# Enhancement of Learning Support
# Eastern Region Report

## Moving with the times; an exploration of how learning support practitioners can be proactive managers of change

Margaret Casey
Paul Dolman
Carole Jones
Liz Maudslay
Jane Opie

March 2011

# Contents

## 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 development programme.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 development 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.

## Introduction and background

The brief given to the Eastern Region was to:

*Report on research and review of training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for managers of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs)  to ensure that management development includes their role in organisational development and managing change*

The report should *outline some tested approaches to developing a whole organisation, inclusive approach to the management of learning support*

The rationale behind this strand was that Phase One of the project had found that some managers of LSAs/SSAs felt that they had received little or no training.  They reported that the training they had received, focussed on issues of compliance e.g. inspection, funding, health and safety etc, rather than on management skills. Others said they were regarded as 'co-ordinators' but not as managers of change.

'*The problem is not seeing ourselves as managers of change, but as administrators and trouble shooters. We need to understand what brings about change and to have strategies to help us do it.*'

## Personnel involved in the project

The two colleges leading on this strand were Oaklands College, Jane Opie, (Head of Skills Additional Learning Support) Carole Jones( Head of Skills, Learning for Living and Work) and St Elizabeth's College (Paul Dolman, Principal, and Margaret Casey, Vice Principal). The strand was also supported by Liz Maudslay, Specialist Adviser.

## Approach and Methodology

## Planning and research

The team held two meetings and a telephone conference in September/October 2010.  During meetings we discussed the substance of the topic and planned the overall methodology.  We also carried out some background reading on management training and change management. Documents we found specifically relevant included Pearson Publishing **The Good Practice Guide: A Tool for Managers and TAs/HLTAs**  (2009) by Maggie Balshaw, which while looking specifically at Learning Support Assistants in schools nevertheless has many messages for those working in post school provision; **Good Practice Guide, Leading from the Middle**, LSN, 2007, which, although aimed at Key Skills Managers still has many relevant points for those in cross college middle management roles; and Annette Zera's and Susan Murray's training manual **Getting on Brilliantly** (2004), which contains a wealth of practical advice on how to organise meetings in ways which allow all participants maximum opportunity for contribution.

## Organising and completion of events

The Eastern Region held two events (1st December 2010 and 17th February 2011).  The Eastern Region has an existing Association of Colleges (ACER) which includes in its membership those working in Further Education, Adult and Community Education, Work Based Training, offender institutions and voluntary organisations. We allocated resources for ACER to organise the events, given their existing network of communication and the size of the Eastern Region.  The high turn out at both events was a result of the forward planning, use of ACER and choice of venue to ensure maximum accessibility.

It was agreed that the best way to get delegates to discuss how to become managers of change was for them to focus on practical changes they had made or wanted to make.  We sent out a pre-event activity (Annex1).

Attendees were asked to state a change they had made or wanted to make and what support they required to achieve it.

The first event was very well attended (43 delegates) with a spread of managers and LSAs from a wide range of different organisations. The event began with an overview of Phase One of the Enhancement of Learning Support Project and a brief presentation by the Principal of St Elizabeth's on making changes within the college.  The main emphasis of the event was to give delegates time to discuss change within their own organisation. This was done during three workshops. First, they discussed barriers to making changes. Second, they shared positive changes they had been a part of. Third, they discussed other changes they would like to make, the potential for success and the support they would require. (Annex 2a) The outcomes of these discussions were summarised in Annex 2b.  Each organisation then left with an action plan for change they would start planning or undertaking before the second event. (Annex 2c) Between the two events we sent out reminders to delegates about their action plans. The action plans were copied, collated and responses were summarised.  (Annex 2d)

The second event was also very well attended (48 delegates) and with some new delegates who had not been able to come to the first event. Evaluations from both events were very positive with 100% of those attending the first event and 96% of those attending the second event  judging them to be good or better.

Comments from both events were very positive overall, with the following quotes being typical.

> "*Networking opportunities great.*"

> "*Good opportunity to appreciate concerns in your organisation are shared by other FE providers*

An evaluation summary for both events can be found at Annexes 3 and 4.

Feedback from the first event suggested that delegates wanted time to discuss issues with other practitioners. We planned the second event in response to this.  We began with three brief inputs from two colleges and one ACL centre who had made substantial progress in following through their action plans. Analysis of action plans from first event revealed that changes which practitioners wanted to implement focussed on three main areas:

• Recruitment and internal training of the LSA team;

• Training carried out by the LSA team for mainstream curriculum staff; and

• Improving communication of the work of the LSA team across the organisation.

We divided delegates under these three headings into workshop groups, according to three themes where they had the opportunity to discuss their action plans and feedback both on what they had achieved and on what had supported their success. (Annex 5a). Some pointers for the discussions were provided via a PowerPoint, see Annex 5b.

The most useful resources to be shared were direct examples of changes carried out by individual organisations.  These included the process of carrying out the change and the factors which helped them to do it. In order to collect these examples in a consistent format we sent out a template where delegates could record results of their action plans.

The Eastern region team disseminated their findings at the national conference and delivered a workshop to delegates where the action plan model was also used to generate further discussion.

## Findings

There were discrepancies in the resources provided for learning support and in the way in which it was organised. These differences were apparent between different kinds of organisation, e.g. FE sector colleges, Adult Community Learning and work-based training, and also between different organisations within the same sector. Numbers of support workers varied enormously between organisations. Organisations also had very different ways of managing their support, for example while some combined support for specialist and mainstream provision in others these teams were very distinct.

There were differences in the status given to learning support teams, with some managers receiving management training on a par with all other curriculum managers whilst others' roles were perceived as less of a priority.

Barriers faced by teams included:

- many LSAs were hourly paid and/or agency staff, not funded to attend training and with less favourable  conditions of service than other permanent staff;

- the difficulty of supporting LSAs in multi site organisations;

- the lack of career progression routes for LSAs;

-  a lack of clarity about the role of LSA and tutor; and

- LSAs were being used inappropriately to support students who had been misplaced on courses in order to boost numbers.

Delegates were very keen to find:

- better ways of appraising and supporting LSAs;

- more effective ways of working with curriculum staff; and

- more efficient methods of communicating their service across the organisation.

All delegates felt very strongly that the most valuable way of developing their provision was to have time to network and share with others in a similar position both within their organisation and more widely. In both events there was a real enthusiasm and a desire to learn from each other and to share resources and not always feel they had to 'reinvent the wheel'. There was also a very clearly expressed desire that those present at the events wished to have opportunities to share and network on an ongoing basis. LSAs in particular felt that their managers had these opportunities via their existing Learning Support Network but that they did not.

Another universally shared finding was the crucial importance of having the support of senior management and of budget holders. Organisations which had this support felt that their work was valued and had in place structures which allowed them to work positively across the organisation, for example training which they offered formed a compulsory part of the training and induction programmes of all staff. Others believed that they did not have this support and felt that when they did put on training events, they were only attended by those who were already positive about their work.

## Outputs

There are case studies by four providers in Annex 6. These include examples of positive changes which organisations have carried through, some of them as a result of this project. In writing up their successes we were clear that we wanted participants to include not just the positive change which they managed to make, but also the process of making this change. Changes identified by Learning Support teams tended to fall into three main areas:

1. ***Recruitment and internal training and support of learning support teams*. Examples included:**

- an Offender Organisation which had developed a training programme for prisoners so that they gained recognised qualifications and themselves became LSAs in the prison;

- observation of LSAs;

- work shadowing carried out by LSAs;

- new management structures which created a new post of senior LSA; and

- development of e-training.

**2.** ***Training carried out by LSA team for mainstream curriculum teaching staff*. Examples included:**

- colleges which had managed to make this training compulsory for all teaching staff;

- a college which began to include learners in their training programmes; and

- training delivered entirely by LSAs.

**3.** ***Improving communication*. Many organisations carried out work in this area.** Examples included:

- the creation of Learning Support Handbooks;

- the instigation of newsletters; and

- creation of formal structures for working with external providers, particularly feeder schools.

**4.** ***Improving target setting and recording*** Examples included:

- improvement to formative assessment and target setting; and

- the simplification of recording procedures and documentation.

Case studies giving details of these outputs can be found in Annex 6, and also a brief description of useful externally produced resources and web links to them can be found at Annex 7 of this report.

## Impact

The Eastern Region project resulted in three major areas of impact:

1) *The opportunity for Learning Support managers and LSAs to work together at the events.* The high attendance and the fact that most delegates attended both events showed the real interest practitioners had in meeting and sharing concerns and issues. Participants welcomed the opportunity for both managers and LSAs to share their work with others. The high energy levels at both events revealed how important it was for practitioners to have the opportunity to spend time discussing areas of shared interest and also to discuss resources and approaches developed by individual organisations.

2) *Asking delegates to create action plans at the first event and share these at the second event* was an idea welcomed by all. Several delegates spoke of how they had an opportunity to develop an action plan which they then were able to carry out between events and discuss at the second. This structure provided them with the impetus to carry out changes which they had been meaning to develop and also gave them a supportive context in which to work through their ideas.

3) *The instigation of an ongoing Eastern Region online Learning Support group*. Delegates expressed their desire to create an on-going support group Suggestions made by delegates for an ongoing support network included the creation of a simple website on which members could share documentation, share stories and raise issues; the possibility of organisations arranging visits to other providers and sharing training; the potential of organising webinars. The project team are working with Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region (ACER) to develop an e network making use of Sharepoint through ACER which would enable users to have a password protected network membership through which members could send emails, share documents and includes a calendar to publicise events or plan them.

Formal evaluations of both events were very positive Attendance, enthusiasm and energy were all high, despite the current rather gloomy economic and social context,. This demonstrated the importance for practitioners to have opportunities to meet, reflect on issues and discuss outside their workplace. The events clearly demonstrated the skills knowledge and experience that is on offer within organisations and a will to share and learn.

The Eastern region study demonstrated the value of having an 'action plan' model Practitioners were invited to record a change they had attempted or wished to embark upon, share the results at the next session and reflect on the results and what conditions and/or support had enabled their desired change

The Eastern Region study showed the enormous value of regions having a formal organisational network which has the infrastructure and expertise to carry out regional co-ordination

Internal evaluation of the team who carried out the study showed that staff from Oaklands College and St Elizabeth's College and the external adviser all enjoyed working together and worked well as a team. They all benefitted from the experience brought by each member and developed more in depth links which are sustainable. The specialist advisor brought an overview of the national agenda and experience in research and writing.

However, while accepting the importance of practitioners in colleges having a key role in organising events of this kind, there was some concern that it

added to their already heavy workload. While colleges received money for carrying out project management the reality is that it is hard to buy in cover particularly for key players such as senior co-ordinators and Principals. One key lesson is that it is important to identify those tasks best carried out by college practitioners and those which might be better taken on by others. Also there was a lack of clarity regarding lines of reporting within the project.

## Recommendations for future work and further developments

If learning support teams are to become proactive managers of change the following factors need to be considered:

- Identify the factors within organisations that facilitate the development of successful, high profile learning support;

- Recognise that many solutions are available within organisations and provide opportunities for these to be more widely shared;

- Ensure that ongoing regional network for learning support practitioners as well as managers are resourced and facilitated; and

- More research is required to highlight and investigate the huge disparity between the conditions of service, role and development opportunities of learning support staff in different organisations.

## Annex 1: Pre-event Task for Event 1, December 2010.

### Pre Event Task

It would be really helpful if you could spend some time reflecting on your role and respond to the following questions as honestly and openly as possible. Your responses will be completely anonymous but will help us to fine tune the event to meet your needs. You might like to involve some other colleagues in responding. If you are able to send this back before the 1st December please do so, or bring it along on the day.

There are many different models of learning support and part of the project is to look at where learning support sits within the college's management structure.

1) **Please give us an overview of how learning support is structured within your college. This could be a brief paragraph or an organisation chart.**

2) **Please answer the questions below according to your role in college:**

*For Managers:*

| | |
|---|---|
| *A positive change I have made in my area of work has been....* | |
| *In the next year I think my main challenge in being a learning support manager will be….* | |
| *An idea I have to improve my service is…..* | |

*For Learning Support Assistants*

| | |
|---|---|
| *An achievement that I have made, or an initiative that has been successful is….* | |
| *In the next year I think my main challenge in being a learning support assistant will be….* | |
| *An idea I have that would help me to support learners better is…* | |

## Annex 2a: Materials for Event 1, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010.

Table discussion topics

1) What are the main internal and external barriers that you face in the management and delivery of learning support?

2) Discuss some examples of positive change that you've been part of.

3) Three questions:

- What other changes would you like to bring about?

- What potential do you have to make these happen?

- What additional support might you need to bring this about?

4) What are the next steps that you can take to bring about positive change? What support do you think you need?

These questions were presented to groups as pre-prepared spider diagrams on large coloured sugar paper. Groups worked on each question, but the groups changed for items two and three. They were brought back together into College groups for the last question. For question four participants completed an action plan.

## Annex 2b: Summary of Workshop Notes for Event 1, December 2010.

**Summary of workshop notes**

**Main internal and external barriers in management of learning support**

**Funding:**

- Budget restrictions;

- Poor pay and conditions of LSAs;

- Lack of funding for Levels 1-3; and

- Lack of funding for training.

**Situation of LSAs:**

- Role undervalued;

- Lack of career progression opportunities;

- Lack of relevant qualifications;

- Lack of consistency of staff – some didn't want to move on or up skill;

- Problems with sickness management; and

- Challenge of involving both work based trainers and employers.

**Organisational:**

- Non existent or irrelevant policies;

- Lack of clear job demarcation (LSAs/tutors etc.);

- LSAs not always involved in planning;

- Not always seen as part of overall organisation but as an add-on; and

- LSAs used inappropriately to support students on courses they should not be on in order to boost numbers.

**Communication barriers:**

- Lack of communication with external bodies; and

- Lack of internal communication between tutors and LSAs.

**Examples of positive changes you have been part of**

**Pre Course:**

- Pre Entry visits;

- Better assessment (HMP Weyland and Harlow);

- Training prisoners to be LSAs and enabling them to gain accreditation (Weyland); and

- Learning support in industry (East of England Co-Op).

**Support for LSAs:**

- Appraisal of LSAs (Norfolk Adult Services);

- Shadowing and mentoring;

- Training for teams (Harlow);

- Improved case loads (YOI Warren Hill);

- New post of co-ordinator/trainer (Oaklands);

- All support managed as one team (City College Norwich); and

- Free Levels 2 and 3 for all staff.

**Communication with/training for tutors:**

- Improved communication using ELIP (Northampton);

- CPD on working with your LSA (New College);

- Compulsory CPD for lecturers (New College Stamford);

- Greater involvement of teaching staff (Oaklands);

- Support workers planning and running CPD sessions (Oaklands);

- Evaluation sheets for tutors (Harlow);

- Induction Pack for all staff (Oaklands); and

- Communication folder for all staff (multi agency plus parents) (nhc).

**New or additional resources:**

- Chill out room for learners (nhc); and

- Move service to central location in middle of college (Huntingdon).

**Other changes you would like to make/potential for making them/additional support you might need**

**Changes in respect of LSAs:**

- More observation/monitoring quality of work;

- Better progression routes for LSAs;

- More appropriate qualifications;

- Revised pay structure; and

- National body for LSAs.

**Training for teaching staff:**

- More time for training;

- Compulsory CPD for tutors;

- Online training;

- More input in induction of teaching staff; and

- Focussed workshops.

**Structural changes:**

- Integrated ILPs with input from all staff including LSAs;

- Better integration of support;

- Better sharing between departments;

- More joint work on initial assessment;

- Improved admission processes for ldd students;

- Better communication and ways of passing on information;

- Greater flexibility;

- LSA in every theory based session;

- Quiet room for students with behavioural issues.

**What you would need to carry out these changes:**

- To be listened to by SMT/support and understanding of SMT;

- Looking at examples of good practice at other organisations;

- Information on different ways of supporting students;

- More provision for Entry 3 – Level 1;

- Less box ticking and less emphasis on bums on seats;

- More person centred planning;

- Change management training for all staff; and

- Support on how to make meetings more positive.

## Annex 2c: Action Plan for Event 1, December 2010.

Enhancement of Learning Support Programme

East of England:  Approaches to developing a whole organisational approach

| Organisation: | Names: | Email: | Telephone: |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

| ACTIONS | BY WHOM | BY WHEN |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |

## Annex 2d: Summary of key points on Action Plans, Event 1, December 2010.

Summary of key points from Action Plans drawn up on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010

| | |
|---|---|
| ILP<br><br>Bite size training | HMP<br><br>Warren Hill |
| Organisational.  Communication folder | North Herts |
| Internal organisation | Stamford |
| Some already done – training, location of centre, raising status | Huntingdon |
| Practical communication - resource allocation and good practice | Otley |
| Training for staff re identification of need | PBB WBL<br><br>Training provision |
| Communication and procedure re ALS | Norwich |
| Staff development | Norwich |
| Observations.  Training & development of LSAs and procedures | Colchester |
| Observations.  Promotion – advanced practitioner of status | Oaklands |
| Communication.  Training and qualifications | Harlow |
| Communication.  Training and qualifications.  Peer observation, egs of how to raise profile with SMT, student involvement | Oaklands |
| Staff training.  Promotion | HMP<br><br>Wayland |
| LSA and tutor role. | Sense |

| | |
|---|---|
| Communication – learners staff support - Newsletter | Norfolk Adult Ed |
| Monitoring progress of ILPs | St Elizabeth's |
| Process of allocation | Otley |
| Training | East of England Co-op |
| Plan to train as LSAs – already done | HMP Hollesley Bay |
| Status and communication, Student support & practice | Great Yarmouth Community Trust |
| Observation ⇨ peer | Northampton |
| Raising awareness.  Training | Harlow x 2 |

## Annex 3: Summary Evaluation First Event

**The Enhancement of Learning Support Programme**

**East of England Theme:  Tested approaches to developing a whole organisational, inclusive approach to the management of learning support**

1st December 2010

We very much hope that you enjoyed today's event. Please take the time to complete this evaluation form and return it to us before you leave. Your feedback will be crucial in helping us to evaluate how useful the events are, and also in planning future actviity. In addition, they are an important key performance indicator for LSIS.

**Please tick or circle to indicate your response**

How would you rate the session activities provided today?

| Aspects | Excellent | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Presentation topics:* <br> *Liz Maudslay* <br> *Paul Dolman* | 12 <br><br> 9 | 15 <br><br> 15 | 2 <br><br> 6 | 0 <br><br> 0 |
| *Discussion groups* | 17 | 18 | 0 | 0 |
| *Networking opportunities* | 17 | 13 | 6 | 0 |
| *Sharing approaches and resources* | 12 | 16 | 5 | 0 |
| *Delivery methods* | 9 | 16 | 9 | 0 |
| *Administration* | 16 | 15 | 5 | 0 |
| *Venue* | 20 | 16 | 0 | 0 |
| *Catering* | 17 | 16 | 1 | 0 |
| ***Overall rating of the event*** | 7 | 18 | 0 | 0 |

**What advice, whether specific or general, would you wish to offer to the planners of this event for the next regional meeting?**

- Quite specific feedback on today's suggestions.

- Clearer audio presentation – staff training with use of microphone.

- Hard to head speakers – be prepared with sound systems.

- Make sure subjects are relevant.

- Difficult to hear the speakers.

- Give thought to the acoustics of the room – hard to hear at the back.

- Remember that not everyone who provids the learner support does so in a college or other educational institution, or somes to the event with other colleagues.

- I would have liked more opportunities to talk to other LSA's or maybe it was just the groups I found.

- All very good so no advice needed.

- Proved really useful – and well organised, thank you.

- More notice of pre-event task.

- Strategies for improving LS provision that have been successful e.g. case studies.

- Pre-event task sent out earlier so we have time to gather feedback from other colleagues.

- End section for networking – people say what they are happy to share – emails then exchanged.

- Venue very nice but a bit far away from my college.

- Excellent day, very interesting. Good to network, lots of ideas.

**Are there any additional comments you would like to make?**

- Networking opportunities great.

- It's a shame IT let the side down!

- Good opportunity to appreciate concerns in your organisation are shared by other FE providers.

- Well organised and enjoyable.

- Would it be appropriate for attendees to have all our emails made available to each other**?**

- Discussion groups provided opportunities to hear several points of view.

- Keep up the good work!

- Would be nice to raise the LSA professional profile, to have a clear direction for the profession. Something valued.

- An interesting session which allowed for the opportunity to share ideas and practice.

- I'm leaving feeling very motivated.

- Good to hear voice of LSA's. Quite sad that issues still same. Good range of bodies represented after many years (10+).

## Annex 4: Summary Evaluation Second Event

**The Enhancement of Learning Support Programme**

**East of England Theme:  Tested approaches to developing a whole organisational, inclusive approach to the management of learning support**

17 February 2011

We very much hope that you enjoyed today's event. Please take the time to complete this evaluation form and return it to us before you leave. Your feedback will be crucial in helping us to evaluate how useful the events are, and also in planning future actviity. In addition, they are an important key performance indicator for LSIS.

**Please tick or circle to indicate your response**

How would you rate the session activities provided today?

| Aspects | Excellent | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Presentation topics:* <br> *Norfolk Adult Education* <br> *Harlow College* <br> *North Herts College* | 3 <br> 13 | 19 <br> 15 | 6 <br> 2 | |
| *Discussion groups* | 7 | 21 | 3 | |
| *Networking opportunities* | 17 | 13 | 3 | |
| *Sharing approaches and resources* | 12 | 16 | 5 | |
| *Delivery methods* | 2 | 23 | 9 | |
| *Administration* | 7 | 25 | 1 | |
| *Venue* | 16 | 17 | 1 | |
| *Catering* | 13 | 18 | 2 | |
| ***Overall rating of the event*** | 9 | 18 | 2 | |

**What advice, whether specific or general, would you wish to offer to the planners of this event for the next regional meeting?**

- Very good sessionwith a combination of peer and case study input.

- Ask individuals to bring documetation so share, appropriate to topic.

- Smaller groups.

- More local.

- Learner specific e.g. FE only.

- Would be nice to be given ideas on what would be discussed so we could come with ideas before attending.

- Nothing in particular but thanks for the decaf coffee.

- Opportunity for each area to bring/present something to share.

- Excellent for networking getting new ideas.

- To improve delivery using microphone which seems to be haphazard.

- To improve heating.

- To sort out the mocrophone system which works when it had a mind to.

## Are there any additional comments you would like to make?

- Always good to network.

- Make training free, as soon as things are made having to pay then people can not attend.

- Perhaps needed to mix the groups more.

- An excellent opportunity to share and pool resources with similar practitioners.

- I found it a very good use of my time.

- All the technical equipment should have been prepared prior to the start (microphone).

- Organisers of event/Staff delivering presentations should introduce themselves.

- Organisers of the event who make the introductory speeches should introduce themselves.

## E&D monitoring

**Ethnicity**

| | |
|---|---|
| British | 25 |
| Other white | 1 |

**Age**

| | |
|---|---|
| Under 25 | 1 |
| 26-34 | 5 |
| 35-44 | 2 |
| 45-54 | 11 |
| 55-64 | 7 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Employed | Y = 24<br>N = 0 |
| Full time | 15 |
| Part time | 4 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Man | 2 |
| Woman | 24 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Transgender | Y = 1<br>N = 16<br>Prefer not to say = 2 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Disability | Y = 1 = medical conditions<br>N = 23 |

**Sexual orientation**

| | |
|---|---|
| Heterosexual/straight | 18 |
| Lesbian/gay | 1 |
| Prefer not to say | 4 |

**Religion or belief**

| | |
|---|---|
| Christian | 13 |
| Buddhist | 1 |
| None | 6 |
| Prefer not to say | 3 |

## Annex 5a: Materials for Event 2, February 2011

### Materials for Event 2 - Table top discussions

Delegates were asked to split into three broad groups, based on the overall theme of their action plans. (The themes were identified through an analysis of the Action Plans from the first event, see Appendix 2a)

The groups/themes were:

1) Internal training and support for Learning Support assistants, eg recruitment, internal training

2) The role of the Learning Support team in providing training for curriculum staff across the organisation

3) Promotion of and communication about the Learning Support Service, eg how promote services, provide information about individual support needs

Some pointers for the discussions were provided via a PowerPoint, see Appendix 3b.

## Annex 5b: Power Point Slide, Event 2, February 2011

**Some Pointers**

- Did you face barriers in carrying out your change?

- How did you ensure that the change was embraced by your whole team?

- Were there groups who resisted or felt threatened by it?

- How did you manage this?

- Whose support did you need?

- How did you gain this?

- Who were your allies and how did you use them?

- Were there external training programmes or resource documents which helped?

- Were you supported by sharing examples of good practice with other providers?

## Oaklands College

### Enhancement of Learning Support Programme

### Management of Change

A Case Study

Learning/Student Support Assistant Co-ordination

## Background

Oaklands College is a large General FE College that includes a large and diverse discrete provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or learning difficulties; including those with profound and complex learning difficulties (at a dedicated centre), mental health needs, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders and those who are preparing for paid employment. Classes are delivered across three campuses and in two satellites centres including a medium secure facility run under Home Office directives. Overall there are four hundred learners who are part of the College's LLDD provision.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Young Persons Learning Agency (YPLA) will confirm that there is no other General Further Education College in the UK providing a comparable breadth and range of curricula, which makes it unique in providing a truly inclusive educational experience for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

A significant proportion of learners travel from outside the College's normal catchment area because other providers are unable to offer a curriculum that meets their individual needs. There are a significant number of learners who have benefitted from the Improving Choice project – which originated in the East of England but now being rolled out nationally, which enables learners who would have previously had to go to out-of-county residential placements to access provision closer to home.

Within the general college over 900 learners are supported on a wide range of provision with a broad spectrum of learning difficulties and disabilities and including learners with literacy, numeracy or second language needs. The

area has learners with complex learning requirements who have also benefited from the Improving Choice project and also includes those learners with learning difficulties who have progressed to mainstream; including supporting 'blended' learning with dual led mixed ability classes including those learners on the Autistic Spectrum.  Support is delivered in a range of ways including in-class support by learning support assistants or by communication support workers, one to one support and assessments by specialist support tutors and literacy, language or numeracy support staff. Learners may also receive assistive technology training or be supported in a small group or workshop setting.

## The Issue

Student support is provided by Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), who chiefly provide support to learners in mainstream college, and Student Support Assistants (SSAs) who typically provide discrete programme support, although inevitably the edges do blur where learners progress to mainstream.

The requirement for both Learning and Student Support Assistants has increased rapidly over the last three years causing concerns about sustaining the quality of support and ensuring that learners continue to receive a bespoke learning experience.

There was a drive within college to ensure that Additional Learning Support (ALS) funding was divided more evenly between mainstream and discrete LLDD provision which, together with an increase in the complexity of the learning needs of prospective learners on mainstream courses, led to a sharp expansion in the  levels of staffing and volume of support within the college as a whole

In recent years the recruitment process for LSA/SSAs has resulted in increased applications from a younger age group, most of whom are graduates, more experienced highly qualified candidates and college learners who have gained a taste for support from working in SSA/LSA roles as part of their course or others who did not have any specialist experience but a desire to work within learning support.

The sheer size and rapid expansion of such teams, the diversity of their makeup and the more complex requirements of learners posed considerable challenges. LSAs/SSAs required development that was focused, supervision and support that was consistent and appropriate to need.

Overall there was a requirement for a change in order to continue delivering support that ensured responsiveness to learner need and resulted in a quality learner experience.

The above also gave the college the responsibility to nurture, skills match and support the new staff, whilst developing their skills, recognizing their roles and responsibilities and increasing their profile and status within the college.

## The Approach

## Recruitment

Job descriptions were reviewed and revised to reflect accuracy of role and requirements.

Co-ordination roles were defined and appointments made.

Learners on vocational courses such as Public Services and Sports Studies were given opportunities to work supporting learners as part of their course and vacancies were promoted within the vocational areas.

Dual advertising campaigns/joint interviews between discrete and mainstream ensured consistency and correct placement of applicants.

Training needs were identified at interview to inform planning for the induction process, in order that the new cohort of staff were qualified in and aware of the essential elements of the role.

Cross college staff inset days were used  to deliver a more tailored package of training, appropriate to need.

## Induction and Mentoring

Specialised induction included clarity of role (booklets and packs specific to the areas, developed by the existing support staff to ensure requirements and expectations of the role, were clear prior to them starting  and addressed as part of induction)

Initial staff development was delivered as appropriate and additional training materials/ guidance made available on Oaklearn (College VLE)

Mentoring partnerships were established as appropriate throughout the year.

Shadowing and peer observation opportunities were established early in the academic year and followed up, with outcomes disseminated to the staff team in order to share good practice.

Induction and mentoring was supplied by Advanced Skills Practitioners and more senior LSAs/SSA's.

Observation feedback sheets focusing on support  were devised to monitor quality and recognize and inform good practice and used in addition to the corporate Observation of Teaching and Learning

## Staff Development

Development in addition to the corporate requirements was listed and a programme established. E.g. Approach training, epilepsy training, safe guarding, gastronomy and peg feeding, emergency tracheotomy care, administration of oxygen and suctioning, feeding awareness and of course lifting and handling.

Where possible existing staff delivered training; thus allowing for more immediate, cost effective delivery, with real life reference.

Learners were consulted and involved in development and delivery of training where possible.

New staff that came with a specialism/interests were encouraged to develop their talents appropriately e.g. a law graduate attended Disability Hate Crime course and in turn raised awareness at the college.

Vocational specialists were trained to deliver to college teams e.g.

Specialist training delivered by the physiotherapist, nurses practitioners and osteopath.

Shared staff development between mainstream LSAs and discrete SSAs and observations and peer mentoring were encouraged across different teams

All LSAs were given individual training sessions in Assistive Technology as appropriated to their experience and to the nature of the learners they would be supporting so that they could identify opportunities for using the technology and model its use to both learners and teaching staff in the vocational areas.

Existing staff in the team provided training for LSAs on working with learners with specific learning difficulties, deaf awareness, Mental Health Awareness.

Materials were developed by the staff team and shared on the college VLE

## Co-ordination

Co-ordinators were appointed from the already established staff team, drawing on their experience in the field.

Co-ordinators gradually assumed responsibility for the line management of the majority of SSAs/LSAs along with identifying and organizing training, mentoring, performance reviews etc.

Co-ordinators have also assisted in the assessments for applicants and work closely with staff in vocational areas as a vital point of contact whose expertise is recognized and valued.

**Timescales**

The changes took place over the last three years and are still work in progress.

The increase and diversity of learner need continues to required responsive training programmes.

## The Outcomes

The above development has resulted in a confident staff team, who have qualifications and 'field' experience able to meet the varying demands of a challenging cohort of learners.

The continued improvement in learners' support has reflected in the quality of delivery of teaching and learning throughout the college.

There is recognition of the value of support staff throughout the college which has raised both the profile and the status of the role; they are recognized as 'experts'.

The learners played a vital role in training the staff teams. The ethos of consulting learners at every opportunity to ensure their voices were heard was vital; offering a measure of the effectiveness of support provided.

There has been a gradual erosion of barriers between mainstream and discrete delivery which will offer opportunities for further development in the future.

LSA/SSA Induction packs have been shared with feeder schools for visiting staff on collaborative programmes to ensure clarity and consistency of delivery.

Feedback from outside agencies has been sought and fed back to teams to inform further training and possible sharing of good practice.

Accuracy of matching, skills, knowledge and experience has resulted in staff being placed appropriately with groups/individuals they really want to work with.

**St Elizabeth's College**

Case Study of Change Management

A whole team approach to developing

Individual Development Plans

**Background**

St Elizabeth's College is a residential Independent Specialist College for young people with learning disabilities and difficulties. Learners have a "waking day" curriculum, that is one which includes independent living skills, vocational work placements and embedded Skills for Life, delivered in context during the day and in the evenings as appropriate. The learners are tenants in their own accommodation and much learning takes place within their home setting. The learners are supported throughout the day by Independence and Curriculum Tutors, who lead on sessions such as Home Management or Shopping. The Independence and Curriculum Tutors are duel qualified, holding NVQs in Health and Social Care and at least Level 3 PTTLS. They are the equivalent to LSAs in other contexts. Senior Curriculum Tutors, who have full teaching qualifications, lead the formal college sessions, such as Media and Current Affairs as well as community based vocational sessions.

Each learner has a Key Tutor, who is an Independence Tutor, who is responsible for setting their learner's Individual Development Plan (IDP) targets to cover the waking day curriculum and long term goals. They are supported by Senior Curriculum Tutors to set the targets and review progress. There has been significant staff training on setting SMART targets and using the targets to plan sessions that fully meet the individual needs of each learner.

Historically progress against the learners' targets was commented on by Tutors after each session, by hand writing onto a document which listed out

all of these targets.  These comments were collated by the Senior Tutors in order to prepare Progress Reports, normally three times a year.

## The Issue

During 2009 and 2010 tutors began to feedback to management that they were struggling with the amount of paperwork that this process involved.  This occurred particularly during feedback discussions after session observations.  Staff independently began to explore ways to improve the system.  For instance, one group of Independence Tutors designed another form and shared this with College Management.

In addition the Senior Curriculum Tutors felt that the current system for writing Progress Reports was too burdensome and did not accurately reflect the whole of the learners' experiences.   During whole staff training in February 2010 all tutors were given the opportunity to feedback in general on the processes.

Overall it was felt that:

- Learners had too many targets;

- Targets tended to concentrate on Independent Living Skills, leaving significant aspects of the curriculum, such as community vocational work placements, without targets;

- Targets were often too specific, reducing flexibility in setting learning objectives;

- The written comments on targets were often repetitive, as there might not be anything new to say about how the learner was getting on against them;

- Summarising progress to write the content of Reports was burdensome, as there were so many sheets of paper with several comments on each;

- The system would not support the introduction of Foundation Learning and accreditation for Independent Living Skills; and

- Therapy targets were on the IDP, but not always brought through to session planning.

## How we worked to improve the system

During May and June 2010 there was extensive work by the Vice Principal with the Lead Senior and Senior Curriculum Tutors regarding the processes and paper work around setting IDP targets and writing Progress Reports.

The aim was to increase the quality of formative assessment comments whilst reducing the amount of paperwork Tutors have to complete during the day and to improve the target setting. In addition we wanted to improve the ability for Key Tutors and their managers to track learner progress.

The key changes are:

1) Each learner has two IDP folders, one held at the College Academic Base and the other on the learner's bungalow;
2) Broader targets are now grouped into five areas: Independent Living Skills, Personal Development, Skills for Life, Vocational Skills and Health, Leisure and Community. There are more than 3 targets in each section;
3) Therapy targets and guidance are included at the front of the folders, so that they are easily accessible, using the same format as the other targets;
4) Tutors set Specific Learning Objectives at each session that allow for small steps towards the broader targets;
5) A formative comment is made on this sheet, which is kept in the folder, allowing Tutors to easily review on-going progress; and
6) Learner background information provided on a separate sheet, to include any information regarding learning styles or strategies.

The new documents are attached.

## Key observation regarding managing change and responsiveness to Tutors' feedback

Crucial to the successful change in the system was Tutors' confidence in speaking to managers about their problems and management's willingness to listen and take on board these comments. Secondly Tutors' views were sought throughout the process. The idea of a folder and the final paperwork was suggested by one of the Senior Curriculum Tutors, not management.

There were two sets of staff training during which the new paperwork and processes were shared with the Independence Tutors. During these sessions, Tutors were able to feedback on their initial thoughts and several suggestions were carried forward into the final system. For instance, changing boxes to prompt Tutors to sign as well as date their formative comments.

**Individual Development Plan Front Sheet**

**Learner's Name:**      **Key Tutor:**

**Period:**     Oct 2010 to Jan 2011      **Date**: 25/10/2010

| No. | Independent Living Skills |
|---|---|
| 1. | Complete all tasks in home management to an acceptable standard. |
| 2. | Store food appropriately (closing cupboard doors and paying attention to use-by dates and quantities). |
| No. | Personal Development |
| 3. | Ask for help from staff when needed. |
| 4. | Focus on the task in hand. |
| 5. | Listen to staff/ learners and recognise other people's personal space. |
| No. | Skills for Life |
| 6. | Use ICT to search for, select and use information |
| 7. | Use written words and phrases to record or present information |
| 8. | To recognise the value of notes and coins. |
| No. | Vocational Skills |
| 9. | To work with others. |
| 10. | To follow instructions to complete task |
| No. | Community/Leisure/Health |
| 11. | Make a positive choice about how he occupies his free time (i.e. not the computer all the time). |

**St Elizabeth's College Learner Individual Target Sheet**

Name:                                    Date:  November 2010                    IDP No 1

| Curriculum Strand: Independent Living Skills |
| --- |

| Target:    To complete tasks in my morning routine (e.g. getting dressed, brushing hair etc.) |
| --- |

| Specific Learning Objective | Formative Comments | Date/Sign |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**St Elizabeth's College**

**Individual Development Plan**

**Information Sheet**

| Learner: | Date of Birth: | Address:<br><br>Jubilee House |
|---|---|---|
| IDP Number: 1 | Period From:<br><br>October 2010 | Period To:<br><br>January 2011 |
| Key Tutor: | Senior Tutor: | |

**Long Term Goal:** To take a full part in the college programme and develop the skills and behaviours for future, adult-life.

**Pen Portrait:**

… is warm, confident and friendly and enjoys a range of leisure activities including bowling, cinema, swimming, football, music, dancing and parties. She has had a successful work placement at a local shop and enjoys horticulture and beauty.

… has significant needs, particularly in the area of communication. In general she is able to participate fully in learning activities, but at times she becomes frustrated.

… is an enthusiastic communicator even though she has a limited ability to "speak". She uses a range of strategies to communicate with others including actions, Makaton signing and finger spelling.

The Speech and Language Therapist reports that … is reliant on context and visual clues to interact with others, take part in discussions and follow instructions.

**Key Assessment information: (eg Skills for Life Levels, Learning Styles, Additional Support Needs)**

.. has severe learning difficulties, communication difficulties, speech impairment, negative behaviours, dysplastic right kidney.

If she is under pressure she will find it harder and will put her head down and hide her eyes at times.  In addition … requires continuing support to develop her social skills as she can greet strangers inappropriately.

| Brief programme details | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Day** | **Morning** | **Afternoon** |
| **Mon** | Cultural Studies Rm 1 | Media Studies Rm 1 |
| **Tue** | Drama | Sports and Games |
| **Wed** | Cultural Studies Rm 1 | Home management |
| **Thur** | Media studies | Adventure Service Challenge – Rm 3 |
| **Fri** | Shopping | Jewellery |

| Therapy | Day | Time |
|---|---|---|
| Speech & Language | Thursday | 3p.m. |
| Multi-sensory | | |
| Social & Personal Relationships | Wednesday | 10.30 to 11a.m. |
| Occupational | | |
| Psychology | | |
| Physiotherapy | | |

| Social Enterprises | Day | Time |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ash Vale | | |
| Orchard Project | | |
| Drawing Room | | |
| Jewellery | Friday | p.m. |
| Owl | | |

| Additional relevant information |
| --- |
| |

## Case Study 3

### HMP Wayland/A4e

**Organisation: HMP Wayland/A4e**

HMP Wayland decided to develop training so that offenders could become learning support assistants. They felt this would both enhance their own teaching and learning and also open up employment opportunities for offenders on release.

The A4e team marketed the course to prisoners, discovered there was interest, registered with the awarding body, utilised qualified teaching staff's specialisms and designed resources to meet the curriculums requirements whilst tailoring it for the environment.

This course has proved very successful in offering a 'life changing' programme for many prisoners. Students who have undertaken this course have all played their part in the Skills for Life Strategy in a variety of ways: by developing their own skills to support their peers within the classroom, workshop or through their contribution to the Toe By Toe[1] scheme. Through the gate it will equip them with the skills to confidently support their children right through to GCSEs and Further Education, show future employers that they have developed skills in guidance, leading, presenting and supporting their colleagues in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT. The ALS qualification also adds to their skills set a wide range of soft skills such as empathy to work with vulnerable learners/adults, working in a front line role, mentoring, identifying learner's needs and appropriate behaviour in such a role.

Feedback from students, both candidates of the ALS and those receiving support through peer mentoring, has been excellent. The learners are supported more in Literacy, Numeracy and ICT by peers they feel comfortable with, can relate to and who have a lot of empathy towards them. The peer mentors have a good qualification that has opened progression routes, developed soft and hard skills as well as building on their own Literacy, Numeracy and ICT ability. The ALS course has also opened a progression route through to the PTLLS level 3 or 4 qualification and we hope to include the City & Guilds level 3 Advice and Guidance qualification to that progression route.

Many of the students who have achieved the ALS certificate undertake other relevant courses to provide them with the appropriate qualification and skills to use when they leave prison and wish to work with ex-criminals, alcoholics,

---

[1] Toe by Toe is a well-used reading programme specifically for learners with specific learning difficulties. Further information can be found at http://www.toe-by-toe.co.uk/

offenders, young offenders, minority groups or drug users such as IT and Business enterprise.

The programme has benefitted from  ongoing support from senior management both in the prisons service and in education. Those involved in it feel that, so long as the qualifications remain in place, it is sustainable, and would certainly recommend it to other providers in a similar situation.

## Case Study 4

### Sense Specialist College (Dereham Resource Centre)

**What change have you made or plan to make?**

We have delivered 6 sessions (out of 10) of the C&Gs 7320 Award in Preparing to Support Learning – level 3 to 9 LSAs

**What made you see that this change was needed?**

- CPD for our LSAs.

- For the LSAs to realise how important their role is.

- To give them an industry standard qualification plus many other advantages.

**How did you go about instigating the change?**

- Delivered presentation to Senior management, gained their commitment.

- LSA commitment.

- Designed course.

- Teacher commitment.

Were there any particular difficulties/barriers, or were there people who felt threatened by the change, and how did you seek to overcome these?

This took a year from the original discussions about the course to the first session being delivered. There were challenges all the time – getting people on board with the idea and fully committed was the biggest problem. Training costs were an issue but LSAs doing the course with no payment and in their free time.

**What differences has the change made?**

At the moment too early to tell – but the LSA group have bonded and work well as a team – they have learnt to reflect so this in itself will improve their LSA practice

**How sustainable do you feel it is?**

Long term – this course will be used throughout the college in different resource centres so will improve and impact on all LSAs. We will make it a prerequisite of LSA employment that they complete this course once they have completed their probation period.

**What specifically supported you in bringing about this change? e.g. any particular training or guidance document; support of senior management or colleagues; who were your allies etc.**

Had designed and delivered the course that is now used at Wayland Prison to train prisoners to be peer supporters in the classroom so knew the value of the course but this is the new award and I needed to change the course for a different group of LSAs. I developed the course for the specialist college I now work in with a colleague.

**Any advice you would give to others planning a similar change in their organisation?**

It is a really worthwhile course and a definite advantage is the LSA team will "bond" – work well together and as part of the course need to reflect on their supporting role in combination with learning objectives covered in the course.

It can be delivered in a "fun" way but can be difficult for LSAs who have not studied themselves for a while.  A lot of course material to be covered in a short time – but will give the LSAs knowledge to go with the vast skills they need to work in our specialist area.

**Anything else you wish to add?**

As part of the workshops we attended – we had said that we were going to define the role of the LSA before, during and after the sessions – we will do this in the last session to bring the course to a conclusion.

## Annex 7: Resources

The 40-50 practitioners we worked with on this study on the whole felt that the potential to share expertise and examples of good practice in managing change in the area of learning support were more valuable than any externally produced resources. However, there are two externally produced documents which we want to highlight as being useful aids in helping teams to analyse how change occurs and what they can do to further it.

### Resource One

This comes from **The Good Practice Guide: A Tool for Managers and TAs/HLTAs (2009)** by Maggie Balshaw, and published by Pearson Publishing. It enables Learning Support teams to better understand the nature of organisational change and to carry out an activity which enables them to focus on the process of change within their organisation.

It includes:

- **A Handout**: containing information drawn from Special Needs in the Classroom and Education Resource Pack (UNESCO 1991). The handout gives a brief introduction on how to understand the nature of change, the barriers to making change happen and the conditions necessary for the successful process of change;

- An activity **Guidance leaflet**: describing how to carry out an activity which enables participants to examine a particular change which has taken place in their organisation – who proposed it; what its intention was; what actually happened;

- A set of **powerpoints** to accompany the activity; and

- A **template** for participants to record their finding.

Further details about The Good Practice Guide can be found at http://www.pearsonpublishing.co.uk/education/search/search.py?search=Good+practice+guide

### Resource Two

**Getting on Brilliantly: Recipes for managing successful meetings**, Annette Zera and Susan Murray.

The full document can be downloaded from the Getting on Brilliantly website – www.gettingonbrilliantly.co.uk

This handbook is quite literally a recipe book for people organising meetings in a post school education context. The two authors are very experienced

adult educators – Annette Zera was for many years principal of Tower Hamlets College in London while Susan Murray has worked in a range of training situations with teachers.

The Introduction states that the book is based on the premise that most people come to work caring deeply about what they do and willing to take responsibility for what happens. The authors believe that when people 'are able to express their passion for their work, are encouraged to reflect, plan and work together on issues that matter, whatever their job or status, radical improvements follow'. The book then continues with numerous creative examples of ways in which meetings can be organised so that this passion and commitment will be best expressed, heard and acted upon.

The notion of how to create positive changes permeates the book. Throughout the 'recipes' there are suggestions as to how groups can look at where they are, where they want to go and how to get there. Meeting topics include how to enable participants to think imaginatively about possible changes and also how to prioritise ideas, plan for action and overcome barriers.

Annette Zera now works as a trainer and facilitator. A small number of staff we worked with had attended training sessions organised by her based on 'Getting on Brilliantly' and had found them extremely helpful.

**Resource Three**

**Good Practice Guide – Leading from the Middle**, published by LSN – www.LSNeducation.org.uk  This report was written to support the roll out of functional skills in further education. However, it contains useful messages for those working in any cross college middle management role. It is particularly good on analysing what are some of the skills needed by these managers and on defining distinctions between concepts of 'management' and 'leadership'.