

Enhancement of Learning Support Programme 2010/11

'A long and winding road'

Learning Support Assistants in lifelong learning:
career structure and progression pathways



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In partnership with



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An overview of the Enhancement of Learning Support (ELS) Programme

In January 2010 LSIS commissioned Natspec (the Association of Specialist Colleges) to explore the training and development needs of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) and those who manage them across the lifelong learning sector. The first phase of the project, the Enhancement of Learning Support, involved talking to practitioners and learners and scoping existing work and expertise in order to make recommendations for future training and development activities. Drawing on all the initial research findings, the final report identified a series of recommendations, which were accepted by LSIS and used to form the basis of a national implementation programme.

The 2nd phase of the project has been jointly undertaken by Natspec and the Association of Colleges (AOC), between September 2010 and March 2011. 20 lead colleges, both General Further Education Colleges and Independent Specialist Colleges, were supported by nine specialist advisers. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and learning support staff have continued to be heavily involved in the latest project. It aims to improve the quality of learning support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across the learning and skills sector and to promote and enhance the important work of learning support staff.

The implementation programme, which finished in April 2011, has produced a series of reports and resources. This report is one of those. The remaining materials can be accessed via the [ELS Section of the Excellence Gateway](#).

Executive Summary

Background

This small-scale project was conducted between October 2010 and March 2011 as part of the Enhancement of Learning Support Implementation Project, conducted by Natspec and AoC on behalf of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). The project aimed to investigate possible career structures and progression pathways for Learning Support Assistants (LSAs). The methodology used a mixed-methods approach examining existing web-based information, conducting interviews with LSAs to draw extensively on their first hand experiences, formulating models of career pathways, then testing and consulting on the outcomes in workshops and a conference, with the LSA reference group, the project team and steering group.

Main findings and conclusions

- 1) Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) make an important contribution to the retention, achievement and progression of many learners.
- 2) There is currently no clear, formally recognised career structure for LSAs. The assumption that the only or main progression route is into teaching, is unfounded. There are many LSAs in the workforce who do not wish to pursue this route.

- 3) The role of senior LSA, or advanced practitioner, exists widely in practice, yet there is no formally agreed role, occupational standards, qualifications or specific training. There is a compelling case to address these gaps.
- 4) LSAs' motivations and aspirations for career progression vary considerably. The model of a career pathway as an employment journey with stages on a career escalator, moving seamlessly from one stage or level to another, belies the complex reality for many LSAs.
- 5) Barriers to LSA career progression include: lack of funding; availability of appropriate training and qualifications; lack of support or encouragement and lack of job opportunities.
- 6) LSAs are a widely diverse group of people. They are of different ages, with varied previous experience, careers, qualifications, motivations and aspirations.
- 7) Creating a single career pathway for such diversity would be inappropriate. The project has developed a career pathway framework that encompasses different entry points, progression routes and eventual career aspirations, derived from the evidence provided by LSAs.
- 8) The framework can accommodate: progression within the job role; lateral progression such as a change of role or developing a wider range of skills at the same level; vertical progression to a more senior role and career change to a different role, within or beyond a formal education or training setting. The framework does not assume that all LSAs will follow the pathways in a linear direction.
- 9) The framework allows individuals to plot progress on their career pathways, and to review and plan future options and organisations to review and develop plans for their workforce.
- 10) Organisational culture, structures and practice influence LSAs' possible career pathways.
- 11) LSAs were clear that the extent to which the organisations encouraged and supported them to develop their skills and interests was directly linked to successful career development.
- 12) Structures that provide clear opportunities for progression have roles at increasing levels of responsibility and seniority. Some have different 'Levels' of LSA and pathways to Senior LSA, teacher or LSA manager and beyond, others have pathways that develop specialist knowledge and skills.
- 13) Organisations that offer a range of opportunities for career progression, and different areas for developing specialisms, are more likely to meet the varied aspirations of LSAs.

- 14) Effective performance review processes linked to professional development and the opportunities offered to LSAs, are both instrumental in promoting career progression.
- 15) Although there exists a plethora of qualifications, they are not mandatory, some are only partially relevant to LSAs in lifelong learning and there are some gaps that need to be addressed. As yet there has been insufficient take up of awards and qualifications specifically designed for LSAs.
- 16) Qualifications alone are insufficient to promote career progression. LSAs identified being given other development opportunities such as different experiences, opportunities for shadowing, mentoring and secondments as important factors.

Recommendations

What individual LSAs can do to promote career progression:

- Complete the LSA on-line self assessment tool;
- Familiarise themselves with the career pathways within and beyond their current workplace;
- Familiarise themselves with the national occupational standards and application guides; and
- Participate in continuing professional development including LSA peer support networks.

What organisations can do to promote career progression:

- Review staffing structures to ensure clear progression pathways;
- Ensure that managers conduct effective audits of skills and interests and encourage LSAs to use the on-line self assessment tool;
- Ensure that all LSAs are included in performance review systems;
- Link the outcomes of performance review to professional development opportunities which might include, but not be limited to, formal training and qualifications, shadowing, mentoring and secondments;
- Encourage and support LSAs to develop their skills and interests;
- Encourage LSA peer support networks; and
- Use the ELS organisational audit tool to review practice.

What government bodies and support agencies can do to promote career progression:

LSA career structure and progression pathways

- Develop national occupational standards for Senior LSA roles;
- Review the qualifications and credit framework to ensure that a comprehensive range of qualifications is available and that qualifications on offer are directly relevant to LSAs in lifelong learning;
- Encourage awarding bodies to take up the Level 3 specialist award that has been developed; and
- Ensure that there is an LSA web-portal with up to date information on national occupational standards and a searchable database of qualifications and career development opportunities.

Introduction

Background and rationale

Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) make an important contribution to the retention, achievement and progression of many learners. Since 2008 there have been National Occupational Standards in place that have defined the role and recognised the importance and impact of LSAs. Yet there is currently no clear, formally recognised career structure for LSAs. The assumption often made is that the only or main progression route is into teaching. There are many LSAs in the workforce who do not wish to pursue this route, but instead wish to improve their skills and take on additional responsibilities in providing learning support. The development of a career structure for LSAs in the learning and skills sector will therefore support the professionalisation of the role and the skills of those who wish to progress within it.

Research conducted in Phase 1 of the Enhancement of Learning Support Programme indicated that there was no recognised career structure within which LSAs worked and progressed (Faraday 2010¹, O'Brien and O'Brien, 2010²). This contrasted with the school sector where the workforce reform agenda has had a significant impact on both the professionalisation and skills of the LSA workforce, known as Teaching Assistants (TAs). The role has developed to include a more senior level TA known as the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA). This role includes working with groups and whole classes for a certain period and providing supervision for pupils in the absence of the teacher. There are clearly identified qualifications and career progression routes to support both TA and HLTA roles and those seeking progression within the role of the TA.

Terminology

This report uses the term Learning Support Assistant (LSA) adopted by the Enhancement of Learning Support project:

Learning support assistants have direct and regular contact with the learner (or group of learners). Their role is to facilitate learners' access to identified support,

¹ Faraday, S. (2010) *Enhancement of Learning Support*

The training and development needs of learning support assistants. A literature review. Natspec (may need to ref LSIS here)

² O'Brien, A. and O'Brien, K. (2010) *Enhancement of Learning Support*

The training and development needs of learning support assistants. Findings and recommendations. Natspec

within the learning process. LSAs are not on a teaching or training contract; rather they work under the direction of the person(s) leading the learning.

In practice providers use a wide variety of titles for staff supporting learning, which include: learning support assistant; teaching assistant; learning support worker; learning support practitioners; learning facilitators; educational support worker and enablers and others.

The term “learning support practitioner” (LSP) is used in the National Occupational Standards (NOS) developed by Lifelong Learning UK for this group of staff. However the project revealed that LSP was not a term that was understood or widely used by those working in the sector.

Aim of the project

The project aimed to investigate possible career structures and progression pathways for LSAs that took account of different routes and ambitions and that linked to developments within Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK)³, and to produce a report on the outcomes.

Methodology

This small-scale project was conducted between October 2010 and March 2011 as part of the Enhancement of Learning Support Implementation Project, conducted by Natspec and AoC on behalf of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS).

The first research activity was to review existing information sources to provide a sound foundation for the project. This included drawing on existing practice undertaken for Teaching Assistants in schools to support the development of a model career structure and progression pathway which took into account the application guides for learning support staff. As part of this process, contact was made with representatives from Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) to establish current thinking and plans related to National Occupational Standards and application guides for LSAs. However, on 9 December 2010, during the course of the project, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) announced that LLUK would not be relicensed as a sector skills council from April 2011. Most LLUK work will then transfer to LSIS.

The websites for the main awarding bodies of qualifications for LSAs were examined to identify progression routes and appropriate qualifications. Telephone calls were made to these awarding bodies in an attempt to find out about any plans to develop new qualifications or to review existing ones. It did not prove possible within the scope of this project to obtain any further information on proposed developments.

³ This was the aim of the project when it commenced although by the time the report is published LLUK’s functions will have transferred to other organisations.

A framework for data collection was developed to identify current effective progression pathways within organisations. The emphasis in this project has been on involving LSAs and using their experiences, as the basis for analysis. Three main sources were used to obtain primary data from LSAs: the London regional event in November 2010; the ELS project LSA reference groups and telephone interviews with individual LSAs. The questions used to elicit information are presented in Annex A. Eight telephone interviews were conducted with LSAs to identify current effective progression pathways within organisations and the factors that contributed to successful career progression. Interviewees were identified from the London regional event or by the project team and the sample covered General FE and Independent Specialist Colleges. Additional information was also sought from the work-based learning sector. LSA job descriptions were also collected and reviewed.

The findings were analysed and a career pathways framework of job roles was developed. Two tables were drafted, the first plotted examples of qualifications linked to particular job roles to which LSAs might wish to progress, by National Qualifications and Credit Framework Level. The second table listed CPD and other opportunities LSAs and their managers might wish to consider. These were circulated to interviewees and the project team for discussion and review at the steering group by the LSA reference group. The project findings were also presented and the frameworks reviewed in workshops at the London Regional Event in February and at the Northern conference in March 2011. Feedback received was incorporated in the revised report.

Professionalising the LSA role

The introduction in 2008 of national occupational standards (NOS) for learning support practitioners has helped to define the role and give recognition to the significant impact that this support role has had on the quality of teaching and learning.

The standards are overarching and appropriate for all learning support staff, whether new or experienced, and in any context. They apply to any stage in the career of the staff and may be used to underpin professional development. At the time of writing there were three standards for Learning Support Staff in lifelong learning⁴:

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

⁴ The NOS were accessed at:

[http://www.lluk.org/documents/Learning_support_staff_full_suite\(1\).pdf](http://www.lluk.org/documents/Learning_support_staff_full_suite(1).pdf) (16.11.10) and after April 2011 will be available on the LSIS excellence gateway.

This standard defines the LSA role in meeting learners' needs by directly engaging the learner in activities which promote their learning. It is for LSAs in a generalist role and those who specialise in a particular area of learning.

Standard B: Planning and assessing for learning support

This standard details the knowledge understanding and practice needed to plan for learning support, to support the planning of learning activities, to support the assessment of learning and to carry out the evaluation of learning support. Standard B is also for LSAs in a generalist role and those who specialise in a particular area of learning.

Standard C: Providing specialist learning support

This standard addresses the additional areas of knowledge, understanding and practice required by specialist learning support staff. It is for LSAs who work specifically in a particular and defined area of specialism.

Many LSAs work in a generalist role with a range of learners across a number of subjects, contexts and/or settings. Some may be considered as specialists, offering expertise in one or more areas of specialism. This may relate to working with learners with a particular learning need, working in a particular subject area, or working in a particular context. It is therefore possible to take a qualification for a 'generalist' role or for a more specialist role.

For any individual the relevant standards are determined by the role and responsibilities undertaken. Not all the standards apply to all LSAs. Where LSAs have other roles, a combination of standards might be appropriate. For example, those responsible for co-ordinating other LSAs' work may use appropriate leadership and management standards and qualifications. For those with more responsibility related to a specialism in a particular disability or learning difficulty, specialist qualifications might be undertaken.

Units of assessment have now been drawn up from the national occupational standards, and guidance is available for awarding institutions to develop appropriate qualifications. The full list of roles, the NOS and the units of assessment can be accessed in the document Awarding Organisation Guidance on the LLUK website.

An application guide has been published (LLUK March 2010)⁵ which provides detail of the skills, knowledge and understanding of learning support practitioners who support disabled learners. This detail is provided against the skills (performance criteria) identified in standard C. These performance criteria apply to learning

⁵ LLUK (March 2010) Learning support for disabled learners: Application of the National Occupational Standards for Learning Support Staff, LLUK

support practitioners in any area of specialism. The application guide defines the performance criteria together with the applied skill, knowledge and understanding required. Applied skills, knowledge and understanding are then detailed and further guidance on the extent of coverage for these elements.

It should be noted that at this time there is no statutory requirement for those working in a support role to undertake these qualifications.

Models of career pathways

The concept of a career pathway as an employment journey that can be viewed as stages on a career escalator, has been developed in local government and described in the Skills Pathways Framework⁶.

“The essence of this approach is that all employees are encouraged to review, renew and extend their skills and knowledge; that they will be supported to do so; and will be provided with opportunities to progress along their chosen skills pathway as appropriate. The key is to create a culture where learning is deemed essential for improvement.” Employers Organisation for Employment 2004, p3

However, for LSAs, the notion of moving seamlessly from one stage or level to another may not be as simple as this model implies. Their motivations and aspirations vary considerably.

There are frequently barriers to be overcome for individuals to progress to opportunities at the next level. These include: lack of funding; availability of appropriate training and qualifications; lack of support or encouragement and lack of job opportunities. These barriers are particularly acute for part-time, session or agency staff.

While some LSAs might wish to develop their skills at their current level of responsibility, others may choose to develop the skills necessary to progress to a more senior role. All LSAs will need to develop skills to enhance their performance as their roles inevitably change with the changing nature and demands of the learning environments in which they are working.

Professional development activities to develop the skills to progress to a more senior level may be undertaken while LSAs are in their current posts. Even if these activities are undertaken successfully, it does not mean that the LSA will automatically obtain a higher level position or receive any other recognition such as

⁶ Employers' Organisation for local government, skills pathways in local government, 2004 (www.lg-employers.gov.uk/skills/pathways/index.html)

a pay enhancement. It does however mean that the LSA will be well placed when applying for promotion opportunities that become available.

The concept of a career escalator also implies that progress will be upward and in progressive steps. The reality for LSAs is different. It cannot be assumed that all or even most LSAs want to become teachers. Conversely, some teachers are now choosing to take on an LSA role. Of these, some might wish to return to teaching at some stage in the future, but others prefer to progress within the LSA or senior LSA roles.

Findings

It is clear that there is a wide range of people working as LSAs. They are of different ages, with varied previous experience, careers and qualifications, motivations and aspirations. Creating a single career pathway for such diversity would clearly be inappropriate. Rather, building on the evidence provided by LSAs, a framework has been developed that encompasses different entry points, progression routes and eventual career aspirations.

The career pathway framework includes: progression within the job role; lateral progression such as a change of role, developing a wider range of skills at the same level; vertical progression to a more senior role and career change to a different role, within or beyond a formal education or training setting.

The following section provides a series of stories of the experience of LSAs that illustrate the career pathways individual LSAs have followed, these include:

- Progression for LSAs within the LSA role;
- Progression for LSAs to a Senior or Advanced LSA role;
- Progression for LSAs within formal learning; and
- Progression for LSAs outside of post-school learning.

Progression for LSAs within the LSA role

For some LSAs their employment as an LSA provides valuable experience for progression to a career, either within or outside of formal learning.

Many LSAs wished to remain in the LSA role but wanted to take on additional responsibility and to have their extra skills and responsibility recognised. It was clear that in practice, a senior LSA role exists in many organisations. However, it was equally clear that there is no consistent specification, standards, qualifications or even role or function fulfilled by senior LSAs. Different approaches were adopted by different organisations and these had evolved in response to organisational context and requirements. Senior LSAs had one key role in common with HLTAs, their counterparts in the school sector. They would stand in for teachers and undertake some responsibility for teaching, often leading with their own class or session on a regular basis. Some LSAs have had previous experience as TAs in schools and others move on from the LSA role to work in the school sector as a TA or HLTA.

LSAs might develop specialisms in, for example: a curriculum area such as literacy, numeracy or creative arts; ICT; work experience; health and safety; managing challenging behaviour or assistive technology. Alternatively, they might develop expertise in providing support for particular disabilities or learning difficulties such as autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) and Deaf and hard of hearing learners. In practice, the specialist role has often been associated with literacy, language and numeracy and the natural progression route for the LSAs specialising in these areas would be into teaching.

LSAs could also take on management responsibilities including: organisation and deployment of LSAs, line management and representation on committees internally and externally. Professional development is another area in which LSAs might specialise for example by: coaching; mentoring; providing training for other LSAs; teachers; managers; governors; providing external training and training for other organisations.

LSA curriculum area specialist role

This example illustrates how LSAs might develop a specialism in a curriculum area. In this case, the LSA already had high levels of skill in the specialist area, with a degree in music and chose to undertake further self-funded professional development. A critical factor in enabling this LSA to develop was both his employer's encouragement and the provision of opportunities to use his specialist skills.

LSA experience - specialism in music

While studying for a degree in music, Mike⁷ (not his real name) had a part-time job as an LSA in which he really enjoyed working with students. He applied for a full time job as an LSA on completing his degree.

Mike and two work colleagues wanted to try to use their music backgrounds, so enrolled on a Nordolf Robbins music therapy course, which they paid for themselves. The college was particularly keen to encourage these staff to use their skills, so the LSAs proposed and started taking a session a week in music, using music to encourage choice and communication between students. After two and a half years as an LSA, Mike now runs two sessions including music appreciation, and has assisted with other sessions, such as making music and music production. He has used his outside contacts to introduce students to a community music group. He has helped organise students to take part in a disabilities music festival which will become an annual event. Mike is currently organising the first of what he hopes to be a regular music night that is completely accessible and catered for by people with disabilities. It will offer learners as real an experience as going to the pub or to a club and the chance to check out live bands.

In the future, Mike sees his future progression in further developing his music communications role within the college. He has completed an NVQ Level 2 in learning disability although it was in general care rather than specifically education related. Basic college induction and general training included safeguarding, personal care, feed assisting, the basic principles of assisting and promoting independence. He has also undertaken relevant training specific to the needs of his students for managing challenging behaviour, autism, medication, BSL, health care support and visual impairment. Mike is currently undertaking PTLLS although he is clear that he

⁷ Pseudonyms have been used for all LSAs quoted in this report to protect their anonymity.

doesn't want to be a teacher but enjoys his music communications role. He would be interested in a career in music therapy but the costs involved and five year training/study are prohibitive. He will continue to use aspects of the music therapy approach as an LSA.

Although there is a progression route to a senior LSA post, this was not particularly attractive to him as the additional responsibilities are practical and administrative such as staffing rotas and monitoring stock supplies. The remuneration did not match the additional demands. Mike previously believed that he did not have enough experience to take on this role and has now gained sufficient belief in his own abilities to consider applying in the future. He has pointed out that although the level of pay isn't great, it does offer the only obvious step up and progression route. He has had an opportunity to make a contribution to the management of the college, by being involved in focus groups and talking about key issues (such as communication, the enhancement of learning support project, equality and diversity and music). Mike would like to make a greater contribution in this way - to putting practice and procedure in place - but the options are not there at present.

Not all LSAs wish to progress into a management role and alternatives are not always in place. It is evident that whichever route LSAs take, providing them with opportunities and experience enables them to grow in confidence, to believe in their own abilities and to offer an enhanced contribution.

LSA specialist role in providing support for learners with for particular disabilities or learning difficulties

This example shows how an LSA has developed a specialism for supporting learners with autistic spectrum disorders and now works within a specialist team. Her aspirations at this stage are to remain within an LSA role.

LSA experience – specialism in autistic spectrum disorders

After living abroad and having a family Asha wanted a new career but had no idea what to do. By chance, a friend invited her into the college and she began to work there as an agency member of staff, which fitted her family responsibilities. After a couple of years she developed a particular interest in learners on the autistic spectrum.

Asha's story is one of success – she had only GCSEs in English literature and language when she started. The college funded Asha to do a City and Guilds Level 2 Teaching Assistant course and a GCSE in maths at the college. Having witnessed the changes in practice of LSAs doing the degree arising from their understanding and confidence, she was inspired and wanted to do a foundation degree too. She was able to take the college's Level 3 in supporting people with learning difficulties and disabilities accredited by the Open College Network (OCN) which provided her with entry to the degree course. She is now in the second year and is loving it. The first and second years of the degree are delivered by the college, with the third year at the partner university. What is particularly attractive about the degree course is

that the content is absolutely appropriate for anyone who works with learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, yet offers opportunities for her to develop her chosen specialism. Asha says that there is a real 'buzz' from staff who are confident, knowledgeable and skilled. The course really enthuses everybody in their work. It improves their ability to challenge and so improves the quality of support. It also makes it easier for tutors to ask for support. In 5 years Asha has "come from no career focus or aspirations to studying for a degree and to being a confident practitioner".

Asha has progressed from the LSA role to one where she is a specialist within a team for learners on the autistic spectrum. The role involves mentoring others and sharing best practice. Her longer term aspiration is to utilise the specialist knowledge she has acquired and to apply it in a new school or college, setting up a similar range of support services for people on the autistic spectrum. Alternatively, Asha could stay on, complete her degree and possibly do a masters degree supported by the college. There is a possible progression route to the specialist tutor role, but this has greater management responsibility and Asha prefers the direct contact she currently has with students as an LSA.

Asha stressed that her career progression was down to the remarkably supportive ethos across the college which permeates every aspect. Personal and professional support from line managers to heads of faculty and from those teaching on the professional development programmes were key factors. Mentoring and buddying were also important. In the staffroom, staff sit together and students are in and out all the day. This results in a highly supportive environment with constant informal colleague support.

Progression to a Senior or Advanced LSA role

The two examples below show how LSAs have progressed to Senior or Advanced LSA roles in different organisations. Their responsibilities differ, with the Senior LSA in the first example providing an information advice and support role for other LSAs while other teaching staff have responsibility for LSA line management and deployment. In the other example the Senior LSA takes on a representative role.

LSA experience - Senior LSA role

In one college a Senior LSA manages the team of 5 LSAs working with a group of learners. These LSAs plan two sessions per week for each learner. The Senior LSAs responsibilities include briefing and supporting agency staff and ensuring that all LSAs know the aims for each learner and how to provide support. She also provides information to LSAs about what is happening. In this college, the lecturers are responsible for the professional development and appraisal of LSAs. There is also a co-ordinator who does not work directly with learners, who takes responsibility for the deployment of LSAs and working with agencies.

LSA experience – progression to an LSA representative role

After a career in retail management and once her children were at secondary school, Ruth got a job in the care sector working with adults with learning difficulties and challenging behaviour. Some of the adults went to the college where she now works. She was inspired by the staff in the college and the work they did. When a vacancy for an LSA came up, she applied and 5 years ago was appointed as an LSA. Her training included mandatory elements and specialist training. To enable her to respond to the needs of the learners she worked with, training on visual and hearing impairments and autism was provided.

There were strong opportunities to progress in the college and each group of learners has a senior LSA. The lecturer suggested that she might be ready for the senior role and she felt ready for more responsibility. The lecturer helped her to prepare for the post by taking her through the 'paperwork' – such as assessment, risk assessment, support plans, recording progress and planning. When a position came up, Ruth applied and was successful.

Once appointed to the senior LSA role Ruth undertook PTLLS. She doesn't want become a teacher or manager but would like to become an LSA representative within the college. This is a new role and she is hoping to receive agreement and support from the advanced practitioner, head of curriculum and human resources to pilot the role on the site where she works

Some LSAs have indicated that there seem to be few other options to progress apart from to more senior LSA roles and that for those who seek to progress and to climb the ladder to management, the route does not seem to be that obvious. The following section shows how others have followed different career pathways.

Progression within formal learning

Teaching is the most obvious route within education and the qualifications ladder is already in place with Preparing to Teach in Lifelong Learning (PTLLs), Certificate in Teaching in Lifelong Learning (CTLLs) and Diploma in Teaching in Lifelong Learning (DTLLs). These qualifications can lead to associate or qualified teacher status. Once in a teaching role the career pathway to senior management is also available. Although the roles are differently defined, there is also a similar route for people wishing to work in training or work-based learning provision. There are examples of other LSAs whose career pathways have led them to roles in professional development and research.

The following examples demonstrate how LSA's career pathways can lead to a range of teaching, management and senior management roles. These include:

- Progression from LSA to Support Tutor;
- Progression from LSA to a Specialist Support Tutor role;

- Progression from LSA to Learning Support Co-ordinator;
- Progression from LSA to LSA manager;
- Progression from LSA to teacher to senior manager; and
- Progression from LSA to research and professional development.

The experience of this person in the first example, shows how she is currently progressing from her LSA post, where she has undertaken qualifications and been given specialist responsibilities, to a Support Tutor role.

LSA experience – progressing to teaching or management

After a career in sales and as a child minder, Jenny started to work in hospital and elsewhere as a bank or agency member of staff, as it fitted well with her children. At the same time Jenny started work at the college as a 'bank' staff member as an LSA.

In Jenny's college, LSAs have a dual role, supporting learners in a personal care capacity and also within the curriculum. They work with the learners throughout the waking day. For example, LSAs help learners in the morning developing their daily living skills such as getting dressed and having breakfast. LSAs then accompany learners to formal classes, work placements or in sessions learning independence skills such as shopping or managing their money.

The college has arranged plenty of opportunities for training, for Jenny both when she was employed through the bank and after when she joined the college staff. She has undertaken initial mandatory training and subsequently achieved qualifications at NVQ Level 2 in health and social care and PTLLS. There are further opportunities to go on to NVQ Level 3, CTLLS and DTLLS.

The college has a clearly structured career pathway with increasing levels of responsibility from LSA, through increasingly more senior posts in care and teaching.

Jenny is moving along the pathway. Her current responsibilities include co-ordinating work-experience and supporting transitions. She arranges work placements, provides support in the workplace, works with employers and other employees and reports on progress by providing weekly feedback and end of placement reports with recommendations for future employment.

She will soon be moving on to become a support tutor with key responsibility for individuals.

Looking ahead Jenny thinks she might progress further along either the teaching route or the managerial route.

This example plots a career pathway from LSA, through developing specialist skills and achieving qualifications in communication support, to Specialist Support Tutor co-ordinating support for Deaf and hard of hearing students.

LSA experience - Specialist Tutor for Deaf and hard of hearing learners

Claire started her career in education with an NNEB qualification as a nursery nurse and became a teaching assistant in a special school. While she studied for a degree at university, she continued to work part-time as a TA. Once she had achieved a Level 2 in Communication Support, she started working through an agency part-time as a communication support worker. She also trained as a note-taker. Signature, formerly CACDP regulates the qualifications for supporting Deaf and hard of hearing people.

Claire is now the specialist support tutor co-ordinating support for Deaf and hard of hearing students. She provides support, develops and reviews plans for students, checks that their communicators and note takers are working well, and liaises with parents. She is in the process of attaining a Level 4 in British Sign Language –which is qualified interpreter level. Claire is now also undertaking a teaching qualification – a Certificate in Education, supported by the college.

Claire sees her future career as remaining as Deaf specialist support tutor but with enhanced skills. As a specialist co-ordinator, she needs to be at least a level higher than other communication support workers. She doesn't have line management responsibility but provides support and contributes to staff development. The Certificate in Learning Support would be another qualification to complete the portfolio and enable her to support a communicator, note taker and LSA in any capacity. She will also do a lip speaking course for people with an acquired hearing impairment.

Some LSAs might progress to role where their primary responsibility is for managing other LSAs, rather than following a pathway that focuses on teaching.

Kay's career pathway to Learning Support Co-ordinator

Kay worked as an admin assistant but wanted to change career to work with people. After working in a small unit, she got a job as an LSA in a college.

When she first started she had corporate training including mandatory health and safety and safeguarding training. She also had work shadowing and mentoring, and training in providing classroom support. Kay has now achieved CTLLS and an OCR certificate in Supporting Adult Literacy at Level 3.

In the 6 years she has been in the college, Kay has worked up through the ranks and she is now in a senior LSA management role, as a Learning Support Co-ordinator. In this role she allocates and redeploys LSAs and has line management responsibilities for them. This involves organising inductions, training assigning mentors and returning to work. In preparation for the management role Kay shadowed the

previous post holder. She is not sure what management training might be available and has not yet undertaken any but hopes to do so.

For some LSAs the ultimate aspiration is to become a teacher, yet for others, once they have achieved this goal, they aspire to a senior management position. The career pathway of the LSA in the next example demonstrates that this is a real possibility.

LSA experience – a career pathway to senior management

Naomi currently heads up a specialist section of a college and aspires to become Director with a strategic leadership role. When she left school after GCSEs she didn't have a clue what she wanted to do. Her friend worked in a residential college setting and she got a job there while she decided what she wanted to do. She loved it.

Her initial role was providing personal care and then she moved into supporting education as a LSA. At that time, she did a 12 week learning support qualification that wasn't specialist or particularly useful. Naomi was promoted to senior support role where she ran a shift in the residential area co-ordinating the 24 hour curriculum and leading a staff team. Eventually she went down the teaching route and after a few years did her Certificate in Education. She became a tutor and took responsibility for the social and life skills curriculum.

To support her management and leadership role, Naomi started a generic management course for the voluntary sector which was not particularly relevant. She is now undertaking the Aspiring Leaders Programme.

Although when she started out Naomi had no idea that she would end up where she has, she has always been committed and has thrown herself into her work 100%. She considers she has been lucky to have managers that invested in her and nurtured her. This has, in turn, strengthened her commitment to the organisation. The opportunities and experiences she has been given through the years were the key to her career progression.

This LSA's career pathway has been widely varied and has been influenced by particular lifestyle choices. Unlike the previous example, it has led beyond teaching to research and professional development.

LSA experience – a career pathway to research and professional development

Andrea has had a variety of different careers in fashion and retail. In the early days she lacked direction. She then spent six years as a part-time residential social worker achieved her NVQ and became a senior residential care officer. After a period abroad she went back to the same independent specialist school as a Teaching Assistant. She then moved around the country, undertook a variety of care related jobs and started as an agency LSA whilst having a family. Later, she returned to residential social work but was looking for a new challenge as she felt she was

beginning to 'burn out' as a care worker. Andrea enhanced her skills managing an inclusion project and co-ordinating a mental health help line. Partnership work with Connexions led to Andrea achieving a PA Diploma and she began a Certificate in Education teaching qualification as both roles involved training volunteers and peers as well as undertaking a small piece of research. When the opportunity to undertake more research came up again she took it, enjoyed it and made a lifestyle choice to change her career pathway.

Her next move was into teaching where she covered maternity leave as Learning Support Tutor, became a cluster leader and completed the Certificate in Education teaching qualification. Her college supported the training by allowing her time off. She progressed to a full-time post in the college teaching health and social care and in this post, managed the LSAs and specialised in speech and language. The cluster leader role changed and she did not feel there was a satisfactory role for her when she was offered a secondment to another college to undertake a professional development research project for learning support staff. Having been both an LSA and a tutor, Andrea had the experience and understanding of the role, which she applied in the project to raise the profile of learning support. With it came the kudos.

The secondment provided an excellent opportunity. She went on to other projects and with a colleague set up and now manages a training and development centre. To support the management role, although she has undertaken no management qualifications, she has undertaken plenty of relevant CPD and has acted as a mentor.

Andrea has been highly self motivated and has actively sought a career which meets her desire and need to work, while moving around the country and meeting her family commitments. She has always undertaken a huge range of training and qualifications and this has underpinned her career progression.

In the future she will probably go on to do a Masters degree. She wants to undertake more research and also writing and creative work within the arts. She says that now she works in a way that suits her lifestyle, skills and interests and has "found her voice."

Progression outside of post-school learning

For some LSAs lateral progression to related job roles such as learning mentor or careers advisor might better match their interests and career aspirations, others might move into the school sector in a Teaching Assistant or Higher Level Teaching Assistant role.

Similarly, some LSAs use their experience and initial qualifications as a pathway to a career in social work, social care, community or voluntary sector posts and health or therapy services. Once in the chosen career role, appropriate qualifications relevant to that role can be undertaken. The career pathway can be enhanced by the fact that health and social care qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 are equally applicable to a

range of different jobs in the health and social care sector. Also, at Level 4 and above, some HEIs are developing degrees and other qualification that can be undertaken by people from different professions.

The experience of working with learners who require support has also been used as a route to other public service careers, for example, in the police or the army. The interpersonal communication and person-centred skills developed through an LSA role are transferable to a wide range of contexts.

In the examples below, LSAs describe their jobs as providing a valuable experience that will support their eventual career aspirations in the performing arts and the army respectively.

LSA experience – performing arts

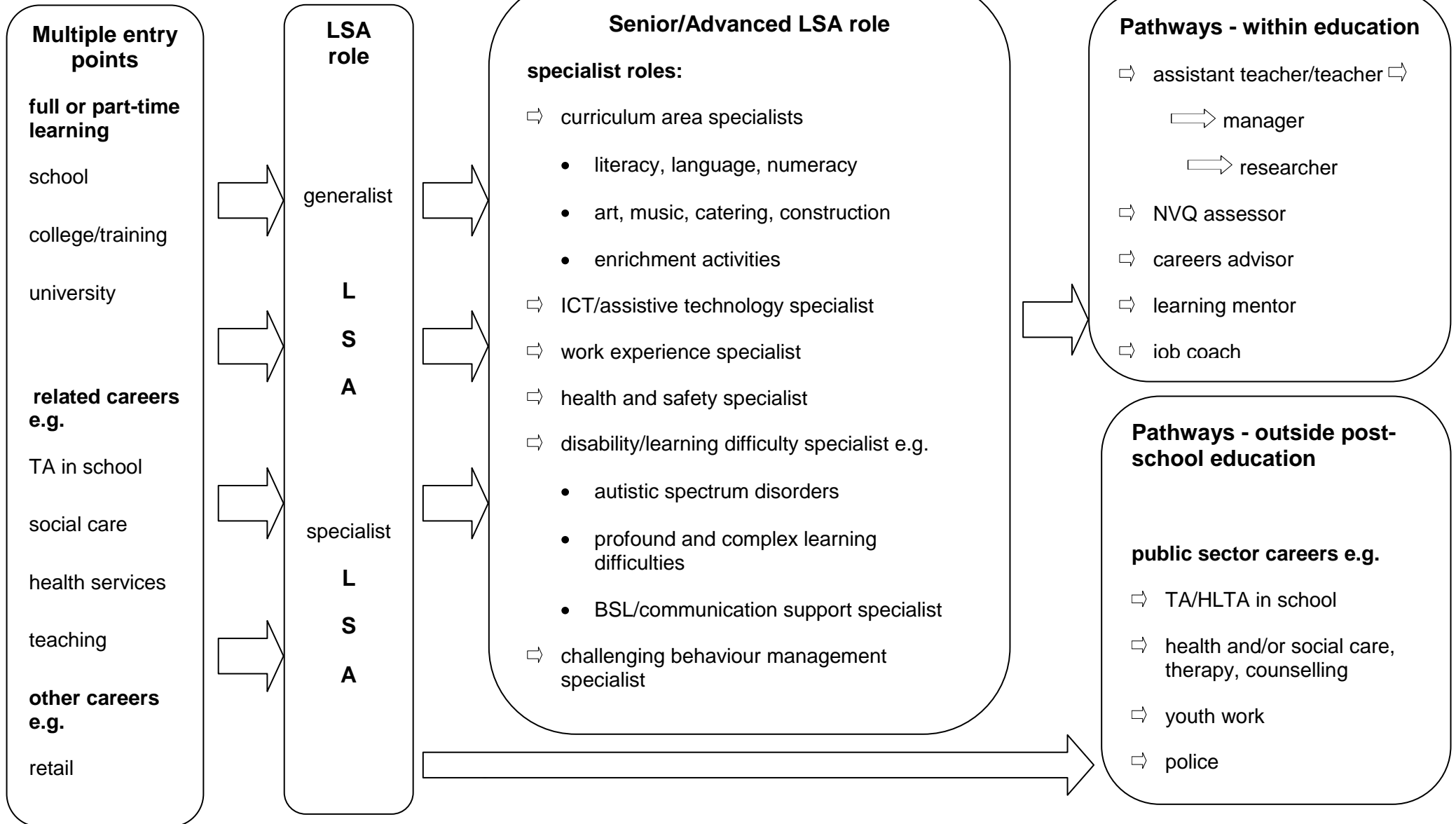
On leaving university having studied dance therapy Xante worked with adults with learning disabilities. This inspired her to apply for a post as an LSA to get 'on the ground' experience to improve her skills. She continues to apply her skills in drama for the benefit of learners with learning difficulties and is currently undertaking a teaching qualification (DTLLS). Her aspiration is to bring together dance and arts therapy with teaching skills and experience to run community arts projects. She considers that her experience as an LSA will provide her with an invaluable foundation in her future career.

LSA experience – stepping stone to a career in the public services

Iestyn is a young man who has been appointed as an LSA. On leaving school he went to college and undertook a one year public services course. A relative indicated that there was a vacancy in a local college for an LSA. He applied and was successful. He does not see the LSA role as a long term career. Rather, he would like to join to the army and sees the LSA role as providing valuable experience that will enhance his application.

The experience of LSAs demonstrates that while a notional career pathway exists for them, in practice, they will move in different ways, at different rates, following different routes. Their ultimate aspirations may vary and the choices they make will reflect their individuality and lifestyle preferences. The careers pathways chart that follows plots some of the options available. It does not assume that LSAs will follow the pathways in a linear direction or indeed, at all. However, it does provide a framework against which individuals can plot progress on their career pathways and review future options and organisation can review and develop plans for their workforce.

LSA careers pathways - roles



Progression pathways within organisations

Organisational structures within which LSAs are located can influence their possible career pathways.

In the example below, the college has a structure with roles at increasing levels of responsibility and seniority. These include: LSAs, Senior LSAs and an LSA manager.

College career structure from LSA to LSA manager

There is a clear progression route for LSAs in this organisation. Each group of students has a team of LSAs, a Senior LSA and a Tutor. There is also an LSA manager who has overall responsibility for all LSAs and Senior LSAs.

Senior LSAs have additional responsibilities. They are the first port of call when issues arise. Each senior has another responsibility such as personal care rotas, deploying LSAs, finding replacements, meal management or stock supplies. They also teach a session a week and will have gone through PTLLS or have a teaching qualification.

The overall manager is responsible for all the LSAs and is in charge of 50 + people, with responsibilities for example, for training and for ensuring effective two way communications between top management and LSAs.

The organisation in the next example has a similar structure with increasing levels of responsibility and seniority. However, in this case the structure is based on specialisms and bridges the divide between LSAs and teachers.

College career structure for LSAs

The college has developed a structure with specialisms which include Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC), Behaviour for Learning support, literacy and numeracy and work experience. There are progression opportunities from generic LSA, to LSAs who provide specialist support, to team leaders, to specialist support tutors to senior practitioners responsible for the specialist area and a specialist support tutor who co-ordinates inclusive practice.

The college in this example also has a system for career progression, derived from the performance review (appraisal) system in which LSAs move through a series of levels. Onward progression to teaching is one possible route, but also there are alternative opportunities to develop specialist areas for those who do not aspire to be teachers.

College progression routes (K)

Within the college LSAs progress through a points system, based on appraisals, from point 1 on completion of induction through to point 4. At point 3 level the LSA

can cover if a teacher is absent. LSAs can progress via this route to associate teacher status and can undertake teaching qualifications of PTLLS, CTLLS can move on to DTLLS if appropriate.

If LSAs are not interested in the teaching route then they can choose to move on to technician or advanced practitioner status, specialising in a particular area. Specialist areas are functional skills, vocational areas and pre-entry level. In these areas LSAs might for example, design resources or provide specialist support.

The table below provides a different example of a structure where LSAs might progress through a progressive series of levels with increasing responsibilities. In some organisations with similar structures levels are linked to pay scales.

LSA Level	Job Role and Responsibilities
Level 1	Work under direct instruction, usually in the classroom with the tutor, to support access to learning and provide general support to the tutor in the management of learners and learning environment.
Level 2	Work under instruction and guidance to undertake work/care/support programmes, to enable access to learning and to assist the tutor in the management of learners and learning environment. Work may be carried out alongside the tutor or elsewhere.
Level 3	Work under guidance and within an agreed system of supervision, to implement agreed work programmes with individuals/groups, in or out of the classroom. This could include those requiring specialist knowledge in particular areas and will involve assisting the tutor in the whole planning cycle and the management or preparation of resources. LSAs may also take whole classes on occasions and deliver individual learning or behaviour programmes.
Level 4	<p>Work under an agreed system of supervision to deliver agreed learning activities. This may involve planning, preparing and delivering learning activities for individuals, small groups or on occasions for whole classes, and monitoring, assessing, recording and reporting on learners' progress and achievement.</p> <p>Be responsible for the management and development of a specialist area and/or the management of other LSAs including allocation and monitoring of work, appraisal and training.</p>

How organisations support career development

Organisational practices: the experiences, professional development and opportunities offered to LSAs, are instrumental in promoting career progression. Organisations that offer a range of opportunities for career progression and different areas for developing specialisms, are more likely to meet the varied aspirations of LSAs.

LSAs were clear that the extent to which the organisations encouraged and supported them to develop their skills and interests was directly linked to successful career development.

Effective organisations will ensure that staff with line management responsibility are skilled in finding out about LSAs aspirations, skills and interests and deploy and support them effectively. Conducting a skills audit is an important part of this process. The LSA online self-assessment tool developed by the Enhancement of Learning Support project has been developed for this purpose. These organisations also encourage and support LSAs, undertake performance review for LSAs as for any other staff and offer continuing professional development and training opportunities derived from the review outcomes.

While LSAs should always have opportunities to develop their skills in new areas or to higher levels, they should be under no pressure to do so. Mindful that not all LSAs aspire to more senior roles, the organisation in the example below makes available many options, then allows LSAs to make the choice.

College opportunities

The college seeks to get the best out of everyone by giving them the opportunity to use their skills and interests. Some staff have musical backgrounds and other LSAs have art backgrounds and run art sessions. The college also offers life guard training so LSA's can lead and assist learners in swimming and numerous different, optional training and qualifications to staff. These include British Sign Language (BSL), Learning Disabilities Qualification (an NVQ Level 2 qualification in disabilities), NAPPI training (Non Abusive Psychological and Physical Intervention) and PTLLS. The college provides in- house training for additional skills such as ICT. All of these professional development opportunities are paid for by the college and it is up to LSAs if they what to take up these options.

This organisation also provides evidence of support and opportunity without pressure that results in career development within the workforce.

Progression opportunities

Within the college there are many different opportunities for LSAs to progress. While the college is very good in supporting LSAs to progress, there is no pressure if they do not wish to do so.

Some LSAs have developed specialisms, for example, in dyslexia, care, mental health, moderate learning difficulties including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autistic spectrum conditions and support for blind and visually impaired learners. There is a care manager – a potential progression route for LSAs who have a caring or nursing role. One person who started as an LSA progressed into teaching and is now a curriculum leader. The college has specialist tutor roles in visual impairment and blind support, physical impairments, non-specified learning difficulties, dyslexia, moderate and severe learning and behaviour difficulties.

Within the college there are other examples of staff who have worked in finance and administration and have undertaken specialist training and moved on to specialist support roles. The manager is particularly good at finding out about individuals' skills and specialisms and so makes the best use of staffing resource.

Qualifications and professional development for career progression

While a detailed investigation of qualifications and professional development is outside the scope of this project, given their importance in relation to career pathways, a short commentary and two tables are provided below.

The qualifications and professional development landscape is continuously changing. The National Qualifications Framework has evolved into the Qualifications and Credit Framework and qualifications are constantly being updated and developed.

The earlier studies within the Enhancement of Learning Support project indicated the existence of a plethora of qualifications and professional development opportunities that may be undertaken by LSAs as they progress in their careers. Very few were designed specifically for LSAs in lifelong learning. Many LSAs were critical of the relevance of awards that were designed primarily for other staff, such as teaching assistants in schools, health and social care staff and teachers in lifelong learning.

Work was undertaken for LLUK to address the lack of relevant qualifications, support the professionalisation of the learning support workforce and improve recognition of the valuable role LSAs play in teaching and learning. Guidance was developed for awarding bodies on initial generic qualifications for LSAs in lifelong learning (LLUK 2010) and a qualification pathway for LSAs who specialise in literacy, language and numeracy. A specification for a qualification for specialist LSAs has been developed but at the time of writing, awarding bodies have yet to offer this qualification. A scoping study for an Advanced LSA practitioner role has also been undertaken but not yet adopted.

LLUK has encouraged the development of these qualifications to ensure that nationally recognised accredited professional development opportunities are available for LSAs and employers. The qualifications are underpinned by the

National Occupational Standards for learning support staff, and provide a nationally developed initial training route. However, there is currently no requirement to undertake these qualifications. They are available for LSAs who want qualifications that will support career progression within the LSA role and also progression into other related roles.

The table of qualifications by Qualifications and Credit Framework Level that follows indicates the range of opportunities that currently exist to support LSAs on their career pathways, both within the LSA role and beyond. It identifies qualifications that are specifically designed for LSAs and since LSAs career pathways include progression to other roles, some illustrative examples of qualifications relevant to different jobs have also been included. The content is representative rather than comprehensive.

The second table lists a variety of different CDP activities or opportunities that LSAs and their managers might wish to consider. These tables build on work undertaken by several local authorities including Suffolk, Sheffield and Newcastle.

Qualifications for LSAs and other roles to which LSAs might progress by QCF Level

Qualifications and Credit Framework Level	Qualifications	Offered by:
<p>Level 2 (GCSEs A* - C)</p> <p>Equates to Level 2 on the Qualifications and Credit Framework</p> <p>LSAs work with small groups or individuals throughout the organisation under the supervision of a teacher</p>	<p>Designed for LSAs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 Award in Preparing to Support Learning. • Level 2 Award in Learning Support. • Level 2 Award in Literacy, Language, Numeracy, ICT Awareness. <hr/> <p>Basic/functional skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE/basic skills Level 2 in English/Literacy. • Maths/Numeracy, and/or IT. <hr/> <p>Related qualifications that may have some relevance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ 2 Supporting Teaching and Learning • NVQ 2 in Health and Social Care • Level 2 Certificate in British Sign Language. 	<p>FE colleges</p> <p>Adult and Community Learning</p> <p>Training Providers</p>

<p>Level 3 (Advanced Level)</p> <p>Equates to Level 3 on the Qualifications and Credit Framework</p> <p>At this level the LSA requires minimum supervision in supporting learning and teaching activities. S/he may have supervisory responsibility for other LSA(s).</p>	<p>Designed for LSAs</p> <p>Level 3 Award in Preparing to Support Learning</p> <p>Level 3 Award in Learning Support</p> <p>Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (disabled learners)</p> <p>Level 3 Certificate in Learning Support (literacy, language and numeracy)</p>	<p>FE colleges</p> <p>Adult and Community Learning</p> <p>Training Providers</p>
	<p>Qualifications for Sign Language Interpreters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Certificate in British Sign Language 	
	<p>Assessor awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Award in Understanding the Principles and Practices of Assessment • Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment • Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement • Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement 	
	<p>Management qualifications</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ 3 Management/Certificate in First Line Management 	
	<p>Teaching qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 PTLLS • Level 3 CTLLS 	
<p>Level 4-6 (Higher Education)</p> <p>Equates to Levels 4 – 6 on the Qualifications and Credit Framework</p> <p>At this level the LSA would usually work under an agreed system of supervision or management rather than direct supervision. Under the direction of a teacher, they could be involved in planning and preparing or delivering sessions to small groups or whole classes. They may also be assessing or reporting the development, progress and attainment of learners LSAs at this level may have supervisory responsibility for a group of LSAs or take the lead for a particular area of work.</p>	<p>Foundation Degrees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation Degree (Learning Support/ Inclusive Learning) <p>Related qualifications that may have some relevance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NVQ 4 Learning Development and Support Services; • NVQ 4 Management or equivalent; and • Level 6 NVQ Certificate in British Sign Language. <p>Teaching qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 4 PTLLS • Level 4 CTLLS • Level 5 DTLLS 	<p>HEIs -Universities</p> <p>Open University (OU)</p> <p>FE Colleges</p> <p>On line/distance learning</p>

	<p>Full degree BA/B Ed/BSc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full degree • Level 6 Honours degree 	
	<p>Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Framework for First Line and Middle Managers 	<p>LSIS</p>
<p>Level 6-8</p> <p>Equates to Levels 6 – 8 on the Qualifications and Credit Framework</p> <p>At this level the LSA may wish to progress to teaching, management and/or research roles.</p>	<p>Teaching qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PGCE <p>Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masters programme • Education-based Doctorate of Education 	<p>FE Colleges</p> <p>HEIs -Universities</p> <p>Open University</p>

Other continuing professional development activities

Initial development

- Induction for LSAs.
- Work in a range of settings/classes.
- Observe other LSAs.
- Take part in organisation-based in-service training.
- Participate in LA support staff in-service training.
- Get to know the policies and procedures of the organisation (e.g. behaviour management and physical intervention, health and safety, risk assessment, safeguarding and vulnerable adults and young people protection).
- Get to know the organisation priorities.
- Get to know and understand the programmes of study (especially in numeracy, literacy and/or IT).
- Work in a range of settings, supporting different subjects and learners with different needs.

Developing specialist skills

- Develop a specific skill/area of expertise – e.g. literacy, numeracy, IT, British Sign Language, Makaton, behaviour support, working with learners with specific needs, English as an Additional Language, a particular curriculum or learning area or a specific intervention.
- Set up an LSA network.
- Undertake work experience in another organisation.
- Mentor/induct new LSAs.
- Become a Union Learning Representative.
- Become a First Aider.
- Become a staff governor.
- Contribute to other aspects of organisation life by joining organisation-based working groups.
- Train as an NVQ Assessor.

Management, leadership and professional development

- Line manage other support staff.
- Keep up to date with national initiatives/policy changes – the big picture.
- Take the lead in introducing new projects and ideas within the organisation.
- Work with teaching staff to try out new ideas and approaches.
- Run inset for other LSAs.
- Get involved in LA, regional and/or national projects.
- Plan and lead extra curricula activities.
- Work with CPD Leaders to lead on CPD for organisation support staff.
- Represent support staff on county, regional and national forums.
- Take responsibility for an area of work within the organisation.
- Focus on developing leadership/management skills.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the experience of LSAs demonstrates that while a notional career pathway exists for them, in practice, they will move in different ways, at different rates, following different routes. Their ultimate aspirations may vary and the choices they make will reflect their individuality and lifestyle preferences. There is evidence that a Senior LSA or Advanced practitioner role exists widely in practice, although the responsibilities undertaken vary considerably according to context. The lack of an agreed Senior LSA role, with occupational standards, qualifications or specific training is a gap that could inhibit progression for individuals between organisations. Organisations can help LSAs to progress by providing structures with clearly defined pathways, effective performance review and a range of experiences and professional development opportunities.

Recommendations for individuals, organisations and government bodies

What individual LSAs can do to promote career progression:

- Complete the LSAs on-line self assessment tool;
- Familiarise themselves with the career pathways within and beyond their current workplace;
- Familiarise themselves with the national occupational standards and application guides; and
- Participate in continuing professional development including LSA peer support networks.

What organisations can do to promote career progression:

- Review staffing structures to ensure clear progression pathways;
- Ensure that managers conduct effective audits of skills and interests and encourage LSAs to use the on-line self assessment tool;
- Ensure that all LSAs are included in performance review systems;
- Link the outcomes of performance review to professional development opportunities which might include, but not be limited to, formal training and qualifications, shadowing, mentoring and secondments;
- Encourage and support LSAs to develop their skills and interests;
- Encourage LSA peer support networks; and
- Use the ELS organisational audit tool to review practice.

What government bodies and support agencies can do to promote career progression:

- Develop national occupational standards for Senior LSA roles;
- Review the qualifications and credit framework to ensure that a comprehensive range of qualifications is available and that qualifications on offer are directly relevant to LSAs in lifelong learning; and
- Encourage awarding bodies to take up the Level 3 specialist award that has been developed.

Annex A:

Workshop: LSA career structure and progression pathways

LSA career pathways and aspirations: your experience

1. Why did you choose to become an LSA? What was your motivation for taking the role?
2. What did you do before becoming an LSA?

Plot your career pathway

- What jobs did you have before becoming an LSA?
 - What qualifications had you achieved before becoming an LSA?
3. Would you say your role and responsibilities as an LSA have developed or progressed? If yes, in what way?
 4. What qualifications have you undertaken since becoming an LSA?(either achieved or underway) Are there any qualifications that you would like to undertake?
 5. What are your long term aspirations?

For LSAs nationally

6. What career progression would be a) possible and b) desirable for LSAs?
7. What professional development opportunities and/or qualifications would be required?
8. How could these be provided? What delivery methods should be used?

Other issues

9. In the school sector, there is a Higher Level Teaching Assistant role. Is there a place for such a role in lifelong learning? If so, what should the role entail that differs from the LSA role?
10. How could LSAs who wish to progress into teaching, best be enabled to do so?
11. Is the qualifications pathway realistic and appropriate for LSAs?
12. What would you recommend to develop and improve LSAs' career structure and progression pathways?

Annex B:**Indicative responsibilities related to a Senior LSA role**

The responsibilities undertaken by senior LSAs vary considerably. The following tables provide summaries of the types of responsibilities that senior LSAs might be assigned that are additional to those of an LSA. The lists are by no means comprehensive rather they are intended to indicate the extensive range of responsibilities.

Teaching and learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with individuals or small groups to deliver guided learning. • Work with the whole class while the teacher support small groups or individuals. • Take whole sessions as appropriate. • Conduct observations and contribute to initial assessment. • Monitor and assess learners' work. • Provide feedback to Learners in relation to their progress and achievement. • Direct the work, where relevant, of others in supporting learning. • Use effective strategies to promote positive behaviour. • Use ICT skills to support learning.

Specialist support
<p>Curriculum area specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide specialist LSA support to a curriculum area. <p>ICT specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use ICT to support learning, develop learners' competence and independence in using ICT and assistive technology. • Take responsibility for facilities such as the ICT room and resources. • Provide technical support.

Enrichment activities

- Organise and assist with trips, visits and residential.
- Organise and run lunch time or after college activities such as sports, creative arts and drama.

Work experience

- Help arrange placements.
- Make visits with learners, provide support, including travel training, where necessary.
- Provide information and support to the employer, learner and other employees in the workplace.
- Ensure two way communication between workplace and learning provider.
- Monitor and review progress and achievements with learners and employers.

Health and safety

- Co-ordinate and report on health and safety systems and arrangements.
- Contribute to health and safety risk assessments.

Particular disability or learning difficulty

- Provide direct specialist support for the learner related to his/her disability learning difficulty.
- Provide advice and information for the teachers and any others working with the learner.
- Adapt/ create resources to support learners to access learning.

External liaison

- Establish relationships and link with:
 - schools and other learning providers;
 - parents and advocates/carers; and
 - other agencies, professionals and services.
- Make home visit with teachers or other professionals.
- Attend and contribute to parents evenings.

- Attend and contribute to multiagency case conferences, including transition reviews.

Management including professional development

- Manage other LSAs.
- Liaise between managers/teaching staff and LSAs.
- Hold regular team meetings with managed staff.
- Represent LSAs at teaching staff/management/other appropriate meetings and at internal and external committees and meetings.
- Undertake recruitment/induction/appraisal/training/mentoring for other LSAs.
- Deploy LSAs matching learners' support requirements to LSA skills, devise timetables and ensure cover is maintained.
- Provide training for teachers, managers, governors and any other staff within the organisation.
- Provide training for other organisations and at external events such as the ELS conferences.

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