


School Remodelling

a UNISON survival guide



Implementing the National Agreement on Remodelling the School Workforce – your questions answered

UNISON

the public service union



Introduction

The National Agreement on Remodelling the School Workforce has led to the development of new roles for support staff. These are the basis for career structures that are now being negotiated. Many new training opportunities have opened up and roles are changing. For many staff this is the first time they have had the opportunity to access career development and get the recognition they deserve.

This booklet tries to answer some of the frequently asked questions regarding the new roles and changed responsibilities primarily for staff working in classrooms.

If you are not already a UNISON member now is the time to join – together we can make sure that school remodelling is about career opportunities and an enhanced status for support staff, not exploitation.



UNISON is already the biggest union for school support staff but too many staff are not in any union. The more members we have, the stronger we are. We need a UNISON contact in every school. Join now and become active.

HAVE A VOICE – SPEAK IN UNISON

Q What exactly is meant by cover supervision?

A 'Cover supervision' occurs when there is no active teaching taking place. Pupils carry out pre-prepared exercises under supervision. The time and nature of cover supervision undertaken by suitably trained support staff will depend on the type of school, ie there will be differences in secondary, primary and special schools. The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) guidance says that cover supervision should only be carried out for short-term absences. It describes circumstances that need to be taken into account when deciding on the length of cover supervision. In a secondary school it is possible that pupils will carry out self-directed learning in a classroom, laboratory, library or ICT centre under supervision. In primary and special schools cover supervision could very quickly become teaching. This, however, would go beyond the role of a cover supervisor and if active teaching is taking place the person undertaking that role should be graded at a higher level. Delivering lessons during a teacher's planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time is not cover supervision. WAMG guidance can be downloaded from the UNISON website at www.unison.org.uk/education/schools.

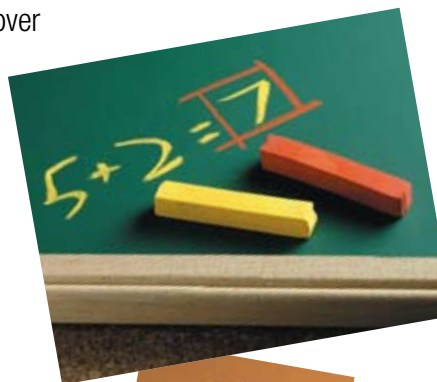


Q Who can do cover supervision?

A Cover supervision can be a role in itself or part of a role. Existing staff who are asked to undertake cover supervision should be given the option of either of the above. National profiles developed by the National Joint Council for Local Government (NJC) suggest that the appropriate grade for this role should be at level 3 in a four-level career structure. Staff undertaking cover supervision need to have appropriate training which is set out in WAMG guidance.

Q Should children in early years be expected to work independently for half or even whole days with a cover supervisor?

A As indicated above, in primary and special schools cover supervision will very quickly become teaching. This, however, would go beyond the role of a cover supervisor and if active teaching is taking place the person undertaking that role should be graded at a higher level. The blurring of both roles must not be allowed. For early years, it is difficult to see how cover supervision will be appropriate at all, as it is extremely unlikely that children of this age would be able to work independently. It is more realistic to ensure support staff who have this responsibility have higher level teaching assistant status or are working towards it, and are being paid accordingly. Qualified nursery nurses are frequently left in charge of a nursery class and their pay and grading should reflect this or they should refuse to do it. Similar arrangements need to be made for special schools.



Q What is a higher level teaching assistant (HLTA)?

A HLTA status is awarded to those staff who demonstrate that they can meet the national professional standards. The National Agreement on Remodelling states that teachers and HLTAs are not interchangeable and that each class or group for timetabled subjects must be assigned a teacher to teach them. The fact that HLTAs may be working with whole classes for some of the time (often during a teacher's PPA time) does not make them substitutes for a teacher. In partnership with the teacher allocated to a class, an HLTA will take on a more senior role, which can vary according to age group

and type of school. The WAMG guidance on HLTAs gives a whole range of examples of different roles for HLTAs. In some schools, science and ICT technicians and other professional staff, such as librarians, may be working at HLTA level or asked to take this on. Once again this should be agreed with the staff and their grade may need to be re-evaluated. WAMG guidance can be found at www.unison.org.uk/education/schools.

Q I have gained HLTA status. Will I be paid at a higher level?

A Successfully completing the training or assessment and obtaining HLTA status will not automatically guarantee a job as an HLTA. Schools will determine if they want to deploy HLTAs and will either upgrade existing staff or advertise a new post. However staff who have completed the training should only work at HLTA level where the job is clearly specified and the agreed grade reflects the higher level work.

Q Can I work as an HLTA without having HLTA status?

A The HLTA standards cover professional values and practices, knowledge and understanding, and the delivery of teaching and learning activities under the supervision and guidance of a teacher. Achievement of HLTA status provides an objective assurance to schools and parents that those members of support staff are working to this set of agreed national professional standards. The assessment and training of HLTAs is an ongoing programme although places each year are limited. It is possible that if a headteacher is satisfied that a member of staff meets the standards and the person concerned agrees to the role and, crucially, is paid for it, they can work as an HLTA. But schools



should ensure that those staff have an early opportunity to take part in an HLTA programme. Above all UNISON's view is that members should not work at this level unless they have agreed to it and their pay reflects their level of responsibilities.

Q How can I get training in order to gain HLTA status?

A In England, training for HLTAs is available as an assessment-only route or as a full training programme which is flexible according to the needs of the candidate. HLTA training is funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) via the local authority (LA). The LA has to publish details of its process for selecting candidates and will advise which route is most appropriate for an individual. Further details can be found at the TDA website www.tda.gov.uk/support/hlta.

In Wales, the assessment-only route is available. In order to be accepted to this route, candidates must already have either a level 3 qualification (NNEB, NVQ 3 or similar) and/or have a number of years of experience in schools. They must also have a level 2 qualification in literacy and numeracy. Training is provided locally through local education authorities (LEAs) consortia. Details will be available from the LEAs. Potential candidates should speak to their headteacher and ask for endorsement.



Q Is a specialist teaching assistant qualification (STAC) or a foundation degree equivalent to HLTA status?

A HLTA status is awarded when a candidate meets the national standards for HLTAs. These were developed following the National Agreement on Remodelling when a new professional role for teaching assistants was introduced. The TDA, which developed the standards, is working with higher education institutions in order to make sure that such programmes are now based on the HLTA standards. If a TA already has this qualification he or she may need to be assessed against the standards in order to be awarded HLTA status. This is necessary in order to safeguard the HLTA standards and introduce national consistency.

Q What is PPA time and does an HLTA qualify for it?

A PPA time is time set aside for teachers during their timetabled teaching hours to allow them to carry out planning, preparation and assessment. Since September 2005, teachers get 10% of their timetabled time for PPA. HLTAs who undertake some whole class teaching should also be given time within their working week to prepare and liaise with the teacher.

Q I work as an HLTA and this includes working with part or sometimes the whole of the class. However, I only get paid for the hours in the classroom; the time I need to speak with the teacher before and after lessons is not paid.

A The contracts of HLTAs must reflect the responsible independent work they do at a high professional level. Teachers and HLTAs need to work together and time needs to be allowed for feedback and preparation. Therefore HLTA contracts need to include time to



discuss planning and pupil progress with the teacher or other staff members. If it doesn't, you shouldn't stay behind or come in early in your own unpaid time but should demand that you get more paid hours to do the work.

Q My head has asked me to do cover supervision during a teacher's PPA time. What shall I do?

A There is a confusion here between cover and being timetabled to teach a class. Cover arises when a teacher is absent from a lesson they normally teach. This will, usually, be on short-term notice. During cover supervision, which can be done by trained support staff, no active teaching takes place. Since PPA time is an entitlement for teachers, it means they will have this time on a regular basis. Therefore there is a need for someone else to be timetabled to teach the class.

Schools may choose to employ additional teachers for this, other professionals such as sport coaches, drama and music specialists, or staff working at HLTA level. This is therefore higher level work than cover supervision. More training and experience is needed and pay levels should reflect the increased responsibility and skills needed. The national guidance is that cover supervision is at level 3 and HLTA work at level 4 in a 4-level career structure. Career structures in your LA may have a different number of levels.



Q Is the sole purpose of an HLTA to teach classes in order to allow teachers to take their PPA time?

A No. The role of an HLTA is a much wider one than working with whole classes. Those who have achieved HLTA status will have had to meet all of the 31 standards developed for HLTAs, and whole class teaching is only one of the standards. HLTA roles have greater complexity and autonomy than other classroom support roles and they are expected to make a significant contribution in a variety of contexts. Some examples are given in the WAMG advice. This can be downloaded from www.unison.org.uk/education/schools.

Q I am a teaching assistant and my head has asked me to teach a class during the time that the teacher normally responsible for that class is taking PPA time. I will be paid at a higher level for this time only. Is this correct?

A Absolutely not, UNISON is completely opposed to this approach. Paying only for these set times is based on the assumption that HLTA work means standing in front of a class. If a nursery nurse or teaching assistant has the skill and knowledge to take a class, she is unlikely not to use the full range of her skills in her normal job. It is very likely she will in fact do level 4 work but only be paid on a level 3 or even 2. In other words, when working in her main role she doesn't lose the skills that she needs in order to teach a class. It would be much better use of these skills if she was deployed as an HLTA in a broader role and paid accordingly. UNISON has pushed to ensure that the WAMG advice on this clearly states that casual remuneration arrangements – which give enhanced pay to teaching assistants who meet the HLTA standards only for those hours when they are deployed with whole classes to provide PPA time for teachers – are not in line with the aims of workforce



reform and the principles of the National Agreement. Our advice to members is to say no to such arrangements and for branches to negotiate around job descriptions with higher grades that reflect these new roles. Teachers often reported that they had to spend several hours per week doing administrative work but schools never proposed paying them at a lower clerical rate for those hours! For more information see WAMG note 12 at www.unison.org.uk/file/A2297.pdf.

Q My head has asked that each TA runs a 'club' for one/two hours a week to release teachers for their PPA time. Is the title 'club' being used to get around the financial implications of using HLTAs?

A By using the word 'club' it seems that the school is trying to get around agreements on career structures. Career structures are negotiated locally. Not all authorities have finalised the new structures yet and schools may well try to jump into this vacuum. Support staff who are asked to work with a class without a teacher being present need to be trained so that they are and feel competent to do this work. It doesn't matter what the school calls it, if you are expected to do this level of work you should be treated and paid as a higher level teaching assistant.



Q My headteacher says she does not know how much to pay me for my work as an HLTA because the LA has not yet agreed any grading structures.

A Community schools need to select a grade for their staff from grades negotiated at local authority (LA) level. Some authorities are still in the middle of negotiations. Each authority should however have determined interim grades in order to direct schools. You should contact your branch to find out what the situation in your authority is.

Q Can a head impose new responsibilities on support staff without consultation and/or agreement?

A Where additional duties are added to the roles of existing staff members this must be done through consultation and jobs must be re-evaluated to reflect the full range of responsibilities. Similarly, where new posts are created they must sit within clearly defined local grading and school staffing structures. If support staff are taking on increasing responsibilities, in some cases sitting on school leadership teams, then they must have access to appropriate pay and rewards. Support staff do not have to accept unilateral changes to their contracts. WAMG advice on the need for consultation is at www.unison.org.uk/file/A2308.pdf.

Q My headteacher says because our union has signed the National Agreement, the support staff have to take on these higher responsibilities. Is this correct?

A No. The agreement did not change the contract of any support staff in schools. UNISON signed the agreement, along with the other support staff unions, because it opened up an opportunity to develop a career structure for our members. Any substantial changes to

job descriptions or terms and conditions must be done through consultation and agreement. New grading and career structures are being negotiated by UNISON. If your headteacher insists on this, contact your local UNISON branch immediately.

Q I am a nursery nurse with an NNEB and am told that in order to gain HLTA status I will need to have a level 2 qualification in literacy and numeracy. Is this correct?

A The TDA needs to insist on this qualification in order to safeguard the standards. Many NNEBs and other TAs who don't have an O-level or GCSE in English and/or maths feel this might stop them from achieving the HLTA status. However a number of LAs and FE colleges have put on special courses to help TAs and nursery nurses achieve a level 2 qualification. There is also a website to help candidates to assess their skills and to find a test centre. It is www.move-on.org.uk .



Q I am a nursery nurse working in early years and have achieved HLTA status. My headteacher has asked me to teach 10 year olds in order to allow the teacher responsible for that class to take PPA time. I feel out of my depth with older children because I have never worked with them. Do I have to do this?

A The HLTA training and assessment is not age or subject specific. That means it does not add new areas of expertise but assesses or expands the current area of expertise. If an HLTA is expected to work with a different

age group (or in a different subject) then additional training, which may have to be substantial, will be necessary. This is emphasised in WAMG guidance on HLTAs.

Q The teacher I normally work with always has me as support in the classroom. Now I have agreed to do 'specified work' once a week in that class (to allow for PPA time) but I will be alone in the class without support. Is this fair?

A HLTAs working with whole classes should not mean any reduction in the support of pupils. The headteacher should, therefore, consider what additional classroom support may be needed.

Q I usually stay behind to clear up the classroom, talk to parents and sometimes to take part in staff meetings. I'm not getting paid for this time but it is important for my job. Should I continue to do this?

A The aim of the National Agreement is to give school support staff a more professional role and make them part of the school team. Teachers get paid a professional inclusive salary that is meant to reflect the fact that their work involves far more than just the time spent in front of pupils. Support staff are usually paid on an hourly basis. To issue contracts to support staff that only pay for the hours that staff spend in the classroom, when clearly more of their time is needed to fulfil their role, is contrary to the spirit of the Agreement. The working week and pay should fully reflect the time needed to do the job with all additional duties that may be necessary. In these circumstances, UNISON's advice is that staff should refuse to do additional unpaid work. In some schools support staff are expected to go on school trips outside of school hours, or even residential trips for no

additional pay. Staff should be paid the appropriate rate, which might include an overtime rate, for **any** work over their paid hours.

Q I am a nursery nurse and currently on a full-year contract. The new career structure proposed by the LA will put all classroom-based staff on term-time only contracts. What can I do about this?



A A number of local authorities have tried to do this. However, usually a protection can be negotiated for existing staff. In those authorities where union organisation has been strong, the move to term-time only contract could be resisted. It is important that more support staff join the union and get involved with their local branch to help organise and oppose this method of undermining staff conditions.

Q Our local authority has just completed job evaluation and the pay levels mean that those of us on full-year contracts will actually lose money (because of the introduction of term-time only contracts) when applying for an HLTA post.

A Boycott the post if it means less money for more work. No union would advise its members to take on additional work for less money.

Q What will happen to my pension if I'm put onto a term-time only contract?



A Being placed on a term-time only contract could be detrimental unless your annual rate of pay increases sufficiently to offset the new way of calculating your pension. When your pension is calculated it is based on your equivalent full-year salary times your length of service per year times the accrual rate of the pension scheme. This is 1/80 in the local government pension scheme for service prior to 1 April 2008 and 1/60 for service thereafter. In calculating your pension as a term-time worker, the standard practice is to reduce the length of service.

For example, if your notional full-year salary is £20,000 but your term-time contract is for 45 weeks a year, your pension would accrue with effect from 1 April 2008 at $1/60 \times 45/52 \times £20,000$.

There may be a further reduction in the accrual rate of the pension if you are working part-time or if you are a nursery nurse working 32.5 hours a week and the full-time week is now considered to be 37 hours per week.

However, if you are receiving a substantial upgrading you could receive an increase in your pension. This is because all your past service will be considered as full-year (without any reduction for term-time working) and the calculation of your pension will be based on your new uprated salary. This will be most beneficial to those staff approaching retirement.

As you can see, the effect on your pension is not straightforward and will have different results for different members of staff. It is therefore vital that discussions about the effect on pensions are included in negotiations on pay and grading structures.

Further advice is available from your branch or regional officer or, as a last resort, the pensions unit at head office.

Q What is happening about training?

A The TDA has produced a three-year programme of training for support staff. It has also developed a framework to help school leaders and support staff identify appropriate training and development. It shows progression opportunities within and across different roles in order to help staff consider potential career pathways. The framework maps support staff job roles against currently available national training and qualifications commonly used by local authorities and schools. Find out more at www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/c/career_support_staff.pdf.

UNISON, with the support of the TDA, has developed a dedicated training website covering current and developing roles within all types of schools. It is designed to help school staff identify the kind of training they need/want for different roles in schools. It includes a self-assessment tool and examples of career development. Go to www.skills4schools.org.uk.



Glossary

HLTA Higher level teaching assistant

HLTA status is awarded to staff who can demonstrate that they have achieved national professional standards in a range of roles. It can be achieved through training or by skills assessment.

PPA Planning, preparation and assessment

PPA is the time set aside for the planning and preparation of classes in school and time for the assessment of pupils, ie writing reports and marking. As part of the workforce agreement, teaching staff are guaranteed time away from the classroom to do this work.

TDA Training and Development Agency for Schools

The government established the TDA to oversee the training needs and requirements of the whole school workforce in England and Wales.

WAMG Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group

The WAMG is the group of partners who signed the Workforce Agreement on Remodelling in 2003 and who oversee its implementation. It includes representatives of teacher, headteacher and school staff unions, the national employers and the Department for Children, Schools and Families. It supports and advises stakeholders on remodelling and produces guidelines and advice on the implementation of the National Agreement.

If you are already a member of UNISON, get involved and become the union rep for your school.

If not then join UNISON now by calling UNISONdirect on *0845 355 0845.

Textphone users call UNISONdirect on *0800 0 967 968.

*** Please quote reference EDSAC**

Lines are open Monday- Friday, 6am to midnight and 9am to 4pm Saturday or visit www.unison.org.uk



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