

## The Enhancement of Learning Support (ELS): A suite of materials to support practice

These resources have been developed as part of a LSIS funded programme to enhance the important work of learning support staff. Each of the resources can be used individually but taken together provide a suite of resources to support individual and/or organisational development. The resource are categorised into three areas;

### Developing and Progressing learning support staff

- Standards & qualifications
- Online profiling tool for Learning Support Assistants (LSAs)
- Alternative approaches to Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Career pathways

### Developing the Organisation

- Organisational audit tool
- Change management
- Effective management of learning support
- Collaborative approaches to organisational development
- Creating local training networks

### Resources

- Involving learners in shaping their own support
- Promoting independence

## What resources are available?

Developing and Progressing	Developing the Organisation	Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Standards and Qualifications</b> Information about National Occupational Standards (NOS) and associated qualifications for Learning Support Staff (LSAs)</li> <li>• <b>Profiling Tool</b> - This online self-evaluation system is mapped against the NOS for LSAs and provides individual and whole organisation reports. It produces individual and group reports, there is a £250 cost to providers regardless of how many learner support staff undertake the profiling tool</li> <li>• <b>Alternative Approaches to CPD</b> - "How to" guidance on shadowing, mentoring and buddying along with amendable resources and exemplars</li> <li>• <b>Career Pathway</b> - A report which explores the experiences of LSAs and suggests possible career structures and progression pathways taking account of different routes and ambitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Organisational Audit Tool</b> -A tool designed to enable providers to evaluate provision against key indicators mapped to the NOS and the Common Inspection Framework</li> <li>• <b>Change Management</b> - A report which considers effective approaches to involving LSAs in change and uses case studies to exemplify these</li> <li>• <b>Effective Management of LSAs</b> - This report draws on research and practitioners experience to describe and exemplify "5 key characteristics" of effective practice in managing learning support</li> <li>• <b>Collaborative Approaches</b> - An approach to involving LSAs in organisational development with accompanying resources and guidance</li> <li>• <b>Local Training Networks</b> -Guidance and recommendations to support the establishment of a cross sector local training network</li> </ul>	<p><b>Involving Learners in Shaping their own Support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approaches to involving learners in shaping support in 5 key areas with resources, case studies and practical examples of effective practice</li> <li>• A review of resources and strategies employed by providers to involve learners in their own support with guidance for use including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accessible Risk Assessment</li> <li>▪ Catching Confidence (NIACE)</li> <li>▪ A British Sign language glossary</li> <li>▪ Working Styles analysis</li> <li>▪ Edu Apps - resources from JISC TechDis</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Promoting Independence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Using Technology to Promote learning and independence</b> - A report which explores how simple technology well applied can increase learners' capacity to learn independently</li> <li>• <b>Creative Approaches to Maximising Independence</b> - A report which explores the impact of organisational structures and systems on learners and learning support and develops approaches and case studies to help providers work more creatively with learners to promote independence</li> </ul>

**How the resources can be used?:** Each of the materials in the ELS suite can stand alone, but taken together, they provide a structure for organisational development which allows providers to identify where they are, both as an organisation and at an individual level, supports them to plan priorities and offers practical support with taking action for improvement. Here is one illustration of how the materials could be applied:



**Where are we now?:** In order to plan and deliver appropriate and relevant training and development activities providers first need to understand current performance of both individuals and the organisation, i.e. "*where are we now?*". This is about getting real knowledge of how things are working currently and involving staff at all levels in evaluating the quality of provision.

Taken together the **Audit Tool** and the **Online Profiling Tool** can provide detailed assessment of this current performance. The audit tool provides a series of indicators that allows an organisation to focus in on those activities and behaviours that represent effective practice. The Profiling Tool enables LSAs to assess their skills and development needs in relation to the NOS and provides not only an individual report, but also a summative analysis of responses which will enable the provider to identify common areas of development across the staff team.

*There is an associated cost with this resource, see website for details.*

**Priorities for Improvement:** Having established an effective baseline, the information provided by the audit and profile tools allows organisations to accurately plan priorities for development. The ELS suite also contains detailed information about the **Standards and Qualifications** and providers can use these to interpret the results, and where appropriate, identify relevant qualifications. In addition the **Career Pathway** resources include an example of a career pathway framework that encompasses different entry points, progression routes and eventual career aspirations. This resource is derived from the evidence provided by LSAs and includes some illustrative case studies which allow individuals to plot progress on their career pathways and review and plan future options. Improvement activities which are effective require a **Collaborative Approach to Organisational Development** and the resources in the ELS suite describe a whole organisational approach to continuous professional development for learning support staff using a combination of learner shadowing and staff development questionnaires. What the initial research showed was that even where training was available it sometimes lacked relevance because it was not planned on a detailed understanding of what LSAs said they need to do their job better. Using a combination of these resources will enable organisations to identify and target relevant training more effectively.

**Delivering Improvement:** Having established a baseline and prioritised areas for development the ELS suite can also support organisations to implement change and improvement. The aim of learning support ultimately is to promote the learners independence and very often technology can provide an effective mechanism to achieve this. The **technology** report provides information about a wide range of technology resources which are readily available, whose use can be life enhancing and empowering and can significantly aid independence. Effective support that is person centred and personalised actively encourages the learner to contribute to managing and defining their own support. The ELS materials aimed at **involving learners in shaping their own support** identify key approaches and resources to support LSAs and organisations in enabling learners to take more control over the support they receive. Providers will offer LSAs a range of CPD activities, the **alternative approaches** resources are designed to support providers to make effective use of the expertise within their organisations through the use of context based development activities like shadowing, mentoring and buddying. These resources provide simple implementation guidance which explain what the process is and how it can be implemented, as well as information sheets, proformas and PowerPoint presentations that may be downloaded and amended to meet providers own requirements. The quality of management is key to any development process and the **effective management of learning support** resources identifies the key factors which support this both in the classroom and across the organisation and exemplifies this through relevant case studies.

**The ELS materials and tools provide a suite of solutions** which can be used effectively to support the development of learning support staff and more broadly the organisations in which they work, in order to improve the outcomes and experiences of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

More information is available on the [ELS pages on the Excellence Gateway](#) where practitioners can also share information with colleagues in other organisations through the blog.