An evaluation of the induction materials for teaching assistants and support staff

The Training and Development Agency for Schools

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Executive summary

Introduction

An evaluation of the induction materials for teaching assistants (TAs) and the introductory training for support staff (SS) was conducted by the University of Bedfordshire (then University of Luton), on behalf of the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). This is a summary of the key findings from the evaluation, as presented to the TDA.

The aim of the evaluation was to collect evidence about the quality and impact of the materials and training received during 2004/05, to feed into the future development of induction for all support staff. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:

- collect information from a representative sample of local authorities (LAs) about the take-up of the TA and support staff induction materials in 2004/05
- gather information from a representative sample of LAs about how they have used the induction materials, in particular to highlight different delivery models and approaches
- collect information about participants' experience and perceptions of the training
- identify the perceptions of a range of stakeholders about the quality of the materials
- assess how the induction materials impact on the skills, knowledge and competencies of TAs and support staff, and where possible collect evidence of how the materials impact on learners and schools, and
- assess the value for money of the materials and whether they are fit for purpose.

Methodology

This report is based upon evidence collected between May 2005 and January 2006. The evaluation involved a range of methods and key stakeholders.

Survey of all local authorities (phase one)

A questionnaire was sent to all LAs to collect information about take-up of the induction during 2004/05 and how the training had been delivered. A total of 105 LAs responded (71 per cent); 103 respondents provided numeric data on the take-up of the materials. Analysis undertaken confirmed that the responding sample was largely representative.

Follow-up survey of a sample LA (phase two)

A more detailed questionnaire was sent to a sample of LAs who agreed at phase one to participate, to collect further information about training delivery; information on their experiences and perceptions of the training; and an assessment of its value for money and impact. A response rate of 47 per cent (32 respondents) and analysis confirmed that the sample was representative across a range of factors.

School case studies (phase three)

This phase involved interviews and focus groups with TAs and support staff, in 10 case study schools, to collect information about their experiences and perceptions of the induction process and its impact. Interviews were also conducted with other school staff about the quality of the training and how the induction impacted on the skills, knowledge and competencies of TAs, support staff and the school.

Interviews with other key stakeholders (phase four)

Seven interviews were carried out with a sample of those who planned, managed or

delivered the induction training locally, based upon these materials. These semi-structured telephone interviews aimed to investigate perceptions of the quality, impact and value for money of the materials.

Key findings

Participation
This evaluation provides useful take-up figures that have not been available previously.

From the 105 local authorities (LAs) taking part in the phase one survey, a total of 427 cohorts, comprising 8,814 TAs, took the courses in 2004/05. From this it can be estimated that 12,591 TAs participated across all LAs in that period.

Support staff introductory training had been delivered by 47 of the 105 respondents. From this sample a total of 155 cohorts delivered to 2,704 SS. Given that less than half of the respondents provided this information, follow-up work was carried out to assess the nature of non-response. Responses from 70 per cent of these LAs confirmed that training had not taken place. From this survey it can be estimated that 3,863 SS participated across all LAs in that period.

Despite the low take-up of SS training in 2004/05, evidence suggested that some LAs (19 from phase one survey) were planning to run the training the following year. Most of the LAs (91 per cent) did not focus exclusively on new staff but also recruited those already in post. This suggests that the training is seen as relevant to those with some experience.

Factors impacting on participation
TAs: The marketing and publicity of the training is clearly important. LAs that attracted a high number of trainees tended to use a variety of marketing approaches including targeted flyers to headteachers and information in CPD notes and websites. Other contributory factors included:
- word of mouth, when the course had developed a good reputation locally
- key/senior contacts in school to encourage participation, and
- flexibility to meet schools' needs.

Staff not being released seemed to be the most common barrier to participation. In particular, this was influenced by the difficulty of finding supply cover for TAs, and in releasing TAs responsible for supporting pupils with SEN. Many respondents suggested that training is not prioritised for this group, especially in secondary schools where take-up was much lower. Pay was identified as an issue because training often fell outside paid working time and staff were not paid out-of-hours attendance. Logistically, personal responsibilities or lack of transport could make it difficult for TAs to attend outside their working hours.

SS: Despite few LAs being involved, the SS introductory training was generally delivered to substantial numbers. As with the TA training, effective marketing and publicity was very important, as were flexible delivery arrangements and encouragement from senior staff in schools in relation to workforce remodelling.

As with TA training courses, SS not being released was seen as the key problem. The availability and cost of release time was cited as the main barrier: SS work across a range of roles, often on a part-time or shift basis, and training often takes place in non-contracted time.

Many respondents said training for SS was even less likely to be prioritised than that for TAs, as the link between their work and school performance is more difficult to understand. Many respondents suggested that the course did not meet the needs of this heterogeneous group of staff who undertake many different roles and have diverse experience and expertise.

Delivery and quality of the materials

While respondents felt that the key strengths of the materials were their high quality and consistency over time, many helpful comments were received about improving certain modules. These have already been fed into the development of the materials during 2006/07. In particular, it was felt that the materials needed to:
* reflect current policy, especially the common core
* utilise a range of methods – particularly interactive and participative approaches
* undergo revision for specific modules, eg. ICT, and
* allow more time for some modules, eg. secondary inclusion.

TAs: The evaluation collected more information about the delivery of TA training than that for SS, probably because fewer respondents offered the latter.

From the findings it is clear that the broad structure of the course was well received by most LAs and trainers. However, many respondents varied the schedule to meet local needs and almost half offered something different from the suggested basic four full days (eg. five or six days). Some LAs incorporated their own training to address local issues or ran various optional modules – the most common of which was English as an additional language (EAL) for primary TAs.

The findings suggest that the trainers welcomed the national and authoritative nature of the training, but complemented this with local issues. Indeed, comments suggested that they were keen for local information to be more easily inserted into the materials.

SS: Particular issues emerged about the suitability of the materials and training for the full range of support staff roles in school. Respondents suggested that the materials were pitched too low for many SS who have significant experience and expertise; and many modules were seen to lack sufficient detail and time. In particular, it was felt that the ICT module would be difficult as some SS have strong expertise and work regularly with ICT, while others do not. It was also suggested that for many SS, some of the topics lacked relevance to their work.

Although it might seem contradictory, the broad coverage of the materials was welcomed, especially topics such as behaviour management and inclusion. There was also value in bringing together support staff from different roles and schools, while setting their roles in the context of the school and emphasising their contribution as part of the school team, which is often under-appreciated.

Impact of the training

TAs: The impact of the training on TAs was rated 'good' or 'very good' by most respondents, who felt that:

- TAs showed greater confidence in school as a result of the training (this was related to their increased knowledge)
- TAs directly employed the strategies that had been introduced during the courses
- teachers reported receiving improved support in the classroom as a result of the training – in some cases TAs were being used for more challenging work as a result
- TAs showed greater interest and commitment to their careers, eg. by progressing onto other courses (like NVQs), and
- TAs showed a change in attitude including being more proactive and reflecting on their practice.

SS: The assessment of the impact of SS training was similar to that for TA training in that it was rated 'good' or 'very good', although slightly more respondents gave an 'average' rating particularly for the impact on their knowledge. Again, the numbers of respondents are much smaller so fewer comments were received.

Feedback suggested that the materials enhanced the profile of training for this group, and raised awareness of working in a school, as part of a team, and how all staff contribute to the school. As with TAs, the training also increased the confidence of SS themselves, but respondents also pointed out that it was difficult to measure impact for this group.

Issues for consideration

Is it 'induction'?
Many LAs offer the training to all SS and TAs, and not just those newly in post. This suggests that it is perceived as valuable to those with a range of experience; indeed some respondents cited the benefits of attending the course with some experience and many LAs rebranded the training as introductory or foundation training, to encourage participation from a wider group.

Versatility of training
While respondents welcomed the nationally authoritative nature and consistency of the materials and training, the ability to adapt the materials to meet local needs was clearly considered to be essential. In particular, respondents wanted to insert local information where relevant or to adjust timings to meet the needs of specific groups.

The findings suggest a tension between the need for general training and more role-specific training for SS. While the generic nature of the training was considered helpful for SS to understand and be aware of behaviour management issues, it was clear that a generic set of materials did not meet the needs of SS across all roles. Therefore it was suggested that the materials need to be more versatile in order to balance these conflicting demands.

Link with other training and qualifications
The findings indicate that linking this training with a formal award or qualification would be welcomed. Responses suggested that it would help schools and TAs/SS understand how the training could be built upon and how it linked to other qualifications and, in turn,

encourages further professional development or career progression. However, a few LAs felt that some staff, especially SS, might be reluctant to undertake formal assessment.

Some good practice already exists. Several LAs link this training to an award or qualification by offering a certificate of course attendance or linking it to NVQs, for example. Interestingly, all LAs that trained large numbers (ie. more than 200 in this period) had linked the training to an accredited award, typically an NVQ. Some respondents that wanted accredited training cited problems in terms of getting the right aspects of the course accredited with the correct quality systems in place and to enable progression routes.

Funding
The findings suggest that there are issues to consider about the funding of courses. Many LAs expressed concern that as they move towards more devolved funding to schools for CPD, this training for these groups may not be prioritised.

Next steps
The findings from the evaluation, as set out in this executive summary and the extended report, have already fed into the development of the materials for 2006/07. It is anticipated that they will also help to inform the direction of induction for all support staff from 2007/08.

1. Introduction

The following report is based upon findings from an independent evaluation of the induction materials for teaching assistants (TAs) and support staff (SS) conducted, on behalf of the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), by the University of Bedfordshire. The report represents a summary of the key findings as presented to the TDA.

1.1 Aims and objectives

The evaluation aimed to collect evidence about the quality and impact of the induction materials for TAs and the introductory training for SS, to feed into the future direction and development of induction for all support staff.

The materials for the induction of TAs were originally developed by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2000; and were mapped to the level 2 national occupational standards for TAs. The introductory materials for support staff were first developed in 2003. Both sets of material were reviewed annually to keep them up to date and in line with policy developments. The responsibility for the induction materials was transferred to the TDA (formerly TTA) in November 2004 as part of the new remit for the training and development of the wider school workforce. The Agency commissioned the University of Bedfordshire to undertake an evaluation in order to inform its plans for supporting induction from 2006.

The materials comprise modules for TAs in primary schools (developed in 2000); secondary schools (developed in 2001); and introductory training modules for other school support staff (developed in 2003). This evaluation focused specifically on users' views of the version of the three packs circulated for use in 2004/05, as training for 2005/06 was ongoing during the fieldwork.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:
- collect information from a representative sample of local authority (LA) education services about the take-up of the TA and support staff induction materials in 2004/05
- gather information from a representative sample of LAs about how they have made use of the induction materials, in particular to highlight different delivery models and approaches
- collect information from participants of the induction about their experience and perceptions of the training
- identify the perceptions of a range of stakeholders about the quality of the materials
- assess how the induction materials impact on the skills, knowledge and competencies of TAs and support staff, and where possible collect evidence of how the materials impact on learners and schools, and
- assess the value for money of the materials and whether they are fit for purpose.

2. Methodology

This report is based upon evidence collected between May 2005 and January 2006.

Evidence was sought about the quality and impact of the 2004/05 induction materials and about practical issues in supporting this training. In order to ensure robust conclusions could be drawn, triangulation of a range of perspectives, views and experiences were sought from:

- those who had planned and managed training locally that used or was based upon the materials
- course tutors and advisory staff involved in delivering this training
- TAs and other support staff who experienced this induction training, and
- headteachers and key senior staff in the schools where these TAs and support staff were working at the time.

The evaluation involved a multi-method approach in four phases.

2.1 Phase one: survey of all local authorities

A short four-page proforma (see annex 1) was sent to all LAs in England to collect information about take-up of the induction during 2004/05 and how the training had been delivered.

To ensure ease of completion and to avoid unnecessary burden on LA staff, it was deemed appropriate to ensure a short questionnaire for this initial phase. After piloting, the questionnaire was posted to named LA personnel with responsibilities for the TA and support staff training process. They were also invited to send information from any evaluation that they had carried out regarding the use of these materials, the effectiveness of the training and to indicate any schools or contacts to assist in later phases of the evaluation.

A total of 105 questionnaires were returned from individual LAs (representing a response rate of 71 per cent). Numeric data on the take-up of the materials was provided by 103 of the responding LAs. Analysis was undertaken to ensure that the responding sample were largely representative across government office regions (GORs), type of authority, size and education star rating[1].

2.2 Phase two: follow-up survey of a sample LA

A more detailed questionnaire (see annex 4) was sent to a sample of LAs who agreed at phase one to participate. The questionnaire collected further information about how the training had been delivered; and their views on the strengths of this induction experience and areas they thought could be improved. The questionnaire also sought an assessment of the value for money and impact of the training.

As with phase one, after piloting, the questionnaire was posted to named LA personnel with responsibilities for the TA and support staff training process. Respondents were also invited to suggest any schools that might be interested in participating in the project.

At phase one of the study, 68 LAs agreed to further involvement in the evaluation. They were all contacted to take part in phase two, as they represented a good regional spread; they also had a good range of take-up of the induction training according to data from phase one. However it is likely that there may have been some bias in this sample: for example, it is difficult to assess whether these LAs were more actively involved in training than the others; and whether a particular experience motivated their involvement in the evaluation.

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[1] Quality is based upon the CPA education star rating as of December 2003 and the number of schools in each LA in Ofsted's *LEAs at a glance 2002/3*.

Responses were received from 32 of the 68 LAs. As with phase one, analysis was undertaken to ensure that the respondents were largely representative across GORs and take-up of the induction training. Not all respondents completed every section of the survey, but this simply reflected the training undertaken within the LA. For example, where no training was delivered for secondary schools in 2004/05, then the secondary part within the questionnaire was not completed.

2.3 Phase three: school case studies

A range of qualitative methods was used to gather evidence from TAs and support staff about their experience and perceptions of the induction process. This phase also involved collecting perceptions from a range of others in schools about the quality of the materials and how the induction impacted on the skills, knowledge and competencies of TAs and support staff; and the school.

There were 10 case study schools (see table 2.1): five primary and five secondary across three regions (east of England; south east and London). Within each school, interviews were conducted with the headteacher or a senior member of staff responsible for support staff training (such as the SENCO), and at least one TA or member of the support staff who had undertaken the induction training. While arrangements were made to interview a couple of TAs as well as one or two support staff during each visit, schools were often only able to release one TA for interview because of release issues. In some cases the TAs interviewed had multiple roles in the schools, for example being both a TA and a lunchtime supervisor.

Two focus group meetings were held for cross-phase groups of TAs. These meetings consisted of six and nine members respectively. During the original survey period it proved impossible to convene a viable focus group of support staff as so few had attended introductory training in the areas concerned. The research team extended the sample area as far as possible but were unable to identify suitable groups. A cross-phase focus group for support staff was convened in the later stages of the project to explore training needs and barriers to training with support staff who had not taken part in this training.

Table 2.1: Schools visited during phase three

Staff interviewed	School type
Headteacher TA	4–11 years, mixed (500–600 pupils) FSM eligibility close to national average Predominantly white British with wide range of ethnic groups High EAL, 30 pupils at early stage of English language acquisition SEN average but statemented pupils higher than national average
Headteacher TA – absent	4–7 years, mixed (200–300 pupils) Attainment on entry is well below average 98 per cent of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds EAL is very high (93 per cent) FSM eligibility below national average (24 per cent) SEN below national average (6 per cent)
Headteacher TA – dual role	7–11 years, mixed (300 pupils) FSM close to national average (34 per cent) 50 per cent pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds

	EAL is higher than national average (43 per cent) SEN is above national average
Headteacher TA – absent	3–11 years, mixed (190 pupils) Attainment on entry is well below average Serves a wide catchment area including areas of social and private housing Eligibility for FSM higher than national average Proportion of pupils with SEN is well above average
Headteacher Two TAs	7–11 years, mixed, large village school (340 pupils), voluntary controlled Almost all pupils from white British background and have English as their first language SEN is below national average.
Headteacher TA	11–18 yrs, mixed (600–700 pupils), smaller than average secondary school) FSM eligibility is close to national average SEN is above average Attainment in Year 7 below national average Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is high Low level of pupils in early stages of English language acquisition
SENCO TA	11–18 yrs, mixed (900–1,000 pupils) Secondary modern (non-selective) within a selective authority Wide range of socio-economic backgrounds FSM eligibility is below national average SEN above national average Nearly all pupils are white British
Deputy headteacher School CPD coordinator Senior TA	13–18 years, mixed specialist school (1,500–1,600 pupils) Draws from 30 villages, 90 per cent travel by bus each day FSM eligibility below national average SEN below national average (12 per cent)
SENCO Two TAs	13–18 years, mixed specialist school (1,200–1,300 pupils) Over-subscribed FSM below national average SEN below national average 90 per cent of pupils from white British backgrounds Higher than average EAL but none at early stage of language acquisition
TA coordinator Two TAs	11–16 years, mixed community school (1,100–1,200 pupils) Broad catchment area includes some socially disadvantaged districts FSM eligibility is average SEN higher than national average (20 per cent, including a special provision for physically disabled and visually impaired students) 50 per cent of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and 12 per cent having EAL

2.4 Phase four: interviews with other key stakeholders

Interviews were carried out with a sample of stakeholders who either planned or managed the induction training locally, or were course tutors and/or advisory staff who delivered the training based upon these materials. A total of seven LA staff, from varied roles such as school workforce adviser, development officer for TAs and senior SEN adviser and across six GORs, were interviewed.

This phase involved semi-structured telephone interviews, using schedules similar to those used in phase three (see annex 12). Its chief focus was to investigate perceptions of the quality and impact of the materials, and to assess the value for money of the materials and whether they are fit for purpose.

3. Teaching assistant induction

3.1 Key findings

Overall, the majority of respondents were positive or strongly positive about the materials and training for TAs. The courses seem to have a good reputation locally, such that new TAs were keen to attend, and respondents suggest that the course materials were generally seen to support good practice.

> *"most teaching assistants who are fairly new are delighted with that opportunity to just get a bigger picture of what it's all about, and are very happy to be asked to go on them. Nobody ever refuses… I don't recall anyone missing a single visit."*
> Headteacher, junior school; phase three

> *"It gives you a lot of strategies, a lot of knowledge on other areas of your work… lots of resources to read. I think if you were a new TA, it'd make you a lot more comfortable doing your job."*
> TA, primary school; phase three

Despite the overall positive assessment of the training and materials for TAs, a small number of issues emerged as needing attention and amendment. In particular, respondents suggested that the materials need to better reflect the common core for the children's workforce. Respondents also suggested that the following areas need some improvements:

- **regular updates for printed, audio and video resources:** to reflect key policy developments, eg. introducing TAs to current perspectives on the primary and KS3 strategies and on the latest developments following *Every child matters*. Some LAs had undertaken this task themselves, but most were looking for updates at national level.

- **local content:** half of phase two respondents had made changes or additions to the materials to reflect local content and context. Some felt that the design should be revised to facilitate (or even encourage) local adaptation more effectively. This was seen as particularly important for the SEN module and child protection issues. Suggestions included a ring binder format so local handouts could be inserted easily, and providing some materials (eg. the programme schedule, action plans and observations form) in electronic format as well as on paper, so they can be more easily adapted.

  LAs emphasised the importance of the national dimension, but alongside the importance of making it relevant to local context and issues.

  > *"TA materials are supplemented, not adapted. We say that this is a national programme, and so this is the profile they need to get, and so we don't want to change it too much."*
  > LA adviser; phase four

- **practical hands-on exercises:** several respondents emphasised the value of these activities, including strategies that TAs can practise in the classroom. The ICT

module was particularly identified as not having sufficient practical learning activities; in addition to the behaviour management, SEN and EAL modules.

3.2 Participation
3.2.1 Number of trainees

A total of 427 TA cohorts comprising 8,814 people took the courses in 2004/05 in the sample of LAs. Table 3.1 sets out the composition of the course cohorts.

Table 3.1: TA courses during 2004/05*

Primary cohorts	Secondary cohorts	Cross-phase	Other	Total
263	152	12	0	427
Primary staff	**Secondary staff**	**Cross-phase****	**Others**	**Total**
5,925	2,819	67	3***	8,814

*	n = 105 LAs

*   n = 105 LAs
**   Those in cross-phase cohorts but whose individual phase was not recorded
***   One TA from a supply service and two from pupil referral units

Fewer secondary TAs were trained (approximately one-third of trainees) partly as more TAs work in primary schools, and were typically trained in small cohorts (the average secondary cohort had 18.5 staff compared with 22.5 staff in primary cohorts). Some cohorts were significantly larger, which meant that the training had to be delivered in the style of lectures rather than as participatory workshops.

Most LAs (85 per cent) only offered primary and secondary training, therefore TAs working in special schools were trained with mainstream colleagues. However, some LAs reported that little interest was shown by their special schools; reasons for this included that the courses were too generic for special schools, or that customised training was delivered. Three LAs in the phase two survey outlined how they had delivered the training to special schools:
- induction training delivered within a special school (two)
- a senior teacher from a special school planned and delivered this training for that group (one)
- an additional SEN and foundation stage module was developed (one).

Prior to this evaluation the numbers trained could only be estimated, based upon the number of packs requested by each LA as no participation data was routinely collected. During 2004/05 it was estimated that 13,000 primary TAs and 8,000 secondary TAs would receive induction training in 2004/05, totalling 21,000 individuals. Data collected from phase one has enabled figures to be projected for the total number of TAs who may have been trained in all LAs in 2004/05[2]. The projection was completed using several assumptions, but all projections show a large disparity between the tender's estimated figures and those projected. A simple projection of the total numbers of TAs trained would be to assume that the 30 per cent of non-responding LAs were equally likely to

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[2] The projection was completed using a variety of methods (eg. simple projection assuming the non-responding LAs were equally likely to offer this training; assessment of sample and non-respondents using LA size and education star rating.) All provided similar projections for the national population.

train. This projection would mean that a total of 12,591 had been trained (8,464 were primary and 4,027 were secondary with the balance cross-phase.)

Almost 40 per cent of respondents (in phase two), particularly those with high numbers of trainees, suggested that take-up of the training was strong. About half of respondents believed take-up was moderate; and the remainder said it was weak (four LAs, two of which trained approximately 50 TAs).

3.2.2 Factors affecting participation
Marketing

LAs publicised the training via:

- notices about CPD opportunities (28 out of 32 respondents)
- a special flyer sent to schools (25); targeted at headteachers (14); and TAs (11)
- their website (22), and
- a noticeboard (four).

Respondents that achieved a high number of trainees tended to use more than one approach so it is difficult to establish the impact of a specific type of publicity. Targeted flyers to headteachers seemed successful; of the 14 LAs using this method, six achieved very high numbers of trainees. Only a few phase two respondents said that they were routinely informed when new TAs started work in schools so that they could target their marketing, while more than three-quarters claimed that newly recruited TAs were informed of the training.

Facilitators to participation

In the phase two survey, 28 respondents believed that take-up of the courses was influenced by:

- effective publicity, including personal contacts with key staff (13)
- word of mouth – the course had built up a good reputation locally (eight)
- the adaptability of the course to meet schools' needs (six), and
- encouragement from senior staff (four).

Barriers to participation

Table 3.2 sets out some of the barriers to take up offered by respondents (in phase one and two surveys). The key issues seem to be broadly similar across both surveys – with staff being released the most common response.

Table 3.2: Factors inhibiting take-up of the training

Barrier	No. of respondents	
	*Phase one**	*Phase two***
Amount of release time for TAs/staff not released by school	24	15
Cost of release/supply	6	5
Many TAs have already attended training	5	1
School/headteacher gives this low priority	5	7
Information not passed on to TAs	3	3

*   n = 103
** n = 32

Supply cover: Respondents suggested that schools find it difficult to get supply cover for TAs and many do not attempt to cover their work.

> *"It's difficult, because it puts the staff under pressure when they're out of the building… I know some agencies do offer supply support staff, but… we have to manage."*
>
> Headteacher, primary school; phase three

> *"It is always difficult because you can't just grab anyone passing by to stick them in. You have to have someone who you think will be able to manage the role, kind of effectively… we tend to have people who will do extra hours and that sort of thing."*
>
> Headteacher, primary school; phase three

Supply cover for pupils with SEN: There are particular issues when releasing TAs responsible for supporting pupils with SEN.

> *"There were difficulties for me because of the little girl I support, I had to show someone what to do. There was only one person who could actually take over what I do."*
>
> TA, focus group; phase three

> *"We don't buy in cover; we just try and cover it between ourselves. So cover will be taken from one child, so we prioritise."*
>
> TA assistant coordinator; phase three

> *"…when support staff are out on training, we're not able to support the children in their work. That obviously has to be against it…. When they are (out on) the same days – that is the worry."*
>
> SENCO, secondary school; phase three

Pay: This was identified as an issue. In particular, many TAs work on a part-time basis and the training fell outside their paid working time and they were not paid for the time to attend. They were also often not paid expenses. Some accepted this but most respondents felt it was a barrier to take-up.

Logistics: Many TAs work on a part-time basis and have responsibilities outside work which mean attending outside their working hours is difficult. Start and finish times of training are crucial; particularly as they need to travel to a different location and often by a different means of travel.

> *"At the time I had to get someone to look after my children. Because the course started at 9 and my children weren't allowed to be in school."*
>
> TA, primary; phase three

> *"Sometimes we're told we can't book these hours because TAs have to get childcare for their own children for the whole day. If they go to a 3.30 – 4.00 it's tricky. They have to leave 15 to 20 minutes early and miss things at the end'*
>
> Headteacher, primary school; phase three

> *"It is a rural county, small population – public transport is not there. We have a lady 21 miles away who needs the training – she doesn't drive – school will not release*

anyone else to attend with her. The school has now appointed another TA who does drive and so hopefully they will drive together."

<div align="right">Development officer for TAs; phase four</div>

Training not prioritised: Proportionally fewer TAs from secondary schools were sent on this training than those from primaries. Possible reasons include:
- secondary school headteachers did not prioritise training for TAs/have not previously released TAs for courses (six)
- there are fewer TAs in secondary schools (five)
- it is difficult to ensure that publicity material is communicated to the appropriate person (five)
- large secondary schools often have their own in-house provision for induction and training (five), and
- secondary TAs tend to work with individual pupils, making release from school difficult (three).

Some respondents (8 out of 32 in phase two) suggested that the number of TAs trained was equal across phases, while two LAs claimed to have had difficulties recruiting from primary, not secondary; and one commented that prior to 2004/05, training in their LA had been focused on primary TAs, with emphasis now changed to secondary TAs.

"Secondary schools have larger teams with allocated team leaders and value offered training. …Positive impact of well-trained staff and actively encourage them to progress from introductory training through level 2, 3, 4 qualifications to HLTA status."

<div align="right">LA; phase two</div>

3.2.3 Induction
Overall, 91 per cent of LAs offered this training to staff currently in post and did not restrict it to newly appointed staff. This seemed to be welcomed by some at school level, although concerns were raised that new staff did not have the opportunity to attend as early as they would have liked.

"We use some of it to plug a gap for people who've been here for a little while … within performance management, we identified areas for development, and some of them plugged the gaps for that."

<div align="right">Headteacher, junior school; phase three</div>

"I think generally we felt that it was something we should attend very early on, on starting the school, and that it's left too late by the time we actually get onto the course."

<div align="right">TA1, upper school; phase three</div>

"Some people waited even longer than six months to get on the course, and they definitely felt that some of it would have benefited them more if they'd managed to get on to it earlier."

<div align="right">TA2, upper school; phase three</div>

However, some respondents felt that having experience and/or a mixed cohort could benefit the training experience.

"Teaching assistant training benefits if there is a mix of new and experienced teaching assistants. We have done in the past one cohort of all newly inducted trainees. In relation to how the teaching assistants were when it was not mixed, it was deadly because the teaching assistants did not have the background to reflect, they were too new into the post. They need to have at least a term, I think, so they can reflect on what's being given to them and how it fits in to their own practice. A mixed cohort assists that process of reflection, which is what we are trying to stimulate."

LA adviser; phase four

These findings have implications for how the course is labelled. Three-quarters of LAs (surveyed in phase two) still referred to the training as 'induction' despite the range of experience of trainees. Many attempted in their marketing to ensure that experienced TAs felt it was relevant for them, and a small number did not actually use the term 'induction' in their marketing. For example, one LA advertised it as 'core training' to *"identify the basic core of information required by all who work in the education service".*

3.3 Structure and content of the training

3.3.1 Course structure
The phase two survey suggested that, while the schedule of the course often varied to meet local needs, its broad structure was well received by most trainers. Table 3.3 sets out the number of days over which TA induction training was delivered. Although many LAs deliver the suggested basic four full days of training, a similar number uses a range of other approaches. Table 3.4 sets out the 'other' delivery models.

Table 3.3: TA induction training structure

	Four full days	Eight sessions	Other
Primary	53	4	45
Secondary*	46	7	35

* 13 LAs do not run the secondary induction

Table 3.4: Breakdown of other delivery models

Structure of other delivery models	No. of LAs using to deliver in primary	No. of LAs using to deliver in secondary
12 days	1	NA
7 days (linked to NVQ)	1	NA
6 days	8	6
5½ days	1	NA
5 days	14	14
4½ days	7	4
4 days + 6 sessions	1	NA
4 days + 6 modules	1	1
4 days + 3 modules	1	1
3 days + 2 x ½ days	1	2
2 days + 6 x ½ days	1	1

10 x ½ days	1	1
10 sessions	1	1
9 sessions	1	NA
2 hours x 15 weeks (accredited)	1	1
Mix of full/part days	2	1
In-school programme	1	1

Some LAs incorporated their own training to address local issues, and others ran optional modules. Only eight of the 28 phase two LAs had not considered other modes of delivery, while eight others had positively considered that the whole course could be delivered through other modes; 12 respondents believed that it could be partially changed.

3.3.2 Content of the training
Optional modules
Of the responding phase one LAs, 89 ran at least one optional module. EAL was by far the most common optional module (offered by 76 LAs). Understanding how children learn (52 LAs) and ICT (41 LAs) were also popular. Thirteen LAs did not run any optional modules although three of these suggested that they would be delivered from September 2005. No correlation is apparent regarding LA type and optional module take-up.

A high proportion of LAs were unable to give figures easily for those trained in each of the optional modules, so some caution should be taken in interpreting the figures in table 3.5. For example, in one LA Understanding how children learn was almost compulsory so the total number of TAs undertaking these modules cannot be meaningfully projected.

Table 3.5: Delivery of optional modules

Modules	School Phase	No. of LAs running	Total no. of TAs trained	No. of LAs stating numbers trained
EAL	Primary	76	1,748	39
Understanding how children learn	Primary	52	963	28
ICT	Primary	41	658	18
EAL	Secondary	64	821	35
Science	Secondary	42	413	23

n = 105

3.3.3 Primary course
The following section sets out findings from phase two (unless otherwise stated) about specific modules for TAs working in primary schools, and follows the format of the course file for ease of reference. However, most of the comments made apply equally to the secondary course. Respondents were asked about the strengths of each section in addition to what elements could be improved.

Notes about the course and this file (section 1)
Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they would not change this module. However, it was noted that it could be made easier for course tutors to customise the notes. Two respondents urged the need to update the terminology to reflect *Every child matters.*

Personal profile (section 2)

Almost three-quarters of respondents would not change this module. Many LAs praised this section as it encouraged "personal ownership of learning" and provided a helpful framework and a good starting point for building up a personal development file. Two LA respondents suggested it could be even more helpful if it were possible for TAs to remove or add pages (eg. job description, CV, etc.), and a further two respondents suggested that it could be put onto a CD-rom.

One LA respondent suggested this section was irrelevant, while another thought it out of date and needing rethinking. However these views were the minority.

Finding out about the school (section 3)

More than three-quarters of respondents would not change this module, so few further comments were offered. Of those received, two respondents found the module basic and probably best covered by schools; one suggested it could be a pre-course task, used for initial discussion/icebreaker activity; and another felt it was a useful discussion activity.

Review or appraisal (section 4)

Half of the respondents would leave this section unchanged. Seven responding LAs thought this section could be "expanded now, as more and more TAs are involved in the performance management cycle", for example by including some ideas for appropriate personal targets, referring to national occupational standards or making the link with CPD opportunities explicit. Three respondents preferred the secondary materials to the primary; and one suggested that the primary materials needed more detail to be helpful for new TAs or those who have not had an appraisal. One respondent found this topic difficult to discuss given the variety of practice between schools.

Behaviour management module (section 5)

More than half of respondents would not change this section and felt it important enough to be given extra time. This module was also identified as important by five phase three respondents. LAs' own evaluations highlight the value of using the positive 4R framework to help encourage self-esteem and good behaviour management.

However many respondents suggested the need to review this module, in particular, the following:

- less theory and a greater focus on practical strategies and advice (12 LAs; five in relation to primary materials, and seven to secondary materials)
- more realistic and higher quality video material (four LAs; three in relation to primary materials, one to secondary materials), and
- more time allowed for this module (three LAs).

Some concerns were expressed about the relevance of the materials, in relation to the age of pupils and the need to take account of emotional literacy and pupil voice.

> *"The behaviour management… is not very useful. Though they separate on the middle and upper, it is very much focused on the younger. The youngest we've got here are 14 years old. They are young adults we're working with. The management techniques for them are completely different."*
>
> SENCO upper school; phase three

"This unit is very behaviouristic in approach, eg. here is the behaviour and here are the strategies to manage it. But more notice needs to be taken of feelings of the TA and the child and the interaction that takes place.'

LA; phase two

Literacy module and literacy (reception) module (section 6)
Half of those responding would not make any significant changes to these sections but more than half of respondents suggested some changes would be helpful. The literacy module was generally seen as important and useful (two phase two and two phase three respondents particularly highlighted this); and two further respondents suggested extra time should be allocated to it (for example, more time is needed to deliver the guided reading and writing element).

Substantial updating to take account of developments with the national strategies was recommended by 11 phase two respondents. One headteacher (phase three) felt the module was too technical, especially for TAs with English as an additional language or low levels of basic skills. This concern was echoed by an LA who wanted to see the module closely tailored to the needs and tasks of TAs with more practical in-class support strategies. A course leader (phase three) reported using video from other sources to stimulate the discussion during this module.

Mathematics module and mathematics (reception) module (section 7)
Half of the respondents could see no need to change this module which, like the literacy module, was generally recognised as an important one (five phase three respondents).Suggestions for change included the need to reflect policy developments (seven phase two respondents; four in relation to primary materials and three to secondary) and greater emphasis on practical classroom strategies (three phase two respondents).

General background notes (section 8)
Almost two-thirds of respondents did not want to change this section. Two respondents (phase two) said this material should be restructured, with greater prominence given, or even a dedicated section, to the SEN/disabilities and child protection materials.

Specific proposals for updating the reading list (which might include useful websites) included materials on the common core, *Every child matters*, children's services and the new Ofsted framework. The need to update the terminology was also highlighted.

EAL module (optional) (section 9)
From phase one, 74 LAs ran this optional module. Two-thirds of respondents in phase two saw no need to change this module and many positive comments about it were received. The importance given to this module depended on the local context: one LA used it for raising awareness, another used it for training across the workforce, not just for TAs. Some respondents (seven) suggested it needed more depth especially when working with high numbers of EAL pupils.

Suggestions for improvements included:
- more practical classroom material (three respondents, phase two)
- facility for trainers to include their own materials (two, phase two), and
- allowance for more discussion time (one, phase three).

Understanding how children learn module (optional) (section 10)

From phase one, 53 LAs indicated they ran this module. Half of those responding in phase two would not change it and four particularly emphasised the importance of it.

One respondent, however, described it as "the least popular module with TAs", and a variety of suggestions for improvement were offered. Again, dissatisfaction with the video content and the need for more active learning were cited, and some respondents challenged what they saw as narrow curriculum content. Suggestions for additional content included:

- risk taking, thinking skills, creative engagement, presentation skills, active listening (one respondent)
- more explicit links to the national curriculum, schemes of work, planning and progression (one), and
- more on brain gym and/or "brain-based learning" (one).

ICT in teaching and learning module (optional) (section 11)

From the phase one survey, 42 LAs indicated they ran this module. Despite the number of respondents offering this module, more than half of phase two LAs wished to change it and it received the highest number of comments overall.

Most comments called for more hands-on experience with a range of hardware, such as interactive whiteboards and laptops, and software (five respondents in phase two; several across other phases) and increased content on the use of ICT to support children, teachers and the curriculum (two respondents). There were also proposals for the support of practical work through web-based provision or a CD-rom with exemplar material; others indicated that they substituted this module with local courses.

3.3.4 Secondary course

The following comments apply to the secondary course file only.

Role and context (section 1)

Almost three-quarters of respondents did not want change on this section. Comments made by phase two respondents identified the need for the terminology to be updated (as with the primary file) and material added on topics such as school self-evaluation, workforce remodelling and *Every child matters*. Two respondents rated it as excellent, and one suggested it should be included in the primary course.

Sections 2–4

Between two-thirds and three-quarters of respondents were happy with these sections. Comments made were similar to those on the primary course and have been identified in the corresponding primary sections.

Inclusion: special educational needs and disabilities (section 5)

Two-thirds of respondents would not change this material although several suggested it should also be a separate module in the primary course.

Again, greater emphasis on practical classroom strategies was suggested; and updated content to take account of recent developments in this field. Two respondents felt that the material was not relevant for most trainees.

"The video clips are inappropriate… . They try to show that students with quite severe disabilities and learning needs can be included but the clips don't reflect most mainstream schools where TAs have a number of students with less severe needs but there is still a challenge to access the curriculum to them."

<div align="right">LA; phase two</div>

Two respondents felt that there was too much content to get through in the time allowed.

"They would prefer more time on specific needs… . To include working with children with ASD and ADHD would have looked at the need and how the TA addresses that need. So, to combine TA role and specific needs with some video clips and scenarios would be better. There is a great need to look at accessing the curriculum"

<div align="right">LA; phase two</div>

While these suggestions reflected most views about the module, more positive comments were made about the inclusion materials in the primary course, than in the secondary.

EAL (optional) (section 6)
Most of the 64 phase one LAs who ran this module want it to remain unchanged.

Science (optional) (section 7)
Again, virtually all respondents do not want to see change in this section (run by 44 phase one LAs).

3.3.5 Suggested additions to the course
Respondents highlighted what they have added, or suggested what they would like to see added to the course. These included:
- induction checklist for mentors and TAs to discuss
- links to DfES 2000 booklet[3]
- a short and user-friendly handbook for mentors, including a section on working with TAs
- a booklet to help complete tasks, that includes all the suggested tasks, forms and tables provided, with some additions from course leaders
- TAs to create a presentable piece of evidence that they can keep, and
- use of the good practice guide and the maths vocabulary book[4].

3.3.6 Links to other qualifications and training
Training
A significant proportion of LAs (20 out of 28 phase two respondents) offered some follow-up training. However, most referred to general courses available and did not directly link them with, or attempt to build them upon, this training. It was suggested that trainees had been stimulated by their experiences on the induction but there were few systematic activities to support this. Only two respondents referred to centrally organised career and professional development planning for individual staff, and only one mentioned school visits as part of the follow-up.

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[3] *Working with teaching assistants: A good practice guide* DfES 0148/2000
[4] *Working with teaching assistants: A good practice guide* DfES 0148/2000 and *National numeracy strategy mathematical vocabulary book* DfES 0313/2000

Listed below, in order of most mentions by respondents, are the types of local training on offer to TAs:

- courses that lead to an accredited qualification, mainly NVQs (13 LAs)
- courses focusing on specific curriculum areas, ICT (four) literacy or numeracy (two), and
- behaviour management (four).

Several respondents suggested that this training should be seen as the first step.

"I think it's only part and parcel of a whole. You can't just have that as the be-all and end-all. … So I've got a load of new ones who came in October/November time, who are undergoing the initial induction. My theory then would be to put them on to that one, and then obviously, perhaps after a year, two years, I would be putting them on the HLTA course."

SENCO, secondary; phase three

Qualifications

A total of 16 respondents had not linked the training with any formal award or qualification. Of these, five offered a certificate of course attendance; links to NVQ courses (six) and college or university accreditation (three). Two other LAs (represented in phase four) suggested this training could be linked to an NVQ and one offered credits towards a City and Guilds qualification.

Some LA respondents thought that few TAs would feel it was necessary to link the course to an award, and they might be reluctant to undertake formal assessment. However, most respondents thought a link would be valuable or extremely valuable as it would support further professional development or career progression for TAs, provide an incentive for training and recognise the TAs' work as valued.

"Well, if you linked it to NVQ … or it was a step on the way to … because there are certainly one or two here who would consider doing some HLTA training, and there's some of those who possibly want to go into teaching. It could be seen as a rung on the ladder to getting to where they want to be."

Headteacher, primary school; phase three

"All a teaching assistant has got to show at the end of the day, if you're looking for another job, is 'Yes, you've done it and you've done it for this long a time'. You could do the job for 20 years, and not come out with more than that. Apart from a list of courses that you've gone on, but none of them built up to it. It would add value to a job of teaching assistant."

TA, upper school; phase three

Seven LAs had trained more than 200 staff in this period, and had linked the training in to an accredited award, typically an NVQ. The most ambitious link involved "seven full days linked with award of NVQ level 2 (development of portfolios over full academic year)". While TAs seemed to want accredited training, there were problems in getting the right aspects accredited with the correct quality systems in place and in enabling progression routes. Respondents suggested guidance about what is available and how this could be accredited would have been helpful.

*"They said we could go on to do the NVQ, to keep all the paperwork we had done
and then, if we went on the NVQ, then the stuff that we had done would aid us… .
I think perhaps they should have shown us more about what the NVQ would cover,
how we would … what we would have gained from that"*

TA, community college secondary; phase three

3.3.7 Administration and funding of the training
Funding and costing of the courses
The phase one questionnaire explored how the induction training was funded. The
replies showed that the standards fund support was the key means of funding this
training; several LAs used a combination of the standards fund and charging schools,
and three LAs used the standards fund, charged schools and added additional funds
(see table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Funding methods for induction training

Funding method	No. of LA respondents
Standards fund	84
Schools charged	18
Standards fund plus additional funds	9
Standards fund plus charge schools	8
Workforce remodelling budget	1

Closer examination of funding in phase two found that 22 of the 32 responding LAs said
that feedback from schools suggested that cost of cover and lack of funding were the
most frequent reasons given for not sending TAs on this training. It was noted that in
areas where LAs covered the cost through retained portion of the standards fund grant,
schools were less concerned about funding. From the data provided, it is not possible to
conclude how this affected recruitment in these areas

More than half of respondents expressed concern about the impact of changes to
funding arrangements; many claimed that the need to charge would reduce uptake.

Administration at national level
LA staff responsible for delivering the courses locally relied on the efficiency of the
national ordering and distribution system. Of the 29 LA respondents, 15 had found the
arrangements efficient or very efficient and less than half judged the arrangements to be
fair (10), inefficient (three) or very inefficient (one). Several highlighted that the efficiency
of the service impacted their delivery of the courses because of:
- incorrect or no labelling of the materials (two)
- incorrect order received (two)
- wrong person and wrong place (one)
- delivery dates rarely met (one)
- order not received even on second request (one)
- contents in the box not matching statement on the label (one)
- delivery too late for course (one), and
- frequent problems and an annual source of anxiety (one).

3.3.8 Perceived value for money
The course

Value for money was difficult to assess, as it is based on individual perceptions which are problematic to measure and benchmark. There are expectations of professional service levels that, in relation to the impact of training delivery and content, may be an immediate expectation for some, while remaining an expectation identifiable in the longer term for others. The task of measuring these perceptions becomes more difficult when there are no explicit charges. Caution should therefore be used in interpreting these findings.

Of the 66 phase two respondents, 25 judged the materials to be 'good' or 'very good' value for money; this view was supported by headteachers and other school managers interviewed during phase three.

> *"The induction programmes have been invaluable to TAs and their schools."*
>
> LA; phase two

> *"For the schools they are ludicrously good value for money"*
>
> Development officer for TAs; phase four

> *"In general TA courses aren't as expensive as staff courses, so they are good value."*
>
> Headteacher, primary school; phase three

Gauging relative value is more difficult: courses are free of charge to the trainee and most schools, so they can be seen to represent value for money. However, there are hidden costs which schools and LAs are not clear about – evidenced by LAs reporting such wide variations in their breakdown of expenditure – so the findings were difficult to interpret.

> *"Taking everything into account TAs and support staff training do offer very good value for money, but it is difficult to make headteachers see this, as there are hidden costs. Also the courses are funded. They do not generate income."*
>
> Senior SEN adviser; phase four

Respondents suggested that the course could be made more cost effective at the school and LA level by trying to design and run sessions within the school, or perhaps by combining with neighbouring schools.

Course materials

Given the disparity outlined earlier between the number of packs ordered and actual number of trainees, clearly there is some wastage which does not represent value for money. However, the evaluation did not attempt to estimate the cost of this wastage.

It was unclear from the findings what happens to unused packs. Evidence suggests some are retained for future use: for example, where take-up was lower than anticipated the materials would be used in the following year. This is not an ideal solution as it involves using old material for training rather than current good practice, and has inherent storage costs and issues.

Respondents suggested using e-learning materials or files, stored locally, which would be usable over several years with new updated material being inserted as appropriate.

3.4 Experiences and perceptions of the training

3.4.1 Perceptions about the quality of the materials
Phase two respondents were asked to identify three strengths and three areas for improvement for TA materials 2004/05. These key strengths were generally also endorsed during interviews and local evaluations:
- course materials overall were to a high quality, in particular their consistency over time and their authority as a nationally supported resource
- broad and comprehensive coverage of areas relevant to TAs
- programme over a four-day period allowed time for thorough coverage.

The following key areas of improvement were identified by respondents:
- quality of specific modules and accompanying materials (in particular, the video and DVD material lacked quality)
- format or design of the learning materials (in particular, to make them less bulky)
- central/national support for marketing and information to schools
- stronger links to continuing professional development were needed and arrangements for accreditation or certification of course completion.

3.4.2 Course preparation
About two-thirds of respondents recommended that the pre-course activities be retained. In the phase two survey, 17 respondents reported that TAs attending primary induction courses had been asked to complete pre-course activities, but 12 had not. For secondary courses, 14 respondents reported that trainees had been asked to complete them, but 10 had not.

LA respondents varied in their assessment of the pre-course activities: of the 31 respondents, nine valued them highly (notably the job description task); some LAs (10) incorporated them into the course itself; while three suggested the workload be reduced. Six respondents encountered problems getting them done due to late registration of participants and poor distribution arrangements.

Some respondents gave a short account of the use they had made of the pre-course activities. In most cases the brief comments did not make clear how exactly the activities fed into the programme, except that they formed a point of reference as the course proceeded or were simply integrated "as recommended". Examples included the importance of getting trainees thinking about their role, familiarising them with the course and building their confidence.

> *"Helpful to prepare people for the course and get them to start thinking about their role in school."*
>
> LA; phase two

> *"Pre-course work prepares the TAs for the course, gives a focus to the pre-course briefing, familiarises TAs with the course materials."*
>
> LA; phase two

"Participants who had done pre-course tasks were more confident especially on day one."

<div align="right">LA; phase two</div>

Other suggestions about individual elements of the pre-course materials included:
- finding out about your school could be added to the pre-course tasks and then used in initial group discussions and/or as an icebreaker activity (one)
- more in-depth advance knowledge of the course content in the pre-course information would enable course selection (one), and
- improved formatting of the material might help readability (one).

"It felt like you spent some of the time well, but other times you'd be thinking, 'I could be doing so much more with my time'. And maybe specific sections of the course would have been more useful, so we could have gone on specific courses, rather than the whole chunk... . If we'd known a bit more about what each section was about, we could have chosen which was most relevant to us."

<div align="right">TA; phase three</div>

Tutors who described the pre-course activities as effective were aware that, although many participants had not found the time to complete them, they underpinned the learning of those who did use them. A few respondents noted that the activities could be used in preparation for award-bearing courses, eg. as the first step towards developing a professional TA portfolio. The job description task was particularly welcomed (four).

Even when respondents observed that few participants had the time to tackle the tasks adequately, they still sometimes added comments such as "it is better than nothing". Obstacles to completing the tasks were identified as:
- too much workload (two)
- texts were "too wordy or inadequately explained" (two), and
- poor arrangements for registering participants in advance and dispatching the materials to them (two).

In contrast, some tutors had resolved these problems by incorporating the pre-course tasks into the course schedule; one argued that this had pedagogical advantages.

"It is much better to do them as you go along on the course so everyone is working together at the same pace with a schedule, deadlines and feedback."

<div align="right">LA; phase two</div>

Possible improvements for course preparation were suggested by respondents:
- reduce the total amount of paper/information (seven)
- provide simpler guidance to what has to be done (one)
- reduce the number of pre-course tasks, incorporating some into day one (one), and
- stress more clearly that participants need to complete the tasks in order to gain the maximum benefit (one).

3.4.3 The experience of the course
Mentors

Table 3.7 shows that mentor attendance seems to be quite low. Most phase two respondents reported that fewer than 25 per cent of their TAs were accompanied by a mentor when they attended the course.

Table 3.7: Proportion of mentors attending with TAs

Type of course	Less than 25 per cent	25 per cent–50 per cent	51 per cent–75 per cent	More than 76 per cent
Secondary TA induction	19	2	2	2
Primary TA induction	17	3	3	4

Approximately half of phase two respondents suggested that mentors who had already attended primary induction training with previous mentees, tended not to attend again with new TAs. More than three-quarters of respondents recommended that mentors should continue to attend during TA induction because of the perceived benefits:
- attending mentors are better able to support TAs (six in relation to primary, eight for secondary)
- demonstrates the value that the school places on the course and on the TAs themselves (seven primary, three secondary)
- ensures that mentors and TAs hear the same messages about the TA's role (six primary, two secondary)
- enhances TAs' sense of their value (four primary, four secondary)
- raises issues that teaching staff need to address (three primary, two secondary)
- helps to build the mentor's relationship with a new TA (two primary), and
- helps TAs who are unfamiliar with the training and the associated course expectations to settle in (two primary, two secondary).

The interviews conducted in phase three confirmed the importance of mentor attendance, but problems in securing attendance were emphasised. In a focus group for mentors, two HLTAs, with supervisory responsibility for the TAs had previously attended the induction training as TAs but felt that they needed to attend as mentors to support their colleagues.

The identity of mentors was discussed by respondents and a range of opinion emerged. It was suggested by some that senior TAs might be more easily released than mentors who are teachers. As a phase four respondent highlighted, it is important that mentors have sufficient influence in school to enable induction-training initiatives to be instigated and developed. For example, a headteacher that attended induction yearly, as a mentor, implemented new messages heard from the sessions within her school such as performance management for TAs.

Mentees found the attendance of mentors very helpful even if their own was not present: for example, this primary TA welcomed the support from a mentor from another school.

> *"I hadn't done any exams or any writing of essays for such a long time, it's helpful to have somebody who is more up to date with what's wanted and written down."*
>
> TA, primary school; phase three

Most respondents were aware that it would be desirable for mentors to attend and that course tutors would welcome their presence. Various measures were taken to

encourage attendance: for example: two LAs arranged a separate session for mentors in advance, which focused specifically on their role and what their TAs would cover during the course. One of these LAs offered accreditation in order to encourage attendance.

Low mentor attendance can impact the training, particularly for joint mentor and TA activities planned to engender future positive relationships; these might not be offered as they are difficult to handle with only a few mentors.

> *"This LA has ceased to bother requesting a mentor to attend TA induction training. So few attended anyway that it is better to have none rather than a few."*

<div align="right">LA adviser; phase four</div>

3.4.4 Learning resources
Suitability of the material
Table 3.8 sets out LA responses (in phase two) regarding the suitability of the materials for all TAs. As anticipated given the nature of the training, the more experience TAs have, the less relevant the training is deemed to be.

Table 3.8: Suitability of materials for TAs with different experience (No. of respondents)

Suitability of materials	New TAs	TAs with 2 years' experience	TAs with 2-plus years' experience
Primary materials	27	23	14
Secondary materials	23	21	14

N = 32

About half of phase two LAs felt the training materials were suitable to meet the needs of TAs in special schools, PRUs and special units.

Trainer booklets and support materials
As seen in table 3.9 there was broad satisfaction with the trainer booklet and course programme; a few respondents gave average or poor ratings to the information for headteachers and mentors, and the pre-course information for TAs scored lowest of all. The provision of resources to support tutors in delivering the courses was generally welcomed and the CD was seen as good quality and useful by most respondents.

Table 3.9: Respondent ratings of the trainer booklets and accompanying material

Course material	Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	Mean rating
Trainer booklet	0	0	5	17	8	4.1
Course programme	0	0	8	15	7	4.0
Information for headteachers	0	1	10	14	5	3.8
Information for mentors	0	1	10	14	5	3.8
Pre-course information for TAs	0	2	10	15	3	3.6
CD quality	0	1	4	19	5	4.0
CD usefulness	0	2	7	12	7	3.9

N = 30

Specific suggestions for improvement were also received from respondents across phases 2 and 3:

- The video and CD footage needed to be made more realistic, relevant and practical. For example, a focus on TAs working with children who are more 'challenging' in terms of their SEN or behaviour: use more 9–11 year olds in KS1/2 videos (five); more footage would be helpful (two); and more updating (one)

- Make it possible for the video clips on CD to be shown on full screen (six); ensure they include more realistic material eg. more KS2 children (three); easier navigation (two); and ensure they are up to date (two)

- Liven up the PowerPoint presentations (one), separate them from the video clips (one), separate them for each module (one) and make them available to participants (one).

Files and paper materials
On average, all elements were seen to be 'good' or at least 'average', as seen in table 3.10. However 11 out of 28 respondents believed that the ease of use was poor.

Table 3.10: Respondent ratings of the TA training materials and accompanying material

	Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	Mean rating
Folder quality	0	2	3	15	8	4.0
Use of dividers	0	2	3	17	6	4.0
Use of colour	1	5	6	14	3	3.6
Accessibility	1	5	10	10	2	3.3
Ease of use	1	11	5	10	2	3.1

N = 28

Despite the positive feedback received, it was commonly felt that there were too many paper materials and they lacked organisation.

> *"They're quite glossy, in presentation. Sometimes a bit daunting we feel, initially … Just the size, and the … amount to look at initially. They could be … dividing it someway to make it bite-size rather than huge, more user-friendly."*
>
> Headteacher, junior school; phase three

> *"I think they were a bit daunting. If they were in bite-size pieces. The level was a bit hard, especially for people whose native language wasn't English."*
>
> Headteacher, secondary school; phase three

> *"Instead of a massive folder, it would be nice if we could have it in little bits. It's such a hefty thing."*
>
> TA focus group; phase three

Not all respondents were convinced that separating the sections would be helpful.

"Although they are heavy, I'd rather have them all in one because I don't think I could cope with: 'Where's my EAL? Where's my this? Where's my that?' And I know they are all in one place."

<div align="right">LA adviser; phase four</div>

Opinions on the style and format of the folders were divided. While some felt that the spiral binding was less bulky and took up less space, others wanted to return to the ring binder as it made local adaptation and additions easier. Customising to local needs was a recurring issue because virtually all LAs (93 per cent) had adapted the material to meet their needs.

"They've changed over time anyway in the way they look. It started off as a ring binder…it's now gone on to this, and now …I think it …just looks a lot more professional now, says to teaching assistants, we value what you're doing and it's an important job."

<div align="right">Headteacher, primary school; phase three</div>

"I was disappointed when they got rid of the ring binder. Although the file was cumbersome, it gives it some value when you are giving out something that looks nice at the beginning of a course, or at the beginning of a career perhaps. If we are putting in supplementary materials or encouraging people to keep notes and do some activities in relation to the course, then the spiral bound file is not user friendly. This is important if people are doing NVQs and need to keep supporting evidence."

<div align="right">LA adviser; phase four</div>

Comments were also made that the page and section numbering were confusing, and that organising the secondary and primary binders in the same way would reduce confusion.

3.4.5 Teaching style, presentation and timing of the course
Teaching style and presentation
Overall, most respondents were positive about the teaching style and presentation of the materials but it should be remembered that many course leaders had made changes to both presentation and timing. The most common changes reported in the phase two survey were:
- addition of more participative, hands-on and interactive materials (10), and
- greater emphasis on practical strategies of support for pupils and the teacher (seven).

TA focus groups suggested they would have welcomed these changes.

"I think some of the lessons could have been more hands-on. Because sitting in a warm room, for over two hours, it's hard to keep focus."

<div align="right">TA focus group; phase three</div>

LA respondents in phase two also revised instructions for the activities to make them clearer and easier to follow, to reduce repetition of material, especially in the literacy module and to accommodate the availability of trainers.

Timing of courses

The most common adjustments to course timings were:

- reducing time on some elements of a module to make it fit the time allocated – concern was expressed about losing time for discussion and practical activities
- extending certain modules, notably behaviour management and SEN, to a full day, and
- restructuring the literacy module to enable tutors to include updated and/or local material.

The recognition of constraints on TAs' working time was flagged up.

> *"Sometimes the courses go on longer than the school day does, and in my experience, many of my teaching assistants have young children at home, so need childcare. Though it wasn't really a barrier, it could have been. What I'm trying to say is, they should keep the training to the same hours as school."*
>
> SENCO, upper school; phase three

3.5 Impact

3.5.1 The impact of the training

As can be seen in table 3.11 almost all phase two respondents perceived the impact of the materials to be good or very good.

Table 3.11: Perceptions of impact (No. of LA respondents)

Area of impact for TA	Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	Mean rating
Knowledge	1	0	1	15	11	4.3
Competence	0	0	5	18	4	4.0
Confidence	0	0	1	13	11	4.1
Awareness of new strategies	0	0	5	11	11	4.2

N = 32

In phase two, 27 respondents had received feedback from schools about the impact of the TA training in 2004/05. About half of them (13) reported positive feedback from schools or course members, for example:

- TAs showed greater confidence in school as a result of the training and, in some cases, were being used for more challenging work as a result (five)
- TAs were progressing onto other courses, including NVQs (four)
- reports of TAs showing greater interest and commitment to their careers (three)
- teachers reported improved support in the classroom as a result of the training (two), and
- reports of TAs directly employing, in school, the strategies that had been introduced during the courses (two).

These findings were echoed in the phase three and four interviews; many respondents referred to TAs' increased confidence as a result of attending this training. While confidence is difficult to measure, it is an important outcome of the training and a common theme throughout much of the feedback.

Respondents said that the training led to an increase in knowledge and confidence; these two outcomes are related. An increase in confidence can lead to an increase in knowledge, as TAs feel able to ask staff questions; but equally the increase in knowledge can increase their confidence.

"I think it makes them more confident, because of its existence they know they can come back and ask, they know there are issues that need focusing on. They would have known very little, but we say 'Go away and read this before next week, we're going to talk about it, and by then you'll have questions of your own once I've finished.' So what I think it does, it develops their knowledge, it makes them feel very at ease, and importantly, builds this relationship with each other."

LSA, secondary school; phase three

"I think people enjoyed doing it, and I think that it raises people's esteem for their capability in doing the job. And I think if you've done some training, then you actually think: 'Actually I am someone who does know more than the average person on the street, and I am qualified to do this job'."

TA primary school; phase three

"I think it's reinforced a lot of what we already knew but didn't know we knew. It gives you the confidence to speak up."

TA focus group; phase three

"Yes, they have all said it has made them much more confident, much more able to understand where children are coming from and going to. And the need to keep differentiating if a child says '...but I don't understand, but I don't get it', to keep breaking it down in different ways. Which before they would have thought 'Oh, this child just doesn't understand'."

Headteacher, primary school; phase three

"I think their impact in the classroom is that they're more confident. And I think anyone with more training is willing to go up and use some of those ideas, and share them. I think they're able to relate better to adults in the classroom, to the teacher. They're aware of their role and what their role is."

SENCO, secondary school; phase three

"I think again it depends on the role they're doing. I am aware … that the member of staff that supports food technology got a lot from the health and safety section, and so she works a lot safer thanks to that training."

SENCO, upper school; phase three

"Greater confidence certainly when they come back from the courses. Improved knowledge, particularly in literacy ... especially methods in maths. Knowledge and how they support staff. Our assistant head, who monitors and sees progress, said last week how she's definitely seen progress… . More confidence in the way they deal with the children as well, and particularly in maths, how to deal with it. More independent. Rather than having to go back to the teacher to ask for advice, they've got their own role and can cope."

Headteacher, junior school; phase three

Respondents also referred to a change in attitudes or the TA's ability to reflect on their practice more; this outcome was particularly evident for TAs with some prior experience.

"You can take a step back, and you can evaluate things more. That you actually know what is the end result required with any particular thing you are doing with a child… because of your training you're given much more …background knowledge of what is going on in the teaching programme process. I think that it probably gives you more time; you're evaluating the whole time rather than just doing your job or trying to get a child do the work that is written on the board."

LSA, primary school, six years' experience; phase three

"*Through all those classes, the positive side of everything was brought to our attention and I know we need to be aware of it all the time… . I feel more confident than I did before the training. I know there's still lots for me to learn, lots of improvements I can make, but all the time I feel a lot more confident and… I feel like I can initiate things, whereas before I was always questioning and asking advice.*"

TA primary school; phase three

"I think I've been more aware, or I've tried to be more aware of the language I use when speaking to kids, put things positively."

TA upper school; phase three

The courses gave opportunities for networking with TAs in other schools and hearing how they worked, which was welcomed by TAs and respondents across phases.

"Because obviously you've only got experience with one school, most of my staff... come into it, probably new to the job, they haven't actually got experience… . And so the fact that they can actually go there and talk to other people, and find out what is going on in their schools, you know, they actually come back saying, 'I'm quite pleased, we're doing that already.' 'They did try that, and seemed able to make it work.' So they're able to contribute to the development of our department as a whole."

SENCO, secondary school; phase three

"You're actually learning from other people who are working with children who may be similar."

TA primary school; phase three

Most respondents did not refer directly to any impact on pupil outcomes, but this quote gives an example of how training impacts the classroom.

"Their understanding's increased, they're more willing to take things… . They're much more proactive. So, yes, it does impact.… teaching staff appreciate …working with someone who's more informed… So that has a positive impact on relationships in work… . We've just had an Ofsted, and the use of support assistants was mentioned…yes, standards are improving. Expertise increasing especially within the SEN areas."

Headteacher, primary school; phase three

4. Introductory training for support staff

4.1 Key findings
Overall respondents were less positive about this training than they were for the TA provision and take-up was significantly below that for TAs. Various reasons were offered by respondents for this low take-up.

4.1.1 Heterogeneous group
Support staff undertake many different roles in schools and have diverse backgrounds in terms of experience and expertise. Respondents suggested that the course does not adequately address their varied needs.

4.1.2 Cover issues
Support staff work across a range of roles and usually on a part-time or shift basis, so practical problems arise in arranging for staff release. For example, making it possible for staff who work different hours and part time to attend training that is scheduled at the same time can be more problematic than releasing teachers or even TAs.

4.1.3 Prioritising support staff training
Respondents suggested that as it is difficult to demonstrate the relationship between support staff training and pupil learning, their contribution to the work of the school can be taken for granted. Support staff themselves, as well as their managers, may not prioritise their training beyond the specific requirements of their immediate duties.

4.2 Participation
4.2.1 Number of trainees
Of the 105 phase one LAs, 48 provided information about the number of participants in the support staff introductory training. A further 19 LAs had organised this training but had no or low take-up. Given this low number, respondents that had not completed this section were re-contacted to check the reason for their non-response. Of these LAs, 70 per cent confirmed they had not delivered the training and the remaining 30 per cent did not reply. From this, it can be concluded that take-up of the support staff training is relatively low. Such low numbers meant recruiting respondents for the evaluation was problematic, hence the findings in this section are based on very small numbers and should be interpreted with caution.

Table 4.1 presents the participation figures based on a sample of 44 LAs (the remaining four could not be included in the analysis). It can be seen that 155 cohorts were trained, involving 2,704 participants.

Table 4.1: Support staff induction (2004/05)

	Primary	Secondary	Cross-phase	Other	Total
Cohorts	74	25	55	1	155
Individuals	1,300	369	1,035	NA	2,704

Base = 44 LAs

Despite the low numbers of LAs involved, training was delivered on the whole to substantial numbers: for example, seven LAs had delivered to 100 or more support staff in their area; and 55 cohorts were delivered cross-phase by 17 LAs. The total number of support staff involved in this training was about one-quarter of the total number of TAs, in the same period.

"The support staff training is offered mixed phase, as it is the case of getting a cohort. It is still building its profile. Initially support staff perception was 'Why do I need to do that?' In pilots support staff who attended the training all found it useful."

Education adviser for support staff; phase four

Prior to this evaluation, the number of support staff trained could only be estimated, based on the number of packs requested by each LA. During 2004/05 it was estimated that roughly 11,000 support staff would receive the introductory training in 2004/05. Data collected from phase one has enabled figures to be projected for the total number of support staff who may have been trained in all LAs in 2004/05. The projection was completed using several assumptions[5], but all projections show a significant disparity between the tender's estimated figures and those projected. The total reported across responding LAs was 2,704 support staff trained in this period. A simple projection of the total number of support staff trained would be to assume that the 30 per cent of non-responding LAs were equally likely to train. This projection would mean that a total of 3,863 had been trained; and is significantly below that estimated by the number of packs requested.

Despite the low take-up in 2004/05, evidence suggested that some LAs (19 from phase one survey) would move forward with this training during 2005/06 as its value was recognised. This work was ongoing or at the planning stage at the time of the survey. For these LAs, the key issues to ensure that they met the needs of schools and their support staff were to:
* provide training in school/to clusters of schools (four)
* tailor the training to meet individual school needs and include aspects of it at network meetings (three)
* strengthen the link to workforce reform (one)
* adapt modules and deliver them as part of other training (one)
* combine it with TA training as every applicant had a dual role, eg. lunchtime supervisor/TA, technician/TA (one), and
* develop a CPD framework to incorporate induction materials for support staff (one).

4.2.2 Factors affecting participation
In the phase two survey, 14 respondents thought that facilitators for take-up of the course were:
* effective publicity (eight)
* flexible arrangements for delivery of the courses (five)
* encouragement from senior staff in schools in relation to workforce remodelling (three), and
* central funding that allowed the LA to subsidise the course and avoid charging schools (three).

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[5] The projection was completed using a variety of methods (eg. simple projection assuming the non-responding LAs were equally likely to offer this training; assessment of sample and non-respondents using LA size and education star rating). All provided similar projections for the national population.

Table 4.2 lists some of the barriers to take-up suggested by respondents (in phase one and two surveys). As in the case of the TA materials, the key issues were broadly similar across both surveys, with staff release being the most common response.

Table 4.2: Factors inhibiting take-up of training

Barrier/Issue	No. of respondents	
	*Phase 1**	*Phase 2***
Difficulty releasing support staff for training	16	5
Headteachers/senior managers do not understand relevance/importance of introductory training	8	8
Difficult to get support staff to attend	7	2
Marketing information does not always get through	4	4
Travel to venues can be a problem	4	1
Level of training content too low	3	2
Schools prefer to organise own internal training	3	0
Perception by support staff that modules are not relevant to their roles	2	2
Cost	2	2
Ordered training materials did not arrive	2	0
Already existing training	2	0
Specific support needs not identified by training materials	2	0

*   n = 59
**   n = 17

Release time

As with TAs, the availability and cost of release time was seen as the main barrier to sending staff on training, especially as support staff work across a range of roles and usually on a part-time or shift basis. Practical problems in arranging for staff release can arise: for example, making it possible for a midday supervisor, a site manager and IT technician who often work very different hours, to attend training that is scheduled at the same time can be problematic. Training held outside non-contracted time also raises cost implications for the school.

> *"Midday supervisors would benefit but many are only paid to work lunch hours – reluctant to invest the time and no money to fund."*
>
> LA; phase two
>
> *"Most support staff work part time and were being asked to attend this training in their own time. No cover was available through lack of funding. This is still the biggest barrier we face."*
>
> LA; phase two

Low demand from schools
Respondents felt there was low demand from schools for this training. Despite the issues identified earlier about the barriers to TAs attending the training, the evidence suggests that TAs were more likely to be released as schools see a clearer link between the work of TAs and training and pupil learning. Respondents suggested that, given this difficulty in demonstrating the relationship between support staff training and pupil learning, their contribution to the work of the school can be taken for granted. Support staff, as well as their managers, may not prioritise their training beyond the specific requirements of their immediate duties. Schools also did not prioritise this training because without a clear framework, it was difficult to see how the training could be built upon.

Furthermore, support staff undertake many different roles in schools and have diverse backgrounds in terms of experience and expertise. Many LA respondents thought that the course did not adequately address the varied needs of this heterogeneous group; and schools did not feel the training met the needs of staff. Respondents also suggested there was confusion at school level over who should attend.

> *"Much harder to recruit from the diverse group of support staff. It is very difficult for information about the courses to be passed to them. They often do not fully understand the need for elements of the training. Even some headteachers question why site supervisors etc. need behaviour management training or EAL or inclusion, SEN etc. There is a lot of work to be done here. However, once on the training, participants really appreciate it and they realise the importance and relevance."*
>
> LA; phase two

> "*Lack of interest in training support staff – not a priority in the school development plan. Very few new support staff taken on as part of the WR agenda – and those already in post feel the training was not at their level. Too many other priorities for schools to pick up on."*
>
> LA; phase two

4.2.3 Induction
As seen in table 4.3, 17 phase two respondents reported that a mix of support staff attended the courses; sometimes one or more groups were trained separately because of a tradition of working in that way or for practical reasons such as timing (eg. training lunchtime supervisors together).

Table 4.3: Reported attendance of support staff

Title of support staff	No. of LAs reporting attendance*
Administrative staff	16
Midday supervisors	15
Technicians	13
Site managers/caretakers	11
Bursars	7
Librarians	7
Learning mentors	4
Cover supervisors	3
Catering staff	3
Voluntary staff/parent helpers	2

Exam invigilators	1
After-school workers	1
Cleaners	1
TAs	1

* Multiple titles permitted
n = 17 Not all respondents completed this section of the questionnaire

One LA had invited TAs working in dual roles to the support staff course and had found that some schools also sent single-role TAs, although they had advertised for support staff only.

According to 16 phase two respondents, new and experienced support staff had attended the introductory training within their LA, and one respondent advised that they had just trained support staff that started work in 2004/05.

Two-thirds of the respondents (11) said the existing materials had met the needs of this diverse range of staff. Those who sought improvements, or had made their own changes, suggested that:
- materials were too basic for some groups of staff such as technicians, learning mentors, sports coaches, ie. those with particular experience and expertise (three)
- differentiated materials would help those with some experience and prior knowledge (one)
- specialist modules went beyond basic awareness of school life and enabled support staff to study in more detail in their own areas (one)
- customised training would be helpful for welfare staff (one) and bursar roles (one)
- separate materials be adapted for primary or secondary support staff, particularly for the behaviour management module (one)
- ICT section is currently too theoretical (one)
- there should be flexibility to allow access to units that are pertinent to particular roles, eg. some headteachers were willing for lunchtime supervisors to attend behaviour management sessions/risk/SEN, but not ICT (one), and
- training was linked to or provided a minimum English/mathematics qualification for support staff (level 2 skills for life) to gain access to the 'learning ladder' (one).

The need to differentiate the materials was a key theme; a significant proportion of respondents considered the current pitch to be too generalised. This impacted on take-up of the training. Many of those responsible for the training said they would have run more targeted courses if there had been sufficient take-up. However, there was also resistance to any move towards selectivity or specialisation.

"No, I just open it up to anyone that wants to come that is on the support staff. My philosophy on education is that we are all in this together, we are all about education and unless I'm going to be particular I don't want the audience to be for just that. And I also think its good development for them to meet different people. So we've had the lot."

Senior education officer; phase four

"*I felt this course was made even more interesting by the fact that everyone attending was from such a wide variety of backgrounds. It was good to hear other people's suggestions, views and feedback. I think this course was really useful for anyone who works as support staff within schools.*"

<div align="right">LA; phase one</div>

4.3 Course organisation and structure

4.3.1 Administration and funding of the training
Funding of the courses

The standards fund was the key means of funding this training. In some cases schools were asked to contribute but the amount was described as 'very small'. Informants in the phase two survey were also asked whether additional costs were paid centrally through the standards fund, eg. for cover or travel. Only one authority covered these costs, including room hire, catering, administration, and presenters' time and travel. Where courses were run in schools, a range of practice was identified.

More than half of the respondents (nine) were concerned about the impact of changes to funding arrangements; many felt that a need to charge would reduce uptake. This issue was exacerbated by the problems of low take-up in relation to the relatively low priority given to the training of support staff in schools.

"Schools find it difficult enough to release support staff and we have so far only had demand to justify running one course a year – if we had to charge for this I don't think we would ever get enough people to run this course."

<div align="right">LA; phase two</div>

National administration system

Most respondents thought the system for ordering and distributing the materials was efficient (10), although a few rated it as fair (two), inefficient (three) or very inefficient (one). Some respondents felt this had a negative impact on the delivery of their training, although they tended to train higher numbers (see table 4.4 below) – this could be because they used the service several times.

Table 4.4: Perceptions of the ordering system by numbers trained

Perception (rating)	LAs with low numbers of trained SS	LAs with high numbers of trained SS
Very inefficient (1)	0	1
Inefficient (2)	1	2
Fair (3)	1	1
Efficient (4)	4	3
Very efficient (5)	2	1
Total	8	8
Mean rating	3.9	3.1

n = not supplied

4.3.2 Marketing
LAs marketed the training via:
- a booklet or flyer about CPD courses (14), flyers to schools/headteachers (13), or flyers direct to support staff (five)

- a website (13), and
- school/LA noticeboards (five).

One or two LAs mentioned the courses during discussions on workforce remodelling, welcome meetings for new staff, meetings of CPD leaders and support groups, personal letters to headteachers and intranets. Two LAs only used one method for marketing their introductory training flyers to schools, while 12 respondents used a range of approaches. It was not clear from responses whether this was a step-by step strategy depending on take-up or whether all approaches were concurrent.

"We usually produce a CPD file containing flyers for all school staff. The school CPD coordinator gets one copy. Details of all courses are also put on the website. If take-up of courses is low, we fax/e-mail schools (CPD coordinator and support staff line manager where known) with course titles and dates and ask them to refer to flyers in file/on website. We now also sometimes request names of new support staff from HR and send them their own copy of flyer (again, if take-up is low)."

LA; phase two

"We tried to attract all support staff no matter how long they had been in post and tried to raise the profile of all support staff, making them feel more valued that this training had been devised for them. We ran lots of briefing sessions, held focus groups with all categories of support staff, sent out questionnaires before we delivered the materials to identify training needs etc., so we could be sure that we were delivering to their needs and so that we could develop the materials beforehand."

LA; phase two

In order to increase take-up, some LAs went beyond marketing to restructure the provision. For example, one provided training as part of a consultancy package available to schools on request; another had created a menu of training modules (£275 per session), where local schools could choose the timing and venue to suit them. In this LA, the EAL module was compulsory and offered free of charge.

"Training was originally offered centrally, but a new strategy is now being tried with it being offered as bespoke training, to all staff, within individual schools. So far two schools are taking this up."

LA; phase two

4.3.3 Course structure

Table 4.5 below sets out how LAs delivered the training during 2004/05. It is interesting to note that LAs largely offered the same approaches across phases. This may reflect the high proportion of cross-phase training.

Table 4.5: Training delivery method (phase one survey)

Type of school	2 full days	5 x 2 hour sessions	Other
Primary	12	28	12
Secondary	10	24	11

A number of 'other' delivery approaches were used, including five half-day sessions (four LAs), one full day, plus three half days (cross-phase), four two-hour sessions, five two-hour sessions, plus an extra EAL module.

Phase two respondents offered further information about course delivery, which showed how LAs attempted to respond to both support staff need and availability for training:

- twilight sessions: for example, sessions from 4pm – 6pm and staff could choose which sessions they wanted to attend (two)
- delivered in school settings: for example, five sessions from 9.15am – 11.30am (two).
- within cluster groups of schools: for example, specific focus on staff in welfare roles (two)
- merging TA training with support staff introductory training: for example: two cross-phase core days consisting of behaviour management, SEN inclusion and disabilities, national curriculum and EAL, risk and reflection, plus a range of optional role-specific sessions (two)
- five two-hour sessions: for example: enabling meal supervisors to return to school by lunchtime (two)
- five mornings with trainers from different teams: for example, ICT team, child protection unit (one)
- half-day sessions in a central venue within an area of a county (one), and
- using trainers from a neighbouring LA to deliver in a cluster of schools across five half days (one).

4.4 Perceptions and experience of the training

4.4.1 Perceptions about the quality of the materials
Phase two respondents were asked to identify three strengths and three areas for improvement for the support staff introductory training materials for 2004/05. The key strengths highlighted by respondents overlapped with those identified for the TA materials:

- quality of the course materials was perceived to be good, in particular the clear style in which they are written (six); the useful guidance they provide for tutors (five); their authority as a nationally supported resource (three); and good awareness of important issues (three)
- perceived value in bringing support staff from different schools together (two) while setting their roles in the context of the school (two) and emphasising their contribution as part of the school team which is often under-appreciated (two), and
- broad coverage of areas relevant to support staff (two), particularly the materials on children's learning and EAL (three), behaviour management (three), risk and reflection (two) and inclusion, SEN and disabilities (two).

Areas that respondents felt would benefit from improvement also overlapped with the TA findings:

- level of the materials is perceived to be too low and most areas lack sufficient detail and time (10)
- ICT module is not pitched appropriately for support staff across all roles – some have strong expertise and work regularly with ICT, while others do not (six)
- TA file was praised and respondents suggested that it would also be welcomed by staff trainees (four)
- content could be enlivened with more case studies and examples so staff can identify the relevance of these topics to their work (two), and

- stronger links to continuing professional development and performance reviews (two).

There was a tension between the broad coverage of the materials and perceived relevance. While some respondents welcomed the breadth of coverage of the materials, others thought it was too basic given the range of experience and expertise of support staff. A few respondents felt the training was "not role-specific enough" so that many support staff found it hard to see the relevance to their role.

"More in-depth information (is) required for most categories of support staff, and the way some of it is written can come across as a little patronising to some staff."

LA; phase two

4.4.2 Perceptions of material suitability
The suitability of the materials for the full range of support staff was certainly an issue among phase two respondents, but a significant proportion felt the materials met the needs of the complete range of support staff roles (11) and the ratings for fitness for purpose were high (14 out of 16). However, researchers suggested that care should be taken with these findings as LAs tended to modify the materials and deliver in a variety of ways to meet different needs. They suggested that an issue throughout the surveys was whether the materials used were pitched at the right level for the full range of roles and the distinction needed between generalist and specialist material tailored for a particular audience.

"There are issues in terms of pitching the course to both those who work directly with pupils for the majority of their time (eg. cover supervisors, midday supervisors) and those with much less pupil contact (eg. admin. staff). Would be useful to combine the TA and support staff courses and make both very modular so that options are chosen relevant to the role, eg. all support staff could do sessions covering roles in school, how schools use ICT, child protection and basic principles around SEN and behaviour management. Staff with pupil-contact roles could then do further SEN and behaviour training, TAs and cover supervisors could do curriculum modules."

LA; phase two

"Some of the material implied that school support staff were not able to assimilate information except through playing a game. It was found that some SS felt that they were being talked down to."

LA; phase two

4.4.3 Perceptions of the learning resources
Overall the materials were rated as good or very good (see table 4.6). The main areas to receive 'poor' or 'very poor' ratings were the quality of the wallet, the accessibility of the materials, and ease of use. Numbers however were small. The main suggestion was that support staff should receive their own wallet of materials, containing individual booklets, which could be consolidated into one folder (14).

"Wallet itself is a bit of a pain to put together and when given to support staff for them to keep handouts, is not that helpful. Small ring binder would be more useful."

LA; phase two

Table 4.6: Perceptions of the learning resources (No. of respondents)

Learning resource	Poor (1)	Very poor (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	Mean rating
Quality of wallet	1	1	4	10	2	3.6
Quality of booklets	0	0	1	14	2	4.1
Use of colour	0	0	3	14	1	3.9
Ease of use	1	0	1	15	1	3.8
Accessibility	1	0	4	11	1	3.7

n = 18

4.4.4 Perceptions of the course structure
A few respondents (eg. in one LA evaluation and some in phase two) suggested that the half-day sessions were rather "crammed" and the coverage sometimes "rushed". However, this needs to be viewed within the context of the difficulties of schools releasing support staff. One LA emphasised the importance of time for reflection and that covering two modules in a day was the maximum.

"Sometimes subjects are covered which support staff do not normally work with. We want to give people time for reflection also."

LA; phase two

Regarding the feasibility of other delivery modes, phase two respondents offered these suggestions:
- as part of CPD within school, using training days for support staff, staff meetings and group discussion time with SMT (three)
- some aspects delivered through distance/online learning, eg. one-day training and one day e-learning, but the importance of support staff meeting others from different schools and training in a venue away from their school was recognised (three)
- one-day induction training course for all new support staff, using all the modules, plus information on local strategies and the workforce remodelling (one), and
- more varied training methods, so as to use a range of information and formal methods (one).

4.4.5 Perceptions of the key elements and modules
Respondents in the phase two survey were asked to rate the importance of the modules (see table 4.7). Notably, their responses varied between LAs. For most of the modules, most respondents rated them as useful or very useful, particularly the modules on behaviour management, inclusion, SEN and disabilities. The introduction and ICT module were perceived to be the least useful. These comments were also evident in the local evaluation studies.

Where the EAL module was not considered to be important, it tended to be delivered by other means; for example via a rolling programme to all schools. Elsewhere in the survey, though, four different LAs said they felt the EAL module was a strength of the introductory training materials and had a high priority within their LA.

Table 4.7: Ratings of the modules from the phase two survey

Module	Not at all useful (1)	Not useful (2)	Average (3)	Useful (4)	Very Useful (5)	Mean rating
Introduction and ICT	4	3	3	6	2	2.9
Behaviour management	2	1	0	4	11	4.2
Inclusion, SEN and disabilities	2	1	0	8	7	3.9
Curriculum and EAL	1	2	3	5	6	3.8
Risk and reflection	2	3	0	4	9	3.8

n = 18

For some respondents, the behaviour management (five) and child protection modules, within risk and reflection (four) were either given more time and/or believed to merit expansion. In addition, more time would have been welcomed for the SEN, inclusion and disabilities material (two).

Table 4.8: Suggested strengths of the introductory materials for support staff

Strength of introductory materials	No. of respondents
Well-structured modules/good breadth	4
Good trainer support materials	4
EAL module	4
Behaviour management module	4
Inclusion/SEN module	3
National induction programme for all support staff	3
Good overview of support staff role	3
Easy to use	2
Good coverage of important areas	2
Pitched at correct introductory level	2
Networking for support staff	2
Good materials/resources	2

n = not supplied (phase two survey)

Table 4.8 lists the key strengths identified by LAs in the phase two survey. The quality of the materials and particular relevant modules were identified as important.

Respondents from all phases of the research offered constructive suggestions about possible areas for improvement. As shown in table 4.9, respondents were keen for support staff to have their own file and expressed concern about the relevance of the ICT module given the range of SS roles and expertise.

Table 4.9: Suggested areas for improvement

Areas for improvement within the introductory materials	No. of respondents
Delegates to have their own material in a file	5
Level of ICT module too low for office staff; of little interest for others; and little access to ICT suites	5
Materials overall too basic, more depth needed	3
CPD section is needed	2
Not role-specific enough	2
More examples/case studies needed throughout (so staff can identify their work with the subject matter)	2
Difficult to fit modules into timeframe	2
More needed about workforce reform	2
More information about how children learn	1
Child protection needs a wider range of teaching strategies, eg. video section	1
Ideas on how to deal with the public needed	1
Risk and reflection too packed in	1
More regarding health and safety issues and behaviour management in the playground	1
Behaviour management and SEN needs to be more hands-on/ interactive	2
More time needed for behaviour management and SEN	1
Materials need to accommodate different learning styles	1
More group exercises needed	1
Follow up/further structured courses to be linked to qualifications	1
Separate introductory information needed for headteachers, line manager and support staff	1
Update of children's services	1
'Finding out about your school' tasks to be given in advance	1

n = not supplied

4.5 Impact of the training

The assessment of the impact of the SS training (see table 4.10) was rated similar to that of the TA training, although it was slightly lower. However, the numbers are much smaller and fewer comments were received.

Table 4.10: Respondents' ratings of the impact of the course

Course feature	Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	Mean rating
Impact on support staff knowledge	1	0	4	7	4	3.8
Impact on support staff competencies (5 × nil-response)	1	1	2	4	3	3.3
Impact on support staff confidence	0	0	2	9	5	3.9
Value for money (2 × nil-response)	0	0	2	7	5	4.2
Fit for purpose	0	0	2	10	4	4.1

n = 16

In respondents' comments on how the training has impacted staff, the key factors are the enhanced profile of training, awareness of working in a school and as part of a team, and the confidence of support staff.

"Has raised the profile of training for all staff who have a right to have access to quality training."

LA; phase two

"It's helped them to get an awareness of the whole school team, and their role within that. It again builds self-esteem."

Education adviser for school support staff; phase four

"(The course) gave me an insight of school policies and how I can give good and constructive support to the team."

LA evaluation excerpt

"*I now have a much more informed view of the range of activities within a school and their interdependence. This will assist me in planning changes/developments whilst accommodating the needs of the school.*

LA evaluation excerpt

Several respondents highlighted the difficulty of measuring impact.

"Measuring impact is always difficult. Our evaluations were very positive in general, but some support staff were sent on the training when it was not suitable for them. Schools did not select their staff as carefully as we asked them too, wanting to tick boxes and say TAs and support staff had had this training and cheaply."

LA; phase two

Several respondents also raised a note of caution about the impact that could be achieved given the general nature of the course and its target level.

"I think the purpose of this introductory course is primarily to raise awareness of issues and general knowledge of schools and how support staff operate within them. It cannot be used to improve support staff competencies as there is such a wide range of roles."

LA; phase two

"Content not in depth enough so it would not have enough impact on raising knowledge and skills to justify schools releasing them for half a day."

LA; phase two

4.6 Links to other training and qualifications

Among respondents, there was general support for linking this training to a qualification. Three phase two LAs had already developed a formal link between this training and an award or qualification. A further 11 LAs thought that this would be valuable; six had received feedback from staff to this effect; and six thought it would link well with the NVQ. LAs who had linked the introductory training to an award suggested it had been made a pre-requirement of, or marketed as, a lead into the level 2 support work in schools vocational qualification (SWiS).

This sample of comments from phase two respondents explains the support:
- it will set the context of a learning journey and opportunities for progression (four)
- accreditation may encourage more support staff to apply (two), and
- it will help "upskill" the workforce (one).

While many LAs did not formally link this training to an award, it seemed to be offered as part of a wider programme of training and development for support staff.

5. Summary

The findings collected as part of this evaluation indicate strong user support for the concept of national introductory training materials and for the training packs that were circulated.

The overall evaluation of the course materials by most respondents was positive or strongly positive. They were generally seen as supportive of good practice with relevant coverage of the school-based role, particularly that of TAs.

The positive comments concerning SS introductory training materials need to be considered with caution, given the low number of LAs that used them and the difficulties in delivering suitable training across the range of support staff roles. At the same time as offering positive overall assessments, many suggestions as to where improvements could be made were offered by respondents.

The findings from this report have already fed into the development of the materials for 2006/07 and it is anticipated that they will also help to inform the direction of induction for all support staff from 2007/08.