

Improving Assistance in Inclusive Educational Settings

Systems for supporting children's learning and development (0-18 years)

Partner	Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE)
Country	England
Background info to the educational system (e.g. https://www.european-agency.org/)	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25
Methodological approach (Please give information about how you got the information provided below)	From knowledge of the system and reference to key extracts from the Code of Practice (link above).

Please fill out the dimension boxes in a narrative way. (for example see: p2i)

GENERAL	
Financial Framework of the services (Who is financing the service?)	<p><i>Current state:</i> Each school has its own budget and learning supporters' salaries are paid from it. For pupils who have an Education and Health Care Plan sometimes additional funds are allocated for learning support, but the threshold is high: schools have to find the first £6,000 per pupil per year from their own budget.</p> <p>The way schools in England are funded is currently under review. In order to address historic inequalities, a new national funding formula is being proposed and there is currently an open government consultation on it (https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/schools-national-funding-formula-stage-2). A helpful overview of the whole issue is available at http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06702, with a link to the full report, and at https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/schools-national-funding-formula/supporting_documents/Current_funding_system.pdf.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources: included above</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments: Happy to provide further information if needed.</i></p>



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<p>Organization/ Admin of the service (Who is offering the service)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i> There is no national service for providing learning supporters. Schools are responsible for their own recruitment. The role is referred to by many names, I have used the general 'learning supporters' in this form. They are sometimes referred to as 'teaching assistants', to distinguish from 'classroom assistants' who are often found in early years and have more of a pastoral brief, concerned with children's well-being and also putting up displays and other tasks not related to supporting pupils' learning.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources: Personal professional knowledge.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
<p>Cooperation of the supporters with other staff (teachers, parents, therapists etc.)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i> This varies enormously from area to area and from school to school. In a nutshell, some schools value their learning supporters more, while in others they are perceived to be quite low in the organizational hierarchy. Therapists, for example occupational therapists or speech & language therapists employed by the local health authority and working with school staff, tend to have higher status possibly due to their qualifications and salary levels.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources: Personal professional knowledge.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
<p>Target groups of supporters (With whom they are working?)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i> Learning supporters work with pupils identified as needing additional learning support. By now most schools have a pool of learning supporters who are assigned specific duties – some schools operate a 1:1 model, assigning a particular learning supporter to individual children, while others adopt a more collaborative approach. It is quite common for learning supporters to withdraw children from class for 1:1 or small group work, or to work with one or more children when the whole class is working in small groups.</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources: Personal professional knowledge.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>



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<p>Qualification requirements (What are the official requirements that someone can work as a supporter?)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i> <i>Individual schools can decide what, if any, qualifications to specify when recruiting. Most learning supporters would have GCSEs and A-levels, some also have a vocational qualification, for example a City & Guilds qualification. Since 2003 there has been an advanced qualification for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA). Qualified HLTAs have greater responsibilities, for example are allowed to teach a class on their own to cover for planned absences or teacher planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources: Personal professional knowledge.</i> <i>Info on HLTAs:</i> http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/TDA0420.pdf <i>Info on City & Guilds qualification for learning supporters:</i> http://www.cityandguilds.com/qualifications-and-apprenticeships/learning/learning-support/5329-supporting-teaching-and-learning-in-schools#tab=information</p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
<p>Legal status (Which laws are affected?)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i> <i>Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, with accompanying statutory guidance (see Code of Practice, above).</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i> http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted</p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
TASKS	
<p>Aims and Tasks of supporters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Principles/ official guidelines (What are they supposed to do?) 	<p><i>Current state:</i> <i>Learning supporters are expected to help specific pupils access the curriculum and reach their learning goals. The official line is:</i> <i>6.36 Teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources: This quote is from the Code of Practice (link above)</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practical (What are they really doing?) 	<p><i>Current state:</i> <i>It is widespread practice for teachers to wash their hands off these pupils' learning and delegate all responsibility to the learning supporter. Even in schools which include pupils with significant learning difficulties, there are differences of opinion as to whose responsibility it is to differentiate the curriculum and prepare resources.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources: Personal professional knowledge.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
<p>Access to information (Which information they get?)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i> <i>This varies from school to school but, on the whole, learning supporters are granted access to information about the children they support.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
<p>Hierarchy (Who is the boss?)</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i> <i>In most schools the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or Inclusion Manager is the learning supporters' line manager. Also in most schools the SENCO or Inclusion Manager is a member of the Senior Leadership Team and often have the head teacher as their line manager.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources:</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>
JOB SITUATION	
<p>Status and Responsibilities in educational systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formal 	<p><i>Current state:</i> <i>Learning supporters are expected to earn:</i></p> <p><i>Personal and professional conduct</i> – <i>In order for teaching assistants to provide effective support to teachers and pupils, they need to be clear about their role and responsibilities and how these fit within the wider structure of the school. In the same way as teachers, teaching assistants operate in a position of trust and are seen by pupils as role models. They should be able to maintain proper boundaries with pupils and their behaviours should reflect</i></p>



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	<p><i>this responsible position.</i></p> <p>Knowledge and understanding – Teaching assistants should have sufficient knowledge and skills to help teachers support pupils in achieving their maximum potential. School leaders are best placed to make judgements about the type and level of knowledge and skills that individual teaching assistants need, as this will vary according to job role. This could include: subject knowledge; specialist skills and knowledge to support pupils with special educational needs or disabilities; knowledge of the curriculum; pedagogical knowledge; behaviour management strategies.</p> <p>Teaching and learning – An important role of a teaching assistant is to support the teacher in ensuring the best possible outcomes for all pupils. The standards in this theme recognise that teaching assistants work under the supervision of a teacher in accordance with arrangements made by the headteacher of the school. Schools should refer to the EEF guidance report (see Further information) for ‘relevant strategies to support the work of the teacher’.</p> <p>Working with others – Teaching assistants work with other professionals, parents, carers and outside agencies as well as with pupils themselves. Although other themes require teaching assistants to work collaboratively with others, these qualities and skills were considered so important and distinctive to the role as to merit their own theme.</p> <p><i>The status varies from school to school, in some cases they are respected as much as other staff but more frequently they tend to be looked down on as lower in the hierarchy. On the whole the status of assistants tends to be lower than that of teachers, and HLTA somewhere between the two, by virtue of lower pay, fewer qualifications and different terms & conditions of employment. Things like how much or what kind of information is shared with them, vary from place to place.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources: I discovered this document on teaching assistants standards (link at bottom of page): http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/staff-management/professional-standards-for-teaching-assistants-published/</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments: I am not sure there is an answer that holds true across England regarding the status of assistants.</i></p>
<p>○ Informal</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1) Help with schoolwork under the supervision of the teacher</i> <i>2) Prepare learning materials</i> <i>3) Help children understand instructions</i>



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	<p>4) Carry out a child's care plan 5) Encourage children to communicate 6) Give information and help to teachers 7) Support children during social activities and outings 8) Help children during therapy sessions 9) Look after children's physical needs 10) Keep records</p> <hr/> <p>Sources: I found an interesting overview of the role at https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/my-career-options/learning-support-assistant and this set of recommendations for improving the impact of teaching assistants: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/news-events/pdf/TA_Guidance_Report_MakingBestUseOfTeachingAssistants.pdf</p> <hr/> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>Continuing professional development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the chances for career development? 	<p><i>Current state:</i> <i>There is no longer any government funding for support staff training. Learning Supporters' professional development is up to their school and their (seriously depleted) budget.</i></p> <hr/> <p>Sources: Personal professional knowledge</p> <hr/> <p>Comments:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How are supporters supported to deal with the challenges of the job? 	<p><i>Current state:</i> <i>There is no national structure; this, too, is at the discretion of the school.</i></p> <hr/> <p>Sources: Personal professional knowledge and link as mentioned above.</p> <hr/> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>Job security and career progressive description/profile of workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equality profile (gender, impairment, age, ethnicity, migrant) 	<p><i>Current state:</i> <i>There is very little job security – the way I understand it (and I stand to be corrected) is if you are a learning supporter employed to work with a particular pupil and that pupil leaves the school, you stand to lose your job.</i> An interesting overview of learning supporters' concerns was published in 2013 by the union UNISON, identifying pay levels, overtime and job security among their biggest concerns: https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2014/09/TowebTA-Survey-</p>



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<p>status)</p>	<p>2013-PDF2.pdf</p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources: Personal professional knowledge and link as mentioned above.</i></p> <p><i>The most recent information on numbers and equality profile of the workforce is at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2015</i></p> <p><i>Updated information is expected to be available in June 2017.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i> <i>I looked for more recent surveys but cannot find anything beyond this 2013 survey.</i></p>
<p>○ Contractual situation</p>	<p><i>Current state:</i> <i>Learning supporters tend to be employed for a set number of hours to support the learning of specific pupils. This means there is no provision for them to have liaison meetings, plan or attend reviews of the pupils they support – many do this voluntarily. By contrast, teachers have a set number of ‘non-contact’ hours built into their contracts and can do these things as part of their paid duties.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Sources: Personal professional knowledge.</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>Comments:</i></p>

