Enhancement of Learning Support (ELS) Implementation programme

Evaluation Report

Alison O'Brien

Project Director

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Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to Ann Ruthven and Viv Berkeley from LSIS, and to Alison Boulton, Chief Executive of Natspec, for their support throughout the project. We are grateful to all the providers and practitioners who have contributed their time and experiences to this project with so much enthusiasm and to the lead college project teams (Annex 1) and specialist advisers (Annex 2) who have harnessed the power of those contributions to produce these resources and reports. We are thankful to the Steering committee (Annex 3), who have guided the process and in particular to both the learner reference group (Annex 4), and the learning support assistant reference group (Annex 5), who have helped ensure that what we have produced has practical relevance and will add value. I would also like to recognise the contribution of Lifelong Learning UK, Pearson Publishing for their input into the profiling tool, and also JISC TechDis, who have not only provided support to Yorkshire and Humberside and the West Midlands, but have contributed to a number of regional events and significantly raised awareness of, and enthusiasm for, the use of technology to support learning.

Alison O'Brien
Project Director

On behalf of the project team (Annex 6)

Contents

Executive Summary

Introduction to the Enhancement of Learning Support (ELS) project

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. This involved talking to practitioners and learners and scoping existing work and expertise in order to make recommendations for future training and development activities. The research team reported in April 2010, producing a series of reports available from the ELS section of the Excellence Gateway, including a literature review[1], and an overall report "Findings and recommendations"[2]. Drawing on all the initial research findings, the overall report identified a series of recommendations (See Annex 7), which were accepted by LSIS and used to form the basis of a national development programme.

The development programme has been jointly undertaken by Natspec and the Association of Colleges (AoC), between September 2010 and March 2011, working with twenty lead colleges supported (Annex 1) by ten specialist advisers (Annex 2). 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.

To facilitate close involvement of both learners and learning support staff the methodology was designed to include a reference group for both learners (Annex 4) and LSAs (Annex 5) both of whom have been involved in reviewing resources and approaches across all aspects of the project management and delivery.

Outputs from phase 2 of the project

Involving learners in shaping their own support – North West and South West regions: Learners have very clear views about what constitutes effective support, and how they want to be supported. These projects developed and tested resources and approaches aimed at involving learners in shaping their own support.

Organisational Audit Tool – London region: An organisational audit tool was produced, designed to enable providers to evaluate their provision against seven key indicators, mapped to the National Occupational Standards and also the Common Inspection Framework.

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[1] Faraday, S. (2010 *Enhancement of Learning Support Literature Review* Natspec

[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

Change Management – East of England region: Bringing about organisational development requires change, and this project has considered effective approaches to change, and used case studies to exemplify these.

Using technology to promote learning and independence - Yorkshire and Humberside with the support of JISC TechDis: This project explored and exemplified simple technology, which well applied, can be truly life enhancing and hugely increase the learner's capacity to access learning independently.

An online individual profiling tool - South East Region: This tool enables LSAs to assess their skills and development needs in relation to the National Occupational Standards. Best undertaken in a facilitated group, the tool provides both individual reports and a summative analysis of common areas for development.

Guidance and protocols to support alternative approaches to CPD - West Midlands Region: LSAs value alternative approaches to CPD and this region has produced "how to" guidance on: shadowing; mentoring; buddying and "learn and share," along with practical and amendable resources and exemplars.

Creative approaches to maximising independence - North East region: This project aimed at 'un-sticking the Velcro' - challenging the notion that effective support is one to one support. It explored the impact of organisational structures and systems on learners and learning support and developed approaches and case studies to help providers work more creatively with learners to promote independence.

Involving LSAs in improvement: a collaborative approach to organisational development - East Midlands region: This project has developed an approach to involving LSAs in organisational development, through learner shadowing and the use of anonymous questionnaires to identify shared training needs.

A local training network - Doncaster College for the Deaf: The project, reporting in June 2011, established a cross sector local learning partnership which brings together staff to share training and develop important local networks. It will offer recommendations and guidance for other areas to establish similar networks.

Factors which contribute to the effective management and deployment of learning support assistants across organisations and in the classroom - West of England College: This report draws on research and practitioners experience to describe and exemplify five key characteristics of effective practice and 34 contributory factors.

Online Analytical Processing (OLAP) –the implications for accurate workforce data - Glynn Owen: This report addresses the lack of access to accurate data on the LSA workforce, explores the current OLAP and considers the implications of existing data for ensuring accurate workforce data.

A long and winding path: LSAs career structure and progression pathways - Sally Faraday: This report explores the experiences of LSAs and suggests possible career structures and progression pathways, taking account of different routes and ambitions.

A Review of the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) specifications for teachers to ensure that they include working with support staff - Helen Deane: This report explores existing ITT and CPD specifications to review the extent to which they include working with support staff and makes recommendations for future developments.

What went well?

- **Partnership working:** The project has developed strong and effective working relationships with key partners, including LSIS, JISC TechDis, Lifelong Learning UK and Pearson Publishing. The lead colleges have worked well together, creating relationships which will extend well beyond the life of the project, and the regional networks will continue to provide an effective mechanism for sharing practice and experience.

- **Methodology:** The approach to delivery, using lead colleges within regions to research, develop and pilot resources, was highly effective. The input by specialist support was invaluable in supporting lead colleges and contributing to the production of final resources of a publishable quality.

- **Conferences:** The conferences were well attended, positively received and provided an excellent platform for raising awareness of the ELS resources. The "learner panel", which provided delegates with the opportunity to hear learners' views of their experiences of support, were particularly well received.

- **Steering Groups:** The project was both well supported and well directed by three groups; the steering group, which provided guidance at a strategic level and the learner and LSA reference groups which provided invaluable feedback on developing resources and the overall approach taken by the project.

- **Commitment to the project by lead colleges:** The project presented significant challenges to lead colleges in terms of timescales, level of demand and outputs, all at a time of wider delivery challenges. Lead colleges have embraced these with enthusiasm. The demands on managers and practitioners have been enormous, and many of those involved have put in significant time and effort, well above that which might be reasonably expected, in order to secure positive outcomes.

- **Communication.** The project has established effective lines of communication at all levels, including the website, which have contributed enormously to the overall success of the ELS implementation programme.

What went less well?

- **On line registration**. Although in principal this was a good idea, at both regional and conference event level, it created a dislocation between those managing the system and those planning and delivering the event which at times resulted in poor communication with delegates.

- **Attendance at regional events.** Despite the best efforts of regional and national project teams, although we recruited sufficient numbers to meet our target of 900 delegates, our actual numbers fell somewhat short at 763. Some events were hampered by very poor weather, but the current climate of cuts appears to also have had an impact, with a number of organisations reporting that they were struggling to release staff.

What we would do differently next time?

- Change the registration process.

- Allow greater flexibility within the criteria for sector involvement.

- Consider how to secure access to written resources to support conferences and events.

Overall summary

The Enhancement of Learning Support (ELS) implementation programme has been a large and complex piece of work, undertaken in very challenging timescales, and ultimately very successful.

- The sector has grasped the opportunity to be involved in developing resources and practice with enthusiasm.

- 18 regional events and 2 conferences have been successfully delivered, with high levels of satisfaction rates from participants.

- All outputs have been delivered on time and to a high standard.

- Although it is too early to measure the impact of the work, the emerging and anecdotal impact data is very positive.

- LSAs have, as planned, been actively involved in the project, with nearly half the delegates attending regional events being LSAs. The LSA reference group has been very effective in reviewing resources and steering the project.

- Anecdotal evidence suggests that the project has been successful in raising the status of LSAs and enhancing self-confidence. The contribution of JISC TechDis, along with the focus on the use of technology undertaken within the Yorkshire and Humberside region, has clearly been effective in raising awareness of and enthusiasm for the use of enabling technology across the sector.

- Learners have been actively involved in the project and through the learner reference group had the opportunity to influence developments and review resources. Those learners involved in the both the learner reference group and the conferences have reported that they found the experience valuable. Their contribution was powerful and feedback form conference delegates indicates that it has caused many practitioners to reflect on existing practice and consider how they could further include learners in shaping their own support.

- Feedback from the regions and the conferences clearly demonstrate that practitioners value the resources that have been produced and are keen to use them.

The project team is delighted with both the enthusiasm with which those involved have embraced the project and the quality of the outputs and very much hope that the final resources will contribute positively to improving outcomes for leaners and enhancing learning support across the sector.

Introduction to the project

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. This involved talking to practitioners and learners and scoping existing work and expertise in order to make recommendations for future training and development activities. The research team reported in April 2010, producing a series of reports, including a literature review[3], and an overall report "Findings and recommendations"[4].

Drawing on all the initial research findings, the overall report identified a series of recommendations (See Annex 7), which were accepted by LSIS and used to form the basis of a national development programme.

The development programme, has been jointly undertaken by Natspec and the Association of Colleges (AoC), between September 2010 and March 2011, working with twenty lead colleges supported (Annex 1) by ten specialist advisers (Annex 2). It aims to improve the quality of learning support for learners with additional needs across the learning and skills sector and to promote and enhance the important work of learning support staff.

Methodology

The project team (see Annex 6) were keen to draw on the views and experiences of practitioners across the sector. Accordingly, the methodology adopted a distributed participatory design and used action research to involve practitioners from the sector directly in identifying their own solutions. This approach supports the direct participation of users (LSAs) and other stakeholders (learners, managers, tutors) in the analysis and design work and aims to facilitate understanding between the different design teams by giving them the opportunity to get involved directly in the development activities. The approach was designed specifically to extract the insight, information and knowledge that are embedded in the practitioner community and use it to shape the outputs so that they have value to the end users.

As identified in the initial research undertaken for the ELS project (Annex 8), the views of learning support staff are woefully underrepresented, in the literature and both LSAs and their managers identified a lack of relevant and appropriate training and development materials. The methodology adopted has involved the direct involvement of practitioners, in the development of materials and resources designed to support them in their work. As a result, we are confident that the outcomes have practical

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[3] Faraday, S. (2010) *Enhancement of Learning Support Literature Review* Natspec

[4] 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

application, have achieved "buy in" from stakeholders and will contribute to sustainability in the longer term.

The diagram below summarises how the different elements interact:
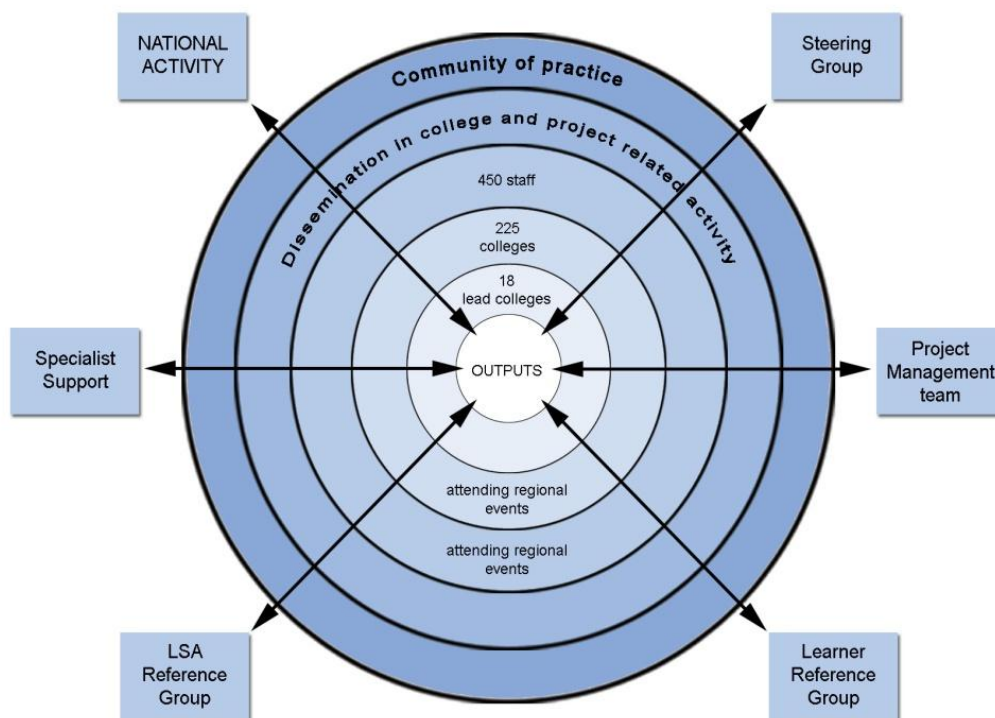
The project team developed an innovative method of facilitating sector led development. A consortium of 20 colleges was created, supported by Natspec and AoC working in partnership with a project team of specialists. Eighteen colleges worked regionally; a lead Independent Specialist College (ISC) and Further Education (FE) College in each region, with relevant expertise and skills working in partnership to deliver a significant proportion of the outcomes, using the regional network events as a cornerstone for gathering evidence, testing ideas, generating, piloting and evaluating resources. The remaining outputs were commissioned through the central project management team and delivered by a team of specialists and by the direct involvement of two further colleges. West of England College has produced a report on effective practice in managing learning support staff and Doncaster College for the Deaf has worked in partnership with Doncaster local authority to develop a locally based network to coordinate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities.

The overall project methodology is illustrated below;

Project Methodology Overview

LSA Reference Group ⟷ Project Steering Group ⟷ Learner Reference Group

Project Direction & Management

**9 Regional Strands
18 Colleges in 9 Regions**

National / Cross Regional Outputs

- -

2 Lead Colleges in every region ⟵ Cross Regional Coordination → Specialist Support and Two Colleges

Regional Event 1

Regional Development

Regional Event 2

Editing and Review

Outputs

A range of resources to support organisations in involving learners in identifying their own support needs

An organisational audit tool.

A profiling tool

A report on the potential of technology for further promoting independence

Alternative CPD approaches such as shadowing, buddying and mentoring

Review training and CPD for managers of LSAs to include organisational development and managing change.

⟷ Specialist Quality Assurance ⟷

Outputs

A web based portal

Information about existing qualifications on portal

A virtual centre of specialist expertise

Report on systems to provide and maintain workforce data.

Report synergy and crossover with other projects in the sector

Review Initial Teacher Training and CPD specifications for teachers

Report effective practice in managing learning support staff

A proposed career structure and progression pathways for LSAs in lifelong learning

Two National Conferences to Showcase and Disseminate

FINAL DELIVERY

To facilitate close involvement of both learners and learning support staff, the methodology was designed to include a reference group for both learners and LSAs both of whom have been involved in reviewing resources and approaches across all aspects of the project management and delivery.

Learner Reference Group

As the North West and South West were concentring on involving learners in shaping their own support, the project team asked these two regions to establish learner reference groups, with a remit not only to comment on developing resources within their own regions, but where appropriate to contribute to wider project developments.

The South West Learner reference group consisted of nine learners ranging in both support needs and abilities, as the table below shows.

Learner Reference Group	
Names **Course**	**Impairment**
Level 1 Hospitality	ASC
Level 2 Computing	ASC
Fsc Computing	ASC
BTEC National Music Technology	ASC
Level 2 Sport	ADHD
Prep for Work and Life	MLD/MH
Prep for Work and Life	ASC
Prep for Work and Life	MLD
Level 1 ICT	VI

ASC- Autistic spectrum condition; **MLD**-Moderate Learning difficulties
VI- Visual impairment; **MH**- Mental health; **ADHD**- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

The SW learner reference group met in early November 2010 and discussed the outline of the project and what approaches they would like the project to focus on. They asked a series of questions about how they were involved in making decisions about their own support. Five key questions were established which ultimately became the basis for the approaches used.

- How can I comment on the support I receive?

- How can I review my Support?

- How can I tell my support worker what's working and what isn't?

- How do I access and contribute to the information on MIS?

- How do I ensure my support arrangements meet my future needs?

The South West report summarises how these approaches were then developed and the ways in which the learner reference group was involved in piloting and reviewing them.

In the North West, the Learner Reference Group again consisted of nine learners ranging in ability from pre-entry level to level 3, and including learners with a range of learning difficulties and or/disabilities (Annex 9) The group met twice during the life of the project. At the first meeting a workshop was held to gather their views on support in order to inform the approach to the project. The questions explored include the following:

a. How do you tell an LSA you want to be more independent?

b. How are you involved in planning and managing your support?

c. What do you think about the support that you get?

d. How can we gather your views about support?

e. What types of support resources do you like using?

f. How can we gather your feedback for this project?

g. How do you feel about being part of this project?

At the second Learner Reference Group Meeting, learners were invited to provide feedback on their evaluations of five support resources. The NW report summarises their detailed and useful evaluation, which was invaluable in making amendments to the final resources and also in providing guidance to support their use.

In addition to contributing to resource development in their own regions, and through that helping to steer developments across the project, the learner reference groups

played a central role in the national conferences. Four learners attended the North conference and five attended the South. These learners provided a "panel" of experts, talking eloquently and honestly about their experiences of support, their views about what works well and what is less effective and the enabling potential of technology. They also answered questions about their involvement in the project. Evaluations from both events indicate that delegates were both impressed and inspired by their contribution, with one delegate commenting;

> *"I have never been to anything like this before. It is both very powerful and inspiring listening to you talking about your experiences, and it makes me recognise that we need to completely review the way we organise and review our learning support."*

It is fair to say that perhaps the most moving and powerful input at the South conference was provided by a young woman with autism, who had written a contribution she wanted to share with those present. It is re-printed here with her permission:

> *'I feel very honoured at being invited to London to speak at this National Conference. It makes me very happy to feel useful and able to contribute something on a personal level.*
>
> *Children and young people with learning difficulties often feel very sad and isolated. Too many people regard them as "dumb" and don't want to listen to what they have to say.*
>
> *Sometimes I have felt so lonely that the pain has been unbearable.*
>
> *I have been in crowded rooms but no-one has spoken to me.*
>
> *I had no friends in mainstream school and I was always bullied for being different.*
>
> *Only now, late in my education, have I found friends. I can talk to other young people with similar problems and we can relate to each other.*
>
> *I also have fabulous tutors and teachers who are patient with me and listen to me.*
>
> *For the first time in many years I feel happy and of some worth to others.*
>
> *Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.'*

Learning Support Assistants Reference Group

The initial research had identified the importance of involving LSAs in any developments to support their training and professional development. It had shown that LSAs have clear views both about their training and development needs and also about the most effective ways to support and work with them. The summary report "Findings and Recommendations" recognised the importance of securing ownership of all aspects of

development by LSAs, noting that "buy in" could only be secured if developments reflect, and are responsive to, their needs. The project management team therefore established a learning support staff reference group to act as an advisory group throughout the life of the project. A key role was to ensure that the developing outputs have practical relevance and will add value to practitioners.

Each of the lead colleges was invited to identify an LSA to represent the LSA voice at the learner reference group. The purpose was to advise both the project steering group and the project management team, and to contribute to reviewing the project work at key stages. They will also be asked to consider how such a body might be maintained and sustained once the project is complete, and contribute to future recommendations about the continued involvement of learning support staff in on-going development.

The geographical spread presented some challenges, but it was felt that at least one face to face meeting would be important to set the context. Fourteen names were put forward for the group, but unfortunately, very poor weather on the day of the meeting affected numbers and only four made it. Nonetheless it was very productive, with wide-ranging discussion covering Career pathways and progressions routes, the use of technology, alternative approaches to CPD and working in partnership. As a result of the meeting, three of those present were interviewed for the Career progression route report and all were sent copies of the guidance and protocols for alternative approaches to CPD to review. Despite the low attendance the meeting was felt to be so valuable, that a second meeting was arranged for Thursday 8th January 2011. This meeting, attended by 9 LSA representatives, focussed on impact, sustainability and the website, as well as providing an update on regional activity. There was real enthusiasm for both the project and the outcomes and, although it is still too early to measure over time, the following impacts were identified:

- Increased reflection on own development;

- Has raised the status of LSAs in own organisation and regionally;

- Created on-going relationships within regions which will be beneficial;

- The Learner reference group have been useful for learners, who have benefitted from meeting learners with different types of needs and skills;

- It has been useful to meet and talk to people from other sectors; and

- *"It is good to know there are other people up and down the country who care what we are doing and/or do similar roles".*

Feedback from the LSA reference group was very positive. All those participating reported that they had both enjoyed, and found it useful. When asked if they felt there was value in having such a group to steer developments for LSAs in the future, all agreed there was.

Regional Events

A key element of the regional activity involved organising two regional network meetings in each of the nine regions, each with a target of 50 participants. The first of these took place in the early phase of the project (typically November 2010) and the second in the later phase (typically February 2011). In keeping with the distributed participation approach, participants were asked to attend these events with the understanding that it involved a development activity, and there were therefore some key expectations. In order to ensure the involvement of LSAs, providers were asked to commit to sending two delegates to each event (ideally the same people at each), one of whom should be a member of learning support staff. There was an expectation that participants, with their provider's permission would be prepared to share both examples of effective practice and areas for development, related to the strand theme. Participants were asked to undertake some form of development activity or research between the two events, such as undertaking a pilot or critically evaluating a resource, and to report back on their experiences.

The events were seen as a key opportunity to promote regional networking and so all participants were invited to share their contact details in order to facilitate the development of a community of practice which is intended to survive beyond the life of the project. In addition to taking part in the regional strand development work, participants were kept informed of developments in the wider regional activity and were invited to contribute to them by joining communities of practice via the project website.

In addition to running 18 regional events, the project also hosted two national conferences, one in the North and one in the South, to raise awareness of the ELS project and celebrate and share the outputs.

The resources available to the sector

Involving learners in shaping their own support: The North West and the South West regions

The initial research, perhaps not surprisingly, identified that learners have very clear views about what constitutes effective support, and also about how they would like to be supported. As a result of this initial work, two of the regions have developed resources and approaches aimed at involving learners in shaping their own support.

In the North West, David Lewis College and Wirral Metropolitan College worked together to identify the skills and strategies already being employed by colleges to listen to learners and then to find ways to apply these approaches to learning support and share them more widely. At the first regional event, a range of resources and approaches were shared and as a result, 5 were then selected to be further tested and developed, with participant agreement to evaluate and feedback at the second regional network event.

These are:

1. Accessible Risk Assessment;

2. Catching Confidence;

3. British Sign Language Glossary;

4. Working Styles Analysis; and

5. Edu Apps – JISC resources.

In the South West, Weston College and National Star have explored 5 approaches to involving learners in shaping their support, through 5 learner centred questions. These were:

1. How can I comment on the support I receive?

2. How can I review my support?

3. How can I tell my support worker what's working and what isn't?

4. How do I access and contribute to the information the college hold about me and my support?

5. How do I ensure my support arrangements meet my future needs?

The final report exemplifies how colleges within the region have addressed these questions, and includes case studies and examples of practice, such as a transition booklet, that will enable providers to reflect on how they too might change practice to secure greater involvement of learners in defining their own support.

Organisational Audit Tool: London

The initial research generated a lot of information about good practice and it was felt that this could be collated and used to enable organisations to self-assess their current practice. Carshalton College has been working in partnership with Orchard Hill to produce an audit or self-assessment tool designed to enable providers to evaluate their provision against seven key indicators, mapped to the National Occupational Standards and also the Common Inspection Framework.

Moving with the times - an exploration of how learning support practitioners can be proactive managers of change: East of England

The initial research identified that many managers of LSAs felt that they were often regarded as 'co-ordinators' rather than managers of change and reported they had received little or no training to support them in that role. The training they had received typically focussed on issues of compliance such as inspection, funding, health and safety and so on, rather than on management skills. Bringing about organisational development requires change, and Oakland's College and St Elisabeth's college has been working with practitioners across the region to consider effective approaches to change. Their report provides some useful resources to support the change process

and provides some interesting case studies exemplifying how providers has successfully made changes to support improvement.

Using the ordinary to create the extraordinary - The potential of technology for further promoting independence and supporting: Yorkshire and Humberside with the support of JISC TechDis

The provision of simple technology, well applied can be truly life enhancing and hugely increase the learner's capacity to access learning independently. The project activity, which has been led by Henshaws College and Sheffield College with the support of JISCTechdis and the Yorkshire & Humber Regional Support Centre, explores and exemplifies effective practice in the use of technology to support learning and promote independence and makes recommendations for future activities and developments to ensure that the use of technology is maximised and promoted across the sector. The report exemplifies approaches which demonstrate just how powerful enabling technology can be, and will also support providers to adopt similar approaches in their own organisations.

An online profiling tool: South East Region

The initial research identified the existence of an on line profiling tool for teaching assistants which was widely used in schools, and felt that a similar tool would have value for LSAs working in the lifelong learning sector. The resulting tool, now called the "Professional Development Profile" has been produced by Treloars College and Abingdon and Witney College working in partnership with Pearson Publishing, which has extensive experience of producing and using online profiling tools in the education sector. The purpose of the tool is to enable learning support assistants to self-evaluate their skills, knowledge and understanding against the National Occupational Standards and a range of other measures. It is best undertaken as part of a facilitated group, and once completed provides not only an individual report, but also a summative analysis of responses which will enable providers to identify common areas of development.

Guidance and Protocols to Support Alternative Approaches to CPD: West Midlands Region

The initial research revealed that much of the training for both LSAS and their managers typically focuses on compliance, with significantly less aimed at supporting practitioners with the real job- of supporting learners and promoting independence. LSAs identified that they value alternative approaches to CPD, such as shadowing, mentoring and buddying. Often, however, these only happen at induction, or are not available for LSAs. Walford and North Shropshire College has worked with Derwen College and practitioners from across the region to produce "how to" guidance for shadowing, mentoring, buddying, and "Learn and share" along with some practical and amendable resources and exemplars.

"Unpicking the velcro" - creative approaches to maximising independence: The North East

The North East Regional project work was led by Northern Counties College and City of Sunderland College, and has explored the impact of organisational structures and systems on learners and learning support. It has developed a range of approaches and case studies to help providers work more creatively with learners to promote independence. It addresses the issue of "unsticking the Velcro" that is, challenging the notion that effective support is always about one to one direct contact with an individual. The report provides a series of case studies exploring ways in which providers and practitioners involved in the project activity have adjusted their approaches to increase learner independence.

A collaborative approach to organisational development - involving learning support assistants in improvement: The East Midlands

The initial research indicated that training and development activities for learning support staff are most effective when they are directly to the identified needs of LSAs – i.e. provide the training LSAs themselves say they need. It also identified the value of joint training for tutors and LSAs. Portland College and New College Nottingham have worked together to develop a model and associated resources, tested in participating colleges, that promotes a whole organisation approach to improvement, resulting in a more effective approach to continuous professional development (CPD). It involves learner shadowing and the use of anonymous questionnaires to support the identification of shared training needs. This model, adapted from the work undertaken with Coventry Adult Learning Service and outlined in the Enhancement of Learning Support report (2010)[5], promotes the involvement of all staff in identifying barriers to effective working and devising solutions to address them.

A local Training Network: Doncaster College for the deaf

The initial research revealed that many organisations find it very difficult to release LSAs for training and development purposes. It was clear that these activities need to be as local as possible. As part of the project activity, a cross sector local learning partnership has been established which brings together staff to share training and development and develop important local networks. This will report in June 2011 and produce recommendations and guidance to support other areas to establish similar networks.

Factors which contribute to the effective management and deployment of learning support assistants across organisations and in the classroom: West of England

This report draws on research and practitioners' experience to exemplify the key factors which support the role and impact of learning support staff. It identifies five key

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[5] O'Brien A., O'Brien, K. (2010) '*The Enhancement of Learning Support The training and development needs of learning support assistants. Key findings and recommendations.*' Natspec

characteristics of effective practice and 34 'factors' that contribute to these characteristics. These factors offer clear statements for guidance in the development of policies, procedures and practice that can contribute to the improvement of learning support services and the integration of learning support into the effective management of organisations.

Learning Support Assistants – An Analysis of a 15,000 Workforce; Using Data to Understand Workforce Trends and Implications: Glynn Owen

The initial research identified that it was difficult to access accurate data about the learning support staff workforce. This report explores the current Online Analytical Processing system (OLAP) and considers the implications of existing data for ensuring accurate workforce data.

Model Career structure and progression pathways for learning support assistants: Sally Faraday

The initial research revealed that there is currently no established career structure or obvious progression route for learning support assistants. 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. This report explores the experiences of LSAs to suggest possible career structures and progression pathways, taking account of different routes and ambitions and linked to developments within Lifelong Learning UK and as such has the potential to support the professionalisation of the role and the skills of those who wish to progress within it.

A Review of the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) specifications for teachers to ensure that they include working with support staff: Helen Deane

The initial research identified the importance of teachers and LSAs working well together, but also indicated that teachers, particularly those new to the profession, do not always feel confident in knowing how to manage LSAs. This report explores existing ITT and CPD specifications to review the extent to which they include working with support staff and makes recommendations for future developments.

Crossover and synergy

There have been huge changes in the lifelong learning sector in the last twenty years. Increased understanding along with changes in policy have led to the inclusion of a wider range and number of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is often the number and expertise of the LSA offer which will determine an organisation's ability to both include and meet the needs of these learners, particularly more complex needs. As the range of provision has expanded the range of support services and related activity available to support quality has also increased. This report explores how the ELS implementation programme links with other support activities and projects in the sector to ensure coherence and sustainability.

Other outputs

Web based portal for LSAs

The initial research identified that the role of teaching assistants (TAs) in schools was much more clearly defined in the schools sector, than the role of LSAs in the lifelong learning sector. Furthermore, whilst TAs can access information relevant to their role via the Training and Development agency for schools (www.tda.gov.uk/) and/or the National Association for Professional Teaching Assistants (NAPTA –www.napta.org.uk/) there is no single site where LSAs can find information to support them in their work. A key recommendation of the initial research therefore was the development of a web based portal to provide a common location for information and resources for LSAs and their managers. This will be hosted on the Excellence Gateway and will contain all the resources and reports for the ELS implementation programme, as well as details of existing LSA qualifications and a range of resources to provide virtual support and expertise for LSAs working in the sector.

How to get the best from the resources

Although each of the reports and resources will work as a standalone resource, they are arguably more effective when used as a suite of resources deigned to promote effective practice. Although it does not include all the resources, the diagram below demonstrates how this might work. It provides a structure for using the resources to evaluate current practice and areas for development, both as an organisation and at an individual level, plan priorities and also provides practical support with delivery and taking action for improvement.

Using the ELS resources to promote improvement and support development
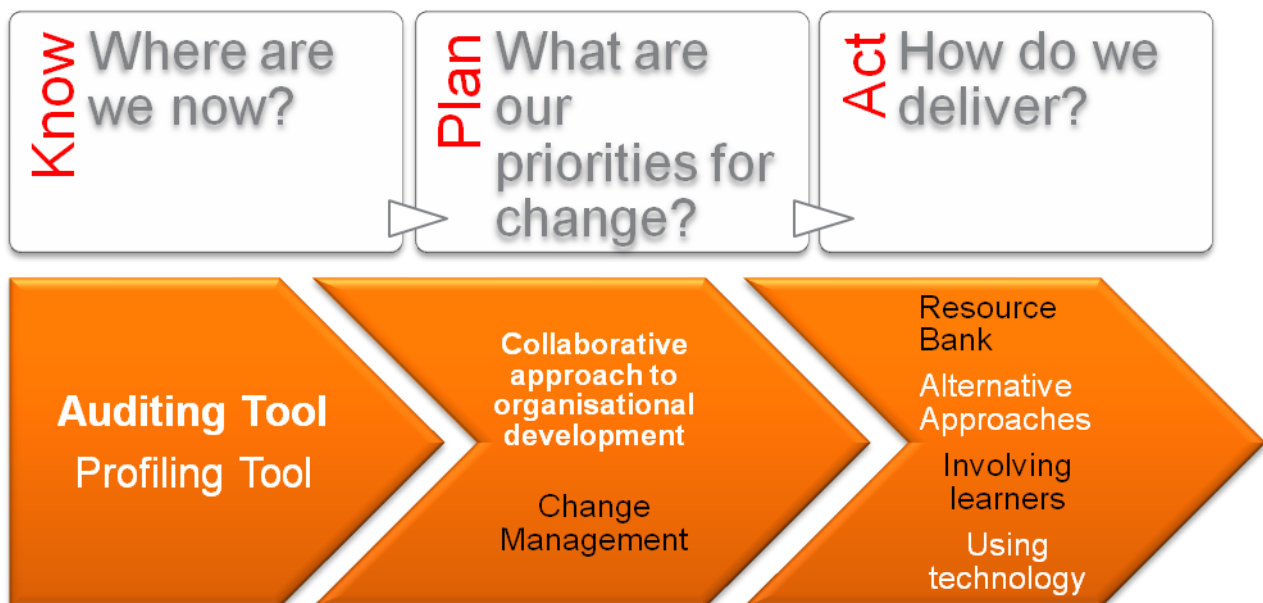
In order to plan appropriate and relevant training, organisations need to address two key issues. They first need to understand the "what and why" of current performance "Where are we now?" The audit tool developed in the London region and the Personal Development Profile (PDP) tools can really add value here. The audit tool provides a series of indicators that allow an organisation to focus in on those activities and behaviours that represent effective practice. The PDP enables LSAs to assess their skills and development needs in relation to the National Occupational Standards (NOS).

The second issue is how to make sure that CPD is relevant. The initial research showed that even where training was available, it often lacked relevance because it was not planned on a detailed understanding of what LSAs said they need to do their job better. Very often the approach to improvement is too top down – organisations sometime push learning solutions at individuals and hope they add value to learners, when what they might usefully do is plan development activities which link more explicitly to the needs of people being supported.

There are two resources which will help organisations to identify priorities for development and implement improvement. The collaborative approach to organisational development will enable LSAs and tutors to work together to identify shared training and development needs, in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in which LSAs and tutors felt free to exchange their personal views and experience. The East of England provides a series of resources and examples which will support organisations in thinking about how to implement change effectively.

Finally, there are a number of resources to support organisation in delivery. These include the report which explores the enabling potential of technology, the resources and report designed to support organisations in involving learners in shaping their own support, the guidance and protocols to support alternative approaches to CPD and the "Unpicking the velcro" report which explores approaches to promoting independence. In addition, the website hosts a range of other useful resources which will provide support, guidance and information to facilitate effective practice.

Conferences

Two national conferences were hosted in March 2011, to raise awareness of the ELS implementation programme and share and celebrate the outputs. These were well attended with 123 attendees in the South and 112 in the North and the feedback for both events was very positive, with all delegates reporting they were satisfied and with the vast majority of these (77% in the South and 75% in the North) indicating that they were very satisfied. The evaluation forms indicate that the highlights were the learner panel and in the North, the principal's perspective. Comments about all the inputs and workshops were positive. We were also fortunate in securing Lesley Dee to speak at the South conference, and Alasdaire Duerden to speak about the Green Paper [6] in the North

[6] Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability
http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/SEND%20Green%20Paper.pdf

conference. The evaluation data from the conferences was overwhelmingly positive about the professionalism of AOC conference staff on the day.

The conference venues, both FE colleges, were generally felt to be very appropriate by delegates - they were, for most people, relatively easy to reach, and the rooms were fit for purpose. A significant number of delegates reported that they did not like having to stand up for lunch at the North conference. In addition, a number of delegates indicated that they would have liked to have access to hand-outs from presentations during the day. The project team was always very keen to involve learners in any way it could and one of the ways this was achieved was by involving learners in preparing delegate packs for the conferences. Learners at David Lewis College, working in the Karten Centre, made up folders and printed out delegate lists, programmes and evaluation forms for both events. They did an excellent job, which included getting them couriered to the venue, and the project team was able to acknowledge their contribution by writing individual letters of thanks which will be used as evidence towards the achievement of their Information Technology qualification.

What went well?

As noted previously, the conferences were very successful. In addition, the following aspects of the project went well.

Partnership working

The whole project methodology has been designed to promote effective partnership working and in that respect it has been very successful. The lead colleges have worked effectively together and through the regional events developed effective regional networks, which will support practice and communication in the future. An agreed outcome of the East of England regional work, for example, was a commitment to continuing meeting beyond the life of the project to share practice and experience.

The project has been jointly undertaken by Natspec and AoC. The partnership has been highly effective in identifying lead colleges with relevant skills and experience in each region to lead on development activities and in securing their commitment to being involved.

With LSIS

The initial research clearly indicated that both the role and value of LSAs has often been undervalued in the past. The investment in the training and development of this important role by LSIS is a significant development and has contributed substantially to both raising the status of the role, and, anecdotal evidence from LSAs would suggest, in raising LSAs' self-confidence. LSAs involved in the project have overwhelmingly reported that having a piece of work centred on their role, and being actively involved in developing has been a very positive experience, for them personally and professionally, and also for the role overall.

In addition to funding the project, the support for the implementation programme has been superb. A representative of LSIS has attended both the conferences and all bar one of the regional events. The latter provided LSIS with the opportunity to raise

awareness about "Shaping My Future", an on line learning resource developed by LSIS to help users develop and plan their careers. As a result of being introduced to this at the regional events, 10 LSAs have used the Shaping my Future online careers programme and received one hour of career coaching, providing very positive feedback about both the resource and the associated coaching. LSAs were also involved in working with LSIS to update the resource, and make it more accessible to a wider audience, an experience which was really positive for those involved.

In addition to attending the steering committee and making positive contribution to the development of the project, including suggestions for conference content, there has been regular contact with the project director to answer queries and make suggestions. Requests for help and support have been promptly responded to and comments and guidance through the project and resulting from the quality assurance process have been invaluable in securing quality in the final outputs.

With Lifelong Learning UK

The project has received excellent support from its key partners. The project director has had monthly teleconferences with a representative from Lifelong Learning UK, who has also spent significant time speaking and emailing leads on three relevant strands of work (the Initial Teacher training report, LSA Career progression and the Data report) She was able to suggest relevant sources of information, including access to document and data and also undertook an initial quality review of the reports. Since the project was completed Lifelong Learning UK has ceased to exist and a significant amount of their work has transferred to LSIS.

With JISC Techdis

The support we have received from JISC Techdis has been outstanding. They have contributed to seven of the nine regional events and provided workshops at both the conferences. In addition, they provided specific expertise to the Yorkshire and Humberside strand, which has been focused on the use of technology to promote independence. There have been regular teleconferences between the project director and members of JISC TechDis. In addition, they produced individual guidance for each of the regions, identifying technology resources which might be relevant to the strand they were working on. A key message emerging from the project is the enabling potential and powerful of technology. The regional events and conferences have provided a vehicle to raise awareness of the valuable work undertaken by JISC TechDis and the evaluation for their contribution was all very positive.

With Pearson Publishing

The online profiling tool developed in the South East was developed following the identification of a similar tool being extensively used in schools. This had been created by Pearson Publishing for NAPTA (the National Association of Professional Teaching Assistants). The resulting tool, now called the "Professional Development Profile" has been very successfully piloted and all those involved felt it was a valuable tool. Although the regions were responsible for developing the content, Pearson Publishing took responsibility for building the online profile and managing data and reports. The tool requires careful management for sensitive personal data and the expertise of Pearson

publishing was invaluable in this respect. In addition, a representative of Pearson Publishing attended both the SE regional events, to share experience of running and using such tools, which proved very useful in supporting the successful implementation of the tool.

The evaluations from pilot participants were very positive about the quality of their reports, which are printed off and sent via Pearson Publishing, with one delegate commenting for example:

"Many thanks for the PDP report – it is wonderful – really informative and very professionally presented. I am very impressed with the quality of information which it has provided and feel it will go a long way to raise the profile of my department with senior managers"

Methodology

The approach taken by the project team to deliver against the outcomes has been effective. The regional events worked well as cornerstone for gathering ideas and testing hypotheses. The project team was able to draw on practitioner experience and expertise and as result the resources will add value. The involvement of the learner reference group and LSA reference group have further helped steer eth project.

Steering groups

The project has been effectively supported and steered by a series of groups including the LSA reference group, the learner reference group and the steering committee. As noted elsewhere in the report, the LSA and learner reference groups have contributed substantially to ensuring that the final reports and reports are high quality and will add value to practitioners. The steering committee has met three times, and in each case has provided guidance and support which has been of tremendous value to the project team, particularly in respect of conference planning.

Commitment to the project by lead colleges

This project has presented significant challenges to lead colleges in terms of timescales, level of demand and outputs, all at a time of wider delivery challenges. The spending cuts are beginning to bite and a number of the organisations involved in leading in regions are in the process of undergoing staffing reviews some of which might need in redundancy. Lead colleges have been asked to report on progress on a monthly basis, organise two regional events, plan workshops for and contribute to the national conferences and produce reports and resources of publishable quality. They have embraced this with enthusiasm. All on-going reporting requests were met on time and produced information of a useful standard, contributing significantly to the quality of the monthly project reports for LSIS. The demands on managers and practitioners are enormous, and many of those involved have put in significant time and effort, well above that which might be reasonably expected, in order to secure positive outcomes.

Communication

The lines of communication for the project overall were very effective. As noted previously, the project team established good working relationships and regular and effective communication with key partners. Effective use was made of technology to reduce travelling time and costs, including teleconference, video conferencing and Skype. The project website provided an invaluable repository for storing project related information and was well used. Lead colleges were provided with regular emails outlining reporting deadlines, including timely reminders of future deadlines, and the project team provided regular and prompt response by phone and email.

What did not go so well?

On line registration

The project design, although effective, placed significant responsibilities on lead colleges. In addition to organising two regional events, they needed to undertake research, secure the involvement of practitioners in developing resources, gather feedback and also undertake regular reporting to the project director and through her to LSIS. As a result, it was felt that it would be useful to reduce the burden of administrating events to some extent by taking advantage of AOC's online registration. In practice however, this was less effective than anticipated. Although the on line system itself worked well, with delegates getting an immediate response to confirm successful registration, the dislocation resulting between those planning and organising the event and those undertaking registration and sending out information resulted in some problems in communication.

For the second event, the vast majority of regions emailed registered delegates directly to provide joining papers and information about future events, and this appears to have supported attendance. This did however mean that a minority of new delegates were never registered on the AoC booking system. In addition, in planning the system, the project team did not consider sufficiently the demands place upon the data system to manage attendance data for two events. An assumption was made that delegate who attended the first event would attend the second. Whilst overall this was true, inevitably some registered delegates did not attend the second event, and there were some new delegates from previously unrepresented organisations. As a result, although we have data on registered delegates and numbers attending, it has not proved possible to disaggregate that data.

There were also some issues with the on line registration for the conference via LSIS. Although it worked well for a number of delegates, a significant minority reported that whilst they felt they had registered successfully, when they arrived, there was no record of them having done so. The fact that the conference was booked through LSIS and the conference organisation was undertaken by AoC, led to confusion for a number of delegates, which the project team had to resolve.

Attendance at regional events fell slightly short of KPIs

Despite significant time and effort being put into marketing, overall, at 763, the project fell a little short of its target of 900 delegates attending regional events. This was

disappointing. A number of factors influenced the attendance. The majority of regions were able to recruit at or around the target of 50 per event, and indeed at 523, the registered delegates exceeded requirement to hit an overall attendance of 900 (assuming those registered attended both events). In practice however, a number of those registered were unable to attend on the day. Reasons for this included some external influences, such as the announcement of impending Ofsted visit, but more often, was due to staffing shortages and/ or difficulties. A number of organisations were reviewing staffing and facing cuts during the life of the project, and although many delegates emailed to say that they would like to have attended, their organisations were unable to release them. The regional events were further hindered by poor weather. In the Yorkshire and Humberside region for example, whilst in excess of 60 delegates were recruited for the first event, very poor weather reduced this to 56. In the West Midlands, the weather forecast was such that the first event had to be postponed. This reduced numbers at the West Midlands future events on two counts. A significant number could not attend the re-scheduled event, and despite best efforts to share what had taken place, through the production of a short video and the sharing of resources via a memory stick, a number of delegates felt that as they had not attended the first event, there would be less value in attending the second, and so came to neither.

What would we do differently if we were to do it again?

Change the registration process

As noted above the dislocation between those planning and delivering events and those taking registration created some issue which at times adversely effected communication with delegates. For regional events, it would have been better for them to maintain responsibility for managing the registration process. Not only would this have ensured that all delegates received information in a timely manner, but it would have facilitated communication between organisers and delegates.   For the conferences, the roles and responsibilities for the process of registration was insufficiently clear. For future events it would be useful to identify in advance who is doing what when, and how information will be passed to those who need it, in order to secure a seamless experience for delegates.

Allow greater flexibility within the criteria for sector involvement

LSIS has criteria of 60% sector involvement in any project, and the ELS implementation programme was planned to take account of this. In a number of regions this worked well, and the contribution of practitioner experience and expertise was invaluable in all. However, while accepting the importance of practitioners in colleges having a key role in undertaking development activities 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. This created significant challenges for lead colleges. 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. The role of the specialist support in bringing expertise in undertaking activity of this kind was invaluable, particularly in producing final reports and resources of a high standard. In reality, the specialist support, along with input from the project management team, often

contributed beyond their contracted obligation in order to ensure that, the final outputs were of such high quality.

In planning future project and activity, consideration could usefully be given to ensuring that the construction reflects a true balance of the skills and time of those contributing. Whilst some activities will lend themselves to practitioner based action research, others might benefit from a higher level of input by skilled and experienced researchers. Greater flexibility to allocate funding according to an analysis of the skill required, as opposed to a prerequisite breakdown, would be valuable. In future tenders, those applying to undertake work could for example be asked to very clearly demonstrate how they plan to involve the sector, and a weighting could be attached to this which reflects an understanding of what the project will involve.

Consider how to secure access to written resources to support conferences and events

As noted elsewhere, a number of delegates indicated that they would have liked to have access to hand-outs from presentations during the conference. Some of these reported that not having access to paper copies was detrimental, due to specific difficulties which made it hard for them to process information provided purely aurally. Although delegates had the opportunity to declare any specific needs as part of the registration process, they were not made specifically aware of the LSIS policy on keeping paper copies to a minimum and hence did not request these in advance. Although copies of all conference presentations and materials were available to download from the Natspec website prior to each of the conferences, this was not communicated to delegates prior to the events. For future events, there would be some merit in making it clear to delegates that no paper hand outs would be available on the day unless specifically requested.

Overall reach of project

The project had a target of 900 delegates attending 18 events. Given the way in which the tender was constructed, that is, with an expectation that delegates would attend both events, this means that the target for registration was a minimum of 450. The total number of registered delegates was 523, and we know that a number of new delegates attended second events who did not ever register with the AOC. This means that at least in terms of recruitment, the target for registration was substantially exceeded.

The table below shows a breakdown by region of registered delegates, and numbers of actual attendance.

Number of attendants By region	Registered	Attended 1st event	Attended 2nd event	Total Attended
East of England	75	41	46	87
East Midlands	36	27	33	60
London	54	52	28	80
North East	50	50	40	90
North West	74	64	42	106
South East	54	49	48	97
South West	42	42	40	82
West Midlands	52	30	40	70
Yorkshire and Humber	86	56	35	91
Total	523	411	352	763

As noted elsewhere in the report, the attendance for some regions was significantly less than the target of 50 per event. This was influenced by a number of factors, including very poor weather (heavy snow hampered travel) and a climate of cuts and staff shortages in which providers struggled to release staff. Whilst a number of regions recruited well in excess of their target, a small number struggled with recruitment, and this in turn affected final numbers. Whilst it is not clear exactly why this might be, we do know that existing networks within the East of England, North West and Yorkshire and Humberside were very strong, and this may well have been a contributing factor. The total number attending regional events was 763. For the majority of regions, numbers fell for the second event, despite evaluations from first events being very positive. Again, while it is hard to be sure, anecdotal evidence from would be delegates would suggest that many organisations struggled to release staff within the current climate.

The table below provides an indication of the range of organisations represented by delegate and in total across each of the regional events and overall.

Type of organisation	EM	NE	NW	SE	SW	YH	WM	London	EE	Total
Independent Specialist College	13	11	20	6	11	10	19	11	2	103
Adult and Community Leaning	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	8
Art & Design College	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3
Land based college	3	0	0	3	3	0	2	0	2	13
Further Education college	18	20	29	31	22	50	27	20	53	270
Local authority	0	1	7	0	0	3	0	1	1	13
School	0	2	1	0	0	9	0	0	0	12
Sixth form College	0	4	2	7	0	1	6	2	2	24
Work based learner	0	2	13	0	1	2	1	2	4	25
Other	2	7	1	7	3	1	11	7	15	54
Total delegates	36	50	74	54	42	86	54	50	79	525
Total organisations	18	21	42	31	30	37	29	27	35	270

The data for numbers of LSAs attending was hard to disaggregate, because the job title on the AOC registration did not always make the role clear, and not all regions collected this data at registration for the events, but if we assume a similar pattern across all events, the data do have would indicate that at approximately 46%, the LSAs represent almost half the delegates.

The conferences had a target of 250 in total. The total number of participants for the South was 123 and the North 112. Although this fell slightly short of the total target, given the current climate, this was felt to be a success overall. The conferences were well received and had a "buzz" about them, and feedback from them, both formally, via evaluations and informally, via comments and emails after the events, were very positive.

At the conferences in addition to signing in, delegates were asked to indicate the type of organisation they worked at and their role. Whilst this does not capture all delegates (not all completed it, and some providers sent more than 1 representative) it does give a sense of the breadth and distribution of organisations represented at the conferences.

Type of organisation	North	South	Total
Further Education college	42	42	84
Adult and Community Leaning	10	9	19
Independence Specialist College	9	9	18
Sixth form	6	7	13
Land based	4	4	8
Work based learning	3	3	6
Voluntary sector	2	0	2
Health	1	0	1
Young Offenders Institution	1	0	1
Local Authority	0	2	2
Employer	0	1	1

In addition, delegates were asked to indicate their role and the following data was collected.

Role	North	South	Total
Manager	52	61	113
Tutor	14	14	28
Learning Support Assistant	14	13	27

This clearly indicates that by far the most represented role amongst conference delegates was that of manager. This is not surprising. Initial research indicated that organisations find it very hard to release LSAs and that in order to facilitate this, the more local the event, the more likely it is LSAs will be able to attend. Clearly this was not the case for national events, and indeed it could be argued that there are benefit for organisation in sending delegates who operate at a strategic level, can cascade information and make changes to policy and practice. The marketing for the event was not deliberately targeted at LSAs nor was there any requirement upon providers to send an LSA.

The regional events were however very much targeted at LSAs, with guidance to providers clearly requesting that two delegates should attend, one of whom should be an LSA. The role of LSAs is very diverse within the lifelong learning sector, as is the title which is used to refer to the role, and indeed the responsibilities. In analysing the data from the online registration, it is not always apparent, from studying the job tile, whether the member of staff is a learning support staff or has a role. Furthermore, whilst some delegates clearly operate at manager level, they still might be working exclusively within the leaning support role and often had some time within their week which involved continuing to provide learning support. Individuals who fall into that category could conceivably be described as being dual role. Given the above, whilst it is not possible to say exactly how many LSAs attended the regional events, the data we do have indicated that it was at least 46%. Given the identified difficulties providers have in releasing LSAs we regard this as a success.

Equality and Diversity Analysis for regional events

The project team was keen to ensure that equality and diversity was effectively addressed and as such undertook an Equality and diversity Impact assessment, which can be found in Appendix 1. Annex 10 contains a table showing a breakdown of the 472 delegates who registered on the AoC registration site. Analysis of this data clearly indicates that the vast majority of participants (80%) are white British, female (75%) and employed on a full time basis. The majority of delegates (54%) are aged between 35 and 54 and 8% of those attending declared a disability, of which the most common were sensory and physical (3%) and medical condition (3%). This data is not surprising. One would expect the majority of LSAs to be female. Although the percentage of those who are employed on a full time basis is higher than suggested by the initial research, we also know that access to training for LSAs is hugely variable across the sector and particularly problematic for those employed on an agency or part time contract. It is

perhaps not therefore surprising that the majority of delegates having the opportunity to attend are full time employed. Given what we know about how hard provider find it to release LSAs, it is perhaps the proportion of LSA who attended the regional events, which is the most pleasing figure, which although just short of the 50% aimed for, at around 46% remains high.

Annex 11 shows an analysis of the equality and diversity data collected by LSIS for delegates registering for the conferences. Perhaps what is most striking about the data is that it is virtually identical to the data collected for the regional events. The vast majority of participants (81%) are white British, female (72%) and employed on a full time basis. The majority of delegates (55%) are aged between 35 and 54. The only significant variation is that a smaller number of delegates (just under 3%) declared a disability, as opposed to 8% at the regional events. It is also worth noting that whilst at the regional events, we were aiming for 50% attendance by LSAs, the conferences were aimed at a broader audience, and as noted above, attracted a large number of managers, with approximately three quarters of those who provided information about their role identifying themselves as managers. This clearly indicates that men are underrepresented in this area of work.

In addition to the expected participation at regional events and conferences, the reach of the project was further expanded through a range of activities:

Work-based learning (WBL) subgroup – North West region

This work-based learning sub groups came about after the first NW regional network meeting. It had become apparent during the event that the model for delivering additional learning support and involving learners was very different in WBL, largely due to funding constraints and resulting organisational support infrastructures. Some providers had felt out of their depth and were not aware of a number of the resources and approaches being shared at the first regional meeting.

A follow up meeting was held with two providers to explore and share resources and approaches used in their support of work based learners. These providers then agreed to review their approaches in the light of the project aims and to provide feedback at our next regional meeting. A project representative also attended the Greater Merseyside Learning Provider Forum Learning Difficulties/Disabilities sub group to brief members about the project and to involve them in the wider aims of the project. As a result other providers became project partners and attended our second regional meeting.

Participation at NIACE events

NIACE hosted a series of "Effective Practice Events" in late February and early March, to which Natspec was invited to attend and present a workshop about the ELS project. The project was represented at all 4 events, which provided an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the ESL project and developing resources, share key messages and gather the views and experiences of those working in the Adult and Community Learning sector. Four workshops were presented, attended by a total of 75 delegates, further extending the reach of the project, and in particular expanding the reach within the ACL sector, which had not been particularly well represented at regional events, or indeed at either of the conferences.

The Enhancement of Learning Support section of the Natspec website

The project team wanted to ensure that information emerging from the project could be shared easily and therefore established a tab within the Natspec website, headed "Enhancement of Learning Support".

This includes links to the following pages:

- National Conferences;

- Regional Activity;

- Reports and Resources;

- Blogs;

- Background research; and

- Get involved contacts.

Every region has its own page, and as the regional events have been held, has upload presentation and resources. The conference page contains all the presentations and workshop resources from the both events.In addition to providing a location for all the ELS information, it was also hoped that the website would ultimately promote the use of the final learning support web portal. The data on website views below clearly demonstrates that this has been a successful strategy, with views increasing steadily from August until the culmination of the project in March.

	2010					2011			
	Aug	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	**Feb**	**Mar**	**Apr***
ALL PAGES	65	396	1171	3554	2325	2797	3176	4341	1869
Landing Page	65	395	586	785	538	835	931	921	421
National Conferences	-	-	-	-	-	170	386	776	263
Regional Activity	-	-	354	1899	1349	1363	1369	1852	860
Reports and Resources	-	-	84	378	211	177	246	425	159
Background	-	-	59	261	118	130	138	221	107

Research								
Get Involved	-	-	88	231	109	122	106	146	59
BLOGS	-	-	-	341	1699	1555	1048	1592	714

*April data is not a full month – data correct up to 19.4.11

Some qualitative comments from evaluation forms

As noted previously, the evaluation forms for both the regional events and the conferences were overwhelmingly positive. The delegates at the events welcomed the opportunity to meet and talk to other practitioners undertaking similar roles in different contexts. There was tremendous enthusiasm for the opportunity to meet regionally and clear enthusiasm for continuing this beyond the life of the project.

The opportunity to learn from and share approaches, experiences and resources with others was clearly valued. A willingness to both share and learn characterised the whole ethos of the project. This was reflected in evaluations from regional events, and also captured in this comment from a conference delegate:

> *"The sharing of resources was what I found most valuable. We all try and recreate the wheel and this takes up lots of time"*

Other comments from the conference, which capture the key themes from delegates, include:

> *"Excellent and thought provoking event. Many thanks. I will be accessing the audit and profiling tools after today"*

> *"Well managed and stimulating- thoroughly worthwhile journey"*

> *"Very well presented day"*

> *"A very informative and inspirational event – lots of practical guidance advice and ideas to take ways. Thanks you"*

> *"Excellent bank of resources, thank you"*

Of all of these positive comments, it was particularly pleasing to read:

> *"Inspirational. I will leave here full of optimism for a brighter future for learning support and supported learners. Thank you."*

Evaluations from the regional events indicate similar themes. Delegates again valued the opportunity to liaise with colleagues, share experience and ideas and overall were very positive about the organisation of events and standard of presentations.

The following comments, collected from evaluation forms are typical:

> *"Good useful information. Appreciated the chance to meet other people from other colleges"*

> *"Felt it was delivered at appropriate level, at appropriate pace"*

> *"Well organised and well delivered. Relevant information and opportunities to share and evaluate"*

> *"Informative workshops"*

> *"Gave a better insight into the role of the LSA"*

> *"Gave great ideas and resources to take forward"*

> *"Useful to share practices and hear other peoples' opinions"*

> *"It has been very interesting to know what other colleges do, and to find out what works effectively. Then to look at what could be developed and changed in your own organisation."*

> *"Made me look and approach work differently"*

> *"Very well put together, a lot of valuable information to pass on to other LSAs and students."*

> *"Great to network and good facilitators*

> *"I had some new things to take away and think about"*

Case studies and examples

The reports contain a number of useful case studies and examples which will support practitioners to consider how they might make changes or do something new or different. The case studies and examples below provide a taster of these.

The following case study, from "Unpicking the velcro" - Creative approaches to maximising independence: North East region, shows how New College Durham supported a learner with Asperger to become more independent in accessing college, by using a staged approach to the reduction of support.

Case study 1: Promoting independent travel, New College, Durham (NCD)

Introduction

College Links Asperger Syndrome Support (CLASS) is a partnership of four County Durham FE colleges and other related agencies. It is dedicated to creating and sharing good practice in teaching and supporting students with Asperger Syndrome (AS) or High Functioning Autism. The project is led by staff from the Learning Support team at New College and was launched to parents and professionals on 1st December 2009.

The project has four main aims:

1. The development of staff to support students with Asperger syndrome;

2. The promotion of support available to students with Asperger syndrome ; and

3. The development of resources to support students with Asperger syndrome.

The development of student support networks

Support at New College Durham is student centred and each learner receives an individual support plan. One student who has benefitted from all of the developments outlined above is called Chris. Chris has given the college his permission to use him in this case study.

The context

Chris was on the "Pathways" course, part of a group of six students all with Asperger's syndrome together with other learning/behaviour difficulties. The group was supported by an assigned LSA who worked closely with Chris, particularly in IT, numeracy and literacy.

The Challenge

When Chris first attended college he was unwilling to find his way from reception to his classroom and was heavily reliant on being met and escorted. His social skills were very poor which led to his isolation. He was a very quiet student who was reluctant to make any contribution in lessons. The challenge with Chris was to boost his confidence and make him much more independent.

What we did

Initially Chris was met at reception and on the way to the base room the LSA would "acquire" a reason to leave him. "*Chris, You know where you are going, I`ll see you there shortly.*"  The remainder of his journey would be observed by another LSA. After a short time he was told "*Chris I can`t meet you. Make your own way to the base room.*" Again he was observed by an LSA. Chris was soon happy to find his

own way, not just to the base room, but also between classrooms.

Chris moved to a mainstream course but was still reliant on his mother for travelling. A major breakthrough was made when Chris decided, with the encouragement of his LSAs, to take ownership and travel independently.

Initially Chris travelled by bus between the college and home accompanied by his mother until he was comfortable with the route. Then he was taken to the bus stop where he boarded the bus alone. Chris was met at the bus stop near college and accompanied the rest of the way. After class he would be met and taken back to the bus stop and was accompanied until the bus arrived. The bus was met by his mother at his home point.

Using the same tactic as when he first started, it was only a matter of weeks before Chris was making his own way to and from college.

A lunch time social club was established, staffed by a lecturer and an LSA, to encourage the students across college with Asperger syndrome to meet in a quiet, safe and controlled environment. The attending students could eat lunch, access the computers and play games, "Uno", a card game, being the favourite. This club proved to be very popular.

Several trips were organised as part of the club.   The students would meet at the college on a Saturday. Activities included a food festival and a trip to an Italian restaurant. They also went bowling after college on a weekday night. A major achievement for Chris was a Saturday trip to Durham. Chris travelled independently to Durham where he was met at the bus station. Together with the rest of the group he shopped before eating lunch and returning to the bus station where he left to travel home, again independently.

Why we did it

Independence is a major factor in life. It builds confidence and helps all of us reach our full potential.

The outcomes

In Chris` case it has helped him grow into a mature and confident young man, keen to pursue his studies and widen his options socially.

The impact

- Chris still attends NCD and is studying for a BTEC National Certificate at L3.

- No longer receives 1:1 support in class.

- He has made friends on his course.

- Chris is continuing his efforts to be independent.

Case studies 2 and 3 are from "Using the ordinary to create the extraordinary - The potential of technology for further promoting independence and supporting learning" and show how powerful and enabling technology can be in supporting learning and promoting independence.

Case study 2 –Henshaws College

Name: Sophie

Medical Condition: Mitochondrial disorder, mild learning difficulty. Sophie has been left with limited arm movement, no mobility and speech problems after developing chicken pox in her early life.

Impact of IT: Sophie had a very keen interest in ILT prior to coming to Henshaws, having used a Lightwriter communication aid as her primary means for communication for most of her adult life. Since starting at college we have nurtured this interest in technology. This includes two new developments with regards to her accessing a computer.

Initially Sophie was using a standard keyboard with a rollerball mouse which, whilst she was very adept at using it, was difficult to set up due to her limited movement. Upon investigating other ways of accessing computers it was discovered that Sophie's wheelchair was Bluetooth enabled and we were therefore able to configure it to Windows and have it act as a mouse. This was then coupled with the on screen keyboard which is a standard feature of later versions of Windows, instantly increasing her independence in using ICT as she no longer had to rely on someone else to set her up with equipment, it was all done through her wheelchair control stick.

Case study 3 – Sheffield College

Name: Samara

Medical condition:

Impact of IT: Samara is 18 years old, in her second year at Sheffield City College on a Level 2 Office Administration course. Samara is a highly capable and motivated Visually Impaired (VI) student. She is a Braille reader and is becoming a proficient touch-typist. This year we have encouraged her use of technologies such as. text reading (Supernova) software, in order to enhance her independent study skills and mobility.

In conjunction with the above we have had tutorial sessions in using Braille Sense (a portable notetaker), which has numerous enabling functions for VI users. These include; email, word processor, scheduler, radio, web browser, digital recorder and an MP3 player. It has a text display (for sighted users), audio playback of content and importantly, has pop-up pins, updating in real-time, Braille text keyed by the operator. It outputs to a PC, printer or Braille embosser and to storage, such as compact flash. Braille sense can be used via mains or rechargeable battery and has

interfaces with external devices via USB, microphone, headphones, Ethernet, with ports for VGA, Serial and Parallel devices.

This technology has been used with other VI students too. All have found it accessible, easy to understand and handle. We feel it is useful in the transition process between the more traditionally taught 'Braille scholar' and the digital native generation. One of its strengths is its versatility, enabling users to interface with varying media and types of data in ways that are common and accessible to VI users from different generations and abilities.
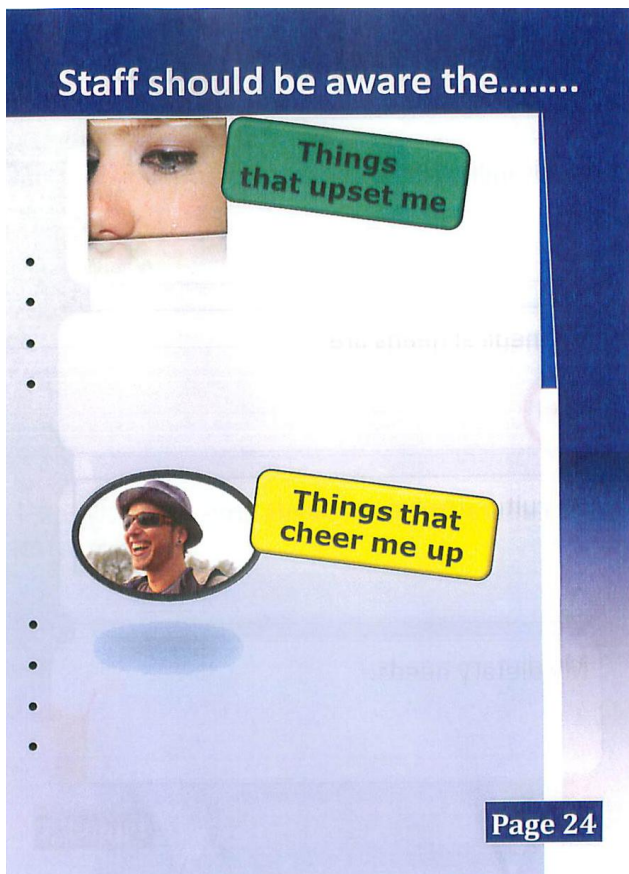
This video was taken at a recent AoC event where Samara demonstrated Supernova and the Braille Sense. Both these technologies have proven empowering in interfacing to her coursework and to the wider world, via media devices and the internet. As Samara puts in her own words;

"I have found it useful for word processing and making any notes that need to be taken in class, e.g. English revision for descriptive writing. I think it has great potential"

The South West region explored approaches to involving learners in shaping their own support. The following extract is from a transition booklet designed to support learners in ensuring their future support arrangements meet their needs. The pages are provided by Foxes Academy, an independent specialist college in Somerset, who adapted and trialled a transition booklet originally devised at Weston College for learners on the autistic spectrum. The booklet contains all of the learners' key information that enables them to begin to shape their own support whether they are starting a new course, are in higher education, or are progressing into employment and/or independent living.

Examples of pages within the learner transition booklet

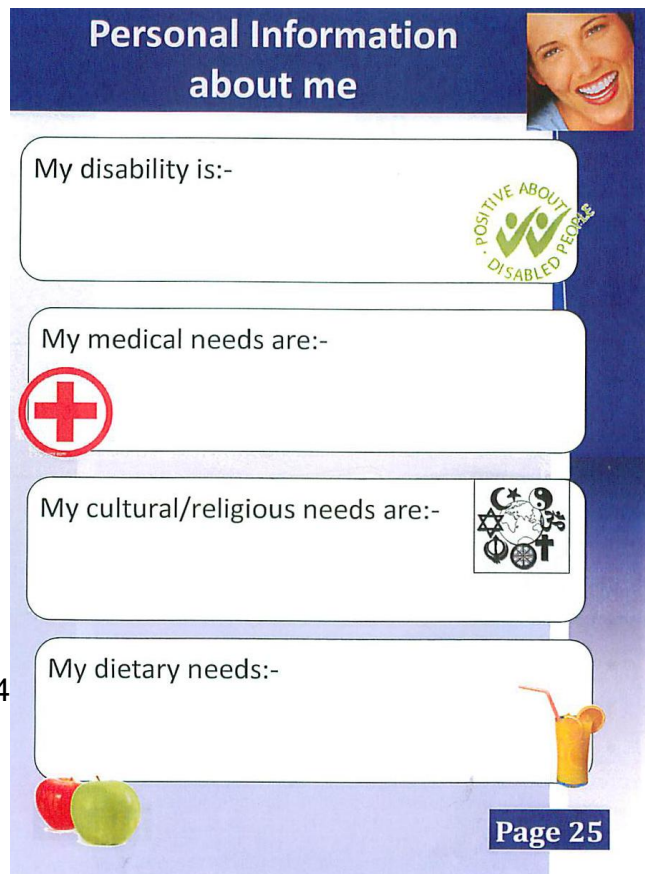Staff should be aware the........

Things that upset me

Things that cheer me up

Page 24

Personal Information about me

My disability is:-

My medical needs are:-

My cultural/religious needs are:-

My dietary needs:-

Page 25

ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNING SUPPORT

Appendix 1: Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

Name of programme:	**Enhancement of Learning Support**
Lead completing:	**Helen A Deane**
Position:	**Equality & Diversity consultant**

Step 1– Scoping the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Name of the project:	**The Enhancement of Learning Support**

1.1 The main aims, purpose and outcomes of the programme and how it fits in with the wider E&D policies of Natspec and the AoC

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) commissioned the Association of National Specialist Colleges (Natspec), and, The Association of Colleges (AoC), to deliver a national programme of activities to improve the quality and management of learning support for learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities across the learning and skills sector.

The programme consulted with a wide range of providers and practitioners in order to develop a range of resources, reports, continuing professional development (CPD) activities and events which will enhance the skills of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) and their managers. These resources will support the development of practice and improve the experience of learners with learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities across the learning and skills sector.

The core objective of the programme is to produce resources and materials which will support the sector in the process of continuous improvement. As they are approved, we will provide links to their location on the Natspec website (www.natspec.org.uk) and, ultimately to their location on the Excellence Gateway, where the final suite of resources will sit.

For some of the protected characteristics and associated public sector equality duties, the programme has identified issues and developed activities and resources that will support the improvement of learning support available for learners with learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities.

1.2	Activities to be assessed and who is likely to benefit

For the purpose of this Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) the deliverables to be assessed are grouped under two main categories:

- A series of reports to be made available; and

- Regional activities testing ideas, generating, piloting and evaluating resources.

1.2.1 Summary of the reports

a) <u>Report on systems to provide and maintain accurate workforce data</u>: The report examines ways to improve the quantity and quality of data collected about the role of LSAs and identifies barriers to collection.

b) <u>Report exploring the synergy and crossover with other projects in the sector to ensure coherence and sustainability</u>: This report ensures that the work of the project reflects other developments and activities taking place across the sector and draws these together.

c) <u>Report on effective practice in managing learning support staff</u>: This report explores the extent to which continuing professional development (CPD) for LSAs has impacted on other aspects of managing learning support.

d) <u>Development of a model career structure and progression pathways for LSAs in lifelong learning</u>: The future career structure and progression pathways for LSAs.

e) <u>Report reviewing the Initial Teacher Training and CPD specifications for teachers to ensure that they include working with support staff</u>: This report reviews the initial teacher training specification more generally to ensure they reflect the role played by support staff.

f) <u>A locally based network to coordinate CPD activities</u>: This proposal explores how the support needs of young people can be identified to inform joint training and sharing of practice for all local providers, including specialist providers. It examines how joint working can sustain a professional development network.

1.2.2 Summary of regional activities

a) The development of approaches and a range of resources to involve learners in planning their own support and to support providers in involving learners in identifying their own support needs.

b) The development of an organisational Self Assessment Audit Tool.

c) A review of training and CPD for managers of LSAs to support their role in whole

organisational development – managing change and promoting improvement.

d) Development of an online an online tool that will profile the CPD needs of learning support staff.

e) Promotion of the potential of technology for promoting independent learning.

f) Development of guidance and protocols to support alternative approaches to CPD such as shadowing, buddying and mentoring.

1.2.3 Who is likely to benefit:

a) Learning support staff working in Independent Specialist Colleges and/or with learners with learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities across the learning and skills sector.

b) All learning and skills sector teachers, trainee teachers, staff and stakeholders.

1.3 Relevance of the whole programme and main issues to consider

a) The programme has had a particular impact on the promotion of equality in the areas of disability but has also raised an awareness of gender, race and religion issues.

b) The activities undertaken and developed in the programme have had a direct positive impact on the needs, quality of support and delivery of the education and training of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

c) The programme has supported the needs of the Learning Support Assistant (LSA) community of staff, by enhancing their confidence and engagement with their personal and professional development.

d) The programme has raised the profile of LSA roles and by its wider promotion, has the potential to attract under-represented groups of staff, particularly minority groups who traditionally are difficult to attract in terms of employment e.g. black and ethnic minority (BME) communities and men.

1.4 What data, research and other information is available that might be relevant to the activities to be assessed in this EIA

a) The equality and diversity (E&D) policies for both Natspec and the AoC demonstrate the need to promote equality in all areas of their organisational activities. They drew

upon their knowledge and experience of working with the needs of different communities and groups of protected characteristics to ensure that the programme addressed E&D issues relating directly to its delivery in relation to the needs of staff, providers, learners and other stakeholders. Full E&D policies and supporting documents are available if required.

b) All delivery staff, including college or associates/consultants, were contractually committed to comply with this E&D commitment.

c) The Project Director and Project Manager monitored progress on these issues which formed a part of the regular review process of the steering group and the regular reporting arrangements to LSIS.

d) Ongoing consultation was carried out as part of the programme delivery.

Step 2 – Any involvement and consultations relevant to the programme

2.1 Involvement and consultations of groups to be assessed

Equality group	
ALL	a) As stated earlier, this EIA does not cover all protected characteristics. b) An E&D consultant supported at the planning and implementation stage of the programme and also completed E&D impact assessments on a sample of the project developments. c) There will be an opportunity to monitor the impact on all groups as the programme outcomes are disseminated.
Disability	Representatives from Natspec college members, LSIS E&D network and AOC college members involved in the development of activities and the delivery of the projects participated in external discussions and submitted comments and recommendations.
Gender	The AoC and Natspec are all experienced in the issues relating to the under-representation of men in LSA positions and other gender equality matters. This understanding was recognised in initial planning and other stakeholders with experience of gender equality issues were included in l discussions and the planning of activities.

Race (and Religion and Belief)	Stakeholders with knowledge and experience of race equality, religion and belief were invited to the forums and events. They were included in evaluation activities and discussions.

Step 3 – Data collection and evidence

3.1   Interpretation of data regarding the engagement with programme events

The AOC collected and analysed the E&D data of those attending the regional events . (annex 10) and a summary of the overall analysis is included in the final programme report. For the purpose of this EIA the following points are noted:

a)   The purpose of the data collection exercise was to analyse attendance and engagement with the regional events and to ascertain whether attendance was representative of the whole learning and skills sector community.

b)   There was no evidence of any discriminatory practice found.

c)   The key findings of this exercise related to the representative attendance at the time of the events in terms of demographics of the region (disability, gender, race, religion and belief). Although evidence indicates that there were some instances of a low representation in some regions from some of the groups included in this assessment (annex 10), this did not result in inappropriate publication of the events or development of activities that may have discriminated against these groups.

d)   As a result it was identified that any imbalance in attendance to the events progression was justified and not related to E&D.

3.2   Additional research or data required to fill any gaps in understanding the potential impact of the programme.

a) Implementation of the programme outcomes and including activities on the Excellence Gateway will widen the reach and increase the use and engagement of a range of groups who may be from protected characteristics.

b) Monitoring the engagement of users accessing the information via the Excellence Gateway will provide some useful data for a fuller EIA.

c) It may be useful after the resources have been put on the Excellence Gateway and operational for a number of months to commission small scale research for an assessment of its overall impact.

Step 4 –assessing impact and strengthening the programme

4.1 How does the programme and resulting activities affect different communities and groups?

The programme specifically recognises and addresses issues around support for those working with learners with learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities across the learning and skills sector.   There are extensive examples of effective and good practice which can be accessed via the various reports and activities being produced as outcomes. These will be widely available to a range of teaching and learning communities and groups.

4.2 Additional measures included to help promote equality and diversity

a) All documentation and reports are available in the accessible and alternative formats required by LSIS. In determining the circulation list of the printed report, consideration should be given to ensuring that the report is delivered to key representatives from a wide range of relevant organisations and communities interested in the findings. This may also involve routing the reports via suitable "gateway" distributors to ensure it reaches the relevant communities of interest.

b) Attendance to the events was evaluated by race, gender and disability. This enabled the identification of diversity issues and comparisons were made regarding regional attendance data.

4.3 Measures to address existing patterns of potential discriminatory practices

The primary purpose of the programme was to improve learning support for learners. CPD was one of the means through which this was achieved. The initial research clearly demonstrated that there is variation in the extent to which many LSAs are able to access training, and too often access to training and development is very limited and in some cases non-existent. The programme has therefore supported   inclusivity in terms of improving access to CPD and training and development opportunities for LSAs as well as to appropriate training for those working with LSA's (with different forms of outcomes. As a result, measures to address existing patterns are fundamental to its purpose and embedded throughout the development and implementation of outcomes.

4.4 Impact the programme has on promoting good relations and wider community cohesion

Highlighting and mapping good practice in equality and diversity across all learning and skills sector communities will support the promotion of networking and learning from other sub-sectors.

4.5 Where the programme is likely to have a negative effect ('adverse impact'),

what are the reasons for this?
Implementation of the process and outcomes of this programme will not have an adverse impact on any group or community.
4.6   Any practical changes that help to reduce any adverse impact on particular groups
Not applicable

Step 5 – Summary of findings

5.1   Summary and overview of whether the programme has met Natspec/AOCs responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity
Although a full equality impact assessment has not been undertaken due to the nature of the programme being specifically aimed at improving support for learners with learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities in the learning and skills sector, I am satisfied that this programme meets Natspec/AOCs responsibility in terms of the E&D requirements.
5.2   Recommendations to reduce, justify or remove any adverse/negative impact?
Not applicable.

Step 6 – monitoring, evaluating and reviewing

6.1   How the recommendations of this assessment will be built into wider planning and review processes
The recommendations from this assessment should be used during any future events to disseminate outcomes and during the consideration and planning of any future developments.
6.2   Give details of how the results of the impact assessment will be published
The programme outcomes together with the impact assessment will be published on the relevant section of the Excellence Gateway on the LSIS website.

Step 7 Considerations for future activity

This EIA has considered some issues that may support future programme activities to assure prospective users and stakeholders of the commitment to E&D throughout any future dissemination of the outcomes process. It should be acknowledged however, that whilst these considerations should be noted, the evidence indicates that the programme activities as a whole have had a major positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning delivery to learners with disabilities and learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities. This is a an over-riding strength of this programme and the wide range of initiatives implemented during its delivery will continue to have a positive impact, as the outcomes are further disseminated and provider practice is improved. It is hoped that other protected character groups assessed for the purpose of this EIA will benefit, with immediate effect, from the knowledge that they are working with a programme of activities that is fully committed to ensuring equality and diversity.

Protected Characteristic	Potential Issue	Suggested action required	How will you measure the impact/outcome?
ALL	No clear evidence of final resources and outcomes reaching all the protected characteristic group	a) Continue to use the standard E&D data collection format for dissemination events. b) Monitor the engagement of users accessing the resources that are made available online.	Monitor attendance at dissemination events and where possible engagement with publicised resources and documents
Disability	19 percent of event attendees declared a disability	None required	
Gender	Fewer men than women accessed the events however this is in line with the fact that fewer men than women are employed as LSAs and Learning and Skills sector teachers	None required	

Race	Only 3 percent of event attendees were from a African, Caribbean or Asian ethnic group	Publicise dissemination events through BME professional networks such as the Network for Black Professionals and FE college BME forums	
Religion and Belief	Two percent of event attendees stated their religion and belief as other than Christian or prefer not to say	Publicise dissemination events through BME professional networks such as the Network for Black Professionals and FE college BME forums	

In looking at the overall data, we have identified a number of them which could usefully be addressed in any future work, and these are listed below along with suggested actions.

Theme	Suggested Action to be Taken	By whom	Expected outcomes
Consultation (ALL)	• The Learners reference group and the LSA reference group to be monitored for inclusion of all key protected characteristics. • Membership and project interested parties to be diversified through wider publicity of similar projects (NIACE, NBP, College Unions, mainstream colleges).	• LSIS • Natspec	• More representative learner, staff and stakeholder voice to inform development of future projects.
Better access to accurate LSA workforce data (ALL)	Specialist Colleges and other LSS providers to be strongly encouraged to supply more accurate and reliable workforce data and information relating to employment and conditions of LSAs	• LSIS	• Improved accessibility to all taking on board issues of

Under-representation of particular groups (Gender, Race, Disability)	• Sector positive action initiatives to increase the representation of males, people with disabilities and Black. Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) LSA's. • Publicise dissemination events through BME professional networks such as the Network for Black Professionals and FE college BME forums. • Publicise dissemination events through disability employment networks and forums.	• LSIS • Sector agencies • Natspec	• Increased and wider workforce representation. • Increased and wider participation in any future projects.
Human resourcing, remuneration and CPD of LSA's (ALL)	Sector wide investment to enhance the pay and conditions of LSAs	• Sector agencies • Individual providers	• Better parity of esteem for LSAs which could have the potential of narrowing the gender and ethnicity employment gap. • Equality of access to training.
Accessibility of documentation (ALL)	As indicated in the evaluation report, consideration is needed to examine how better to secure access to written resources to support information prior, during and after any future conferences and events.	• LSIS	• Better E&D data collection. • Increased evaluation form completion. • Better prepared delegates. • Improved accessibility for all protected characteristics.

Annex 1: Lead Colleges

Abingdon and Witney College

Carshalton College

City of Sunderland

David Lewis College

Derwen College

Doncaster College for the Deaf

Northern Counties College

Wirral Metropolitan College

Henshaws College

Sheffield College

National Star College

New College Nottingham

Oaklands College

Orchard Hill College

Portland College

St Elizabeth's College

Treloar College

Walford and North Shropshire College

Weston College

West of England College

Annex 2: Specialist Advisers

Helen Deane

Sally Faraday

Punam Khosla

Liz Maudslay

Alison O'Brien

Kevin O'Brien

Glyn Owen

Helen Sexton

Brian Simpson

Annex 3: Steering Committee

Alison Boulton:	Natspec (Chair)
Viv Berkeley:	LSIS
Jan Donnison:	Derwen College
Carol Hill:	New College Nottingham
Michelle Iannantuono:	New College Nottingham
Louise Keevil:	Derwen College
Punam Khosla:	JISC TECHDIS
Joy Mercer / Uhuru Tyrie-Socha:	AoC
Karen Nicod:	Lifelong Learning UK
Alison O'Brien:	K and A Associates (Project Director)
Kevin O'Brien:	K and A Associates (Project Director)
Anne Price:	David Lewis College
Ann Ruthven:	LSIS
Janet Sherbourne:	Carshalton College

Annex 4: Learner Reference Group

Richard Amos: National Star College/Speak Advocacy

Roisin Cash: Weston College

Charlotte Davey: Weston College

Jonathon Davey: Weston College

Sophie Davidson: Weston College

Jemma Glossop: David Lewis College

Charlotte Hawe: Wirral Metropolitan College

Charles Kelly: David Lewis College

Andrew Letts: Wirral Metropolitan College

Cally-Ann McEvoy: National Star College

Zac Meyer: David Lewis College

Kirsty Payne: Wirral Metropolitan College

Steven Philp: Weston College

Martin Ralfe: Wirral Metropolitan College

Nathan Rich: Weston College

Vicky Roberts: David Lewis College

Gareth Sloan: Wirral Metropolitan College

Robert Surrey: National Star College

Helen Vennall: Weston College

Annex 5: Learning Support Assistant Reference Group

Lynda Battams: Walford and North Shropshire College

Sarah Bradbury: David Lewis College

Andrea Brown: Treloars College

Cate Cassidy: Wirral Metropolitan College

Helen Cronshaw: Treloars College

Janet Donnison: Derwen College

Mark Fox: Northern Counties College

Michael Hall: City of Sunderland College

Tessa Hearnes: Orchard Hill College

Rob Hibbert: National Star College

Helen Moore: Weston College

Georgina Oliver: Abingdon Witney College

Julie Paterson: St Elizabeth's College

Sandra Rhoades: Carshalton College

Annex 6: Project Team

Alison O'Brien – Project Director

Alison Boulton – Project Adviser

Maria Coulson – Project administrator

Sally Faraday – Quality assurance

Kevin O'Brien – Project Manager

Uhuru Tyrie-Socha – Project Manager

Annex 7: Recommendations from the initial research

Recommendation 1 Develop a web based portal to provide a common location for information and resources for LSAs and their managers. This will also support the development of a collective identity for LSAs and should improve practice by supporting the sector to share information more efficiently. This is likely to involve the development of a national organising body.

Recommendation 2 Building on effective practice, develop an approach and related resources to support the planning of customized training and professional development which is directly derived from LSAs' and teachers identified needs. This methodology is exemplified in the Coventry Adult Service case study. Consideration could then be given to wider dissemination and national rollout.

Recommendation 3 Develop a Locally Based Network to coordinate CPD activities.

Recommendation 4 Develop an organisational audit tool**.**

Recommendation 5 Develop a profiling tool which individuals and organisations could use to assess skills, competencies, confidence and training needs against NOS and range of knowledge sets.

Recommendation 6 Undertake research and develop systems to provide and maintain accurate workforce data.

Recommendation 7 Develop a virtual centre of specialist expertise.

Recommendation 8 Develop a career structure and progression pathway for LSAs in lifelong learning with relevant nationally recognised qualifications from Levels 2 – 4. Information about qualifications should be published on the LSA portal.

Recommendation 9 Review Initial Teacher Training and CPD specifications for teachers to ensure that they include working with support staff.

Recommendation 10 Research and review training and CPD for managers of LSAs to ensure that management development includes their role in organisational development and managing change.

Recommendation 11 Collate, develop and publish guidance and protocols on alternative CPD approaches such as shadowing, buddying and mentoring.

Recommendation 12 Encourage the development of e-learning resources for LSAs and LSA managers. Existing resources should be identified and signposted on the LSA portal.

Recommendation 13 Develop resources to support organisations in involving learners in identifying their own support needs.

Recommendation 14 LSIS and its partners to undertake further research to identify how existing structures and systems influence the provision and nature of support and potentially discourage independence.

Recommendation 15 Explore the potential of technology for further promoting independence and identify best practice within the sector to reduce reliance on physical support.

Annex 8: Reports and References, Including initial research

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and deployment of LSAs and learning support across the organisation and Factors s that contribute to effective management of LSAs and learning support in the classroom

Simpson, B. (2010) *Enhancement of Learning Support*

The training and development needs of learning support assistants. The views of learning support assistants and their managers. Natspec

Annex 9: Breakdown of North West Learner Reference Group support needs and NQF level

Learner ID	Support Need	NQF Level
1	Complex Learning Difficulty, Epilepsy	Pre entry milestones
2	Complex Learning Difficulty, Epilepsy	Entry Level 1
3	Complex Learning Difficulty, Epilepsy	Entry Level 1
4.	Complex Learning Difficulty, Epilepsy	Entry Level 1
1.	Moderate Learning Difficulty, Visual Impairment, Physical Impairment	Entry Level 3 – Skills for Working Life
2.	Moderate Learning Difficulty	Level 1 – Introductory Diploma in Caring for Children
3.	Specific Learning Difficulties	NVQ Level 1 – Performing Engineering Operations
4.	Deaf	Level 2 – Diploma For Progression (Pre Access - Humanities)
5.	Visual Impairment	Level 3 – BTEC Diploma in IT

Annex 10: Enhancement of Learner Support - Equality and Diversity Data for regional events

Ethnicity	Total
Any other white background	5
African	2
Asian or Asian British	2
Bangladeshi	1
Black or black British	4
Chinese or other ethnic group	1
Dual heritage	3
Pakistani	1
Prefer not to say	34
White	30
White British	379
White Irish	9
Any other ethnic group	1
Total	**472**
Other Ethnicity Specify	
Pakistani	1
Celtic	1
French national	1
Welsh	1

Yemeni	1
Some Irish and Scottish ancestry	1
White Other - from Belgian origin	1
Prefer not to say	1
Total	**8**
Age Group	
25 and under	30
26-34	64
35-44	106
45-54	148
55-64	73
65+	3
Prefer not to say	48
Total	**472**
Employment Status	
Contract	7
Agency	5
Full-time employed	399
Part-time employed	61
Total	**472**
Gender	

Male	98
Female	358
Prefer not to say	16
Total	**472**
Religion	
Buddhist	5
Christian	216
Jewish	1
Sikh	1
Muslim	4
None	116
Prefer not to say	129
Total	**472**
Disability	
Yes	91
No	336
Prefer not to say	45
Total	**472**
Impairments	
Medical conditions	13
Physical or sensory impairments	15

Mental health difficulties	2
Specific learning difficulties	8
Total	**38**

Annex 11: Enhancement of Learner Support - Equality and Diversity Data for conferences

Ethnic Background	Total
Any other white background	5
Any other Asian background	1
Any other black background	1
British	141
Caribbean	1
Indian	1
Irish	5
Pakistani	1
Prefer not to say	16
White and black African	1
White and black Caribbean	1
Total	**174**
Age Group	
25 and under	7
26-34	18
35-44	39
45-54	54

55-64	31
Prefer not to say	18
Total	**167**
Employment Status	
Prefer not to say	5
Yes	168
Total	**173**
Employment Status - Specify	
Full-time	139
Part-time	17
Total	**156**
Gender	
Man	39
Woman	123
Prefer not to say	8
Total	**170**
Religion or Belief	
Christian	58
Muslim	2
None	32

Prefer not to say	58
Total	**150**
Disability	
Yes	5
No	150
Prefer not to say	12
Total	**167**
Disability Impairments	
Other or prefer not to say	3
Physical or sensory impairments	2
Mental health difficulties	1
Specific learning difficulties	1
Total	**7**
Sexual Orientation	
Heterosexual or straight	109
Lesbian or gay	3
Prefer not to say	40
Total	**152**
Transsexual	
No	133

Yes	6
Prefer not to say	18
Total	**157**