The Management, Role and Training of Learning Support Assistants

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of learning support assistants (LSAs) working in mainstream and special schools. The implications of this for the development of effective practice is referred to in the Green Paper Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs (DfEE, 1997), and in the follow up document Meeting Special Educational Needs a Programme of Action (DfEE, 1998a). Furthermore the Green Paper Teachers Meeting the Challenge of Change (DfEE, 1998b) signals the projected increase in the number of classroom assistants who will provide general support in mainstream schools and not solely restricted to pupils with special educational needs. These developments raise a number of questions related to effective practice in the management, role and training of LSAs in mainstream and special schools. This study set out to explore these issues by carrying out a number of case study visits to local education authority (LEA) support services, mainstream and special schools in which interviews were held with teachers, LSAs, parents, pupils and other related professionals. In addition, a questionnaire on the training of LSAs was sent to training providers, mainly colleges of further education and LEAs.

Key Findings

- **The role of LSAs.** LSAs undertake a whole variety of tasks that are both complex and challenging but, apart from their very general role of supporting the teacher, there is no consistent pattern of working practices both within and between mainstream and special schools. There is also no clear distinction between the work of LSAs with pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and that of other general classroom assistants. This indicates the need for a single profession of classroom assistants with a unified career structure. The lack of planning time for LSAs and teachers is consistently reported as a key factor that can reduce the effectiveness of their work. An exception to this is the increasing involvement of LSAs in supporting teachers in implementing the National Literacy Strategy, where the role is more clearly defined and the level of prescription results in everyone sharing clear objectives. The vast majority of LSAs who were interviewed were extremely enthusiastic and committed to their work.

- **The management of LSAs.** In the majority of schools visited, the LSAs felt supported by senior management and part of the whole school team. However, they were extremely concerned about their low levels of pay and almost non-existent career structure. In some schools there are LSAs on different pay scales who are doing very similar, if not identical work. Many are still on temporary contracts that are linked to pupils with statements. There were conflicting opinions as to who should be responsible for employing LSAs – schools or LEA support services. LSAs who are appointed by a centrally-based LEA service are generally on permanent contracts and the service usually offers ongoing training and induction. However some schools prefer to appoint their own LSAs and to take more direct control over their management.

- **The training of LSAs.** Virtually all training providers strongly supported government policy on the need for there to be a nationally recognised and accredited training programme for LSAs. They felt that this should be linked to salary and career progression and might included a pathway that could eventually lead to a teaching qualification, however the case studies showed that only 20% wished to become qualified teachers. At present the content of all accredited training courses is extremely varied and there is no core curriculum that is common to all of them. In regard to school-based non-accredited training, LSAs are normally invited to attend courses but many considered that these were not relevant to their needs.
Aims of the study

The detailed aims of the study were as follows:

- To carry out a series of visits to different LEAs and schools where LSAs work to obtain the views of a range of stakeholders, including parents, teachers, senior staff in schools and LEAs, pupils and LSAs about their role in schools, the ways they are managed and supported, career structures and training opportunities;

- To conduct a nation-wide survey of training providers - mainly colleges of further education and LEAs - to obtain an overview of the range of training opportunities that are currently on offer and to seek the views of providers about current and future developments in training.

In carrying out this research the intention has been to relate the findings to the development of effective practice in the management, role and training of LSAs in both mainstream and special schools. In this way it is intended that the work of LSAs, their schools and LEAs is informed by this report and by any further guidance that follows it.

The focus of this research is on the work of LSAs in relation to pupils with special needs in special and mainstream schools. However, there is inevitably a large overlap between the work of general classroom assistants and LSAs and many of the findings and recommendations in this report apply to both groups.

Methodology

The sites that were visited were chosen to reflect examples of “good and interesting practice” in relation to the management, role and training of LSAs in different areas of the country. The 21 sites were made up of:

- four LEA support services;

- six non-resourced mainstream schools – (3 primary and 3 secondary);
  (These were schools where LSAs worked but which did not receive additional LEA funding to support a group of pupils with a specified range of disabilities);

- six additionally resourced mainstream schools (3 primary and 3 secondary),
  (These schools had been resourced to cater for pupils with a specified range of special needs, e.g. severe learning difficulties, hearing impairment);

- three special schools; and

- two schools/services maintained by voluntary organisations.

The questionnaire to training providers was sent to colleges of further and higher education, universities, LEAs and voluntary organisations. Information on 339 courses was provided, 91% of which were run by FE colleges and LEAs. An average of 67% of training providers offering courses to LSAs returned questionnaires.

Issues arising from the research

The role of learning support assistants

The evidence of this study suggests that there is a clearly understood distinction between the role of LSAs and teachers. Teachers are responsible for the overall success of the teaching programmes; they plan the programmes, monitor the pupils’ progress, plan review meetings
and liaise with parents. Meanwhile, LSAs are 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, in assessment and recording, and in working with parents.

- LSAs tend to support pupils in mainstream classes by keeping regular contact with those who may need help but, in general, they do not sit with a pupil throughout a lesson unless s/he is working on a completely different curriculum activity from that of their peer group.

- A wide variety of practices were observed in relation to withdrawing pupils from class for individual sessions. Teachers and LSAs adopt a flexible approach to this issue and were responsive to pupils’ wishes.

**The management of learning support assistants**

- Currently there is virtually no career structure for LSAs. The majority can work for several years in a mainstream or special school with little or no prospect of promotion or significant rise in salary.

- Most LSAs have job descriptions though many do not refer to them and, in non-resourced mainstream schools in particular, they frequently undertake work that is completely unrelated to their job description.

- The whole issue of contracts and pay remains a source of great concern. Levels of pay are seen as being far too low when set against the work that LSAs undertake and the responsibilities they are given. Many contracts are temporary and tied to a pupil with a statement. LSAs in the some schools are on different pay scales although they do very similar, if not identical jobs.

**The training of learning support assistants**

- The survey of training providers indicated that the City and Guilds Certificate in Learning Support is by far the most popular accredited training course for LSAs.

- The content of all accredited training courses is extremely broad whether they are run by LEAs, FE colleges or other educational institutions.

- LSAs valued the opportunity to receive training, both accredited and non-accredited, particularly if it related to their daily work. However they were unanimous in stating that attending training courses had no impact on salary or career progression.

- Virtually all training providers stressed the urgent need for there to be a nationally recognised and accredited training programme for LSAs that is linked to salary and career progression and which could eventually lead to a teaching qualification for LSAs who wished to become teachers.

- The induction of LSAs appears to be variable across the different sites that were visited. Although some examples of good practice were observed, there is scope for schools and LEAs to make further improvements in this area.
Recommendations on the development of effective practice

The findings from this study are complex and sometimes contradictory. However, there are a number of common themes that have emerged, which indicate how practice might move forward in this area. This has made it possible to develop a common framework that can be used to arrive at a definition of effective practice in the work of LSAs in whatever settings they are employed. The basis of this framework confirms the general findings that suggest that effective practice:

- fosters the participation of pupils in the social and academic processes of the school;
- seeks to enable pupils to become more independent learners;
- helps to raise standards for all pupils.

The results indicate that dimensions of effective practice, defined in this way, are rooted in the work LSAs undertake, their role, in the way they are managed and supported, and in the quality and availability of training they receive. These three dimensions, role, management and training, are interconnected in a whole series of ways such that all need to be considered together in order for practice to move forward. Within this overall framework, each dimension can be divided into a set of indicators of effective practice:

- At the classroom level these relate to how LSAs work with individuals and groups of pupils, their role in the planning and evaluation of pupils’ progress and in the wider contributions they can make:
  
  A1. LSAs work co-operatively with teachers to support the learning and participation of pupils;
  
  A2. LSAs work with teachers to prepare lesson plans and materials;
  
  A3. LSAs contribute to the evaluation of the outcomes of lessons;
  
  A4. LSAs make relevant contributions to wider school activities.

- At the management level the indicators refer, on the one hand, to how LSAs are supported in schools and LEAs and made to feel part of a team, and, on the other, to school and LEA policies on salary, conditions of service and career structures:

  B1. Teachers’ management strategies provide clear guidance as to how LSAs should work in their classrooms;
  
  B2. Schools have policies outlining roles and responsibilities of LSAs;

  B3. LEA policies ensure that LSAs’ conditions of employment foster effective practice.

- At the training level they relate to the quality of school-based training and support and to the availability of relevant in-service and accredited courses that improve classroom practice and are linked to salary and career progression:

  C1. Teachers and LSAs learn together to improve the quality of their work;

  C2. School staff development programmes foster the competence of LSAs and teachers to carry out their respective tasks;
C3. LEAs provide relevant additional training and support for LSAs;

C4. Use is made of (institution-based) external courses, or courses run by voluntary organisations to extend the expertise of LSAs.

These key indicators lead to the formation of some central questions about the management, role and training of LSAs that form a Review Agenda for schools and LEAs to consider when planning to improve their work in this complex area. This Review Agenda can be used in a number of ways, for example in school-based inset for teachers and assistants, as a planning guide for LEAs and senior managers or by training providers who are developing new courses or adapting existing ones. It can be applied to any setting where LSAs work and is also relevant for all assistants and not just to those who work with pupils with SEN. The Review Agenda forms the basis of a final set of recommendations on ways of developing a career structure for LSAs that is linked to salary, training and job descriptions.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and context

Traditionally the task of teaching pupils and managing classrooms, particularly in mainstream schools, has been the responsibility of qualified teachers working on their own with support from senior colleagues. However, a number of recent government initiatives have had a significant impact on classroom practice in mainstream schools and have led to an increasing numbers of staff without a teaching qualification being employed to work alongside teachers in the classroom. These initiatives include the implementation of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Needs and the continuing rise in the numbers of pupils with statements of special needs being placed in mainstream schools.

In contrast to these developments in mainstream schools, special schools, in particular schools for pupils with severe learning and physical difficulties, and mainstream nursery and infant departments, have employed classroom assistants for many years. In the past such staff were typically referred to as nursery nurses and had obtained the NNEB qualification. Their role tended to be one of assisting the teacher by helping pupils in the toilet and in getting changed for PE, and in generally keeping the classroom tidy. Indeed they were appointed because it was recognised that very young pupils and those with severe and complex special needs required help in completing these self-help and, by implication, non-educational tasks. Teachers, on the other hand, were appointed to teach the regular curriculum and the presence of assistants to help with these other “peripheral” activities enabled them to do this.

It was not until the late 1970’s that the role of assistants in special schools began to expand into other areas of work. This partly came about following the transfer (in 1970) of the former junior training centres from the responsibility of social services departments to LEAs. This move highlighted the need for all staff in ESN(S) schools, as they were then called, to receive training in a whole range of areas. Influential courses such as the Education of the Developmentally Young - EDY (Foxen and McBrien, 1981) and Portage (White and Cameron, 1987), were specifically targeted at assistants as well as teachers. In addition “room management” schemes (e.g. Thomas, 1985) were designed to show how the roles of teacher and assistant could be interchanged so that both groups could work with children in all areas of the curriculum, including self-help tasks.

In mainstream schools the increasing number and expanding role of assistants reflects, in part, a growing national and international movement to make educational provision more inclusive and to reduce the potential for marginalising pupils with special needs in separate special schools. Assistants therefore have the potential to play a key role in helping to make inclusive education effective for all pupils including those with statements. This important role is reflected in government figures which suggest that in January 1997 there were as many as 24,000 full time equivalent learning support assistants (LSAs) working in mainstream schools in England (DfEE, 1997).

Recently the government has signalled its intention to extend the role of assistants beyond that of working with pupils who have special needs. The Green Paper “Teachers Meeting the Challenge of Change” (DfEE, 1998b) refers to an extra £20 million that has been allocated to recruit and train the equivalent of 2,000 literacy assistants and its intention to provide a further 20,000 full-time equivalent assistants for schools by 2002. In the next few years, therefore, there will be a continued and rapid growth in the numbers of assistants employed in mainstream schools who will work with pupils.

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1 ESN(S) - Educationally Subnormal (Severe)
across the ability range. LSAs therefore have a major contribution to make in helping the government to achieve its objectives to raise standards for all pupils.

The increasingly important role of assistants is reflected in the growing number of publications in this area. Three studies have recently been completed, one commissioned by Unison (Lee and Mawson, 1998), one by the National Union of Teachers (NUT, 1998) and the other by the TTA (Smith et al, 1999). These have focused on the work of classroom assistants in general, without specifically focusing on those working with pupils with SEN although these made up half the sample in the Unison study. The studies are complemented by the large number of books and articles that track the changing and developing role of assistants over the last fifteen years (see for example Balshaw, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1998, 1999; Clayton, 1993; Fox, 1993, 1998; Morgan, et al 1998; Potter and Richardson, 1999, Lorenz, 1998; Dyer, 1996; McGarvey et al. 1996; Dew-Hughes et al. 1998). In addition recent books on special needs and inclusion devote substantial sections to this area of work (see for example Thomas et al. 1998; Tilstone et al. 1998). Interest in this area in the UK has been matched by developments in the USA in the role and training of what they tend to call para-educators or para-professionals (see, for example, Storey, 1993; Sanacore, 1997; Hilton and Gerlach, 1997; Pickett, 1986).

1.2 The aims of the research

The expansion in the numbers of LSAs and their evolving role in mainstream and special schools has raised a series of issues that are the focus of this research. These include the nature, scope and availability of training opportunities, the effectiveness of training that is offered, contractual and salary issues, career structures, the relevance of job descriptions, different styles of supporting pupils in classrooms, and the ways in which LSAs are managed and supported. These and other issues were highlighted in the Government’s Green Paper “Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs” (DfEE, 1997) which also referred to the need for more research in this area. As a result the Centre for Educational Needs at the University of Manchester was invited to carry out a study which had the following aims:

- To carry out a series of visits to different LEAs and schools where LSAs work to obtain the views of a range of stakeholders including parents, teachers, senior staff in schools and LEAs, pupils and LSAs about their role in schools, the ways they are managed and supported, career structures and their training opportunities;
- To conduct a nation-wide survey of training providers - mainly colleges of further education and LEAs - to obtain an overview of the range of training opportunities that are currently on offer and to seek the views of providers about current and future developments in training.

In carrying out this research our intention has been to relate the findings to the development of effective practice in the management, role and training of LSAs in both mainstream and special schools. We have therefore drawn conclusions from our findings that enable us to present a picture of what we consider to be effective practice in the work of LSAs working in a range of different contexts. By offering this model of effective practice it is intended that the work of LSAs, their schools and LEAs is informed through this report and by any further guidance that follows it.

The focus of this research is on the work of LSAs in relation to pupils with special needs in special and mainstream schools. However there is inevitably a large overlap between the work of general classroom assistants and LSAs and many of the findings and recommendations in this report apply to both groups.

Throughout the research the project team were guided by advice received from the project steering committee, convened by the DfEE, and by an advisory group comprising senior staff in the North of
England with experience of working with LSAs. The full membership of the steering committee and advisory group is provided in appendix 1.

1.3 The scope of this report

Following the introduction, the report describes the methodology used for both phases of the research, the site visits and postal survey, and provides information about the range and numbers of interviews which took place and statistical information on questionnaire returns. In the following three sections, 3, 4, and 5, we present and integrate the main findings from the interviews, observations and questionnaire, in a way that attempts to illustrate the range of thinking and practice in the field. Inevitably the picture that emerged was quite complex and at times contradictory. Therefore the findings reflect the wide range of views and experiences that were reported and that we observed in schools and classrooms. In section 6, we offer an interpretation of these findings and consider their implications for the development of effective practice. We conclude the report with a summary of the main findings, focusing on the management, role and training of LSAs. This summary is presented in the form of an agenda that can be used to evaluate and review existing policies and practices at the LEA, school and classroom level. We also provide a set of recommendations relating to contracts, career progression and training of LSAs.
2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 The site visits

The aim of this phase of the research was to visit LEA services and schools where it was thought that there would be examples of “good and interesting practice” in relation to the management, role and training of LSAs. The criteria for selecting the sites were based on a number of factors, including personal recommendations from people working in the area and Ofsted reports. In addition, it was important to select sites from different parts of the country, in different types of LEAs, and which reflected a mixture of urban and rural areas and the full range of disabilities. The 21 sites visited are summarised below:

- Four LEA support services

In three of these services the LEA employed the LSAs who were then attached to schools to support individuals and/or small groups of pupils with SEN. The service base was visited together with one secondary and one primary school where staff from the service are attached. In the fourth LEA the service offered co-ordinated training programmes to LSAs in their area.

LEA 1  A service offering support from teachers and LSAs to pupils with general and severe learning difficulties in an urban LEA in the North West of England;
LEA 2  A service offering support from teachers and LSAs to pupils with general and specific learning difficulties in a mixed urban and rural LEA in the North of England;
LEA 3  A service offering support from teachers and LSAs to pupils with a range of difficulties in a London borough;
LEA 4  A service offering a training programme for LSAs in a largely rural LEA in the North East of England;

- Six non-resourced mainstream schools – (3 primary and 3 secondary)

These were schools where LSAs worked but which did not receive additional LEA funding to support a group of pupils with a specified range of disabilities. LSAs in these schools could be employed to support individual pupils with statements of SEN and/or they might give support to small groups of pupils who are thought to have emerging special needs.

1P (NR)  A primary school in a town in the South in an urban LEA;
2P (NR)  A primary school in the South East in an mixed rural and urban LEA;
3P (NR)  A primary school in a North London borough;
1S (NR)  A secondary school in the North in an urban LEA;
2S (NR)  A secondary school (GM) in the East Midlands in a mixed rural and urban LEA;
3S (NR)  A secondary school in the West Midlands in a town in a mixed rural and urban LEA.

- Six additionally resourced mainstream schools (3 primary and 3 secondary)

These schools had been resourced to cater for pupils with a specified range of special needs, e.g. severe learning difficulties, hearing impairment. Typically such pupils were assigned to a work-base or designated area of the school although many spent a considerable portion of the each day in a mainstream class.
Three special schools.

- **1S** A school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in an urban LEA in the London area;
- **2S** A school for pupils with severe learning difficulties in an urban LEA in the West Midlands;
- **3S** A special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties in a mixed urban and rural LEA in the South East.

Two schools/services maintained by voluntary organisations.

- **VO 1** A school for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in an urban LEA in the North West;
- **VO 2** A voluntary organisation for pupils with visual impairment offering training for LSAs in a national programme.

More detailed descriptions of each of the sites are presented in appendix 2.

Interview schedules were developed in consultation with the steering committee and advisory group. These contained a series of key questions each of which were followed by a number of prompts that enabled the researchers to probe further into those areas which might not be addressed by the interviewees’ initial response.

Given the diverse nature of the case study sites a number of interview schedules was drawn up, not all of which were used for each visit. These were used to interview the following:

- LSAs – mainstream and special schools
- Headteachers – mainstream schools
- Headteachers – special schools
- Teachers – mainstream schools/support service teachers
- Teachers – special schools
- Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) – mainstream schools
- Parents – mainstream schools
- Parents – special schools
- LEA officers/heads of support services
- Governors
- Pupils

Condensed versions of the interview schedules is presented in appendix 3.
Given the fact that some sites, e.g. LEA support services and special schools, contain a large number of LSAs and class teachers, some of the interviews were conducted as focus groups. The items on the relevant schedules were written on overhead transparencies and interviewees invited to work individually or in small groups and record their responses. Group responses were summarised on a flip chart. The project team retained all written responses. Focus groups were used for groups of five or more members where the context permitted it. For the interviews participants were asked to respond fully to each of the items on the interview schedule. The interviewers took detailed notes and regularly checked back with the interviewee(s) so as to ensure that they had made an accurate record. Interviews with senior staff and SENCOs were tape recorded where possible to allow more accurate analysis of the data.

In the majority of school sites LSAs were observed working with pupils with special needs in class or in a small group in a separate room.

The data collection procedure, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, was piloted for two of the case study visits by two members of the project team working together. This enabled us to verify the interpretability and relevance of the interview questions, explore the logistics of carrying out site visits and to check on the validity of our interpretations. Pilot visits were made to an LEA support service and a resourced secondary school.

A total of 21 sites were visited. LEA site visits, where there was a central service of assistants, took three days to complete; one day to visit the centre base to meet senior staff, support teachers and a group of LSAs; and two further days to visit a primary and secondary school where LSAs from the service work. Other site visits were completed in one day.

Table 1 provides information on the total numbers of people we interviewed in each of the different sites. From this it can be seen that we interviewed a total of 149 LSAs, 113 teachers, 47 pupils and 35 parents.
Table 2.1: Type of sites and interviewees at each site (n = 408)

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Region Key: N & NE = North and North East; NW = North-West; L & SE = London and South East; S & SW = South and South-West; WM = West Midlands * SLT = Speech and Language Therapist
2.2 The questionnaire survey of training providers

The aim of the postal survey was to obtain a national picture of training provision together with the views of training providers, mainly LEAs and Colleges of Further Education, on a variety of issues including the frequency, length and content of courses, entry requirements, funding and assessment procedures.

Following consultation with members of the steering committee and the advisory group, a pilot version of the questionnaire was distributed to 4 LEAs and 4 Colleges of Further Education. A few amendments were suggested which were incorporated into the final version which was then circulated to organisations that had already agreed to take part in the survey. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. Part 1 was mainly concerned with obtaining factual information about courses. Part 2 contained more open-ended questions seeking the views of providers about current and future developments in training. The content of part 1 of the questionnaire was the same for all providers. However, for LEAs, part 2 contained additional questions concerning their policies and practices on funding and supporting training. Copies of the questionnaires are presented in appendix 4.

In order to obtain the highest possible response rate colleges of further and higher education, universities, LEAs and voluntary organisations in England were contacted by telephone at the start of the project. They were informed about the research and, if they ran courses for LSAs, they were asked if they would like to participate in the survey.

In an attempt to obtain as much information about different courses as was possible, three copies of the questionnaire were sent out to organisations that had agreed to take part. They were asked to complete one for each course and, if they ran more than three courses, they were encouraged to duplicate and complete further questionnaires as necessary.

Table 2.2 provides information on the numbers of different providers who were contacted, the numbers who ran courses for LSAs and agreed to take part in the survey, the number and percentages of those who returned completed questionnaires and the total number of questionnaires that were returned. (Although telephone contact was made with all LEAs –150, we only managed to speak to staff from 133 who had direct knowledge of LSA training in the LEA. Consequently the figure of 133 is quoted as the number contacted in table 2.2).

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<td>Those who ran courses and agreed to take part in the survey</td>
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<td>Number and % of providers returning questionnaires</td>
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The response rate for the two major providers, LEAs and FE colleges, of 69% and 66% is above average for surveys of this kind and suggests that the responses are likely to reflect accurately the range and scope of training for LSAs and the views of those involved in running courses. It is worth noting that virtually all LEAs contacted are involved in running courses for LSAs compared with less
than half of the FE colleges. The figure for LEAs is in contrast to Ofsted’s findings reported in the Green Paper (DfEE, 1997) which stated that “fewer than half of LEAs provide appropriate training for learning support staff”.

3 THE ROLE OF LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

In this and the following two sections we draw on the findings from the site visits. We have chosen to begin with a discussion of the role of assistants as findings from this part of the research have implications for the management and training of LSAs which are considered in sections 4 and 5. A number of different themes emerged from the data in each section and these are discussed separately, although it is important to emphasise that they overlap and interconnect in a number of ways.

3.1 The distinction between the role of class teachers and LSAs

One of the aims of the interviews and observations was to determine the views of stakeholders as to the main ways in which the roles of teachers and LSAs in special and mainstream schools could be distinguished. Two areas were highlighted. The first of these concerned the different roles of LSAs and teachers in the monitoring and review of programmes, writing reports for reviews and liaising with outside agencies. In all cases this was seen as the teachers’ responsibility. However all the LSAs interviewed felt involved in this process and that their views were considered. Some also made written contributions to annual reviews though most preferred to give a verbal report to the teacher. A few LSAs in mainstream schools also attended the annual review meetings whereas in some special schools, in particular for pupils with severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders, it was more common for them to do so. Teachers were responsible for writing reports for reviews but all considered the LSAs’ views to be crucial as they were able to provide detailed and more in depth observations on particular aspects of an individual educational plan (IEP) which the teacher would not be able to comment on, either in a report or at a review meeting the responsibility for planning and implementing pupils’ IEPs. In general teachers were responsible for planning programmes of work for the pupils and LSAs implemented them. This applied in different types of mainstream schools, primary/secondary, resourced/non-resourced, and in special schools and is in line with the findings from the NUT study (NUT, 1998). This general view about the respective roles of LSAs and teachers was illustrated in the service manager’s comments in LEA 2. She felt that the difficult and, by implication, more intellectually challenging part of helping pupils with special needs was in assessment and programme planning. This required the expertise of an experienced teacher who could then advise and support the LSA in the implementation of the programme. She considered that much of the actual teaching of pupils with SEN was repetitive and routine and did not require the expertise of a teacher to do successfully. Through working directly with pupils she believed that LSAs were central to the effective delivery of services to pupils with SEN and were a valuable resource to mainstream schools.

Our observations and discussions with LSAs indicated that this clear distinction between the role of LSAs and teachers in respect of the planning and implementation of programmes was not so quite so clear in practice. In general LSAs working in non-resourced mainstream schools and for LEA services tend to be given more opportunities to develop their skills in adapting programmes of work and in planning new programmes. This is partly because they do not have such regular contact with support teachers. For example in a non-resourced secondary school (1S NR), although there are regular meetings between the LSA and SENCO, much of the detailed work on literacy is taught in a withdrawal situation and appears to be planned by the LSA. In addition an LSA working for LEA 1 appeared to take responsibility for planning the communication programmes for the pupil with severe learning difficulties whom she was supporting. In LEA 2, one experienced LSA frequently adapted and modified programmes of work without consulting the support teacher or SENCO. In the resourced primary school (2P R), however, the designated teacher for the pupils with severe learning disability (SLD) had a central and pervasive role in ongoing assessment and programme planning and the LSAs appear to have less opportunities to take an active role in this process. It is possible, therefore, that LSAs working in non-resourced mainstream schools, who tend to receive lower levels
of support from teachers than they do in other settings, take a more active role in programme planning.

The designation of the teacher who took responsibility for the planning and review of programmes varied considerably. For example in non-resourced mainstream schools the SENCO tended to take responsibility for this work in consultation with class teachers. Where a support teacher from an LEA service visited the school s/he tended to take over the main responsibility for planning. In one of the resourced primary schools (2P R), a designated teacher and not the SENCO, had responsibility for planning the pupils’ work.

In special schools, where typically there has been a longer tradition of employing LSAs than there is in mainstream schools, class teachers were still responsible for planning the IEPs for all pupils and for curriculum development work. The involvement of the LSA in this seemed to vary between classrooms and depended on the relationship between the teacher and LSA and on their respective expertise. In addition to working directly with pupils, one teacher in a special school (SLD) referred to the LSAs as doing the “messy jobs” and a 17-year-old pupil at the same school stated that S (the LSA) “did the toileting and fixed the plasters”. LSAs’ role in this school seemed to extend beyond that of helping to implement pupils’ programmes of work. In another special school (EBD) the LSAs were central to the implementation of behaviour management programmes which were integral to overall programmes for the pupils.

LSAs were, on the whole, happy to take on the role of implementing an IEP that had been planned by the teacher. Although they all wanted to be involved in this process they did not want to take full responsibility for the success or failure of the programme. The vast majority believed that the teachers were responsible for the pupils’ progress and would be the ones to be held to account if there were problems.

### 3.2 Styles of in-class support

There was almost unanimous agreement among all those interviewed as to how effective in-class support in mainstream classrooms should be organised. Effective practice in this area involves the LSAs being fully informed about the aims and objectives of the lesson and about the learning needs of the pupils who required assistance. They need to have access to, and be familiar with, any additional or adapted materials, to specialist equipment that may be required and to ensure that the pupils use this appropriately. They need to follow the teacher’s lead in order to ensure that they, and the pupils they support, attend to whole class instructions. In order to work in this way it is important for LSAs and teachers to get on well together, to trust each other’s judgement and to have sufficient time for planning.

Pupils, teachers and LSAs preferred this support to be given “from a distance”. That is, they preferred LSAs to float around the class so as to be available immediately a pupil needed help. Secondary aged pupils in particular did not want the LSA to spend large parts of the lesson sitting next to them as this served to highlight their problems and could cause them embarrassment. As one pupil with physical disabilities in a secondary school (1S R) said “I like J (the LSA) to be available when I need help. If I put my hand up I know she will come”. This observation reflected a common finding that many pupils in mainstream schools were aware of their learning difficulties and that they needed help but did not want this help to be too obvious to peers.

A typical example of this style of support was observed in a maths lesson for Year 8 pupils in a non-resourced secondary school (1S NR). The teacher began the lesson by informing the whole class about the aims and purpose of the lesson; he then explained some of the key concepts using the blackboard and asked the pupils to copy them down. He then handed out some written exercises for
the pupils to complete. It was clear from the observation that the LSA had targeted five pupils who might require her support in the lesson, two of whom had a statement. During the introductory phase of the lesson she quietly moved from child to child, mainly checking that they had copied the work from the blackboard correctly. When the pupils began work on the exercises, she continued to float around the class focusing on the five pupils but on occasions she would offer help to others. Rarely did she stay with one pupil for more than a minute. If one of the five pupils needed help they put their hand up and the LSA would attend to them. However on many occasions the teacher might respond to the request for assistance, particularly if the LSA was busy. Therefore, although the LSA had targeted her support at these pupils, the teacher also felt responsible for offering help and in this sense both staff were working as a team. In another school (3S NR) in a Year 9 geography lesson much the same kind of practice was noted. Two students with statements were in this group, one of whom had a significant physical disability, the other behavioural and learning difficulties. The assistant did not spend any concentrated time with either of them, but circulated the room, after the teacher’s introductory session, much as the teacher was doing. Both adults were therefore a resource to any student requesting help.

The only exception to this preferred style of providing in-class support in mainstream schools was for pupils with severe learning difficulties, where there were a variety of views and practices. In one primary school, where two such pupils were placed (LEA 1P), the preferred style was similar to that described above, while in a resourced primary school, which has eight pupils with SLD (2P R), much of the in-class support was given on a one-to-one basis. Given the nature of the pupils’ learning and communication difficulties, it was not possible to obtain their views about the styles of support they preferred. In addition, due to the extent of their problems, the nature of the work they were asked to do was quite different from their peer group which made it more difficult for them to work for any length of time unsupported by an LSA.

The style of in-class support in special schools varied somewhat depending on the nature of the pupils’ problems. In each of the two schools for pupils with SLD and autistic spectrum disorders (SLD and VO 1), teachers and LSAs worked in similar ways, either with individual pupils or with small groups, and a new visitor to the class might have had problems in distinguishing between the two groups of staff. In one special school (EBD) the LSA and the teacher effectively team-taught, taking turns to put points across to the whole class or part of the class. An emphasis on attention to the positive behaviour management strategies, i.e. seeking consistent, positive approaches within lessons meant that this had to be done consistently and seamlessly.

3.3 To withdraw or not to withdraw

On the whole, the bulk of support from LSAs was given in-class. However some contradictory practices were observed that are worthy of comment. As referred to above, in the resourced primary school for pupils with SLD much of the individual support was given in the mainstream class. In one English lesson containing approximately 30 Year 6 pupils (school 2P R) an LSA worked with a child who had major language and learning difficulties in addition to a severe hearing problem. The LSA spent the time working on early literacy skills, for example name writing and copying. Although this could be described as an English lesson, the work was completely different from the spelling exercises that the rest of the class were working on.

In another primary school (LEA 2P), where an LSA is responsible for supporting five pupils who have specific learning difficulties (SpLD), all the work aimed directly at improving the pupils’ literacy skills was taught in a withdrawal room – half an hour per day. The pupils, LSAs and support teachers were happy with this arrangement. The support teacher, in particular, stressed that this was “separate work” implying that it could not be taught in the context of a busy classroom. The LSA felt that she gained status in the school by being allocated a room for her sole use to work on a special programme, which she had received training to implement. One of the class teachers, however,
expressed the view that the pupils missed vital parts of the lesson by being withdrawn, and she did not see why the programme could not be delivered in class.

These two examples highlight an interesting contradiction. The pupil with the greatest difficulties in learning received 1 to 1 support from the LSA in class even though an alternative room was available, while the pupils with less severe problems were withdrawn. One might have expected the opposite to be the case if one of the aims of inclusion is to enable pupils to gain maximum access to the curriculum. The pupil with SLD was involved in completely different work and the presence of her mainstream colleagues was, if anything, a potential distraction. However, the pupils with SpLD were involved in literacy activities which, according to one class teacher, were not so different from what was being taught to the whole class and withdrawal may be denying them a chance to be fully included within their peer group.

In another school (2P NR) a pupil with a considerable visual impairment spent a good deal of time working with modified computer software, at which he was very skilled, improving his writing techniques. He also used these skills to support other children by producing final copies of their work, as one or two others joined him at the workstation in the classroom to work collaboratively on these tasks. The LSA had been instrumental in supporting these activities (a very positive strategy for including the child), and the work he was doing was much the same as the other pupils. The teacher and LSA had planned this strategy together, and were pleased with how it was going. They had considered withdrawal for this child to be totally inappropriate.

Our interviews with pupils indicated that they had mixed opinions about withdrawal. As implied above, many were aware that they had learning difficulties and were a little embarrassed about this. As a result they did not want their problems highlighted among their peer group. They all wanted support but had different views about how this could be given in as non-intrusive a way as possible. Some felt that withdrawal only served to highlight their problems. Others preferred withdrawal as they were uncomfortable about being supported in class. One very able 15 year old pupil with specific learning difficulties recognised his need for support but felt that both withdrawal and in-class support marked him out as a pupil who was different. He specifically requested individual help at dinnertime when he hoped that nobody would notice that he was receiving it. Clearly teachers and LSAs need to be sensitive to the views of pupils on this issue and to try to accommodate their wishes wherever possible.

3.4 Joint planning time between teachers and LSAs

Although the teachers play a crucial role in planning and monitoring programmes, finding time for day-to-day meetings to fine tune programmes and make necessary adjustments was a major problem in the majority of the mainstream schools visited. There were many occasions when the LSA would arrive at a lesson being unclear about what teacher was intending to do. Currently the working hours of LSAs mean that they arrive at, and leave school, at the same time as the pupils, leaving little or no preparation time. In one resourced secondary school (1S R), this problem has been tackled by giving LSAs half an hours’ non-contact time each day. At a resourced primary school (2P R) there is a meeting each morning between the specialist teacher and the LSAs and this allowed for sufficient time for planning. However these examples were exceptions. On the whole one of the main problems affecting the work of LSAs in mainstream schools was that of finding sufficient time for day-to-day planning between LSAs and teachers. Both groups of staff expressed dissatisfaction with this situation and felt that it had a direct impact on the success of their teaching.

In contrast the special schools visited did not refer to planning time between teachers and LSAs as being a particular problem, partly because there were established teams of teachers and assistants who worked together for a year or more and also because planning time was built into the weekly timetable. This is particularly important for older pupils in special schools who were following a secondary timetable necessitating the LSAs working with different teachers. However, even here, the
organisation of the secondary department in one special school (MLD) meant that LSAs felt they did not have enough time to see the range of teachers they had to work with, contrasting with opportunities for this in the primary base of the school.

3.5 LSAs and the literacy hour

A striking feature of the site visits to the primary schools was the role played by LSAs in helping to implement the literacy hour. Teaching staff in particular stated that managing the literacy hour with LSAs in class to support pupils with special needs had made them look at the role in a much wider and more flexible way. The classroom management with an assistant present had altered in other lessons apart from the literacy hour. A flexibility, which they felt they were obliged to use within the hour, had been transferred to other situations. One teacher (in school 1P NR) said that his Key Stage 1 class felt “odd” when he could not rely on an assistant to work with him – something was missing from his ordinary planning. The expanding role of assistants in the literacy hour is also referred to in the recent survey of classroom assistants (NUT, 1998).

3.6 Extracurricular duties

In the schools visited the LSAs were fully involved in out of class activities, including social events, some of which the LSAs organised for the whole staff. Many examples were given. For example one played the piano in assemblies and another was responsible for making the costumes for the school play. LSAs welcomed these opportunities to extend their role in the school beyond that of supporting pupils as it helped them to feel valued as part of the whole school team. Much of this work was done willingly in their own time. In some primary schools, in particular, LSAs were drawn very much from the community of the school. They therefore had a substantial knowledge of that community, of events and people within it. Where this was sensitively drawn upon it made a significant contribution to the approaches that the school and the LSAs made with certain pupils in the school, helping to plan suitable ways forward (for example in schools 1P NR and 3P NR).

3.7 Teachers’ views about LSAs

All the teachers interviewed were extremely positive about having LSAs in their class. “We could not manage without them” and “It’s essential for inclusion to work” are just two of the comments that were made. Another teacher stated that having an LSA in the class kept them on their toes, ensured that they planned their lessons properly and was “good preparation for Ofsted!” (LEA 1S). On the whole they felt they had the confidence to work with assistants though they recognised that this required them to plan more carefully and to develop teamwork skills. Teachers in two non-resourced secondary schools (LEA 1S and 1S NR) considered that a minority of their colleagues (particularly the more experienced ones) were less happy about working with LSAs in the classroom. However with increasing inclusion and the growing number of LSAs being employed, they felt that all teachers would develop more positive attitudes towards LSAs in the near future.

There were a variety of views among the teachers as to their responsibility for planning the IEP for pupils with SEN. In special schools this was clearly the responsibility of the teachers in consultation with senior staff and LSAs. However, in resourced mainstream schools the responsibility lay with the teacher who was appointed to work with these pupils. He or she would plan and review the programmes in consultation with relevant class teachers and LSAs. In non-resourced mainstream schools the responsibility for planning lay primarily with the SENCO who would liaise with teachers and LSAs. In secondary schools this did cause some problems as so many teaching staff were involved in teaching one pupil. Mainstream teachers often felt excluded from the planning process and hence did not feel directly responsible for the progress made by the pupils with SEN.
Senior managers in schools and LEAs, including headteachers, SENCOs and managers of support services were also extremely positive about the potential role that LSAs can play in helping pupils with SEN in mainstream and special schools. Their presence has become central to the successful implementation of LEA policies on special needs and inclusion.

3.8 Supply teachers and the work of LSAs

Although most staff understood the respective roles of LSAs and teachers, senior staff in mainstream schools felt that many supply teachers were poorly prepared and did not understand or appreciate the LSAs’ contribution, whilst not always seeing that there was some responsibility on their part to prevent this happening. In addition, supply teachers, often being unfamiliar with a class or school, may have difficulties taking over from the regular teacher and therefore have no time to collaborate with the LSA. In contrast, some senior managers in schools had not considered this to be an issue that might cause some difficulties suggesting, perhaps, a limited understanding of the issues involved in planning effective teamwork between LSAs and teachers.

In one of the special schools (VO 1) the long term absence of the class teacher and her substitution by two half-time supply teachers caused much resentment among the two LSAs who felt that they were “carrying the class” and that their expertise in managing the pupils and in planning work was far superior to that of the supply teachers. This caused a great deal of resentment in the school.

3.9 The views of pupils and parents

Both parents and pupils seemed to understand the roles of teachers and LSAs in respect of the planning and teaching of programmes and as to whom had overall responsibility for the pupils’ progress. When asked who was in charge, pupils referred to the teacher and not the LSA, even though in some cases they would have more day-to-day contact with the LSA. Parents in mainstream and special schools also understood that the teacher was responsible for the planning and review of programmes but that much of the teaching would be undertaken by the LSA.

However, there were two instances when the parents thought that their designated LSA, employed to work with their child who had a statement, was a qualified teacher who had received specialist training to work with children similar to their own. There had clearly been a serious lack of communication between the school/LEA and the parents that needed to be rectified tactfully and without delay.

In some schools (mostly primary) the LSAs worked in the local community and were well known to the parents. This resulted in them having a different kind of relationship with the parents from the teachers. However this greater degree of familiarity with parents had the potential to cause some problems to do with confidentiality and clear ground-rules needed to be established in the schools to minimise the risk of LSAs being indiscreet when they met parents out of school. In one primary school (1P NR) where LSAs were also parents, ground rules to support confidentiality had been devised which covered LSAs, parent helpers, volunteers and lunchtime organisers.

Even though many parents met LSAs informally, either in the community or when they collected their child from school, they still tended to refer to the teachers if they wished to discuss a problem relating to their child. Nevertheless on day-to-day issues, parents in several schools communicated with LSAs through “daily written diaries”, homework books, etc.etc and this enabled them to share views on the pupils’ progress.

The pupils’ perceptions of the different roles between LSAs and teachers were illustrated by some of them referring to teachers by their second name and to LSAs by their first name. One group of pupils in a resourced secondary school (1S R) said that LSAs were more like “friends – someone to turn to”. This attitude seemed to be generally accepted throughout this school. However in another secondary
school (non-resourced – LEA 2S) the teachers stated that they felt it was a mistake if the LSAs became too friendly with the pupils as this might have an adverse effect on maintaining consistent standards of discipline.

3.10 The views of LSAs

A striking feature of all the interviews with LSAs in mainstream schools was their enthusiasm for the work they do. Almost without exception they stated that they enjoyed their work and felt that they were making a genuine contribution towards helping pupils with special needs. They also felt that staff, parents and pupils valued their work. In particular they valued the opportunity to get to know a relatively small number of pupils really well, much more than a class teacher normally does. This positive attitude towards their role does not take account of their concerns about salary, conditions of service and training, issues that are considered in subsequent sections.

There was something of a contrast in the perceptions about their role from LSAs working in special schools. Here, where the tradition of employing LSAs has been established for many years, there was a sense in which the LSAs felt they were just “doing a job of work” and although by and large they were happy in their role, the enthusiasm and energy that was observed in the mainstream sector was not so evident.

When asked if they would like to be teachers approximately 80% of the 149 who were interviewed said that they would prefer to remain as LSAs. The main reason for this was that LSAs did not want to take on the additional tasks and responsibilities associated with teaching. Many saw teaching as being a stressful profession and had no desire to work the additional hours that are expected of teachers. “When I finish work, I want to go home and forget about school” was a remark which reflected a sentiment expressed by many. A number of LSAs also felt that they were too old to and did not have the energy to undergo the additional training necessary to become a teacher and would not do so even if training opportunities were made more readily available. Others appeared to feel that they did not have the ability to succeed on a teachers’ training course or the ability to succeed as a teacher. This attitude, again more prevalent among older LSAs, may reflect a lack of confidence in their own ability and has implications for the management and support they should receive in their day-to-day work.

On the whole younger LSAs, in particular the small number with degrees (e.g. in psychology) or other similar qualifications, expressed the desire to move on to other professions. A small number saw their work as an LSA as a way of filling a gap between their degree and gaining a place on a social work or counselling course. Others were clearly interested in becoming teachers and were applying for places on PGCE courses.

3.11 Summary – the role of learning support assistants

- The evidence of this study suggests that there is a clearly understood distinction between the role of LSAs and teachers. In the particular context of pupils with special educational needs, teachers are responsible for the overall success of the teaching programmes; they plan the programmes, monitor their success, plan review meeting and liaise with parents. Meanwhile, LSAs are seen as being responsible for implementing the programmes under the teachers’ guidance.

- LSAs tend to support pupils in mainstream classes by keeping regular contact with those who may need help but they do not sit with a pupil throughout a lesson unless s/he is working on a completely different curriculum activity from that of his/her peer group.
• A wide variety of practices were observed in relation to withdrawing pupils from class for individual sessions. Teachers and LSAs adopted a flexible approach to this issue and were responsive to pupils’ wishes.

• A consistent problem in the mainstream sites, in particular the non-resourced schools, was the lack of time for day-to-day planning meetings when the LSA could give feedback to and receive advice from the teacher.

• In mainstream primary schools LSAs were making a significant contribution in helping to implement the literacy hour.

• In all sites LSAs undertook a range of extracurricular activities, often in out-of-school time.

• All teachers and managers were very positive about the work of LSAs in schools and classrooms.

• Parents and pupils understand the respective roles of LSAs and teachers.

• The vast majority of LSAs are extremely enthusiastic about their job, despite reservations about their conditions of service, and most do not want to be teachers.
4 THE MANAGEMENT OF LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

4.1 Selection criteria

When asked about criteria for entering the profession virtually all those interviewed stressed the importance of personal qualities over qualifications and experience. These qualities included the ability to get on with others and to work as a team, patience and a sense of humour. Academic qualifications were seen as being of far less importance, although most senior staff felt that a level of basic English and Mathematics, up to GCSE grade C, was needed in order to do the job successfully. In addition, many stated that having previous experience of working with children either as a parent or volunteer worker was also important. Parents of secondary aged students also said that LSAs “need to understand what teenagers are like!” These criteria applied equally to those working in mainstream and special schools. Specific qualifications in the area of learning support were desirable but by no means essential and, in any case, only a tiny minority of applicants had obtained such a qualification before applying for a post. The one exception was the NNEB qualification but this was seen as being irrelevant to many of the jobs LSAs are now required to do and is not even recognised by some LEAs.

The only exception to the general entry requirements referred to above was mentioned by the head of one of the special schools visited (VO 1) who favoured appointing psychology graduates as LSAs. He felt that the learning difficulties and challenging behaviours of the pupils in the school were such that it helped if LSAs had some academic background relevant to the pupils’ problems. He had recently appointed two such graduates to his school.

4.2 Contracts of employment

The whole issue surrounding contracts of employment was extremely contentious and the source of a great deal of anxiety and concern particularly among LSAs themselves.

All the LSAs interviewed had only recently been issued with contracts. However, for many this was a recent development which had been a long time in coming. Contracts for LSAs in special schools, resourced mainstream schools and for those working for LEA support services were more likely to be permanent and therefore the employees were more secure in their jobs. However contracts for LSAs working in non-resourced mainstream schools were normally temporary as they were typically employed to support pupils with statements. If these pupils left the school their contract could be terminated. Understandably this caused a great deal of anxiety among the LSAs concerned.

The vast majority of contracts were for term-time work only, although a few added in one or two weeks’ holiday pay. In most cases salaries were averaged out over twelve months which ensured that LSAs received the same amount of money each month. Contracts also specified how many hours LSAs were supposed to work and, in most cases, these hours coincided with the time the pupils were in school. As a result, if LSAs came in early or stayed late, they received no extra pay. Despite this major disincentive to work a few extra hours that could be used for meetings, training, planning or preparation, many LSAs were prepared to do so even though they received no extra remuneration or negotiated time in lieu.

The major problem regarding contracts was the low levels of pay. All LSAs resented this. As one ruefully remarked “you couldn’t live on this salary”. “I would get more working on Sainsbury’s check out,” said another. They all felt that pay differentials between themselves and teachers (often as much as £14,000 per year) were far too large and that the differences in their role were not so great as to justify this huge imbalance. Teachers and senior managers also believed that these pay differentials were totally unjustified given the work that LSAs were expected to do.
Pay scales appeared to be restricted by the limited number of incremental points that were available. Therefore an LSA with over 10 years experience might still be earning less than £8,000 per year with no prospect of enhancement. In addition, obtaining further relevant qualifications usually had no effect on pay levels; a point we shall return to when we discuss training issues.

Problems with contracts and pay levels were exacerbated in those schools and services where different groups of LSAs had different contracts. In a resourced primary school, for example (2P R), the LSAs working with pupils with SLD received less holiday pay than an LSA working with a pupil with visual impairment and still less than the assistant in the nursery who was paid on the NNEB scale. The LSAs for the resourced pupils felt that their work was so specialised that they should have been paid more, not less than their colleagues.

From what senior managers said, there is little doubt that pay levels for assistants, particularly those in special schools, have come down in the past few years since LEAs have ceased to recognise the NNEB qualification as being relevant and have therefore not paid new assistants on the NNEB scale. This has meant that in many special schools there are two groups of assistants. There are those who have been there for some time and are still paid on the NNEB scale and those who have been recently appointed and who may also have obtained an NNEB qualification but who are paid on the assistants' scale. In this way schools may claim to be getting the same service for far less money. Or, alternatively they can appoint more assistants within the same budget.

4.3 Job descriptions

The above discussion on contracts is closely linked to job descriptions. All the LSAs interviewed had been issued with job descriptions although the vast majority did not refer to them and many had forgotten that they existed, or regarded them as “out of date” and “not relevant to what I do now”. Where there were examples of relevant job descriptions, LSAs had themselves been involved in drawing them up, and in reviewing them (for example, in schools 3P NR and S2 NR). Here there was a positive response about them, saying it helped other members of staff to understand the LSAs’ roles too.

Job descriptions may have been of little practical value to the assistants, but to some of the senior staff we interviewed, they provided a justification for the different levels of pay referred to above. In one of the special schools (SLD), for example, there were two types of LSAs, nursery nurses and classroom assistants, the former being paid approximately £11,000 per year and the latter only around £6,000. The job descriptions were slightly different, the nursery nurses focusing more on teaching the curriculum, the classroom assistants on preparing equipment and materials. In addition, the assistants were expected to work under the direction of nursery nurses as well as teachers. In their day-to-day work the teachers clearly distinguished between the roles, “nursery nurses help you to teach; classroom assistants help you to care”. However both classroom assistants and nursery nurses felt that, in practice, the roles were virtually indistinguishable and this was the cause of some resentment in view of the salary differentials.

A similar distinction between assistants was made in the titles and job descriptions in one of the LEA support services (LEA 2). One group of assistants was referred to as teachers’ aids and the other as child support assistants with similar pay differentials to those referred to above, the teachers’ aids being paid around £11,000 per year and the assistants between £6,000 and £8,000. Once again the job descriptions were very similar and it is likely that the post of teachers’ aid will be phased out as people retire or move jobs and that, in future, all staff will be paid on the child support assistants’ scale.

In mainstream schools, where LSAs had been allocated to support pupils with statements, it was often the case that their role strayed way beyond that of supporting their designated pupil(s). For example they would offer help to any pupil who was having problems or work with some of the more able
pupils while the teacher attended to those who were having problems. Teachers and LSAs accepted that this was good practice as this helped to include the pupil(s) in the school. However there was evidence in one secondary non-resourced school (1S NR) that all support for pupils on stages 2 and 3 of the Code of Practice was being given by the LSAs who were employed on temporary contracts to support the few who had statements. Furthermore this school only employed one teacher to work with pupils with SEN. Therefore the use of the service of LSAs to help with pupils who were not on statements may have been at the expense of the school employing teachers or other assistants to work with this group.

4.4 Career structures of LSAs

As implied above there is little or no career structure for LSAs in the schools and services we visited. All those we interviewed saw this as a major problem. There were two examples in mainstream secondary schools where the post of senior LSA had been formed and in most cases these staff were paid slightly more than their colleagues were. These posts were created because the LSAs in question had worked for many years in the school and were recognised for their outstanding contribution. Generally these senior LSAs were well respected and they took on additional management responsibilities in relation to their junior colleagues. For example in one school (1S R) the senior LSA, in addition to managing the team of two LSAs, was responsible for liaison with parents and outside agencies, the LEA and feeder schools. In another, (2S R) where there was a senior and deputy senior LSA, they took on the training and induction of LSAs, co-ordinating and timetabling roles specifically as part of their duties, and they were given non-contact time for this work. In a third school (3S NR) an experienced LSA was helping to co-ordinate a reading programme which involved direct contact with parents and had timetabled time for this. Another LSA who had been allocated co-ordination tasks also had a small time allowance for these activities.

4.5 Appraisal

Although it is still not a common practice for LSAs to be appraised, there were a few examples where appraisal systems (termed “professional development discussions” in two schools) were being introduced. Indeed, one of the senior members of staff at a special school (VO 1) has been given responsibility for this. She arranged meetings every six months with the LSAs at which she reviewed their work and considered training and development needs. LSAs on the whole welcomed the introduction of appraisal, not so much because it might contribute to their professional development, but because the process of being appraised was a symbol of their acceptance as a professional within the school. In another school (2P NR), where professional development discussions had recently been introduced, the LSAs said they had been “a bit frightened at first, but once we had done it, we could see it was useful”. The SENCO said she and the Headteacher felt it was very important in helping LSAs to identify issues about their practice and needs for training and to review their roles. In several of the schools senior managers said that they had identified appraisal as an issue to deal with in the near future, recognising the need for it in recent times.

4.6 Team building

A consistent theme that emerged from all the interviews was the importance of the LSAs feeling part of a team within the school. On the whole the LSAs felt this was achieved successfully despite differences in salaries and conditions of service. Indeed, as referred to in the previous section, many were involved in extra curricular activities such as school trips and concerts. This together with appraisal schemes helped the LSAs to feel fully integrated members of the school community. It is difficult to pinpoint the management strategies that contributed to this successful ethos. However, the following are a few brief examples of how managers had tried to achieve this. A number of headteachers referred to the work involved in taking up “Investors in People”, stating that this espoused the value and worth of making all staff members of a team. Another headteacher had set up
a strong partnership between her and the SENCO in the management of assistants that had helped the LSAs to feel valued members of the school team. Finally, several senior staff stressed the importance of involving LSAs in key decisions affecting all aspects of their work and in trying to arrange meetings with them at convenient times to discuss timetabling arrangements and other issues.

4.7 Who should employ LSAs?

In all the mainstream school sites we visited, there were a number of different arrangements for employing LSAs. In the LEA support services the LSAs were employed by the service although for their day-to-day work they were attached to a school. The LEA services were responsible for recruitment and selection, for drawing up contracts and job descriptions and for training. The schools were responsible for the day-to-day management of the LSAs. In some resourced schools, the LEA was responsible for drawing up job descriptions and contracts but left everything else to the school. In other mainstream schools complete responsibility for all aspects of management was left with the school, including employment. In a few schools, where there were different groups of LSAs, some were wholly managed by the school while others were also employed by and accountable to the LEA.

There were conflicting views about who should be responsible for employing and managing LSAs. Those managing support services felt that they were able to offer a more extensive range of training opportunities and they could transfer LSAs to different schools as the need arose without them having to apply for a new job. Many of the LSAs in these services also valued the support they received from the centrally-based services. However, there were also a few problems with this arrangement. Some of the schools would have liked more choice in the recruitment of LSAs; “we just take what we get!” was the view of one teacher. Others felt that it was extremely confusing when there were different sets of LSAs in the schools with different conditions of services and different managers, and that this did not facilitate the smooth running of the school. With the expected growth in the numbers of assistants being employed in the future it is possible that this situation may become more complex.

4.8 Summary – the management of learning support assistants

- Personal qualities rather than qualifications and experience, except perhaps for grade C in GCSE English are seen as the main criteria for entry to the profession. These include the ability to get on with others and to work as a team, patience a sense of humour and an understanding of children and/or young people.

- The whole issue of contracts and pay remain a source of great concern. Levels of pay are seen as being far too low when set against the work that LSAs undertake and the responsibilities they are given. Many contracts are temporary and tied to a pupil with a statement. LSAs in the some schools are on different pay scales although they do very similar, if not identical jobs.

- Most LSAs have job descriptions though many do not refer to them and, in non-resourced mainstream schools in particular, they frequently undertake work that is outside their prescribed remit.

- Currently there is virtually no career structure for LSAs. The majority can work for several years in a mainstream or special school with little or no prospect of promotion or significant rise in salary.

- A few schools had instituted appraisal schemes that were much appreciated by the LSAs.

- All LSAs interviewed felt part of the school team and joined with other staff for extracurricular activities.
There were conflicting opinions as to who should be responsible for employing LSAs – schools or LEA support services. LSAs who are appointed by a centrally-based LEA service are on permanent contracts and the service usually offers ongoing training and induction. However some schools prefer to appoint their own LSAs and take more direct control over their management.
5 THE TRAINING OF LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

5.1 Introduction

In this section we consider the findings regarding the training of LSAs. The interviews and questionnaires yielded a large amount of data and, where possible this is presented together so as to illustrate the interrelationship between the two. It is important to remember, however, that the focus of the enquiry regarding training differed between the questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire addressed issues to do with organisation, content and delivery of courses run by major training providers e.g. LEAs and colleges of FE. It also sought their views on future developments in training. It did not consider courses organised and run by individual schools as part of their ongoing in-service training for staff.

However interview questions during the site visits did refer to this type of training in addition to that offered by LEAs and other training providers. The interviews also sought the views of stakeholders about the quality and benefits of training and on the type of training that LSAs should be offered, e.g. accredited courses, induction, specialist training and joint training with teachers and other professionals. In addition we asked for people’s views about classroom and school development programmes and about the training opportunities LSAs and teachers gain from working together.

Given the large volume of data that was gathered, we have deliberately selected the findings that throw the most light on key issues related to the current and future training of LSAs.

5.2 What kind of training is provided?

As table 2.2 in section two indicated the main providers of training who responded to the questionnaire were FE colleges (160 courses) and LEAs (149 courses). The other providers were very much in the minority; HE (11 courses); VO (8 courses) and U (11 courses).

Figure 5.1 indicates the percentage of courses run by all these providers that offered an accredited qualification. From this it can be seen that all the university courses, over 92% of the FE, and 80% of HE courses offered an accredited qualification compared with under half of the LEA and VO courses.

In the light of this finding, in all the remaining tables and figures we present the findings from accredited FE, HE and U courses together while the accredited LEA and non-accredited courses are presented separately. We shall not consider the findings from the very small number of non-accredited FE and HE courses.

The voluntary organisations involved in running courses comprised the Down’s Syndrome Educational Institute, the RNIB, the Maria Montessori Training Organisation and NASEN. The NASEN one-day course on LSAs working in the school team is run five times a year. The Down’s Syndrome Educational Institute regularly run three one day courses on meeting the educational needs of pupils with Down’s syndrome in infant, junior and secondary schools. The Maria Montessori Training Organisation run a 60 hour course for their assistants that is accredited by their international

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2 In the text, tables and figures that follow, the following abbreviations are used for courses provided by different organisations: FE refers to FE colleges; U to universities, HE to higher education institutions which do not have university status; VO to voluntary sector organisations and LEA to local education authorities
body. The RNIB runs courses entitled “Facilitating Independence” are accredited by universities. As
the information on the training provided by voluntary organisations was limited to eight courses, data
from them has been excluded from the following tables and figures.

Accredited courses are defined as those that offer a certificate or similar award from, the training
provider or from a recognised awarding body such as City and Guilds. In addition, a course was
counted as being accredited if the provider, e.g. an LEA, sought recognition from a local university.
All accredited courses are required to present their programmes for scrutiny by the awarding body.

**Figure 5.1 Percentage of courses providing an accredited qualification**

![Bar chart showing the percentage of courses providing an accredited qualification]

Table 5.1 provides information on the titles of courses currently offered by the training providers.
From this it is clear that, for college and university-based courses, the City and Guilds programme is
by far the most popular. If findings for the advanced and introductory courses are taken together the
total exceeds 50% of all such courses. According to a senior officer City and Guilds, 4544 students
successfully completed the introductory course in 1997/98 and it is estimated that this number will

In one LEA service (LEA 1), which is a provider of City and Guilds training at introductory and
advanced levels, all LSAs in the service had completed the introductory course or were enrolled on it.
However only a small minority of those met on other site visits, less than 10%, had completed the
course.

Table 5.1 indicates that the City and Guilds Certificate in Learning Support accounts for 28.4% of the
accredited LEA courses. A similar percentage (25.7% and 20.3%) are general or specialist courses
accredited by a university. The vast majority of non-accredited LEA courses are described as
specialist or general support courses. This table also gives an indication of the key role played by
City and Guilds which accredits over half of the courses (55.5%) run by FHEs.
Table 5.1. Titles of courses provided for LSAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the course</th>
<th>FHE(^5) courses (%) (n=182)</th>
<th>Accredited LEA courses (%) (n=74)</th>
<th>non accredited LEA Courses (%) (n=75)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City &amp; Guilds Introductory Certificate in Learning Support</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City &amp; Guilds Advanced Certificate in Learning Support</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City &amp; Guilds Introductory &amp; Advanced Certificate</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLANSA Certificate for Literacy &amp; Numeracy Assistants</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTEC Professional Development Award</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCFE Special Needs Assistants Certificate</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCFE Initial Training for Classroom Assistants</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STA-Specialist Teacher Assistant</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CACHE-Specialist Teacher Award</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Courses (accredited)</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Support Courses (accredited)</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Teacher Assistant (Non-accredited)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Support Course (Non-accredited)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 shows that the vast majority of these courses are run by LEAs who approach a local university for accreditation. The table shows that other named courses were far less common, notably the accredited Specialist Teacher Assistant (STA) and the CLANSA certificate. However, it must be remembered that the questionnaire sought information on courses run for LSAs working with pupils with SEN. It is possible that providers running more general courses, not specifically in the SEN area (e.g. CLANSA) did not provide us with information about their course. Therefore the figures for the range of course run in training institutions indicted in table 5.1 is not intended to reflect the full range of courses that are on offer.

A minority of all courses were viewed as prerequisites for obtaining further training and almost all of these were prerequisites for obtaining further training and almost all of these were prerequisites for enrolling on the City and Guilds advanced programme. It is clearly not possible for LSAs to attend this programme unless they have already passed the City and Guilds introductory course or obtained a qualification that is seen as being equivalent accredited LEA.

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3 Abbreviations; STA: Specialist Teacher Assistant’s Course; NCFE 3563: Special Needs Assistants Certificate; NCFE 3561: Certificate in Initial Training for Classroom Assistants-Stage I; CACHE: Council for Awards in Children’s Care & Education; CLANSA: Certificate for Literacy & Numeracy Support Assistants; BTEC: Business Technical Education Council.

4 Accredited specialist and general support courses are accredited by universities.

5 The abbreviation FHE is used in the remainder of this report to refer to those courses run by colleges of further and higher education and by universities.
5.3 The availability of training for LSAs

Nearly 72% of the LEAs stated that they offered some form of training to all the LSAs in their authority. They described a whole range of methods they used to make LSAs aware that training was available, the most common of which was through advertisements in booklets and schools’ bulletins. In addition, all the mainstream and special schools visited included LSAs in the regular training days for all staff. LSAs therefore appear to be regarded as a group of professionals who are entitled to training. However the views of the LSAs on this issue were more mixed. As already stated above, less than 10% of those interviewed had obtained a recognised qualification such as the City and Guilds award and, due to funding and time constraints, few were currently registered on such courses. In-service courses, though available, were often designed for teachers even though LSAs were invited; or they were put on in the evening, outside working hours. Therefore, although schools and LEAs offered a range of courses for LSAs, for a variety of reasons LSAs were unable to attend them or did not feel that they were relevant to their needs.

5.4 Recruitment, entry requirements and student numbers

Figure 5.2 provides details of the selection procedures adopted by LEAs and FHE. From this it is clear that courses offering accredited training are more likely to require candidates to complete an application form and attend an interview, particularly if the course is FHE-based. Indeed, selection procedures at colleges appear to be more rigorous than in LEAs. The majority of respondents from LEAs, who quoted “other” selection procedures referred to procedures that were similar, though not identical, to providing references, e.g. telephone recommendations or written letters of support.

Figure 5.2 Selection procedures adopted by LEAs and colleges
Table 5.2 Entry requirements for the course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry requirement</th>
<th>FHE courses (%)</th>
<th>Accredited LEA courses (%)</th>
<th>Non-accredited LEA courses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants should arrange minimum required number of hours of workplace experience during the course</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working as an LSA in a mainstream school</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working as an LSA in a special school</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working as an LSA with pupils with a particular disability</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants should have agreed mentor or assessor</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants should be at least 18 years of age</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants should have a witnessed testimony signed by people from their workplace</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who have already attended on accredited courses for LSAs</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None (e.g. course is open to teachers, LSAs, EPs and others)</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants should have GCSE English</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A specified minimum years of experience</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None (but course only open to LSAs)</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other required school qualifications</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 gives an indication of the different entry requirements for courses. In general a key requirement, particularly for accredited LEA courses, was being currently employed as an LSA in a mainstream or special school. For courses leading to an accredited qualification having a mentor or assessor in the workplace and being able to complete a minimum number of hours of work-based learning were seen to be important factors.

If working with pupils with a particular disability was specified by the respondents as an entry requirement, they were asked to indicate what that disability should be. A wide range of replies were given reflecting the full range of disabilities and no LSAs working for particular groups were favoured. As regards the level of English and Maths, only 9.9% of FHE and 16.2% of accredited LEA courses stated that applicants needed to have obtained GCSE grade C or above in English.

Table 5.3 refers to the mean numbers of applicants, enrolment figures, and those who completed and passed the courses, while Table 5.4 refers to the enrolment, completion and pass rates for each type of course. There was a relatively high degree of non-response to these questions, particularly with regard to completion and pass rates (for example, 22% of the returned questionnaires had missing data on the number of applicants, 44% had missing data on the number of students who completed courses). This suggests that such figures are not collated in a systematic way by a large minority of course providers. However, the available data provides some broad indicators. First, the majority of applicants were eventually enrolled onto courses (91% for FHE courses, 82% for accredited LEA courses, and 83% for non-accredited LEA courses). This suggests that the courses are not particularly over-subscribed and the majority of applicants are likely to be offered a place. Second, across all courses, the completion rates are high - from 89% for FHE courses to 100% for non-accredited LEA courses.
Finally, for accredited courses, pass rates are also high - 88% for FHE courses and 89% for LEA courses. The high level of non-response for these items makes it difficult to generalise to all courses for LSAs. However, if these figures are broadly representative, the high enrolment rate, together with the high completion and/or pass rates, suggests that there are few barriers to applicants gaining access to courses and - where relevant - eventual accreditation.

Table 5.3 Mean number of students who applied, enrolled, completed and pass the course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Mean number of students who are;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHE courses (n = 182)</td>
<td>34.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=154)</td>
<td>(n=158)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited LEA courses (n = 74)</td>
<td>44.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=59)</td>
<td>(n=60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-accredited LEA courses (n = 75)</td>
<td>52.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=46)</td>
<td>(n=43)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 Enrolment, completion and pass rates by course type⁶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Enrolment rate</th>
<th>Completion rate</th>
<th>Pass rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FHE courses (n = 182)</td>
<td>91% (n=151)</td>
<td>89% (n=119)</td>
<td>88% (n=104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited LEA courses (n = 74)</td>
<td>82% (n=56)</td>
<td>93% (n=33)</td>
<td>89% (n=34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-accredited LEA courses (n = 75)</td>
<td>83%  (n=42)</td>
<td>100% (n=34)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.5 Attendance requirements

Figure 5.3 shows that the length of courses taken by LSAs for those which are accredited tends to be longer (over 51 hours for 62% of FHE) than for non-accredited courses when the length of 40% of the courses was less than 9 hours. This finding, though not surprising, does highlight a key difference between accredited and non-accredited courses.

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⁶ Enrolment rates are based on the proportion of applicants who are enrolled onto a course; completion rates are based on the proportion of students enrolled who eventually complete the course, while pass rates are based on the proportion of students enrolled who eventually pass the course.
Figure 5.3 Total number of hours of attendance at the course venue

**FHE Courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-9 hrs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24 hrs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-50 hrs</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-99 hrs</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-380 hrs</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Accredited LEA Courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-9 hrs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24 hrs</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-50 hrs</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-99 hrs</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-380 hrs</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Non-accredited LEA Courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-9 hrs</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24 hrs</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-50 hrs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-99 hrs</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-380 hrs</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.4 indicates the differences in the time of day courses are taught between LEA and FHE based courses. Non-accredited LEA courses almost all take place in the day time as do half the accredited LEA courses. FHE tend to run their courses in the day or evening or mixture between the two.
Figure 5.4 Time of attendance at course venue

5.6 Course content

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to give information about the content of their courses. They were provided with an extensive list of areas which might be covered on courses and asked to indicate the ones which were covered on their particular course. The responses are given in table 5.5. At first glance it appears that all the suggested topics were popular and covered on all courses whether or not they were accredited. On closer inspection it is clear that there are some differences between the two types of courses, accredited and non-accredited. For example, the accredited courses tend to cover more of the topics listed than the non-accredited courses. This is probably because they tend to be longer more substantial courses and hence there is time to cover more topics. However, courses in basic literacy and numeracy are ranked as being more common in non-accredited courses.

As table 5.1 demonstrates (see above), City and Guilds courses were by far the most common among the accredited courses. Therefore the ranking of the content of courses listed in table 5.5 is likely to reflect the most popular areas covered on these courses. Essentially, they appear to cover a great deal of ground with 13 out of the 20 topics listed being covered on over 50% of these courses. Only one topic covered on FHE-based courses, first aid/medical, was taught on less than a fifth of courses.

For accredited LEA courses only first aid/medical and counselling were taught on less than a fifth of courses. As the City and Guilds introductory courses referred to in the questionnaire is of 72 hours duration, this suggests that coverage of some of the topics may be a little superficial. Informal discussions that took place after the data were collected with staff from a college that runs a City and Guilds course, suggests that, in the forthcoming review of the City and Guilds programme, the curriculum in such courses will be restructured and cover areas in greater depth.

A direct comparison between the City and Guilds courses run by LEAs and FHEs indicates that much of the content is the same. However there are some striking differences. For example Child Development features in 65% of the LEA run courses and on only 25% of the FHE run courses. In addition around 80% of LEA courses cover areas to do with the training of literacy and numeracy whereas a little under 50% of FHE run courses covering this topic. Inclusive education is an area more frequently dealt with on courses run by FHEs (over 80% of all courses) compared with 40% of LEA courses.
Further analysis that compared City and Guilds with other accredited courses suggested that there was little difference between them. For example, the top eight content areas listed in 5.4 also featured prominently on all accredited programmes and not just the City and Guilds courses. It is likely that the data in table 5.5 only provides a superficial overview of the content of courses. For example, we do not have any indication as to the depth into which each of these subject areas was covered and about the method and quality of the teaching. Therefore courses that claim to cover the same or similar areas may, in reality, be quite different.

Table 5.5 The main content areas of courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course content</th>
<th>FHE courses (%)</th>
<th>Accredited LEA courses (%)</th>
<th>Non-accredited LEA courses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflective practice/self evaluation</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunities</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and use of learning support materials</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing and managing behaviour problems</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting independence and self-esteem in children</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing and recording progress</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils with specific problems (e.g. pupils with hearing impairments)</td>
<td>73.1</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation, government and LEA policies (e.g. the SEN code of practice)</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive education</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in methods of collaborative working with other staff</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods for supporting basic literacy</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods for supporting basic numeracy</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing IEPs</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child development</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with parents/carers</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum development</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First aid/medical</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7 LSAs views on the quality of training

During the site visits LSAs were asked for their views about courses they had attended. The views of the few that had completed the City and Guilds training were mixed. In LEA 2, which organises its own City and Guilds programme for LSAs in the authority, the views of participants were extremely positive. They greatly appreciated the fact that the LEA had paid for the training and that they knew many of the staff who were involved in running the course though their everyday work contacts. In addition, the assignments were all related to their practical work with pupils. This helped them to link the course content to their daily work. In LEA 3, LSAs who worked in the service highly valued the
opportunities the LEA support service offered for both LEA-based training, and for FHE courses, where these were available and relevant. The views of the small number of LSAs we met on other site visits who had completed City and Guilds training were less favourable. On the whole they found the content to be a little remote and not related to their daily work.

This may have implications for the siting and organisation of training in that LEA-based courses are more likely to be in a position to tailor their courses to meet the needs of participants. This view is strongly reinforced by the experience of one LEA (LEA 4). In this authority senior staff had taken considerable care about planning their accredited training programme. They had set up a series of planning meetings which involved LSAs from the start and had piloted and evaluated the new course before offering it widely across the LEA. As a result the course appeared to be highly rated by LSAs who took part.

In regard to shorter in-service courses, LSAs stated that courses run “on site” and which were of practical relevance to their every day work were the most valuable. Others mentioned that joint INSET with teachers frequently covered areas that were of no relevance to them at all. This was seen in some cases to be because the language, concepts and style of delivery was not “right” for them, in other words, the training session curriculum had not been modified to suit their needs as well as those of the teachers. However, they welcomed the chance to be invited to be part of the schools’ regular INSET days, but LSAs in mainstream schools in particular would have like to be more involved in planning the content of this training. A few LSAs complained that they had asked for opportunities to attend specialist training courses but nothing had been forthcoming, or if it was offered, they might have to fund it themselves and complete much of it in their own time. However one LSA was particularly grateful to the LEA service for funding her to attend a sign language course.

5.8 Assessment and mentoring arrangements

Table 5.6 provides information about the different ways in which participants’ progress is assessed. Not surprisingly, perhaps, non-accredited LEAs’ courses offer little or no method of assessing students, although a quarter require a minimum level of attendance. For the accredited courses the assessment arrangements are remarkably similar except that FHE staff are more involved in the assessment of students on their own courses and LEAs staff more involved in theirs.

Table 5.6 Assessment of participants’ progress on the course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment method</th>
<th>FHE Courses</th>
<th>Accredited LEA Courses</th>
<th>Non-accredited LEA Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written assignment</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School based project</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio of evidence derived from practice in school and course activities</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of participants working with pupils</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants give talk to other course members</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum attendance</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No assessment</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As figure 5.5 indicates LSAs are assessed by a combination of college staff, mentors, external verifiers and LEA staff. On the whole, college staff and external verifiers are used more frequently for college-based courses while LEA staff undertake this work more frequently in LEAs.

**Figure 5.5 Assessor of the participants’ performance on the course**

The questionnaire indicated that around 70% of institutions running accredited courses assigned a mentor in schools to guide the work of the LSA whereas only 8% of the non-accredited courses require participants to have mentors. The position of mentor in the school varied from headteacher, SENCO, deputy head and experienced class teacher; with class teachers and SENCOs being the most popular.

### 5.9 Who teaches the courses?

Table 5.7 provides information about the range of people who teach courses and indicates that a whole range of different professionals can be involved. Not surprisingly, FHE and LEA staff are more likely to teach courses in their own organisations and FHE staff rarely teach on LEA non-accredited courses. A few draw on experienced LSAs and parents. Educational psychologists, specialist teachers and inspectors/advisors are also involved, particularly in LEA courses.

This multi-agency approach is in line with the thrust of the DfEE Action Programme for SEN (DfEE, 1998a). It appears that FHEs consider that they have sufficient resources to run their own course without drawing heavily on outside staff whereas LEA providers use their own employees to run courses.
Table 5.7 Who teaches on the course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the course tutor</th>
<th>FHE courses (%)</th>
<th>Accredited LEA courses (%)</th>
<th>Non-accredited LEA courses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College staff</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside consultants</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist teachers (e.g. teachers of the deaf)</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural/learning support teachers</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech and language therapists</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN co-ordinators</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA staff</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational psychologists</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced LSAs</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisors/inspectors in SEN</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiotherapists</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paediatricians</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.10 Partnership between training providers

Table 5.8 indicates the percentage of courses that were run in partnership with another organisation. From this it is clear that accredited LEA courses are the most likely to enter into some sort of partnership arrangement and only a fifth of FHE and LEA non-accredited course provider enter into any form of partnership.

Respondents were asked to provide further information about the nature of the partnership arrangement. The replies reflect the wide variety that existed. For example those FHE courses that were run in partnership linked with LEAs and/or individual schools. Accredited LEA courses linked with a variety of organisations including colleges, universities, voluntary organisations and other LEAs. The few LEA non-accredited courses that were run in partnership all linked with voluntary organisations. Nearly half of the accredited LEA courses that are run in partnership with other organisations are linked to colleges or universities and a third with voluntary organisations. The nature of these partnerships tended to involve tutoring and mentoring although recruitment, moderation, course. One additional reason for LEAs to enter into partnership is to secure some form of accreditation either from a college or university.
Table 5.8 Courses run in partnership with another organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnering organisation</th>
<th>FHE Courses (%)</th>
<th>Accredited LEA Courses (%)</th>
<th>Non-accredited LEA Courses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleges</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAs</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary Organisations</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City &amp; Guilds</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools &amp; LEAs</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The FHEs that did run courses in partnership usually worked with another LEA. Over half of these arrangements involved collaboration in relation to course structure, planning and curriculum design; 40% involved linking with LEAs over the funding of students and in this way potential problems with recruitment could be tackled by LEAs offering a ready supply of funded students. Other partnership arrangements were also mentioned including recruitment, setting up work placements and monitoring students’ progress. Delivery, construction of programme content and the provision of materials were also mentioned.

5.11 The cost of training and who pays

Figure 5.6 gives an indication of the costs of different courses for each student who attends. Not surprisingly it is clear that accredited courses are more expensive than non-accredited courses which tend to be shorter although 31% of accredited LEA courses are free to those attending. Generally, accredited courses run by LEAs are cheaper than those run by FHEs.
The problem of funding training was referred to frequently during the site visits. It is also cited as a major barrier to further developments by the respondents to part 2 of the questionnaire. However the data indicate that a third of LEAs now draw on the Standards Fund to support training for LSAs and 14% combine this with additional money from their own resources. When asked to indicate the percentage of Standards Fund allocation that is reserved for LSA training, nearly half of the LEAs were unable to provide a figure, suggesting that they are not always clear about the extent to which the Fund is used to support LSA training. Of those that did respond 80% retain between 0 and 15% of Standards Fund money for this activity.
The vast majority of respondents to part 2 of the questionnaire consider that LEAs and schools should do more to fund the training of LSAs and that money from the Standards Fund was not being used to the extent that it might be.

The majority of respondents to part 2 of the questionnaire (the section with open ended questions) consider that LEAs and schools should do more to fund the training of LSAs. Over half of those from LEA specially referred to the Standards Fund as being an underused resource, whereas only 16% of responders from FHEs mentioned the Standards Fund as a source of finance that LEAs could use in collaboration with colleges.

The site visits indicated that, in the LEA managed support services, LSAs did not have to pay for their City and Guilds training. Furthermore, special schools have, for sometime, included assistants in their training budget. Many mainstream schools may not have recognised that the Standards Fund can be used for this purpose. Where it has been recognised, the school managers have seen it as useful for either including LSAs in school training days or paying for an external course.

5.12 The need for a nationally recognised framework of qualifications linked to salary scales and career progression

A central theme running through responses to part 2 of the questionnaire and from the site visits was the need to develop a co-ordinated and nationally recognised pattern of training for LSAs that was linked to career progression. These views are in line with government policy outlined in the Special Needs Programme of Action (DfEE, 1998a) and in the Green Paper on Teacher Training (DfEE, 1998b). Currently, of the 147 LSAs interviewed during the site visits, only one had completed an accredited training programme. One LSA (LEA 2) felt very strongly about this and considered that a basic entry qualification was needed otherwise “anyone can enter the profession”. She believed that currently the profession is devalued, as the job is perceived as being one that anybody could do. The views of the senior manager in the same LEA service were typical. She believed that it should be possible to provide a framework for training which included an introductory course such as the City and Guilds which then could lead to a more advanced training for those who wanted it, and from there to a teaching qualification. Like others she felt the NVQ framework might provide the competency-based system which could be universally recognised. In general responders to the questionnaire described the current position as improving but variable across the country and still insufficient to meet the need.

All LSAs interviewed during the site visits welcomed the opportunity to be invited to enrol on training courses but felt that attendance at both accredited and non-accredited courses should be linked to career progression. Many felt that, as a means of enhancing career prospects, the vast majority of courses were a waste of time. The questionnaire replies reinforced this point as they indicated that only 6.7% of LEAs offered any extra remuneration to LSAs who have undergone training.

5.13 Training providers’ plans on the future development of training

Respondents from the Further and Higher Education sector referred to a range of options they were considering for the future development of training. Approximately a quarter were planning to develop an advanced City and Guilds certificate course together with more courses on specific subjects. A few mentioned their plans to develop more courses in conjunction with LEAs and to expand existing provision. LEA responders referred to a whole variety of priorities for the development of training with no one priority having preference over others. However, one theme that emerged from this question was the need to increase the opportunities for LSAs to attend accredited courses, possibly adopting the NVQ framework. A small number mentioned the need to develop more specific courses
for pupils with low incidence disabilities. Others were planning to establish working parties or LEA teams with responsibility for developing and marketing new training courses.

5.14 Induction for newly appointed LSAs

All LSAs interviewed as part of the site visits stressed the need for induction training and associated support when they began their job. In one LEA service (LEA 1) training is offered by senior and experienced teachers associated with the service and the LSAs we interviewed valued this. In several schools there was a recognition that this should be addressed more formally, and systematically. The time to do it was difficult to find, especially where LSAs start a job in the middle of a term, for example, in response to a pupil’s placement. In several schools there were attempts at induction that were valued by LSAs. In school S2 R, for example, the senior LSA, using ideas and help from recently appointed LSAs, had drawn up a training and information programme which she had time to implement. She took the new LSAs through this, with the others’ support, including taking them on shadowing activities for a day. The LSAs said this helped them a great deal to get to know the school, see it through the LSAs’ eyes and see how the role looked in practice in classrooms. In a primary school (P3 NR), the SENCO had encouraged the LSAs already in post to draw up a programme for new LSAs, remembering what they had needed to learn as they started. A set of documentation had resulted from this activity, which the SENCO and LSAs were using with new appointees. One of the special schools (VO1) has recognised that the induction of LSAs needs to be improved and a new programme will be introduced shortly.

5.15 The training needs of class teachers

The teachers we interviewed as part of the site visits were asked whether they felt prepared and confident to work with assistants. Many, particularly those in special schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties and autism, did not consider this to be a problem, perhaps because there is a long tradition of assistants working in these schools. Teachers in mainstream schools were a little apprehensive at first but felt more confident the more familiar they became with having another adult in the class. Only one of the sites visited (LEA 1) offered training to teaching staff in effective practice in working with assistants. The staff in the primary school visited as part of this site (LEA 1P) were very appreciative of this training and felt that it prepared them to work with pupils with learning difficulties and about the ways in which the teachers and assistant should work together.

However, there is undoubtedly a need for teachers to learn how to work with LSAs. Indeed training standards for newly qualified teachers of pupils aged 3-11 require them to demonstrate that they are able to manage, with support from an experienced specialist teacher if necessary, the work of parents and other adults in the classroom (our italics) to enhance the learning opportunities of the pupils (TTA, 1998). Consequently initial teacher training courses are required to cover this aspect of their work.

Therefore the training the LSAs themselves is only part of the training issue. Without supporting teachers in managing LSAs, their own training could in some ways almost be wasted. In some of the case study schools there was beginning to be a recognition of this need and that training of teachers should go beyond one to one support from the SENCO for an individual colleague or small group such as a faculty team. In one of the schools (1P NR) the SENCO had helped the LSAs, during one of their ‘think tank’ sessions, to draw up a list of what their views on effective practice in managing them in classrooms should be. This was to be the subject of discussion at staff meetings in the near future. LSA perceptions of effective ways of managing them were therefore to be offered as a form of support and training for their teaching colleagues using the SENCO to orchestrate this debate. More of these kinds of initiatives in schools should be encouraged if teachers’ needs are to be addressed.
5.16 **Summary – the training of learning support assistants**

- The City and Guilds Certificate in Learning Support is by far the most popular accredited training course for LSAs offered by institution providers (FE colleges, HE institutions and Universities) and by LEAs.

- The content of all accredited training courses is extremely broad with many topics being covered and there is a marked similarity between accredited LEA and FHE courses. However there were some differences. For example LEA courses tend to give more emphasis to literacy and numeracy and FHE courses give more coverage to child development and inclusive education.

- Three quarters of LEAs offer training courses for all LSAs in their authority.

- The key entry requirement for accredited and non-credited courses is for applicants to be working as an LSA in a mainstream or special school.

- A greater range of different professionals are involved in teaching LEA-based accredited courses than FHE-based courses who tend to rely on their own staff.

- LSAs valued the opportunity to receive training, both accredited and non-accredited. However they had mixed views about the quality of the training they received. On the whole accredited LEA courses were more highly valued than those run by FHEs as they were felt to be of more relevance to the daily work of LSAs.

- There was unanimous agreement among LSAs that attending training courses, accredited or non-accredited, had no impact on salary or career progression.

- On the whole LSAs welcomed to opportunity to join in a school’s in-service programme for teachers although they frequently felt that the topics covered were of little relevance to them.

- Virtually all training providers were in agreement with government policy about the need for there to be a nationally recognised and accredited training programme for LSAs. They also felt that this should be linked to salary and career progression and which could eventually lead to a teaching qualification for the minority of LSAs who wished to become teachers.

- The induction of LSAs appears to be variable across the different sites that we visited. Although some examples of good practice were observed, there is scope for further improvements in this area of training.

- With a few notable exceptions there are very few opportunities for class teachers to receive training for working with LSAs in mainstream or special schools.

Finally, detailed statistical analysis of questionnaire data using logistic regression, provides a helpful summary of the factors associated with different types of training courses. This is presented in table 5.9 below.
Table 5.9 Factors related with different types of training courses (logistic regression)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FHE (compared to accredited LEA courses)</th>
<th>Accredited LEA Courses (compared to FHE courses)</th>
<th>Non-accredited LEA courses (compared to accredited LEA and FHE courses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courses less likely to be run in partnership with other organisations.</td>
<td>Courses are more likely to be run in partnership with another organisation.</td>
<td>Participants are less likely to be required to undertake any additional course activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants are more likely to be interviewed in order to be selected on the course.</td>
<td>Candidates are less likely to be interviewed.</td>
<td>The course is less likely to be taught by college staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses are more likely to be taught by college staff.</td>
<td>Participants are more likely to be assigned to teacher mentors.</td>
<td>Participants’ progress is less likely to be assessed by written assignments produced by participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants’ progress is more likely to be assessed by college staff and less likely to be assessed by LEA staff.</td>
<td>Participants are less likely to be observed in a classroom as a part of assessment of participants progress on the course.</td>
<td>Participants’ progress is less likely to be assessed by portfolio of evidence derived from practice in the school and course activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEA staff were found to be more likely to be a assessor of participants’ progress on the course.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EPs are more likely to teach the course.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total number of hours of attendance at the course venue likely to be longer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.9 provides an indicator of factors that are associated with the three different types of courses that form the focus of the analysis in this section. The table has been developed using logistic regression, a statistical procedure in which responses to factors associated with different types of courses are correlated and those with high correlations are linked together. This makes it possible to isolate the key factors that are associated with each type of course.

The factors listed under each type of course are those that are most likely to be associated with he course when compared to other courses. So, for example, when compared to accredited LEA courses, FHE courses are less likely to be run in partnership with another organisation, their applicants are more likely to be interviewed, taught and assessed by college staff. By referring to table 5.9 the same kind of comparisons can be made to accredited and non accredited LEA courses.
6 DEFINING EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

6.1 Introduction

In sections 3, 4 and 5 we have described the wide range of practice that we found during the site visits and from the survey in relation to the management, role and training of LSAs. We have also reported the views of the various stakeholders about current and future developments in this rapidly evolving area of work. In general the data suggest that the picture is quite complex with variations in practice being evident both within and between the different sites that were visited and in the range and quality of training opportunities that are offered. It is likely that the different tasks LSAs undertake and the varied status accorded to them imply different perspectives on what their contributions ought to be.

The aim of this section is to build on the findings of this study in order to begin the task of defining effective practice in relation to the work of LSAs. In view of the range of data reported in the previous sections this represents an enormous challenge. As a first step we feel it is essential to set out a series of criteria that can be used as a basis for determining what is involved in describing effective practice. In general terms our findings suggest that effective practice in the work of LSAs involves contributions that:

- foster the participation of pupils in the social and academic processes of a school;
- seek to enable pupils to become more independent learners;
- help to raise the achievement of all pupils.

In this section we offer a detailed definition of effective practice that reflects these aspirations and that could be applied in schools of any type and in any LEA. However our investigations have made us extremely aware of the influence of contextual factors on practice. Consequently, we wish to avoid the danger of making suggestions that might imply a standardised approach that could be adopted for use in any school context. This being the case, we prefer to offer a series of ‘factors’ that seem to be associated with effective practice and which, we believe, are worthy of the attention of those wishing to encourage improvements in the field.

The factors we propose have arisen from a careful engagement with the data collected during this study and in the light of the three criteria outlined above. They also relate to the three headings that were used to structure our enquiries, i.e. role, management and training of LSAs. Drawn from this typology, the following questions were used in order to develop the arguments that are presented:

A: Roles How can LSAs work effectively in schools and classrooms?

B: Management How can the conditions for effective working practices be created?

C: Training What forms of training and support are needed?

In the remainder of this section we explore and describe in some detail the indicators (ingredients) of effective practice as we see them in relation to these questions. Inevitably there are some overlapping and continuous threads that permeate all of the questions and this results in some of the points being repeated and re-emphasised in different parts of the text. At the end of each section, we present a key indicator of effective practice that encapsulates the issues raised in the discussion. Taken as a whole the indicators form the basis of the Review Agenda that is presented in section 7.
6.2 How can LSAs work effectively in schools and classrooms?

6.2.1 Supporting learning and participation

Our observations indicate that the ways in which LSAs and teachers relate to one another as they work together in classrooms has a direct bearing on the effectiveness of the provision made for pupils. Such positive working relationships have to be nurtured and in this respect certain strategic issues need to be addressed.

Firstly, consideration has to be given to teaching strategies and styles in order to ensure that these take account of the presence of LSAs in the classroom. Here the aim should be to establish working patterns that enable them to carry out their tasks effectively, and in ways that encourage the participation of pupils in the lesson. For example, we noted that in some schools the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy had been a particularly positive influence in that it had encouraged much more explicit attention to be paid to the ways in which teaching strategies can involve contributions from LSAs. We also found that many teachers were learning lessons from this experience that could be applied to other areas of the curriculum. In this way their perceptions of the scope of the LSA’s tasks in relation to their own teaching approaches appeared to have been broadened. Some teachers also talked of how this had heightened their understanding of how planning the use of available resources was a key element in developing classroom arrangements that can foster the learning and participation of all pupils.

Where LSA time was used to the best effect with regard to creating more independent learning opportunities, strategies which ‘give space and distance’ to pupils were found to be particularly important. In this respect flexibility of response seems to be the key. LSAs need to be clear about when to intervene with particular pupils and when to stand back and become a general resource to the whole class, whilst, at the same time, keeping a watchful eye on those pupils designated for support in that part of the lesson. Many students in secondary schools were particularly articulate in expressing their preference for this way of working. Where they had been consulted on such matters (something that in itself is an important and helpful strategy), this seemed to have facilitated the creation of a mutual acceptance as to the forms of support that were most acceptable. Usually these involved approaches within which help was available to students when it was really needed, but without a sense of a constant presence, cutting down opportunities for discussions with peers, or the teacher.

All of this indicates that LSAs must have a detailed engagement with the aims, content, strategies and intended outcomes for the lesson in order that effective forms of co-operation can be achieved. In contrast, a more marginalised role, whereby the LSA is only seen as being concerned with certain pupils and their individual learning plans, tends to reduce the opportunity for a fuller engagement in the processes of the lesson. This engagement is most likely to influence participation and learning outcomes. Too often this is likely to lead to a form of in-class segregation for both pupils and LSAs. In particular, an over-reliance on the LSA’s ‘delivery’ of individualised targets can mean that the lesson is planned with most but not all pupils in mind, because the pupils for whom the LSA is seen as having responsibility, by definition, are no longer the teacher’s concern. On the other hand, where effective practice exists, the LSA, whilst having detailed knowledge of certain pupils’ needs, also has an engagement with both their own curricular and teaching strategies, and those of the teacher.

The detailed knowledge and skills that LSAs have might related to particular educational difficulties or sensory impairments (for example, severe learning difficulties or hearing impairment). Teachers who draw on these areas of expertise as they plan and define their lessons are likely to have more success in devising appropriate strategies that will help to overcome potential barriers to participation. However, in some situations, it may be appropriate for the LSA with such expertise or skills to work for a short period outside the classroom in order to provide opportunities for giving intensive help to particular pupils. In making such decisions, teachers and LSAs must be mindful of each pupil’s
curriculum entitlement and, of course, the views of the pupils themselves about where they wish to work.

It seems, therefore, that there is a need to establish a careful balance between a focus on individual pupils, and their learning programmes and targets, and the LSAs’ engagement with overall curricular approaches, content and teaching arrangements. In this way, LSAs are neither marginalised nor seen as the only form of support for pupils, thus possibly creating segregation and dependence, but are drawn fully into the processes of the lesson. This enables them to be a greater resource to the teacher and other pupils, whilst all the pupils’ entitlement to the teacher’s time is also secured. This may involve teachers and LSAs sharing and alternating roles at various stages. So, for example, pupils needing extra support may, at some points in the lesson, receive this from the teacher whilst the LSA keeps the overall lesson moving along. In this context, the teacher needs to be reassured that the LSA is confident about fulfilling such classroom maintenance roles and, of course, prepared for that task. This means that a certain level of curriculum content knowledge on the part of the LSA is essential.

Our evidence suggests that LSAs are required to carry out a whole variety of tasks both within and between lessons. In order for this to work effectively it is important that they do not distract the pupils they are supporting from the teaching and activities that form part of the lesson. This is particularly crucial during the introductory phase or activity, when the purpose and arrangements are being clarified. This also means that the LSA gains a full understanding of the aims and purposes, which can only enhance his or her effectiveness in contributing to the lesson. Similarly, where the attention of the LSA is focused on individuals or groups of pupils at a later stage of the lesson, certain factors need to be taken into account. For example, care needs to be taken to ensure that pupils receiving support are aware of incidental teaching points that are made to the whole class, and that the teacher includes the group with whom the LSA is working in all general classroom processes.

Another important area relates to overall approaches to classroom discipline. Where the LSAs have an understanding of, and confidence in, the behaviour management strategies employed by the teachers, within a consistent school approach, they are more likely to feel comfortable in mirroring these approaches. Knowing when to intervene, for example, when the teacher’s back is turned, and using their ‘extra pair of eyes’ to good effect, they can make a significant contribution to the creation of a consistent policy.

LSAs who also feel confident in the processes of observation of pupils as they work, and are able to record evidence of interactions and responses, are in a strong position to contribute effectively to the ongoing assessment of pupils’ progress. Furthermore, a close scrutiny of their approaches to learning leads in turn to a clearer definition of their needs. In this way the teacher and LSA are able to pool their understanding and contribute to the planning of classroom arrangements that can foster improved learning outcomes.

Teachers who recognise the potential of gaining both oral and written, informal and formal feedback on lesson processes and pupil responses, are better able to capitalise on LSA perspectives and knowledge. All of this requires an openness on the part of teachers to feedback which might in the first instance seem potentially critical of their practices, but we had a number of examples of teachers who had come to see this as an opportunity to learn from their LSA colleagues. Therefore, it is crucial that the LSA is made to feel comfortable in this role, whose perspective on classroom life is seen positively as a means of critiquing and developing existing arrangements. Where an openness exists to this form of joint reflection and evaluation, and where it is seen as a two-way process, pupils tend to notice the atmosphere of teamwork and inclusion which provides for them a model of participation and entitlement within the learning environment.

In these ways, therefore, it is possible to maximise the potential of the tasks LSAs carry out in the classroom so that they help to raise standards for more than just a few pupils. At the same time, they are more likely to facilitate maximum participation for pupils experiencing difficulties and to foster
opportunities for independent learning. This means that: \textit{LSAs work co-operatively with teachers to support the learning and participation of pupils.} (Indicator A1)

### 6.2.2 Planning together

Our observations indicate, therefore, that effective working partnerships between teachers and LSAs arise as a result of strategic educational decisions being made. At the same time they usually involve drawing LSAs into planning processes in ways that ensure that they can contribute their knowledge and experience. This also helps to clarify the roles of each member of the partnership in ways that lead to increased participation in classroom processes of both LSAs and pupils.

It is important, therefore, that within the LSA’s formal working time the teacher should create planning opportunities that are dedicated to decisions about what they will both be doing in the long and medium term. These should include consideration of overall curriculum aims and content and what contribution other teaching colleagues, such as support department staff and LSAs will be making. This helps to clarify what each member of staff will need to prepare, including materials and resources, whilst also pointing towards possible training and support needs. In this way, detailed specifications of the LSA’s tasks and activities begin to take shape, particularly as consideration is given to the learning needs of individual pupils within the overall plans for the class.

Within such a process, the teacher and LSA can then plan effectively in detail for the short-term, both together and separately. This should mean that LSAs do not find themselves walking into a lesson that does not immediately make sense to them. Not only are informal or immediate plans easier to define, but the teacher and LSA will also find they develop the capacity to be flexible within the lesson and alter plans to suit what is happening and how pupils are responding.

Our findings also suggest that joint planning needs to involve an element of feedback and critique on the respective contributions of both the LSA and the teacher. Furthermore, where this is seen as the regular way of working, pupils can themselves be drawn into this form of reflective evaluation of classroom processes, organisation and learning.

It has to be recognised, then, that planning needs to take account of unexpected incidents that can occur within a lesson and which require staff to adjust their original intentions, including the anticipated roles of the LSA. Here the way in which support to individuals is offered also has to be kept under review as the lesson activities proceed in order to offer a flexible range of responses.

Some schools also reported that it is helpful to have systematic ways of planning for teacher absence, such that the LSA helps to provide a degree of continuity in the classroom. This has to be dealt with sensitively, not least so that the LSA does not end up taking responsibility for the lesson. An appropriate level of reliance on this particular source of continuity is to be encouraged, in order that standards are reasonably maintained, whilst not overstepping the boundaries of reasonable responsibility.

It is clear from the above that there are a number of ways in which teachers and LSAs can plan together successfully. However our evidence indicates that one of the main problems they face is in finding sufficient time for planning, particularly in mainstream non-resourced schools. This is in part a management issue that needs to be addressed urgently by LSAs, teachers and senior staff in schools. In essence, therefore, it is important that: \textit{LSAs work with teachers to prepare lesson plans and materials.} (Indicator A2)
6.2.3 Evaluating outcomes

Our study suggests that another important contribution that LSAs can make relates to the monitoring of current arrangements as a means of bringing about improved outcomes for pupils. The evidence is that their knowledge of individual pupils and their particular perspectives on classroom interactions can be particular strengths within this respect. Once again, however, such participation has to be encouraged and welcomed.

LSAs are often in a unique position to offer insights on classroom life and pupil perspectives. Firstly, they may be perceived by pupils as being a listening ear. This means that disclosures can occur which reveal aspects of pupils that other staff may not necessarily hear. In addition, since LSAs see pupils in a variety of situations, more opportunities exist for them to offer contrasting pictures that can inform an overall profile. Thus, in putting together useful review information, teachers can draw on these wider perceptions of what pupils do in different lessons or subject areas. This can be particularly helpful during Years 7 to 11, where pupils may require varied levels of support in different subjects, and in relation to different teachers’ classroom approaches.

Our findings suggest that the most effective way for LSAs to evaluate pupils’ responses to teachers or their own instructions is for them to provide immediate verbal feedback. Where written contributions are required it is helpful to create procedures that work for both the teacher and LSA. In addition, LSAs may well need encouragement to write notes, diaries and journals, keeping plans and reviews of these up to date. Many LSAs commented about their role in record keeping but were also aware of their need for support in this activity.

Another useful and effective strategy is for the LSA and teacher to develop coding systems which indicate at a glance how much support a pupil has needed to complete a piece of work. We heard of a number of ingenious ideas that had been devised which offer very useful information in planning next steps or deciding to reduce or increase levels of support, whether LSA, teacher or peer support. These were found to be particularly helpful when attempting to reduce support in order to increase independent learning.

Sometimes LSAs are asked to contribute verbally or in written form to the procedures that lead to formal assessment. Their contributions confirm that their detailed knowledge of pupils is valued in the school. However, this needs sensitive handling, and it is important that no LSA should feel at any stage that they are out of their depth in the process. So, for example, it is helpful if they are offered support prior to participating in review meetings and case conferences, where it is felt appropriate and, of course, where this falls within the LSA’s working hours.

Many LSAs correspond with parents via home diaries, home-school logs, and homework books, and, therefore, have access to parents’ views about pupils’ work and concerns. They also have detailed conversations with pupils about these forms of communication, and are able to add that knowledge into the review and recording process. It is therefore essential that: LSAs contribute to the evaluation of outcomes of lessons. (Indicator A3)

6.2.4 Wider contributions

There are a number of positive ways in which LSAs may contribute to the wider functioning of the school. However, it must be kept in mind that under existing pay and conditions of work much of this might be seen as skills and help offered at a voluntary level, falling outside contracted hours. There is a fine line between putting upon enthusiastic and willing members of the workforce, who undoubtedly love their jobs and wish to offer much to them, and taking them for granted.
Where LSAs are drawn from the local school community, they often have an in-depth local knowledge, and some of the people, events and factors that have been influential in shaping social norms in the district. We were told of a number of instances where such knowledge had been put to good use in supporting the learning of pupils. All of this necessitates strict ground rules about confidentiality, and requires that those involved remember whether they are functioning as an LSA, a governor, a parent or a member of the community in some other capacity.

It is helpful if the social activities of the school, including participation in the staffroom, school trips, concerts and performances, and social events for the staff, are open to LSAs. This is particularly important when they are ‘on attachment’ to the school from the LEA. Otherwise, they may feel marginalised, as did those in one school who were required to wear ‘visitor’ labels when the Ofsted inspection team was present.

Activities such as school trips and camps can provide opportunities for LSAs to draw on their out of school interests. Often, they have much to offer, but clearly it is necessary to be mindful of their commitment on these occasions, which normally far exceed paid working hours. Certainly, where the LSAs are drawn fully into the life of the school they frequently talk of greater job satisfaction and higher self-esteem. This means that: LSAs make relevant contributions to wider school activities. (Indicator A4)

6.3 How can the conditions for effective working practices be created?

6.3.1 Teachers’ management strategies

As we have seen, effective practice is associated with contexts where teaching strategies have been planned in ways that take account of the presence of LSAs in the classroom. Of course, no two teachers will interpret this task in the same way, not least since circumstances and teaching styles differ considerably. The onus on LSAs to ‘fit in’ with local conditions and ways of working, particularly where they work in a variety of classrooms, is a considerable one and should not be underestimated. Potential problems in this area can be reduced, however, particularly where teachers are clear in their own minds about what they are expecting and what is planned. Our findings (and those of Balshaw, 1999) suggest that some of these difficulties are also minimised when teachers are familiar with, or, where appropriate, have been involved in drawing up job descriptions that accurately reflect the tasks to be undertaken by LSAs.

The teacher’s planning should reflect an awareness of the different types of tasks that LSAs might carry out at various stages of the lesson that are indicated in the job description. In addition, it should include consideration of where all these activities are to take place and what resources will be necessary. Inevitably, the nature of the lesson activities to be carried out, the level of support required by particular pupils, and what else is happening in the room at the same time, will all determine exactly how the tasks included in the job description can be carried out in practice.

In managing the lesson the teacher also has to take into account when to engage with all the pupils, including the ones for whom the LSA will have some delegated responsibility, not only at the whole class level, but individually, in pairs and in small groups. Direct attention from the teacher is an entitlement for pupils and is a crucial way of fostering participation. Therefore, when directing the LSA’s tasks, the teacher should remember that those pupils with whom the LSA works also have a similar entitlement. It is also important that they have opportunities to learn with and from their peers. This should include time when they can work with classmates whose levels of attainment are very different from their own. In this way opportunities for more independent learning and participation in the social processes of the class will be provided. This is particularly important for pupils experiencing difficulties in learning or behaviour, since there is powerful evidence that co-operative learning arrangements are effective in fostering their academic and social progress (e.g. Johnson and Johnson, 1994).
There is also a need to consider the implications of two adults sharing the same physical classroom space, paying attention to the likely difficulties that can be created (e.g. Thomas, 1992). Specifically, teachers have to take account of the extra adults’ need for working space, as well as their own. Some teachers talked of designating an area of the classroom such that any pupils working with the LSA had enough space to move about, get resources and remain relatively independent. This was seen as being preferable to pupils being ‘stuck in their own corner’, marginalised and dependent on the LSA for practical support and resources.

By managing the classroom in this way the teacher has created a degree of flexibility which both adults can feel comfortable with. It is also important that the pupils understand the classroom processes in which they are involved, and what the two adults will be doing co-operatively and separately. However it is important to avoid giving the “wrong” kind of message where, for example, an LSA’s presence is explained through identifying an individual’s difficulties and the help the LSA provides for him/her, creating potential embarrassment for both. Nevertheless teachers still have to make it clear to all pupils what they can expect from the adults in the classroom.

Explicit evaluation of the classroom partnership by the teacher and LSA will also lead to the ability to transfer what has been learnt to other lessons and classrooms and to other colleagues. This learning can contribute to the development of a wider school understanding about the management of LSAs in classrooms, provided the conditions exist in the school overall for this practice to develop, and forms part of the agenda for the section on in-service training. Where this happens, the evidence suggests that pupils and LSAs will experience more participation, independence in learning and higher standards. Therefore, it is necessary that: Teachers’ management strategies provide clear guidance as to how LSAs should work in their classrooms. (Indicator B1)

6.3.2 School policy

Our visits to schools indicate that overall school policies are vital to the development of practice in relation to the work of LSAs. Put simply, such policies can either foster or limit the capacity of colleagues to develop effective ways of working. Positive conditions seem to arise when the school management team establishes policies that encourage an ethos of participation, collaboration and consistency. The evidence is that the creation of the classroom strategies outlined on previous pages is to a large degree dependent upon the existence of this positive lead from management. Therefore, school development processes should seek to nurture the conditions that facilitate the tasks of teachers and LSAs working together effectively in classrooms.

A key issue to consider at the outset is the job title given to assistants. Many respondents were of the opinion that there should be more cohesion between LEA and school terminology in order to reduce existing confusion. We have come across a whole variety of different titles in both mainstream and special schools. In general, titles should be defined in such a way that there is no ambiguity about the primary purpose for them being in the school. As assistants are employed in schools to assist teachers in helping pupils to learn, the term “Learning Support Assistants” seems appropriate for all LSAs. Therefore this title should be used for all assistants who work in schools and not be restricted to those who work with pupils with special needs. The label “LSA” should place those employees firmly within the mainstream purpose of teaching and learning.

When deciding on recruitment criteria there are some basic necessities in respect of LSA suitability for the role which are related to the skills required to work in particular contexts. As a basic prerequisite it is important to focus on personal qualities of applicants rather than their qualifications and experience although previous work with children and young people and a basic level of English and Mathematics up to GCSE Grade C are also important.
It is common for primary schools to employ staff from the local community, often through parent volunteers, ancillary staff, school lunch supervisors, playgroup staff, etc. However, headteachers need to be satisfied that certain criteria are met. Parent helpers do not necessarily become effective LSAs without considerable support. In addition, if LSAs are to support the literacy and/or numeracy hour, they need to demonstrate that they are capable of and confident about working in this area. For secondary and special schools the pattern of recruitment may be different, with less focus on the local community. Teachers in all sectors stress the importance of LSAs being good at getting along with a whole variety of people in all the areas of the school, being sensitive to the territorial issues that can exist in some faculties and classrooms. LSAs’ clear commitment is also needed from the outset to learn about the job and be prepared to attend staff development opportunities and training.

For LSAs who are likely to work with a specified group of pupils with identified disabilities, e.g. pupils with visual disabilities, some proven expertise in this area may be a necessary condition of appointment. If it is not, then appropriate training should be provided immediately the post has been filled.

We found that parents had very definite views about LSAs and their work with their children. The following list is a brief summary of opinion amongst parents: LSAs should like children and ‘know what makes them tick’; be friendly but firm and capable of dealing with behaviour and discipline; be aware of teenagers’ needs (at secondary level); be sympathetic to their difficulties or disabilities at the same time as providing the right kind of support and not doing tasks for them; be able to provide knowledge and skills in certain areas related to disability and learning difficulty. Overall, parents wish to see support used well in the interests of their happiness and learning at school. Some parents also mentioned that they would have liked to meet or interview applicants, although it was only with hindsight and hearing what their children had had to say about how things were going that they felt informed enough to do so. This might be taken into consideration where parents have developed a clear sense of the role of the LSA in relation to their child and their view should be noted.

Where recruitment of LSAs are the school’s responsibility rather than the LEA’s, they should be offered clearly defined contracts, with job descriptions that provide a set of accountabilities that protect both the interests of the LSA, the school and pupils. Contracts - where possible - should also be permanent, and not linked to particular pupils as is often the case at present. Contracts that are linked to pupils are often temporary and may be terminated if the pupil leaves school or no longer requires LSA support. A general and permanent resource of LSAs, managed by the school, and deployed according to need is likely to encourage LSA commitment to the role and a sense of permanence and value. In addition, opportunities for training and staff development are less likely to be seen as ‘wasted’ as they often are at present. A permanent resource of LSAs should also engender a sense of continuity in the role, which might offer a meaningful career structure. In schools where these steps have been taken there is a more positive feeling amongst LSAs about their prospects and value.

In addition, a career structure should be offered to all LSAs and embedded within contracts that reflect recognition of experience, years served, skills, knowledge, and competencies in the role, training and courses, including qualifications. This should start with the lowest level being for newly appointed LSAs who have no qualifications directly associated with the role. Where LSAs have pursued basic level training this should be acknowledged in the contract offered. More experience, demonstrable competencies in the role and further specific skills training should be further recognised at the next level. A senior post should be offered to LSAs with considerable experience, more advanced qualifications, and a co-ordinating role with additional responsibilities, such as inducting newly appointed LSAs, supporting in-service training initiatives, offering job shadowing opportunities.

Positive attitudes to the worth of LSAs also suggest that their contracts reflect a commitment on the part of management to LSAs having a proportion of paid time dedicated to non pupil-contact
activities. These include essential requirements such as planning time with teachers, attendance at meetings and opportunities for staff development. These activities should not be seen as additional extras, as they currently are in many schools. This is a crucial factor in reference to offering high quality teaching and learning for pupils, and is fundamental to the LSAs’ abilities to support this task, under the direction and guidance of teaching colleagues. In schools where these arrangements have been made the quality of LSA’s work is considerably enhanced and they feel that they are making more focused, competent and appropriate contributions to working with pupils in classrooms.

The school’s responsibility to manage LSAs may be complicated where the LEA has powers to appoint, direct and train LSAs who are financed through additional resourcing, often in support of pupils at stages three to five on the Code of Practice assessment procedure. The interface between the school and LEA management of LSAs can be fraught with difficulty, with conflicting ideas about what should be done, even in sites of good practice. LEAs’ continuing practice in appointing LSAs on temporary contracts exacerbates these difficulties. Where the LEA has worked with schools to clarify this issue, there is less confusion (the following section on LEA responsibilities deals with these issues in more detail). At a school level, however, there is a majority opinion - greater in the secondary sector than primary), - that schools should be trusted to use professional judgements in the appointment and management of LSAs.

Communication about the work of LSAs in schools is another major area of concern. In larger schools, particularly secondary and middle schools, wider staff awareness about the role is an issue where LSAs are likely to support across a range of curriculum areas, in different classrooms and with different teaching staff. Teachers who have not experienced having another adult in the room need to be prepared and receive support. A first step is ensuring that respective responsibilities are clearly outlined and that teachers receive guidance on effective practice in this area, with the learning support department having a role to play in this. Training needs are also a priority here, for teaching staff as much, if not more than LSAs. The section on training will deal in some detail on this area.

Supply teachers are another group of staff for whom communication about the work of LSAs is essential. Where regular supply staff are deployed, this is easier to manage, but even in schools where management have thought through many communication issues, this still remains patchy. Therefore, school management needs to consider when and how supply teachers will be informed about the role of LSAs in the school, otherwise LSAs can find themselves taking responsibility for the whole class with the supply teacher being in effect the LSA. Of course, LSAs can and do provide the continuity needed particularly in respect of certain pupils, but they are not responsible for the quality of teaching and learning which ensues in these situations. Supply teachers should also be aware of the LSA’s role in encouraging the maximum participation of all pupils in the lesson, and not create tensions for LSAs, for example, by asking them to leave the lesson, either alone or withdrawing some students!

In secondary schools, management has a responsibility to consider the ways in which subject or faculty links are encouraged. It is unreasonable for LSAs to develop a detailed knowledge across all curriculum areas. Teachers are not charged with this task. In many schools, because LSAs are attached to one pupil, a system of shadowing individuals across the timetable has ensued. Yet, it has been found that, where more effective support strategies exist, teachers and students alike prefer to see an LSA ‘linked’ to subjects so that they see them as part of that team, if not fully, at least for a substantive part of their time. Balshaw (1999) offers detailed explanations as to why this is the case.

Parents should be involved in, and informed about, the work of LSAs in the school. Where LSAs work flexibly as a resource to support many pupils, then parents should know about this, be reassured about their competence and their professional status in the school. Where LSAs are involved in planning strategies and learning programmes with the teacher, parents of those pupils should - wherever possible - be drawn into that process and their views about levels of support and what form it might take should be valued.
Governors, who themselves have management responsibilities, should be made aware by the senior staff/head of the roles and responsibilities of LSAs in the school. Communicating the essential nature of their status and work in school is important, because governors themselves can influence perceptions amongst members of the school community about the LSAs. Where governors have a designated responsibility to meet with and observe LSAs’ work this supports the process of communication about them and with them. Where governor sub-committees have LSA issues as regular agenda items then this provides another means of reminding governors of the value of their role as members of staff. In addition, where schools have appointed an LSA to the governing body, again a forum for communication exists. Senior LSAs can also contribute to reports to governors about their work.

The support for LSAs at a pastoral level is also a management responsibility. Systems that are clear to LSAs are needed, and key members of staff at senior management level should be identified to them. Schools employing systems of formal and informal appraisal for LSAs have found that this enhances their work. ‘Professional development discussion’ is the way in which some schools describe it, feeling that it is perhaps a less threatening term for the LSAs. LSAs themselves say they value this opportunity, and it helps them to feel like professional members of the team participating more fully in the life of the school. More detail about these issues will be dealt with later, in the section on training and support. However, it is essential that: Schools have policies outlining the roles and responsibilities of LSAs. (Indicator B2)

6.3.3 LEA policies

Just as classroom practices are influenced by overall school policies, so, it seems, what happens in schools is shaped to some degree by the policies of LEAs. This is highly complex territory related to policies within individual LEAs; their strategies for allocating financial resources; their overall structures and processes; their approaches to managing change; the partnership arrangements that exist; and the ways in which different policies interact (Ainscow et al, 1999). Bearing these complexities in mind, in this section we look more specifically at how LEA policies can influence the work of LSAs.

In regard to recruitment, it is important for LEAs who retain control of this area, whether employing LSAs to work in a service team or be attached to schools, to have explicit procedures and clearly understood criteria for making appointments. These criteria should mirror those used by schools who appoint their own LSAs directly. Many of the issues covered in the school management section are also relevant for LEAs, particularly in respect of roles and responsibilities, titles, career structures and contracts, and therefore reference should be made to the advice offered in the previous section.

In addition, however, LEA contracts should also reflect flexibility of management in any given context, again enhancing a school management’s capacity to make appropriate decisions about their roles and tasks. Where LEA support teachers are also seen as having a responsibility to manage LSAs within school contexts, this interface should be carefully managed. In many schools confusion is created by these joint arrangements, so wherever possible total devolvement to the school should be the strategy used, in order that the LSA is clear about line management. This applies particularly in secondary school contexts where managers feel that a more cohesive approach to managing LSAs should exist.

In summary, LEA managers have a great deal of responsibility for setting a professional ethos for the LSAs they fund. Clearly a better skilled and motivated work force will only be created if the key issues are addressed. These include permanent contracts, reflecting a commitment to a career structure that contains training opportunities. In addition an allocation of time to plan and learn about the role together with teaching staff should be seen as a priority area for development by LEA managers. If
6.4 What forms of training and support are needed

6.4.1 Learning together

Opportunities for training are ongoing and the evidence suggests that these should be fully integrated into everyday classroom life. They should not be viewed solely as an extra activity that takes place out of the class, on a course or INSET day. Indeed the classroom and school strategies that we have explored create the working conditions within which LSAs can make significant contributions to the participation and learning of pupils. They are therefore important in encouraging teachers and LSAs to learn from and with each other about the tasks they carry out together. In other words, conditions are created within which the development of thinking and practice becomes an integrated element of day-day-to-day classroom life. There is, of course, considerable evidence that such training, involving mutual support and coaching within the working context, is an effective means of bringing about improved outcomes for pupils (e.g. Joyce and Showers, 1988).

Feedback from pupils can also play a valuable part in this learning. This feedback may come in the form of their reactions to the arrangements and strategies that the teacher and LSA devise, and how they get on with their work as a result of these arrangements. It may not be necessary to ask pupils - simply observing their behaviour will be enough. However, where teachers and LSAs model reflective practice about the conduct and outcomes of a lesson, pupils may also join in the discussions, either as a group or individually as they review their own progress.

Where reflective practice is the norm in classrooms, and teachers and LSAs see that they are carrying out what is basically action research into the ways in which they are working together, they often seem to become habitual problem solvers about the processes of classroom partnership. Many teachers in schools feel that they would benefit from team teaching in order to develop their teaching skills. However, in many schools the pressure of staffing only allows this to happen occasionally, if at all. The presence of LSAs in the classroom allows for a similar if not identical opportunity for both professionals to improve their team teaching skills. Teachers have commented on the benefits of having another adult working alongside them. When this works well it can result in a number of positive outcomes: for example a glance across the room, a non-verbal direction to intervene or take note of something that is happening, the raised eyebrow that speaks volumes, a shared incident - negative or positive – that they can relive afterwards. Where this joint experience is formalised into a reflective feedback session from which they both learn, there will be benefits for both adults and the pupils.

In addition to these developments, both induction and appraisal procedures, if they exist, can also be carried out in the classroom context, where LSAs’ staff development needs are identified and supported from the outset. Clarity of the aims for LSAs’ initial learning in the job will provide a focus for what can be done in the classroom under the teacher’s guidance.

Where LSAs attend a course outside school that involves some classroom-based development, the mentoring role of the class teacher becomes important. Here again, within a focused project that is aimed at developing LSA competencies and skills in the classroom, and chosen by the LSA, the teamwork and learning which can go on may be very considerable. Teachers may well need support in
how to provide appropriate mentoring skills, but the benefits for the partnership are often quite considerable, as well as developing the LSAs’ skills and knowledge.

Competency-based learning for the role of the LSA starts in the classroom and, actively pursued, can go on for as long as the LSA works there. Seeing it as an opportunity for teachers’ learning also means that collaborative practice develops. From induction processes through to learning to work cooperatively, with at some later stage the teachers mentoring LSAs’ classroom learning, a foundation for relevant competency-based staff development exists. The staff development plan of the school, where it reflects the needs of LSAs, should firmly root much of those learning opportunities in the classroom alongside teachers. This helps to ensure that: Teachers and LSAs learn together to improve the quality of their work. (Indicator C1)

6.4.2 Staff development in schools

Beyond the focus on classroom partnerships as a means of fostering improved classroom practice, it is also important to consider the ways in which overall school staff development processes can reflect the training needs of LSAs. Some of this may involve activities that are geared directly to the team of LSAs, whilst other activities will be carried out alongside teaching colleagues.

At the start of their employment a period of induction, for which various staff in school might assume some responsibility, has been found to be helpful. The classteacher(s) with whom LSAs work have a role to play in this - familiarising them with the rules and routines of the classroom and department on a ‘need-to-know’ basis to start with, then moving into more detail. Various helpful strategies, like a classroom notice board or daily/lesson log left on the desk for open perusal containing details helpful to anyone, such as LSAs, volunteers, parents, students, supply teachers make for quick and easy reference. Other LSAs, perhaps specifically a senior LSA, can mentor new appointees, providing support and guidance and offering opportunities for shadowing. LSAs have reported that they find it very helpful to watch another LSA at work. In these cases, classteachers need to be aware that they will have two LSAs in their room and what the purpose of this is.

Staff such as senior managers and the learning support co-ordinator should hold more formalised induction meetings with LSAs. Senior staff taking trouble over their induction procedures is seen by LSAs as a positive recognition of their importance in the school right from the start. In one school, the headteacher invites all the LSAs to an informal lunch in his study once a term, with an open forum for discussion, and LSAs feel a real sense of recognition, particularly those that are new to the school.

Beyond induction processes and procedures, there are other staff development needs to be considered. This agenda has been identified by many LSAs as competency-based training. Components of this may well include: curriculum-based knowledge (specifically in literacy and numeracy); positive behaviour management strategies; specific skills in supporting pupils with disabilities; working successfully in collaboration with teaching staff and other adults, ways of involving parents and learning how to find out things for themselves. This ‘find-out’ culture can be very positive, as was noted in one particular school, where LSAs support each other with ideas about where to find information. It is particularly so where the context is conducive to being one of action-research, but not where it is seen as having to find out many things in the absence of essential or relevant information being offered.

One area of development in some schools has been the examination of ways of training teachers to develop collaborative working practices in classrooms so that they are more confident to work with LSAs. Many teachers have said that this is an area that is covered inadequately on initial teacher training courses and that further INSET is needed. Indeed, feedback from LSAs in this study suggests that teachers can lack confidence and competence in managing another adult in the classroom. No
matter what investment is made in training LSAs this will be in part wasted if a similar effort is not put into supporting teachers in the development of their skills in this area. Otherwise the work of LSAs, and by definition the pupils they support, will continue to be on the margins of general school development processes.

Our evidence suggests that wherever internal staff development opportunities are relevant to LSAs, these should take place as contracted training within their paid working hours. Alternatively, some time in lieu by mutual agreement can be an interim step in the right direction. It would be helpful if a commitment to this aspect of the work was made explicit at appointment or during appraisal procedures. Where schools have increasingly moved towards these arrangements there is a sense of participation and value experienced by LSAs about which they make very positive comment. Occasionally, however, they report that they are not sure about the relevance of the training they have attended, particularly if they feel too much ‘jargon’ was used, but they consider that it was a great step in the right direction for them to be there at all. Managers of staff development opportunities should take note of this in supporting their full participation. A differentiated, carefully planned curriculum should ideally be on offer. Consulting LSAs about their reviews of training experiences and using this feedback should help with that planning.

The training agenda as identified by LSAs may not always be met through the school’s internal staff development plan. In such instances there may be sources of training identified outside the school, in the LEA, for example, which could be offered. The Standards Fund allocated to the schools has been made available to cover fees for external training. In addition this may also be used to release LSAs to shadow others, visit other schools, where there is some interesting practice to observe, and to attend courses, by providing cover where necessary.

Finally, LSAs consistently referred to the need for a school managed or LEA-managed or LEA-supported career structure that is supported by the careful selection of additional training opportunities. These might contribute to a portfolio of relevant competency-based training, skills training for particular job specifications, such as working with pupils with challenging behaviour or sensory disabilities, and advanced training. Where there is an intention to support the career development of LSAs, appropriate learning opportunities as well as time served in the post and additional responsibilities are aspects to consider in determining the level of post in which the LSA is working. In addition where LSAs obtain additional qualifications, some recognition in pay levels should also be made. Many LSAs are currently put off committing themselves to training because of their temporary contracts and lack of salary enhancement in return for putting in the time. It is, in summary, important that: School staff development programmes foster the competence of LSAs and teachers to carry out their respective tasks. (Indicator C2)

6.4.3 LEA training and support

Where LSAs are either employed by the LEA and form part of an LEA service, or are deployed to schools under the direction of the support services, the LEA has some responsibility to train and support them. In addition, many LEAs open up training opportunities offered to other school personnel to their LSAs, as well as running courses to which school or service LSAs are specifically invited. Our data demonstrate that a wide variety of approaches are used, with some training events happening in the evening and others offered during working hours. There are also longer courses that have award-bearing status. Within all these options there are certain issues which need to be considered in relation to their role in fostering effective practice.

LEAs with a centrally managed service that includes LSAs who offer support to schools have some key training issues to address. One is at the level of inducting LSAs into the service itself, followed by preparing them for their allocated tasks in schools. The induction training is important in order for
LSAs learn about the LEA policy on special needs, but also about the overall educational provision in the authority. Where LEAs are seeking to move towards more inclusive policies it is important that LSAs understand the nature of this and the implications it has for them. One of these may be that they will be supporting pupils with significant difficulties whose parents have asked that they be educated in a mainstream setting. This places LSAs at the forefront of groundbreaking developments in practice in many LEAs, with the support service being in some measure judged by the success of these attempts by schools to take pupils who may in the past have attended special schools.

Skills-based training is therefore required, and in many instances the teachers in the support service and other professional colleagues such as therapists or psychologists are the tutors on these course sessions. Our data indicate that LSAs welcome the opportunity to attend, meet other LSAs and share experiences. In LEAs where this training is seen as a priority and is offered as a part of the LSAs’ working hours within their contract, it is particularly valued by LSAs. The LEAs negotiate with schools that they should attend on a regular basis, so those schools know they will not be in school on those days when training is taking place. In one LEA that has devised an introductory course, more advanced modules are starting, with focused content areas on particular skills needed by LSAs working in settings where, for example, there are pupils with behaviour difficulties or sensory disabilities. This is done to ensure that they feel skilled and confident enough to provide effective support. The modules are offered on a three-week rotational basis so LSAs are out of school every three weeks for a morning. This provides a structure that other LEAs might well find to be useful.

As in schools, LEA management have a responsibility to make sure that the service personnel who work with LSAs have an understanding of the role, its attendant responsibilities and the conduct expected of LSAs deployed to schools. In this way those staff will not be suggesting that LSAs take on tasks that are inappropriate. They will also be able to advise school staff about the LSAs’ role. Therefore, there is a staff development need that should be recognised and met by LEAs for other personnel who have a responsibility to direct the LSA’s work.

Accredited LEA courses are sometimes conducted in partnership with a further education college, or directly through an award bearing body and staffed entirely from LEA personnel. It is notable from feedback from LSAs that many of these do not offer the most appropriate content and where the college has devised this content without reference to the contexts where LSAs work, there is a great deal of disparity between contextual needs and content. Where LEAs have devised courses themselves and made arrangements with an accrediting body, such as City and Guilds, a much better match was found. The factor that seems to make a significant difference is the allocation of a mentor to support the LSAs in their own setting. Where this is missing the impact that the course has on LSA practice is much reduced. LSAs, whether schools or LEA-based, provide positive feedback about mentoring saying that courses which make this requirement are much better related to what they actually do. As in many college run courses, for example, the impact that the course makes on the LSA’s practice in classrooms is much reduced. LSAs, whether school or LEA-based, provide positive feedback about mentoring within these courses, saying that they are much better related to what they actually do. Whether schools, LEAs or LSAs are funding these activities, there should be a clear match between investment and impact. Currently this seems in many instances not to be the case, if LSAs’ comments are to be taken note of, and attention should be paid to this significant issue. Therefore, it is in summary, important that: LEAs provide relevant training and support for LSAs. (Indicator C3)

**6.4.4 The use of FHE-based courses and those run by voluntary organisations**

Finally, we need to consider the place of external or institution-based courses in relation to the development of effective practice. Examples were found in the case studies of carefully devised and well-taught courses that were clearly making a very significant contribution. Unfortunately, the data suggest that these were in the minority and were usually found in contexts where there was tangible
involvement of LEA staff in the planning and presentation of the courses. Clearly, if schools and LEAs are to use these as a positive resource, particularly with respect to the development of a career ladder for LSAs, this area needs a good deal of evaluation and revision.

It seems that at a basic level, LSAs want opportunities to pursue competency-based training which has maximum relevance to their work and work context. A school or LEA may provide much of this type of training. However, where particular skill development is required, other sources may be used. Those sources, whether colleges of higher and further education, or voluntary organisations and accreditation bodies, should be seeking to support and develop the competencies needed for the role of LSAs. Furthermore, courses which in the eyes of LSAs are jargonistic and aimed at too high a level for their job competencies, seem to have been devised by personnel who are not intimately familiar with LSAs’ work – a situation that is clearly unsatisfactory.

The general perception that large numbers of LSAs harbour the long-term ambition to become teachers needs to be reconsidered. Whilst this option should indeed be made available for those that want it, LSAs’ feedback within this study is that they require, in the main, training that is aimed at supporting them in doing a better job in the classroom. The recent TTA report (Smith et al, 1999) makes a similar point. Therefore any intention to offer them opportunities to train as a teacher must be thought through carefully. It would be extremely unfortunate if this ultimate aim filtered into the curriculum of more basic level training to such a great extent that the curriculum content became even further removed from their role as LSAs. Virtually all LSAs in this study stated that they wanted a career structure, linked to relevant training, that leads to them being a better LSA and valued for doing just that. As stated in section three of this report, around 80% of the LSAs interviewed had no desire to become teachers. In essence, then, schools and LEAs should ensure that: *Use is made of institution-based courses or courses run by voluntary organisations to extend the expertise of LSAs.* (Indicator C4)

### 6.5 Concluding remarks

In this section we have analysed a series of overlapping and interconnected principles and indicators related to the management, role and training of LSAs all of which are associated with effective practice in the work of LSAs. As we have seen, the nature of these indicators is such that they imply a fundamental commitment to approaches that are geared to making effective use of all available human resources in order to overcome barriers to the participation and learning of pupils within a classroom. They also require the development of LEA and school policies that will encourage the development of such approaches. In the final section of the report we use our findings to suggest an agenda that can be used as a basis for reviewing existing arrangements within LEAs and schools in order to develop a plan for moving practice forward. We also offer some recommendations that are intended to help shape policy development at a national level.
7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The final section is divided into two parts. In the first part we use our analysis of effective practice in order to formulate an agenda that can be used to review school and LEA policies and practices. In the second we make recommendations related to contracts, job descriptions, salaries, career progression and training that are intended to inform policy development at the national level.

7.1 A Review Agenda for schools and LEAs

This review agenda is presented as a series of indicators within an overall framework, stating what we would expect to see in settings that are structured in ways that are intended to encourage effective practice in the work of LSAs. The framework and indicators are presented in figure 7.1.

For each indicator we provide a number of questions that have emerged from the analysis presented in the previous section. These questions throw further light on what is involved in developing effective practice at the classroom, school and LEA levels. They can be used to collect and review evidence in order to make judgements about the quality of existing arrangements at each of the levels in order to develop improvement targets. Experience elsewhere of carrying out such reviews suggests that approaches that attempt to draw together the perspectives of different stakeholders are an effective means of mobilising support for improvement efforts, not least those of LSAs and pupils (Ainscow, 1999; Balshaw, 1999).

In order to use the Review Agenda effectively, it is important to refer to the relevant parts of the previous section as the key questions raised in the Agenda are discussed in more detail there. The two sections should therefore be used in conjunction in order to gain maximum benefit from the review process and to enable people to consider each question in sufficient depth.
### Figure 7.1 Framework for evaluating practice at all levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Role</th>
<th>B. Management</th>
<th>C. Training</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1 LSAs work co-operatively with teachers to support the learning and participation of pupils</td>
<td>B1 Teachers’ management strategies provide clear guidance as to how LSAs should work in their classrooms</td>
<td>C1 Teachers and LSAs learn together to improve the quality of their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 LSAs work with teachers to prepare lesson plans and materials</td>
<td>B2 Schools have policies outlining roles and responsibilities of LSAs</td>
<td>C2 School staff development programmes foster the competence of LSAs and teachers to carry out their respective tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 LSAs contribute to the evaluation of the outcomes of lessons</td>
<td>B3 LEA policies ensure that LSAs’ conditions of employment foster effective practice</td>
<td>C3 LEAs provide relevant additional training and support for LSAs</td>
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<tr>
<td>A4 LSAs make relevant contributions to wider school activities</td>
<td>C4 Use is made of (institution-based) external courses, or courses run by voluntary organisations to extend the expertise of LSAs</td>
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The review agenda

**Dimension A: Roles**

**A1 LSAs work co-operatively with teachers to support the learning and participation of pupils**

**Issues to consider:**

- Do teaching approaches take account of the presence of LSAs?
- Do the contributions of LSAs encourage pupil independence in classrooms?
- Do LSAs understand the rationale of lesson activities?
- Is the expertise of LSAs used appropriately to foster the learning of pupils?
- Are there strategies for ensuring that LSAs have appropriate space for carrying out their tasks?
- Do LSAs work in ways that ensure that pupils remain engaged with all the important aspects of the lesson?
- Do behaviour management approaches take account of the contributions of LSAs?

**A2 LSAs work with teachers to prepare lesson plans and materials**

**Issues to consider:**

- Are LSAs involved in discussion of longer-term plans?
- Do LSAs take part in the planning of lessons?
- Are LSAs involved in decision making about plans during lessons?
- Do LSAs and teachers plan in ways that demonstrate to pupils their commitment to teamwork?
- Do LSAs and teachers have plans that encourage them to offer one another constructive feedback?
- Are there agreed plans for LSAs to respond to the needs of individual pupils?
- Do the plans involve LSAs in ensuring curriculum continuity for pupils?
- Do plans for LSAs ensure the entitlement of each pupil to direct teacher attention?
A3  LSAs contribute to the evaluation of outcomes of lessons

Issues to consider:

• Do LSAs contribute to record keeping?
• Are LSAs invited to comment informally on pupil progress?
• Are LSAs encouraged to offer feedback on classroom arrangements?
• Do LSAs contribute to the collection of evidence for formal assessments of pupils?
• Are LSAs aware of the need for confidentiality in relation to information about individual pupils?
• Is the knowledge that LSAs have of the pupils’ views used as part of the evaluation process?
• Is the knowledge that LSAs have of the pupils’ families used as part of the evaluation process?

A4  LSAs make relevant contributions to wider school activities

Issues to consider:

• Is LSA knowledge of the local community utilised?
• Do LSAs make contributions-based on their wider interests?
• Is care taken to ensure that LSAs are not subjected to unreasonable demands?
• Do LSAs participate in staff social activities?

Dimension B: Management

B1  Teachers’ management strategies provide clear guidance as to how LSAs should work in their classrooms

Issues to consider:

• Are teachers familiar with the job descriptions of LSAs?
• Do teachers indicate to LSAs their roles at various stages of the lesson?
• Do the teachers’ management strategies ensure that the presence of the LSA does not inhibit pupil-pupil interactions?
• Do teachers provide guidance as to how LSAs should contribute to record keeping?
• Do teachers use LSA perspectives to develop better understandings of how classroom partnerships can be created?
B2  Schools have policies outlining the roles and responsibilities of LSAs

Issues to consider:
- Do schools have clearly defined criteria for use in appointing LSAs?
- Do schools provide appropriate job descriptions for LSAs?
- Are job descriptions reviewed with LSAs on a regular basis?
- Do LSAs receive regular appraisal of their work?
- Do the job titles given to LSAs reflect an emphasis on supporting participation in learning?
- Do school contracts set out conditions that help to foster LSAs’ commitment to their work?
- Are LSAs given time within their contracts for preparation, meetings and other administrative tasks?
- Do schools offer a career structure for LSAs that reflects qualifications, experience and training?
- Are the respective management roles of schools and LEAs agreed in ways that ensure positive working conditions for LSAs?
- Does the whole school community understand the roles and responsibilities of LSAs?
- Where LSAs are required to work in different areas of a school is this co-ordinated by the senior staff involved?

B3  LEAs policies ensure that LSAs’ conditions of employment foster effective practice

Issues to consider:
- Do LEAs have clearly defined criteria for appointing LSAs?
- Do LEAs provide appropriate job descriptions for LSAs?
- Are job descriptions reviewed with LSAs on a regular basis?
- Do LSAs receive regular appraisal of their work?
- Do the job titles given to LSAs reflect an emphasis on supporting participation in learning?
- Do pay and conditions of service help to foster LSAs commitment to their work?
- Are LSAs given time within their contracts for preparation, meetings and other administrative tasks?
- Do LEAs offer a career structure for LSAs that reflects qualifications, experience and training?
Are the respective management role of LEAs and schools agreed in ways that ensure positive working conditions for LSAs?

**Dimension C: Training**

C1 Teachers and LSAs learn together to improve the quality of their work

**Issues to consider:**

- Do teachers and LSAs set out to improve the quality of their working partnership?
- Do teachers and LSAs talk together on a regular basis about their own learning?
- Do the partnerships between teachers and LSAs foster mutual confidence?
- Is the evidence drawn from partnerships used to inform staff appraisal?

C2 School staff development programmes foster the competence of LSAs and teachers to carry out their respective tasks

**Issues to consider:**

- Are LSAs provided with a school induction programme?
- Is there a programme of staff development for LSAs?
- Do LSAs participate in wider staff development activities?
- Are LSAs given direct support in developing aspects of their classroom practice?
- Does the school staff development programme include attention to the skills of teachers and managers in working with LSAs?
- Are opportunities for LSA staff development offered during paid working time?
- Are LSAs given staff development opportunities in relation to career progression?

C3 LEAs provide relevant additional training and support for LSAs

**Issues to consider:**

- Does the LEA provide LSAs with an induction programme?
- Is there a LEA programme of staff development for LSAs?
- Are LSAs given direct support in developing aspects of their classroom practice?
- Does the LEA staff development programme include attention to the skills of teachers and managers in working with LSAs?
- Are opportunities for LSA staff development offered during paid working time?
• Are staff development opportunities for LSAs linked to career progression?
• Does the LEA provide accredited training for LSAs?

C4 Use is made of institution-based courses or courses run by voluntary organisations to extend the expertise of LSAs

Issues to consider:
• Are LSAs encouraged to attend appropriate FHE and/or VO run courses?
• Do funding arrangements support this attendance?
• Are there mentoring arrangements to ensure that participation on courses is linked to developments in schools?
• Do the competencies that are featured on FHE and/or VO run courses take account of the roles and responsibilities of LSAs in their own schools?
• Is the successful completion of an accredited FHE and/or VO run course linked to career progression?

In presenting this set of questions within the context of a review agenda we have endeavoured to point to the key areas of which all stakeholders should take account with respect to the role, management and training of LSAs. These questions are intended not only for a review of current practice and its further development, but to provide the basis of a set of guidance on the work of LSAs. It could therefore be developed in more detail in order that all stakeholders pay attention to the issues that are of particular relevance to them, whether they are LSAs themselves, teachers or managers in schools and LEAs, parents, pupils or governors. That further development lies beyond the scope of this report, but we feel that what is offered here forms a sound basis from which to start an engagement with that task.

7.2 A national policy for the employment of LSAs

A key area of concern that has permeated all the data, and which is reflected in the review agenda for schools and LEAs, relates to job titles, contracts, career progression, salaries and training of LSAs. These issues have also been addressed in the recent TTA report on classroom assistants (Smith et al, 1999).

We would recommend the following:

1 The job title for staff working in schools and classrooms to support pupils should be the same. For reasons stated earlier in this report we prefer the term Learning Support Assistants which should be applied to all classroom and support assistants working in schools and not be restricted to those who work with pupils who have special needs.

2 Wherever possible contracts of employment should be permanent and not tied to a pupil or group of pupils with special needs.

3 There should be a nationally recognised system for the career progression of LSAs linked to training and experience.
The number of senior LSAs working in schools and LEA services should increase. Such posts should reflect the amount and quality of training and experience and should be matched with appropriate levels of pay.

Clearly schools and LEAs, who are responsible for determining contracts and salaries, would be faced with a demanding challenge in striving to implement these recommendations particularly as there are obvious financial implications contained in them. However, it is important for these issues to be addressed as this report is published at a time when the government has signalled continued growth in the numbers of LSAs being employed in schools and an expansion of their role, in particular in relation to implementing the literacy and numeracy strategies. Clearly, therefore, LSAs will have an important contribution to make towards raising the standards of education for all pupils. In this context the need for a properly regulated, trained and remunerated profession has become paramount.
REFERENCES


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TTA. (1998) National Standards for Qualified Teachers. The Teacher Training Agency

APPENDIX I
THE LIST OF STEERING AND ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

Steering Group
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APPENDIX II

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CASE-STUDY SITES

LEA Service 1 - North West

The service is responsible for offering support to pupils with statements in mainstream schools with learning and speech and language difficulties. Currently 60 LSAs work in the service, each of whom supports one or more pupils in a mainstream school. Each LSA has a permanent contract of employment with the service which states that they are employed on a term time only basis but paid monthly over 12 months. There is also a team of 4 teachers, all of whom have worked with pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties. They visit a number of schools on a peripatetic basis to liaise with the teachers, LSAs and parents, to co-ordinate the planning of IEPs and plan and manage regular reviews of pupils’ progress.

The service is responsible for the recruitment and selection of LSAs and for drawing up contracts and job descriptions. The service also takes responsibility for the training and induction of LSAs and for training teachers in schools where LSAs work. Day-to-day management of LSAs is the responsibility of the schools where they are placed and not that of the centrally-based service.

The research team visited a secondary and primary school. In the secondary school two LSAs support four pupils on a 0.5 basis. In the primary school two pupils with statements are each supported by a full time LSA.

LEA Service 2 – North And North East

The service is involved in a wide range of activities that include a variety of INSET programmes, a Portage service and the training and deployment of LSAs to support pupils with statements. They also run the City and Guilds certificate and advanced training programmes in learning support for LSAs they employ and for others in the region.

As in LEA 1, this service is also responsible for the recruitment and selection of LSAs and for drawing up contracts and job descriptions. The service does not use the term learning support assistants but instead employs teacher’s aids and child support assistants who have different job descriptions. The main distinction is that child support assistants appear to be expected to work under more direct supervision from teachers. Teachers’ aids are allowed a little more autonomy. A teacher who is also employed by the service but works alongside LSAs in the schools to which they are attached directs support for the work of LSAs.

LSAs working for the service are on permanent term-time only contracts. If there is a reduction in the numbers of pupils with statements working in a school such that an LSA is no longer needed, s/he will get transferred to another school, be given work at the SENSS base or with the home teaching service.

The pupils with statements in the junior and secondary school were described as having a range of learning, physical and behavioural difficulties. Two full-time LSAs worked in each school.

LEA Service 3 – London

The LEA is in a London borough. The support service consists of a head of service and two deputies, several senior staff, one of whom is a co-ordinator of LSA support to schools, whose responsibilities include the recruitment, management, support and training for the 106 LSAs employed by the LEA, which make up 72 full-time equivalent posts. Six of these LSAs are men and many represent the
The LEA team of assistants is recruited through a clearly defined procedure, involving oral and written tasks at interview. It is expected that they have previous experience of working with children in any capacity and with adults with learning difficulties in some capacity, possibly voluntary. They also have to agree to undertake a set amount of training, including induction training, which is provided by the LEA support team staff and led by the coordinator of the assistants’ recruitment, allocation and supervision in their school placement. They also are encouraged to take training opportunities of a certificated nature. This is often in their own time. The assistants are allocated to schools for a fixed term, but might be moved at any time. They may have developed skills in one context which the LEA could use elsewhere to meet a particular need, for example in the management of behaviour. Some of the LSAs are recruited, often on an emergency, supply or temporary basis from agencies in the London area.

The majority work on permanent contracts, mostly full-time and are paid over 40 weeks of the year. They are all on the same scale, although some have considerably more experience and qualifications, and many have, after two/three years in post reached the ceiling of their pay scale with no further advancement possible. Any career move comes from moving out of this system. The contract with 38 weeks of school-based time is 40 weeks in total. This reflects a proportion of paid time for training and staff development, which they attend at the central team base and planning time with teachers in the schools where they are placed. The aims and parameters of their work are clearly outlined in their job descriptions and their direction is firmly in the hands of the LEA, who work with the schools in which they are placed to review levels of satisfaction from all points of view.

The secondary school visited on the northern fringes of the borough is in a relatively affluent area compared with the rest of the borough. It has 1520 students, aged 11-18, 100+ teachers and the two assistants that are allocated through the LEA. They are supported by an LEA teacher who spends two and a half days a week in school. The school also has some students who are deaf or hearing-impaired, supported through an adjacent establishment for the hearing impaired, whose children and students are all spending most of their time in mainstream provision. The junior school visited has 10 teachers, 229 children aged 7 - 11 and a base for children with severe learning difficulties who spend a good deal of their time in the main part of the school, often with welfare assistant support. The special school from which they came started a process of relocation in 1995. The three LEA support service assistants are supporting five other children who are from the catchment area.

**LEA Service 4 – North East**

As this is a largely rural LEA, there is no central service of assistants. Instead, the LEA has chosen to devise training and staff development opportunities for assistants, with a large element of this based in school with a nominated mentor to support that work. In addition, the course modules and complete pack is free to schools and is used in an undirected way apart from what is written in the instructions. About 120 assistants will have been trained through courses which lead to the City and Guilds Certificate in Learning Support 7321, by the end of the current academic year and since its launch in 1994.
The pack materials were created in an innovative way. A core team of specialists was drawn together to create some frameworks and criteria for each of the modules, (of which there are now nine, for example, programme planning and individual education plans; managing difficult behaviour; speech and language difficulties;) keeping in mind some key concepts and competencies, whilst attempting to make them comparable in level and length. A ‘writing team’ of mixed professionals for each module, eg educational psychologists, advisory teachers, school-based teachers and assistants. Each group with a different focus planned then wrote the modules together. A group of assistants then discussed what had been produced to evaluate whether the terminology, concepts, and practical usefulness was approachable and appropriate. The starting point was what they felt themselves they ‘needed to know’. After this had been completed the pack was piloted through the first course that was run in a local pyramid of schools. After an evaluation of its effectiveness some further editing and modification took place. The finalised and ‘properly’ published version was then produced. It is tutored by a variety of LEA central personnel. The senior adviser interviewed has management responsibility for the initiative, with support and consultation from the Principal Educational Psychologist, who have each been part of it from the outset.

During its use over the next two years, some minor adjustments and changes were made, in response to both participants’ evaluation, schools’ comments and City and Guilds criteria. A particular feature over the last year has been a clarification of the role and involvement of mentors and the course tutors’ visits to assistants’ schools twice during the year to see mentors, support them and their assistants and to observe the LSAs at work with their school-based project.

Non-Resourced Primary School (P1 NR) - South

The school is a non-additionally resourced primary school with 200+ children on roll, of which 12 currently have a statement. It is in a southern coastal town, situated on a council estate, and the LEA is a unitary authority. There are 10 teachers and 10 assistants in the school. The assistants are LEA and school funded. They are there, in the main, as the result of two factors. One was the decision of the governors to spend a higher proportion of the school’s SEN budget on support staff. The other was a community project which ran from 1994-97, aimed at early intervention through a number of sources, chiefly health and educational, within the locality. Now funded by the school and LEA in about equal proportions, rather than through project funding, they are in some ways part of the legacy left through the experiences of that project, which had positive outcomes during its existence and which the school felt should be retained in some form.

The resource of assistants had become a valued one and the staff had gained much from the introduction of a greater number of assistants. Their contracts are managed to ensure reasonable continuity in employment for the staff who are experienced and valued. Although some uncertainty is unavoidable it tends to be at the margins. However, for some staff it is an issue and they feel their employment is vulnerable.

The SENCO has no class commitment at present, because of a commitment to the role development, overseeing, managing and facilitating SEN support and the number of children currently on role. He has taken the opportunity to spend time on the management and support, including training, of the LSAs, but the training needs of the LSAs are a concern, because suitable outside opportunities are not generally available for the current staff, although occasional meetings held centrally for support staff. However, since local government reorganisation there has been a considerable raising of the status of support staff.

Non-Resourced Primary School (P2 NR) - South

The school is a non-additionally resourced junior school in small town in a rural LEA in the south of England. It has 18 teaching staff (not all full-time) and seven assistants. There are 14 classes. There
are 417 children on roll and two have full statements. The SENCO is a part-time appointment who works for three days per week. She was appointed to the school partly because she had initiated a local training course for learning support assistants during 1997, and the school felt that it would benefit from her approaches with its increasing numbers of assistants. The LEA designates assistants as ‘non-teaching assistants’ but the school has chosen to use LSA as a more positive description of their work.

This has led to some innovative practice in the school, seen as a priority by the headteacher and through the SENCO’s influence, in particular specific opportunities to train in particular areas of need. One of these is specific learning difficulties, which has been a focus for developments in practice. There has been a high emphasis on staff development for assistants, along with a focus on the teachers’ view of their work and how this might inform their management of assistants. Part of this has been an emphasis on seeing the assistants and teachers as reflective learners together. Assistants have been attending the closure days, in particular those focused on the language and literacy approaches of the school and specifically the literacy hour demands. There is a system of apprenticeship for newly appointed assistants to an experienced member of the team as a part of a clear induction procedure which includes training sessions. The SENCO also takes the assistants as a group for specific training sessions. There is an annual appraisal system in place, known as the ‘staff development review’.

Assistants are recruited from the local area, often as a result of having worked in this or another school in a voluntary capacity, for example as parent helpers or lunchtime supervisors. One preference is that they should know the school. Their contracts are drawn up under LEA specifications, but on a line management basis the headteacher takes responsibility, delegating much of this to the SENCO in a redefinition of that role. The headteacher has stipulated that all assistants do paid lunchtime supervision (in an attempt to provide continuity of approaches), attend training days and have clear working conditions laid out in the contract. The contracts are all on the same basic scale used by the LEA and are permanent for a basic number of hours. In practice some assistants have additional hours which are under review according to individual needs of children.

**Non-Resourced Primary School (P3 NR) - London**

This middle school is a non-additionally resourced school for pupils aged eight to twelve in an outer London borough. There are 14 full time teachers and 9 part-time (four of whom are LEA support staff). There are seven assistants, two of whom are welfare assistants and five are LSAs, some funded by the school and some (those hours for 1:1 contracts) by the LEA.

The school serves an area made up of mainly council estate housing, with a wide cross section of ethnic backgrounds, the major one being Asian. The headteacher, who was appointed three years ago and has been pursuing and making considerable progress with an post-inspection action plan which has included the development of the role of assistants in the school. He sees this as part of the intention to develop a more inclusive orientation in the school, through providing equal opportunities to the curriculum within the school for as wide a range of diversity as possible. This is in accord with the stated policy of the LEA, which has been supporting its schools in their efforts to become more inclusive. He and the SENCO have spent time on supporting the development of practice to that end, and see the assistant as a key part of that development.

The LSAs are appointed on borough contracts, in some cases ‘topped-up’ with school funding to extend hours, where they are seen as working to support children with statements on a named basis, and allocated to individuals. However, in practice they are working with a wider range of children, as the policy of the school is for them to work with the specific children in groups and class situations rather than alone. They have job descriptions which they devised themselves, supported by the
SENCO and reviewed with her as necessary. Many have worked in the school on a voluntary basis before being taken onto the staff through interview.

**Non-Resourced Secondary School (S1 NR) - North And North East**

This is a grant maintained Church of England School in an urban LEA. The learning support department is made up of the SENCO and 11 LSAs, all but one of whom are paid for through funds allocated by the LEA to support pupils with statements in the school. Typically these LSAs also support pupils on stages 2 and 3 of the Code of Practice.

LSAs are attached to subject departments and join in departmental meetings. This means that, with the exception of one pupil with severe communication problems, LSAs work with a variety of pupils who need support and are not allocated to specific individuals. Normally support is given in-class with the exception of English when pupils tend to be withdrawn for small group or 1 to 1 work.

The SENCO is responsible for the management and support of the LSAs. There are weekly planning meetings at which timetables are agreed and LSAs allocated to classes. There are no other teachers who work in the learning support department.

All but one of the LSAs is on a temporary term-time only contract. Their presence in the school is dependent on there being sufficient pupils with statements placed there. One senior LSA is employed by the school on a permanent contract and is paid during the holidays.

**Non-Resourced Secondary School (S2 NR) – West Midlands**

This non-additionally resourced secondary school is a GM status upper school with 1500+ students and is 12-form entry. The students are aged 13-18. There are 100+ teaching staff, and 10 support staff of which 6 are assistants. They are funded by the LEA, for statutory reasons. However, as the school has GM status much of its work is carried out without direct reference to or with the support of the LEA. This means that the learning support department has been instrumental in developing approaches that are individual to the school, including the coordination of a cluster training and development initiative for assistants in its feeder first and middle schools, most of which were involved in this project.

The school has recently had a successful Ofsted inspection and is seen as a community resource in a largely rural area, offering its campus for this purpose. There is a commitment to take as many of the children from its catchment area as possible, no matter what their difficulties or abilities. The LEA maintains a more segregationist stance than the school in this respect, with a well established system of separate special education.

The assistants are on annually renewable contracts and two are full-time, the others part-time. They are assigned to individual students or work in a general capacity, in reality these boundaries are blurred, however, with small groupwork and individual support both used. Currently they are not allocated to subject departments, though they do support where they are more confident in working, where possible. One of them, who has worked in the school for 9 years works in a coordinating role for the SENCO and her timetable reflects this.

**Non-Resourced Secondary School (S3 NR) – West Midlands**

This secondary school is in a market town in a largely rural county LEA. It has 100+ teachers and 60 support staff of which 12 are assistants. There are 5 teachers in the learning support department and other faculties have 8-10 staff. There are 1647 students on roll in between eight and ten form entries,
varied amongst years, ages 11-18. The school has had a positive Ofsted inspection recently and has been awarded twice with ‘Investors in People’ awards. It has technology college status.

The learning support assistants work in classes for the largest proportion of their time, reflecting the policy statement that ‘all pupils are educated in their class groups’. For a small proportion of their time they may support students on ‘short-term withdrawal to follow an individual programme addressing specific issues such as literacy or numeracy’, under the direction of a teacher in the learning support base. The assistants are on temporary contracts which are funded by the LEA, and reviewed twice yearly. They are recruited by the SENCO and the school takes responsibility for drawing up their duties and roles.

Three of the assistants have been on the staff for more than seven years, one of whom is a ‘senior’ assistant who has three free periods for her assessment and organisational tasks. Three assistants are full-time, the others work a variety of hours from 10 upwards. Several of them have specific tasks, such as keeping a record of their weekly meetings discussions and passing information to teaching staff as necessary. Others are appointed as outreach workers as well as LSAs. They all liaise with certain year group tutors and teachers at a pastoral support level. They all have opportunities for training and staff development work in school.

**Resourced Primary School (P1 R) – North West**

The school is an additionally resourced primary school in a NW LEA, which is mixed urban and rural. The school is in a small market town. There are 115 pupils in the school, aged 4-11. There are 8 teachers and 5 assistants in the school, two on full-time contracts for HI responsibilities. The assistants are funded through differing budgets. There are 5 children with statements in the school. There are Hearing Impaired service staff based in the school for children with hearing difficulties placed there (provision for 12, only five on roll at present). There are no children actually in ‘the base’, all are in classes for the majority of the day, and supported by HI staff in class, either teachers or assistants. The HI assistants are seen as having point 5 of a week for each of these children. The SENCO of the school is also the team leader of the HI staff. The approaches used are based on natural aural methods, sign language is not used.

A variety of SEN statemented pupils placed through various special schools, which provides outreach support to those children, are also based in classes. The personnel interviewed are concerned with each of these sets of children, and work flexibly with many more in the school, although the original referral to the school was through colleagues in the University of Manchester Dept of Deafness and Human Communication. This reflects a blurring of boundaries that existed in the school, as it aimed to create a team feeling which treated all the support staff as part of the school staff as much as is possible, whilst maintaining the expertise needed to meet the children’s individual needs.

The LEA had recently introduced a regarding of assistants’ contracts and responsibilities and pay, which meant that a team atmosphere had been disturbed by changes in pay, grade and status, with a heightened awareness of differences between them.

**Resourced Primary School (P2 R) - North West**

This primary school is situated in a mixed urban and rural LEA. Provision for primary aged pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) in the LEA is located at four primary schools that have been resourced for this purpose; one of which was visited as part of the research. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties attend a special school. This primary school has eight pupils with SLD on role. They are supported by one full time teacher (soon to be increased by 0.5) and five LSAs. An additional integration co-ordinator, appointed by the LEA, visits the school approximately once a month.
There is a resource base allocated to the pupils where they can be withdrawn for selected activities. However, for much of the time they work in a mainstream class supported by an LSA. Each pupil with SLD may work with no more than two different LSAs.

The teacher with responsibility for the pupils with SLD has a key role in planing IEPs, organising the pupils’ timetables, and for liaison with class teachers, LSAs and parents. She holds a half-hour meeting each day with the assistants and weekly meetings with teachers.

The LSAs who support these pupils are referred to as Resource School Integration Assistants (RSAIs). There are also other assistants who work in the school - a Nursery Nurse, in the nursery department, 2 classroom assistants and 3 LSAs funded by the LEA to support pupils with statements, one who offers general support and two who support 2 specific pupils.

The LEA is responsible for preparing LSA contracts and job descriptions, the school for the recruitment and selection of new staff. LSAs are on permanent term-time only contracts paid over 12 months and including up to five weeks paid holiday per year.

**Resourced Primary School (P3 R) - North**

This first school is in a multi-ethnic community in a large industrial city in the north. There are 18 teachers in the school and seven assistants, three of whom are classroom assistants and four are ‘support’ assistants, funded by the LEA. It is an open-plan school with year team bases divided into class groups which share a large area with extra teaching spaces for groups and activities that need space. This open-plan arrangement impacts significantly on the potential for cooperation amongst staff.

The LEA is an urban one and over several years has additionally resourced the school. However, this additional resourcing, which focused on the opportunities provided for children with a range of special needs (last year 18 with statements), to attend the nursery and follow through into the reception class in the school, was by mutual agreement stopped at the start of the financial year. This was at the instigation of the governors, who felt that the school was becoming too ‘special’.

This resourcing arrangement has left a legacy of children with significant difficulties in the school, and for which the LEA continues to provide support in the form of assistants. In addition, it has left a tradition of understanding and strategies for managing this situation. In the future less children with special needs may well attend the school, as they will attend their own catchment area schools instead. However, for those that continue their education in the school, there is the benefit of experienced staff in dealing with their needs. The school has a policy of ‘teaching children with special needs alongside other children’.

The ‘support’ assistants are on one to one contracts, which are from the LEA. The longest serving assistant has worked in the school for seven years, others are more recent additions to the staff. The assistants are representative of the ethnic makeup of the school and at least one of them is able to use several languages to support the learning of children with Asian backgrounds. In practice, the classroom assistants are now focusing more on learning support with groups of children, in the same kinds of ways as the support assistants.

**Resourced Secondary School (S1 R) - North West**

This is a secondary school in a predominantly urban area has been a resourced school for pupils with physical disabilities or mild motor impairments (MMI). Recently it has also become resourced for pupils with visual impairments and, in addition, pupils with “moderate learning difficulties” and specific learning difficulties are now being admitted. Owing to its history as being a resourced school
for pupils with MMI, the site visit focused on the management, role and training of LSAs working with this group.

Currently there are 11 pupils with MMI on the role of the school supported by three LSAs. In addition, to supporting pupils in class, all LSAs are involved in writing reports for review meetings, and in writing and implementing action plans. One of the LSAs is extremely experienced and has been given the role of senior LSA. She has taken on additional responsibilities, including managing the team, contact with parents, and liaison with the LEA, feeder schools and other services.

Responsibility for the allocation of LSAs to students is shared between the SENCO and the senior LSA. There are daily briefing meetings and monthly meetings with the Faculty links teacher. LSAs undergo informal appraisal twice a year with the SENCO.

All LSAs are on permanent contracts; two are employed by the LEA in which the school is based and one by a neighbouring LEA that places pupils in the school.

**Resourced Secondary School (S2 R) - London**

The school is a comprehensive school with 1800+ students, 100+ teaching staff and 54 support staff of which 16 are learning support assistants. It is in a multi cultural/ethnic community with an inclusive policy, this encompassing both ethnic and special needs issues. The LEA has an inclusive policy and is urban in type. The school took students from two local special schools that closed in 1995 and the big increase in assistants dated from then. As the special school groups relocated, they were combined with the existing 'resource base' in the school and the special needs department in the school with this became the learning support team. The students spend most of their time in mainstream classes with or without assistant support. Other students are also seen as supporters and attention is paid to their understanding and acceptance of a wide variety of needs and disabilities/difficulties. There are five full-time and four part-time teachers in the department, and staff from four central support teams are resourced to it. The SENCO is a Senior Teacher.

The assistants are employed on permanent contracts (a recent development in the LEA). They work on a mixture of full and part time contracts, which are devised by the school, under LEA guidelines. They are a representative mix of ethnic types drawn from the locality, if not the immediate school community. The school has established a senior LSA and deputy senior LSA post to manage the LSA team and create a career route for LSAs.

The school has an equal opportunities policy which relates to 'all our students, regardless of race, gender, disability, aptitude and social background' and the learning support department reflects that through our Inclusive Education Policy which offers equal opportunities to all students across the curriculum, regardless of the level of need or disability'.

**Resourced Secondary School (S3 R) - North**

This additionally resourced secondary school is in a large town a northern urban/rural LEA. It has collaborated with a well known children’s charity since 1994 in order to develop more inclusive practices for students seen as having significant learning difficulties who might otherwise have been in special provision. There are 437 students aged 11-16, in this four-form entry school. There are 27 teaching staff and twelve assistants. These are funded through three different sources, the charity, the LEA and the school.

The charity’s project has been the catalyst for changes in the school, the most significant organisationally being that of a new appointment as project leader being made, after four years into the operation of the project. At this point the SENCO role and project director began working more
collaboratively as members of a school team, whereas the project had been seen previously as ‘separate’. The new headteacher was also supportive of this development. This cooperative resource development has meant that more flexible and effective ways have been found in recent times to support the students’ learning through the LSAs’ work. This means that the assistants are assigned to support a variety of students in practice, although nominally they have ‘project’ students or LEA funded students as their major responsibilities in terms of their formal contracts.

These contracts are full-time and temporary. The recruitment of the project LSAs was originally from qualified graduates who were seeking school placement experience before the next stage of their studies, but this profile has changed significantly. The assistants are now drawn from a variety of sources, the school community included. They support the students almost totally in classes and in groups rather than on a one-to one basis.

Special School (S1) - London

This special school for children aged 5 to 11 with emotional and behavioural difficulties is in a multi-ethnic outer London borough. There are 43 children on roll, all with statements, and 8 teaching staff and 5 assistants. Each class has no more than 8/9 children staffed by at least one teacher and assistant.

The stated aim of the school is that all children should aim to reintegrate into mainstream schools at secondary transfer, and behavioural and learning targets for individuals reflect this. The school also takes part-time attenders from several mainstream primaries in the borough, who are supported in both schools by assistants from the special school, whilst classteachers from special and mainstream schools liaise and team teach on a regular basis to support this initiative. The special school teacher coordinating this worked in mainstream prior to the special school. Therefore, the assistants’ role, in two cases, takes them beyond the special school into mainstream settings.

The assistants are on full-time permanent contracts, funded by the LEA. The job descriptions they have are based on the LEA specifications. They are on a ‘manual grade’. The school is currently discussing the change of name to learning support assistant. The assistants are known by their first names to the children, and play an active part in the consistent maintenance of the behaviour management policy in the school. They are based with one class for much of the day, with the exception of those who work out of school. They have worked in the school from between a few months (one on supply) to four years, and there is a fairly high turnover, partly because the school is seen as a training ground for steps to other opportunities, and there is no career structure available within the post at present.

Special School (S2) - West Midlands

This is a special school for 60 pupil’s aged 14 –19 with severe learning difficulties situated in a predominantly urban area. There are nine teachers and a headteacher.

There are two types of assistants who work in the school, nine nursery nurses and two classroom assistants who are paid considerably less than their nursery nurse colleagues but work slightly shorter hours.

Both groups are on permanent contracts but have different job descriptions. These imply a hierarchy of responsibility in a classroom which goes through the teacher to the nursery nurse and then to the classroom assistant. Nursery nurses are responsible for designing and maintaining a “sensory corridor” within the building. Classroom assistants take on general duties, e.g. photocopying. One of the classroom assistants has been appointed to support staff and pupils on IT related work.
All staff, including LSAs, are eligible for INSET and have access to the same funds as teachers to support this. There is also a comprehensive staff induction programme for nursery nurses and classroom assistants.

**Special School (S3) -South**

The school is an all-age (8-16) special, MLD school with 120+ on roll, in 12 classes, 16 teachers (not all full-time) and 12 assistants. The school is in a town in a relatively affluent area, and the LEA is a county authority. The assistants are funded through the school’s delegated budget, which also issues their contracts. These are a mixture of general and 1to1 allocation contracts with varying hours, recently made permanent after many years of temporary/under review contracts. Some assistants also have additional lunchtime supervision contracts. One assistant is an out-county placement for a specific child taken from the neighbouring LEA.

All Key Stage 2 classes have a permanent full time assistant. Senior classes are supported by an LSA in as many classes as possible. All assistants are involved in the teaching of reading and the delivery of the social use of language programme in the school. There are also two assistants who support on link courses for the older children at the local FE college, taking them out of school one day per week.

The assistants are not drawn from the local or parent/volunteer community but from the town in general, recruited through advertisement and appointed by the school, under LEA guidelines. They have worked in the school for between 15 years and five months, with seven having done five years or more, and four over one year, so they form an experienced team. They are not expected to have formal qualifications, but ‘to train and learn here’, but ‘should have common sense, be warm and relate well to the children’. In fact some of the assistants have pursued certificated training provided by local colleges, but with mixed outcomes in terms of its suitability in this school context and the issues with which assistants have to deal.

**Voluntary Organisation (VO 1) - North West**

This school is part of a service that is responsible for providing education in two separate schools for pupils with language and communication difficulties, including autism in the North West of England. It is also planning to open an assessment facility for LEAs and health services in the region.

The school visited as part of this research caters for 23 pupils aged 5 – 11. There are five classes, three with 5 pupils and two with 4. In each class there is a teacher and one or two LSAs – referred to as educational assistants. Currently the principal of the service is acting as the headteacher though a new head has recently been appointed. There is also a head of pupil services who is responsible for the overall management and appraisal of LSAs.

LSAs are all employed on permanent term-time only contracts. There is no position of senior LSA. LSAs tend to be recruited from three different sources. Some have NNEB or other qualifications in childcare. Some have no relevant qualification often having just completed a degree and see the job as a means of gaining experience before moving on. Finally there are a group who were previously lunchtime organisers or supply staff.

As is the case in many special schools, teachers are mainly responsible for planning the teaching programmes, managing the class, writing reports for reviews and liaison with parents. However, LSAs are consulted on all these matters and are directly involved in teaching the pupils either on a 1 to 1 basis or in a small group.

LSAs have the same entitlement to attend INSET courses as do teachers and, for example, the school have paid for 6 staff, including LSAs to attend a course at a local university.
Voluntary Organisation (VO 2) - UK

This visit entailed attending a day course session in order to meet the coordinator and tutor, and talk with some of the participants. These assistants are all working with blind or partially-sighted students in mainstream contexts and the whole course unit was on ‘facilitating independence’. This particular session (no. 4) was focused on ‘modifying and producing learning materials in alternative media’. There are 6 sessions in the module in total.

The course and this session were in London and it was one of four parallel sessions happening in different centres around the country during that week: Leeds, Edinburgh and the midlands were the others. The course costs £500 and in addition to attendance on the six course sessions, six written assignments based on practice developments and learning related to each session topic in school are expected. A mentor in the participant’s own context supports the assistant’s work. The course is certificated: a Professional Studies Certificate in Education from a university college. Tutors offer telephone and e-mail support and coordinate and teach parts of the sessions whilst practitioners ‘from the field’ offer input on specific topics. The fourth session was led by a teacher from an LEA advisory service with current experience of working in and with alternative media who is based in a secondary school in the midlands.

The twelve participants are from London boroughs, the home counties and the wider south east region. The course session started at 10.00am and finished at 4.00pm. The assistants work in a range of settings: nursery, primary and secondary schools and local support services. Some have responsibilities to named pupils on one to one contracts, others work more generally in their context. They range in experience from 6 years to starting in the current academic year, and are on a variety of temporary, fixed term and permanent contracts, involving working hours between full-time and 20 hours per week.
APPENDIX III
CONDENSED INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Interview Schedule  Learning Support Assistant

Interview site:  Name(s):
Date:  Position/title:

Management

- **Roles and responsibilities**: clear what they are/ any non-LSA responsibilities; what you are called - job title - historical influences; feelings about this
- **Contracts**: whether you have one/specific to you or do all LSAs in school have the same contract; current; nature of; proportion of child/student contact time to non-contact/planning/training time; feelings about this
- **Job descriptions**: whether you have a job description/specific to you or all LSAs in school have the same job description issued by LEA/school; single/1to1 placement; linked to subject department curriculum development; ever left ‘in charge’ of whole class; whether tasks/activities match written job description; feelings about this
- **Management and support - ethos and style of school – relationships**: senior management (SENCO, class teachers, LEA, parents); monitoring and forms of appraisal/accountability/pastoral; feelings about this

Role

- **Classroom practice**: ways of working in the classroom strategies (e.g. - 1 to 1, small group, any child/student, observation); teaching styles that support your work most effective ways of working from your point of view; encouraging independent learning - best ways to do it (rhetoric/reality gap); feelings about this
- **Collaboration with teachers/planning**: how often; who with; what about; where; are you told what to do/ do you choose; feelings about this
- **Contributions to assessment/observation/recording/RofA/case conferences and reviews**: oral; written; in meetings; feelings about this
- **General contributions to the school team**: attitudes/welcomes etc.; eg mix in staff room/socially outside school/spend breaktimes; general/ancillary type contributions; possibly lunchtime supervision/secretarial; status; feelings about this

Training

- **Staff development and training**: learning on the job; in classrooms; in school; appraisal of training needs. In school development/staff development plan/ staff development days; in paid time; particularly literacy and numeracy. Out of school; where/when/what/how often/who by; involvement in ‘5 days’ training; training in literacy and numeracy; feelings about this
• **Courses/qualifications:** what you have done; what you are doing now; what you will
do/would like to do; inc nursery nurse issues/’career ladder’/optional nature of this; feelings
about this

• **What you would like to improve about your job (eg more of / less of):**

• **Any other comments:**

**Interview Schedule  Teacher – Mainstream**

Interview site: Name(s):

Date: Position/title:

• **Views on the general increase in the provision of LSAs:** whether has this been seen as an
imposition/positive; whether consulted

• **Views about having children with difficulties/disabilities in class/school:** necessity for a
person to be ‘attached’ for it to happen; impact on classroom management; other pupils;
curriculum approaches/strategies

• **Your competencies/confidence to work with assistants:** skills; experience; training and
preparation

• **Respective responsibilities:** to teach the children with disabilities/difficulties; planning IEPs;
day-to-day planning (who what, how); giving and writing feedback; evaluating effectiveness;
who should decide?

• **School organisation:** facilitates or makes difficult the teachers’ and assistants’ work together

• **Views on staff development/training opportunities for assistants:** entry
skills/experience/qualifications; separately for them; together with teachers; in
class/school/outside school; career ladder

• **Ethics:** value for money issues/’teachers on the cheap’ - views on this

• **Any other comments:**

**Interview Schedule  Teacher – Special**

Interview site: Name(s):

Date: Position/title:

• **Changing nature of the role of the assistant:** reasons; what title do you use/is it appropriate

• **Your competencies/confidence to work with assistants:** skills; experience; training and
preparation

• **Respective responsibilities:** to teach the children with disabilities/difficulties; planning IEPs;
day-to-day planning (who what, how); giving and writing feedback; evaluating effectiveness;
who should decide?
• **School organisation:** facilitates or makes difficult the teachers’ and assistants’ work together

• **Views on staff development/training opportunities for assistants:** entry skills/experience/qualifications; separately for them; together with teachers; in class/school/outside school; career ladder

• **Any other comments:**

**Interview Schedule  Senco – Mainstream**

Interview site:  Name(s):

Date:  Position/title:

• **What you think about the general increase in the provision of LSAs:** whether seen as imposition/positive; whether consulted about it

• **Views about having children with difficulties/disabilities:** necessity for a person to be ‘attached’ for it to happen; impact on classroom management; other pupils; curriculum approaches/strategies

• **Your competencies/confidence to manage and work with assistants:** skills; experience; training

• **Respective responsibilities: to teach the children with disabilities/difficulties:** planning IEPs; day-to-day planning (who what, how); giving and writing feedback; evaluating effectiveness; who should decide; is there a distinction between SENCO and the role of class teacher in managing and working with LSAs?

• **School organisation:** how it facilitates or makes difficult; your work with assistants; the teachers’ and assistants’ work together; assistants’ liaison and work with faculty department

• **Who has responsibility for:** assistants from LEA/external services – line management issues; to offer pastoral support; identification of and meeting training needs; teachers’ management of assistants and skills required; who decides on time allocation or the LSA? who should decide; who evaluates the effectiveness of LSA work

• **Ethics:** value for money issues/’teachers on the cheap’ - views on this

• **Any other comments:**

**Interview Schedule  Headteacher – Mainstream**

Interview site:  Name(s):

Date:  Position/title:

• **What you think about the general increase in the provision of LSAs:**

• **Views about having children with difficulties/disabilities in school:** necessity for a person to be ‘attached’ for it to happen; impact on classroom and school management; other pupils; curriculum approaches/strategies

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• **Placement of children with difficulties/disabilities:** conditional/unconditional on LSA allocation; implications of single placement (one to one) or as resource provision; financial implications

• **What you see as management responsibilities with regard to LSAs:**
  - accountabilities/job descriptions;
  - contracts;
  - conditions for entry/recruitment;
  - LEA accountabilities;
  - line management from outside and inside school;
  - appraisals;
  - ethos and attitudes;
  - parents’ understanding of role;
  - governors’ understanding;
  - supply teachers’ understanding;

• **Training and staff development for assistants:** who should provide it; where and when - in school/out of school; qualifications; career structure; teachers’ training needs in managing them

• **Ethics of ‘value for money’ and cheap labour - views on this:**

• **Any other comments:**

**Interview Schedule  Headteacher – Special**

Interview site:  Name(s):

Date:  Position/title:

• **Views on the changing role of the LSA in special education:**

• **New skills needed in moves:** from care to learning; towards integration or inclusion

• **What you see as management responsibilities with regard to:**
  - accountabilities/job descriptions;
  - relationships between teachers and LSAs;
  - contracts;
  - conditions for entry/recruitment;
  - appraisals;
  - ethos and attitudes;
  - parents’ understanding of role;
  - governors’ understanding;
  - supply teachers;

• **Training and staff development needs of LSAs:** who should provide this; in-school; outside school; what it should consist of; teachers’ training needs in managing assistants

• **Career structure and qualifications:** views on this

• **Any other comments:**

**Interview Schedule  Pupil - Mainstream/Special**

Interview site:  Name(s):

Date:  Age/Year group:

• **Who teaches you most days? Who else?**
• When you have support with your learning who does it? elaborate on possibilities

• How: eg- alongside you in class; at same table in small group; available when needed; outside class; with particular worksheets/materials/equipment; from the teacher not only the supporter; other; which ways do you prefer and when? when do you learn more/why is this?

• Which lessons do you learn the most? what are they like; who is there

• What do you like about having support from the teacher or supporter? which ways are your favourites? what are you not so happy about? do you get a chance to work with your friends?

• What do you think your supporter could do: more of; less of?

• Do your parents talk to the teacher and/or the supporter about your work? When? Where?

• Do you feel you have a say in the way you get support with your learning? how?

• Is there anything else you want to say?

Interview Schedule  Parent/Carer - Mainstream School

Interview site:  Name:

Date:  Name of child:

• What do you understand to be the role if the LSA in relation to your child? do you know broadly what s/he does?

• How did you feel about the provision of an LSA to support your child in a mainstream school? who else could have supported you child; was the LSA imposed or where you offered a choice of provision?

• Do you have discussions with the LSA? when? where?

• Do you feel that LSA support works for your child? what are the advantages? what are the disadvantages? is s/he happy about the LSA? is s/he becoming more confident and independent?

• Who do you think makes educational decisions about your child? who writes the IEP/plans the work?

• When you have a query who do you ask?

• How well qualified do you feel the LSA should be? what kinds of qualifications? what kinds of skills and experiences?

• Any other comments:
Interview Schedule  Parent/Carer - Special School

Interview site:  Name:
Date:  Name of child:

• **What do you understand to be the role if the LSA in relation to your child?** do you know broadly what s/he does?

• **Can you distinguish between the teacher’s and the LSA’s role:** how; how important is it to know?

• **Do you feel that LSA assistance works for your child?** what are the advantages? what are the disadvantages? is s/he happy about the LSA? is s/he becoming more confident and independent?

• **Who do you think makes educational decisions about your child?** who writes the IEP/plans the work?

• **When you have a query who do you ask?**

• **Do you have discussions with the LSA?** When? Where?

• **How well qualified do you feel the LSA should be?** what kinds of qualifications? what kinds of skills and experiences?

• **Any other comments:**

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Interview Schedule  LEA Officer/Manager

Interview site:  Name(s):
Date:  Position/title:

• **Views on employment of LSAs:** in principle; in practice/pragmatically

• **Views on criteria for their employment/basic qualifications, experience:**

• **Views on criteria for allocating support to schools/pupils:** unconditional/conditional placements of pupils

• **Views on contractual issues:** job descriptions; line management/accountability

• **Views on training opportunities for LSAs:** induction/baseline; advanced in-service; who should do it; who should fund it; does LEA use Standards Fund; have you used GEST funds in past; what kinds are effective

• **Views on career structures and contracts:** pay reflecting training and experience; qualifications awarded

• **Any other comments:**
Interview Schedule  Governor – Mainstream/Special School

Interview site: Name(s): 
Date: Designation: 

- What do you think about the increasing numbers of LSAs in schools? generally; specifically
- How do you feel about the provision of LSAs to support children in this school?
- What do you understand to be the role if the LSAs in relation to children here? do you know broadly what they do?
- Do you have discussions about the LSAs in your role as governor? Who with e.g. head/Assistants /SENCO/other governors? when? how often?
- Who manages their work in the school? E.g. SENCO; SM/Team; LEA
- Who do you think makes educational decisions about the children? who writes the IEPs/plans the work? how do the teachers and assistants plan together?
- Do you feel that LSA support works for the children here? what are the advantages? what are the disadvantages?
- What impact on do you think the LSA has on the children’s learning? Do they seem to be happy with the LSAs? Are they becoming more confident and independent?
- How well qualified or experienced do you feel the LSAs should be? what kinds of skills and experiences? what kinds of qualifications? What about career paths?
- Where should LSAs get their training? Here at school/LEA/other?
- What do you feel about the ethical issues surrounding LSAs and their work? Cheap labour; respective expectations of teachers/LSAs?
- Any other comments:

Interview Schedule  Governor - Special School

Interview site: Name(s): 
Date: Designation: 

- What do you think about the increasing numbers of LSAs in schools? generally; specifically
- How do you feel about the provision of LSAs to support children in this school?
- What do you understand to be the role if the LSAs in relation to children here? do you know broadly what they do?
• Do you have discussions about the LSAs in your role as governor? Who with e.g. head/Assistants /SENCO/other governors? when? how often?

• Who manages their work in the school? E.g. SENCO; SM/Team; LEA

• Who do you think makes educational decisions about the children? who writes the IEPs/plans the work? how do the teachers and assistants plan together?

• Do you feel that LSA support works for the children here? what are the advantages? what are the disadvantages?

• What impact on do you think the LSA has on the children’s learning? Do they seem to be happy with the LSAs? Are they becoming more confident and independent?

• How well qualified or experienced do you feel the LSAs should be? what kinds of skills and experiences? what kinds of qualifications? What about career paths?

• Where should LSAs get their training? Here at school/LEA/other?

• What do you feel about the ethical issues surrounding LSAs and their work? Cheap labour; respective expectations of teachers/LSAs?

• Any other comments:
APPENDIX IV
SAMPLE POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

THE UNIVERSITY
of MANCHESTER
CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Management, Role and Training of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs)

A study carried out on behalf of the Department for Education and Employment by the Centre for Educational Needs at the University of Manchester

Name ………………………………………………………………………………………………..
Telephone ………………………………………………………………………………………
Name of LEA ………………………………………………………………………………………
Job title ……………………………………………………………………………………………
Length of time in current position ……………………………………………………………

This questionnaire is in two parts:
Part one asks for information about a specific course which you run
Part two seeks your views about general issues concerning the training of LSAs

We would like to thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your information and views will be extremely valuable for this research. All replies will be treated in confidence and your individual responses will not be used in the final report without your permission.

Please return your completed questionnaire to: Filiz Polat, Centre for Educational Needs, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, MANCHESTER M13 9PL
THE MANAGEMENT, ROLE AND TRAINING OF LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

PART 1: INFORMATION ON A SPECIFIC COURSE (same for both LEAs & Colleges)

1. Title of the course .................................................................

2. Length of time of your involvement in the course
   ( ) Less than 1 year   ( ) 1-3 years   ( ) 3-5 years   ( ) More than 5 years

3. How frequently is the course delivered?
   ( ) Once year   ( ) Twice a year
   ( ) Once a term   ( ) More frequently (please specify) ......................

4. When was the course first delivered? ............................................................

4a. How many years has the course been running? ............................................

5. Please complete the following table on student recruitment and completion for the most recent time the course was delivered. If you provide approximate numbers, please put these in brackets; e.g. (12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates (month and year)</th>
<th>Applicant Numbers</th>
<th>Student Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>End Date</td>
<td>Number of Applicants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*If different to number of students who completed the course

6. Does your course provide an accredited qualification? Yes ( ) No ( )

6a. If yes please specify ...........................................................................................................

7. Is this award a prerequisite for obtaining further training? Yes ( ) No ( )

7a. If yes please specify ...........................................................................................................

8. Is this course validated by another institution(s)? Yes ( ) No ( )

8a. If yes by whom? ........................................................................................................................

9. Is this course moderated by some other institution(s)? Yes ( ) No ( )

9a. If yes by whom? ........................................................................................................................

9b. Please indicate how ................................................................................................................
10. Is this course run in partnership with another organisation?  Yes ( ) No ( )
10a. If yes with whom? ……………………………………………………………………………………………
10b. Please describe the nature of this partnership ………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
11. Selection procedure for the course (please tick as appropriate)
( ) Application form information
( ) Interview
( ) References
( ) None (all applicants are enrolled)
( ) Other (please specify) ……………………………………………………………………………
12. Entry requirements for the course (please tick as appropriate)
( ) Working as an LSA in a mainstream school
( ) Working as an LSA in a special school or unit
( ) Working as an LSA with pupils with a particular disability (e.g. visual impairment/specific learning difficulties please specify) …………………………………………………
( ) A specified minimum years of experience working as an LSA
( ) People who have already attended on accredited courses for LSAs
( ) Participants should have agreed mentor and assessor
( ) Participants should have a witnessed testimony signed by people from their workplace
( ) Participants must arrange minimum required number of hours of workplace experience during the course
( ) Participants should have GCSE English (Please specify minimum grade required, if there is one) ……………………………………………………………………………
( ) Are there any other school qualifications required, please specify? …………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
( ) Participants should be at least 18 years of age
( ) None (e.g. course is open to teachers, LSAs, EPs and others)
( ) None (but course only open to LSAs)
( ) Other (please specify) ……………………………………………………………………………
13. What is the total number of hours of attendance at the course venue? …… hrs.
14. When does attendance at course venue take place (please tick as appropriate)
( ) day ( ) evening
( ) twilight ( ) weekend
15. What additional activities are students required to carry out away from course venue? (please tick as appropriate)

( ) Self-study (e.g. reading, carrying out self-study activities)
( ) School-based activities (e.g. working with pupils and/or teachers, visiting schools, etc.)
( ) Writing assessed course assignments
( ) None (students are not required to carry out additional activities)
( ) Other (please specify) ………………………………………………………………………………

16. Please specify the main content areas of the course

( ) Child development
( ) Promoting independence and self-esteem in children
( ) Inclusive education
( ) Equal opportunities
( ) Pupils with specific problems (e.g., pupils with hearing impairments/autism/ specific learning difficulties etc.) please specify ……………………………………………………………
( ) Preventing and managing behaviour problems
( ) Developing IEPs
( ) Training in methods of collaborative working with other staff
( ) Assessing and recording progress
( ) Classroom management
( ) Curriculum development
( ) Development and use of learning support materials
( ) Legislation, government and LEAs policies (e.g. the SEN code of practice)
( ) Methods for supporting basic literacy
( ) Methods for supporting basic numeracy
( ) Reflective practice / self evaluation
( ) First aid/medical
( ) Working with parents/carers
( ) Counselling
( ) Other (please specify) …………………………………………………………………………………

17. Who teaches the course? (tick as appropriate)

( ) College staff
( ) Outside consultants
( ) Parents
( ) Educational Psychologists
( ) Advisors/Inspectors in SEN
( ) Behavioural/learning support teachers
( ) LEA staff
( ) Paediatricians
( ) SEN co-ordinators
( ) Speech and language therapists
( ) Experienced LSAs
( ) Specialist teachers (e.g., teachers of the deaf)
( ) Other (please specify) …………………………………………

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18. How do you assess participants’ progress on the course? (tick each method that is used)

( ) Written assignments
( ) School based project (e.g. a work based log book/a case study etc.)
( ) Portfolio of evidence derived from practice in school and course activities
( ) Observation of participants working with pupils
( ) Participants give a talk to other course members
( ) Minimum attendance (Please specify percentage of minimum attendance) .......................
( ) No assessment
( ) Other (please specify) ........................................................................................................

19. Who assesses participants’ performance on the course?

( ) College staff ( ) Mentor
( ) External verifier/examiner ( ) LEA staff
( ) Other (please specify) ........................................................................................................

20. Are participants assigned to a teacher mentor in their school? Yes ( ) No ( )

20a. If yes what position(s) do teacher mentors have? (please tick as appropriate)

( ) Head ( ) SEN co-ordinator
( ) Deputy ( ) Does not matter
( ) Experienced class teacher ( ) Mentor’s position is not important
( ) Other (please specify) ........................................................................................................

20b. How does the mentor support the LSAs on the course? .................................................
............................................................................................................................................... 
............................................................................................................................................... 
............................................................................................................................................... 
............................................................................................................................................... 
............................................................................................................................................... 

20c. How does the mentor maintain contact with the course?

( ) Staff meetings in college ( ) Mid-course discussions with tutor
( ) Moderation meetings between colleges ( ) End of course written evaluations
( ) Other (Please specify) ........................................................................................................

21. What is the course fee per student?

( ) No cost ( ) less than £50 ( ) between £51 - £100
( ) between £101 - £200 ( ) between £201 - £300
( ) between £301 - £400 ( ) over £400

22. Please add any further comments about the course.

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............................................................................................................................................... 
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............................................................................................................................................... 

101
PART 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TRAINING PROVIDERS (LEA Version)

1. What are your views about current training provision for LSAs in England and Wales? ……………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………...
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………...
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………...
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

2. What new developments would you like to see and why? …………………………………………..
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…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
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…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

3. What are your views about funding for the training of LSAs? ……………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

4. Are there specific barriers that prevent you from improving/developing your training course?
   Yes ( )   No ( )
4a. If yes please specify …………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

5. Do you offer training to all LSAs in your authority? 
   Yes ( )   No ( )   Don’t know ( )
5a. If yes how do you ensure this happens? ……………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

6. Do you offer extra remuneration (e.g. increments) to LSAs who have undertaken courses/training? 
   Yes ( )   No ( )   Don’t know ( )
6a. If yes please specify …………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

7. Do you have an induction programme for newly appointed LSAs? 
   Yes ( )   No ( )   Don’t know ( )

8. What percentage of LSAs in your authority have been on these courses? ……………………. 
9. How are LSAs recruited on to a course – for example is there an LEA policy concerning the training of support staff (e.g. training is intended as part of a wider development plan such as all inclusive school initiative)? Or do requests for training come mainly from the individual LSAs or from the schools?

10. Do you offer financial support to LSAs to attend courses?
   Yes ( )    No ( )    Don’t know ( )

10a. If yes how is this funded?
   Through the Standards Fund (including the LEA contribution) Yes ( )    No ( )
   Through the LEAs own separate resources Yes ( )    No ( )
   A combination of the two Yes ( )    No ( )
   Don’t know ( )
   Other (please specify) …………………………………………………………………………..

11. What is the percentage of the funds allocated from GEST (now the Standards Fund) to support the training of the LSAs in the financial year April 1997 – March 1998?
   ( ) 0-5%   ( ) 6-15%   ( ) 16 – 25%   ( ) Over 26%   ( ) Don’t know

12. Does your LEA offer any courses run by another provider?
   Yes ( )    No ( )    Don’t know ( )

12a. If yes please specify ………………………………………………………………………………..

13. What are your plans for developing training for LSAs over the next two years?
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

14. Please add any other further comments about the training of LSAs?
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please return it to:

Filiz Polat
Centre for Educational Needs
University of Manchester, Oxford Road,
MANCHESTER M13 9PL
E-mail: mewxdfp1@fs1.stud.man.ac.uk
Tel: 0161 275 3266/3510
PART 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TRAINING PROVIDERS (Institution version)

1. What are your views about current training provision for LSAs in England and Wales?
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. What new developments would you like to see and why? …………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

3. Are there specific barriers that prevent you from improving/developing your training course?
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. What are your views about funding for the training of LSAs? ……………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

5. What are your plans for developing training for LSAs over the next two years?………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

6. Do you validate any courses run by another organisation (e.g. LEAs or voluntary organisation)?
   Yes ( )    No ( )    Don’t know ( )

6a. If yes please specify which …………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

7. Do you run courses jointly with any other colleges, LEAs or voluntary organisations?
   Yes ( )    No ( )    Don’t know ( )

7a. If yes please specify which? …………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please return it to:

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E-mail: mewxdfp1@fs1.stud.man.ac.uk
Tel: 0161 275 3266/3510
# APPENDIX V
DETAILS OF HOW THE SAMPLE WAS OBTAINED

## Geographical distribution of LEAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical Area</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Mixture</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>10 (6.71%)</td>
<td>6 (4.02%)</td>
<td>3 (2.01%)</td>
<td>19 (12.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>23 (15.43%)</td>
<td>3 (2.01%)</td>
<td>14 (9.39%)</td>
<td>40 (26.84%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>2 (1.34%)</td>
<td>5 (3.35%)</td>
<td>5 (3.35%)</td>
<td>12 (8.05%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>2 (1.34%)</td>
<td>7 (4.69%)</td>
<td>1 (0.67%)</td>
<td>10 (6.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
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<td>17 (11.40%)</td>
<td>2 (1.34%)</td>
<td>21 (14.09%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London and South East</td>
<td>39 (26.17%)</td>
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<td>8 (5.36%)</td>
<td>47 (31.54%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78 (52.34%)</td>
<td>38 (25.50%)</td>
<td>33 (22.14%)</td>
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## Geographical distribution of institutions

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<th>Mixture</th>
<th>National</th>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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