as traineeships. This is currently the only source of funding to support training, although accessing the Productivity Places Program is a cheap way to access this training.

b. **Identified barriers to meeting training needs**
In the metropolitan and major regional centres four main barriers to service providers achieving their training needs were identified.

- Prohibitive training costs. While some support workers are eligible for incentives through traineeships, many are ineligible due to a number of reasons. More flexibility needs to be negotiated with both State and Federal governments to open up traineeships or some other form of "subsidised" training to a broader group of staff.
- Lack of replacement staff to enable support workers to attend/participate in training events. Although "workplace training" has become more utilised by training providers, there are inevitably some components of training where participants need to attend a workshop or "outside work" training event to gain essential knowledge required for skills development.
- Front line managers/co-ordinators having limited, or no training in supporting workers to develop skills, nor adequate time to do so.
- Support workers' motivation to undertake training is low. This may be due to a number of factors; i.e. previous bad experiences with training/school, no apparent incentive to gain skills, i.e. not linked to increments or career development, and poor literacy skills.

In some regional and all of the remote areas the above mentioned are more significant barriers and the following additional barriers were identified
- No training providers able to provide training.
- Logistically; almost impossible to access training even if it existed.
- Training would need to be modified to meet the cultural and literacy needs of support workers.

3. Training providers

The following training providers have been consulted since the commencement of the project.
Great Southern TAFEWA
Central TAFEWA
West Coast TAFEWA
Challenger TAFEWA
C Y O'Connor TAFEWA
TR7 Training
Carealot Training College
Rocky Bay Training (enterprise RTO)
Disability Services Commission Learning & Development Branch (enterprise RTO)
Workpower (enterprise RTO)
Independent Living Centre
Australian Association of Manutention practitioners.
Autism Association
Another Angle Consulting
Perth Home Care Services (in association with) Nationwide Training Solutions.
Green Apple Development (Workpower)

Central West TAFEWA
Kimberley TAFEWA
Pilbara TAFEWA
A.M.A. Health Training Australia[iii]

While the training providers state that they are flexible in how and where they deliver training, they too are constrained by costs. As a result unless an organisation is able to guarantee a minimum number of participants (this varies from 10-15 minimum), training providers find it difficult to offer training.

There is scope for more collaboration between service providers which have small numbers of staff requiring training to achieve viable numbers. There are examples of such a collaboration eg Autism Association, i.d.entitywa and My Place staff combined to form a viable group with CentralTAFEWA.

However regional and remote service providers face real problems in accessing training. For example the Kimberley, Central West, and Pilbara TAFEWA have only provided limited training from time to time and this has tended to be by correspondence only.

Some service providers have established close relationships with particular training providers, so as a result there are a number of training organisations (as listed above) providing training across the sector. Existing relationships are as follows;

TR7 Training:
- ACTIV
- Senses Foundation
- Perth Home Care
- Home Care Options

Central TAFEWA:
- Nulsen Haven
- Centre for Cerebral Palsy
- i.d.entity wa
- Hills Community Support Group
- Crosslinks
- Interchange
- Intework
- My Place
- Valued Independent People
- Autism Association
- Transition and Integration Services

Great Southern TAFEWA:
- Lower Great Southern FSA
- Lower Great Southern CLA

South West Regional College TAFEWA
- ACTIV

- South West Family Support
- My Place
- Life without barriers
- Baptistcare

Challenger TAFEWA:
- ACTIV ATE, Rockingham
- Care Options, Rockingham
- Choice Adult Day Respite, Mandurah
- Community Care, City of Fremantle
- Jean Willis Centre, City of Cockburn, Hilton
- Malibu School, Safety Bay
- Midway Community Care, Mandurah
- Mosaic, O'Connor
- Peel Community Living, Mandurah
- Recreation & Sport Network Inc, Osborne Park

Carealot:
- Baptistcare
- Uniting Care West

Rocky Bay:
- Rocky Bay

West Coast TAFEWA:
- WA Blue Sky
- MS Society
- Community Vision

Disability Services Commission (Learning & Development)
- Disability Services Commission accommodation services

In regional areas the training options are limited to the local TAFEWA facility, but in some regions there is a very close relationship between the local TAFE and service providers. Again, remote areas in the North West particularly have difficulty establishing such relationships due to limited resources at the TAFE and problems getting staff or trainers together. Travel and accommodation costs provide an additional barrier in these areas.

In the Perth metropolitan area there is more choice of training providers. Other than TAFE facilities there are a number of private and enterprise RTOs who are "scoped" to deliver disability work qualifications.

The providers of non accredited training do not have access to State or Commonwealth funding for training, so inevitably the training that they provide is more expensive. However, some service providers like to be able to buy training that targets a discreet issue or skill that they feel their support workers need, that is not a complete unit of competency, and that they do not want to be assessed.

As with the accredited training providers the quality of training varies from excellent to poor, but often this type of training is very specialised and useful to staff working in particular service models. For example, Manutension training, and training in augmentive communication systems. There are also people with a disability who provide training in Disability Awareness, and the experience and insights that they may bring to training is very beneficial.

This type of training tends to be limited to the metropolitan area, but some individuals and groups may be available in regional areas.

4. Service provider opinions on disability training provision

There is a diversity of views as to "what" and "how" support worker training should be delivered in the future. Some service providers support developing agreed sector wide support workers competencies. Achieving these competencies could lead to a full or part qualification, and these workers qualifications recognised across the sector. Service providers favouring this approach to training believe that access to recognised, accredited training is an incentive for staff to remain in the sector, and will "re professionalise" the support worker role. Such an approach would also provide workers with a portable qualification that is recognised across the sector. These service providers maintain that formal qualifications will assist the sector with recruiting and retaining support worker staff.

Other service providers are reluctant to support an agreed sector wide standards or competencies for support workers. These disability services provide their support workers with training opportunities and indicate that their staff are satisfied with the training provided and uninterested in gaining formal qualifications. They also state that because a staff member has nationally accredited training does not necessarily mean they will provide quality services. These disability services maintain that sound supervision and ongoing support/training are critical factors in determining the quality of support workers. Moreover these services point out that at a time when attracting and retaining staff is a problem, compelling staff or potential staff to undertake formal training may put people off entering or remaining the sector.

In relation to the re-professionalisation of support workers, some organisations believe that accredited training may not be a key determinant. Instead they believe that a key factor in professionalising support workers role is achieved by gaining a wider community valuing of people with disabilities.

It is interesting to note that concerns regarding staff recruiting and retaining is an argument used by both these points of view.

Other service providers feel that they have developed "in house" training that is tailored and essential for their service model. They express concerns that developing an agreed set of competencies for support workers will require services to "water down" the quality and tailoring of the training that they have developed.

A workshop held with service providers that analysed various job descriptions and induction programs, identified some common core support workers competencies.

Depending upon the service model, providers would then need to identify a range of specific (specialist) skills training for their workers.

5. Criticism of training providers

Some service providers have felt that the people from training organisations who provide training for support workers are not necessarily the best people to deliver training as they may be lacking knowledge and understanding of current service models and contemporary issues in the disability sector.

There has also been criticism by service providers of the "content" of training in the nationally recognised qualification. However this criticism may be due to the inconsistency of training and assessment by training providers. Content and assessments for the same qualification would appear to vary from training provider to training provider.

Despite all Registered training providers being "accredited" by the State authority in terms of the quality and validity of their training, there has been some criticism of the quality of training being provided; e.g. trainees not being properly assessed, trainers who lack the necessary skills and understanding of the topics being presented.

6. Training provider opinions on disability training provision

Accredited training providers accept that training in the disability sector should be driven and validated by service providers, through the nationally recognised training system. They see the advantages of using this system as being cost effective, securing portable and recognised qualifications for workers and ensuring there is a nationally consistent approach to training.

These trainers are critical of some service providers who don't seem to support a "training culture" in their organisations. They also noted that some service providers who have asked for "classroom based" training to be reduced and training be more work based are not necessarily willing or prepared to support such training when it is offered.

7. Summary of project outcomes

- 33 service providers have been consulted and have provided feedback.
  11 Registered Training Providers have provided information and feedback.
  7 Providers of non accredited training have provided information and feedback.

- 49 people attended a workshop on 5 November 2008 representing 20 service providers. The workshop highlighted some common areas of training need within the disability sector.

- A training co-ordinators network has been created. This consists of service provider staff who have special responsibility for the co-ordination of support worker training and a one day workshop for this group has been scheduled for 26 February 2009.

- An analysis of several current job description forms and induction programs used in the sector has been conducted to identify commonalities for both, within the sector. This analysis in conjunction with the information obtained at the above mentioned workshop has provided an indication of the common "essential skills" that support workers need.
  It is acknowledged that some service providers were concerned about developing a common set of skills/competencies and associated training and how it would be applied to the diverse disability service settings.

- Liaison with people from other states involved in research of training and workforce issues for support workers, has identified extra training resources available.

- The IDEASWA website has been updated, with extra training resources added, and developments within the project are posted on the website regularly.

- Liaison with the Department of Education and Training and Industry Skills Council has identified barriers to service providers accessing nationally recognised training.

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[i] *The main difference between accredited and non accredited training is the presence, or lack of, a formal assessment of participants undertaking training.*

[ii] *Some concern was expressed that Silver Chain training is provided free to metropolitan service providers (through funding by DSC), but not to regional service providers.*

[iii] **Health Training Australia**. *This organisation provides nationally recognised accredited training, but not in Disability Work. It provides training to gain qualifications in Aged Care Work and H.A.C.C. It is a "group training" organisation which means that it recruits staff, who are technically employed by Health Training Australia. These staff are registered as trainees, and are then placed with a service provider for the period of their traineeship. The service provider is required to pay an hourly rate to HTA based upon the hours that the trainee works. The service provider then has the option of keeping or releasing the trainee(sat the successful completion of the traineeship). During the traineeship trainees attend "classroom" training one day per week.*