



Time to train

A report about
school support staff training

**UNISON**
the public service union

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Introduction

Support staff working in schools are a very diverse group, some provide direct support for pupils and their teaching and learning, others play a key role in the management and administration of the school. Roles covered by the increasingly inadequate term 'support staff' include teaching assistants and learning mentors, science and IT technicians, school business managers and examination officers, site supervisors and catering staff, librarians and home liaison officers, secretarial and behaviour management staff – and new roles are developing all the time.

The range of skills is therefore diverse, as is the extent to which training and development has been available. Many of these staff are very skilled and experienced, though some do not necessarily have any formal qualifications. Other staff are already well qualified, but need more specialist training. All will have development needs as they take on more responsibilities and as new roles for support staff emerge.

The training and development of support staff has been a mixed story in the past but has made considerable progress since the National Agreement on school remodelling was signed in 2003. Since then more resources have gone into training and development and more support and guidance has been given to schools. However, this report shows that while there have been genuine advances and progress, these are sometimes patchy and only partially successful for a variety of reasons.

This research outlines the changes that have taken place in the organisation of support staff training over the past five years and examines their impact at local level. By bringing together the experiences of local authorities, schools and support staff themselves, the report shows where progress has been made and where there are barriers to overcome.

To inform the research, views were sought from school workforce development advisers based in local authorities, from senior staff in schools responsible for support staff training and development and from staff themselves who work in supporting roles in schools. These views were gathered by means of a number of surveys conducted throughout England and a series of personal and phone interviews.

At the time of this research the Welsh Assembly had commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to do research on support staff employment including training, and it was therefore decided not to include Wales in this study.

UNISON is actively engaged in the wider learning agenda reflected in the training of over 3,000 union learning reps and in the several hundred workplace learning agreements reached with employers. This study examines how far this work extends into schools and draws attention to the considerable barriers union activists face in trying to organise training courses for school staff. It makes the case for a closer co-operation of schools and local authorities with the learning agenda organised by UNISON in order to benefit particularly those staff who have been left out of formal learning in the past.

The report makes a number of recommendations for further improvement in the access of training. Some are aimed at national negotiators who can address a number of the issues in the new negotiating body for school staff. Others can be used as a support for trade union work at local level. The report particularly emphasises the importance of the local social partnerships and their monitoring role with regard to access to training.

The report was written by Bruni de la Motte, a UNISON national officer in the education workforce unit.

UNISON represents more than 1.3 million public service workers, 300,000 of whom are employed in school and other education settings, making UNISON the leading trade union voice in education today.

Training school
support staff –
the story of the
last five years

The National Agreement and its impact on training

The National Agreement on school remodelling was a watershed in terms of how the whole school workforce was to be viewed in future. In effect, it put support staff on the map by recognising their important contribution to learning. And the National Agreement increased responsibilities for support staff and created new roles. It says in the agreement:

Support staff will be increasingly recognised for the contribution they make to raising standards, and they will have access to expanded roles and improved career opportunities.¹

This simple statement had important implications for training. In 2003, the year the National Agreement was signed, training of school support staff was the responsibility of the local government employers. That meant that training was organised at local authority level and therefore subject to considerable variations. There were some outstanding local authorities with a very broad range of training opportunities but others where school staff training was given a low priority. There was no national monitoring of what happened at local level and no direct link with the developments in educational policy. Although the national employers had developed national occupational standards for teaching assistants leading to the development of NVQs for teaching assistants, the vast majority of training for school staff was unregulated and unaccredited. There was duplication and overlap, dead-end, one-off courses and no clear career pathways for support staff working in schools.

Higher Level Steering Group

Following the signing of the National Agreement and pressure from the support staff trade unions, the government took an increased interest in the training of support staff. In summer 2003, the minister for schools wrote to the chief executive of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) asking him to ‘step up its contribution to developing the skills of support staff working in schools.’² He pointed out that better training and career development opportunities were a high priority for the government and that this was critical for delivering the National Agreement.

As a result a high-level steering group was set up bringing together national employers, support staff trade unions, the LSC and the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This group immediately started work on developing collaborative partnerships between local authorities and local LSCs. In October 2003, joint guidance by the DfES and the LSC was issued to local authorities and local LSCs on the training of school support staff. Local LSCs were encouraged to work actively with schools, local authorities and training providers to support school workforce remodelling. A major pilot training towards qualifications already ongoing was doubled in scope and extended in the areas of delivery, and new networks of local LSCs and local authorities were established.

In 2004, the DfES produced a plan for the training and development of

¹ *Raising Standards and Tackling Workload – A national agreement, signed on 15 January 2003 by most of the school workforce unions, local authority employers and government.*

² *David Miliband, letter to John Harwood, 12 June 2003*

school support staff and, at the same time, extended the remit of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) to work on behalf of the whole school workforce. As a result of this extended remit the name of the agency was finally changed (in September 2005) to Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). In the plan published by the DfES it says:

The TTA will be looking to develop a coherent national framework for school support staff training and development, which can guide the local development and delivery of training, taking account of local needs and priorities.³

The DfES plan was complemented by the Learning and Skills Council's School Support Staff Sector Plan, which was published at the same time.

The transfer of responsibility for training the very diverse workforce in schools to a national body (in spring 2004) meant that a more strategic approach to training and development became possible. A better link between education policy instigated by the DfES and the resulting training requirements was established, which meant that training opportunities for support staff were expanded. It brought about the closer working of the national agency now responsible for training, the DfES, other government agencies, like the National College of School Leadership, and the support staff trade unions with UNISON as the main trade union for support staff taking a leading role. This work was very much supported by the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) which had been set up to oversee and support the implementation of the National Agreement.

As a result, there were some early achievements of this new partnership:

Higher level teaching assistant training

Standards for higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) were developed and the status of HLTAs introduced.

In 2004–5 the first 7,000 HLTAs achieved the status. The initial assessment-only route to HLTA status (which took into account that a considerable number of teaching assistants (TAs) already worked at a higher level with the appropriate skills) was later extended by a tailored training route.

Support Work in Schools qualification

By 2005, a new, more flexible, generic vocational qualification had been developed with the help of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and piloted with great success. This qualification, which is unit based, can be tailored to the needs of schools and their support staff and thus fulfils the need particularly of those working in multiple roles. The qualification, benchmarked to national standards and fully accredited in England and Wales, is available at levels 2 and 3. Today it is called the Support Work in Schools (SWiS) qualification and is funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) through local authorities.

Introductory training for all support staff

Induction training for teaching assistants, funded by the DfES, had existed for some time. With the expansion of roles of support staff and the development of the core skills for the children's workforce, the need for introductory courses for other supporting staff in schools became more pressing. Therefore, in 2003, a general induction course was developed by the DfES which, like the induction course for TAs, was delivered through local authorities. Today both programmes have been combined and revised by the TDA which now takes responsibility for them.

Behaviour and Attendance Management training

A new National Programme for School Leadership in Behaviour and Attendance offered intermediate and advanced training in behaviour and attendance management for support staff. The programme started in September 2004

³ Department for Education and Skills (2004), *School Support Staff Training and Development. Our plans for 2004-05.*

with a pathfinder group of support staff in Learning Support Units and Pupil Referral Units. Following that, a wide range of support staff working with all ages in both mainstream and special schools were given access to the programme. Nine regional network and training co-ordinators were in post from September 2004 and organised local cluster groups of staff undergoing training. The programme involves teaching and support staff training together.

Certificate and Diploma of School Business Management

The Certificate of School Business Management (CSBM) and the Diploma of School Business Management (DSBM) were designed to support and enhance the skills of senior administrative staff as they take on more responsible managerial roles. The programme was piloted in 2002 by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), which is responsible for the programme and started in full in 2003. Today NCSL and TDA have joint responsibility for the centrally funded programme.

Dedicated website for school support staff training

A dedicated website www.skills4schools.org.uk was developed by UNISON with funding from the Union Learning Fund. The award winning website was launched in 2005 and provides a user-friendly, on-line guide to training, development and career pathways for all school support staff, covering current and developing roles within all school sectors. The website has a dual purpose, both to promote recognition of skills and experience, and to actively encourage support staff to develop their roles through training and career development.

School Workforce Development Board

When, in 2004, the TTA was given its wider remit of bringing greater coherence to the training and development of

support staff in schools, reducing skills gaps and shortages, and enabling school staff to develop their confidence and competence, it set up the School Workforce Development Board (SWDB). The SWDB was a new strategic partnership between the key organisations involved in support staff training and development. The members of the SWDB included: the DfES, the Employers' Organisation for Local Government, the LSC (which had identified school workforce development as a national priority), the National College for School Leadership, Ofsted, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the National Remodelling Team (which was set up by the DfES to provide a structured change process for schools), and two representatives of the WAMG, including UNISON. In 2006, the contract of the NRT was re-tendered and the consultancy is now part of the TDA.

In its first year the SWDB identified three priorities.⁴ They were to:

- remove the barriers that prevent take-up of training and development by support staff
- improve the supply of training and development for support staff
- ensure that training and development is of a high quality.

These priorities, identified early on to improve access to training for a broad range of support staff, meant that targeted actions needed be taken. That included, above all, improvement in the provision of information about available training activities by the various providers in local areas. For this purpose school workforce development advisers were funded in each local authority in England to help provide workforce development advice to schools. This complemented the work of local remodelling advisers who helped to implement the National Agreement and the remodelling process. Through this funding and the support given from the TDA through its regional network, the co-operation between local authorities and schools, which had been

4 *School Workforce Development Board (2005), Building the school team. Our plans for support staff training and development 2005-06.*

increasingly disconnected through the increased autonomy of schools, started to improve.

Best practice examples were gathered and validated by WAMG in terms of the benefits of a well-trained and remodelled workforce and in terms of good deployment. These examples were then disseminated to support schools and local authorities to adopt a whole-school staff development.

It was recognised that support staff needed access to flexible, tailored training so that they would have the skills and knowledge for the range of roles they fulfil. And emphasis was put onto clear development opportunities and progression routes to enable support staff to develop their careers.

Early on an acute lack of data and information was identified. The DfES had not gathered any information on training for support staff nor had the local government employers. Any knowledge, if it existed, was restricted to local areas. The only national in-depth research had been carried out by UNISON, which had commissioned the National Foundation for Education Research and the Labour Research Department to conduct national surveys in 1998, 2002 and 2004.⁵

Following the signing of the National Agreement, for the first time, research was commissioned by government to obtain detailed information about support staff. In 2003, the DfES and the Welsh Assembly commissioned a five-year research project, conducted by the Institute of Education at the University of London, on the deployment and impact of all categories of support staff in primary, secondary and special schools in England and Wales. Later the TDA commissioned a whole range of academic studies and surveys to gather comprehensive data.

In 2006, the SWDB published a three-year plan for the training and development of school support staff.⁶ This aimed to give a more strategic approach at national level to the provision of training and development for support staff in schools. The SWDB three-year strategy was based on three objectives:

- supporting schools to develop new ways of training and deploying their support staff
- creating a framework of standards and qualifications to enable schools to develop the potential of all support staff
- extending training opportunities to meet the development needs of all support staff.

Rather than giving details about individual projects and programmes this document drew users to the TDA and partner websites through various links thus pointing to more information about specific training and development opportunities and programmes.

How the scene has changed

Since the TDA has taken over strategic responsibility for training and development of school support staff a whole range of new opportunities for training and tools for those who organise training has been developed.

Career development framework

One of the important initiatives of the TDA to support the planning of training was the development of the Support Staff Framework. This web-based tool, available since September 2006, was created to support local authorities and schools in identifying appropriate training and qualifications for school support staff. It maps support staff job roles

5 *Barbara Lee and Clare Mawson (1998), Survey of Classroom Assistants. A report by NFER for UNISON; LRD (2002), Teaching assistants: a report on the role, pay and employment conditions of teaching assistants; Labour Research Department (2004), School support staff survey 2004: a report on the role, training, salaries and employment conditions of school support staff.*

6 *School Workforce Development Board (2006), Developing people to support learning. A skills strategy for the wider school workforce 2006-09.*

against the current national training and qualifications commonly used by local authorities and schools. The framework is interactive and helps users when considering potential career pathways. It shows progression opportunities within and across different occupational roles within the school workforce.

National occupational standards for staff supporting teaching and learning

The National Occupational Standards (NOS) for teaching and classroom assistants are now owned by the TDA. They were recently revised and broadened and are now called NOS for staff who support teaching and learning in schools (STL). Rather than just for teaching assistants they can now be used to support a range of other roles, such as: pastoral support roles, bilingual support, subject support, cover supervision, special educational needs and additional support.

Induction for support staff

The TDA has revised the induction materials for support staff. The materials continue to support local authorities in delivering training courses that cover the essential knowledge and skills all support staff need in their roles. The training complements school-based induction, providing an introduction to important developments in education, such as Every Child Matters, the National Curriculum and ways of managing behaviour.

Skills4schools website

This dedicated website (www.skills4schools.org.uk), funded by the TDA but run by UNISON, is aimed at support staff working in schools and should be their first port of call when thinking about their training needs. It provides an online guide to training, development and career pathways, so that staff can develop in their current roles and plan for their career ahead. It contains training information for many different roles in schools, supported by case studies. The journey planner

helps identify current skills and future training plans. It also has information for continuing professional development (CPD) developers and union learning representatives to help them plan and support training and development of the whole school workforce. The website has more than 7,000 visits a week and is a valuable advice tool for all enquiries regarding training for school support staff. As one teaching assistant said:

“I read about the new skills4schools website and had a go at the career planner on the site. It suggested I could apply for higher level teaching assistant status, but I would need a Level 2 qualification in numeracy. With the help of the links on the site I did some numeracy practice tests online, contacted a local college and did the national numeracy test there during half term. It took one hour fifteen minutes and I passed straightaway. Within a few weeks of looking at the website I had the qualification I needed to progress in my career. It was brilliant.”

Support Work in Schools qualifications

The support work in schools (SWiS) qualifications, available at levels 2 and 3, provide staff with training relevant to their role and tailored to their specific development needs. Units can be chosen to best reflect the needs of the individual, role and school, helping staff build the knowledge, skills, confidence and experience. The TDA has developed detailed guidance for SWiS, which is available on their website. The guidance gives information about the qualifications to help identify the appropriate units for different roles. SWiS is now funded by the TDA through local authorities and in the recent financial year 7,000 learners have completed it.

Higher level teaching assistants programme

The professional standards for HLTAs were reviewed and revised in line with

the revised standards for teachers and came into force in 2007. The standards can be used to evaluate whether a person is ready for HLTA assessment. By summer 2008, more than 20,000 staff had achieved HLTA status. The programme continues to be funded by the TDA through the local authorities. An extensive study on the deployment and impact of HLTAs, commissioned by the TDA, was undertaken.⁷ One of the many findings of the research was that there is a fairly even split in terms of HLTA employment with about one-third working exclusively as HLTAs, one-third were working in split roles (with 65% of those being paid at different levels) and one-third were working in other roles. WAMG has issued advice regarding the deployment of HLTAs⁸ and continues to monitor the situation.

Skills for Life planner

The TDA has developed the Skills for Life planner to help identify and address any literacy and numeracy gaps among support staff.

School Business Manager programme

This programme is the joint responsibility of the TDA and the National College for School Leadership. It includes the Certificate of School Business Management (CSBM) and the Diploma of School Business Management (DSBM). The CSBM is aimed at people who have worked in school administration, such as school secretaries, or have recently been appointed as school business managers. The DSBM is aimed at experienced school business managers and has been developed to help them play a full part in their school's senior management team.

By summer 2008 about 3,500 people had completed the CSBM/DSBM courses.

Work on further qualifications in school business management qualifications is underway. There are plans for an Advanced Diploma of School Business

Management designed for those working across small groups of schools, such as federations of two or three small schools or a single large school. At the next higher level would be a School Business Director qualification intended for those working in larger, more complex groups of schools like federations, trusts and other formal partnerships including cross-phase and multi-agency settings. Twenty four demonstration projects are testing the concept of these advanced school business management qualifications. These projects are supported by desk research conducted by the University of Manchester and are informed by advice from consultancy company, McKinsey.

Comprehensive advice and support

The TDA has set up a comprehensive support network for local authorities and schools in order to facilitate training and development of the whole school workforce in a consistent way. Each local authority employs an adviser, partly funded by the TDA, whose role includes working with schools and the authority to raise the quality and impact of training and development, and to identify and share effective practice. They also feed local ideas about skills gaps and training and development priorities back to the TDA to help develop appropriate support. There are also regional advisers who have a co-ordinating role in their allocated region. It is through these advisers that the TDA cascades and gains information and seeks to share good practice.

New sector skills plan

The TDA is developing a new sector skills plan for the school workforce that will include a sector qualification strategy and clear priorities for training and development in the medium to long term. The main feature of the sector qualifications strategy will be a new competency framework for support

7 *National Foundation for Education Research (2007), Research into the deployment and impact of support staff who have achieved HLTA status.*

8 *WAMG Notes 12, 17 and 22.*

staff qualifications. This is to ensure that qualifications meet the needs of the sector, allow for progression and reflect other changes in the children's workforce.

In a wide stakeholder consultation, conducted by the TDA, regarding the creation of a career development framework, the majority had said they wanted to see an incremental framework put in place that allowed school support staff to build their skills over time from initial training to full occupational competence and which offered full recognition of prior achievement.

An integrated qualifications framework

What is proposed, therefore, is an integrated qualifications framework not just for the school workforce but for the children's workforce as a whole. It is designed to help workforce mobility and multi-agency working necessary for schools to meet the Every Child Matters agenda and the aims of the Children's Plan. It will also be linked to the new qualification and credit framework (QCF)⁹ With the introduction of the QCF and the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce, schools and local authorities will be in a position to plan development pathways that are more closely matched to individual needs.

In order to support an integrated approach to children's services, the government gave a commitment to create an integrated qualifications framework (IQF). The IQF will be a set of approved qualifications that allows progression, continuing professional development and mobility across the children and young people's workforce. It will be a comprehensive set of qualifications appropriate for people who work with children and young people, up to and including degrees and postgraduate qualifications. The IQF will be launched in 2010 across England.

The TDA is now developing a competency-based framework for school support staff. This will allow progression upwards along a specialist career path, sideways along a more generalist path or into a different role or even different sector. This framework for the wider school workforce will be, to begin with, at levels two and three. It will allow individuals to develop and specialise through the gaining of an award, certificate and diploma, with the diploma representing full occupational competency.

Changes in funding allocation

In 2008, the TDA has made a number of changes to its grant funding arrangements to local authorities (LAs). The most fundamental is the decision that LAs now receive one grant allocation to support training and development of school support staff. This replaces the present system of grants that are ringfenced for specific initiatives, for example HLTA training and SWiS training. This is to give LAs increased flexibility to meet local need and demand for training of school support staff.

In other words, it will now be up to LAs to decide how they will use the grant from the TDA. However, as part of the overall grant allocation the TDA will allocate a 'notional' level of grant in support of government priorities. These priorities currently include HLTA maths and science and the training of parent support advisers (level 3 of the SWiS qualification).

These changed arrangements mean that there will be an even greater need for trade unions to monitor allocation of training opportunities. There is a danger that only those groups of staff will have access to training whose

9 *The framework is a new way of recognising skills and qualifications. It does this by awarding credit for qualifications and units (small steps of learning). It enables people to gain qualifications at their own pace along flexible routes. The new framework has been tested between 2006–2008 and a decision regarding its full implementation will be made based on a report by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.*

role falls into one of the government's priorities. However, it is important for staff development across the board that training is available to all categories of staff and opportunities are spread fairly.

The view
of staff
development
from local
authorities

UNISON survey of workforce development advisers

All local authorities (LAs) in England have a dedicated person, funded by the TDA, responsible for school workforce development.

A survey was sent by UNISON to these School Workforce Development Advisers in each LA in England. The survey aimed to establish the variety of training programmes organised or facilitated by the authority, their level of communication with schools, the extent of the involvement of the local social partnership (the local Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group [local WAMG]) and the forms of monitoring of training for support staff.

One-third of LAs (51) with responsibilities for education, responded to the survey from across the country (UNISON regions):

- 5 LAs from Eastern region
- 3 LAs from the East Midlands
- 7 LAs from London
- 4 LAs from the Northern region
- 11 LAs from the North West
- 6 LAs from the South East
- 8 LAs from the South West
- 3 LAs from the West Midlands
- 4 LAs from Yorkshire/Humberside

The 14 regional advisers from the TDA, whose role is to develop cohesion and to provide local and regional intelligence and strategic support to LAs, had early on suggested the names of 34 LAs with good provision of training for support staff. Of those authorities only eight responded and are included in the 51 LAs mentioned above.

Training organised or facilitated by local authorities

When asked what sort of training programmes the LA organises for school staff, understandably, a number referred to their brochures or websites for details of the provision they offer to schools. But two-thirds (34 LAs) gave detailed accounts of the courses they offer.

The most widespread courses on offer were those where the TDA either provides the funding and/or the materials for training programmes. Thus the HLTA training, including Maths and Science specialism, was mentioned by 20 LAs; the induction programme for TAs was mentioned by 15 and the induction programme for support staff in general by 13 LAs. Training leading to the Support Work in Schools qualification (SWiS) appeared to be provided by almost all responding LAs (30). This shows a very positive response to this flexible, work-based qualification, now funded by the TDA.

Training for administrative staff included 14 provisions for the bursar development programme and six for NVQs. More than half of the LAs responding with details (18) either provided or facilitated various kinds of management training for support staff, including team leading, skills for middle leaders and the NCSL's Leading from the Middle programme. In contrast, only seven LAs mentioned Skills for Life programmes. While 11 LAs facilitated foundation degrees only six LAs offered courses for lunchtime supervisors and only two for technicians. It was surprising that training of cover supervisors was mentioned by only two LAs.

In addition to courses leading to or preparing for qualifications, there was a broad range of other training programmes. Many of these are in support of the curriculum, to support Special Educational Needs and training in behaviour and classroom management. Some of the other training programmes mentioned were health and safety (five LAs) first aid (three LAs) and finance (four LAs).

Good practice

Networks

- An essential aspect of professional development is the chance for people working in similar jobs to network. Thus it is encouraging that a number of LAs facilitate networks for TAs (four LAs), HLTAs (two LAs), admin staff (two LAs), learning mentors, science technicians and IT technicians who meet regularly. Some LAs also organise special conferences or workshops for certain staff groups including TAs, admin staff, IT technicians, science technicians, CPD leaders and support staff who support outside the classroom.
- One LA has an annual award and conferences programme. For several years one LA has been running an annual residential conference attended by about 100 TAs.
- One LA has an extensive range of networks – TAs, admin staff, science technicians and IT technicians – who meet half-termly. Supply cover and expenses for staff attending are paid.

Support in performance review

- In order to help schools with training needs analysis one LA offers schools a self-assessment tool. The LA has created three seconded part-time posts to work with staff in schools helping them to fill in the questionnaires for the self-assessment.
- One LA encourages all staff to keep a portfolio and all schools to offer at least one annual professional development review to staff.
- Three LAs have jointly produced a toolkit, Working Successfully with

Supporting Adults and have received financial support from the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) to produce materials.

Joint training

- Joint training for TAs, HLTAs, NQTs (newly qualified teachers) and supply teachers where appropriate.
- In an attempt to promote whole-school working, INSET programmes are open to teachers and TAs, and TAs are also encouraged to join courses that are offered to teachers.

Support with local provision and funding

- Several LAs secured local delivery of the Certificate of School Business Management (CSBM) (although one LA inexplicably lost funding for this the following year).
- One LA mentioned the role of training schools in its area. These are centres of excellence for training, acting as experts in adult learning and the transfer of skills, and providing a venue for high-quality professional development. They organise conferences and supervisor training, with one school providing a highly regarded 'prospective TA' course, which enables those interested in working as a TA to learn about the role.
- Foundation degrees are supported with bursaries.
- One LA partly or fully funds, among others, Certificates of HE and foundation degree courses for classroom-based staff, learning mentors, early years practitioners and admin staff.
- One LA has set up a leadership development centre for all support staff in leadership roles.

Concerns

- SWiS is offered to a wide range of support staff but several LAs reported that there was a much higher uptake from classroom-based staff. This indicates that in a number of LAs SWiS was offered to TAs even though

the NVQ is more appropriate for these staff.

- Split responsibilities within LAs was an issue. Several LAs mention that there are separate business units for school staff and for other support staff working in schools. This is a typical quote: ‘The school effectiveness section is only responsible for TAs; some training for other support staff is available through our Adult Community Learning Service’. While departments in some LAs with split arrangements work well together others say that they don’t have access to the information and therefore do not know whether schools are aware of the training available.
- One LA flagged up the issue of training for catering staff where school meals have been contracted out. While the LA offers food hygiene and health and safety courses the training is not focused on career development. This would be up to the contractor and the information on this is not being gathered.

Local authority communication with schools

Local authorities were asked how they communicate training information to schools and staff. The most commonly mentioned means of communication with schools used by the 51 LAs that responded were:

- flyers and posters (25 LAs)
- a course brochure; sometimes a supplementary brochure for TAs and other support staff (23 LAs)
- through a website, which in some cases included an on-line booking system (21 LAs); two LAs mentioned a dedicated website or page for school support staff
- email to the person in school responsible for support staff development, i.e. CPD leaders or staff development co-ordinators or bursars

or SENCOs (special educational needs co-ordinators) (19 LAs)

- school workforce newsletter or school bulletin, some produced termly, some weekly (17 LAs)
- dedicated support staff newsletter (nine LAs)
- email to headteachers (eight LAs)
- TA newsletter (four LAs)

Other methods of communication, used by a handful of LAs responding to the survey, included network meetings of different staff groups (eight), support staff conferences (three), headteacher meetings/briefings (five), link advisers who visit schools (two), intranet (two), school extranet (three), school websites (two), governors newsletter (one).

Some LAs contact support staff directly by sending emails or email alerts (three LAs) or by sending mobile phone texts.

Good practice

- Course brochure delivered to a named person in every school. Additional brochures are hand-delivered to every site for circulation and as a talking point when meeting with headteachers and groups of support staff. The brochure is also emailed to schools’ admin officers and this year it will be loaded onto a memory stick for distribution to staff in schools.
- Monthly newsletter which, in one LA, goes to all staff in their payslip.
- Support staff who act as learning champions and contact staff in schools directly, including:
 - county support champions who go into schools to encourage support staff to take up development opportunities (one day a week in eight areas)
 - HLTA link support workers who disseminate information on training opportunities to TAs as part of their outreach work
 - in one county: 10–11 support staff are released from school one

day a week to go into schools and help support staff to identify learning needs and encourage them to take up development opportunities. They are paid as HLTAs for this time

– In one urban LA six support staff are working full-time with schools as support staff champions to contact support staff directly and help them identify learning needs and opportunities.

- Termly drop-in information session for all school support staff.
- Annual support staff conference, open to all working in schools; this is well received by schools.
- Support staff conference specifically for those support staff who work outside the classroom.
- Several LAs have produced posters to provide an overview of all courses available for support staff. One LA's poster is particularly helpful in providing each role with options for further action, divided into: the individual's action, opportunities provided by their school, opportunities through links with other schools, opportunities provided by the LA, opportunities through national programmes and other providers.
- One LA regularly attends headteacher pyramid meetings in order to raise awareness of support staff training programmes and address queries or concerns headteachers may have. As a result of one of these meetings training events are now held in different parts of the LA in order to improve access. The LA offers cover and transport costs wherever possible.
- Five London boroughs pool training and make it available to each other, with an on-line booking system.

Concerns

- Some LAs use only limited communication channels, for example only a website or sending information only to CPD co-ordinators.

- Most LAs that responded seem to be unaware of the skills4schools website as a tool for school staff development. It is only mentioned in the responses of two LAs although more mention it on their own websites.
- Some LAs advertised Skills for Life courses on support staff pay packets but with limited impact. Direct contact with prospective learners is crucial to persuade and motivate them for this training. Union learning reps could play an important part in communicating with support staff directly and motivating them to attend these courses.
- Induction is generally offered to all school support staff but uptake from staff working outside the classroom often seems poor. Again, the same authorities that register this only publicise training through a website with an on-line booking system and through flyers. Direct contact with staff and more targeted activity would probably lead to more success and the union could help with this.

Involving trade unions in communications

Among the responses to the question of whether trade unions are involved when communicating with schools and/or support staff, there was a 50:50 split. Nineteen LAs said they involved trade unions and 17 said they did not, with the rest remaining silent, which could indicate that they do not involve the unions.

There are some good examples of shared work with trade unions in communicating with support staff in schools. This leads to a more successful uptake in training by a wider group of staff.

Good practice

- Trade unions are involved through monitoring the National Agreement and strategic planning as well as equal opportunities and diversity monitoring.

- Trade unions are heavily involved in the communication of the course brochure. There are union learning reps in some schools who support the process and attend meetings to influence the coming year's brochure.
- Several LAs send copies of all information that is distributed to schools to the UNISON branch office. One LA reported that one particular training course was commissioned after the UNISON rep highlighted a gap in the training for TAs.
- Local UNISON reps have input to induction programmes. They are consulted on the annual or three-year plan for school support staff development.
- UNISON rep sits on the CPD steering group of the LA.
- Local trade unions are involved with the Train to Gain initiative across the council, including schools. They were also involved in developing and disseminating the CPD framework. A support staff survey is being planned currently and the LA will be seeking trade union support to encourage staff to complete and return the form.

Concerns

Training is not seen as a trade union issue

Authorities see training as a universal entitlement and not as a union issue. This means that they underestimate the impact unions can have in shaping the plan and helping to motivate staff to take up training opportunities. It also means that the LA misses out on feedback regarding possible causes for lack of take up, which means they cannot address the blocks that might be in the system.

Lack of partnership approach

There is a widespread argument that trade unions can access the information on training if they are interested.

Trade union involvement is restricted to teaching unions

One LA said: 'Union involvement in training and development activity is

largely restricted to the teaching side ... teacher unions are invited to attend CPD leaders' network meetings, so that they are aware of our provision'. No reason is given why this opportunity is not extended to support staff unions.

Training and the local social partnerships (local WAMGs)

Almost all LAs responding (41) said that training was discussed in their local social partnership (local WAMG) with only four saying that it was not, and one LA saying that their local WAMG had been disbanded. This shows that local social partnerships are now well established. One LA pointed out that there was a CPD steering group with full union representation, which is the forum where training is discussed.

Although the majority of LAs emphasised that local WAMGs were involved in training, it is not clear whether the local WAMG is seen by the LA as a reporting committee or as a genuine partnership that can help and shape plans and facilitate delivery of information to staff in schools.

Good practice

Little detail was given about the nature of joint working with local WAMGs but there were some examples of good practice.

- Information on audits of training need and consultation about the type/frequency and focus of much LA professional development.
- Local social partnership group involved in the process of planning training at all stages, including contribution through union learning reps.

Concerns

A number of responses indicated that the partnership in the local WAMG does not work very productively with regards to training in a number of LAs.

Lack of information

One LA said: 'Trade unions began to collate info on training', which seems to indicate that there is no genuine shared practice.

Teacher-focused

One LA observed that key programmes were being discussed with trade union reps attending WAMG, but that they were mainly focused on teachers.

Lack of involvement

The statement by one LA that: 'Any issues on training would be raised through WAMG' does not show an active commitment in involving the social partners.

Problems with union learning reps time off for training

One LA mentioned that UNISON had repeatedly raised the issue of ULRs because, unlike teacher unions, support staff are facing difficulties in getting time off for training ULRs.

Monitoring take-up of training

Almost all of the 51 LAs that responded to the survey said that they had a monitoring system in place, but seven LAs said that they do not monitor take up of training. While a number of responses only confirmed that take-up of training was monitored, others gave more details, which made clear that the level and extent of monitoring varied quite considerably.

- Some LAs only collate data but don't analyse them.
- Some LAs only monitor the training of TAs.
- Some LAs monitor the number of schools taking up training but don't differentiate which roles.
- Some schools (particularly secondary schools) have their own well-planned and executed in-house training programmes and some schools commission in-house bespoke sessions for staff not based in classrooms. One LA commented:

'Some schools prefer to have training tailor-made and delivered in their establishment. There is no central collection of this data'.

- One LA carried out a survey in 2004 to establish a baseline of qualifications of support staff in schools and what training they were interested in. This survey was repeated three years later and found a 20% increase in staff having a level 2 literacy and numeracy qualification.
- One LA undertook a survey in 2006/07 on the impact of workforce reform and remodelling. This was not restricted to contract compliance but included direct consultation with school support staff. More than 75% of those staff felt that the schools offered them good opportunities for professional development.

Good practice

- Some LAs monitor take-up and target some groups as a result. They maintain a full monitoring system to inform future planning and to target areas of under usage.
- Some LAs collate information as to who is working with which school so that they can target schools with a poor response. Some use training officers who visit the schools that appear from the monitoring to have little training activity.
- Some LAs monitor using special software that allows them to record the data around attendance and diversity and are able to run reports detailing numbers by job roles and schools and even which candidates have accessed which training.
- One LA is working towards the implementation of a training database and training analysis tool that would allow a more co-ordinated approach to monitoring and reporting on training. It emphasises that this will only cover the training offered via the LA and will not include any training that schools arrange themselves.

Barriers to monitoring take-up of training

A split of responsibilities

In some LAs there is a split of responsibilities for training within the authority with one part of the LA responsible for TA training but another, usually Adult Community Learning Services (ACLS), responsible for other support staff. The training offered by other LA services is often not shared. This makes a systematic analysis of who accesses training other than TAs almost impossible. Also follow-up work with schools through ACLS is less likely since they do not have the close links which the school workforce development adviser will have.

Training provision is disjointed

Several LAs reported that monitoring is made much more difficult by the fact that training provision is disjointed and delivered by many different providers. Bringing it all together is proving difficult. One additional barrier is that not all providers fill in attendance records properly in terms of job category, ethnicity and disability data.

Monitoring is too resource intensive

Only one LA emphasised that: 'It is difficult and inappropriately bureaucratic and resource intensive to monitor take-up across schools because job titles are not consistently provided, inhibiting accurate tracking'.

Tackling the poor take-up of training by some schools

LAs were asked whether there were schools with poor take-up of training offers and how they tackled this issue. The overwhelming response to the question was 'yes'.

The respondents offered a variety of reasons for poor take-up. Those that featured prominently were time off for training during school hours and location and travelling distance. These are illustrated in some of the detailed responses:

- 'Release has become an issue with learning-related support staff covering PPA (planning, preparation and assessment time).'
- 'Our biggest problem is getting staff released from schools as they are vital to the every-day support in school, unlike teachers there are few people available to 'supply cover' posts.'
- 'I am struggling to get TAs on the TDA induction training as it means five days out of school and travelling time.'
- Location is a big issue for some big counties: 'Central training means travelling long distances and public transport infrastructure is not there'.
- One LA stated: 'We offer cover and transport costs wherever possible in order to enable support staff to overcome barriers to engagement'.

An interesting general observation was made by one local authority:

"I would say that the distinction between teachers and support staff is becoming less and less relevant for our purposes. In fact, our calendar now presents our programme under the headings 'front line staff' (staff who work directly with children and young people) and 'system support staff' (staff whose role it is to support those who work directly with children and young people). This seems to us to be a much more effective way of distinguishing provision for the future."

Regional conference for CPD developers in local authorities

In February 2008, the TDA organised a regional conference aimed at staff in local authorities with responsibility for training the school workforce. In a workshop dedicated to support staff training and development a number of issues were identified.

It is alarming that 'lack of respect in the school for an inclusive approach and a lack of vision of schools' (particularly among governors) were still cited as barriers – after more than five years of remodelling in schools.

Of equal concern is the fact that the 'lack of quality assurance of much support staff training' was still emphasised as an issue. The broad range of training providers makes quality control essential. The demand that Ofsted should play a role here is probably not practicable but must be seen as desirable.

Local authorities felt that they did not have reliable information about support staff training and development opportunities and highlighted the difficulties of getting this information. This may have to do with the split of responsibilities in some authorities where one part is responsible for training of classroom-based staff and another part of the LA for site and facilities staff. But it could also be because of the many providers.

Some barriers were identified that have something to do with the nature of contracts and the geographical spread, i.e. the relationship with working hours and when the training is held and the locality of training. The repeated mention of these problems signifies that they are major hindrances for training.

'Lack of needs analysis' is a barrier that lies at the heart of planning training and is most crucial for staff who take on ever increasing roles and responsibilities as well as their managers who are responsible for learning outcomes.

Not surprisingly, 'lack of funding' was mentioned as a barrier. However, of even more concern was the criticism of 'insufficient ring-fenced resources for LAs leading to a fragmented rather than a strategic approach to support for schools'. The fact that the ring-fenced funding that has existed (HLTA and SWiS training) will, from September 2008, be part of a general grant to LAs, is likely to make this situation more difficult rather than easier.

Solutions identified by the conference

A number of solutions were identified at the regional conference. They included:

- a national drive for performance reviews for support staff as an entitlement
- the development of coherent approaches to needs analysis
- support staff involved in training and development alongside teachers
- awareness-raising events for support staff
- support staff should be used to influence colleagues regarding the value of training and development
- active regional networks of different support staff categories.

The view of staff development from schools

UNISON survey of school business managers

School business managers (SBMs) can now be found in 90% of secondary schools and 13% of primary schools. According to the National College of School Leadership, two-thirds of SBMs are members of the senior leadership team and many have responsibility for support staff development in their school.

A survey was conducted of SBMs across different types of schools in England, with 35 responding from different parts of the country and different types of schools.

Progress in staff development

Practically all schools responding said that support staff development was either part of their school improvement plan or will be in the coming year. One SBM pointed out that it was not part of their school improvement plan and blamed the lack of vision on the part of the school's senior management team for this.

The question of whether there were performance review systems in place, which link to training and development for support staff, was also answered positively in an overwhelming number of cases. And this shows that there has been a dramatic change regarding training of support staff within recent years.

Half of the respondents said that they had a dedicated budget for support staff training while the other half said they had an overall training and development budget for all staff in school.

Worryingly, one SBM said that support staff review was linked to pay rather than to training. This seems to indicate that the performance management system developed for teachers is also applied to support staff, although there is no agreed framework linked to it.

Good practice

An increasing number of schools are developing systems for training and development for all staff. The following quote is representative of this:

“The barriers in the past have been associated with the reluctance to acknowledge the value of CPD for support staff, but the school has for the past two years adopted a much more inclusive approach to the performance management process for all support staff and ultimately the value they add to whole school aims and objectives.”

One SBM said: ‘All staff are included in the performance review system. The college has purchased a system called Blue Sky, which all members of staff use to record their professional development. This tool includes set questions for each role in the college, which enables staff to set targets for future development. This is a new system and still needs future development for all support staff as some of the questions do not fit the roles at the college’.

Barriers to staff development

The question about the main barriers to training for school support staff evoked the most diverse responses. Either lack of time or insufficient funds were mentioned by more than half of the respondents. The lack of cover (or the cost of such cover) was mentioned by several SBMs as a serious barrier to training for support staff.

Release and lack of cover

‘Being able to give time to allow staff to be off for training can be difficult. When teachers go on courses supply is

brought in to cover. Support staff training is often ‘uncovered’, which causes staff to feel uncomfortable (and resistant) to take the time out.’

‘Many courses for teaching staff come with supply cover money; this does not seem to be so for support staff. TAs supporting one-to-one sometimes have difficulty being released. Office staff who undertake training usually come back to a desk full of work.’

Time

There are some issues around the timing of training and different attitudes of staff developers as well as support staff themselves. It is very worrying that some staff developers seem to think it is perfectly fair that training can be undertaken in a person’s own time and they blame support staff for not accepting this premise (‘Some staff are reluctant to use their own time for training’ or ‘some support staff are unwilling to train as courses are longer than their normal hours’). This attitude of some staff developers can pose a barrier to training for some support staff.

But other staff developers recognise the difficulties support staff face and try and help to overcome the burden:

“The main barriers to training for support staff have been restrictions on their time (many courses require considerable study in their own time and this can be difficult for those with young families). We provide non-contact time to those undertaking NVQs, but this is limited.”

Closely related with the issue of time is the issue of contracts. Term-time only contracts were identified by several schools as one barrier to organising training outside school hours. One SBM reported that they were now appointing all new staff on 195 days including five training days.

Attitude of senior managers

Some SBMs have pointed out the reluctance of senior managers in the school to commit to support staff training:

“Barriers to training for support staff in our school is the unwillingness of those who line manage support staff to see the benefits of investing in training and the senior manager’s lack of vision.”

“I have implemented a process within the school where *support staff [Admin, Premises, Finance and Personnel staff] produce a departmental action plan to identify resource and training needs. This is then fed into the School Improvement Plan. Senior Leadership Team sees above as a tick box for Ofsted and don’t really take it seriously.”

“Recognition of professional role. Support staff are often viewed by teachers as ‘non-professionals’ within the school.”

Culture and confidence

Several SBMs mentioned that it was hard to convince some support staff to take part in training because:

- they do not see the benefits of training
- they don’t see their jobs as a career and therefore don’t look to the future and identify any training needs
- they don’t view personal development as a priority.

Behind these claims there is however also another issue which is mentioned by a number of SBMs, and that is the whole question of confidence. For a long time, many support staff have been all but excluded from the CPD programme in schools and therefore don’t yet feel part of the training culture in schools – even when the attitude in the school has changed. Others, particularly staff who don’t work in classrooms, may feel excluded and lack self-esteem, not least because of a lack of formal qualifications. A coaching system and joint working with the trade unions (ULRs) could help to change attitudes and encourage more staff, traditionally not taking part in training and development, to join in.

One SBM said:

“Barriers to training are sometimes employee’s own perceptions and lack of confidence in their skills and abilities. We aim to support and motivate staff to ensure they feel confident and capable of participating in training and gaining further qualifications. It is very rewarding when they have successfully gained qualifications and that success is celebrated in school.”

Costs

Perhaps surprisingly, cost was hardly mentioned by any of the respondents. Only one SBM pointed out that cost can be a factor because:

“There tends to be ‘general’ training that can be delivered to all teachers, whereas the needs of support staff are frequently less similar and therefore the individual cost is greater.”

Ten out of 35 SBMs felt that there were no barriers to training and development for support staff or that these were of a manageable nature. Many SBMs emphasised that most support staff embrace training with enthusiasm and that even though the school may face budgetary difficulties they identify courses that are funded by various outside sources.

TDA testbed programme: Training and development for the whole school workforce

In 2006, the TDA organised a two-year testbed programme in which 45 schools participated on a voluntary basis: 15 primary, 20 secondary and 10 special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).¹⁰ No extra funding for the programme was allocated but the schools were offered support from LA advisers and from Sheffield Hallam University researchers.

Despite the fact that the programme was aimed at developing the whole school workforce only nine schools out of the 45 participating genuinely focused on the whole workforce. The majority of primary schools taking part in the project and one-third of participating secondary schools focused on teachers and/or TAs only. The remaining schools (especially secondary schools) focused in addition on admin staff or midday supervisors. Only special schools and PRUs had a wider focus.

Although teachers and TAs make up 75% of the school workforce, the imbalance is astonishing given that these schools volunteered for the project and knew that it was specifically about training and development of the wider workforce.

The researchers evaluating the testbed programme observed that:

“Schools rarely articulate a clear rationale for including the whole workforce in the project plans and ... a significant number

focused their projects around staff working directly with children – particularly teachers and TAs. This seems to reflect a view of the workforce that marginalised those groups less closely associated with the work of the classroom.”

Despite support from the TDA and the local authorities for this project and the fact that the schools were volunteers in the project, the majority of schools taking part took a relatively narrow approach by concentrating on teachers and TAs. This seems to reflect many schools' understanding of the needs of the workforce. It seems that if it is left to schools to prioritise training needs the vast majority will prioritise teachers and other classroom-based staff because of the perception that other members of the workforce have less impact on measurable outcomes.

Positive strategies identified by the testbed programme

Performance reviews

Performance review (or appraisals) for support staff is one of two main interventions to promote greater equity in the way that support staff and teaching staff are treated. Unlike performance management for teachers, which is linked to pay, performance reviews

¹⁰ Mike Coldwell et al, *Developing the whole school workforce. An evaluation of the Testbed programme. Final Report. Sheffield Hallam University, February 2008.*

provide support staff with opportunities to share with someone aspects of their work that had been going well and to receive feedback on areas for development, which can then be the basis for a training programme. Yet even in the testbed programme, dedicated to developing strategies for the whole school workforce, the emphasis was on teacher performance review and only a quarter extended this to support staff and then in most cases only to TAs.

Auditing and needs analysis

Needs analysis is crucial for the planning of training of the school workforce, particularly support staff, because of their different training backgrounds and the ever-changing roles and responsibilities in schools. When support staff take on extra roles and responsibilities as a result of workforce reform, without a staff audit or needs analysis possible training needs will not be identified.

Questionnaires are a good way of finding out the needs of staff. However, great care needs to be taken to make sure that the questionnaires are relevant to all staff. If, for instance, too many questions seem irrelevant to support staff they will feel left out and not motivated to engage. Failure to consider the differing needs of staff groups and to provide access to appropriate training leads to disengagement from those groups.

Monitoring CPD

Monitoring and data gathering around training is important and can take different forms. Some schools' data gathering is aimed at establishing more efficient systems for recording and reporting; others use it for identifying needs and for facilitating the sharing of knowledge.

In one example of good practice a school established an on-line document that staff added to whenever they took part in a CPD activity. They describe the activity, the quality of the experience, any skills or expertise they developed and the impact on practice.

Key points for success in school-wide training

The research team identified some key points for success in terms of school-wide training:

- The senior leadership team has a strong belief in whole-school training, which is expressed in the vision of the school.
- The culture of the school is genuinely supportive of this vision.
- Don't make assumptions about staff but base any training planning on thorough auditing. For example, senior leaders sometimes think that certain groups of staff are not interested in training and development when, in fact, they are if the circumstances are right (timing of training, suitability of training) and taking into account needs and concerns certain staff groups have (payment for working beyond contracted hours, use of cover for support staff as well as teachers).

Barriers to support staff training identified by SBMs

In May 2008, an international conference for school business managers organised by the NCSL and the TDA, was held.¹¹ One of the workshops was dedicated to a discussion of existing barriers to support staff training and development. The workshop was attended by about 100 bursars, school business managers and school leaders.

Barriers to training raised in workshops

Cultural

- teachers do not perceive the need for support staff performance review
- teachers treat support staff as they do pupils
- forgetting that people should have the ability to improve and develop
- discrimination.

Leadership

- autocratic headteacher
- lack of management support
- ineffective leadership.

Resources

- term-time only contracts
- time/release time/time to analyse training needs
- funding/budget
- transport
- cover for support staff when 'out' on CPD
- personal and family commitments.

Training

- lack of an effective performance management system for all
- job-specific only – not personal
- swamped by too much choice
- availability of relevant course for support staff
- poor LA communications.

Personal

- lack of confidence/low self esteem
- 'baggage' (including negative previous experiences)
- moving people out of their comfort zones.

What SBMs can do

The workshop identified positive proposals that SBMs can implement:

- Bridge the 'them and us' culture through strategic CPD planning and through showing the value of CPD for support staff to teachers, support staff themselves and parents.
- Share the experience and benefits of support staff CPD, i.e. disseminate them within the school (and celebrate success).
- Promote the concept that professional development is 'part of the job' for everybody in all roles.
- Raise SBMs' profile so they can do the same for other support staff by raising awareness at senior leadership team level and acting as a champion for support staff.

11 *International Conference for School Business Managers, organised by the TDA and the NCSL, held on 9 May 2008 in London.*

- Ensure support staff CPD is fed into whole-school planning and ensure equal opportunities when planning.
- Act as CPD co-ordinator, ensuring a whole-school approach backed up by agreed school policy.
- Develop their own review system, including skills audits.
- Ensure appraisals take place – including personal development.
- Offer INSET days as whole-school training days.
- Secure ‘paid’ encouragement for staff to be involved in CPD; be aware of outside funding/support, e.g. LSC, TDA.
- Identify appropriate progression routes that are meaningful to the organisation and the individual.
- Investigate/encourage innovative ways of delivering CPD, e.g. mentoring /coaching/in-house training/networking.

The view of staff
development
from staff in
supporting roles

UNISON survey of staff working in schools

In spring 2008, a questionnaire was sent to UNISON members working in schools in several local authorities in the North West asking for details regarding access to training and development. Nearly 200 (195) staff responded from different types of schools.

Bearing in mind that this survey was only a snapshot in one region, the response gives a valid insight into the situation regarding access to training from the point of view of staff.

Training provision

The vast majority of staff (75%) had participated in some sort of training in the previous 12 months and most of this training had taken place during school hours. Although this sounds good news, the figures do not say much about the amount and the nature of training provided. Several respondents said that they only had half a day's training (e.g. in first aid) or a 20-minute IT session and they expressed the desire for more training. Others said that they took part in a whole-school INSET day that was not really relevant to their work.

Timing of training

Although most training and development took place during school hours, about 20% took place outside school hours. In these cases, two-thirds of respondents said that they were paid for this time. However, this leaves one-third taking part in training and development outside their working hours without being paid for their time.

Training leading to a qualification

One-third of respondents said that they were participating in training leading to a qualification. Most were teaching

assistants working towards NVQ levels 2 or 3 or HLTA status, and administrative staff working towards a School Business Management qualification (certificate or diploma). Although not all who said they were involved in training leading to a qualification identified which one, it is of some concern that, apart from one person working towards a Btech qualification, no other qualifications seemed to be pursued. Whether this is because of lack of funding or availability of qualifications needs to be further explored. But there is also a bigger issue at stake. The Leitch Review of Skills¹² pointed out that employees were seen to be more motivated to learn if it led to a qualification, and over half of the employers in a study by PriceWaterhouseCoopers¹³ thought it was quite important or very important for training to lead to qualifications.

The reality in school seems to be very different. Although there are clear moves towards a professionalisation of teaching assistants and school administration with available dedicated qualifications, other staff from the wide spectrum now found in schools seem to be losing out. For example, of the 195 responses, only two people mentioned the SWiS qualification although this is now widely available and is funded centrally by the TDA.

Annual appraisals

The number of support staff who have an annual appraisal seems to have increased. About 40% of respondents said that they had regular appraisals or development reviews but not all seem to be directed towards identifying training needs. Some respondents also said that the training needs identified were not being met. While it is positive that an

12 *Leitch, Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills. (2006)*

13 *PriceWaterhouseCoopers, The market for qualifications in the UK (2005)*

increasing number of support staff get a chance to talk about their work and identify training needs, 60% do not.

Barriers to training

About 50% of staff said they experienced no barriers to training, which seems to be an indication of an improved environment for training and development.

However the other 50% said that they do experience barriers to access training. The most common ones are:

- Time and timing – problems of cover if the training is during school hours and problems with childcare if it is outside school hours.
- Budget – there is a perception that too often support staff training comes after teacher training as a priority.
- Not knowing what is available – there is still a lack of communication regarding training; 15% said that they had no information at all about any training. This is particularly true for those who are not classroom-based and therefore are not part of the curriculum training. When asked how staff heard about training the most common answer was from the information in the staffroom. That might explain why those staff who do not normally use the staff room feel left out and often respond “I don’t hear of anything”.
- No support from management – there is a frustration among some staff that there are priorities regarding training in the school that are not at all or not sufficiently explained and therefore appear to be unfair.
- No access to computer – this was mentioned by only a few staff but it is still significant; there is no excuse today to have staff working in schools without access to a computer and possibly not having the skills to work with one (something that should be identified in a needs analysis).

The biggest training issues facing staff

When asked what the biggest issues are regarding training a broad variety of concerns were mentioned, some of them identical with the barriers described above, but a higher number of staff responded to this question.

Time off, lack of cover and workload

One in four of staff responding to the survey said time off for training and lack of cover were the biggest issues, with workload also being a decisive factor. A significant number of responses emphasised the lack of time available, which gave the person the feeling of being not able to leave for training or worried about coming back to an even higher workload.

Interestingly, fewer than 10% said that cost of training was the biggest issue – although there is certainly a correlation between costs and cover. Some were frustrated by the fact that training was not linked to promotion opportunities. And several, particularly facilities staff, said that the biggest issue around training for them was that they were not getting any. Some training, particularly when it took place during school INSET days, was not relevant to support staff.

Unpaid time, personal time and no training culture

Training not paid for when it takes place outside working hours (e.g. INSET days) and training only available in a person’s own time were mentioned by a number of respondents. “Little encouragement”, “no culture of training”, “training refused” and “we need to highlight our training needs all the time” were comments made by some. Although these were minority comments they are an indication that not all schools have embraced a culture of training being made available to all staff.

Only 9% of staff responding said they had no issues regarding training.

Quotes from the survey on difficulties around training

Below are some quotes from the survey that illustrate the difficulties staff face around timing and lack of support from management.

A bursar working in a primary school, who has achieved both the certificate and the diploma in school business management (SBM) and is currently enrolled to do a BA honours in SBM said:

“Lack of appraisal, so I have to actively seek my own professional development opportunities. Lack of funding from school/local authority. Lack of support within school – SLT do not acknowledge these as professional qualifications. Training is only offered to teaching staff – I feel like I am on a one man crusade to get support staff an appraisal and recognised as valuable assets to the school.”

Another bursar illustrating the difficulties around timing:

“Time out from school. There isn't generally enough time to do my work as it is without having time out for training – I always seem to be playing catch up.”

One technician interested in training but doesn't get any support from management:

“Heard of one NVQ – requested to apply but never put forward. Willing and wanting to train and develop myself – no support from my line management.”

A member of staff regarding barriers to training:

“This question may be answered both 'yes' and 'no'. I have been allowed to undertake some courses, but denied courses that would have given me a real chance of promotion, e.g. I passed the NEBOSH certificate and then was denied the NEBOSH diploma.”

Other relevant studies on training in schools

Labour Research Department survey on training

In spring 2007, the Labour Research Department undertook a comprehensive survey of school support staff and included a section on access and quality of training.¹⁴

In the survey respondents rated their school's training provision on a three-point scale. Views were evenly divided with about a third saying that their school provided a 'comprehensive programme of training', another third describing it as a 'reasonable programme of training but could do better'; and another third commenting that their school had a 'limited programme of training and could do much better'. In other words, two-thirds of support staff who responded to the survey thought that their school could do better or much better in terms of provision and/or quality of training.

Just over a quarter of respondents in the survey (28%) commented on their training. There were some very positive comments who considered that their school's provision was 'comprehensive'. They tended to cite the high profile given to training, accessibility, and the generosity and effectiveness of what was provided.

However, the number of those least satisfied with their school's training programme was double. They saw their school's training provision as falling short, and had (mainly) critical comments to make. These mentioned:

Funding constraints

'[We were told there was] no available money in the budget.'; 'Training is usually offered only when the course is free.'

Cover problems

'Because of cover it is very difficult to go on courses.'

Amount of training on offer

'In the last three years support staff have had very little training.'

Exclusion from training plans

'It always seems to be the teaching staff who go on the training courses.'; 'Insufficient training for admin support staff.'; 'Staff development is a side issue when it comes to support staff.'; 'We are not paid to attend staff meetings when the most important everyday training issues are addressed.'; 'My contractual hours do not allow me to stay for staff training and get paid.'

Availability of relevant training

'I have sole responsibility for working with SEN children and the only training I have been offered was first aid.'; 'Most inset days are completely irrelevant to support staff and no external training has been offered.'

Lack of support

'Most training/courses are independently sought, without school support.'; 'Any new skills I have acquired have been through studying in my own time.'; 'I would like to see encouragement from my school for me to professionally develop.'

¹⁴ The staff survey received responses from just over 1,000 UNISON members whose job content had changed in recent years as a result of workforce remodelling. The report was published by UNISON in October 2007.

Institute of Education research on deployment of support staff

In 2003, the then Department for Education and Skills commissioned a five-year research project to obtain reliable data on the deployment and characteristics of support staff, the impact of support staff on pupil outcomes and teacher workloads, and how that impact is affected by school management and communication in the school. The study covers schools in England and Wales. It involves large-scale surveys and detailed case studies. It started in 2004 and is due to produce a final report in 2009.

A team of researchers from the Institute of Education at the University of London is undertaking the research. In their second report,¹⁵ based on survey work in 2006, they found:

Education and training leading to a qualification

Just under a third (28%) of respondents had attended education or training leading to a qualification relevant to their current post, in the previous two years. Special school staff were more likely to have attended training leading to a qualification in the last two years (33%) in comparison to primary and secondary school staff (25% and 29%).

TDA commissioned research on experiences of training

In 2006, the TDA commissioned a study that follows training experiences of school support staff over a three-year period (June 2006–May 2009)¹⁶. The first survey was conducted in the autumn term of 2006 and the results were

published in January 2008. More than 3,000 support staff were surveyed from 584 schools (comprising secondary, primary and special schools).

Main findings

- Three-quarters (76%) said that their school had a performance review system or process in place through which they could discuss their work. However, only 52% had been appraised in the last 12 months.
- One in 10 support staff said that no one helped them to identify their training and development needs.
- Staff employed by ‘other’ organisations had a lower satisfaction with school support than those employed by schools. [These ‘others’ were not specified in the report but presumably are private contractors].
- Staff from secondary schools had lower satisfaction with school support than those from primary and special schools.
- The main barriers to training were lack of time/other commitments (30%) and lack of funding (15%).
- Specialist and technical staff as well as learning support staff faced a significantly larger number of barriers when they wanted to take part in training. [In other words, training, to a large extent, seems to be targeted towards teaching assistants.]
- 20% of staff said that they did not know where to access information about training.
- 75% reported having received some training or professional development relating to their current role in the past 12 months.
- Most training (70%) seems to be taking place in school (either the respondent’s own or a neighbouring school).

15 Peter Blatchford et al. *The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools. Report on findings from the second national questionnaire survey of schools, support staff and teachers.* Institute of Education, University of London, 2007.

16 *A three-year study undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research and Ipsos MORI. First report published in January 2008.*

- 38% of training took place during the school's INSET time while 22% of training took place outside the school's INSET programme. [It is not clear whether or not staff were paid for this training since the question was not asked in the survey.]
- Only 17% of respondents said that their training had led (or would lead) to a qualification (e.g. NVQ Level 2 or 3, HLTA status, certificate in numeracy or literacy, certificate in food hygiene or health and safety, certificate in working with children with autism, certificate in behaviour management, certificate in child protection). [It is noticeable that none of these qualifications apply to administration staff, which seems to confirm the tendency, noted above, that training is targeted mainly towards teaching assistants.]

Common themes in the research

All four pieces of research above identified common themes:

Development reviews

Although the number of performance reviews has clearly increased, only 40 to 50% of all staff have an annual review. This is an area where increased efforts need to be taken. Performance reviews need to be combined with a needs analysis, which should feed into a personal development plan.

Training and development received

There is an overall consistency with regard to support staff being engaged in training and development; 75% say that they have been involved in some sort of training or development during the previous year. However, the nature of this training varies in both quantity and relevance.

Timing of training

Most training (between 70% and 80%) is taking place in school and during school hours, with a large part (38%) taking place during INSET days. The question of payment for training during the time outside working hours remains an issue

for one-third of all staff taking part in this kind of training.

Information

It must be of concern that between 10% and 20% of staff have no access to information about training and no help in identifying their training needs. A whole-school approach to staff development means that all staff should be included, not just those who work with children directly, because all staff have an impact on pupils and parents in a variety of ways. And it should also include staff employed by private companies but working under the direction of the headteacher.

Barriers to training

The main barriers to training seem to be problems relating to time and cover. Between 25% and 30% of staff in the different surveys say that timing and the related issue of getting cover for courses during school time, is the biggest issue regarding access to training. Some emphasise that they have a unique role in school and therefore cannot get time off. Others say that the budget does not cover costs for cover. The other big issues are workload (which makes taking time out for training difficult) and budget constraints.

Funding

Although funding does not seem to be the main barrier (mentioned by 10% to 15%), there is still a perception that, when planning the budget, teacher requirements come first. This is an issue of both communication with all staff and joint work with governors who ultimately make decisions about the school budget.

Training leading to a qualification

Only between 17% and 30% of training that staff undertake seems to lead to a qualification. NFER research into staff experiences of training and development found that 61% of staff have qualifications relevant to their role. Since many roles do not require a specific qualification this figure can only be a relative indication. In fact, the research team found that the question in the survey regarding qualifications related to the role led to a large and varied

distribution of different responses, some providing just 'grades', others giving qualification names. It is therefore the intention of the team to review the phrasing of the question to obtain a more precise answer in the next round of surveys.

Learning activities
organised or
supported by
UNISON

UNISON's learning agenda

UNISON's learning programme

Traditionally, those in lower-paid jobs have had less access to training and development at work despite many being on the frontline of service provision. UNISON, aware that many are held back by lack of skills and qualifications, has a long established track record of engaging those who have been out of learning for some time, building both their skills and confidence as well as developing progression routes for those who want to get ahead.

Learning at work is particularly appreciated by those who have previously had little opportunity for development. Managers report increased motivation and improved morale and a beneficial effect on attitudes, relationships and communication.

Since 1989 UNISON has been at the forefront of developing lifelong learning opportunities for the groups of workers least likely to be able to access existing training provision, including women, part-time workers and those in low-paid manual jobs.

UNISON courses

The two most important and popular courses are *Return to Learn*, which has been running for 20 years – and *Pathways for Women*. These courses are designed for people without any formal qualifications who may have missed out on education first time around. They are designed to help build confidence by teaching Skills for Life and thus putting in the foundations for possible further learning.

Other courses organised by UNISON in partnership with the WEA (Workers' Educational Association) are:

Using English at Work – this is designed for people whose first language is not English and is structured around

the writing, speaking, reading and listening skills required by support employees at work.

Learning for You – a course for those returning to education. It can provide an effective stepping stone into vocational and professional training.

Development Review Workshop – introduces employees to the development review process and builds their confidence helping them get the most out of it.

Training of union learning reps

With support from the Union Learning Fund, UNISON has trained over 3,000 union learning reps (ULRs) who work as part of branch education teams, and more are coming forward to take on this role all the time. ULRs provide invaluable support and information to hard-to-reach learners and they work with colleagues in the branch to support and encourage others into learning.

Workplace learning agreements

UNISON has reached learning agreements with over 400 employers, including local authorities, and has had tremendous success with the learning agenda.

A learning agreement may be a short-term arrangement whereby UNISON brokers delivery of an appropriate course and the employer offers facilities for the training and time off to learners. The UNISON branch, through its ULRs, helps recruit learners and supports them through the course.

An agreement may be wider in scope, establishing a formal learning partnership that may include wider commitments to support and encourage learning, monitor take up, develop, support and train union learning reps, and establish frameworks and principles to improve access to learning.

Case study: Newcastle

In Newcastle City Council, UNISON led a joint union bid to the Union Learning Fund resulting in the establishment of a learning centre in a disused library. The Brinkburn Centre, which is now one of the biggest workplace learning projects in the country, is run in partnership with the council. Hundreds of staff have benefited from a wide range of programmes including numeracy, literacy, IT and National Vocational Qualifications. It is unusual in being entirely staffed by Union Learning Reps recruited from frontline service staff – who are often powerful role models for learners.

UNISON's learning agenda in schools

UNISON currently has around 30 learning agreements in local authorities with education provision. Three of these specifically exclude schools from the agreement with the argument that local authorities cannot direct schools. In 10 local authorities with learning agreements there are no learning activities aimed at staff working in schools – even though these agreements do not specifically exclude schools.

Four of the local authorities with learning agreements were able to take forward a whole range of learning activities in schools, from running learning surveys to organising courses for specific groups of staff (e.g. catering staff, caretakers and lab technicians) and, in one London authority, a range of programmes for different groups of staff, including teaching assistants, that are run in the learning centre of the local authority.

A positive example of a learning partnership

The most successful example of joint working between the local authority, schools and UNISON comes from Barnet (see Appendix 1). A learning agreement was reached with the local authority that included three days release for a lifelong learning co-ordinator (a

graduate of UNISON's Return to Learn programme). The branch brokered a joint agreement with the local authority and the College of North East London to deliver courses from UNISON's Learning at Work programme, including Skills for Life, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), Return to Learn, Team Leadership and First Line Management. The learning agreement included time off for learners on these courses.

Union reps say that the learning agreement gave the union the opportunity to go into schools and raise the issue of training. In Barnet, there are many self-governing schools and the support of the local authority was therefore crucial for the success of the project. The branch, supported by funding from UNISON, created a dedicated post. This made it possible to contact every school and establish learning needs. As a result, a number of courses have been run for teaching assistants, including Communication Skills and ICT skills. The training was carried out during working hours in agreement with the local authority.

Remaining barriers

Yet time off is still the main barrier to training and not all staff have the chance to attend the UNISON courses. According to the education convenor, heads are more likely to give time off for job-related courses, but less time for courses that they feel are not directly relevant to the school. Many headteachers do not see the courses organised by UNISON as part of career development. Yet, for technicians, for example, ICT courses are not available generally; technicians are usually only sent on health and safety courses because this is seen as necessary for their work. So attending the UNISON courses would be very beneficial for many staff.

However, despite these learning activities organised by the branch and strong support by the LA, there is only one union learning rep based in a school in that authority. The main reason, as in other authorities, lies in the difficulties of getting time off.

Other examples of good practice

Unions and local authority co-operative working

A London authority with a learning agreement between the unions and the local authority runs a joint project with all the unions participating. In the four years since the agreement was signed 32 ULRs have been trained, several of those working in schools. The local authority has signed up to the Go Award (see p49) and has produced an action plan on learning. The unions jointly produced a questionnaire to establish training needs for school staff and received several hundred responses. There has not been any provision of training yet following this needs analysis, but this work is planned for the immediate future. According to the union rep, the main barrier to overcome will be to convince headteachers to allow time off. Although some TAs have agreed to do training during the school holidays, the plan is to organise training on school premises either during the school day or immediately after. The union rep hopes that because all unions (including the teaching unions) are arguing together for the learning agenda this will help to convince heads to release staff.

Teaching assistant apprenticeships

One branch successfully secured funding from the Union Learning Fund for a project worker in schools to establish apprenticeships for TAs. The project worker was a TA herself. As a result of this work the local authority has now set up a county-wide apprenticeship board which provides apprenticeships not just for school staff but for other local authority staff as well. This has reinvigorated training in the LA.

Learning champions

In one LA with a learning agreement ULRs were trained but none of them came from schools due to time-off issues. However, the union was able to negotiate with the local authority some dedicated posts of learning champions who will go into schools. Funded by the local authority, the staff working in these new posts are to work as capacity builders in schools. They themselves

have a school background and will help with training needs analysis of TAs and other staff.

A dedicated schools education convenor

In one local authority, a UNISON activist and branch education convenor dedicates all his time to working with schools. The learning agreement in this authority excludes schools but there are many learning opportunities for school staff provided by the council. He found that there was a lot of resistance from headteachers (particularly in big primary schools) to training. So he put together a document with all the information on training provided by the local authority (including details of funding, as many courses and/or qualifications are funded by the TDA or by the local authority and are free to schools). This material, branded with joint UNISON and local authority logos, was put onto notice boards in schools and has had a very positive effect.

Benefits of union learning reps based in schools

One UNISON branch activist who worked as a ULR in schools said: 'As a school-based employee I realised the value of moving round the local schools, together with the teaching unions, and actively promoting the training. Staff in schools feel isolated and find it harder to access training as the schools don't quite see the support staff through the same eyes as they do the teaching staff. It helps for an outsider to go in and point out a few things sometimes as the schools tend to do the training as and when they need to, as things are usually finance led.'

However, in most cases, the work of identifying school staff needs and organising suitable courses in the learning centres is not undertaken by ULRs based in schools but by branch activists from local authorities. The reason for this is that there are very few ULRs working in schools and those who do face difficulties getting time off.

Difficulties with time off

In three authorities that have a learning agreement, UNISON organisers tried to win school support staff to take part in training in order to become union learning reps. However, despite best efforts over a 12-months period, staff were not given time off from their school and could therefore not attend the courses. Even though there was extra money to pay for TAs' time off, schools did not allow them to participate in this kind of training. Ironically, the teaching unions in the same local authorities had no problems with getting time off for ULR training. In other words, those staff who would benefit the most from learning, supported by the union and the local government employers, are missing out because schools are reluctant to release staff, even for a few days' training. Local authorities say they have no power over schools and cannot direct headteachers.

In another local authority the ULR used health and safety inspections to introduce manual staff working in schools to UNISON's Return 2 Learn courses. The response was good. But even though the catering and cleaning staff were employed by the local authority (i.e. not a private provider) they could not get time off from school to attend this training. Even IT courses would have to be run after school since schools would only give time off for NVQ 2 qualifications. Yet many of the manual staff would benefit from the UNISON courses as an introduction and confidence-building measure to undertake NVQs later.

In a London authority where UNISON has a learning agreement with the local authority the union has been running courses (on Skills for Life, numeracy, literacy, using IT) very successfully. However, only a few staff from schools were able to attend due to time-off problems. According to the lifelong learning co-ordinator, between 50% and 70% of those who wanted to attend courses were unable to because schools would not give them time off. When the union reps went into schools, there was a good response from staff in schools.

Manual staff particularly showed an interest in the courses. However, time off was the big issue, especially for cleaners. Caterers were worried about the attitude of their managers who they feared were hostile to the courses. Many headteachers felt that the courses would be inappropriate for TAs and refused to give time off. However, in UNISON meetings, quite a few TAs expressed an interest and would have liked to attend UNISON's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course.

The Go Award and its impact on schools

The Go Award is a government initiative to develop Skills for Life of staff working in Local government. It is an incentive for employers to sign up to developing – in partnership with unions – a workplace Skills for Life strategy that builds in provision for further learning and development opportunities. Local authorities sign up for the Go Award and then receive funding. UNISON works with the local government employers around the Go Award.

Yet, there are particular issues regarding schools. It is not clear how the LA communicates with schools. Headteachers are often not convinced that the Skills for Life courses are appropriate for their staff. But in Newham, for example, because of the ethnic minority representation amongst school staff, there is a need for ESOL and literacy skills courses that is often ignored by headteachers.

UNISON is trying to bridge the gap and often initiates interest amongst staff as well as organising courses; but time off is the biggest problem because these courses are not seen as work related by headteachers. Obtaining the personal support of the chief executive and, in turn, winning over the top management team, is as critical as winning the headteacher's support. Skills for Life should feature in staff appraisals and development programmes.

A review of the Go Award by Cornwell Management Consultants emphasised

the importance of trade unions in achieving positive outcomes and winning learners:

‘Many local authorities referred to the involvement of union learning representatives as a key positive factor. Where unions are involved, and their contribution acknowledged, it has helped in creating better general relations between employer and unions.’¹⁷

This should apply to schools as well, but there are extra hurdles as described above.

How much do schools know about local authority initiatives, such as the Go Award? A skills analysis of all staff would identify any Skills for Life needs. And joint work with the local authority in this field would benefit all staff.

Reasons for partial success of the learning agenda in schools

The relationship between local authorities and schools

The main reason for the partial success of UNISON’s learning agenda in schools lies in the relationship between local authorities and schools. Local authorities feel they cannot direct schools regarding their activities including staff development. As a consequence, agreements are reached between the local authority and the trade unions but the activities around learning all too often concentrate on town hall staff rather than schools.

Some local authorities have reached learning agreements with the trade unions but specifically leave schools out of these agreements. Others are silent on schools, thus including them by implication, but in practice no work is done in schools. Only a minority of local authorities that reach a learning

agreement with the unions actively support the unions as they try and win learners in schools. As a tutor from the College of North East London commented: ‘It is crucial to get the support of the director of children’s services. This is a way into schools. As a result of the joint activity between the local authority and UNISON, bursars are now beginning to ask about the courses organised through UNISON and run by the college.’

Time off for training union learning reps

Schools are very reluctant to release staff for a role that goes beyond their job in school. While it is difficult for school support staff to get time off for job-related training during school hours it is next to impossible for a role beyond this. Unlike teacher unions who have been able to train a fair number of ULRs, UNISON and other support staff unions face huge difficulties getting time released even for ULR training let alone ULR work. This reflects the fact that many schools do not see themselves as part of the local authority community but restrict their plans regarding training to their school’s needs. Yet, at the same time, staff developers in a number of schools express concern that some support staff are reluctant or afraid to enter into training. It is those staff where the union courses would help – as has been shown in many service areas where UNISON organises, such as health and social care.

17 *Cornwell Management Consultants (2006), Review of the GO Award for Local Government. DfES.*

Summary and recommendations

Summary

In the past five years, there has been a dramatic transformation in the organisation and provision of training for school support staff. The creation of the Training Development Agency for Schools (TDA) meant that a national body took control of the very diverse scene which was the training and development of school support staff in England.

A career framework was created to support local authorities and schools in identifying appropriate training and qualifications for school support staff. National Occupational Standards for classroom-based staff and professional standards are now linked to each other as a basis for career development. There has also been national funding for such key programmes as HLTA and bursar training, the induction programme and the Support Work in Schools (SWiS) qualification. These made a difference in ensuring a more consistent provision of training at local level. The change in the funding arrangements to local authorities in 2008 from ringfenced funding to a general grant may have an impact on some of these programmes. It will be important to monitor the allocation of the general grant to ensure that support staff programmes are continued and expanded.

Local authorities play a key role in the organisation of training and development at local level. Many provide or facilitate a range of courses and they give advice to schools regarding training. The funding of a comprehensive network of support and advice has been crucial in raising the profile of support staff training. The school workforce development advisers, based in local authorities, and the regional advisers, who have a co-ordinating role within their region, are funded by and accountable to the TDA.

The existence of staff dedicated to school workforce development has helped bring about a better consistency

in the provision of training though there are still variations in how local authorities work with schools. Apart from organising and/or facilitating a range of courses, local authorities have set up networks for certain categories of staff, supported schools with performance reviews and provided funding for a range of qualifications.

Particularly with regards to communication with schools, we have seen marked improvements. The report gives a range of good practice examples but also shows where further improvements can be made. The trade unions and the local social partnerships (local WAMGs) can play an important role in this area since the unions can additionally inform members through their own networks.

Trade unions and local WAMGs

The research showed that the level of contact between the school workforce advisers and UNISON varies considerably. Many authorities do not see training as a union issue, which means that they underestimate the impact unions can have in helping to motivate staff to take up training opportunities. It also means that the local authority misses out on feedback regarding possible causes for lack of take up, which means they cannot address the blocks that exist in the system. Better co-operation between the unions and school workforce advisers, directly or through local WAMGs, could help to improve communication with schools and thus benefit support staff. For instance, some local authorities say that their induction course is generally offered to all school support staff but uptake from staff working outside the classroom often seems poor. One of the reasons for this may well be lack of information. UNISON could help

to promote this training if they were included in the LA's communication strategy.

Although the majority of local authorities emphasised that local WAMGs were involved in training, it is not clear whether WAMG is seen by the local authority as a reporting committee or as a genuine partnership that can help and shape plans and facilitate delivery of information to staff in schools.

Recommendations

1. Local WAMGs have a crucial role to play in the monitoring of training. Local authorities have a costed delivery plan in place that details their priorities and proposed spending under the Workforce Modernisation and Development Grant. Local WAMGs should discuss and monitor this plan to ensure that it includes training provisions for a broad range of school support staff. This is particularly important now that the funding from the TDA will no longer be ringfenced for HLTA and SWiS training.
2. UNISON should ask for regular reports on training programmes and information on what categories of staff they are aimed at and establish not only the number of staff who undertake SWiS but what categories of staff they come from.
3. Local WAMGs should encourage a partnership approach to training. It is a union issue and the union can support the process and help to improve access to those who have been out of training for some time.
4. Most local authorities have some monitoring system regarding access to training in place and this should be shared and discussed with their local WAMG. This should include information about where there are split responsibilities within a local authority for training different categories of staff, i.e. where there are separate business units for school staff and for other support staff working in schools, in order to secure

information about all school support staff training.

5. Local WAMGs should be informed about schools that do not engage in training. Training provided to staff employed by private companies should be included in the monitoring.
6. UNISON reps should make contact with their school workforce development adviser in the local authority, if they have not already done so. They should work together to channel information into schools and encourage members to take up training.
7. The local WAMG and/or UNISON should argue for the setting up of networks for different categories of staff and/or conferences/workshops.
8. UNISON should raise the possibility of creating posts for support staff as learning champions.

TDA competency framework

Training and development for school support staff will be subject to more changes in the near future. The TDA is planning to introduce a competency framework for support staff qualifications that will allow progression upwards along a specialist career path, sideways along a more generalist path or into a different role or even different sector within the children's workforce. This will be linked to the new qualifications and credit framework (QCF) to be launched in 2010.

Recommendation

9. UNISON national negotiators should argue for the right of staff to be able to plan their own professional development and see their own progression in terms of skills and rewards. The planned integrated knowledge and skills framework could help in improving career pathways across the school workforce.

Quantity and quality of training and development

The research showed that there is an overall consistency with regard to support staff being engaged in training and development. Three-quarters of staff say that they have been involved in some sort of training or development over the previous year. However, the nature of this training varies considerably in both quantity and relevance.

Most training (between 70% and 80%) seems to be taking place in school and during school hours, with a large part (38%) taking place during INSET days. The question of payment for training during the time outside working hours remains an issue for a third of all staff taking part in this kind of training.

Only between 17% and 30% of training that staff undertake seems to lead to a qualification. Although there are clear moves towards a professionalisation of teaching assistants and school administration with available dedicated qualifications, other staff of the wide spectrum now found in schools do not seem to have the same opportunities. An entitlement to training would help all staff to pursue their development.

Recommendation

10. Negotiators both nationally and locally should argue for the principle that school support staff have an entitlement to high-quality training and development.

Appraisals

Appraisals for support staff are one way to promote greater equity in the way support staff and teaching staff are treated. There is now a statutory performance management system for teachers that is linked to pay. No such nationally prescribed system exists for support staff because the parameters for determining pay are different. However appraisals can provide support staff

with opportunities to discuss their work and to receive feedback on areas for development, which can then become the basis for a training programme. Although the number of appraisals for support staff has increased, the research showed that only between 40% and 50% of all staff have an annual review. This is an area where increased efforts need to be made. Appraisals need to be combined with a needs analysis, which should feed into a personal development plan.

Recommendations

11. There should be a national drive for schools to conduct regular appraisals for support staff.
12. Local WAMGs should enquire whether and how needs analysis is carried out in schools and what support the LA gives.

Training needs analysis

Training needs analysis is crucial for the planning of training of the school workforce, particularly for support staff because of their different training backgrounds and the ever changing roles and responsibilities in schools. When support staff take on extra roles and responsibilities as a result of workforce reform, possible training needs will not be identified without a staff audit or needs analysis. The cycle of staff appraisal should provide opportunities for staff to assess their own progress in developing the knowledge and skills they need for their role, and to identify opportunities for further development or career progression.

Recommendation

13. Needs analysis is paramount for the planning of training and development. There should be a stronger direction given from national level for schools to do this. This will need the development of a more coherent approach to needs analysis.

Whole-school approach

It must be of concern that between 10% and 20 % of staff have no access to information about training and no help in identifying their training needs. A whole school approach to staff development means that all staff should be included, not just those who work with children directly, because all staff have an impact on pupils and parents in a variety of ways. It should also include staff employed by private companies but working under the direction of the headteacher.

Recommendation

14. A number of schools already have whole-school training and development plans and performance review in place for all staff. This should be the reality in all schools. The cycle of staff appraisal and review should provide opportunities for staff to assess their own progress in developing the knowledge and skills they need for their role, and to identify opportunities for further development or career progression.
15. Local WAMGs should monitor the existence of inclusive training and development plans in schools.

Barriers to training

Time

The main barriers to training relate to time and cover. Local authority staff and staff developers in schools emphasise the difficulties they face of getting support staff released for training and support staff themselves say they often cannot get time off. Between 25% and 30% of staff in the different surveys say that timing of training and the related issue of getting cover for courses during school time are the biggest issues regarding access to training. If training takes place during school hours cover for support staff is not just a cost but also a practical issue. Some emphasise

that they have a unique role in school and therefore cannot get time off. Workload is the other main reason why some support staff find it difficult to take time out for training. There is repeated reference to term-time only contracts, which are a barrier for any training outside school hours.

Recommendation

16. The new negotiating body for school support staff should establish an entitlement to training within a framework of development and must, as a matter of urgency, address the issue of time off for training.

Cost

Although funding does not seem to be the most prominent barrier (mentioned by 10–15% of respondents), there is still a perception that, when planning the budget, teacher requirements come first. This is an issue of both communication with all staff and joint work with governors who ultimately make decisions about the school budget. It is also important because it will have an impact on morale. If, for example, following an appraisal, a particular kind of training is agreed for a number of staff and then these staff cannot attend because of lack of cover or refusal to fund external courses, a sense of discrimination will be strongly felt.

Recommendation

17. The negotiating body for school support staff should consider funding criteria for training to secure fair and equitable access to training and development for all staff.

Confidence

For a long time, many support staff have been all but excluded from the CPD programme in schools and therefore don't yet feel part of the training culture in schools – even when the attitude in the school has changed. Others, particularly staff who don't work in classrooms, may feel excluded and some lack self-esteem,

not least because of a lack of formal qualifications.

Recommendation

18. UNISON should encourage a coaching system and joint working with the trade unions (ULRs) in order to help change attitudes and motivate more staff, who have traditionally not taken part in training and development, to join in.

UNISON as a partner in the learning agenda

The study also looked at UNISON's learning activities organised in local authorities and schools. It found that although UNISON has a high number of ULRs working in local authorities, schools seem to be left out. Some LAs have reached learning agreements with the trade unions but left schools out of these agreements. Most agreements are silent on schools and in practice little activity takes place in schools in terms of getting staff to attend union learning courses.

Even where branches are active in schools, there are almost no ULRs who are actually based in schools (usually only one ULR per local authority, even though there are several hundred schools). One of the reasons for this is that only a minority of LAs that reached a learning agreement with the unions actively support the unions as they try and win learners in schools. Their main argument is that local authorities cannot direct schools. Yet, some authorities have engaged and been able to influence schools regarding the advantage of joint working. It is therefore crucial to get the support of the director of children's services in order to be effective in schools. They can make a case for training to the school and thus convince headteachers to release staff for training.

The main barrier to the apparent lack of learning activities in schools on behalf of UNISON is the difficulty of getting

time off for training. Schools are very reluctant to release staff for a role that goes beyond their job in school. While it is difficult for school support staff to get time off for job-related training during school hours, it is next to impossible for training that goes beyond the role in school. Unlike teacher unions, which have been able to train a fair number of ULRs, UNISON and other support staff unions face huge difficulties getting time released, even for ULR training let alone ULR work. This may reflect the fact that schools do not see themselves as part of the local authority community but restrict their plans regarding training to their school's needs. Yet, at the same time, staff developers in a number of schools express concern that some support staff are reluctant or afraid to enter into training. It is those staff where ULRs based in schools and courses organised by UNISON would help – as has been shown in many service areas of UNISON.

Recommendations

19. UNISON locally should work together with teaching unions to negotiate a learning agreement with the local authority that includes schools and seek the senior support from the LA.
20. UNISON should discuss the issue of school-based ULRs at local WAMG meetings in order to get support from the social partners.

Appendix

Learning in Partnership learning agreement

Partners

Barnet UNISON

London Borough of Barnet

Aims

- to build a learning partnership across the council
- to encourage the staff within the council to participate in life-long learning
- to provide access to life-long learning
- to establish a learning centre of excellence within the council
- to build upon the government's current learning initiatives
- to work with organisations such as CONEL to ensure the partnership is a success.

What the agreement covers

This agreement covers all full and part time employees of the council.

The council will provide paid time off to cover skills for life training related to an employee's job, and make a contribution to employee's personal development as determined by the line manager, within council guidelines.

The corporate learning agreement will be the framework agreement for all directorates.

The employer will undertake to ensure that this agreement will not be used as an alternative to collective bargaining with the unions and agrees to maintain and use existing negotiating procedures and arrangements other than those specified in this agreement.

The partners agree that all individual grievances arising from any educational or learning initiative shall be subject to the existing grievance procedures.

The establishment of a learning partnership group (LPG) which will be responsible for introducing, implementing and monitoring learning initiatives.

Barnet council will appoint a senior officer who will act as vocational and learning and development manager.

Barnet UNISON will appoint a UNISON life-long learning co-ordinator who will act as lead representative.

The LPG's main responsibilities

- identifying the learning needs of the staff
- prioritising learning needs by the identification of those groups and individuals who are to benefit from the various learning initiatives
- producing realistic targets and set goals for the learning provision within the workplace, which will include establishing a learning centre of excellence
- the LPG will meet once a month (or as agreed by a meeting) to carry out the tasks as identified by this partnership agreement. The LPG will comprise equal number of employer and union representatives. At least one senior member of its management team will be a part of the LPG, in order that the group is able to take effective decisions.

Responsibilities of partners

The partners agree that any learning needs analysis is undertaken with the full co-operation of all partners, and that any such analysis will be solely for learning and educational purposes. The analysis will not be used in relation to other issues such as pay, performance appraisal, redundancy, disciplinary, procedures etc.

The partners commit to regularly updating the learning needs analysis of participants in any learning programme.

The partners agree to ensure that all sectors of the workplace are represented equally on the LPG, and that members of the LPG are provided with all relevant information concerning the learning provision and their duties/responsibilities as members of the group.

The partners will have the responsibility of disseminating all information on matters relating to learning in the workplace and will ensure that all employees and managers are made aware of the learning opportunities available and the work of the LPG.

The partners recognise the importance of equal opportunities and equal access to enhance skill levels in order to meet both the business objectives of the employer as well as the individual learning and development needs of the employees.

The partners will ensure that training and development will be provided to all employees in accordance with the council's Equal Opportunities policies and any appropriate legislation.

Partners' roles and duties

Facilities for union learning representatives (ULR)

It is agreed that there will be the following ULR representatives in:

- housing
- environment

- education
- social services (adult services and children's services)
- resources directorate.

Appointment of ULRs will be a matter for Barnet UNISON.

Where a service, by virtue of joint initiatives, has identified a need to increase the number of union learning representatives then provided there is an agreement with LPG, it may do so.

Time off for ULR duties

Under the ACAS Code of Practice April 2003, ULRs are entitled to paid time off for carrying out their duties. This is defined as:

- analysing learning needs
- providing information and advice to staff about learning or training matters
- arranging learning and training
- promoting the value of learning or training
- preparation for and consulting with the employer about carrying on any such activities
- undergoing relevant training.

Where a ULR is also an elected union official and/or TU health and safety rep this agreement will apply in addition to the existing TU facilities agreement.

UNISON life-long learning co-ordinator

The ULLLC will initially be granted five days' release a week to undertake these duties. This may increase in light of the activity required or following the appointment of a deputy.

Materials

Directors are responsible for ensuring that their service ULRs have access to and reasonable use of, an existing work based PC with internet/email access, printer and stationery. Use of the council's email system is allowed in accordance with IT policies and

standards for use on legitimate TU learning rep business.

Information

The HR lead and manager OD & learning strategy will ensure that the trade unions have access to Learning and development information and reports.

Communication strategy

Matters referred to in this agreement will be communicated to staff through inclusion in team briefing sessions, notice boards, staff bulletins and via jointly agreed statements and presentations.

Resolving disagreements

Should disagreements arise between partners about any matters covered by this agreement, they will in the first instance be discussed at the LPG. If the matter remains unresolved it will be referred to the appropriate local area JNNC.

Review and monitoring

It is recognised that changes may occur which may affect any of the parties to this agreement. Therefore any such changes may need to be considered through joint consultation.

Signed on behalf of the council
Leader of the council

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Date

Signed on behalf of the Barnet UNISON
UNISON regional secretary

.....
Date

