Enhancement of Learning Support

The training and development needs of learning support assistants

A literature review

Sally Faraday

March 2010

Contents

Introduction

This review of literature is one part of a larger project, the Enhancement of Learning Support , commissioned by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, (LSIS) and undertaken by the Association of National Specialist Colleges, (Natspec).between January and March 2010 within the lifelong learning sector. The overall aim of this project was to explore the training needs of learning support assistants and those who manage them across the sector, scope existing work and expertise and use the resulting information to make recommendations for future training and development activities.

The project was conducted by a team of seven researchers and a project administrator (Annex 1) who have worked closely together to share information and discuss implications for future work. Although small in scale, we believe this is nonetheless an important piece of research, as it expands our understanding of a significant and valuable part of the workforce which this literature review demonstrates has been hugely under researched until now.

Throughout this literature review the term lifelong sector is used to refer to learning provider organisations including Further Education Colleges, (FE), Independent Specialist Colleges, Adult and Community Learning (ACL), and Work Based Learning (WBL) and Offender Learning. Whilst it is recognised that there is an important role for learning support within Offender Learning, the structures are very different, and very little research was found relating to this context during the course of the review.

Summary of Key Findings

Although this study is a small scale review that cannot claim to be comprehensive, nevertheless, it begins to fill a major gap in knowledge about LSAs with some themes and findings emerging so consistently that they can be reported with confidence.

The review found that literature on the professional development of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) was extremely limited, therefore evidence from the school sector was examined to learn lessons from the experience. Even so, the voices of support staff and learners in research were noticeably absent.

There is a need to conduct research and to publish literature on the professional development of LSAs in lifelong learning and the publication of this review would be a small contribution to building an evidence base.

The voice of LSAs needs to published and heard and it is essential to include LSAs in the development of any programmes of training or professional development for them.

Evidence of the positive impact of support staff on learners and learning has only recently begun to emerge, although anecdotal evidence suggested that they were highly valued. There was also evidence that unless appropriately deployed and trained, support staff could have a detrimental effect.

Further research is required to provide robust evidence of the positive impact of LSAs. Based on evidence from the school sector, **it is essential to train and deploy support staff appropriately, to avoid any detrimental effect.**

Workforce reform in the public sector led to the professionalisation of support staff in schools and, more recently, to teaching staff and LSAs in lifelong learning. This has led to career progression pathways, national occupational standards and qualifications.

There is a need to evaluate and review the effectiveness of career progression pathways, national occupational standards and qualifications for LSAs.

To ensure the effectiveness of any professional development programmes for LSAs in the lifelong learning sector, it will be necessary to consider:

- the culture and ethos of organisations – how inclusive they are – as this has a direct impact on the support for and effectiveness of LSAs and on outcomes for learners;

- ensuring understanding of inclusionary practice and how exclusion might be avoided;

- the importance of valuing diversity and understanding the impact on both learners and learning of prejudice and stereotypes and knowing how to challenge them;

- clearly defining the role of the LSA and ensuring that all staff are aware of the respective roles of themselves and others which is essential for effective practice.

- the provision of effective training for the generalist role, whilst also providing opportunities to develop a specialist focus;

- the importance of working together, including how to build effective teams for those who manage LSAs and training in how to contribute as an effective team member for all other staff;

- structured time together to plan and prepare activities for teacher and support staff: this has a pivotal influence on support staff relationships with teachers;

- how to address the lack of sufficient time to meet with teaching staff to discuss and collaborate in the planning of learning or to review learning that has taken place;

- a far greater emphasis on teaching and learning in support staff training;

- the importance of effective communication and interaction which needs to be central to programmes of professional development for all LSAs. There needs to be access to more in-depth training to develop specialist skills;

- that teachers need to be properly prepared to forge effective working partnerships with and take responsibility for both the contribution of their LSA colleagues and for all their learners;

- managing challenging behaviour, which is a high priority issue for support staff and has a major impact on individuals and other learners. LSAs' professional skills would be enhanced by training and development related to understanding and responding appropriately to learners behaviour that is challenging;

- that effective professional development for LSAs encompasses a wide range of strategies and approaches: a framework for professional development within which existing opportunities – and there are many - can be located to form a coherent and comprehensive whole;

- the professional development opportunities that exist which include qualifications. These exist at national qualifications framework (NQF)

Levels 2 and 3 and foundation degrees at level 4. CPD is however widely recognised to be much more than attending training or undertaking courses leading to qualifications. Other strategies include: work shadowing; coaching or mentoring; project work; visits; sharing information; online learning ; peer support; action learning or learning sets; observation; staff meetings; in-house briefings or training and local training programmes.

- that there are some award bearing frameworks and programmes which were designed specifically for LSAs in lifelong learning, and these are often accredited by open college networks (OCNs); and

- the potential barriers - cultural; to do with leadership; resources; training related and personal barriers – that LSAs in lifelong learning might experience in engaging in CPD and how to develop a range of strategies to overcome the barriers.

There is a need for further research to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development and to continue to understand better the most effective ways of supporting staff and the barriers that they might experience in gaining access to professional development.

This project has made a small contribution to furthering our understanding of the professional development needs of these '*forgotten staff*' but it is only a small beginning and much more remains to be done.

Introduction and Background

This review of literature was commissioned by LSIS as part of the '*enhancement of learning support'* within the lifelong learning sector.

The approach taken in searching for literature for this review included three main sources: interviews with key stakeholders, an online questionnaire and a keyword search for web-based literature and resources. The methodology is described in Appendix A. The most significant finding from this process was, with very few exceptions, the almost complete lack of theory, research, policy or guidance literature specifically for Learning Support Assistants in the Lifelong Learning sector. It was immediately apparent that the scope would need to be widened to provide any meaningful account of evidence to underpin the project.

Although this was a small scale review that cannot claim to be comprehensive, the lack of attention paid to this important segment of the lifelong learning workforce in research is both astonishing and shocking. With one exception, the Learning and Skills Research Centre study by Robson et al (2006)[1], no substantial research studies were found. This is particularly surprising given the strong focus on improvement, the rapidly increasing numbers of support staff employed and the important role these staff have, especially for those who require considerable additional support if they are to succeed and achieve. In addition, very little research was identified which relates to learning support within Offender Learning. Consequently, in this review it has been necessary to draw extensively on the evidence and experience of the schools sector, while recognizing that the context was significantly different. Although even in the school sector, a publication by Watkinson (2008)[2] described teaching assistants as the '*forgotten staff'*.

> " *In contrast to the employment of classroom or teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools, the growth in the use of LSWs (however titled) in the learning and skills sector appears to have gone largely unnoticed by commentators and experts in the field and uncontested, for example, by teachers' unions. The development has taken place at local level, and is not the outcome of government policy; there has been little official recognition of the value of these staff in educational or other terms."* Robson et al (2006) p9[3]

---

[1] Robson, J., Bailey, B. Mendick, H. (2006) *An investigation into the roles of learning support workers in the learning and skills sector.* LSRC. www.lsneducation.org.uk/pubs/pages/062568.aspx (accessed 3.03.10)

[2] Watkinson, A. (2008) *Leading and managing teaching assistants*. London: David Fulton

[3] Robson et al (2006) op cit

There was no clear source of information about this segment of the workforce in lifelong learning in evidence. Quoting the Robson et al (2006) study, LSAs were estimated to be about 4% of the FE workforce in 2005 and the QIA briefing stated:

> *"FACTS*
>
> *21.5 The average hours worked per week by LSWs*
>
> *83 The percentage of LSWs who were women*
>
> *30 (or more) The average number of LSWs employed by FE colleges*
>
> *10 (or less) The average number of LSWs employed by WBL and ACL providers." (*QIA p1)[4]

Another significant omission from the literature reviewed was the voice of support staff: Teaching Assistants (TA)s and LSAs themselves. O'Brien and Garner (2001)[5] pointed out that not only was the voice of LSAs largely unheard, the language used by other professionals was in itself disempowering: term such as 'use' and 'utilise them well' did not indicate a valued, professional segment of the workforce.

Bourke (2008)[6] pointed to the anomaly that the voice of the TA was so rarely heard in research, perhaps reflecting their low level in the hierarchy, yet often they were the ones who knew the learners best. **There was a strong message about the need to include LSA in the development of any programmes of training or professional development**. As they

> *" feel marginalised and disempowered when decisions about professional development are made for them without taking into account their perspectives about the training they need to support students."* (Bourke 2008 p37)

Feedback from learners was also noticeably absent.

In compiling this literature review, the term "**learning support practitioner**" was originally used, to reflect the terminology present in the National Occupational Standards (NOS) currently being developed by Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) for this group of staff. However, both field research and the on line survey undertaken as part of this project have clearly revealed that this is not a term which is widely used or indeed recognised by many of those working in the sector. Accordingly,

---

[4] QIA *Learning Support Workers Just how valuable are they and can we improve their effectiveness further still?* QIA Excellence gateway (http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/Learning%20for%20support%20workers%20_3_.pdf accessed 3.03.10)

[5] O'Brien, T., Garner, P. (2001) *Untold Stories: Learning Support Assistants and Their Work* Trentham Books Ltd

[6] Bourke, P. (2008) *The experiences of teacher aides who support students with disabilities and learning difficulties: A phenomenological study.* Queensland University of Technology.

throughout this report we use the term "**learning support assistant**" (LSA) refer to staff employed in the lifelong learning sector context who are not on a teaching or training contract but who provide support to learners including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Learning support assistants have direct and regular contact with the learner (or group of learners) to facilitate their access to identified support, within the learning process and under the direction of the person(s) leading the learning.

Definitions for the project as a whole are as follows:

> *'**Learning** support is about enabling the learner to engage with the learning programme and providing personalised, identified support that will allow them to maximise their independence as a learner, achieve and progress.*
>
> ***Learning support assistants** have direct and regular contact with the learner (or group of learners) to facilitate their access to identified support, within the learning process and under the direction of the person(s) leading the learning.*
>
> *This project focuses on **learning support** and the role of the **learning support assistant** as defined above.*
>
> *It will also explore the **management** of learning support in the following ways:*
>
> - o *Line management/supervision*
> - o *"Classroom" management by the person leading the learning.*
>
> *The project does not cover **learner** support, which is about enabling the learner to participate by overcoming potential barriers. Learner support provides funding (e.g. for childcare, transport) and services (e.g. guidance, benefits information, counselling) which enable the learner to access the appropriate learning environment. The project does not therefore cover the staff who support these functions, nor those such as librarians and technicians whose work does not focus on providing this support to individual learners.'*

When referring to literature about schools, we refer to such staff as Teaching Assistants (TAs). This is the Government's preferred term because it captures the 'active ingredient' of their work and recognises the contribution to teaching and learning and to pupil achievement. The term support staff is used as a generic term to cover both sectors and is also used where the authors themselves referred to support staff.

For the sake of consistency, the term 'teacher' has been used in this report to refer to all those employed in both sectors as teachers, lecturers, trainers or tutors. Support staff who fulfil other roles such as librarians, technicians, careers advisers were outside the scope of the review, as were the training and professional development required to provide specialist support in the Skills for Life areas of literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and also Information Communication Technology (ICT).

Evidence of impact and effectiveness of support staff on learners and learning

Before embarking on an analysis of the main findings, it is worth pointing out that, although there was overwhelming opinion that support assistants were effective in supporting teaching, learning and achievement, (Blatchford et al 2004[7],) and in the learning and skills sector this was confirmed by Robson et al (2006)[8], there was until recently little evidence of impact to substantiate this fact. Robson reported that there was a widespread *'even an overwhelming'* view that LSAs were effective or very effective in a range of ways and in improving learner retention and achievement. They also commented on the difficulty in finding direct evidence of the impact. Two studies: a review of the deployment and impact of support staff over a five year period by Blatchford et al 2009[9] and systematic literature review by Alborz et al 2009[10] sought to address this evidence gap. Their findings underpinned the Lamb inquiry into special educational needs and parental confidence 2010[11], which commented on the effective deployment of TAs.

Having reviewed the available evidence, Lamb gave a mixed picture of the effectiveness of TAs in supporting learners with special educational needs. He reported a negative impact of learners' progress when substituting TAs for teachers. He found a clear relationship between support from TAs and lower attainment and slower rates of progress in learners with special educational needs: the more TA support, the lower the attainment. He went on to state that TAs do have a useful support role, in providing targeted interventions for individuals and groups *under the direction of the teacher*. To ensure that learners benefit, there would need to be a ruthless focus on the impact of how they have been deployed and the skills they need to support learning.

In a review of international research, Giangreco and Doyle (2007)[12] asserted that the increasing use of teaching assistants in schools has arisen from policy and history rather than educational theory and research. They cited a lack of lack of evidence to support the decision to deploy the least qualified staff members to be the primary

---

[7] Blatchford, P. Russell, A. Bassett, P. Brown, P. Martin C. (2004) *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*. DCSF Research Report RR605.

[8] Robson, et al (2006) op cit

[9] Blatchford, P. Bassett, P. Brown, P. Martin, C. Russell, A. Webster, R. (2009*) Deployment and Impact of Support Staff Project.* London: Institute of Education, University of London.

[10] Alborz, A. Pearson, D, Farrell, P. Howes, A.(2009)_ *The impact of adult support staff on pupils and mainstream school a systematic review of evidence.* DCSF

[11] Lamb Inquiry (2010) *Lamb Inquiry Special educational needs and parental confidence* DCSF

[12] Giangreco M., Doyle M. (2007) Teacher assistants in inclusive schools. In Lani Florian *The Sage handbook of special education.* Sage pp429-439

support for those with the most complex learning characteristics. Indeed, the authors went on to suggest that such devaluing double standards would be unacceptable if applied to the non-disabled population. They also cited research that showed that the utilisation of teaching assistants has been associated with inadvertent, detrimental effects (for example, dependence, isolation, stigma, interference with peer interactions and interference with teacher involvement).

These findings confirmed that there is a need therefore to apply a '*ruthless focus*' on improving practice and ensuring a positive impact on learners and learning. However, evidence of positive impact has been emerging. A DfES UNESCO study [13] into the use of support staff suggested that although it was early days as far as hard evidence of the impact of reform in the classroom was concerned, there was growing evidence that it was beginning to make a difference.

Blatchford et al. (2004)[14] concluded that there was greater interaction and teachers perceived TAs to be making a valuable contribution in a number of ways, such as increased individual attention; increased support for learners with disabilities and learning difficulties; facilitation of more productive group work; enabling more practical and creative activities and assistance with classroom management. An evaluation (Thomas et al. 2004)[15] of the Transforming the School Workforce pathfinder found evidence of support staff being more prominent and effective in these schools. The success of the project depended on factors including the quality of management. As the evaluation looked at schools only one year after the implementation it was unlikely that any measurable effect on pupil outcomes would be observable. Although the evaluation did not find *statistical* evidence that the project had led to improvements in pupil outcomes, teachers reported that it had impacted positively on teaching and learning.

More recently, Ofsted (2010)[16] observed that standards and achievement had improved significantly since 2004 and that they could provide secure evidence that workforce reform had contributed to this improvement. The development of programmes of support to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that LSAs need to be effective is, however, only a part of the picture. The inclusiveness, culture and ethos of the organisations within which they work, the roles LSAs fulfill, their position within the staff team and the capacity of teaching staff to work with them successfully, are all themes explored in this review.

---

[13] UNESCO (2004) Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: The use of support staff DfES

[14] Blatchford, P. Russell, A. Bassett, P. Brown, P. Martin C. (2004) *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.* DCSF Research Report RR605.
[15] Thomas, H. Butt, G. Fielding A. Foster, J. Gunter, H. Lance, A. Pilkington, R. Potts, L. Powers, S. Rayner, S. Rutherford, D. Selwood, I. Szwed, S. (2004) *The Evaluation of the Transforming the School Workforce Pathfinder Project.* Research Report No 541

[16] Ofsted (2010) *Workforce reform in schools: has it made a difference?* London: Ofsted

Professionalisation of support assistants

Over more than a decade, there has been an agenda for workforce reform in the public sector. In the 1990's a body of research and inspection evidence was amassed in the school sector (Farrell, Balshaw and Polat 1999[17], DfEE 2000[18]) that indicated a need to reform the professional status of support staff in schools. A national agreement for a programme of workforce reform was agreed by Government, employers and school workforce unions in 2003 and implementation began. A key element of the Agreement was to recognise and enhance the contribution made in schools by school support staff and to improve their opportunities for training, development and career progression.

In the Lifelong Learning sector workforce reform has more recently achieved prominence and has included the professionalization of both teaching staff and LSAs. In the school sector reform was driven by slightly different forces from post-school learning with the need to reduce the workload of school teachers, although the imperative to raise standards was common to both sectors. The professionalisation of the Teaching Assistant role, central to the process of reform in schools, followed a similar route to that currently being taken for LSAs. It provided the Lifelong Learning sector with the benefit of evidence arising from progress in implementation over a longer timescale and an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned along the way.

In schools, professionalisation involved a complete change in organisational culture and ethos with regard to the workforce. The need was recognised for clearly defined roles and responsibilities for TAs and an analysis of training and support needs to help them fulfill their duties, within a framework of professional performance review. A comprehensive range of professional development activities, reflected in national occupational standards has resulted. These include, but are not limited to, a series of professional qualifications at different levels providing a ladder for career progression. Rather, there has been a strong emphasis on partnership working and joint development with teaching staff. There were other important issues for TAs that are outside scope of this study – for example pay and conditions. The emergent role of the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA), now firmly embedded in the schools systems, is not currently prevalent in post- school learning although it might well become an issue in the future.

In the lifelong learning sector, a key milestone in the professionalisation of the learning support workforce was the publication of National Occupational Standards

---

[17] Farrell, P., Balshaw, M. H. and Polat, F. (1999) *The Management, Role and Training of Learning Support Assistants* London: DfEE publications

[18] DfEE (2000) *Working with Teaching Assistants: A Good Practice Guide* DfEE

(NOS) in 2007[19] for learning support assistants. This was in recognition of the valuable role LSAs play in supporting teaching and learning. The standards were introduced to describe the skills, knowledge and understanding required of all those who perform the role and to provide a benchmark for performance that underpins professional development.

The national occupational standards for LSAs comprise:

- Standard A: Providing learning support to individuals or groups of learners;

- Standard B: Planning and assessing for learning support and

- Standard C: Providing specialist learning support. (LLUK 2007)

With regard to access to training and staff development for LSAs in FE, Robson et al (2006)[20] found it to be patchy. Some form of induction or shadowing appeared to be fairly common, as was the offer to participate in development activities. Managers suggested that LSAs who did not hold qualifications would be encouraged to work towards qualifications such as the City and Guilds certificate in learning support. However in practice, LSWs found it hard to arrange to attend training and were not paid to attend in some cases.

---

[19] LLUK (2007)*Providing learning support to individuals or groups of learners.* LLUK http://www.ukstandards.co.uk/Admin/DB/0030/STANDARD%20A.pdf (accessed 20.03.10)

[20] Robson et al (2006) op cit

The experience of Teaching Assistants in schools

Implementation of reform in the schools sector commenced with DfEE developing a major programme of support including: effective induction and high level training together with funding to support training; greater clarity over the role and qualifications pathways, underpinned by national occupational standards.

The Lifelong learning sector is now in a similar position, facing the same challenges and there is much to be learnt from the experience in the schools sector, whilst recognising that the context is significantly different. Seminal guidance, derived from robust research evidence, was published by the DfEE[21] in 2000. It has continued to provide a sound basis for development and is worth reporting in some detail here since it offers a useful summary from which to consider current issues in the professional development of LSAs.

Understanding the role of the TA was of primary importance and their value was recognised by OFSTED (1999)[22]. Inspection findings also noted that TAs could hardly be expected to produce good practice without **good training** and **supporting management**. This finding is equally true on the post-school sector. The role was defined in terms of four strands of support:

- Support for the pupil: support for all pupils, even where the TA had been assigned to an individual, to promote inclusion

- Support for the teacher: performing routine tasks both within and outside the classroom under the direction of the teacher

- Support for the curriculum: often working across the curriculum and providing support for example, for literacy or ICT

- Support for the school: TAs were not just part of the staff but were part of the team and this part of the role entailed understanding and implementing the policies of the organisation and furthering the ethos.

Although these four strands described the support provided by the TA, there was a parallel expectation that the TA would receive support and training to fulfill all these aspects of the role.

Effective TAs:

- Foster the participation of learners in the social and academic processes of a school;

---

[21] DfEE (2000) op cit
[22] OFSTED (1999) *Review of Primary Education 1994-98*. OFSTED

- Seek to enable pupils to become more independent learners; and

- Help to raise the standards of achievement of all learners. (Farrell et al 1999)[23]

Within these three areas, a number of key tasks or activities were identified.

Fostering participation

- supervising and assisting small groups of learners in activities set by the teacher

- developing learners' social skills – supporting learners in groups who might otherwise have been separated

- implementing behaviour management policies

- spotting early signs of bullying and disruptive behaviour – heading off disruption or providing a 'listening ear'

- helping the inclusion of all children – helping learners form friendships and good relations with others

- keeping learners on task – preventing their attention wandering off

Promoting more independent learners

- showing interest – raising self-esteem by showing an interest in the learner

- assisting individuals in educational tasks - providing support where the learner might be unable to perform a task, while avoiding stultifying or demeaning the learner

- freeing up the teacher to work with groups – allowing the teacher to work directly with learners who need particular attention

- working with outside agencies – such as speech therapists and educational psychologists

- modelling good practice – in behaviour and learning

- assisting learners with physical needs – intervention when help is necessary

Helping to raise standards of achievement of all pupils

---

[23]Farrell, P. Balshaw, M. Polat, F (1999) *The Management Role and training of Learning Support Assistants.* London: DfEE

The points above refer to directly supporting individual learners who are identified as requiring particular assistance, but there are also aspects of the role that involved assisting the learning of everyone in the class.

- Being involved at whole-class level – as a general resource for the whole class – this was more effective than only working with an individual and their ILP.

- Helping implement lesson plans – TAs who were briefed on what the session aimed to achieve were better equipped to help realize the aims

- Making possible more ambitious learning activities – providing an extra pair of hands with practical activities and activities outside the classroom

- Providing support with literacy and numeracy strategies

- Providing feedback to teachers – observing learners' performance and providing feedback on learning obstacles and what worked best

- Preparing learning materials

Other important aspects for organisations to consider in supporting the role of the TA included:

- Developing an organisational policy of the work of TAs

- Job description - which is clear and accurate, related to the national occupational standards and used as the basis for performance management/ appraisal

- Induction

- Communication – ensuring everyone knows the policy on TAs and their role

- Providing clear line management to avoid conflicting messages

- Facilitating teamwork – ensuring that teachers are properly prepared to work with others in the class

- Providing a wider picture – of learners current attainment and the aims and expectations

- Providing specific information on individuals' support requirements

- Reviewing the TA/learner link - whether support from the same individual is appropriate across all curriculum areas

- Using specialist skills the TA might bring e.g. additional languages

Creating partnerships in the learning environment

Teachers and assistants needed to be aware of their **respective roles.** TAs should always work under the direction of the teacher, whether or not they were in the same environment.

TAs needed to participate in planning. Allocated **planning time** for the teacher and TA to work together was essential if support is to be effective (Lorenz 1998).[24] Building elements of review and planning into the structure of learning activity is a way of addressing this need when dedicated time is problematic.

Encouraging the **climate** that allowed the TA to become confident and exercise their own judgment was crucial. This came from the growth of a mutually supportive relationship where culture and expectation became implicit rather than explicit.

Good teamwork included developing good **feedback mechanisms** to inform assessment, recognise progress and identify barriers.

It was important to ensure that consistent arrangements were followed in **managing behaviour** so learners did not receive conflicting messages.

Including TAs in learner reviews, meetings and staffrooms as well as written communication gave positive messages of **inclusion** rather than differentiation and exclusion.

Recognising the **legal responsibilities** of TAs to ensure compliance with legislation was also essential.

Encouraging **reviews** of the classroom relationship was also thought to be essential to ensure reflection, improvement and effective practice.

Creating partnerships with other people involved in learning

A TA's role did not end within the classroom, but was part of wider network of relationships. These included outside agencies, SENCOs, or those responsible for learning support, parents and significant others. Bilingual TAs could have an important role not only in assisting communication but also in creating community links and ensuring that cultural diversity was valued. Including TAs in events was also an important way of communicating publicly that TAs were valued.

Creating partnerships amongst TAs

---

[24] Lorenz, S. (1998) *Effective In-Class Support.* David Fulton Publishers

There were a number of approaches to overcome the risk of isolation of TAs. These included: holding regular meetings of TAs; encouraging sharing of information about learners (within confidentiality policies and rules); encouraging sharing of information about the organisation, by for example, asking existing TAs to contribute to induction and mentoring; involving TAs in representative and management groups, including committees and governors.

Reviewing performance and promoting development

TAs, like all staff, have an entitlement to regular feedback on performance and opportunities to develop. Effective development should be based on a system of regular appraisal, revisiting the job description and identifying the person's training needs. The types of training TAs have identified include: skills in supporting literacy, numeracy and behaviour management; curriculum content knowledge; specific strategies to support learners with particular learning difficulties and disabilities: working with teaching staff; involving parents and others; study skills; ICT and other curriculum-specific skills.

Other important aspects of effective development included: providing induction; mentors; training provided in-class, in-house, with the LA or externally; joint training; encouraging sharing; a professional development portfolio; finding resources to support CPD and evaluating training.

The good practice guide (DfEE 2000)[25] also provided an audit with checklists for four indicators. This audit tool could readily be adapted and developed for post-school learning. These indicators were:

1. Clear policies outlining the roles and responsibilities of LSAs

2. Managers and teachers management strategies for how LSAs should work in the learning environment

3. Teachers and TAs working together to improve the quality of their work

4. Developing effective partnerships with other people involved in learning

Key themes from this guidance will be explored in relation to LSAs in further detail in the following sections. The themes include: organisational culture, values and ethos; the role of support assistants; working together; teaching and learning; helping teachers to work effectively with LSAs; strategies and approaches for professional development and barriers to professional development.

---

[25] DfEE (2000) op cit

Underpinning values and ethos: the culture of the organisation

The culture and ethos of the organisation – how inclusive it is – has a direct impact on the support for and effectiveness of LSAs and on outcomes for learners. The Lamb review stated

> "*All the evidence from work on leadership shows the importance of staff development in setting the ethos and in developing staff skills and expertise.*" (Lamb Inquiry 2010 p 2.32)[26]

LSAs have historically been undervalued and the language of support – 'use' 'utilisation' implies an instrumental and marginalised view of LSAs rather than as integral members of the staff team. The importance of culture, ethos and climate of the organisations, and the proper support and development for TAs as an integral part of the learning environment, were identified as essential underpinnings for the professional development of the LSA workforce (Watkinson 2003).[27]

How LSAs are valued is a fundamental management issue and will impact directly on the outcomes of any training. In describing effective practice, Ofsted (2010)[28] confirmed the importance of a supportive professional culture that encouraged all staff to have high expectations of their work and to be held accountable for individuals' learning. This meant that leaders needed to ensure that all the staff had clear professional status, were well trained and were deployed effectively.

The location of CPD for LSAs within a consistent and coherent management structure was seen as crucial. Training alone is unlikely to bring rich rewards. The need for a whole organisational approach that clearly identified roles and responsibilities, was proposed by writers such as Moran and Abbott (2002)[29]. For LSAs, the essential elements of this management structure would involve:

- a job description

- induction on the organisation's policies and procedures

- nominated line-manager

---

[26] Lamb Inquiry (2010) op cit
[27] Watkinson, A. (2003) *Managing Teaching Assistants. A guide for head teachers, managers and teachers*. Routledge Falmer
[28] Ofsted (2010) op cit
[29] Moran and Abbott (2002) *Developing inclusive schools: The pivotal role of teaching assistants in promoting inclusion in special and mainstream schools in Northern Ireland. European Journal of Special Needs Education 17*(2), 161-173

- specified time for meetings and reviews

- involvement in planning, monitoring and evaluation

These pre-requisites for good practice formed the basis for building a supportive team that felt empowered in their roles. It also provided a focus on the teaching and learning process.

Balshaw (2000)[30] identified key principles underpinning successful policy and practice for LSAs and summarised these as:

- Roles and responsibilities: clarity in the way teaching assistants were deployed

- Consistency of approach: teaching assistants perceived as an integral part of the teaching and learning process

- A working team: the input of teaching assistants was valued and recognised

- Personal and professional skills: teaching assistants were encouraged to use their full potential

- Staff development needs: teaching assistants received appropriate training and support

Three aspects of culture will now be explored: the culture of learning together, an inclusive culture and a culture that values diversity

the culture of learning together

An important feature of the culture that provided the optimum conditions for the professional development of LSAs was the culture of learning together. Groom (2006)[31] suggested that professional development was essentially any activity that increased the skills, understanding, experience, knowledge and effectiveness of teachers and support staff working together. Central to the success of professional development was the fostering of a collaborative culture where there was a strong emphasis on working together across the organisation to share good practice and to develop problem solving strategies to improve teaching and learning. Thus, effective professional development was likely to have a direct relationship to classroom practice and to build on LSAs existing skills and experience. Opportunities for reflection on practice, self appraisal and the sharing of ideas, expertise and

---

[30] Balshaw, M. (2000) op cit
[31] Barry Groom (2006) Building relationships for learning: the developing role of the teaching assistant. In Support for Learning • Volume 21 • Number 4 • 2006 pp199-203

knowledge with others would build and foster a culture that was essentially focused on developing and improving learning. Ofsted (2010)[32] confirmed that in effective organisations the ethos was one where teachers and support staff were determined to learn from and work with each others.

An inclusive culture

There was a developing consensus that classroom support was an important factor in making education inclusive, Rose and O'Neill (2009)[33], Logan (2006),[34] although it was less clear what form support should take. Effective change to promote an inclusive culture required a whole organisational approach. Bourke (2008)[35] citing evidence from Booth and Ainscow (2002)[36], Clarke, Dyson et al (1999)[37], Valchou (2004)[38] and Ware (2002)[39] suggested that this raised questions about the role of TAs and consequently about the nature of their professional development and support. They suggested that the previous model of support would no longer be appropriate in an inclusive environment. That model was where a member of support staff was allocated to a named individual categorised as having learning difficulties and disabilities and provided compensatory programmes and interventions for that learner. This model of support has also been prevalent in mainstream post-school learning, sustained and perpetuated by a system of allocating funding for additional learning support in FE to named individuals.

In a review of evidence on the impact of support staff, Howes (2003)[40] concluded that the way in which support was provided led to either inclusion or exclusion. Where support was provided for a group and for an individual in the context of the group, promoting interaction between disabled and non-disabled learners, it led to inclusion. In contrast, where support was provided in isolation to an individual, where a TA was 'attached' to a single learner, described as the 'velcro' model (Gershel

---

[32] Ofsted (2010) op cit

[33] Rose, R, O'Neill, A. (2009) Classroom support for inclusion in England and Ireland: an evaluation of contrasting models. *Research in Comparative and International Education.* 4(3) pp250-261.

[34] Logan, A. (2006) The role of the special needs assistants supporting pupils with special needs in Irish mainstream primary schools. *Support for Learning* 21(2) pp92-99

[35] Bourke (2008) op cit

[36] Booth and Ainscow (2002) *Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools London: CSIE*

[37] Clarke, C. Dyson, A. Millward, A. Robson, S. (1999) Theorires of Inclusion, Theories of Schools: Deconstructing and reconstructing the 'inclusive school'. *British Educational Research Journal 25(2) 157.*

[38] Valchon (2004) Education and inclusive policy-making: Implications for research and practice. *International Journal of Inclusive Education. 10* pp39-58

[39] Ware, L (2002). A moral conversation on disability: Risking the personal in educational contexts. *Hypatia 17*(3) 143–172.

[40] Howes, A. (2003). Teaching reforms and the impact of paid adult support on participation and learning in mainstream schools. In *Support for Learning • Volume 18 • Number 4 •* 2003 pp147-153

2005),[41] it could lead to dependency, exclusion and stigmatisation. Although support staff were appointed to support learners, they could paradoxically inhibit their social relationships. Ainscow (2000)[42] suggested that although the presence of a one-to-one teaching assistant may often appear 'socially reassuring' to both the learner and the teacher, unless carefully managed it could actually create a barrier between the learner and the rest of the class. By providing individual support, attention was drawn to the learner's inability to cope without support and may have an adverse effect upon the learner's self esteem and ability to work independently.

This finding had fundamental implications not only for the deployment of the support staff, but also for their training and professional development. **Support staff require the knowledge, understanding and skills to ensure they provide support in such a way as to promote inclusion rather than lead to further exclusion**.

The impact on inclusion was greatest when support staff were seen as valued members of the team (Lacey 2001)[43] although Bach et al (2004)[44] reported on the variable extent to which TAs were viewed inclusively. This was reflected in the extent to which they were routinely included in INSET, staff meetings and training. Bach et al also found that the more TAs were viewed as integral to the workforce strategy, the more likely they were to be managed formally and to be given training and development opportunities. At the time of the study, TAs were not routinely involved in appraisal or performance management systems and their training needs tended not to have been systematically identified. In organisations where TAs felt their contribution was not valued, managers were reluctant to identify training needs. Thus, a relationship was identified between the value attributed to support staff and their access to professional development.

Classroom support when well deployed was found to be a critical factor in promoting engagement in learning in an inclusive context. (Blatchford 2007[45], Black-Hawkins 2007)[46], and Groom (2006) went as far as to suggest that the use of in-class support was the single most important factor in enabling learners with special educational needs to be included and maintained in ordinary classes. An inclusive culture where

[41] Gershel, L. (2005). The special educational needs coordinator's role in managing teaching assistants: the Greenwich perspective. In *Support for Learning • Volume 20 • Number 2 •* 2005 pp 69-70

[42] Ainscow, M. (2000) The next step for special education supporting the development of inclusive practices. In *British Journal of Special Education, 27 (2) 76-80.*

[43] Lacey, P. (2001) *The Role of Learning Support Assistants in the Inclusive Learning of Pupils with Severe and Profound Learning Difficulties.* In *Educational Review, Vol 53, No. 2, 2001*

[44] Bach, S. Kessler, I. and Heron, P. (2004) *Support Roles and Changing Job Boundaries in the Public Services: The Case of Teaching Assistants in British Primary Schools.* Paper presented to the 22nd Annual International Labour Process Conference Amsterdam 5-7 April 2004. ESRC.

[45] Blatchford, P., Russell, A., Bassett, P., Brown, P., & Martin, C. (2007) The role and effects of teaching assistants in English primary schools (Years 4-6) 2000-2003. Results from the Class Size and Pupil-Adult Ratios (CSPAR) KS2 Project. *British Educational research journal, 33 (1),* 5-26.

[46] Black-Hawkins, K. Florian, L. Rouse, M. (2007) *Achievement and Inclusion in Schools.* Routledge.

LSAs are valued and included and where they provide support for individuals in an inclusive way, in the group context, is one of the most important factors in promoting effective practice. **Ensuring understanding of inclusionary practice and how exclusion might be avoided, needs to be an integral part of LSAs' professional development.**

Despite this focus on inclusion, learners and TAs were rarely involved in research or identified as major stakeholders in inclusive education (Bourke 2008)[47].

A culture that values diversity

In a publication designed for teachers and trainee teachers working with TAs, Campbell and Fairbairn (2005)[48] referred to a study that emphasised the role that LSAs can play in valuing diversity. It stressed the importance of self- esteem and in making sense of self and others in a culturally diverse society. The study indicated how learners are influenced by significant others and how they develop prejudice and stereotypes. Support staff were found to have an important role in encouraging and valuing diversity, in avoiding stereotypes and prejudice before they become established in young people and in challenging stereotypes and prejudice.

There is a particular value in utilising the diversity of and specialisms that support staff might bring. For example, bilingual support staff may not only understand the language but might bring insights into learners' cultures that might otherwise be missing. This has implications for those who manage support staff, to recognise and value the diversity of the workforce and for the professional development of support staff to assist them to realise their potential to contribute.

In a publication for teaching assistants working in diverse and inclusive environments by Richards and Armstrong (2008)[49], the importance and implications of the impact of different aspects of diversity were explored in detail. **The importance of valuing diversity and understanding the impact both on learners, and learning, of prejudice and stereotypes and knowing how to challenge them, need to be central features in the professional development of LSAs.**

---

[47] Bourke, P. (2008) op cit
[48] Campbell, A. Fairbairn, G. (2005) *Working with support in the classroom.* Paul Chapman Publishing
[49] Richards, G. Armstrong, F (2008) *Key issues for teaching assistants working in diverse and inclusive classrooms.* Routledge

The role of LSAs

Clearly defining the role of the LSA is crucial and ensuring that all staff are aware of the respective roles of themselves and others is essential for effective practice. Yet the literature revealed tensions surrounding boundaries and responsibilities.   A 'plethora' of studies (Mansaray 2006)[50] identified difficulties concerning the boundaries between teaching and non-teaching roles, and the existence of grey areas where uncertainty existed. (Farrell et al 2000[51], Bailey and Robson 2004[52], Bourke 2008[53]). The lack of a clear role definition could create confusion and considerable role ambiguity. One possible consequence was described in the somewhat derisory terms as the 'hoverers' or 'hinderers' stance adopted by some support staff who were unsure of their roles. (Giangreco, et al 1997).[54]There has also been some concern over which roles and responsibilities should appropriately be carried out by teachers and which by TAs (Blatchford 2004).[55]

The evidence of an earlier study (Farrell et al 1999)[56] suggested that there was, in theory at least, a clearly understood distinction between the role of support staff and teachers. Teachers were responsible for the overall success of the teaching programmes; they planned the programmes, monitored the pupils' progress, planned review meetings and liaised with parents. Meanwhile, LSAs were seen as being responsible for implementing the programmes under the teachers' guidance. However, on many occasions LSAs were observed to be taking a more active and pivotal role in, for example, supporting groups of pupils and in assessment and recording.

Giangreco and Doyle (2007)[57] also challenged the assertion that teacher assistants, in practice, work under the guidance and supervision of qualified professionals. Research, they say, suggests the contrary (Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, and Doyle,

---

[50] Mansaray, A. (2006) *Liminality and in/exclusion:exploring the work of teaching assistants.* ISSN 1468-1366

[51] Farrell, P. Balshaw, M. Polat, F (2000) The work of learning support assistants in mainstream schools:Implications for educational psychologists. *Educational and Child Psychology Vol. 17 (2) 66-76*

[52] Bailey, B. Robson, J. (2004) Learning Support Workers in Further Education in England: a hidden revolution? *Journal of Further and Higher Education, Vol 28, No.4*

[53] Bourke, P. (2008) op cit

[54] Giangreco, M., Edelman, S., Luiselli, T., MacFarland, S., (1997) Helping or Hovering? Effects of instructional assistant proximity on students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children* 64: 7-18.

[55] Blatchford et al (op cit)

[56] Farrell, P. Balshaw, M. Polat, F. (1999) *The Management, Role and Training of Learning Support Assistants.* Centre for Educational Needs, University of Manchester

[57] Giangreco, M. Doyle, M. (2007) Teacher assistants in inclusive schools. In Lani Florian *The Sage handbook of special education.* Sage pp429-439 GMB, 2003

2001[58]). Too many TAs continue to provide instruction and engage in other teacher type roles without appropriate training, professionally prepared plans, or adequate supervision. In some cases, particularly for students with the most severe disabilities, teacher assistants function as their primary 'teachers' and are often left to fend for themselves. They point out that a common response to these dilemmas has been to focus on better training and supervision of teacher assistants. Though desirable, they concluded that it was naive to think that training and supervision of teacher assistants was sufficient to ensure high quality inclusive education.

There was also reference in the literature to the way in which the role of support staff in schools has changed and evolved. LSAs were providing much more direct support to learners, and this in turn has implications for training in terms of pedagogy and understanding the process of teaching and learning. A study by Blatchford et al 2004[59] found the TAs in schools were interacting directly with learners for much of their time. Bach et al also (2004) pointed to the altered national role of TAs in the schools sector, resulting in a larger and more segmented TA workforce and a shift towards a more central role in curriculum delivery and working with targeted individuals or groups. A toolkit developed by Tyrer et al (2004)[60] for TDA promoted the notion of the LSA as '*an agent of change'*.

In a synthesis of evidence, Alborz et al (2009)[61] concluded that support assistants were:

> " *more effective if they are part of a staff team where their contribution to whole school decision-making is valued, and where the complementary roles of teachers and TAs are more clearly delineated to the benefit of these professionals, parents and pupils alike."* (Alborz et al 2009 p21)

In the lifelong learning sector, LLUK (2007)[62] defined the role of learning support assistant as providing support to meet a range of needs, across all areas of learning and in a wide range of formal and informal settings. These might include: classrooms, vocational workshops, learning support drop-in areas, supporting individual learners and groups. LSAs could be found working across the sector and this was reflected in a diverse range of job titles and practice. Despite such diversity, the role of learning support assistant could be identified by shared aspects of practice:

---

[58] Giangreco, M. Edelman, S. Broer, M. Doyle, M. (2001) Paraprofessional support of students with disabilities: Literature from the past decade. *Exceptional Children*, 68, pp 45-63.
[59] Blatchford et al (2004) op cit
[60] Tyrer, R. Gunn, S. Lee, C. Parker, M Townsend, M (2004) *A Toolkit for the Effective Teaching Assistant.* Paul Chapman Publishing.
[61] Alborz et al (2009) op cit
[62] LLUK (2007) *Providing learning support to individuals or groups of learners.* LLUK http://www.ukstandards.co.uk/Admin/DB/0030/STANDARD%20A.pdf (accessed 20.03.10)

- They support learners within the learning process

- They work directly with learners

- They work under the direction of the person(s) leading the learning

LLUK stressed that working under the direction of the person leading the learning was particularly important for understanding the role of a learning support assistant. This helped to distinguish the role from that of teachers and other professionals who lead learning, although, as with schools, there was evidence that this apparently clear distinction was in practice rather more opaque. A project by the South West Workforce Development Partnership (2008)[63] for the lifelong learning sector provided confirmation of exactly the same issues in the school sector.

> *"There was a consensus that roles and boundaries between that of teachers and support staff were not clearly defined and that these roles were sometimes blurred with support staff being required to undertake functions which were the responsibility of the teacher."* (SWWDP 2008 p22)

LLUK distinguished between generalist and specialist learning support assistant roles. They found that LSAs had responsibilities for a broad range of learners, subjects and contexts. Some LSAs may have had a particular focus for their work at times, but may not have had the same expertise or training as those in a specialist role. The SWWDP project undertook a substantial development in two phases to develop a CPD framework for LSAs and provide training for them. The second, continuation project, disseminated the CPD framework and provided a 'train the trainers' programme. The project concluded that there was a need for both generic and specialist training and included modules on both aspects of the role in their CPD framework. The implication of this for the professional development of LSAs is that **there needs to be effective training for the generalist role, whilst also providing opportunities to develop a specialist focus.**

The knowledge and expertise of those in a specialist learning support assistant role played an important role in the inclusion, participation, independence and self-determination of learners. This specialist knowledge and expertise may have been greater than that of the person leading the learning. Specialist assistants needed a significant amount of training and/or experience. Of the current learning support assistant roles that could be considered as specialist roles, many are concerned with learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is a need for accredited initial professional development opportunities to be available for those undertaking these

---

[63] South West Workforce Development Partnership (2008). *Project report for the Continuing Professional Needs of Learning support Assistants.* West of England School and College for young people with little or no sight. LSC.

roles. An important part of this training will be a focus on how learning support assistants work with and under the direction of others to ensure their role is effective.

Research into learner perception of their support assistants indicated that many learners perceived their assistants in varying roles as mother/father, friend, primary Instructor and protector from bullying (Broer, Doyle, & Giangreco, 2005[64]; Hemmingsson et al., 2003[65]; Skar & Tamm, 2001[66]). This was a cause for concern, even when the learners' perception was a positive one. For example, although it is positive to make a friend, what does it say about the social relationship of disabled learners if their primary friends are their paid, adult, service providers rather than peers? Although it is always good to protect students from bullying, the role of a teacher assistant as a protector might inadvertently deflect attention from the issue and delay the organisation from tackling bullying. If LSAs have a heightened awareness of these pitfalls, they will be better place to minimise any detrimental effects of LSA support. This has significant implications for LSA training.

---

[64] Broer, S. M., Doyle, M. B. Giangreco, M. F. (2005) Perspectives of students with intellectual disabilities about their experiences with paraprofessional supports. *Exceptional Children, 71*, 415-430.

[65] Hemmingsson, H., Borell, L., & Gustavsson, A. (2003) Participation in school: School assistants creating opportunities and obstacles for pupils with disabilities.
Occupational Therapy Journal of Research, 23(3), 88-98.

[66] Skar, L. & Tamm, M. (2001). My assistant and I: Disabled children's and adolescents' roles and relationships to their assistants. *Disability and Society*, 16, pp917-931.

Working together

Working in partnership was a major theme in the literature from both the school and post-school sectors. (Farrell et al 1999[67],DfEE 2000[68], Collins and Simco 2004[69], Gerschel 2005[70], Groom 2006[71]). Building effective relationships and collaborative practice are embedded in the national occupational standards for TAs in schools and LSAs in the lifelong learning sector. Despite this the Lamb Inquiry (2010[72]) reported that in the majority of cases there was a lack of co-ordination between teachers and support assistants leading to less linkage into the curriculum and to the assessment of progress. Although a research project suggested that over three quarters of support staff were positive about their working relationships with teachers, describing them as excellent, good and supportive (Butt and Lance, 2005).[73] Robson[74] found that in FE LSAs' relationships with learners and tutors were also reported to be generally good. The most effective training was strongly rooted in what goes on in the learning environment, with colleagues learning from each other (DfEE 2000).[75]

Where there were examples of effective collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants (Butt and Lance, 2005[76]; Groom and Rose, 2005[77]) they were noticeably underpinned by the following key factors:

- schools valuing the work of the teaching assistant and recognizing the contribution they make

- involving teaching assistants as much as possible in planning and review

- good channels of communication - regular meetings

- professional development opportunities

- opportunities for collaborative work and sharing of good practice (Groom, 2006)[78]

---

[67] Farrell et al (1999) op cit
[68] DfEE (2000) op cit
[69] Collins, J., Simco, N., (2004) *The emergence of the Teaching Assistant as reflective assistant: a well established norm, a new reality or a future aspiration?* Paper presented at the 2004 British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Manchester.
[70] Gerschel (2005) op cit
[71] Groom, B. (2006) Building relationships for learning: the developing role of the teaching assistant. In *Support for Learning • Volume 21 • Number 4 •* 2006 pp199-203
[72] Lamb Inquiry (2010) op cit
[73] Butt and Lance , (2005) Modernising the roles of support staff in primary schools: Changing focus, changing function. *Educational review 57(2) pp 139-149.*
[74] Robson et al (2006) op cit
[75] DfEE (2000) op cit
[76] Butt, G. and Lance, A (2005) *op cit*
[77] Groom, B. and Rose, R. (2005) Supporting the inclusion of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the primary school: The role of teaching assistants. *Journal of Research in Special Eductaional Needs 5(1), pp 20-30.*

Groom (2006) went on to say that effective LSA practice could be identified by the consistency of a team approach, to the use of appropriate strategies and interventions across the school and to the collaborative way LSAs worked together and with teaching colleagues. Involving LSAs in a dialogue about lesson planning, for example, would not only inform the teaching assistant of the session objectives and the design of the session, but would ensure that they were aware of their proposed deployment and the nature of the support they were to provide. Similarly, involving LSAs in annual reviews or discussions of the progress of an individual learning plan would not only provide valuable input from the LSA's involvement regarding the progress of the learner, but could also be part of the process of discussing and planning the teaching assistants future related role and responsibilities.

In practice Bourke (2008)[79] found that teaching assistants learned about supporting learners 'on the job' and in consultation and collaboration with other members of the organisations support networks. Regular meetings and formalized working practice offered opportunities to share opinions and identify training and development needs linked to organisational improvement. This could also provide a forum for demonstrating and sharing good practice and disseminating the outcomes (Ofsted 2010).[80] However, there was evidence of a lack of time and opportunity for teachers and teaching assistants to talk and plan together. Teaching assistants spoke of their concerns, pointing out that without sufficient preparation, they could go into sessions '*on a wing and a prayer*' (Lacey 2001[81], Gershel 2005[82]). This confirmed the importance of recognising joint working as a legitimate part of the job role of all staff and the crucial role it plays in promoting professional development.

Building a collaborative team with teachers and TAs working together does not happen by itself: team working needs to be nurtured and developed (Collins and Simco 2004[83]). In a study in Greenwich, effective staff training sessions had established the ground rules for teachers and TAs to work together and had produced clear statements of the expectation they each have of each other (Gershel 2005[84]). In the toolkit developed by Tyrer et al (2004)[85] the need for effective relationships, the importance of being part of a team, good teacher/LSA partnerships was stressed and ways in which good collaborative working could be developed were suggested. **Professional development needs to recognise the importance of working together: to encompass how to build effective teams for those who**

---

[78] Groom, B. 2006 op cit
[79] Bourke (2008) op cit
[80] Ofsted (2010) op cit
[81] Lacey, P. (2001) The Role of Learning Support Assistants in the Inclusive Learning of Pupils with severe and profound Learning Difficulties. *Educational review, Vol 53(2) pp157-167.*
[82] Gershel,L. (2005) op cit
[83] Collins and Simco (2004) op cit
[84] Gershel, L (2005) op cit
[85] Tyrer, R., Gunn, S., Lee, C., Parker, M., Townsend, M. (2004) op cit

manage LSAs and training in how to contribute as an effective team member for all other staff.

Joint planning and preparation

A pivotal influence on TA relationships with teachers related to the degree to which they had structured time together to plan and prepare activities. Despite the consensus on the importance of joint planning and preparation (Balshaw et al (2002)[86], Blatchford et al 2009[87], Ofsted 2010[88]) a lack of meaningful time for joint planning was commonly reported (Blatchford et al 2009). The effectiveness of TAs was thought to be compromised by the limited time for such activity, particularly where those concerned hadn't had the opportunity to develop effective working relationships over time. Where an afternoon a week was set aside for planning together, there were reported benefits to not only the TA but to the learners (Bach et al (2004),[89] and Bourke (2008)[90] found that collaborative planning enhanced inclusion.

The results of a study by Blatchford et al (2004)[91] confirmed the need for communication between the teacher and TAs, for example, about lesson plans and learning objectives, and a relationship within which TAs felt valued. Lee (2002)[92] and Wilson et al (2003)[93] also found that there could be insufficient time for pre- and post-lesson planning by teachers and TAs and this limited the opportunity for joint planning and feedback to the detriment of all concerned. This raised an important issue about the practicalities of scheduling time to work together. Farrell et al (1999)[94] found consistent lack of planning time with teachers which they described as a key factor that could reduce the effectiveness of support staff

This finding was confirmed in a study conducted in Scotland (Wilson et al 2003)[95] Many organisations found it difficult to make sufficient time available for teachers and

---

[86] Balshaw et al (2002) op cit

[87] Blatchford et al (2009) op cit

[88] Ofsted 2010 op cit

[89] Bach, S. Kessler, I. and Heron, P. (2004) *Support Roles and Changing Job Boundaries in the Public Services: The Case of Teaching Assistants in British Primary Schools.* Paper presented to the 22nd Annual International Labour Process Conference Amsterdam 5-7 April 2004. ESRC.

[90] Bourke, (2008) op cit

[91] Peter Blatchford, Anthony Russell, Paul Bassett, Penelope Brown, Clare Martin (2004) *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.* DCSF Research Report RR605.

[92] Lee, B. (2002) *Teaching assistants in schools: the current state of play.* (NFER Researchsummary). Slough: NFER

[93] Wilson, V. Schlapp, U. Davidson, J. (2003) *An 'Extra Pair of Hands'? Managing Classroom Assistants in Scottish Primary Schools.* Educational Management Administration & Leadership, Vol. 31, No. 2, 189-205

[94] Farrell, P. Balshaw, M. Polat, F. (1999) *The Management, Role and Training of Learning Support Assistants.* Centre for Educational Needs, University of Manchester

[95] Wilson,et al (2003) op cit

classroom assistants to plan their work together. Without planning and liaison time, the authors suggested that the benefits from an 'extra pair of hands' in the classroom would be limited. An NFER[96] study (2007) on the impact and deployment of higher level teaching assistants found that HLTAs had experienced increased stress resulting from the lack of time to plan and prepare. It confirmed that this finding was equally true of more senior TAs.

Joint planning between teachers and LSAs was identified by Lund (1999)[97] to be a good starting point to improve the contribution of LSAs in the classrooms. She found that while liaison between teachers and LSAs was felt to be good by just over half the teachers in her study, most teachers said that LSAs could be used more effectively if there was time for joint planning. Positive interactions between the pupils and the teacher or LSA needed to be planned for, including an analysis of individual teaching and learning styles. This reinforced the case for joint planning. Ofsted 2010[98] confirmed that effective practice was characterised by collaborative planning, leading to a shared understanding between teachers and support staff of what constitutes good learning. In post-school learning, Robson et al (2006)[99] recommended giving adequate time to LSAs to collaborate with tutors.

> " Central to the success of professional development is the fostering of a collaborative school culture where there is a strong emphasis on working together across the school to share good practice and develop problem solving strategies to improve teaching and learning." (Groom 2006, p202)[100]

The lack of time identified was not limited to joint planning and preparation. It was equally evident in relation to opportunities for feedback and review. SWWDP (2008)[101] found that a high number of support staff in post-school learning felt that there was insufficient time to meet with teaching staff to discuss and collaborate in the planning of learning or to review learning that had taken place.

Reflective practice

Reflective practice and communities of learning were just as important for LSAs as for teaching staff. Communities of learning have been defined as an inclusive group of staff motivated by a shared learning vision. They support and work with each other, finding ways, inside and out of their immediate community, to enquire about

---

[96]   NFER   (2007)HLTA   Deployment   and   Impact   NFER/TDA
http://www.tda.gov.uk/support/support_staff_roles/learningsupportstaff/hlta/resources_2007.aspx
accessed (23.02.10)
[97]   Lund, B. (1999) *The Teacher – Learning Support Assistant Role.* TDA
www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/doc/b/barbara-lund.doc (accessed 03.03.10)
[98] OFSTED (2010) op cit
[99] Robson et al (2006) op cit
[100] Groom, B. (2006) op cit
[101] South West workforce Development Partnership (2008) op cit

their practice and learn together, in order to develop new and better approaches that will enhance learners learning. Collins and Simco (2004)[102] explored the notion of reflective practice and the extent to which it was an important, valued and worthwhile concept for teaching assistants. Experiential knowledge was gathered though experiences and engagement in professional work (Schon 1983)[103] and reflection was an important vehicle for drawing on the knowledge derived from experience. Reflection was defined as

> " *solving problems through organised and careful thinking about alternatives and then choosing the most appropriate course of action (or inaction). However, reflection is more than simply reviewing events. Reflection involves interrogating an experience by asking searching questions about that experience."* (Colllins and Simco 2004 p3)

In considering the availability of empowering circumstances for reflection, they found considerable variation. These included: personal qualities – experience, open-mindedness, responsibility and whole-heartedness: reflective teaching assistants were confident and comfortable. The extent to which teachers reflected on practice affected TAs. Although reflection could be a solitary activity, they pointed to the importance of professional dialogue in promoting greater depth. A study of Higher Level Teaching Assistant training by Burgess and Mayes (2009)[104] confirmed that as well as theoretical underpinnings, HLTAs particularly valued the reflective practice.

This supports the finding that professional development is most effective when it is a valued, collaborative activity shared by teachers and LSAs. It poses the question of **the extent to which professional development for LSAs should be concerned with up-skilling and compliance or whether there should be a greater emphasis on opportunities for deeper learning that involves the acquisition of reflective strategies**.

---

[102] Collins and Simco (2004) op cit
[103] Schön D (1983) *The reflective assistant*. Basic Books: New York
[104] Burgess, H., and Mayes, A., (2009) An exploration of higher level teaching assistants' perceptions of their training and development in the context of school workforce reform. *Support for Learning, 24(1) pp 19-25.*

Teaching and learning

The evidence cited earlier in this report suggested that support assistants were often found to be 'teaching'. Aylen (2007)[105] concluded that since support staff were primarily there to help learners to learn, their role was, in its broadest sense, to 'teach'. This raised immediate implications for LSAs' professional development. The Lamb review (2010)[106] commented on the negative impact on learners from using support staff as substitutes for teachers. This was attributed to the underpinning differences between teachers and support staff in both subject and pedagogical knowledge: in approaches to explaining and questioning learners: in addition the core understanding of learning: why some learners don't succeed and what to do about it. This was at the heart of teacher training, yet was largely missing from the preparation and training TAs received.

The specification of the TAs' role as 'supporting teaching and learning' was thought to be inadequate by Blatchford et al, because this did not address precisely enough effectiveness in classroom interaction, nor provide models or advice which teachers and TAs can use. Instead they proposed considering the interactive role in terms of dimensions such as evaluating and assessing learning, methods of questioning learners, encouraging independence of learning, scaffolding learning, methods of explanation, use of examples, behavioural control and so on. They did not argue that the TA and teacher roles are or should be the same; rather, it would be helpful to articulate ways in which the TA can complement and support the teacher, in terms of classroom interaction. Teachers' comments indicated that reiteration, repetition and 'drilling' might be ways that TAs could contribute to learning and that this suggests one way that TAs' interactive role in relation to learners might complement that of the teacher. They stressed that it was important to remember that TAs were already interacting with pupils and were informing, questioning and controlling pupils in these interactions. The issue here was how to make this as effective as possible

Similarly, Lund (1999)[107] observed LSAs promoting the learning of individual students by using teaching as scaffolding leading to independent working. The LSAs achieved this by: reading; explaining; helping; repeating; undertaking 'hands on' working; and sitting with individual or groups of students. The same study also found a significant impact on learning in indirect ways. When a TA was present, there was more individualised teacher attention. Furthermore, there were more interactions between teacher and pupils involving the task or work at hand. There is also more pupil on task behaviour when working on their own. The presence of TAs therefore helped maximise pupils' and teachers' attention to work. They were not able to fully

---

[105] Aylen, M. (2007) From Teacher Aides to Teaching Assistants: how Plowden promoted parental participation in our primary schools. *Forum. Volume 49, Numbers 1 & 2 pp 107-113.*
[106] Lamb (2010) op cit
[107] Lund, B. (1999) op cit

account for this effect. One possibility was that the presence of the TA provided a stimulation for learners to contribute more –to respond to the teacher and attend to their work. Another possibility is that by working with some pupils, the interactions between the teacher and the rest of the class benefit, by allowing more time teaching and opportunities for the rest of the class to be involved in interactions with the teacher.

Blatchford concluded that there was a mismatch between the actual work of the TA and their professional development, that is, in directly supporting pupils' learning, and their professional preparation for it. Less than half reported having qualifications which were relevant to their work and they were not likely to be trained for their direct interactive role with learners. This finding was confirmed by LSAs themselves who, in a study by Lund (1999)[108] indicated that they would welcome training in differentiation as a pedagogical process and basic assessment techniques to assess the current level of ability and learning needs of the pupils with whom they worked. However, she noted that LSAs did not feel confident enough to initiate discussions with teachers about joint planning. These findings signaled that **there was a need to place a far greater emphasis on teaching and learning in LSA training.**

Communication and interaction

The importance of effective communication in promoting leaning has been widely recognised. Communication plays a central role in the curriculum and is the main mechanism through which learning takes place. Developing the communication and interaction skills of the LSA was thus identified as crucial. This included the skill of active listening, not being too quick to jump in with an explanation or answer, allowing the learner to formulate his or her own ideas and questions (Brookson 2006)[109]. She identified a number of communication skills to be developed and refined:

- Concentrating and listening attentively

- Using appropriate non-verbal gestures

- Using appropriate vocabulary while extending and providing new words and meanings

- Asking open questions

- Responding positively and with humour

---

[108] Lund, B (1999) op cit
[109] Brookson, M. (2006) working as a teaching assistant in Bruce T *Early Childhood: a Guide for Students* London: Sage.

- Being receptive and open to new ideas and other ways of thinking, providing opportunities for meaningful dialogue with other learners and adults.

For some learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, specialist methods of communication might be required: for example intensive interaction, Makaton and Total Communication. LSAs will need specific specialist training to enable them to support the communication method used. (SWWDP 2008).[110] For Deaf and Deafblind learners who use sign language as their main language, support would normally be provided by communication support workers (who have their own profession, standards, training and qualifications), (Signature)[111] although some LSAs might choose to develop a basic level of competence in sign language as a specialist skill. For bilingual learners, communication could be greatly facilitated by LSAs who speak the same language and who understand and can interpret the impact of culture on learning.

The importance of effective communication and interaction needs to be central to programmes of professional development for all LSAs and there needs to be access to more in-depth training to develop specialist skills.

Managing challenging behaviour

Training in behaviour management was identified by support staff in both schools and lifelong learning as a high priority issue. (Lund, 1999[112], SWWDP 2008[113]). A variety of different approaches were reported in the literature and managing behavior was an important component in most training programmes. Derrington and Groom (2004)[114] outlined a planned team approach to problem solving and mutual support in the context of a whole organisational approach. A training guide of CPD for TAs and their managers promoted a positive and proactive whole organisation approach to managing behaviour. This package of materials, included in the resources in this project, was developed to promote a reflective approach to learners' behaviour and the development of personal and professional skills.

Burton (2008)[115] has investigated how psychological theory into behavioural, emotional and social development could be used to empower LSAs to increase

---

[110] South West Workforce Development Partnership (2008) op cit
[111] Signature http://www.signature.org.uk/index.php (accessed 21.03.10)
[112] Lund (1999) op cit
[113] South West Workforce Development Partnership (2008) op cit
[114] Derrington, C. Groom, B. (2004) *A Team Approach to Behaviour Management. A Training Guide for SENCOs working with Teaching Assistants.* Paul Chapman Publishing A Sage Publications Company
[115] Sheila Burton (2008) Empowering learning support assistants to enhance the emotional wellbeing of children in school. In *Educational and Child Psychology Vol 25 No 2.* British Psychological Society 2008.

learners' emotional literacy. She reported that since the limbic system (regulating emotional response) was much quicker to react than the frontal lobe (mediating rational processing), it was important for staff to generate a positive classroom atmosphere – in a negative climate there was an increased risk of the 'flight or fight' response in those who are anxious, stressed or had inadequate coping strategies. Yet most teachers and TAs had no training in this important feature of learning.

Burton and Shotton (2004)[116] developed a training package for TAs followed by regular, ongoing group supervision. The programme provided individualised and small group support for learners who needed intensive input to overcome the emotional challenges before them, and to develop the kind of resilience that would lead to better personal outcomes.

The evaluation revealed a positive response from school staff and pupils alike, leading to a graduated roll-out of the initiative across the whole county, and in secondary and special schools that has continued. The training modules included a combination of background psychological theory and practical guidance. The rationale for addressing emotional literacy within the learning context built on key areas of psychology: Maslow's theory of motivation (Maslow, 1970)[117] was a useful formulation of the need for safety, security and a sense of belonging in order to develop positive self-recognition, which in turn contributes to the capacity to enjoy and achieve. Social learning theory (Bandura 1977)[118] drew attention to the impact of social relationships on emotional development, and underscored the notion that emotional literacy was modelled more than it is taught. Work on multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983)[119] broadened understanding of the multi-faceted nature of ability. His attention on the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions links strongly with the concept of emotional intelligence, presented first by Salovey and Mayer (1990)[120] then popularised by Goleman (1995)[121].

Implicit in developing emotional literacy is raising learners' awareness of emotions and the close link that exists between thoughts and feelings. Many learners had a limited emotional vocabulary. Extending this assisted self expression in a way that reduced the need for problematic behaviours, and was often a useful starting point for intervention. Developing self worth and self esteem allowed learners to develop personal goals and a sense of competence and some learners need assistance to enhance their sense of self worth. Self regulation was another key aspect of

[116] Burton, S. Shotton, G. (2004). Building emotional resilience. *Special Children*, September/October 2004, 18−20.

[117] Maslow, A.H. (1970). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper Row.

[118] Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. New York: General Learning Press.

[119] Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences.* New York: BasicBooks.

[120] Salovey, P. & Mayer, J.D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality, 9,* 185–211.

[121] Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.

emotional literacy, and the training programme included a module on anger management.

Tyrer et al (2004)[122] made the point that self esteem was equally important for support staff. Their toolkit, which included a section on enhancing the role of the LSA, indicated how self esteem linked to classroom behaviour. This finding was confirmed by O'Brien and Garner (2001)[123] who also referred to the role of LSAs in empowering learners, modelling positive behaviour, establishing and developing relationships and increasing confidence and self belief.

Sharp, Herrick and Faupel (1998)[124] had also developed a practical guide. This adopted a staged approach to building understanding of how and why angry behaviour is sustained and suggested a range of calming strategies suitable to different contexts. In training, staff were helped to differentiate between learners' genuine emotional reactions and similar learned behaviours that achieved a desired outcome for an individual.

Allied to social skills was the area of friendship. The training looked at approaches for helping young people to develop the skills they needed to initiate and maintain friendships. One approach used was 'Circles of Friends' which has been widely used with people with learning difficulties. Therapeutic story writing was also taught as a technique that allowed individuals to consider personally challenging issues from a more objective perspective.

The authors concluded from the evaluation and rapid uptake of the training programme that it had been effective in developing the capacity of learning support workers to help youngsters address the wide variety of emotional challenges that they face. The programme was found to be both time and cost effective, and there was scope for the approach to be adopted much more widely.

Managing challenging behaviour is a high priority issue for support staff and has a major impact on individuals and other learners. LSAs' professional skills would be enhanced by training and development related to understanding and responding appropriately to learners' behaviour that is challenging.

---

[122] Tyrer et al (2004) op cit

[123] O'Brien, T. Garner, P (2001) *Untold Stories: Learning Support Assistants and Their Work.* Trentham Books Ltd

[124] Sharp, P., Herrick, E. & Faupel, A. (1998). *Anger management: A practical guide.* London: David Fulton.

Helping teachers to work effectively with LSAs

There was considerable evidence of the need for support and professional development for the teachers with whom the LSA's will be working. Many reports alluded to the lack of preparation teachers received in working with support staff. Moran and Abbott (2002)[125] identified that often teachers were ill prepared to manage the often complex and varied roles of support assistants. The majority of teachers had received no training in how to work with support staff, although many had been involved in delivering training for them (Blatchford 2009)[126]. Bedford (2008)[127] found little if any training in how to work with others in Initial Teacher Training, although there was some in higher level studies. Dew Hughes and Brayton (1998)[128] suggested that both ITT and CPD would be required. One of the primary issues for training would be ensuring that teachers were prepared to take responsibility for both learners and the contribution of support staff. Farrell et al (2000)[129] suggested that training support staff was only one part of the training issue. They went onto suggest that without support and training teachers how to work with support staff, LSAs own training could be wasted.

There was a consensus that effective inclusive practice first and foremost required teachers to take responsibility for all of their learners (Ofsted 2010[130], Lamb Inquiry 2010[131], Blatchford et al (2009)[132]. In mainstream settings, where the teacher functioned merely as 'a host' it was unlikely that students with learning difficulties would be adequately included or taught. Successful inclusion of students with learning difficulties in the general education classroom required a teacher who was instructionally engaged with *all* students in the classroom. Engaged teachers, Giangreco and Doyle (2007)[133] found, expressed responsibility for the learning of all their learners in their class, regardless of characteristics or labels. They: (a) knew the functioning levels and anticipated learning outcomes of all of their learners, (b) instructed their learners who had learning difficulties and disabilities, (c) communicated directly with them, (d) collaborated in instructional decision-making with special educators, and (e) directed the work of teacher assistants in their

---

[125] Moran, A., and Abbott, L. (2002) Developing inclusive schools: The pivotal role of teaching assistants in promoting inclusion in special and mainstream schools in Northern Ireland. *European Journal of Special Needs Education 17(2) pp161-173.*
[126] Blatchford et al (2009) op cit
[127] Bedford, D. Jackson, C. Wilson, E.(2008) New Partnerships for Learning: Teachers' Perspectives on Their Developing Professional Relationships with Teaching Assistants in England. *Journal of In-service Education, v34 n1 p7-25 Mar 2008*
[128] Dew-Hughes, D, Brayton, H. Blandford, S. (1998) 'A survey of Training and Professional Development for Learning Support Assistants', *Support for Learning, 13 (4)*
[129] Farrell, Balshaw, Polat (2000) op cit
[130] OFSTED (2010) op cit
[131] Lamb Inquiry (2010) op cit
[132] Blatchford et al (2009) op cit
[133] Giangreco and Doyle (2007) op cit

classroom. They maintained an instructional dialogue with their assistants that enabled them to phase out teacher assistant support to students when no longer required.

Research suggested that the extent of engagement in learning between teachers and disabled students was a critical factor affecting the success of inclusive efforts. It could be influenced by the way the teacher assistant worked in the class (Giangreco et al 2007)[134]. Teachers tended to have less direct engagement with their disabled learners when those learners had one-to-one support from a teacher assistant. Teachers were more engaged in situations where the teacher assistant supported the entire group of learners under the direction of the teacher.

The study concluded that teachers' responsibilities need to extend beyond merely 'hosting' learners with learning difficulties and disabilities to ongoing substantive, direct engagement with the learner. For some teachers, this was second nature, for others it would mean a shift in attitude, to reassuming responsibility previously delegated to the LSA. It would also mean responsibility for the contribution of support staff, and working in partnership with them to promote successful learning.

Even where teachers were willing to take this responsibility, there was evidence that some did not know how to work in partnership with their support staff. In a case study of a TA, Penny Jones (2003) [135] reported that many teachers weren't sure how to make the best use of TA support in their classrooms as they'd had very little, if any, training on working with TAs during their teacher training. To make up for this deficit, she developed and implemented training sessions for teachers on how to make best use of TA classroom support, and how to build on the teacher/TA partnership. The TDA has now produced a training toolkit '*working with colleagues in school'*[136]. Although designed for newly qualified teachers, it offers an introduction to the issues and a checklist for working with support staff. The LSIS (then QIA) Excellence Gateway included a short briefing that posed the questions:

> "*Could you create opportunities:*
> - *for planning sessions together with LSWs?*
> - *for offering more formal recognition of the role and contribution of LSWs in describing their role and its link with yours?*" *(QIA p2)*[137]

---

[134] Giangreco, M. Doyle, M.(2007)Teacher assistants in inclusive schools. In Florian, L. *The Sage Handbook of Special Education* pp429-439 London: Sage Publications.

[135] Jones, P. (2003) *A teaching assistant's tale.* TDA website (accessed 03.03.10) http://www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling/nationalagreement/resources/casestudies/remodelling/ta_story.aspx

[136] TDA *Working with colleagues in school self study task16* http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/sen/selfstudy/task16.pdf (accessed 21.03.10)

[137] QIA *Learning Support Workers Just how valuable are they and can we improve their effectiveness further still?* QIA Excellence gateway (http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/Learning%20for%20support%20workers%20_3_.pdf accessed 3.03.10)

Recognition that both teachers and LSAs had professional learning needs was important. Increased opportunities for both to engage in shared professional development programmes, should help to enhance the skills of the support team (Pearson, Chambers & Hall, 2003)[138]. It should assist in building a dynamic, cohesive community for learning focused on long-term development and responsive to changing priorities (Broadbent and Burgess 2003?)[139]. For teachers, Alborz et al (2009)[140] concluded that:

> *"within teacher training policy, it is important to communicate the nature of the collaborative working required if TA support is to be employed to its best effect. Teachers need to be appropriately trained in team working approaches during initial or postgraduate training programmes. This includes, for example, teachers acknowledging the knowledge and important perspective that TAs bring on pupils and their responses to classroom activities."* (Algoz et al 2009 p20)

They went on to indicate that it would be important to monitor the ongoing effect of the emphasis on collaborative practice and to ensure that this important feature of the roles of both teachers and support staff was adequately reflected in the national occupational standards for both groups of staff. **There are significant implications for the development of both the initial training and CPD for teachers, if they are to be properly prepared to forge effective working partnerships with, and take responsibility for, both the contribution of their LSA colleagues and for all their learners.**

---

[138] Pearson, S., Chambers, G., & Hall, K. (2003) Video material as a support to developing effective collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants. *Support for learning 18(2) pp 83-87.*
[139] Broadbent, C., and Burgess, J. (2003) Building effective inclusive classrooms through supporting the professional learning of special needs teacher assistants. Paper presented at the Communities of learning: Communities of practice: 43rd Annual ALA National Conference.
[140] Alborz et al (2009) op cit

Strategies and approaches for professional development

One of the most significant themes to emerge from this review of literature is the sheer complexity and diversity of the roles LSAs fulfill in a vast array of different contexts. **As a consequence there is a need for an equally wide range of strategies and approaches: a framework for professional development within which existing opportunities – and there are many - can be located to form a coherent and comprehensive whole.**

Professional development opportunities tend to range from in-house or local authority run courses, to formal courses for Teaching Assistants accredited within the national qualifications framework at Level 2 and Level 3, often offered by FE colleges and at Level 4 Foundation Degrees provided by universities or FE/university partnerships. There are also qualifications for higher level teaching assistants in the schools sector. There were also many distance learning packages and courses available. The content of accredited training courses was extremely broad whether they are run by LEAs, FE colleges or other educational institutions. For TAs there were 4 themes: supporting the teacher; supporting the learner; supporting the curriculum and supporting the school. Most courses had generic and specialist components. Consistent themes in the content of training included:

- Roles and responsibilities

- Working with others

- Effective communication and interpersonal skills

- Teaching and learning and supporting learning

- Personal support

- Challenging behaviour

There are also specialist themes in supporting: SEN; ICT; Literacy and Numeracy.

Some local authorities had produced documents that mapped the professional development and career progression opportunities for TAs. The summary below, adapted from Suffolk pathways,[141] maps the opportunities available. The 'Pathways' leaflet lists some of the many qualifications and awards, which have been developed to support TAs professional practice. It also indicates the providers that offer these qualifications, (not reproduced below) and what other professional development activities might be undertaken. The leaflet does not suggest that TAs take all the

---

[141] Suffolk PathwaysCPD for Teaching Assistants/Learning Support Assistants/Classroom Assistants and Cover Supervisors in Suffolk (www.slamnet.org.uk) (accessed 3.03.10)

qualifications mentioned but that the 'Pathways' guide is used to help plot a career pathway. The leaflet also recognises that different learners have individual learning styles. Some might prefer a formal taught course, while others may choose to access the experience required by an NVQ and prefer the flexibility it can offer.

Level	Qualifications
Level 2 (GCSEs A* - C) **Equates to Level 2 on the National Qualification Framework** Working with small groups or individuals throughout the school under the supervision of a teacher or more senior TA	• *SWiS Level 2 Award/Certificate (contains 3 or 4 NVQ 2 units)* • NVQ 2 Supporting Teaching and Learning • *NVQ 2 in Health and Social Care* • CACHE Level 2 Certificate for Teaching Assistants • *Edexcel BTEC Level 2 Certificate for Teaching Assistants* • Literacy/Numeracy Level 2 qualifications • *CACHE Level 2 Certificate in Playwork* • NVQ 2 in Children's Care, Learning and Development • *NVQ 2 Playwork*
Level 3 (Advanced Level) **Equates to Level 3 on the National Qualification Framework** At this level the teaching assistant requires minimum supervision in supporting learning and teaching activities. S/he may have supervisory responsibility for another TA(s). Cover Supervisors may also wish to access qualifications at this level.	• *SWiS Level 3 Award (made up of NVQ 3 units)* • NVQ 3 Supporting Teaching and Learning • *NVQ 3 in Health and Social Care* • CACHE Level 3 Certificate for Teaching Assistants • *Edexcel BTEC Level 3 Certificate for Teaching Assistants* • NVQ 3 in Learning, Development and Support Services • *Introduction to British Sign Language/Full BSL* • Initial Youth Work qualification • *NVQ 3 Management/Certificate in First Line Management* • CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Playwork • *NVQ 3 in Children's Care, Learning and Development* • NVQ 3 Playwork

Level 4 (Higher Education) **Equates to Levels 4 – 6 on the National Qualification Framework** At this level the higher level teaching assistant will usually work under an agreed system of supervision or management rather than direct supervision. Under the direction of a qualified teacher, they could be involved in planning and preparing or delivering lessons and courses to small groups or whole classes. They may also be assessing or reporting the development, progress and attainment of pupils. TAs at this level may have supervisory responsibility for a group of TAs or take the lead for a particular area of work.	• Foundation Degree (Childcare, Learning and Development) for Foundation Stage and Key Stage and 1 and 2 • *Foundation Degree (Early Years)* • Foundation Degree (Learner Support/Teaching Assistant) – For Key Stage 1 – 4 assistants • *Foundation Degree for Inclusive Learning (all phases)* • *Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status* • Specialist Teaching Assistant Certificate (60 HE credits) • *NVQ 4 Learning Development and Support Services* • NVQ 3 or NVQ 4 Management or equivalent • *NVQ4 Children's Care, Learning and Development* • NVQ4 Playwork • *C & G 7302 Certificate in Delivering Learning* • A1 NVQ Assessor Award/V1 Verifier Award
Cover Supervisors may also wish to access qualifications at this level. Cover Supervision occurs when the teaching assistant takes sole charge of a group of pupils when no active teaching is taking place and no specific planning or preparation of lessons is required.	• Degree: top up third year degree leading to BA/BSc Hons (eg Childhood Studies/ Early Learning) (NB: secondary teaching – ensure approx 50% of the degree is in the subject you wish to teach) • *Full degree (either part time or full time)*
Level 5 (Postgraduate) **Equates to Levels 6 – 8 on the National Qualification Framework** At this level the teaching assistant may wish to progress to teacher training	• School Centred Initial Teacher Training • *Graduate Teacher Programme* • PGCE • *Masters programme – Education-based Doctorate of Education*

A similar mapping of qualifications specifically for LSAs in the lifelong learning sector might produce a rather less rich map. The evidence such as it is, suggests that while the qualifications above, designed for TAs might also be marketed as suitable for LSAs, in practice LSAs have found that they were irrelevant and insufficiently adapted to the lifelong learning context (SWWDP 2008)[142]. Rather, LSAs were directed to the more recently developed qualifications for teachers in lifelong learning:

- Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector, (for teachers, in a full or associate role at Levels 3 and 4)

- Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (for teachers in an associate teacher role at Levels 3 and 4)

- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (for those in a full teacher role at Level 5) (LLUK 2007)[143].

While the emphasis on teaching and learning was found to be relevant and helpful for LSAs, since these courses are designed for those in a full or associate teaching role, they were not entirely appropriate to LSAs. For example, LSAs found they could not access the assessment and achieve the full award, because as LSAs they did not have responsibility for planning lessons. (SWWDP 2008).

The qualifications undertaken by LSAs in the study included:

- Basic Skills in Numeracy and Literacy at Level 2

- Braille

- British Sign Language

- BTEC National Childhood Studies

- Certificate in Supporting Adult Learning (Literacy and Numeracy)

- City and Guilds 7302 Introduction to Teaching

- City and Guilds Subject Specialists in Literacy and Numeracy at Level 4

- City and Guilds Subject Support in Literacy and Numeracy at Level 3

- CLAIT

---

[142] Suffolk PathwaysCPD for Teaching Assistants. op cit
[143] LLUK (2007) *Guidance for awarding institutions on teacher roles and initial teaching qualifications.* London: LLUK

- Community Mental Health Certificate

- Dyslexia qualification at Level 4

- EQOL for profound and complex difficulties

- European Computer Driving Licence

- GQAL for Learning Support Assistants (Exeter University Award)

- Higher Level Teaching Assistants

- Key Skills

- NVQ in Care at Levels 2 and 3

- NVQ in Health and Social Care Children and Young Adults at Level 3

- NVQ in Information, Advice and Guidance at Levels 3 and 4

- NVQ in Teaching Assistants at Levels 2 and 3

- NVQ in Youth Work at Levels 2 and 3

- NVQ Play Work at Level 3

- OCR Supporting Teaching and Learning

- Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS)

- RSA Certificate in Learning Support

- RSA Counselling Skills in the Development of Learning.

There was evidence of some award bearing frameworks and programmes which were designed specifically for LSAs in lifelong learning and three examples are given below.

- The **South West Workforce Development Partnership** undertook a substantial LSC funded project to develop and disseminate a CPD framework to support the role of LSAs in the post-school sector[144]. It was designed to comply with the national occupational standards. The framework was developed and trialled through sharing effective practice between project partners from the FE system. Seven generic core units and a further specialist core units have been developed at Levels 2 and 3, supported by web-based resources. These have been accredited by

---

[144] For further details see Strand 3 Project: Resources

NOCN. The framework was further developed and disseminated through a continuation project to 'train the trainers' (SWWDP 2008)[145] to ensure sustainable training and CPD provision delivered and applied effectively. A trainer pack was developed to support the delivery of the whole CPD framework. The project reported that the outcome for the participating colleges had been to ensure that professional practice was embedded through CPD strategies and appraisal processes.

- **Ascentis,** formerly OCNW, has developed a **Certificate in learning Support at Level 3**[146] to provide LSAs within FE, ACL, Training Providers and third sector organizations, with the underpinning knowledge, understanding and skills to fulfil a generalist role. The certificate provided LSAs with an introduction to learning support and an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of generalist LSAs. This included: knowledge and understanding of approaches to learning; the nature and purpose of learning support; the roles and responsibilities of a n LSA; strategies to promote inclusive learning; planning, delivery and assessment cycle of learning programmes.

- **Inclusion Online** is a flexible, interactive training resource for tutors and support staff working with learners with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities in the learning and skills sector. It was based on a successful model of online training originally developed for school staff, which had been redeveloped for the post-16 sector through the Action for Inclusion activities in the LSC South East Region, funded through the Learning for Living and Work investment funding. It was aimed at all college staff who may have contact with these learners. There was a Foundation course which covered the main issues around inclusion in the FE sector. It was supported by 5 further courses in learning difficulties and disabilities, including autistic spectrum conditions, speech, language and communication needs, managing behaviour, hearing impairment and visual impairment, with further courses planned on a range of topics, including dyslexia. There were a range of interactive elements that support the learning process including: animations; self assessment exercises; online quizzes; video clips; online forums and printable resources. The courses had a Certificate of Online Completion and accreditation routes were being explored.

---

[145] SWWDP (2008) op cit
[146] Ascentis (2010) Certificate in Learning Support http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/qualification/50054697.seo.aspx (accessed 13.3.10)

Beyond training courses

Professional development was widely recognised to be much more than attending training or undertaking courses leading to qualifications, although these were important parts of the overall framework of support for LSAs. Burgess and Mayes (2009)[147] found a need for greater differentiation in the training, in particular, in relation to specialist support responsibilities, and in relation to ICT development, where the current expectations of teaching assistant ICT skills were set too low. There was some evidence that e-learning strategies might prove useful for support staff training although the very positive impact of other teaching assistants and the tutor/trainer role in providing support suggest a 'blended' approach might provide a useful model of training.

The Teacher Development Agency website[148] offered a wide range of strategies for the professional development of support staff beyond formal qualifications. These strategies were equally applicable in the lifelong learning context:

- **work shadowing** to see how a more experienced colleague managed relevant aspects of their job role

- **on-the-job project work**, e.g. learner shadowing to see how a learner with learning difficulties or disabilities responded to different teaching styles and learning contexts

- **coaching or mentoring** by a more experienced colleague from within the organisation or one nearby. Mentoring has been widely mentioned as an effective means of providing support for TAs (Blatchford et al 2004)[149]

- **visits** to other organisations to observe relevant aspects of working practice

- **opportunities to read and question**, e.g. about the organisation/local/national curriculum policies and frameworks and how they interrelate, responding to questions and answers in electronic format, and searching the internet for specific information

- **sharing information** about policies, procedures and practice

- **online learning**

---

[147] Burgess, H, Mayes, A. (2009) op cit

[148] TDA *Evaluating training and development.* http://www.tda.gov.uk/support/cdf/planner_guidance/eval_tandd_ss.aspx (accessed 03.03.10)

[149] Blatchford et al (2004) op cit

- **peer support** from other support staff

- **action learning or learning sets** involving individuals with a common interest from within the organisation or from a group of local education providers

- **observing** a teacher or other colleague who had particular strengths in the area identified for development, e.g. behaviour management, and

- attendance at **staff meetings**

- **in-house** briefings or training

- **local training programmes** offered by the organisation or local authority.

And for senior or more experienced support staff:

- **contributing to the learning and development of others**, e.g. coaching, mentoring, giving demonstrations, or running training sessions (Groom 2006[150], TDA 2010)[151]

Other CPD activities outlined in the Suffolk pathways leaflet included:

- DCSF induction for teaching assistants
- Work in a range of settings/classes
- Observe other TAs
- Take part in school-based in-service training
- Participate in Suffolk County Council support staff in-service training
- Get to know the policies and procedures of the school (e.g. behaviour, restraint and physical intervention, health and safety, risk assessment and child protection)
- Get to know the school priorities as expressed within the School Improvement Plan
- Get to know and understand the National Curriculum and programmes of study (especially in numeracy and/or literacy)
- Work in a range of classes, supporting different subjects and children with different needs
- Develop a specific skill/area of expertise – eg British Sign Language, Makaton, behaviour support, working with children with specific needs, EAL, a particular curriculum or learning area or a specific intervention
- Set up a TA network
- Undertake work experience in another school

---

[150] Groom 2006 op cit

[151] TDA http://www.tda.gov.uk/support/cdf/planner_guidance/eval_tandd_ss.aspx (accessed 03.03.10)

- Mentor/induct new TAs
- Become a Union Learning Representative
- Become a First Aider
- Become a staff governor
- Contribute to other aspects of school life by joining school-based working groups
- Line manage other support staff
- Keep up to date with national initiatives/policy changes – the big picture
- Take the lead in introducing new projects and ideas within the school
- Work with teaching staff to try out new ideas and approaches
- Train as an NVQ Assessor
- Run inset for other Teaching Assistants
- Get involved in county-wide projects
- Plan and lead extra curricula activities
- Work with CPD Leader to lead on CPD for school support staff
- Represent support staff on county, regional and national forums
- Take responsibility for an area of work within the school
- Focus on developing leadership/management skills
-

The SWWDP report[152] suggested In-house training and CDP offered by participating organisations tended to be ad hoc, reactive to support issues as these arise and not accredited. The training and CPD provision identified included:

- Induction to the learning support role
- Administering medication
- Anaphylaxis shock
- Applying confidentiality procedures
- Basic advocacy
- Customer care
- Deaf awareness
- Deaf culture
- Dealing with epilepsy
- Dementia Care Certificate
- Down's syndrome
- Feeding
- Fire training
- First Aid
- Food hygiene
- Health and Safety at Work (including manual handling)

---

[152] SWWDP (2008) op cit

- How to manage challenging behaviour
- Identifying dyslexia
- Inclusive Learning strategies
- Infection control
- Intensive communication training
- Intensive interaction
- Introduction to Counselling
- Language, Literacy and Numeracy updating
- Makaton
- Mobility training
- Muscular dystrophy
- Personal care
- Physiotherapy
- Postural care
- Pump feed training
- Risk assessment
- Safeguarding: children and vulnerable adults
- Signing
- SMART board training
- Specific Learning Difficulties
- Speech therapy
- Supporting learners with brain injury
- Supporting learners with sensory impairment (VI and deaf)
- Supporting Profound and Complex Difficulties
- Supporting tutors
- Total Communication (STC)
- Understanding self-harm
- Understanding the Mental Capacity Act
- Wheelchair handling.

Barriers to professional development

Little evidence was found regarding the barriers to professional development of LSAs in lifelong learning, however, a major national survey of support staff in schools was conducted in 2008 (Teeman et al 2008).[153] The study found that a third of support staff said that other commitments and demands on their time prevented them from taking part in training and development. Lack of funding was also identified as a barrier by one in seven support staff. Smaller proportions of respondents mentioned other factors that they said prevented them from taking part in training and development, such as being older, not knowing what training and development was available and/or thinking that the training and development available was not relevant to them.

Similar findings were also reported by Unison (2009).[154] The barriers to training raised in workshops were found to be: cultural; to do with leadership; resources; training related and personal. Cultural issues included managers and leaders not perceiving the need for support staff performance review; teachers treat support staff much as they do learners, forgetting that people have the ability to improve and develop.Discrimination was also a factor. Autocratic or ineffective leaders and a lack of management support could also present barriers. The nature of contracts – term time only, and the lack of paid time, release time or time developed to analysing needs were problematic, as were resources: funding or a budget for CPD, transport or paid cover when staff were out. Barriers related to training included the lack of an effective performance management system for all staff, irrelevant training – training that was not personal and the lack of availability of relevant course for support staff. Information and advice and guidance were also identified as issues, with poor communications and being swamped by too much choice both cited as particular barriers. Finally, a range of personal factors presented barriers: personal and family commitments, a lack of confidence/low self esteem, 'baggage' (including negative previous experiences) and moving people out of their comfort zones.

To overcome these barriers a number of strategies were recommended

- Bridge the 'them and us' culture through strategic CPD planning and through showing the value of CPD for support staff to teachers and support staff themselves.

- Share the experience and benefits of support staff CPD by disseminating them within the school and celebrating success.

---

[153] Teeman, D. Barnes, M. Mundy, E. Philips, C. Walker, M. Johnson, F. Scott, E. Lin, Y. Gallacher, S. (2008) *The support staff study: exploring experiences of training and Development.* NFER Ipsos Mori
[154] Unison (2009) *Time to Train.* London:Unison

- Promote the concept that professional development is 'part of the job' for everybody in all roles.

- Raise awareness at senior leadership team level and have champions for support staff.

- Ensure support staff training is an integral part of policy and planning and ensure that all staff have equal opportunities when planning.

- Develop review systems including skills audits.

- Ensure appraisals take place – including personal development.

- Offer INSET days as whole-organisation training and ensure that support staff are included.

- Encouragement for support staff to be involved in CPD by paying them to attend.

- Be aware of external sources of funding for support staff such as LSC funding.

- Identify appropriate progression routes and training that are meaningful to the organisation and the individual.

- Investigate and encourage innovative ways of delivering CPD through strategies other than training courses such as mentoring, coaching and networking.

There is need to understand more about potential barriers LSAs in lifelong learning might experience to engaging in CPD and to develop multiple strategies to overcome them.

Conclusions

The review found that literature on the professional development of learning support assistants (LSAs) was extremely limited, therefore evidence from the school sector was examined to learn lessons from the experience. Even so the voice of support staff and learners in research were noticeably absent.

There is a need to conduct research and to publish literature on the professional development of LSAs in lifelong learning and the publication of this review would be a small contribution to building an evidence base.

The voice of LSAs needs to published and heard and it is essential to include LSAs in the development of any programmes of training or professional development for them.

Evidence of the positive impact of support staff on learners and learning has only recently begun to emerge, although anecdotal evidence suggested that they were highly valued. There was also evidence that unless appropriately deployed and trained, support staff could have a detrimental effect.

Further research is required to provide robust evidence of the positive impact of LSAs. Based on evidence from the school sector, **it is essential to train and deploy support staff appropriately, to avoid any detrimental effect.**

Workforce reform in the public sector led to the professionalisation of support staff in schools and more recently to teaching staff and LSAs in lifelong learning and this has led to career progression pathways, national occupational standards and qualifications. **There is a need to evaluate and review the effectiveness of career progression pathways, national occupational standards and qualifications for LSAs.**

To ensure the effectiveness of any professional development programmes for LSAs in the lifelong learning sector, it will be necessary to consider:

- the culture and ethos of organisations – how inclusive they are – as this has a direct impact on the support for and effectiveness of LSAs and on outcomes for learners;

- ensuring understanding of inclusionary practice and how exclusion might be avoided;

- the importance of valuing diversity and understanding the impact on learners and learning of prejudice and stereotypes and knowing how to challenge them;

- clearly defining the role of the LSA and ensuring that all staff are aware of the respective roles of themselves and others which is essential for effective practice.

- the provision of effective training for the generalist role, whilst also providing opportunities to develop a specialist focus;

- the importance of working together, including how to build effective teams for those who manage LSAs and training in how to contribute as an effective team member for all other staff;

- structured time together to plan and prepare activities for teacher and support staff: this has a pivotal influence on support staffelationships with teachers;

- how to address the lack of sufficient time to meet with teaching staff to discuss and collaborate in the planning of learning or to review learning that had taken place;

- a far greater emphasis on teaching and learning in support staff training;

- the importance of effective communication and interaction which needs to be central to programmes of professional development for all LSAs and there needs to be access to more in-depth training to develop specialist skills;

- managing challenging behaviour, which is a high priority issue for support staff and has a major impact on individuals and other learners. LSAs' professional skills would be enhanced by training and development related to understanding and responding appropriately to learners' behaviour that is challenging;

- that teachers need to be properly prepared to forge effective working partnerships with and take responsibility for both the contribution of their LSA colleagues and for all their learners;

- that effective professional development for LSAs encompasses a wide range of strategies and approaches: a framework for professional development within which existing opportunities – and there are many - can be located to form a coherent and comprehensive whole;

- the professional development opportunities that exist which include qualifications. These exist at national qualifications framework (NQF)Levels 2 and 3 and foundation degrees at level 4. CPD however is widely recognised to be much more than attending training or undertaking

courses leading to qualifications. Other strategies include: work shadowing; coaching or mentoring; project work; visits; sharing information; online learning ; peer support; action learning or learning sets; observation; staff meetings; in-house briefings or training and local training programmes.

- that there are some award bearing frameworks and programmes which were designed specifically for LSAs in lifelong learning, and these are often accredited by open college networks (OCNs); and

- the potential barriers - cultural; to do with leadership; resources; training related and personal barriers – that LSAs in lifelong learning might experience in engaging in CPD and how to develop a range of strategies to overcome the barriers.

There is a need for further research to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development and to continue to understand better the most effective ways of supporting staff and the barriers they might experience in gaining access to professional development. This project has made a small contribution to furthering our understanding of the professional development needs of these '*forgotten staff'* but it is only a small beginning and much more remains to be done.

References

Ainscow, M. (2000) The next step for special education supporting the development of inclusive practices. In *British Journal of Special Education, 27 (2) 76-80.*

Alborz, A. Pearson, D, Farrell, P. Howes, A.(2009_ *The impact of adult support staff on pupils and mainstream school a systematic review of evidence.* DCSF-EPPI-09-01 http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-EPPI-09-01.pdf(accessed 20.03.10)

Aylen, M. (2007) From Teacher Aides to Teaching Assistants: how Plowden promoted parental participation in our primary schools. *Forum. Volume 49, Numbers 1 & 2 pp 107-113.*

Ascentis (2010) Certificate in Learning Support http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/qualification/50054697.seo.aspx (accessed 13.3.10)

Bach, S. Kessler, I. and Heron, P. (2004) *Support Roles and Changing Job Boundaries in the Public Services: The Case of Teaching Assistants in British Primary Schools.* Paper presented to the 22nd Annual International Labour Process Conference Amsterdam 5-7 April 2004. ESRC.

Bailey, B.and Robson, J. (2004) Learning Support Workers in Further Education in England: a hidden revolution? *Journal of Further and Higher Education, Vol 28, No.4*

Balshaw, M. H. (2000) *Help in the Classroom*, 2nd edition. London: David Fulton Publishers

Balshaw, M. H. and Farrell, P. (2002) *Teaching Assistants: practical strategies for effective classroom support* London: David Fulton Publishers

Balshaw, M. H. and Sheffield City Council Organisational Development, (2009) Learning and Development (School Support staff) Service *The Good Practice Guide: A tool for managers and TAs/HLTAs* Pearson Publishing

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. New York: General Learning Press.

Bedford, D. Jackson, C. Wilson, E.(2008) New Partnerships for Learning: Teachers' Perspectives on Their Developing Professional Relationships with Teaching Assistants in England. *Journal of In-service Education, v34 n1 p7-25 Mar 2008*

Black-Hawkins, K. Florian, L. Rouse, M. (2007) *Achievement and Inclusion in Schools.* Routledge.

Blatchford, P. Russell, A. Bassett, P. Brown, P. Martin C. (2004) *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.* DCSF Research Report RR605.

Blatchford, P., Russell, A., Bassett, P., Brown, P., & Martin, C. (2007) , The role and effects of teaching assistants in English primary schools (Years 4-6) 2000-2003. Results from the Class Size and Pupil-Adult Ratios (CSPAR) KS2 Project. *British Educational research journal, 33 (1),* 5-26.

Blatchford, P. Bassett, P. Brown, P. Martin, C. Russell, A. Webster, R. (2009) *Deployment and impact of support staff project. DCSF-RB148* DCSF

Booth, T. and Ainscow, M. (2002) *Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools London: CSIE*

Bourke, P. (2008) *The experiences of teacher aides who support students with disabilities and learning difficulties: A phenomenological study.* Queensland University of Technology.

Broadbent, C., and Burgess, J. (2003) Building effective inclusive classrooms through supporting the professional learning of special needs teacher assistants. Paper presented at the Communities of learning: Communities of practice: 43rd Annual ALA National Conference.

Broer, S. M., Doyle, M. B. Giangreco, M. F. (2005) Perspectives of students with intellectual disabilities about their experiences with paraprofessional supports. *Exceptional Children, 71*, 415-430.

Brookson, M. (2006) working as a teaching assistant in Bruce, T. *Early Childhood: a Guide for Students* London: Sage.

Burgess, H., and Mayes, A., (2009) An exploration of higher level teaching assistants' perceptions of their training and development in the context of school workforce reform. *Support for Learning, 24(1) pp 19-25.*

Burton, S. Shotton, G. (2004). Building emotional resilience. *Special Children*, September/October 2004, 18−20.

Burton, S. (2008) Empowering learning support assistants to enhance the emotional wellbeing of children in school. In *Educational and Child Psychology Vol 25 No 2.* British Psychological Society 2008.

Butt, G. and Lance, A (2005) Modernising the roles of support staff in primary schools: Changing focus, changing function. *Educational review 57(2) pp 139-149.*

Campbell, A. Fairbairn, G. (2005) *Working with support in the classroom.* Paul Chapman Publishing.

Collins, J., Simco, N., (2004) *The emergence of the Teaching Assistant as reflective assistant: a well established norm, a new reality or a future aspiration?* Paper

presented at the 2004 British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Manchester.

Clarke, C. Dyson, A. Millward, A. Robson, S. (1999) Theories of Inclusion, Theories of Schools: Deconstructing and reconstructing the 'inclusive school'. *British Educational Research Journal 25(2) 157.*

DCSF (2008) *The Appropriate Deployment of Support Staff in Schools* WAMG Note 22 July 2008 London; DCFS www.dcsf.gov.uk

Derrington, C. Groom, B. (2004) *A Team Approach to Behaviour Management. A Training Guide for SENCOs working with Teaching Assistants.* Paul Chapman Publishing A Sage Publications Company

Dew-Hughes, D, Brayton, H. Blandford, S. (1998) 'A survey of Training and Professional Development for Learning Support Assistants', *Support for Learning, 13 (4)*

DfEE (2000) *Working with Teaching Assistants: A Good Practice Guide* (2000)

Farrell, P. Balshaw, M. Polat, F (2000) The work of learning support assistants in mainstream schools: Implications for educational psychologists. *Educational and Child Psychology Vol. 17 (2) 66- 76*

Farrell, P., Balshaw, M. H. and Polat, F. (1999) *The Management, Role and Training of Learning Support Assistants* London: DfEE publications

Fullan, M. (1991) *The New Meaning of Educational Change* New York: Teachers College press sheffield.gov.uk

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences.* New York: BasicBooks.

Gershel, L. (2005). The special educational needs coordinator's role in managing teaching assistants: the Greenwich perspective. In *Support for Learning • Volume 20 • Number 2 •* 2005 pp 69-70

Giangreco, M., Edelman, S., Luiselli, T., MacFarland, S., (1997) Helping or Hovering? Effects of instructional assistant proximity on students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children* 64: 7-18.

Giangreco, M. Edelman, S. Broer, M. Doyle, M. (2001) Paraprofessional support of students with disabilities: Literature from the past decade. *Exceptional Children*, 68,pp 45-63.

Giangreco, M. Doyle, M. (2007) Teacher assistants in inclusive schools. In Lani Florian *The Sage handbook of special education.* Sage pp429-439

Groom, B. (2006) Building relationships for learning: the developing role of the teaching assistant. In *Support for Learning • Volume 21 • Number 4 •* 2006 pp199-203

Groom, B. and Rose, R. (2005) Supporting the inclusion of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in the primary school: The role of teaching assistants. *Journal of Research in Special Eductaional Needs 5(1), pp 20-30.*

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence.* New York: Bantam Books.

Hemmingsson, H., Borell, L., & Gustavsson, A. (2003) Participation in school: School assistants creating opportunities and obstacles for pupils with disabilities.

Occupational Therapy Journal of Research, 23(3), 88-98.

Howes, A. (2003). Teaching reforms and the impact of paid adult support on participation and learning in mainstream schools. In *Support for Learning • Volume 18 • Number 4 •* 2003 pp147-153

Jones, P. (2003) *A teaching assistant's tale.* TDA website (accessed 03.03.10) http://www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling/nationalagreement/resources/casestudies/remodelling/ta_story.aspx

Lacey, P. (2001) The Role of Learning Support Assistants in the Inclusive Learning of Pupils with severe and profound Learning Difficulties. *Educational review, Vol 53(2) pp157-167.*

Lamb Inquiry (2010) *Lamb Inquiry Special educational needs and parental confidence* DCSF-01143-2009
http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/lambinquiry/downloads/8553-lamb-inquiry.pdf   (accessed 20.03.10)

Lee, B. (2002) *Teaching assistants in schools: the current state of play.* (NFER Researchsummary). Slough: NFER

LLUK (2007) *Providing learning support to individuals or groups of learners.* LLUK
http://www.ukstandards.co.uk/Admin/DB/0030/STANDARD%20A.pdf   (accessed 20.03.10)

LLUK (2007) *Guidance for awarding institutions on teacher roles and initial teaching qualifications.* London: LLUK

Logan, A. (2006) The role of the special needs assistants supporting pupils with special needs in Irish mainstream primary schools. *Support for Learning* 21(2) pp92-99

Lorenz, S. (1998) *Effective In-Class Support.* David Fulton publishers

Lund, B. (1999) *The Teacher – Learning Support Assistant Role.* TDA www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/doc/b/barbara-lund.doc (accessed 03.03.10)

Maslow, A.H. (1970). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper Row.

Moran, A. Abbott, L. (2002) *Developing inclusive schools: The pivotal role of teaching assistants in promoting inclusion in special and mainstream schools in Northern Ireland. European Journal of Special Needs Education 17*(2), 161-173

Mansaray, A. (2006) *Liminality and in/exclusion:exploring the work of teaching assistants.* ISSN 1468-1366

NFER (2007) HLTA Deployment and Impact NFER/TDA http://www.tda.gov.uk/support/support_staff_roles/learningsupportstaff/hlta/resources _2007.aspx accessed (23.02.10)

O'Brien, T. Garner P. (2001) *Untold Stories: Learning Support Assistants and Their Work.* Tentham Books Ltd

Ofsted(1999) *Review of Primary Education 1994-98*. London: Ofsted

Ofsted (2010) *Workforce reform in schools: has it made a difference?* London: Ofsted

Pearson, S., Chambers, G., Hall, K. (2003) Video material as a support to developing effective collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants. *Support for learning 18(2) pp 83-87.*

QIA *Learning Support Workers Just how valuable are they and can we improve their effectiveness further still?* QIA Excellence gateway

(http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/Learning%20for%20support%20workers%20_3_.pdf accessed 3.03.10)

Richards, G. Armstrong, F (2008) *Key issues for teaching assistants working in diverse and inclusive classrooms.* Routledge

Robson, J., Bailey, B. Mendick, H. (2006) *An investigation into the roles of learning support workers in the learning and skills sector.* LSRC. www.lsneducation.org.uk/pubs/pages/062568.aspx

Rose, R, O'Neill, A. (2009) Classroom support for inclusion in England and Ireland: an evaluation of contrasting models. *Research in Comparative and International Education.* 4(3) pp250-261.

Salovey, P. & Mayer, J.D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality, 9*, 185–211.

Schön D (1983) *The reflective assistant.* Basic Books: New York

Sharp, P., Herrick, E. & Faupel, A. (1998). *Anger management: A practical guide.* London: David Fulton.

Sheffield LA (2006) *The Sheffield Experience* www.sheffield.gov.uk

Sheffield LA (2004) *The Sheffield Guarantee for continuing professional development for support staff* (2004) London: TDA (2007) www.tda.gov.uk.hlta

Signature http://www.signature.org.uk/index.php (accessed 21.03.10)

Skar, L. & Tamm, M. (2001). My assistant and I: Disabled children's and adolescents' roles and relationships to their assistants. *Disability and Society*, 16, pp917-931.

South West Workforce Development Partnership (2008). *Project report for the Continuing Professional Needs of Learning Support Assistants.* West of England School and College for young people with little or no sight. LSC.

South West Workforce Development Partnership (2009). *Project report for the CPD Continuation Project; Continuing Professional Needs of Learning Support Assistants.* West of England School and College for young people with little or no sight.LSC.

Suffolk PathwaysCPD for Teaching Assistants/Learning Support Assistants/Classroom Assistants and Cover Supervisors in Suffolk (www.slamnet.org.uk) (accessed 3.03.10)

TDA (2008) *Unlocking the potential of your support staff* London: (2008) www.tda.gov.uk.hlta

TDA *Evaluating training and development.* http://www.tda.gov.uk/support/cdf/planner_guidance/eval_tandd_ss.aspx (accessed 03.03.10)

TDA *Working with colleagues in school self study task16* http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/sen/selfstudy/task16.pdf (accessed 21.03.10)

Teeman, D. Barnes, M. Mundy, E. Philips, C. Walker, M. Johnson, F. Scott, E. Lin, Y. Gallacher, S. (2008) *The support staff study: exploring experiences of training and Development.* NFER Ipsos Mori

Thomas, H. Butt, G. Fielding A. Foster, J. Gunter, H. Lance, A. Pilkington, R. Potts, L. Powers, S. Rayner, S. Rutherford, D. Selwood, I. Szwed, S.(2004) *The Evaluation of the Transforming the School Workforce Pathfinder Project.* Research Report No 541

Tyrer, R. Gunn, S. Lee, C. Parker, M. Townsend, M. (2004) *A Toolkit for the Effective Teaching Assistant.* Paul Chapman Publishing.

UNESCO (1991) *Special Needs in the Classroom: a teacher education resource pack* Paris: Unesco http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/research/basic/PDF/teachers1.pdf (accessed 20.03.10)

UNESCO (2004) *Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: The use of support staff* Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning

Unison (2009) *Time to Train.* London:Unison

Valchou, A. (2004)Education and inclusive policy-making: Implications for research and practice. *Internaltional Journal of Inclusive Education. 10* pp39-58Ware, L (2002). A moral conversation on disability: Risking the personal in educational contexts. *Hypatia 17*(3) 143–172.

Watkinson, A. (2003) *Managing Teaching Assistants. A guide for head teachers, managers and teachers.* Routledge Falmer

Ware, L (2002). A moral conversation on disability: Risking the personal in educational contexts. *Hypatia 17*(3) 143–172.

Watkinson, A. (2008) *Leading and managing teaching assistants.* London: David Fulton

Wilson, V. Schlapp, U. Davidson, J. (2003) *An 'Extra Pair of Hands'? Managing Classroom Assistants in Scottish Primary Schools.* Educational Management Administration & Leadership, Vol. 31, No. 2, 189-205

Appendix A: Methodology

This review of literature formed part of the '*enhancement of learning support'* project that set out to develop and deliver a national programme to improve the quality of learning support for learners with additional needs across the FE sector by developing a training programme for learning support assistants and those who manage them, across the full range of contexts in the lifelong learning sector.

The study is a small scale review that cannot claim to be comprehensive, but nevertheless begins to fill a major gap in knowledge about LSAs and some themes and findings emerged so consistently that they can be reported with confidence.

The key questions the literature review sought to address was:

- "What do we know about the professional development of LSAs?"

An initial search revealed that literature on the professional development of learning support assistants was extremely limited, therefore an additional question was added to examine the rather more substantial body of evidence from the school sector and to learn lessons from the experience.

- "What can we learn from the experience of the school sector?"

To address these questions, it was necessary to look at policy and guidance documents including national occupational standards, career pathway documents, qualifications and training materials, as well as research evidence. The voice of support staff was also sought and was found to be noticeably absent.

The approach to the research review used mixed-methods, guided by a combination of the principles of 'systematic review' and 'realist synthesis'. This allowed for an approach to the selection of material through the use of inclusion and exclusion criteria and an agreed research focus, which was part of the systematic review methodology, to be combined with the flexibility for refinement of findings as work progressed afforded by the realist synthesis approach.

 Initial suggestions of literature to review were made by team members, steering group members and other contacts. This was followed up by a conversation with the person leading the development of the national occupational standards, to establish if any reviews already existed. The response suggested that no comprehensive review of LSAs in lifelong learning had been conducted.

A web-based search strategy was developed to identify further literature. The criteria for inclusion and exclusion were:

Date:	previous 15 years, 1995 onwards , except seminal texts
Countries:	English language only
Document types	Web published research, reports, UK government policy documents, systematic and meta reviews, grey literature where recommended to include conference proceedings and guidance documents, journals, national occupational standards, career pathway documents, qualifications and training materials
Primary study population	Learning Support Assistants and Learning Support Assistant Managers
Key words used for the search	Learning Support Assistant(s) learning support assistant(s), learning support workers, Teaching Assistants, Higher Level Teaching Assistants, support staff, learning support PLUS training, development, CPT, ITT induction, workforce development, managers
Data base and website searches	DCSF, DIUS, LLUK, LSIS, QCA, NIACE, BEI, CUREE, EEP, NFER, journals

A supplementary search was conducted by Skill of Skill Journals.

Sites were identified for database and website searches which included educational research sites and key organisations' websites. Web searches were also conducted via Google Scholar.

As documents were reviewed for relevance, a framework for analytical review was developed which included the impact and effectiveness of LSAs, professionalisation, organisational factors that support LSAs development, the focus for LSA development, issues for managers, barriers and approaches to professional development. The documents were analysed and a synthesis of findings was made.