

# LSC School Support Staff Sector Plan for 2004-05 and Beyond



Learning+Skills Council



## LSC School Support Staff Sector Plan for 2004-05 and Beyond Executive Summary

The Learning and Skills Council is committed to raising participation and attainment, so that by 2010 young people and adults in England will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world. That commitment is across the whole population, but we clearly have a special interest in improving the skills of those who work in schools and thereby contribute directly to our wider targets.

This Sector Plan sets out how the Learning and Skills Council, working in partnership with local education authorities and schools on a basis of joint contributions, will provide support in 2004-05 to improve the skills and qualifications of school support staff. It contributes to a wider set of plans for the sector and the Learning and Skills Council will be working closely with the Teacher Training Agency as it takes on its wider remit for the school workforce.

The key points are set out in paragraphs [2 - 4] below, which highlight our work:

- a. to improve training opportunities
- b. to develop a suitable simplified structure of vocational qualifications; and
- c. to establish networks and partnerships to deliver these benefits to all school support staff.

The new network of local Learning and Skills Council managers responsible for school support staff will work with named local education authority opposite numbers to develop, and implement locally, partnership agreements to deliver shared priorities for 2004-05. These will build on the base of the successful pilot activities already under way.

The crucial next step is the negotiation locally of target numbers of school support staff, by role, level and region, to be jointly supported by local Learning and Skills Councils and local education authorities in 2004-05. The framework for these negotiations will be discussed at the series of four regional seminars, the first of which is taking place today. At the end of the process (by the late summer) we will issue a final version of this plan, including indicative numbers and volumes across the country. However we encourage local Councils to begin implementing their plans as soon as they and their local education authority partners reach agreement for their area.

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## Introduction

1. This Sector Plan arises from the top level commitment given by the then Chief Executive of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), John Harwood to David Miliband, Minister for School Standards, in June 2003 that the LSC would actively support the Government's school workforce agenda by helping to secure improved training linked to career progression for all school support staff in England.

2. The LSC commitments were set out in a School Support Staff Guidance document ([www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)) issued to local education authorities (LEAs) and local LSCs in October 2003. The key commitments were to double the LSC's support staff pilot project, and to develop a Sector Plan backed by a national LSC network. In March 2004, Mark Haysom, the LSC's new Chief Executive, wrote to David Miliband setting out what we have achieved against these commitments, and new developments now being taken forward. The essential points from his letter, a copy of which can be downloaded from [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk), are incorporated within this Plan.

3. This Sector Plan summarises what the LSC and its partners have achieved so far, and how we will contribute in 2004-05 and beyond towards the overarching plan for the school support workforce, which is published alongside this document.

4. We have not worked alone. We have given top priority to developing collaborative partnerships, to support and deliver a coherent programme. A wide range of partners were consulted to inform our thinking, and to plan and develop the work set out below.

5. Above all we have listened to the needs of head teachers, school support staff, and those responsible for their training and professional development. We have sought to identify both the current needs, and those likely to emerge following workforce reform. We are committed to supporting and delivering these training needs with least burden on schools, to meet the increasing demand for training and skills development. This in turn will lead to the development of a more highly skilled workforce and higher standards in schools. Three main threads ran through all these discussions: the need for flexibility, sustainability and simplicity. The actions and plans set out below address these three concerns.

## Vision

6. This Sector Plan sets out a strong commitment by the Learning and Skills Council to deliver significantly higher skills for school support staff. It sits alongside a wider document issued by DfES on 29 March and available from [www.teachernet.gov.uk/supportstaff](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/supportstaff), which sets out the role and contribution of each of the other partners notably national bodies, training providers, LEAs, schools, Unions and individual support staff themselves.

7. During 2004-05 we will support new, wider and more flexible training opportunities through an expanded provider base. We will adapt available programmes to meet the needs of school support staff across the full range of existing and likely future roles, including staff covering more than one role or working across phases and sectors. We will give easy access to excellent information, advice and guidance on training needs and career pathways. We will support new low-burden tools to support appraisal of existing strengths, measurement of gaps and identification of suitable training and qualifications.

8. By the end of 2004-05 there will be in place a new, simplified, flexible structure of accredited vocational qualifications, with options covering most school support staff roles. We will support learners through programmes leading to these new qualifications, to the limits of our funding capacity in 2004-05. From 2005 we aim to extend the offer to the whole school workforce, jointly with Government, LEAs and schools.

## Who, where, when and at what cost?

9. The final version of the Sector Plan will set out target numbers of school support staff, by local LSC and region, whose training we will support in 2004-05. We intend that this should be a large increase on the target of 1,000 within the 2003-04 programme - which was itself much higher than in any previous year. We would aim to achieve this both by expanding delivery within current local LSCs, and by rapid development across LSC areas not yet involved. LSC support would come through matched funding contributions negotiated locally within a national framework.

10. Our aspiration would be to support in 2004-05 up to 10,000 school support staff learning towards a qualification at Level 2 or above. This would be in addition to the 7,000 new higher-level teaching assistants being registered by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) and separately budgeted for by DfES. However, we shall have to live within our available resources, and take account of existing LSC commitments including three-year funding agreements with providers. The actual number of new learners we can afford to support will therefore depend on two factors:

- the economies of scale arising from larger volumes and new training and assessment methods; and
- the extent to which LEAs and individual schools are willing and able to contribute towards these reduced unit costs.

Our contribution, in accordance with the Skills Strategy based on the skills needs of employers and learners, will focus mainly on people with low basic skills, and those embarking on a programme leading to a first full Level 2 qualification (some of whom could be supported through the Employer Training Pilots running across nearly one third of England).

11. We intend to invite the nine regions and their local LSC leads, starting with those engaged in the current projects, to agree target numbers with LEAs and schools. In the course of those discussions we will aim to agree a "core offer" based on a fixed cash contribution by each school and LEA, and brokerage by the local LSC to secure the best value training and assessment packages. We will aim to complete this process over the next few months, so that we can make a big impact from September ahead of the introduction of the new generic qualifications.

12. Longer term, we will continue to work closely with the Employers Organisation, Teacher Training Agency, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), Unions (at local and national level and with the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group), LEAs and providers of training to develop the new flexible vocational qualification further, so that relevant training and short course delivery currently outside the accredited framework is recognised and accredited within this new qualification. This will be delivered through mainstream training and funding and will provide progression opportunities for all support staff, demand-led through a flexible, generic framework, through a responsive network of providers, with increased capacity to deliver on-site training and assessment through a range of delivery methods. This will be extended through a credit framework approach, to recognise and accredit specialist training currently outside the National Qualifications Framework.

## **Training and development - current provision and gaps**

13. In June 2003 we undertook to double the numbers on an innovative national school support staff pilot. This focused on three occupational areas: midday supervisors, caretakers/site managers, and administrative staff. We have duly delivered this commitment, in fact in the eight months since June 2003 we have more than doubled the numbers, to some 1,200 staff. In the phase two of the pilot we are building on the achievements of phase one, and removing further barriers to access and completion. We are also extending use of supported on-line learning, on-site training, and delivery through clusters and federations of schools.

14. We are linking the key lessons from these pilots with findings from research commissioned by DFES through Sheffield Hallam University, and also from a school support staff questionnaire on training accessed over the last two years. We developed the questionnaire in co-operation with the National College of School Leadership's Headteacher Leadership Group, and a range of schools and Bursars groups.

15. Together, these three pieces of work have already provided valuable evidence on barriers to the take up of training and how these can be overcome. The key findings are shown in the research analysis at [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk). The evidence shows a consistent pattern of schools' perceptions of the principal barriers to access to training and assessment. These are:

- a. supply of suitable training (volume, quality and flexibility)
- b. accessibility (time off and supply cover)
- c. qualifications (relevance and flexibility)
- d. assessment (capacity and appropriateness)
- e. funding and affordability.

16. This Sector Plan starts down the road towards removing these barriers. We can only make the journey jointly with our partners:

- a. the Employers' Organisation representing LEAs; the school staff unions and Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group
- b. the Teacher Training Agency, which now undertakes new responsibilities for the whole school workforce
- c. the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and awarding bodies, with whom we shall be developing the new qualifications; and
- d. above all, schools themselves - headteachers, managers and support staff.

## **Major initiatives**

### **Delivering flexible training programmes: credit framework for new qualifications**

17. Phase two of our pilot programme focuses on the training needs of individual learners, rather than forcing them to the mould of existing courses and qualifications. We aim to offer individual packages of training and assessment which closely match the school's requirements. This often means combining units from different national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and programmes offered by different awarding bodies. We will also aim to provide access to specialist training, for example finance software or managerial training, even if currently outside the National Qualifications Framework.

18. Closely linked to this is our work to develop a national credit framework. In his letter of September 2003 ([www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)) Ivan Lewis gave the LSC and QCA a joint remit to review the credit principles and to assign credit to the full range of units both within and outside the National Qualifications Framework. The LSC's Credit Advisory Group will assign credit values to courses undertaken within the school support staff pilot which are currently outside the National Qualifications Framework.

19. We are linking this programme with the ITQ (IT user qualification) pilot, led by the LSC and E-Skills UK together with five awarding bodies. The unique feature of this new competence-based IT user qualification is that it takes full account of prior learning, adopting what is known as the 'assess- train-assess' model. Learners create what is in effect a bespoke qualification, fully linked to the new national IT occupational standards, and including units at different levels, each with an assigned credit value.

20. These two developments feed directly into the main focus of LSC effort with our partners this year, namely to develop a generic credit-based qualification for school support staff. Our research shows strong support from headteachers and Directors of Education for a generic vocational qualification for school support staff, which incorporates core training for child protection and behaviour management and links to the wider children's workforce reform strategy set out in the document Every Child Matters - Next Steps. Currently most categories of school support staff other than classroom assistants have no single qualification within the national framework to demonstrate competence.

21. Working closely with QCA, the Employers Organisation and the Teacher Training Agency, and building on our experience with ITQ, we are well down the road towards creating a generic qualification, which will be available at Level 2 by December 2004 or earlier, and subsequently at Levels 3 and 4. The new qualification will identify core elements which school support staff will need, which may be at different levels according to their job roles, and a wide range of options to allow specific training for specialist and multiple roles. It will initially be built from existing modules and units, informed by our successful extended projects; very soon we will begin generating new optional units. Crucially the new qualification will incorporate a credit framework, delivering the remit from Ivan Lewis to LSC and QCA for an effective, light-touch credit framework for adult learners. The essential characteristics of the new qualification are that it will:

- a. assess and recognise existing skills, with training focused on the gaps
- b. give opportunities for progression between Levels 2, 3 and 4 (linked to Foundation Degrees and other higher education programmes)
- c. facilitate transfer between school support roles and other related career paths for example teaching, education welfare, youth work, childcare, social care and further and higher education
- d. cater both for career enhancement within existing roles and emerging school support roles for example data management/analysis; behaviour and attendance; pastoral care; and para-professional support.

## **Delivery and sustainability**

22. As set out in the LSC guidance document issued in October 2003 (copies downloadable at [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)), we intend to move from 2004-05 beyond the pilot programme, into mainstream support through core LEA and LSC programmes. The following developments are under discussion or are already under way:

**22.1 Developing on-line self-assessment:** recent large investment in information technology and broadband internet access increases the potential for training and assessing school support staff on-line, and though this will seldom be the whole solution it can play a valuable part. We hope to be able to accredit existing LEA and school-

based courses. There is much good local practice which needs sustaining and spreading, but without loss of consistency of standards. One effective approach is to draw the best LEA and school based courses into the national framework. This provides national assurance and support while maintaining local and school-based delivery wherever that makes sense. We will help support schools who wish to become Training Schools for their support staff, and to operate on a cluster basis with neighbouring schools.

**22.2 Increasing assessment capacity:** there is a severe shortage of trained assessors. This, rather than training capacity or school demand, is the main barrier to achieving higher numbers. We are glad that DfES has been able to provide additional funding to train an additional 200 assessors, and at the same time to create a network of 1,200 "training mentors" within schools who will provide direct on-the-job "expert witness" assessment at minimal cost in terms of bureaucracy and time out. We believe that their role will prove critical in supporting a valid, robust assessment of competence which is nevertheless light-touch and school-based. This programme begins at once with a view to having the network in place by the autumn.

**22.3 Union Learning Fund:** last autumn we facilitated a successful bid to the Fund by UNISON. This forms part of a major programme to increase the number of Union Learning Representatives. The project will provide a web-based, user-friendly, guide to training, development and career pathways for all school support staff, sign-posting training opportunities for the whole range of schools and roles. This will increase access to learning and promote equality of opportunity. The website will allow staff both to map and seek recognition for their existing skills and experience, and also to increase those skills. Use of the site will also benefit other areas within school, such as training needs analysis and performance management reviews, school development plans, and supporting evidence for OFSTED inspections/action plans, as it will clearly demonstrate whole staff support for training and development. We believe this will make a significant contribution to raising standards in schools.

**22.4 Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE):** we have initiated a unique collaborative CoVE for school support staff, for proposals to be submitted in July 2004. It would comprise four training providers of quite different types: private, voluntary, college and a LEA; covering four widely separated areas: Staffordshire, Surrey, Lancashire and Wiltshire. Each training provider would bring its own specialist expertise, for example workforce remodelling, virtual learning environment, training and assessment in the workplace. Their collaboration would promote a more responsive, flexible and coherent provider network, sharing best practice as it develops.

## Investors in People in Schools

23. Over one-third of all schools has achieved or is pursuing the Investors in People (IIP) Standard. This has been delivered through close, effective partnerships between the schools, local union representatives, local LSCs, and delivery partners and has proved a successful model. On 28 January 2002 Peter Housden, Director General for Schools at DfES, wrote to all Chief Education Officers to set out the joint support of the Department, the LSC and local authorities for action to enable more schools to achieve the Investors Standard. A copy of his letter is contained in the LSC School Support Staff Guidance document or can be downloaded from [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk). The case for IIP is strong in terms of:

- a. school improvement - National Foundation for Educational Research, OFSTED and individual schools have all found clear positive correlation between achievement of the IIP Standard and quality of teaching and learning
- b. staff development - the agenda of reforming the school workforce means that

every school needs to develop the talents and skills of all its employees, not just the teaching staff but all who work at the school whether on a paid or voluntary basis

- c. performance management - the process of setting personal objectives, reviewing progress at regular intervals and getting feedback and recognition is assisted by a whole-school Investors approach.

24. Evidence from OFSTED research and our pilots confirms that liP is often a catalyst for continuous school improvement. Schools and LEAs interested in pursuing these opportunities, should contact the workforce development team, or the school support staff lead officer, at their local LSC. The LSC is currently developing an liP integrated offer for employers, which would include schools. It is anticipated that the offer would support the employer through elements of the liP process. Further details will be available from local LSCs by July 2004.

## Next steps

25. The crucial next step is for local LSC leads to meet with their LEA partners and plan further activity in 2004-05, as outlined in paragraph 11. Since the activity relates to the funding year which is now beginning, these discussions need to take place as soon as possible.

26. The starting point is an assumption that the unit costs of training staff will be shared three ways between the LSC, LEAs and schools. A separate note is being sent to local LSC school support leads, identifying potential funding routes and noting likely unit costs and priorities. We recognise that local LSCs will vary in their capacity to deploy or re-deploy funds in 2004-05 towards this priority. It is also clear that LEAs and schools will vary in their needs and capacity to fund support staff training. Therefore the LSC National Office makes no assumption that local plans will lead to a uniform scale of activity across the country. While we have no pre-determined level of local delivery, we are optimistic that we will be able in aggregate to achieve new activity on the scale set out in paragraph 10.

27. The framework for these discussions will be set out at the series of five regional conferences, the first of which is taking place today. At the end of the process (by autumn 2004) we will issue a final version of this plan, including indicative numbers of trainees in each LSC area. However we encourage local LSCs to begin implementing their plans as soon as they and their local education authority partners reach agreement for their own area.

28. So the key message is one of local partnerships, operating within a national framework, and developing plans which are locally agreed and will be locally delivered. We are confident that the new networks of local LSCs, LEAs and schools, with national agencies in support, will facilitate the planning process. Good plans will facilitate good delivery. We confidently expect over the following year to see a much larger number of school support staff receiving flexible, high-quality training, achieving high standards and gaining job satisfaction, to the benefit of schools and their pupils.

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