

**The Deployment Of Teaching Assistants To Promote Inclusive Education For
Secondary School Aged Pupils With Statements Of Special Educational Need: - A
Case Study Of One Local Education Authority.**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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April 2002**

Abstract

The core theoretical interest of this study is to examine the extent to which assistants have been deployed by the case study LEA as an effective means of delivering inclusive education to statemented pupils in mainstream schools.

The features that contribute to the debate include:

- the extent to which the theories of inclusive education have been influential or relevant to the adoption of this type of provision,
- the extent to which the management of assistants in schools, usually by the Head teachers and SENCOs, are related to inclusive theory and practice,
- the effectiveness of inclusion based on teaching assistant support in terms of pupil progress,
- the role of political and financial structures in driving the adoption and maintenance of inclusive forms of provision.

In turn, inclusive practice is defined as practice contributing to the education of children with special needs in a way that maximises access to the National Curriculum. The definition is averse to service provision based on membership of a diagnostic or categorical group and is sufficiently flexible to avoid any implicit assumption of a categorical identity through procedures rather than administrative definition.

The findings of the case study are divided into three main sections:

- the implications of national and local fiscal policy on SEN organisation and provision in the case study LEAs mainstream secondary schools,

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Preface

This case study is described as a complex set of processes as they happened in one LEA over a number of years. The whole is made up of the various subsystems which determine the ways the LEA and school delivered educational provision for children with special needs in mainstream schools. The effectiveness of these processes in terms of their impact on the children's learning is also evaluated. This is possible because over the years in question the only additional provision offered statemented pupils in mainstream schools by the LEA was the support of Curriculum Support Assistants (CSAs).

The LEA also has a relatively low number of special school places, taking only the most severely disabled children.

Due to these relatively unique circumstances, this particular LEA has often been seen by individuals and bodies elsewhere as supporting the ideals of inclusion.

Due to the range, complexity and length of time over which the subsystems were studied, the data was collected as a series of different if related projects varying from the views and assumptions of those controlling the financial system as it influenced special needs provision, to aspects of training and management of the CSAs themselves in school. It also measures the progress made by the pupils when working with trained and untrained assistants. As detailed in the following text, these descriptive and evaluative projects are described as substudies, that is, separate pieces of work with their own background review and discussion.

The final discussion section relates the implications and conclusions of each substudy to the other and to the overall themes emerging from the case study. Due to the many methodological issues involved in the whole project, the methodologies for the whole study are introduced early in the text.

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Chapter 1: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

1.0 An introduction to the methodology

What follows is a story, a poly-vocality made up of many dramas and memories and histories and autobiographies put together to extend an understanding of the world in this study. At first, the decision as to how to allow the account to unfold was troublesome. The conventional order of the dissertation seemed unable to represent a practical or coherent narrative. In the event, by the time I sat down to write, the story told itself as a case study in a time line that began at the beginning and finished at the end. It describes the interplay between the events, roles and relationships that promoted the deployment of teaching assistants to promote inclusive education for secondary aged pupils with statements of special educational needs in one Local Education Authority. The end aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of training assistants in terms of statemented pupils' academic progress. At the same time, school issues such as the training, role and management of the assistants were explored from the points of view of the assistants themselves, Head teachers and SENCOs. How did this impact on the effective support that might be offered to individual pupils? What roles were most pertinent for the LEA and its serving officers and how were these affected by financial strictures?

To begin, I touched national politics, trawling newspaper columns and journals to understand how government decisions and policymaking were affecting different LEAs and the case study LEA in particular. I hoped to dispel any ambiguities in the relationship between national fiscal policy and an individual LEA's ability to meet the special educational needs of its statemented pupils. A macro to micro evaluation.

I also decided to measure the academic progress of statemented pupils taught by trained assistants against the progress of a control group of pupils whose assistants had not been trained. Five of the Borough's secondary schools were chosen to take part in the study after matching according to size, free school meal uptake, and percentage of statemented pupils. Training was planned for the assistants in three intervention comprehensive schools. Two other comprehensive schools acted as controls. This section of the study was designed to discover the rates of progress in basic literacy and numeracy skills in the children with special needs included in mainstream schools, and

to discover whether training the assistants made any difference to the rates of progress of the children.

1.1 The structure of the study

Because the study involves the analysis of a number of complex sets of both qualitative and quantitative data, the whole has been divided into four associated sub studies. As a result, the organisation of methodological issues and of the data is absolutely central to a clear and coherent understanding of the research.

In the final draft, the sub studies contribute to the reader's understanding with regard to the issues underlying SEN provision for statemented pupils on the matters of evolving policy towards inclusion. The research describes the context of policy making nationally and in the case study LEA.

In total, the sub studies give a number of insights into the way the study LEA organised support for schools to educate special educational needs children in mainstream secondary schools.

The effect of multiple studies meant the usual structure of a research report had to be reviewed. Each discrete sub study is now written in its entirety complete with a literature review, methodology, results, key issues and discussion. The strands of the separate sub studies are brought together again in the final discussion. The relationships of the various sub studies are explored using the conceptualisation of case study. This methodology accepts data from different sources to reach an understanding of how a particular LEA is organised and operates to support special educational needs issues. Yet research of this kind also accepts the limitations of generalisation from the evidence. In this report, the case study is a study of how one particular LEA and six of its secondary schools responded to the challenge of providing education for children with special educational needs, by employing the services of teaching assistants in schools

The current report structure then takes the following form:

1. The general methodological issues for the full case study and the structure of the data collecting procedures relating to all the constituent sub studies.
2. A description of the case study LEA.
3. The sequence of four sub study reports.

4. The final discussion, including a post hoc critique of the inclusive movement in education relating the findings of the study to the present day
5. Conclusions and recommendations of the whole study.

1.2 Statement of the key issues for the whole study

The following key issues evolved from the various literature reviews associated with the sub studies and are discussed in detail at the end of each discrete aspect of the report. These are:

1. To describe and evaluate how legislation and national initiatives influenced SEN policy, administration and financial management in the case study LEA.
2. To describe and evaluate the impact of the case study LEA's SEN policies on the level of SEN resourcing offered to schools.
3. To describe and evaluate the pattern of recruitment, deployment and management of assistants by one LEA.
4. To describe and evaluate the deployment and management of assistants within secondary schools in one LEA.
5. To describe the prior experience and training of assistants in the case study LEA.
6. To ascertain the assistants' self perceived training needs.
7. To ascertain the future training needs of the assistants as perceived by the Head teachers and special needs co-ordinators of all the Borough's schools.
8. To evaluate the effectiveness of appropriate training for teaching assistants in terms of pupils academic progress.

1.3 General methodological issues: which paradigm to choose?

From the above list of key issues, it is clear that both quantitative and qualitative methodologies will be used to gather evidence to address the questions posed by the research. A more detailed rationale of each sub study's individual methodology is described in the methodology section of that sub study. However there are some general considerations that apply to the use of both paradigms for the study as a whole. These will be discussed below.

1.3.1 Qualitative versus quantitative research

The boundaries of scientifically based research were adopted by the social sciences. The concepts of validity, generalisability and reliability were accepted as a fundamental "must be" to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of research results. Cronbach and Meehl (1955) developed psychological tests that were influential in setting the scene for quantitative data collection and analysis to enhance concurrent and predictive validity. This involved, for example, the use of correlation coefficients standardising the results to some external criteria. For a time, then, the modernist world looked to objective "measurable" truths and validity. Methods of investigation involved quantitative measurements for the description of processes, enabling statistical evidence for hypothesis testing to take place. These quantitative methods also brought with them concepts relating to random change in measurement from one measurement to another (reliability) and estimated the extent to which this might correlate to other measurements of the same construct, i.e. the validity of measurement. Later the type of data accepted as valid research broadened, to include general descriptions, built from the perceptions of the participants, with no reference to any quantitative measurement at all. Svale (1993) outlines the epistemological basis for qualitative research,

"In a positivist philosophy, knowledge became a reflection of reality: There is only one correct view of this independent external world, and there is ideally a one to one correspondence between elements in a real world and our knowledge of this world. In a post-modern era, the foundations of true and valid knowledge in a medieval absolute God or a modern objective reality have dissolved. The conception of knowledge as a mirror of reality is replaced by knowledge as a social construction of reality. Truth is constituted through a dialogue; valid knowledge claims emerge as conflicting interpretations and action possibilities are discussed and negotiated among the members of the community" (p239).

A movement away from observed and measured knowledge and towards knowledge as conversation is accepted as valid by qualitative researchers. However care must be taken when choosing between the consequent competing interpretations that inevitably evolve from this kind of research. Miles and Huberman (1994) advocate a number of varied strategies to employ when checking the plausibility of findings including triangulation, replication, paying attention to researcher effects and checking for representativeness. The researcher should review the overall theoretical underpinning of the whole investigation in order to balance the relativity of the emergent interpretations. The results can also be checked against any existing empirical evidence, which may support or refute the interpretation. In this way, the qualitative researcher can address the issue of the validity of both their data and their interpretations.

Issues of reliability and validity form the broad concerns of all researchers, whether their data is qualitative or quantitative. With regard to the reliability of qualitative research, Walker (1980) explains that presenting work that is open, accessible and examined for multiple interpretations bypasses the usual problems of reliability by passing responsibility for this onto the audience. Thus, the interpretation of the reader to the representations of events is as significant as all the other voices in the report,

"..In other words the fit between events and their representations of it presenting a more subtle set of problems than is usual in testing or survey research."(Walker p45)

1.3.2 Considering action research.

Action research is described by Elliott (1982) as providing,

"The necessary link between self evaluation and professional development ... the study of a social situation, with a view to improving the quality of action within it."

Researching this paradigm may utilise a wide range of approaches and methods which link educational theory with practice, allowing the practitioner to serve him or herself as a self-evaluative researcher as well. An important aspect of action research,

however, is not simply that it helps the practitioner reflect on his/her work, but that this process co-jointly involves a change in practice. Thus theory underpins the whole notion of professional development.

Kemmis et al (1982) suggested that action research is a cycle of activities in which each phase both learns from the previous one and shapes the next.

"Theories are not validated independently and then applied to practice. They are validated through practice." (Elliott 1982 p87)

So changes in practice may be an outcome of research (Hopkins 1985) or the change in practice may prelude a strategic plan for development, but using either definition, working practice is changed and influenced by understanding through reflection and revision.

In this study there was no attempt to influence or change any aspect of the special needs process within the LEA for the years of the study. It appears then that a description of action research would not be appropriate for this report and that another methodology was sought. A case study conducted within an illuminative approach was chosen.

1.3.3 The advantages of using the framework of a "case study."

The stance of an "illuminative case study" was useful in this instance because it allowed the writer to provide insight into the issues of inclusion on both a practical and theoretical basis. Stake (1994) explains that the details of the actual case studied are secondary. The aim is further to develop a more complete understanding and knowledge of the issue.

"The choice of case is made because it is expected to advance our understanding of that other interest."(Op cit. p237)

Concerns are often stressed for a case study's general reliability, validity and sampling. Wellington (1998) suggested posing two questions of any research undertaken.

- "1. Is it externally valid or generalisable?
2. Is it internally valid?" (p 47)

He further explains that a competent researcher will reflect on the effects of the instrumentation used and his or her own presence in the case studied. Also the extent to which the researcher's,

"Observations and subsequently interpretations theory are value laden."
(p 47)

How then is external validity regarded? This difficulty is usually related to the difficulties of sampling. Again Wellington suggests sampling should be both "systematic and purposive" of a number of cases so that "valid generalisations" can be made.

The quest for an interpretative validity in qualitative research is different from collecting data for empirical science. Altheide and Johnson (1994) describe how ethnographic research focuses,

"On the processes that members use in constructing or creating their activities, and how they found or established order in their activities. This focus on what some have termed "the definition of the situation" was oriented to meanings and interpretations of members who lived in specific historical, social and cultural contexts, and faced numerous practical challenges and limitations. It was on descriptions - including descriptions of language, nuances and, of course, routines - that ethnographers based their reports."(p 489)

My intention in this case study is to allow others their own voice by narrative structuring. This will involve organising interviews, text and quantitative analysis to bring out their meanings. The real focus of the work is the narrative of the story. Essentially this is told in a temporal fashion using all the evidence available in the public domain at the time, as well as that offered to the researcher by virtue of her professional practice. This is an ad hoc if eclectic approach that some may criticise suggesting that at the least, some of the interview accounts should be more appropriately found in the appendices. I simply decided that here were descriptions evoking the platitudes and crises of events more vividly than I could. Also I had no authority to claim another's reflections as my own - there were other opportunities for me to reflect in the discussion of the key issues. As Denzin (1997) states,

"A thin description simply reports facts, independent of intentions or circumstances. A thick description, in contrast, gives the context of an experience, states the intentions and meanings that organised the experience

and reveals the experience as a process. Out of this process arises a text's claims for truth, or its verisimilitude." (p 405)

Thus, each interview or questionnaire response asked for an individual's account of their experience, recollections, points of view and interpretation of events and ideas. Taken on their own each account might be considered only partial and incomplete. However, if the act of receiving one account was unreliable, each account would add a further perception, the total number and range of which might more accurately represent a richly embroidered tapestry describing the influences brought to bear during the time in which the study took place. The key elements in an illuminative type of approach to research identify how the researcher can also draw upon statistics and the empiricism of experimental and quasi experimental design whilst still stepping forward into Burden's (1998) empowering,

"Paradigmatic revolution .. (whose) .. evaluation studies should throw light on what is going on.."(p5)

He further explains that this reflective methodology must allow evidence from many different sources. Indeed he encourages the researcher to,

"Obtain as much information as possible about the context from a number of different perspectives and at a number of different levels." (p 17)

Altheide and Johnson (1994) also argued that if the social world is an interpreted world and not literal, then that validity as reflexive accounting (VARA) is an acceptable and valid perspective. They suggest that various principles should be adhered to, to substantiate any interpretations with a reflective account of the research processes. These included a description of,

1. " the relationship between what is observed and the larger cultural, historical and organisational contexts within which the observations are made;
2. the relationships among the observer, the observed and the setting;
3. the issue of perspective whether the observer's or the members' is used to render an interpretation of the ethnographic data;
4. the role of the reader in the final product; and
5. the issue of representational, rhetorical or authorial style used by the author to render the description and/or interpretation." (p 489)

So this study may not always follow the standard familiar format of writing but accepts a range of different types. Also, the different sections may stand independently but combine with one voice to illuminate the whole.

Ruddock (1985) again comments on the vast amount of material that may usefully inform the researcher as she describes the three stages of case study research.

1. The Case Data. This is all the material collected for study.
2. The Case Record. ".. a lightly edited, ordered, indexed and public version of the case data" (p.102) that may include edited notes, observational reports, interview transcripts and any other documents referred to.
3. The Case Study itself is "the product of the field worker's reflective engagement with an individual case record." (p.103). The case study should be easy to read and accessible to the reader.

Wellington (1998) suggests,

"The ability to relate to a case study and learn from it is perhaps more important than being able to generalise from it."

1.4 Methods of data analysis for this case study

Inside the case study envelope, it is important to clarify something of the intended methods of analysing the interview and questionnaire data, when they are used to look for general interpretative themes. In general, content analysis (Cohen and Manion 1980) is used as a means of identifying themes in all the interviews in the study. The questionnaires are approached in the same way, looking for descriptive data on the processes identified from the literature as being relevant. Where relevant, simple statistical analysis is used to organise the categories emerging from the questionnaire data, as well as direct description. The final section on the effectiveness of the assistant training uses a hypothetico-deductive method, with the null hypothesis that training makes no difference to child attainments. This descriptive data from the whole study is then discussed in terms of the theory of inclusion, to attempt to illuminate the nature of the processes, which have led to and support the high level of inclusion in schools in this authority. More detailed information on the methodologies and procedures used in each individual element of the case study are given just before presenting the results of that element.

1.4.1 Using questionnaires as a research tool

One general criticism of the use of postal questionnaires, as are employed in this research, is that the non-response rate may be much larger than for interview refusal rates. As little, if anything is usually known about the views and characteristics of those who do not respond, any claims as to the generalisation of the results may be seriously threatened. However due to the sheer number of contacts that were sought in one of the sub studies, self completed questionnaires were the only reasonable method that could be used. Carefully worded, clear and unambiguous questionnaires are enormously efficient in terms of time and effort although responses are sometimes criticised as being superficial.

1.4.2 Using interviews as a research tool

An interview, even for research purposes, has an interpersonal context. It is a shaped conversation on an agreed topic of interest and normally includes a sequence of themes to be covered as well as specific questions. Whilst an interview is neither as anonymous and impersonal as the questions in a street survey, nor as emotive as a therapeutic contact, it is still incumbent on the interviewer to contain the relationship safely within the period of the interview, so that the interviewee may feel sufficiently trustful to discuss both his thoughts and feelings in open dialogue.

Spradley (1979) suggested an open phenomenological approach to the interviewee,

"I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand?" (p 34)

A successful interview allows the interviewee initially to settle into the novelty of the interview situation by describing and commenting upon a topic and only then, if a true empathetic response has been evoked, is the interviewer allowed to duck under these essential if more superficial layers, to identify and catch the valuable core beliefs the person holds. It is the intertwined cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspect of this personal truth that motivates and guides a person's daily life, but this is usually not immediately apparent in conversation. Core beliefs are difficult to notice even for a trained interviewer and may first be realised in a passing sentence, phrase or even an

elaborative gesture, all and any of which need recognition and further interpretation and explanation. Attentive listening and gentle feedback to the interviewee to emphasise an appreciation of their point of view complemented by open Socratic questioning are useful techniques. Kvale (1993) sets out nine different ways of posing questions in an interview situation including;

- Introducing questions-"Can you tell me when..?"
- Follow up questions
- Probing questions-"Could you tell me something more about that?"
- Specifying questions- "What did you do then?"
- Direct questions- " Do you manage the assistants' timetables?"
- Indirect questions-"How do you think the assistants feel about you managing their timetables?"
- Structuring questions- "I'd like to move on to a different area of your work."
- Silence- to allow the interviewee to collect their thoughts, reflect and offer further spontaneous information
- Interpreting questions - reflecting back to the interviewee to clarify points made or asking the interviewee to interpret their thoughts further.

To track a core belief is revealing but needs care because it can, without warning, expose an interviewee to themselves and to the interviewer, if they suddenly reveal deeply negative feelings of hurt, resentment, loss of status, sadness, impotency, frustration and loss of self esteem. For this reason the ethical issues of anonymity and permission in interviewing and reporting both need careful consideration from the outset of the study. More than likely, interviewees will also need further reassurance of the parameters of the discussion before the interview starts. These considerations should be negotiated and carefully explained to all the participants from the outset.

An ability to motivate a free flowing of feelings and ideas denotes a dynamic positive interview experience for both conversationalists Pre planning the emphasis of the interview, i.e. the interview's themes as well as specific questions is essential for effective analysis, e.g. the focus of the interview might be exploration versus hypothesis testing, or description versus interpretation,

Robson (1993) identifies 10 questionable practices in social research as

1. " Involving people without their knowledge or consent
2. Coercing them to participate
3. Withholding information about the true nature of the report
4. Otherwise deceiving the participant
5. Inducing them to commit acts diminishing their self-esteem
6. Violating rights of self determination (e.g. in studies seeking to promote individual change).
7. Exposing participants to physical or mental stress
8. Invading their privacy
9. Withholding benefits from some participants fairly, or with some consideration, or with respect." (p 33)

Kvale (1993) argues that the mode of interview analysis depends on the theoretical conceptions underpinning the interview, including its topic and purpose, so that a psychoanalytic interpretation of a transcript to understand the motivations of the interviewee could not be analysed say in the behavioural terms of stimulus and response. Again it is emphasised that the focus of the study is an important consideration. For example, systematic analysis testing a hypothesis by asking teaching assistants how they meet the emotional needs of statemented pupils would not be conducted in the same way as the analysis of interviews asking assistants to explain the school's pastoral system.

There are standard objections to interview research. These critiques can be usefully absorbed to improve the overall quality of interview data gathering. They include the view that interviewees are liable to talk subjectively, in a biased and generalised manner and in terms of common sense. Thus the conversations cannot adhere to the rigours of scientific inquiry. Validity is compromised by subjective impressions whilst reliability is thwarted as different readers ascribe different meanings to the material.

Cohen and Mannion (1980) argue that the researcher should minimise the amount of bias as much as possible to enhance validity.

"The sources of bias are the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent and the substantive content of the questions. More particularly, these will include: the attitudes and opinions of the interviewer, a tendency for the interviewer to see the respondent in his own image, a tendency for the interviewer to seek answers that support his preconceived notions, misconceptions on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent is saying and misunderstandings on the part of the respondent of what is being asked." (p 318)

1.4.3 Other data collection

In addition to the use of questionnaires and both open and semi structured interviews, all the circular letters, committee decisions, audits and published consultancies that concerned both special needs and the deployment of assistants between Autumn 1992 and the end of 1995, were accumulated for further analysis.

1.5 Considering the role of the researcher

The physical act of putting pen to paper was long and arduous, a real metacognitive leap from being one who was part of but not influential in the action, to being the writer reflecting on the order and outcome of each act of the story. I can only liken it to being both a character in the play and the newspaper critic in the audience during the same performance. After the play, the critic must return home to write his review for the public to read. Denzin (1997) very aptly identifies these tensions.

"Moving from the field to the text to the reader is a complex reflexive process. The researcher creates a field text consisting of field notes and documents from the field. From this text he or she creates a research text, notes and interpretations based on the field text. The researcher then recreates the research text as a working interpretative document. This is the working document and contains the writer's initial attempts to make sense out of what has been learned, what Caldinin and Connolly term "experiencing experience". The writer next produces a quasi- public text, one that is shared with colleagues whose comments and suggestions the writer seeks. The writer then transforms this statement into a public document that embodies the writer's self-understandings, which are now inscribed in the experiences of those studied. This statement, in turn, furnishes the context for the understanding the reader brings to the experiences being described by the writer. Reading and writing then are central to interpretation. To paraphrase Geertz, a good interpretation takes us into the centre of the experiences being described." (p 502)

Whilst writing, I was increasingly mindful of the admonitions of, among others Punch (1994), who considered that field research is crucially dependent on the researcher's perception at the time and that his or her personality and degree of intimacy with what is observed make him or her their own research instrument. He suggested that the following features would have a

"material impact on qualitative research in general and fieldwork in particular." (p 86)

Researcher personality The reader requires an intellectual autobiography to clarify why academics end up studying what they do. Family circumstances could also be important in terms of absences and travel and spouse's support, or lack of it, can prove crucial to the continuation of a field project.

The geographic proximity of studies This emphasises the difference between living in relative isolation in the Bush and travelling "down the road to the nearest morgue, mental hospital or action group." (p 87).

The nature of the research object. This was considered to be of significance with regard, for example, to opportunities of access and to funding.

Status of field workers. Does the researcher allow him or herself to be relatively invisible or is he or she hired and tied to contractual obligations?

You will read this story and develop your own generalisations and impressions of what is described, based upon knowledge and experience. My interpretation is not one of an interested fieldworker, or so called "well informed expert" (Denzin 1997), but that of someone whose very professional existence is still being shaped by the story told.

As the case study worker, I was a newly qualified and recently appointed educational psychologist to the LEA in question and therefore already in a favoured position of trust and bound by a professional Code of Conduct. As a part-time worker and a mother with a young family, I was happy to embark on the PhD study that was to take place in the context of my normal working life. All the subjects would know me and the intention of the research, to evaluate the effectiveness of assistants to support pupils with learning difficulties, was openly and honestly discussed. If anything, my job specification and the fact that I was an employed officer of the LEA authorised almost unlimited access to special needs pupils and the assistants who supported them. The special needs co-ordinators in the schools and the officers of the LEA were generous with their time and fulsome in their explanations of how they observed the part of the special needs system that was within their own remit.

Professional ethics and common courtesy meant that I always kept the Head teachers and my Principal briefed about the levels of intervention and progress in the study. Whenever I assessed statemented pupils reading age or comprehension or number skills ability, the results were quickly fed back to the schools for their own internal use. However, to this day, despite publishing several articles and successfully negotiating a

several hundred thousand pounds. DFE bid to train assistants to degree level as a continuation of this story, no interest has ever been shown in the outcome of the research at any level of the LEA hierarchy. For my own part, it matters not one whit that the study may pass unnoticed. Its usefulness is that it prepared the ground for me to establish a dedicated and validated training for assistants working in the Borough. Promoting a context for the effective support of young people and children with learning difficulties within a mainstream environment has always been the focus of this study. These people with their enormous diversity and severity of learning difficulties have been the client group. All else is incidental.

1.6 Summary

A clear conception of the content and purpose of the investigation, i.e. the "what" and "why" as being essential before any investigation of "how" can begin, has been recognised. This is simply because these deliberations are the start of deciding the eventual questions that will be asked. This point will be discussed further throughout the methodology sections of the included sub studies.

The case study approach has been explained. It is adopted here to support research into some aspects of both the nature of inclusion and the activities that may support effective special educational needs practice in mainstream schools in the case study LEA.

The strengths and weaknesses of this methodology with respect to reliability and validity and the different aspects of data collection used in the finished draft have been outlined.

Chapter 2: DESCRIBING THE CASE STUDY LEA.

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the case study LEA in February 1993 when the research began. An overview of the socio-economic data available for the Borough and the figures relating to the numbers of pupils with special educational needs is set out. The appropriateness of using this LEA for the study, both in the context of its high rate of inclusion for special educational needs pupils and because of the sole provision of assistant hours as a resource offered to support these pupils in mainstream school is also explained.

2.1. The baseline characteristics of the case study LEA in 1993

The study was conducted in one of the smaller and more rural districts of the metropolitan authorities. Previously an area almost totally devoted to coal mining, the Borough suffered enormously with the collapse of the industry in the eighties.

The consequent job losses are estimated to be around 20,000 since the 1980s. The Borough has particularly high levels of hidden unemployment, that is, people who have left the workforce and are not counted in the claimant count statistics. Unemployment is only one symptom of the economic decline experienced in the district. It also suffers from a low-skills base due to the previous reliance on older traditional industries. The Gross Domestic Product is estimated to be 65 per cent of the European average.

Between the 1981 and 1991 census, the resident population remained almost static at 22,000. Within the wards, it is common to find complete extended families living within a few streets of each other. In the course of the author's own professional working life, clients who talked of other family members living in different wards regarded them as living some distance away even if this was only half an hours bus journey.

The relatively depressed economic activity of the area is illustrated by the fact that in 1991 more than 1.5 per cent of households still lacked a bath or inside WC, 40 per cent still did not own a car, 30 per cent of the housing was council owned and only 14 per cent of the population were employers, managers or professional workers. Across

the Borough, 11 per cent of men and 3.6 per cent of women were unemployed. However, these figures mask wide variations between the wards. In the old mining areas, redundancies pushed levels of male unemployment as high as 20 per cent. (BMBC Circular letter 65/64/95 13.1.1995.)

Nearly a third of all households had dependent children in 1991. These included 14,521 (66.6 per cent) children who were under 4 and 29,147 (13.2 per cent) were of compulsory school age.

2.1.1 Incidence of Pupils with Special Educational Needs.

Fourteen comprehensives and their 118 primary feeder schools educated pupils to GCSE level after which post compulsory education is taken at the local FE College, although one "far flung" secondary school still retained a sixth form.

Since the 1981 Education Act, pupils who required special educational needs provision within the LEA were given a statement. In 1991, 1.4 per cent of the Borough's school aged population had a statement. By 1995 that figure had risen to 2.8 per cent and the latest 1998 figures indicate that 3.24 per cent of pupils were in receipt of a statement. (Appendix 2,3,4). However, these figures reflect a relatively small rise in proportion to the total number of the school population. In 1991 443 children had statements, compared to 896 pupils in 1995. This trend continued and in 1998, 1,177 pupils were statemented.

The CSIE segregational statistics for 1992 analysed official data for the Department of Education and Science. Between 1988 and 1991, these declared a 2.05 per cent increase in the segregation of primary aged children with special educational needs into special schools and a decrease in the level of segregation for pupils aged 11 to 15. However, the CSIE warned,

"These national statistics for England in 1991 hide many wide variations between local education authorities. It remains the case that if children have disabilities or difficulties with learning, their chances of being integrated into mainstream schooling vary enormously depending on which LEA they live in. For the national pattern is still very patchy. The chances of being integrated are improving only slowly and in some cases, made worse as a handful of LEAS send more pupils to special schools." (CSIE 1992, p1)

At this time, 14 LEAs had more than 2 per cent of their pupils in special schools, 82 had between 1 and 2 per cent and 12 less than 1 per cent.

The case study LEA was the least segregated LEA in the country with 0.55 per cent of its pupils in special schools. This was an enormous 32.1 per cent reduction in the proportion of children in special schools since 1988. In 1995, 0.5 per cent of pupils attended special schools maintaining the LEA at second place for the LEA with the lowest rate of segregation.

In September 1996, the DFEE Statistical Bulletin indicated that nationally the percentage of pupils with statements in mainstream schools had risen from 40 per cent in 1991 to 54 per cent in 1995. This represented 2.6 per cent of the total school population, slightly less than the case study LEA's 2.8 per cent.

The focus of this thesis rests on placing the LEA in its historical and also its educational context with regard to special educational needs provision at the start of the study.

2.1.2 LEA provision available to support pupils with special educational needs.

As part of the collection of the case study data, interviews were held with the Principal Educational Psychologist who had worked for the LEA for 8 years and the recently appointed Chief Education Officer. The interview schedules are set out in Appendix 2,3 and 4. The Principal psychologist explained that in 1983, when the 1981 Education Act was implemented,

"the LEA looked for Nursery Nurses to provide support for statemented pupils in mainstream schools, but very quickly, the supply of such people dried up and increasingly people with no qualifications were employed. (Appendix 2 p1).

Nevertheless, the usual outcome when individuals,

"were assessed was a mainstream placement. That in turn had an effect upon our special schools, particularly our schools with children with moderate learning difficulties, and very soon their populations began to dwindle as a result of the policy for placement of children in mainstream schools. This led to the closure of two MLD schools in the 1980s and the closure of the last MLD school in 1991. So we were left in a situation where we did have special schools for children with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties and for physical difficulties but we had no provision for moderate learning difficulties at all other than placement in mainstream schools with support. The same was true also of children with a range of needs from language disorders

through to behavioural difficulties and specific learning difficulties. We had no specialist provision whatsoever for them and in each case children were placed in mainstream schools." (Op cit. p3)

Apart from the three special schools which had 154 places available in total and which were largely populated with ex-district pupils, the LEAs learning support services included a team of 6 teachers to support pupils with learning difficulties in primary schools, 6 full time teachers supporting pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in the secondary sector and a team of 4.5 full time educational psychologists.

Other provision included two hearing impaired units, one in the primary and one in the secondary sector, each attached to a mainstream school. There was little evidence of any routine links or outreach work between the mainstream and special schools. Any linkage noticed was almost always offered as pupils transferred from their local school into the special school. Three boys were placed in out of district provision for pupils with social, emotional and or behavioural difficulties.

The Principal remembered the enthusiastic support parents offered for the policy and practice of integration,

"I suspect that had the policy been more unpopular, that is, had parents aspirations for their children been to go to special schools and had those parents been vociferous and approached elected members, then the situation would have been very different, but that very patently is not the case. Parents by and large in Barnsley want their children educated in the mainstream schools in their own communities. In fact, the psychological service at the time was instrumental in the commitment not to make special school placements and unless a child was severely disabled or had parents who particularly wished their child to leave their local school, all pupils were taught in a mainstream setting." (Appendix 2, p2)

I joined the schools psychological service in September 1992. It became evident that a huge proportion of all the learning support service's time was being spent with pupils who were to be put forward with a request for a formal assessment of their special educational needs. If a statement was agreed, the only resource offered to statemented pupils was the entitlement of curriculum support assistant hours. The schools were quick to appreciate an extra pair of hands. Already a modestly small number of assistants (possibly 40 or so) were employed to support statemented pupils in every sector of mainstream schooling. Yet I could not find any evidence to suggest that the employment of assistants to support SEN pupils had become an adopted policy,

supported by the Committee of Education. No matter where I looked, I could not even find the date the first assistant had been employed - they had simply 'come into being'. Within two years of my appointment, the numbers of this paraprofessional group rose dramatically in response to the number of statements being issued. If teaching assistants were to be the only resource to support pupils with special educational needs, there was as yet no evaluation of their effectiveness. It seemed that those with the least skills and knowledge were working with those pupils who had the most need. In addition, because they were a relatively new phenomenon (even nationally) in mainstream schools, the LEA had no organised assistant training programme. The few planned induction days were quickly disbanded as an influx of numbers overwhelmed the SEN administrative system.

2.2 Summary

The information in Chapter 2 is a necessary foundation of knowledge for the case study. Future comparison to this baseline will lead to an enhanced understanding of how the LEA assisted schools both to develop inclusive education by supporting pupils with special educational needs, and also to establish whether an effective training system for teaching assistants enhances SEN pupils academic progress.

The study will also allow the researcher to reflect on whether theory and research later influenced the provision of inclusive education services

The conditions surrounding this study were enabling according to the following criteria.

- The LEA maintained the highest rate of inclusion in the country.
- Teaching assistants were the only resource offered to statemented pupils in mainstream schools.
- Teaching assistants were being employed for the first time as a resource to support pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream school nationwide (see Chapter 3).

Research was carried out to,

1. understand the way in which theory influences the provision of inclusive education,
2. explore the effectiveness of training assistants to work with special educational needs pupils,
3. evaluate the influences brought to bear on schools with regard to managing the assistants as a para-professional group,
4. establish an effective training system for teaching assistants in the LEA concerned,
5. reflect on the social, political and financial pressures to which the LEA must adhere when considering the type and allocation of SEN resources.

Chapter 3: SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is a literature review. It sets the nature and effects of inclusive education on the curriculum, learning and teaching processes for pupils with special educational needs in the early to mid 1990's in context.

The review explores the tensions existing in systems structured to enhance the success of education in mainstream schools for children with special educational needs. The models discussed include supportive links between mainstream and special schools, statutory legislation, staff development, SEN training, peer tutoring teaching assistant support and teaching within an SEN context.

A discussion of the changing nature of inclusive education is part of the final discussion.

3.1 Working towards inclusive education during the late 1990s

Since the 1981 Education Act, legislation has required all local education authorities to promote the inclusive education of all children into mainstream schools. At this time integration was often conceptualised as functional and locational integration, descriptions formulated in the Warnock Report (1978). Thus the policy of segregation, which had been maintained until this time, was prominently called into question.

Hegarty (1985) suggested that segregated division for pupils with special educational needs had initially been provided for children with severe and visual sensory handicaps at a time when 'handicapped' was seen as an individual defect that would inhibit a pupil's learning progress. This philosophy made sure that 'handicapped children' were viewed differently from other children and were consequently in need of a separate system of education. Also,

"Running alongside these ideological considerations and helping to underpin them was the claimed administrative convenience of grouping children with similar handicaps and concentrating in one place the special resources they needed. Whatever the reasons for segregation and regardless of how well special schools fitted the prevailing requirements, the overriding consideration in any move towards integration is that ordinary schools were inadequate in the first instance. If pupils were removed from ordinary schools because their needs could not be met there, it makes little sense to return them without closer examination of what the ordinary school has to offer and if necessary making changes. But more directly, what this means is that integration requires educational reform." (Op cit. p2)

The inclusion debate began in earnest with the Warnock Report (1978), which outlined three different types of integration that were considered to be overlapping rather than exclusive. These were:

- * Locational integration was the physical placement of position alongside mainstream schools.
- * Social integration referred to social interaction between SEN pupils and their mainstream peers.
- * Functional integration involved children with SEN joining and learning in mainstream classes as full members.

Yet even the above may each be broken down into a number of levels. For instance, Jarrett discussed a further continuum in terms of locational integration arrangements that allowed special educational needs pupils successful and continuous interaction with their peers who do not have learning difficulties, as follows:

1. Pupils with special needs fitted into existing arrangements.
2. Mainstream placement with specialist support provided within the class.
3. Mainstream placement and withdrawal specialist work.
4. Mainstream placement, attending special centre part-time.
5. Special centre placement, attending mainstream classes part-time.
6. Special centre full-time.
7. Special school part-time, ordinary school part-time." (1996: p77)

Thus we note that integration can be considered to be achieved in different ways and at different levels. However, Forrest, the Director for the Centre for Integrated Education, Toronto, Canada, discusses the notion as a philosophical ideal,

"Integration is traditionally interpreted as the amount of time a learner spends in a situation with other learners who are not disabled - the deeper meaning of integration is expressed in terms of 'inclusion', 'belonging', 'unity'. It is not a placement. It is a philosophy that says classrooms and communities are not complete unless all learners with all needs and gifts are welcome."(See Jarrett, 1996 p78)

3.2 The competing tensions for families and involved professional agencies.

A discussion of inclusive or integrated education is not simple or easily thought through. The success of an education system and its processes is often argued to rely heavily on the values of the human agents within, including parents, children and other professional agencies.

"Each may have a different view of the relative priority to be given to aims: academic opposed to social, for example." (Lindsay 1997 p57)

Indeed even the framework of special educational needs may be regarded from different viewpoints, such as the medical or the social model of learning difficulties; assessments based on within child factors or the curriculum context and social or biological models of explanation. Each of these leads to tensions regarding the best methods of teaching and resourcing pupils between the various professional and non-professional groups again including parents and pupils themselves.

Lindsay continues to explain that the tensions,

"revolve around the interplay between the values of equality, individuality, social inclusion and practicability and are found in issues about a common curriculum for all." (Op cit. p101)

3.3 Tensions for mainstream school staff

As a result of visits made by HMI across 33 LEAs, the OFSTED document 'Promoting High Achievement for Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools' (1996) was written. This report concludes that the key features of LEA structures which support schools effectively to raise the achievements of their SEN pupils are:

- "* Specific responsibilities for SEN at senior officer level with personnel.
- * Access by the head of service (if a learning support service exists) to policy planning meetings with LEA officers or inspectors.

- * A mechanism to ensure close liaison with all providers of a service, that is, educational psychologists, visual and hearing impaired services, pre-school, behavioural and learning support services.
- * A restructuring of permanent, full-time staff employed at differing levels, including non-teaching personnel, clear job descriptions and facility for staff development." (Op cit. p24)

The report also considered the importance of staff development provided by LEAs for both teachers and non-teaching staff and that provided for the Learning Support teams. It comments that

"Teachers need to feel confident that what they plan, teach and evaluate does meet the needs of all learners in their classes. Many teachers do not have this confidence. Practical INSET on teaching learning strategies is said to be required." (Op cit. p27)

To support this, it was suggested that LEAs should identify the priorities which reflected schools' needs and using high quality specialist trainers should provide and credit INSET activities at a variety of levels which should in turn be regularly evaluated. Additionally it was suggested that the learning support teams should address their own professional development by enhancing their specialist skills.

The argument, then, is that although education is increasingly subject to market forces, i.e. the demand of parents upon places, financing based on pupil numbers and the ever increasing need to raise test results, schools must also respond to the pupils who have special educational needs, including those pupils without statements. How many LEAs seek to exert influence or pressure, when necessary, on individual schools' SEN policies and practice? It appears that pupils with special educational needs are more reliant than ever on the abilities of individual schools to meet their various needs. Certainly the Code of Practice (1994) did much to clarify the responsibilities of schools. There are three stages of school based assessment which schools may follow to assess the duration and severity of pupils' needs. During each stage, pupils should follow an individual education plan that is an individually planned and monitored programme of instruction that allows staff to monitor pupil progress. The Code also requires schools to detail their SEN funding for children with learning difficulties as part of their SEN policy. The importance of each school's SEN policy was highlighted by Gary Thomas (1997) who suggested that the policy document establishes,

"... the school's ethos and calculates its commitment, underlines its practice and celebrates its successes. It can be used to develop better practice and to ensure near fair distribution of resources to learning support." (Op cit. p295)

Interestingly, Getting in on the Act (1992) revealed that most of the head teachers interviewed did not feel confident "in assessing what level of support these pupils needed." (Op cit. p95)

There seemed to be as much concern that they would over provide - thus affecting the child's independence - as they would under provide.

The OFSTED Report 'Promoting High Achievement' (1996) acknowledged that the identification and assessment procedures of SEN pupils in schools were inconsistent although the Code of Practice was having an increasing influence. However,

"Most schools are reviewing their policies for SEN. These reviews generally provide clearer information and guidance on administrative and organisational issues, however, practice guidance on strategies to implement and evaluate policy is not always included." OFSTED 1996 p6)

Two main factors were deemed to hinder effective co-ordination of SEN provision in the schools at secondary level. These were insufficient support by the senior management team (SMT) for SEN co-ordinators and a lack of time. It was recognised that most of the secondary schools visited had a designated SENCO whose line manager was one of the SMT. It was clear that the day-to-day organisation and administration of SEN matters rested with the SENCO who often stated that they did not have time to plan and target support successfully. Importantly and

"...as a consequence, pupils can be helped in class by teachers with little subject specialist knowledge who then fulfil a supervisory role to pupils rather than teach them. Sometimes teachers of SEN support a subject area they are not qualified in and the need for joint planning is more imperative."(Op cit. p18)

With respect to progress and achievement, it was stated that all pupils, including those with special educational needs benefited from good teaching practice. Also the most influential factor,

"On the effectiveness of in-class support is the quality of joint planning of the work between class/subject teacher and the support teacher or special support assistant." (Op cit. p20)

The report was concerned that assistants were less effective in raising standards in the secondary sector but that the "quality of education provision in withdrawal sessions" raised pupils' standards more at secondary level than at primary. The key features of providing high quality in class support were explicitly mentioned as,

- ** Good team working between support staff and class teacher, that is, joint planning to allow pupils with SEN to work on the same curriculum area or theme as the rest of the class, but at an appropriate level.
- * The support teacher or assistant being well supplied with information about the work to be attempted.
- * The support teacher introducing additional materials and strategies to enable pupils with SEN to take part. Often these are of use to a wider group of pupils.
- * The support teacher or assistant working, for example, with a more able group, enabling the class teacher to focus on those pupils who need more help.
- * Ensuring that pupils of all abilities are adequately challenged to solve problems, reflect, formulate strategies and act independently; that is, it is not helpful to the pupil if the support teacher or assistant largely does the work for the child.
- * Ensuring the integration of pupils with SEN into the whole class." (1997 p17)

Hazel Dodgson (1989) describes three more models of in-class teacher support that are commonly used including

- 1 The support teacher supporting an individual child which she suggests may only change,
"the location of special education rather than the concept and may serve to segregate the child from his peers in the classroom situation." (p159)
- 2 The support teacher supporting individuals or groups of children as the need arises.
- 3 A collaborative teaching situation, where the support teacher acts in support of the class or subject teacher in addition to supporting the children.

She argues that in the collaborative model that she advocates tensions still reside and teachers may see their role as an in-class support as either a threat or a challenge, depending on each teacher's beliefs about their own personal resources, the degree of understanding between the subject and the support teachers' goals, values, commitment and empathy and the extent to which staff believe that extra support can be a positive

experience providing resources to help the integration process. She gives an example of subject and support teachers working at odds when the former believes that the 'problem' of teaching SEN pupils lies in the adaptation of materials, whilst the latter feels that the subject teacher's style, classroom organisation and lesson content might need to be revised as well.

Hodgson et al (1984) concur that SEN pupils in mainstream schools can only access an education that meets their needs if staff can,

"develop appropriate programmes of work and possess the teaching skills to cater for a wide range of attitudes and needs. They have to decide what each pupil should learn, select appropriate teaching strategies and learning resources and monitor subsequent progress. Some schools will have specialist teachers in post to guide and support their colleagues in these demanding tasks. Many will not, however, the more so as integration becomes more common and increasing numbers of pupils with special educational needs attend their neighbourhood schools. The result is that many more class teachers may find themselves in the position of having to teach individual pupils with special needs without having adequate recourse to specialist in-house support." (1984 p4)

Evans et al (1996) undertook an in-depth investigation of the Code of Practice in five local education authorities and concluded that staff in secondary schools lacked models of support that could help them to determine their own "resource allocation practices". Also most of the support appeared to be placed in English and mathematics as priority lessons. Other subject teachers commented that they would have liked more quality support so that they themselves could work with special needs pupils for more time each day. They also wanted more sustained specialist support, i.e. support that would be "subject literate" or be able to work with a particular child's needs. In their conclusions, it was suggested that staff responsibilities under the Code should be highlighted and, more particularly, understood in secondary schools. Opportunities should be made for both teaching and support staff to train and obtain qualifications to improve their skills and confidence, improve access to other LEA agencies and help staff to devise and use effective models of support for both targeting resources and differentiating learning experiences.

Clayton's article (1992) examined the special needs provision available to schools concluding that there was a substantial level and range of support given by other LEA

and health professionals - all of which were recognised in the head teachers' responses. But in contrast, he noticed a marked difference in the resources available within the schools themselves.

"Particularly noticeable within schools was the small number of qualified special needs teachers although, as the data shows, quite a few did have special needs experience. Lack of training opportunities also featured significantly in support to schools where it was the resource least likely to be available." (1992 p154)

3.4 SEN training of teachers

A report by the Teacher Training Agency "Survey of special educational needs training provided by higher education" (1997) indicated that 70 higher education institutions in England and Wales provide additional SEN training although teachers who could attend on secondment were 'rare'. In fact most of the courses recruit teachers who are either self financing or who have 'mixed types of financial support', e.g. from school or the LEA, GEST or personal finance. The report also makes it clear that the Higher Education In-Service courses have often been set up in response to local curriculum initiatives and national legislation. Many of the courses take into account local LEA ventures and existing separate types of provision.

3.5 An evaluation of cost

It was DFEE funded Newcastle University's research 'Costs and Outcomes for Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties in Special and Mainstream Schools' (1999) which claimed that

"There is no convincing evidence that this approach.. (smaller teaching groups backed by LSAs) .. works for children with moderate learning difficulties." (TES 8.1.99. Children who need more than hope).

Rather, the research team discussed the "resource and hope" policy which relies on teachers' "practice and their experience of what works on the ground" (p16). The report also attacked the Warnock model as it was represented in the statementing procedure. It criticised a process that funded SEN resources into school without establishing any future outcomes for the individual pupils targeted.

Getting in on the Act (1992) indicated that

"on average it is not more expensive to educate a child with learning difficulties in an ordinary school with support rather than in a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties." (p 84)

Thus the cost considerations in the choice of special or ordinary schools were considered to be 'neutral' for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. However, pupils with severe learning difficulties were thought to be more expensive to place in ordinary schools if "major physical adaptations were required" or if the cost of extra support could not be spread across a small group of pupils as would elsewhere be the case in a special school.

Previously, Clayton (1992) had also remarked upon the tensions of funding special needs issues for head teachers and school governors in the face of competition based on academic attainment with other neighbouring schools. Indeed Baskind's and Thompson's (1994) survey of 20 schools' special needs governors in one large LEA in the North of England had already clearly emphasised how little those who run the system know about the budgetary considerations affecting SEN issues, yet there was an increasing awareness that other calls on their schools' budgets was reducing SEN staffing time.

"Although as a group the governors were undecided about whether statementing money covered the cost of the requested special educational provision listed in statements, several did show knowledge of the financial implications of special needs in regard to staffing issues. Five of the governors mentioned budget deficits in schools due to the rise in teachers' salaries which were offset by losing or reducing the time of the special needs staff". (Op cit. p297)

3.6 Links with Special Schools

Supportive links with local special schools may provide a valuable resource and enhance the integration experience of special needs pupils. The 1993 OFSTED report "The integration of pupils with moderate learning difficulties into secondary schools", was written after inspecting 19 LEAs, including the case study LEA which also gave information about its current integration policies. The report suggests that

"the reward of successful integration of pupils, parents and teachers are considerable." (p10)

3.7 What factors enhance the success of inclusive education?

Jacklin and Lacy (1993) describe an elaborate model of possible patterns of integration into secondary school programmes. They clearly understood the need for high pupil / teacher ratio, constant close and supportive adult relationships and the constant availability of medical personnel; e.g. the school medical officer, physiotherapist, speech therapist, occupational therapist etc. that can be found in special schools. They contrast this with the secondary school environment with its frequent changes of lessons and teachers and combinations of pupils of various sizes. They argued that the success of mainstream placements for special needs pupils hinges on effective relationships with teachers and, most importantly, with peers. In their practical model, it is clear that links, which create flexibility to meet the needs of pupils, staff and schools, are very effective, as is the allocation of non-contact time for staff. They also suggest that,

"if integration is to be more than simply placement, issues other than these practical implications of support must be understood. Essential to this process is building relationships and making friends, a factor the pupils themselves felt was of the utmost importance." (1993, p 55)

Hegarty (1990) inferred that many of these link schemes can involve assistants as well as teachers and that usually staff went from the special to the mainstream school, although this position was reversed when mainstream staff wished to ask specific questions about curriculum development. He pointed out that the special school may be a resource centre for mainstream colleagues and that special school teachers undertook three activities when they went into mainstream, i.e. teaching, supporting mainstream colleagues and monitoring the pupil link arrangement with special schools. Several factors have been promoted to enhance successful integration programmes for SEN pupils.

Maggie Balshaw (1998) continues to propose that best practice for supporting pupils with special educational needs combines staff development, the notion of discussing the management and co-operation of teams involved in the instructional process and INSET for all the members of the instructional team together when it is directly relevant to classroom practice.

Hegarty (1982) argued that the human agency of personnel and an enthusiastic head teacher who could motivate and influence staff were pivotal. Derk Gans (1987) and Robson (1989) both supported the notion that staff willingness and commitment to teach SEN pupils was crucial. Clough and Wigley (1995) identified that considerably more teachers in Derbyshire County Council than in the other two compared LEAs appeared to be sympathetic to the aims of mixed ability teaching and teaching SEN children in mainstream schools. They were also confident that they had all or some of the skills required to meet the needs of learners with SEN. Interestingly, most of the teachers could identify the main thrust of the LEAs SEN funds and recognised its continuity with the policies in their own schools.

"We feel that their understanding of policy informs and affects attitudes towards their own practice in a positive way." (1991, p 40)

Gilbert and Hart (1990) also recognised the staff's need for confidence so that they could successfully teach pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties. They suggested that staff should recognise the merits of specific planning and target setting that would not necessarily be consistently achieved. They should also understand the importance of praise for pupils. They considered the relevance of training, particularly with respect to curriculum differentiation, describing it as a very powerful aid for the successful schools integration programme.

3.8 Peer tutoring and collaboration

Jarrett (1996) reminds us of the importance of peer tutoring and peer collaboration in order that pupils of different abilities may have the opportunity to work together to seek a solution to problems. The example that he gives include Topping's (1988) shared reading scheme. It is argued that the effectiveness of this approach may utilise pupils' different strengths as appropriate, although it is not necessary for any pupil to have any advantage in skills or knowledge above another.

3.9 Teaching assistants supporting SEN pupils

The Plowden Report (1967) discussed the class teachers' need for support if pupils with special educational needs were to join their mainstream peers.

"If children such as these are to be placed in a normal class, it is essential that the co-operation of the teacher is secured. It must not be forgotten that either one or two severely handicapped children add greatly to the responsibilities of a busy teacher in a large class. In such circumstances, some ancillary help may be essential." (op cit. s845)

By 1982, Hegarty was stating that the assistant's work was critical in

"determining the feasibility of a programme, and the way in which they are deployed, its success or failure. (1982, p 177)

He argues that the assistants might be employed to provide physical care, implement the programmes of speech therapists or physiotherapists or in an educational role. He also considered that they would provide the routine of familiarity and the friendship that was often needed by SEN pupils.

A decade later, Gerald Haigh reported on the effectiveness of a relatively new para-professional group, the specialist teacher assistants (STAs) whose number had increased from 6,342 in January 1991 to 9,304 in 1993 (TES October 7 1994). The Government's new ten million pound programme of one year Specialist Teaching Assistant (STA) training courses had almost completed its first cohort. Teachers who were interviewed for this article enthused about the qualities of their assistants in class. In turn, the assistants themselves felt valued and part of the instructional team. They felt more able to have informal relationships with pupils and to be able to spend time talking to them and explaining ideas. The STAs were employed to work in Key Stage 1 classrooms and not specifically with children who had special educational needs. However special needs assistants working in mainstream classrooms also usually follow this model of working.

A review of non-teaching staff in schools (DES 1992) surveyed 100 primary and 50 secondary schools. The report indicated that the non-teaching assistants (NTAs) enable the Head teacher and teachers to work more effectively and efficiently and that,

"the work of these staff is so valuable that important aspects of teaching and learning would be curtailed without their help." (op cit. p4)

The report also acknowledged that the assistants had few formal qualifications for the work that they did. It accepted that there was some need to distinguish between the fine line of supporting pupils in class and doing the work for them, and it argued that the

LEA or schools should at least provide a clear job description, appraisal of performance and provision of suitable training (page 23). In all, it was considered that it was special needs assistants who worked most closely with and under the guidance of the teachers and that the assistants were possibly the most closely supervised with more clearly defined jobs to do. However,

"the effectiveness of many (assistants) was constrained to a greater or lesser degree by factors which included a limited perception, on the part of schools and the staff themselves, of their capabilities and potential, inadequate management and in particular the absence of a job description, a lack of formal or informal appraisal of performance, lack of in-service training and a shortage of time to perform duties. (1992, p 14)

3.10 Summary

The 1981 Education Act supported inclusive education for all pupils in mainstream schools. Influential factors contributing to the successful placement of pupils with learning difficulties included clear SEN policies which gave good guidance on administrative and organisational issues, well planned work schedules for subject staff and support teachers or assistants, effective in-class support, strong links with local special schools, the opportunity for staff to enhance their skills and knowledge in the area of special needs and an enthusiastic Head teacher whose staff were willing, confident and committed to teaching pupils with learning difficulties.

The next chapter describes and evaluates, through a literature review, how political and financial decisions were taken at central government level, also how these decisions determined the various approaches of different LEAs to resourcing pupils with special educational needs. This chapter is also the beginning of Sub study 1 and links the influence of national political and financial SEN arrangements with the extent and nature of SEN support for statemented pupils in the case study LEA.

SUB STUDY I: A SUB STUDY TO DESCRIBE AND EVALUATE HOW LEGISLATION AND NATIONAL INITIATIVES INFLUENCED SEN POLICY, ADMINISTRATION, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND THE LEVEL OF RESOURCES OFFERED IN THE CASE STUDY LEA.

Chapter 4: THE DEVELOPMENT IN FUNDING FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE 1990s IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: A LITERATURE REVIEW.

Chapter 5: AN OVERVIEW OF HOW LOCAL FISCAL POLICY AFFECTED SEN ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CASE STUDY LEA.

Chapter 6: AN OVERVIEW OF THE EFFECTS OF LOCAL FISCAL POLICIES ON SEN REORGANISATION FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF ASSISTANTS IN SCHOOLS: THE LEA'S PERSPECTIVE.

KEY RESEARCH ISSUES 1 and 2.

Key Issue 1 To describe and evaluate how legislation and national initiatives influenced SEN policy, administration and financial management in the case study LEA.

Key Issue 2 To describe and evaluate the impact of the case study LEA's SEN policies on the level of resourcing offered to schools.

Chapter 7: A DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES 1 AND 2.

Structure of sub study 1

This sub study describes and evaluates how legislation and national initiatives influence SEN policy, administration, financial management and the level of resources

offered in the case study LEA. It considers nationally and locally published material to provide a review surrounding Key Issues 1 and 2 and then interview based data to describe the evolution of local policy and practice.

Chapter 4 is a literature review of the development in funding for inclusive education in the 1990s in the United Kingdom. The various SEN approaches of different LEAs to national fiscal policies are discussed.

Chapter 5 is an overview of how local fiscal policy developed and affected SEN organisational development in the case study LEA. using published circulars,

Chapter 6 The personal account of serving officers are triangulated with opinions offered throughout the literature review and with the Authority's published papers detailing the ramifications of decision making at a local political level with regard to the employment of assistants.

Chapter 7 discusses the first two Key Issues of the study, which are:

Key Issue 1

To describe and evaluate how legislation and national initiatives influenced SEN policy, administration and financial management in the case study LEA.

Key Issue 2

To describe and evaluate the impact of the case study LEA's SEN policies on the level of SEN resourcing offered to schools.

CHAPTER 4: THE DEVELOPMENT IN FUNDING FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE 1990s IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: A LITERATURE REVIEW.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the development in funding for inclusive education in the 1990s in the United Kingdom.

Beginning with the historical identification and recognition of the rights of pupils with learning difficulties through statutory legislation, the study outlines the competing tensions for LEAs and schools who also had to address the resultant pressures of the 1988 Education Reform Act and the delegation of the school budget.

4.2 The effects of recent statutory legislation on SEN provision

Ten years after the introduction of the 1981 Education Act, Mary Warnock (1992) discussed the naivety of the 1978 Warnock Report and suggested that the committee had never thought to question why LEAs should want to take on a system of statementing children with severe learning difficulties without extra resources from central government. The Report suggested that these children

"needed to be protected against possibly idle or impoverished local authorities. With hindsight, what is happening now should have been expected. Parents are pressing in increasing numbers for statements for their children since only then, it seems, can they be assured of special provision. Local authorities are increasingly drawing up statements not in accordance with the child assessed need, but with what they think they can afford." (Warnock, 1978 p3)

The passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act managed to decentralise the administration of schools and enhanced their competition with each other. LEAs were required to delegate the authority for school budgets, including the management responsibilities of employing staff, buying materials and equipment and providing the general day-to-day running expenses of the building. The much discussed open enrolment of schools enhanced parental choice. Parents might now choose the school they wished their child to attend and LEAs were required to admit pupils to a school until it was full.

After the enactment of the Education Reform Act, only three methods of funding pupils with special needs in ordinary schools remained to LEAs. These were

- "a) general funding through the formula, in the same way that they fund all pupils, largely on the basis of the number and age of pupils;
- b) delegating certain funds for pupils with special needs including, in some cases, funds allocated via a statement;
- c) providing services directly to pupils, for example, individual tuition, specialist advice etc." (DFE Getting in on the Act 1992 p38)

Jennifer Evans and Ingrid Lunt monitored the effects of Local Management of Schools (LMS)(1993) on provision for special educational needs pupils. They discussed the main elements of the LMS package which were:

"Financial delegation, formula funding, open enrolment, appointment and dismissal of staff and assessments of performance". (Op cit p73)

Under LMS, local education authorities were required to delegate at least 85 per cent of their potential schools' budget (PSB) to schools. The PSB was calculated by subtracting the cost of those items which were 'mandatory exceptions', (i.e. those which LEAs are obliged to fund centrally), from the general schools budget (GSB) and subtracting the cost of home to school transport and school meals (both of which are discretionary exceptions but which vary so much from LEA to LEA that their inclusion in any budget makes comparisons between any LEA very difficult).

From the 15 per cent or less of the PSB remaining under central control, the LEA had to fund such administration as,

"The educational psychology service, educational welfare service, peripatetic teachers, statements for pupils in mainstream, library and museum services, insurance, special staff costs (that is, redundancy payments), LEA initiatives and structural repairs and maintenance". (Op cit p74)

Provision for pupils who are educated in special schools was also included as part of the PSB calculations when local management of special schools (LMSS) began in 1994. This meant that they were subject to the same cash limits for delegating centrally held funds as mainstream schools.

Additionally, under LMS, 80 per cent of schools funding is based on "pupil-related" factors. This was, and still is, mainly dependent upon the age of the pupil. However, LEAs do include some additional weighting for SEN factors. This is usually

according to the pupils' socio-economic level of needs and allows LEAs to take account of the background of the pupils in different schools. Often the weighting is made according to the number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

Evans and Lunt state,

"As far as pupils with special educational needs are concerned, the key services on which they and schools rely are peripatetic advisory and support teachers, educational psychologists, education welfare officers and statemented provision in mainstream". (op cit p59)

However, schools also received additional resources for individual pupils who have a statement of special educational needs. In their survey of just under one half of all English LEAs, Evans and Lunt found indications that,

"The proportion of pupils with statements had increased in 84 per cent of LEAs. The average statement in 1992 was 2.4 per cent, in 1990 it had been 2 per cent and in 1991 2.2 per cent". (Op cit p59)

They discussed the 'disturbing trends', suggesting that the figures indicated an increase in the portion of statemented pupils in the majority of the LEAs which responded and also that the number of pupils in special schools had increased. They were just as clear that,

"The majority of LEAs have targeted extra funds to schools to support pupils with SEN whose needs do not fall within the range that require a statement. However, a combination of factors appears to be creating a situation where schools are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the needs from their delegated budgets. Firstly there are pressures on the budget of some schools that are 'losers' in the average/actual salary costs denouement, that is, schools which have above average salary costs will have to cut staff or save money in some way to balance their budgets. (An earlier survey had indicated) ... that at that time, the majority of schools (80 per cent) had not had to cut staff because of LMS. Of those that had cut staff, 30 per cent had lost special needs teachers. In 1994, the transitional period, to protect mainstream schools against the problems incurred in funding above average staff costs, will come to an end. It is likely that, at this point, more schools will cut SEN staff. A recent HMI report (1993) has suggested that schools whose budgets are under pressure are already finding some difficulties in providing adequately for pupils with special educational needs". (Op cit p60)

On the other hand, Evans and Lunt suggested that the 44 LEAs who responded to their questionnaire had enhanced the support that they could offer through their support services. They argued that this might have been because LEAs had been anxious to

organise such support centrally and been cautious about delegating SEN funds to schools themselves. However, the HMI report acknowledged that a number of LEAs were planning or had made some service reduction due to their education budgets being charge capped. They concluded that resources were shifting away from support for individuals and towards

"support for schools and a reaffirmation of the role of schools in providing for all children, including those with special educational needs". (Op cit p61)

4.3 Comments on the experiences of LEAs

Copeland et al's review (1993) acknowledged the weakening of the powers of LEAs in the wake of the 1988 Education Reform Act and determined to assess the impact of the ERA upon central special educational needs support services. They suggested that the LEAs did actually prefer to retain learning and behavioural support services as a central resource available to all schools equally and supporting integration for children with SEN. However, the required implementation of a higher percentage of Gross School Budget being given to schools and the fact that money in the formula is led by pupil number and not individual pupil needs, has meant that, in some LEAs, schools had been asked to buy in support service time whilst, in others support teams were retained centrally but vastly reduced in number. At the time of the Report, the most recent consultation, "Local Management of Schools: the future framework" (DFE 1993) suggested that educational psychology services and education welfare services might be mandatory exceptions, i.e. their funding should not be delegated to schools. This, in fact, is exactly what happened.

LEAs have always expressed concerns about delegating SEN funds to schools, usually for two main reasons. Firstly, there was no guarantee that these funds would be spent on SEN pupils and, secondly, that LEAs often considered that their own central support team was more skilled and better trained than the staff in ordinary schools. Appositely, the experience of the team investigating schools for the report Getting in on the Act (1992) suggested that,

"Most of the head teachers and teachers in ordinary schools which were visited did not agree that central LEA teams were better equipped than they were to provide for pupils with learning difficulties, and they also felt that they could provide the service to pupils more efficiently themselves.

Delegation of this service would mean that time currently spent travelling would be spent in school and would reduce the problem of peripatetic teachers arriving at inappropriate times during the school day - a significant bone of contention with many ordinary schools. Furthermore, it is difficult for peripatetic teachers to be well co-ordinated with pupils' ordinary class teachers as the staff of their own school because, moving between schools, they are usually not so easily available to hold discussions with the class teacher." (DFE 1992 p93)

The report also indicated that there was no evidence that schools had mismanaged SEN funds that had been delegated by the LEA. In fact, two of the LEAs actively evaluated and monitored how schools were applying the delegated resources.

The above suggests that the LEAs were handed a considerable diminution of their previous role with the advent of the Education Reform Act. However, Thomas and Levacic (1991) argued that formula funding still gave LEAs considerable political discretion,

"LEAs can adopt quite different policies with regard to favouring or penalising certain types of school. For example, the formula can favour schools which have pupils with special needs or low socio-economic status."(Op cit p414)

On the other hand, Vincent et al (1994) suggested that the government of the 1980's purposefully viewed local government as anathema to their ideal of minimum state 'interference' in schools and so LEAs,

"Were to lose much of their former initiative constrained now by financial restrictions including capping, the induction of compulsory competitive tendering, housing and education legislation." (p 318)

Indeed many LEAs began to see themselves as co-ordinators or facilitators and no longer as direct providers of SEN services to schools. However, with regard to delegating funds to pupils with statements, all LEAs still controlled this budget separately. As a result, schools genuinely have tended to compete for the resources a statement will provide. The Audit Commission (1994) concluded that there had been a positive response from LEAs to the government report 'Getting in on the Act,' although the LEAs still needed to address four key points. These included constructing criteria for the instigation of the process of formal assessments in order to reduce inequities in the increasing demand for assessment from schools and parents, improving the speed

that assessment took, making sure that schools recognised the special needs aspect of their formula funding and adjusting to forecasted demands.

This echoes the thoughts of Evans and Lunt that there had been an enormous increase in the number of requests for statements of special educational needs as gate keeping considerable extra resources and also, perhaps more particularly worrying, that there had been an increase in the number of excluded children that schools said they could no longer cope with.

The fortunes of special educational needs provision in LEAs across the land since the onset of LMS have been amply chronicled by the Times Educational Supplement (TES) since the early 1990s. Nicholas Pyke reported,

"The wide disparity of provision from one local authority to another and - as a forthcoming Commission report is likely to suggest - from area to area within a borough". (TES, 24 April, 1992, page 3)

Commenting on Evans and Lunt's survey by London University's Institute of Education, he argued that individual authorities, such as Gloucestershire, showed a much higher increase of pupils with statements than the average. It was also more apparent in this LEA that there were more exclusions of pupils in the first term of that year than in the whole of the previous 12 months. In the same article, Baroness Warnock lamented the lack of,

"Any graded system of provision. There is nothing for children who are not in the 2 per cent needing a statement but who still make up the 20 per cent with special needs of a less severe kind". (TES, 24 April, 1992, page 3)

Philippa Russell of the Voluntary Council for the Handicapped Child reiterated the ad hoc provision in LEA funding and policy making. However, she also commented upon Nottinghamshire's inclusion policy that was supported by spending £2 million on extra resources and £750,000 on capital improvements. The equivalent of 60 full time teachers was switched from special into mainstream schools and the LEA,

"... slashed the number of children who were placed outside the Authority. Nottinghamshire is trying to meet pupils assessed needs with a minimum of statementing, on the grounds that the whole process ties up many thousands of pounds". (TES 1 May, 1992, page 12)

In 1994 it was clear that the proportion of pupils sent to special schools had risen for the first time since 1980 according to figures published by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education. The number of pupils in special schools rose to 88,952 or from 1.47 to 1.49 per cent between 1991 and 1992. This increase coincided with the Commons announcement of new special needs legislation. Under the 1981 Education Act, LEAs had a duty to integrate as many children as possible as befitted the efficient use of resources. Now Lambeth and East Sussex put the greatest proportion of children into special schools, Barnsley and Cornwall the least.

Dr Brahm Norwich (1994) who compiled a further analysis for the London University's Institute of Education, wrote,

"If this reversal is confirmed by the 1993 and subsequent figures, then it is likely that this is the first sign of the ongoing impact of local management of schools and the national testing introduced in the Education Reform Act 1988.

In effect, this would mean that ordinary schools are moving more children with difficulties and disabilities into special schools because they represent too great a challenge under the new working arrangements". (TES, 2 September 1994, page 9)

On 27 January, 1995, the TES reported East Sussex as one Authority planning to delegate SEN funds and the budget for statements to school governors, hoping that this would enable schools to identify this limited pot of money. The Assistant County Education Officer, David Nelson, suggested,

"The present system has too much of a bidding system within it, and all the pressure that that entails". (Page 3)

By 12 May, Peter Bibby, barrister and educationist, was suggesting that the amount of money that schools were given both through their GSB and via statementing differed,

"Wildly .. and this leaves some schools in a poor position to implement the new Code of Practice". (TES, Page 3)

Indeed, in the following, Bibby clearly illustrates the different levels of funding that schools might expect to support pupils with special educational needs. He acknowledges that Central Government controls local authority expenditure, providing about half the revenue needed through the revenue support grant. Sixteen per cent of

this is allocated according to educational needs based on a national index of socio-economic deprivation. In this way expenditure,

"For children ranged from £18,200 per one hundred children in the least deprived authorities to £82,200 per hundred children in the poorest areas. The government clearly expects the differences in funding to be passed on to individual schools". (12 May, 1995 Page 9)

All LEAs should have identified, in their section 42 budget statement for schools, some additional SEN monies for pupils without statements. That identification was usually based on either free school meals or performance testing. Bibby argued that,

"Having identified a special needs allocation in this way, an LEA cannot convincingly assert that schools ought to be spending further money on special provision for individual children, particularly since the incidence of special needs varies as much within local authorities as between them". (Page 9)

He supported this argument by referring to a survey of learning difficulties in Lambeth primary schools showing a range of no children with special needs to 30 per cent. Similarly a study in Nottinghamshire gave a range from 0 to 38 per cent, whilst an audit of Kent secondaries showed a range from 12 to 58 per cent, excluding grammar schools that ought to have few pupils with learning difficulties. In this manner, if general funds were to be provided for special educational needs, those who do not have SEN will have fewer resources allocated to them than their peers in needier neighbouring schools. Would this effect be exaggerated in areas where there were grammar or selective grant maintained schools?

The vast discrepancies were illustrated in the additional needs allocation in each Authority in England for 1994/95. In Southwark, the average figure given is £16,979 per hundred children. However, individual schools receive between £3,000 and £23,000 per hundred children. On the other hand, the London borough of Newnham allocates no money on the basis of 'additional need'. All the special needs funding was included in the GSB. However, one should also pay regard to the fact that Newnham,

"Also delegates to schools the lowest proportion of its standard spending assessment of any Authority in England".(Page 9)

Bibby concluded,

"The dramatically differing allocation must affect the extent to which schools can be reasonably expected to implement the Code of Practice. In some areas schools have budgets, which commit substantial provision for individual children. In others, schools cannot be expected to implement the Code to any meaningful degree. The amount spent on children with special needs but without statements to a large extent determines the threshold at which the Authority is obliged to make a statement.

Where the resources allocated for special needs are substantial, there will be less need for assessments. The new special needs tribunals will need to determine on a case-by-case basis, the annual sum that schools in the particular LEA can reasonably afford to spend on special provision for a single child. That sum is the statement threshold. It is a constant within each LEA but will vary substantially from one LEA to another.

The statement threshold may be determined by costing the levels of provision which are suggested for children at each stage of the three school-based stages of assessment described in the Code. By my reckoning, that produces a cost ratio between children at stages one, two and three of 1:3:12.

The only further information needed is the proportion of children in the LEA who are at stages 1, 2 and 3 in an LEA where SEN levels are the national average and the SEN allocation is £15,000 per one hundred children, the statement threshold would be £2,685. That sum would purchase annually, say, 5 hours a week from a classroom assistant, 1 hour only from a specialist teacher, a portable word processor and £100 of materials. A school could reasonably expect the Authority to meet any requirement above this through a statement.

... Authorities which allocate little to special educational needs will need to issue a great many statements. In high spending Authorities, statements will rarely be necessary. Schools and local authorities would be well advised to reach agreement about the statement threshold in the context of their budget as a whole". (TES 12 May, 1995, page 9)

Early in the autumn term of 1995 the National Governors' Council had published its own survey of school budgets. This showed how funding constraints, particularly in 1995/96, had impacted on the decisions which governing bodies had made at the beginning of that financial year. It was anticipated that the full effect of these constraints would only finally come to fruition during the autumn term, at the beginning of a new academic year when pupil rolls are normally expected to rise.

The evidence of the findings concurred with the concerns previously expressed that pupil numbers, class sizes and individual teacher contact hours were on the increase, whilst teacher numbers had decreased and actual expenditure per pupil for the whole school population was already expected to exceed income in 1995/96 by more than 1 per cent.

Under these circumstances it is difficult to envisage that schools could find the resources to implement the Code of Practice and follow specific individual education places for pupils with special educational needs without additional support from their LEAs.

4.4 Summary

The government sought to implement the 1981 Education Act without resourcing the initiative. However, money to provide for the needs of pupils with learning difficulties was earmarked in the schools' own budget and in each LEA's special needs purse.

The funding was purposefully variable across the schools. Much of this variation reflected social and special education needs indices set up by the LEA, e.g. free school meals. Although the money should have been used to support pupils with learning difficulties, general financial pressures might mean that schools were tempted to use it to balance their general budget.

As Chapter 5 indicates, the same process of reducing the special needs allocation to meet general budget deficits also occurred at LEA level.

These considerations lead to the choice of the first two Key Issues for this study that were to explore how national developments in school funding might have influenced policy and practice in the case study LEA.

4.5 Key Research Issues 1 and 2

Key Issue 1

To describe and evaluate how legislation and national initiatives influenced SEN policy, administration and financial management in the case study LEA.

Key Issue 2

To describe and evaluate the impact of the case study LEA's SEN policies on the level of SEN resourcing offered to schools.

Chapter 5: AN OVERVIEW OF HOW LOCAL FISCAL POLICY AFFECTED SEN ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CASE STUDY LEA

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the financial freedoms that schools had in the LEA to address their own SEN issues. Certainly the general school budget included a significant element of money via formula funding. However, as the months and years passed, the general schools budgets were squeezed and there was a tendency to under spend on low attaining pupils and special educational needs support in schools. Under these circumstances, the schools chased the only other obvious route for additional resources i.e. statements. In the case study LEA, assistants were employed to resource statements and so the employment of this para-professional group was scrutinised at the highest local political level during the course of the next few years.

As the number of referrals increased year on year, Central Government's and the local authority's position was to reduce spending on special educational needs and encourage schools to use their own budgets to meet the needs of their SEN pupils.

The reality of the political situation meant that the LEA had to make one of two choices, either to face the constant dilemma of delegating more and more of the budget to schools and losing control of SEN resourcing, or to accept their own role in deciding an acceptable level of statementing and funding this, with the risk of possible overspend.

The following illustrates how, over several years, the pattern of spending was decided locally at a political level and how the financially driven mechanisms of the system responded.

5.1 Methodology

In this chapter the emergent theme is the discovery of the effect of local fiscal policy on SEN organisational procedures at LEA level from April 1994 to April 1996. The case study approach has been adopted for data collection and interpretation. The intention is to describe the process whereby the study LEA used the national framework for resourcing the provision of educational support for children in the Borough. Data was sought from two sources. After the initial familiarisation with the nature and scope

of the area of the research being investigated, rigorous, systematic and sustained data collection of all relevant LEA documentation was necessary for a period of two years. This included policy documents, circular letters and letters to parents. Concurrently the evidence of this activity was constantly analysed and reviewed and the various directions of focus considered. Also, two interviewees who had been in post in this period, the Chief Education Officer and the Principal Educational Psychologist, discussed their own understandings of how LEA policy was ratified. These conversations developed the collection and analysis of data. They were taped and transcribed to achieve as complete a record as possible in its most manageable form. They were then processed by content analysis. The themes discussed will be triangulated with other interviews and data sources throughout the whole study, in order to validate the information proffered by both parties.

In addition, an unstructured style of interviewing was used with general questions covering the main research areas for Key Issues 1 and 2, to clarify and probe answers to the following specific questions,

- How and by whom were educational policies, including SEN policy, decided in the case study LEA?
- Was there a relationship between local fiscal policy and SEN policy and procedure?

These questions are followed up in the course of the interview with further impromptu questions from the researcher as the interviewee uncovers other issues via the initial prompts. This style of interviewing is generally accepted as appropriate when the interviewees concerned have highly personal and idiosyncratic knowledge of the topic under review. The relevant questions cannot all easily be determined ahead of the research because the very perceptions of the interviewees are often so personal and lead to other possibly unanticipated lines of thought.

5.2 How was education policy decided in the LEA? Results of the interviews with senior officers of the LEA. (Also see Appendix 2, 3 and 4)

During an interview in May 1994, the Chief Education Officer (CEO) discussed the precise way in which all education policy was decided within the Borough. He explained that it was the officers who pulled policy together in working groups, either in one service area or perhaps in a combination of different affected services, e.g.

Education and Social Services. The officers would make their recommendations to members, usually starting with the Chair of the Service Committee, who is their chairman. The policy was then officially in the Council's management and quality system. There would be checks and balances to ensure that policy devised in one service area did not conflict with another. For example,

“on the Children Act there was joint liaison between the Legal and Social Services and Education.”

Once the education policy had been formed, it took a 6 week cycle to be ratified. The first stage in the policy acceptance was the financial control point, so,

“At the beginning, it goes to budget review (a policy advisory committee), and then to the Labour Group Policy and then to the next available Education Committee.” (p 1)

In all, this allowed due consideration of new policy for everybody. He explained how SEN policy particularly might be checked for flaws,

"The preparatory work by the officers is deemed critical for clearing all the politically sensitive issues and estimating the resource commitments for the council, for example in terms of staffing. The LEA always tried to consult with head teachers and governing bodies in advance before the council had met and policy was agreed. The Principal Officer (PO) Special Needs is one of Education's Leaders. If some aspect of special needs policy was being considered, the PO might form together a multi-professional working group. This might include Health and psychologists, that is, professional groups who understand the area and are able to contribute meaningfully to make sure there was the fullest representation."(p 1)

At every stage, the policy leader was meant to be in control,

“The (policy) leader actually prepares the report in consultation with the C.E.O., and then it starts its way through the system. The leader is expected to follow the draft policy all the way along through the stages to check if it is financially and procedurally sound”(p2)

In general, these procedures seem to be not untypical of many LEA systems, although the description of the system of approval being given was clearly the “ideal” one rather than the “actual” one. In practice, matters were not quite so simple, at least to judge from the picture given by the Principal Educational Psychologist.

When asked the same questions, the Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) saw SFN policy as having developed from a different model and that the formal

approval of the policy by the politicians was actually not essential for the policy to operate, at least in the instance of the special needs policy supporting inclusion. He commented that the integration of SEN pupils into mainstream school, begun in 1983, carried on right through into the 90s. However, he felt this was sustained by a number of factors, which were largely due to the people in key posts who had no brief for special schools at all but did hold a genuine commitment to integration,

"In 1983 when the 1981 Education Act was implemented, quite serious notice was taken, not just of the letter but of the spirit of the 1981 Education Act, and a group of officers got together to look at how the LEA was going to respond to the Act. A decision was taken at that time that, what we now call inclusion, then referred to as integration, was going to be the guiding principle. That was decided at officer level and wasn't something that politicians were involved in. This included an idealistic SEN Adviser and an officer who was responsible for special education who possibly did not have an ideological commitment to integration, but who was a stickler for regulations and legislation. Because the 1981 Act had a commitment to integration these two individuals complemented each other very well. Also, the psychological service was instrumental in making recommendations were very reluctant to make recommendations for special education. In fact he had the impression that the decline in special school numbers had started long before the implementation of the 1983 Act."(p 4)

The PEP mentioned another factor he felt was relevant. Although many of the mainstream schools were reluctant to retain children with special needs,

"...many of them, particularly head teachers, were also aware that the quality of provision in the LEA's special schools, particularly MLD schools, was not very good and there was a genuine desire, certainly on the part of some schools, to actively retain an integration with special needs and I think that had a mushrooming effect." (p4)

He also added that when a third MLD school and two remedial centres were closed in the very early 80s, special provision was limited. He also recognised that in 1995 assistant hours were cut and opinions started to change as schools questioned how they could meet SEN pupils' needs without support. This was accompanied by other pressures, i.e. the National Curriculum, OFSTED and the publication of exam results. The LEA's SEN policy had never been through the Council's process of ratification and was not written down. It eventually evolved as "policy through custom and practice." This "informal" operation of the policy did not appear to have occurred because of the reluctance to involve the politicians or a doubt that they would support the policy, but a

sense that such formality was not really necessary. Later on, when further developments meant that the LEA needed a written policy, the policy was presented to the politicians and adopted easily by them,

“As we needed to re-organise our special schools, the issue of not having a written special needs policy became current. Work started in 1997 or 1996, but in 1998 the LEA actually published its special needs policy for the first time. By and large the essence of the policy was very much an inclusive policy, and went through the council with very little question, it was adopted by the elected members with essentially very little debate.”(p 3)

However, over time, the number of requests for, and granting of, statements of special educational needs grew to such a point that;

“The number of statements and therefore the amount of money being spent on supporting kids in mainstream schools was so large that it was taking an unacceptable amount of the total schools budget. This led to a diminution in the amount of support provided in the schools by the authority going through a cuts exercise”. (p 4)

However, in this instance the financial side of provision did not seem to be linked in practice to the implementation of the provision from the beginning, leading to the dislocation of “the cuts” as experienced by the school staff and the assistants. The “cuts exercise” is referred to elsewhere in this study (Chapters 6 and 10), during the interview with the LEA officer who reduced the number of teaching assistant hours in schools. This resulted in LEA and schools' staff regarding the only priority for the LEA was to cut budget costs. At that time, this was very clearly a very dominant concern, as the costs constituted an “unacceptable amount” in the total schools budget, even in the eyes of the Principal Educational Psychologist. It is interesting that the definition of “unacceptable amount” was not specified either by the educational professionals or by the financial controllers of the system – presumably some level of expenditure to deliver integration and inclusion would be acceptable – but the “unacceptability” of the expenditure would presumably be a judgement of senior managers based on some combination of absolute level of expenditure for the given school population, the apparent controllability of the expenditure, and the rate of growth of the expenditure. At the extremes, a high absolute spend, combined with a rapid rate of growth over a few years, and lack of any obvious mechanisms to control the expenditure would presumably result in a perception of an “unacceptable” expenditure, needing some kind of new mechanism to control it and to

consequently reduce it. However, political or administrative control over expenditure does not necessarily mean “reduction” of spending and of services – if properly set up at the time of the policy acceptance or at a review point, the “acceptable “ level of expenditure could have been worked out in educational terms to give a stable and effective service. This was made more complex by the assumption of the 1981 and subsequent Education Acts that most of the extra support for schools for educating children with special needs had to be based on assessments of individual children, rather than specific support to the school to help them educate all the children in school with special needs. This type of control was that aimed at by the “Children First” policy in another LEA in the region, introducing policies and activities such as those described by Dessent (1987).

The changes currently being advocated by the Labour Government since 1997 of increased “devolution” of finances to schools was expected by the Principal Psychologist, but as possibly bringing in a threat to the style of inclusive practice which he saw as having been supported by the LEA funding assistants to work with children with special needs in mainstream schools,

“I think we were able to recruit some very good people who did some very good work (in schools), and not only schools but schools and parents appreciated the work and were quite prepared to accept the practice. The situation in the future could well be different, as along with other authorities, this LEA will be moving in the not too distant future to a system where instead of the support assistants being managed centrally and allocated to schools and being LEA employees, the schools will be funded, given money basically, associated with particular statements and they will have the freedom to spend the money in a way that they choose. So whether they will spend that on support assistants, whether they will spend that on teachers, whether they will spend it on something else, remains to be seen.”(p 2)

5.2.1 Summary

Several important pieces of knowledge are introduced in the dialogue above. Both the interviewees were quite clear in their views, although there were some clear differences in the interviews. The Chief Officer had been in post for a much more limited period than the Principal Psychologist, and gave a general description of the policy formation process, rather than any specific details concerning the evolution of the special needs policy. Firstly, he believed that education policy was decided by principal officers after consultation with schools and ratified by politicians. Secondly,

this procedure might be checked financially but it was not mentioned that it was driven by fiscal policy at all at this level. Alternatively the Principal Psychologist has described a contradiction in what might be viewed as a "bottom up" process in the case of the special educational needs policymaking. He strongly supported the notion that this really began at a grass roots level in the 1980's and early 90's and was carried out by committed key officers and their teams, - such as the psychologists - and was never ratified by the Council. In addition, the whole edifice was seen as vulnerable to changes introduced from central government. If the attempt to set up the inclusive system had been accompanied by greater LEA led evaluation of the successes of the system, in a way which involved schools, and led them to confirm their belief in the effectiveness of inclusive practice, possibly devolution of financial control would have not held such a risk of the schools moving back to a less inclusive system.

In summary, these two interviewees did see the policy of inclusion being a policy controlled by the officers and politicians of the authority as both leading to better outcomes for children and conforming to the expectations of the national educational system as expressed in Acts of Parliament and DES guidelines.

In contrast, the following pages describe how the later "top down" process began to prevail during the latter part of this research in the mid 1990's as politicians' decisions imposed onerous cuts on SEN services.

5.3 Tracking local fiscal policies' effects on SEN procedures from April 1994 to March 1995.

The local authority budget for April 1994-1995 was increased because the standard spending assessment went up approximately 6 per cent. For the first time, the Department of Environment and the Department of Education accepted that Barnsley was not scoring as well as it should have done on the Standing Spending Assessment (SSA). Now the 'educational needs factors' had changed as follows:

- * The amount of money previously being given for minority ethnic pupils had been reduced and Barnsley benefited from this.
- * A morbidity factor in the authority was now being counted. Again Barnsley benefited as an estimated one third of all Barnsley families have a member with a long term debilitating illness, usually pneumoconiosis.

* New criteria had been created which also placed unemployment in the frame. As a result, the amount of monies available for education as a whole was to increase by about 3 per cent for 1995-1996.

When the council set its budget for 1994-1995, the councillors had made a decision to cap the number of statements between 1,000 and 1,020 by 1995. During the previous four to five years, there had been an enormous growth in the schools' requests for statementing. The amount of money required to meet this demand had increased fivefold to the 2 million pound mark.

Limiting the growth of statements meant that only another 150 statements could be produced during the year to reach the overall limit. Any further increase in the number of statements would need to come from the overall budgetary figure rolled forward into the fiscal year 1995-1996. It was specified that in future the number of overall statements would be maintained at this level. If schools required more statements, these would have to be funded by an overall cut in the schools' budget to keep to the current target of a 90 per cent delegation of funds from the General School Budget (80 per cent of which had to be pupil driven).

The target of 90 per cent represented an overall increase of 5 per cent being delegated via GSB.

But it was not only that the overall number of referrals for formal assessment was increasing and unmanageable, also the implementation of the new Code of Practice, which had been received in early June, forced the LEA to draw up basic revised procedures regarding statutory assessments, statements and annual reviews. One of the main aims of the LEA at this time was to coerce the schools themselves into taking more responsibility for implementing the Codes stages 1 to 3, within their own budgets.

The policy for the special needs elements of formula funding had been agreed in 1989 in consultation with head teachers and governing bodies and still remains in force today. Consultation between the LEA, head teachers and other working colleagues regarding the application of positive action funding, resulted in the recognition that there are additional educational needs within schools, e.g. those with a high socio-economic index. At that time, the right and best indicator was thought to be the incidence of free school meals in schools. In 1994 the Authority started to review this

policy and consider other indicators that some Authorities used, for example, pupil attainment.

In May 1994, the task of one of the working groups was to provide a policy to be sent out to governing bodies in January 1995. This would prepare the delegation of assistants and funding for statemented pupils. Half of the two million pounds in the special needs holding account had to be delegated between April 1995 to March 1996, as part of the pupil driven element of the budget. The LEA would still retain the statementing and assessment procedure, but felt it was best to delegate other special needs monies to schools so that they could engage staff as they wished. It was difficult at this time to have any idea of the fiscal commitment that the new 1993 Education Act would promote.

In the light of the requirements of the Code, e.g. school based assessment, schools were asked to consider the following priorities:

- * The clear identification and definition of the role of SEN co-ordinator, and internal procedures for identification and assessments.
- * The identification of a named governor (not mandatory, but advised) to take an overview of special educational needs.
- * The allocation of resources to special educational needs.
- * The arrangements for providing a differentiated curriculum for the majority of children with SEN.

In addition, the criteria for a statement were more precisely prescribed, to allow schools themselves to judge more clearly which pupils to put forward for a formal assessment.

The special needs co-ordinator and head teachers were to review their provision and, whilst the LEA admitted that the measures below were crude in isolation, in additionally simplistic terms, teaching staff were still asked to review their school's provision for the following pupils:

- Those with a measured IQ of 70.
- Those with measured reading ages against chronological age as follows:

Chronological Age	Reading Age
7 years	5 years 3 months
9 years	6 years 4 months
11 years	6 years 11 months
13 years	7 years 7 months

- Those functioning in number at the following ages relative to their chronological ages as follows:

Chronological Age	Number Age
7 years	5 years
9 years	6 years 5 months
11 years	7 years 11 months
13 years	8 years 5 months

It was suggested that the above levels of functioning represented attainment at the 3rd centile. In simplistic terms, pupils working at or above these levels would be within the range that should be managed within the normal arrangement of a school, perhaps with some additional support service input.

By July 1994, schools' claims on the fiscal purse for SEN services had climaxed and the LEA issued a circular to the Head teachers of all schools containing information clarifying the trend in the processing of formal assessment and statements within the Authority. The figures were,

"taken from the statutory January return for each year, with the additional half-year figures for 1994 to illustrate the continuing trend". (Circular letter 109/93/94)

Forty-five new statements had been issued in 1990, 105 in 1994. If these figures are described as a percentage of the school population, in 1990, 1.3 per cent of pupils had a statement. By 1994, the number had increased to 2.7 per cent and was still rising.

TABLE 1: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PROVISION IN THE LEA BETWEEN JANUARY 1990 AND JANUARY 1994

	YEAR	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
a) Initiation of Formal Assessments		132	142	213	236	314
b) Production of new Statements		45	95	122	173	215
c) Total Statements Produced		97	181	228	268	371
d) Children with Statements		400	443	520	631	813
e) Children as % of relevant population		1.3	1.4	1.5	1.9	2.4

(Circular letter 109/93/94)

This rate of growth was draining not only SEN resources, but was also beginning to eat into other areas of the education budget. It also meant that a significantly higher proportion of pupils were being statemented than was ever envisaged by the Warnock Report and subsequent 1993 Education Act. The schools quickly found that more statements meant more resources. More resources meant extra pairs of hands to help out in busy classrooms, often on a full time basis. It was not unusual to have more than one assistant in the classroom if there was more than one statemented pupil in the group.

5.3.1 Summary of the changes in resources and statements 1990-1994.

Although the budget for 1994 had increased due to a change in the SSA, a decision had been made to cap the number of statements in order to stem the ever-increasing flow of money into the SEN budget. At the same time, the LEA tried to write criteria to aid the statementing process, set at the maximum limit of cognitive abilities or academic attainment to be met before a formal assessment of a pupil's special education needs would be initiated. The criteria were written to help schools judge the severity of learning difficulties of pupils. It was hoped that further clarity would support their SEN procedures for deciding whether a pupil would be eligible for a statement. This system also supported the Code of Practice (1994) National Government advice about how to manage the tensions between families, school and an LEA. This period in the LEA's history occurs at a time when there was disagreement between two senior serving officers about how or even whether formal political

approval for policies was gained. Certainly, there were no formal policy documents for any area of special educational needs. Serving officers were seeking further clarification, in order to set the oncoming tide of requests for formal assessment against some semblance of criteria that the LEA might follow and schools understand. The following chapter illustrates how top down mechanisms decided the level of resources being offered to schools for their statemented pupils during the same period.

5.4 April 1995 to March 1996

In March, 1995 the council set a budget of £153.459 million for 1995/1996. This figure was £3.094 million above the provisional cap announced by the Government and fractionally over 2 per cent higher than the budget for the previous year.

The Authority's expenditure for 1995/96 would be capped at £150.37 million if new savings were not found.

Education and Leisure were told to shed £0.5 million from the special needs budget, as well as ending the school library service and careers advice and guidance to adults. In the Department of Education and Leisure, 37 posts were at risk, although 30 people were interested in voluntary severance. Job vacancies were now strictly controlled. Only absolutely essential posts were being filled. Wherever possible, opportunities were taken to restructure sections and secure essential posts for 'at risk' employees. (MEC Matters, issue No. 39, April 1995).

In September 1995, due to the severe financial constraints imposed by capping, further expenditure was drastically stopped and a moratorium on expenditure was announced. In addition to the Authority-wide financial difficulties, it was clear that the projected expenditure on SEN support for mainstream still remained far in excess of its budget.

In order to bring this situation under control, no additional assistant time was added to the hours in schools as at 21st September 1995. The freeze also included any vacancies in the schools' allocation of hours. Absences caused by sickness had to be covered by other assistants within the school. Where necessary, a redeployment of permanent assistants continued.

Expertise to rationalise future SEN strategic planning was sought outside the authority and in the summer, a management consultant's exercise was conducted by Windsor and Company. By this time it was clear that there was to be another enormous round of cuts in the next financial year.

The report's recommendations suggested that in the SEN context, the LEA is:

"Enabler, regulator, advocate and purchaser. Correspondingly, schools are providers for children with special needs, to whom the LEA owes a statutory duty. At present, the LEA supplements the school's provider role with defined (in house) resources. Schools have as yet to recognise these new but crucial

(relational) distinctions; this can (and does) lead to unrealistic expectations".
(Windsor and Co. page 2)

The report also acknowledged that, as measured by standard indices, each of the SEN support services (possibly with exceptions in the case of assistants) operated with similar levels of utmost efficiency, cost effectiveness and user specification. There appeared little or no hope for achieving efficiency savings and management action was considered essential. A 'more dynamic approach' to the management of SEN provision was suggested to achieve the Authority's set target reduction of £ 0.5 million.

It was suggested that changes should be made to the internal structure of the LEA. This would be done by identifying and outlining the structural functions.

The *enabler core* was seen as the 'key strategic managerial and administrative element of LEA SEN provision'. It would administer and co-ordinate the assessment process between parents, schools and other multi-agency involvement.

The *formal assessment and evaluation service unit (FAES)* was seen as a multi-professional service unit, led and line managed by the principal educational psychologist.

It was considered that the arrangements for the *provider unit* were more 'transient'. This unit retained (assistants) services centrally. The report asked the LEA to appraise carefully the various options for these services.

Option 1

If the assistants were to remain centrally employed, there would be no disruption to the service and risk and uncertainty might be avoided. However, the Report considered that the SEN budget would continue to absorb money and that any internal changes to the *enabler core* and the *FAES* could not surmount the current fiscal difficulties on their own. It was also suggested that this option would inhibit the LEA from adopting more 'up to date and effective approaches'.

Option 2

Alternatively, the LEA could delegate a substantial amount of funding for statements to schools. The schools would then have the opportunity to:

- * buy back from the service units, or
- * make alternative provision for themselves.

The report argues that this would allow 'greater flexibility over how statements were met' as well as enabling 'services to be guided more precisely by demand rather than by what the Authority assumes demand is'. The disadvantages might result in a reduction of the assistant numbers. There was also concern that schools might fail to realise the requirements set out in statements, thus requiring the Authority to take a more active monitoring role. It was clear that the report felt that this was the best option available.

Option 3

Finally it was suggested that the total funding for statements could be delegated to schools. They would then have the funding and the responsibility for resourcing statements, including employing the current assistant workforce. It was concluded that this option would involve a short-term increase in the cost of SEN provision and an increase in monitoring costs. It was not the preferred option.

There were clear practical implications for the LEA if they were to consider either of the first two options. Because the Authority has a legal duty to provide for statements and because there would be some risk that the schools themselves might not comply, the Authority would need to monitor both, thus mitigating risk and enabling intervention where necessary. The monitoring role would also eschew value for money. The Authority was asked to consider appointing two posts dedicated to the monitoring function and suggested that the appointees were 'capable of formulating judgements which are both educationally and financially sound'. The preferred structure option for these two posts was under the management of the *enabler core*. The funding of these posts was thought to be necessary in statements that could be funded partly by shifting or delegating any assistant resources. The final recommendations with regard to the *enabler core* were

- "* during the period September 1995 to August 1996, investigate and calculate the savings which would arise were the Authority to attend and contribute to statutory reviews;
- to calculate the level of resources and associated cost (precisely) to enable this capacity;
- to calculate the next cost/saving of attendance versus non-attendance;
- to prepare a report setting out both clearly evidenced findings and clear recommendations and proposals. This is to be a mandatory target deliverable in 1995 - 1996." (op cit. p10)

In effect, the worsening financial situation took over and the Council did not have an opportunity to consider the recommendations-as described in the next section.

5.4.1 Summary

The local authority needed to find massive savings this year. These cut deep into the SEN budget and included a moratorium on assistant vacancies. External advice was bought in to rationalise future SEN strategic planning.

5.5 April 1996 to March 1997

In March 1996, the forecast council tax in Barnsley increased by 5.5 per cent following the members' decision to approve a budget of £162.03 million for 1996/97. The 5.5 per cent increase "is in line with average council tax increases across the country outside London." (MET matters issue ref No.45, 1996).

To meet this target, another £3.8 million worth of services had to be cut. Planning for this had begun the previous summer. Over a series of intensive meetings, members and senior officers examined every aspect of the council's work and asked fundamental questions, 'What do we do? Why do we do it and how?' The answers were used to establish priorities and develop a strategic framework for future budgets.

The final budget papers set out four categories of potential savings, ranging from 'A', the relatively acceptable to 'D', those which were highly contentious with a major impact on the service. The majority of A, B and C savings were made. One of the main priorities had been to protect education as much as possible and particularly the schools' own budgets. For the first time in a number of years the council had been able to fund the full teachers pay award of 2.7 per cent and a further 1 per cent in December - a total of £1.23 million. The council also managed to cover the cost of the extra 290 pupils expected to enter schools over the year. It was expected that governing bodies would want to use this spending on extra resources in the classrooms and it was hoped that a further deterioration in the teacher/pupil ratios could be avoided. (MET Matters issue ref.No.45, March 1996).

5.5.1 Summary

Despite further swingeing cuts this year, the local authority managed to protect the education budget from a large reduction in income.

5.6 Chapter Summary

Overview of local fiscal policy and SEN reorganisation in Barnsley (April 1994 to April 1997)

April 94 - Barnsley Standard Spending Assessment March 95 (SSA) increased due to a change in the "educational needs factors".

The Council decide to set the maximum number of statements of special educational needs to be written this year at between 1,000 and 1,020.

July 94 - The introduction of the Code of Practice and the subsequent increased number of referrals from the LEA to draw up procedures to coerce schools into adopting Stage 1-3 of school based assessment and realistically judging which pupils might be eligible to be put forward for a formal assessment.

April 95 - The Council sets a budget for April March 95 to March 96 of £3.094 million above the provisional cap announced by the Government. The special needs education budget is to find savings of £500,000.

July 95- A management consultant's exercise is carried out by Windsor and Company. The following changes were suggested with regard to the internal structure of the LEA. The LEA should set up:

- * an 'enabler core' - the "key strategic managerial and administrative element of LEA SEN provision".
- * a 'formal assessment and evaluation service unit' (FAES) as a multi professional service unit lead and line managed by the PEP.
- * a "provider unit", e.g. assistant services.

July-August - assistant hours are reduced by 1,400 hours in secondary and 250 hours in primary schools.

September - an LEA moratorium on spending is announced.

- * no further assistant vacancies to be filled.
- * assistants absences caused by sickness to be covered by existing assistants.
- * where necessary permanent assistants to be redeployed.

October 95- The LEA announces that at the current level of expenditure, the assistants' budget would be £350,000 overspent by the end of the year. A target of 22 per cent reduction is made involving a further education of 2,150 assistant hours in total by December 1st (1,800 primary, 350 hours secondary schools).

April 96 - A further £3.8 million worth of services to be cut to secure the budget for this following year.

The above picture details the financial background and impetus to changing decision making for sen service delivery within the authority. Yet how far did this budgetary definition of provision reach into the schools, and was any genuine attempt made to discover the children's needs and how they might be best met?

The following chapter reveals that the budget remained the single major concern of the lea and the schools when continued implementation of the SEN services was considered.

Chapter 6: AN OVERVIEW OF THE EFFECTS OF LOCAL REORGANISATION FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF ASSISTANTS IN SCHOOLS: THE LEA'S PERSPECTIVE.

6.0 Introduction

So far this sub study has sought to identify possible relationships between the systems of educational policy making, including SEN policy and procedure, and fiscal policy, in the case study LEA. Chapter 6 recognises that as the number of statements issued rose, the number of assistants supporting pupils in schools rapidly grew. The LEA realised that the costs of SEN funding would be ever spiralling. The only way to cut the budget was to reduce the only provision available, i.e. assistant hours given to individual schools. The period from July 1994 to November 1995 is described here as a time of great change as the LEA took control of the SEN spend.

6.1 Methodology

The emergent theme of the last chapter was to discover how the effect of local fiscal policy on SEN organisational procedure developed. The narrative now continues to explore Key Issues 1 and 2 and how these procedural developments subsequently determined the LEA's employment of assistants in schools by asking,

- How was the SEN budget to schools controlled?
- How was this control recognised by serving officers of the LEA and the schools themselves?

The impact of the authority's fiscal policy on the deployment of assistants to support statemented pupils in mainstream schools is precisely described in chronological order, using the Circular letters addressed to schools and parents and circulated to LEA officers

However as the dominant themes in the majority of the transcript are so densely packed with comments regarding the need to control and reduce resources given to schools that the very personal reflection of one of the two serving LEA officers who effected the cuts in assistant hours is purposefully left unabridged. In part, this is to allow the reader to experience the officer's complete understanding of the schools' and pupils' needs and the LEAs necessity to cut the budget.

These two contemporary sources are used to provide an objective and alternative affective description of the events as they unfold.

6.2 Results

6.2.1 How the LEA took control of the SEN budget

July 1994

As already discussed, in line with the Code of Practice and in parallel with schools' own considerations of the criteria for SEN pupils on stages of school based assessment, the wider aspects of the Authority's SEN policies and procedures were reviewed. Subsequently the serving officers of the LEA clarified the following points with regard to the deployment of assistants.

1. CSAs were deployed centrally but managed on a day to day basis by the head teacher of the schools.
2. Although the appointment of a CSA was generally linked to the needs of a particular child, it was not intended that they should necessarily work solely and exclusively with the pupil. Rather they should be regarded as a resource to enable the school to provide for the pupil's needs as specified in a statement. For example, a CSA might allow a class teacher to spend time with the statemented pupil, or the pupil's needs might be best met in small groups, facilitated by the CSA. However, it was clearly unacceptable to divert the CSA resource into totally unrelated areas of work -

"the key issue is the effectiveness in meeting needs, not the detail of how resources are used". (Circular letter 109/93/94)

April 1995

The LEA was really feeling the implications of the present budgetary situation. This month, the schools were notified that short term assistant absence should be managed within schools resources and that in any other case authorisation for the employment of supply cover would be required if claims for payment of wages were to be validated.

The then Director of Education had explained the budget proposals for 1995/96 in a general meeting held on Thursday, 24th March and stated that the Special Needs Funds were to be held at the 1994/95 level. He

"..would have wished to have added some more but we need to work with Head teachers and Governing Bodies to see how we are dealing with special needs overall...The problem is that we have a total amount of money for the Education Service which cannot be exceeded, we chose to put that money into the school budgets and we cannot put money into school budgets and into special needs as well". (Circular letter 120/94/95)

It was also explained that about 120 to 150 children were waiting for statements at that moment and that funds would be recycled to those when other pupils who had statements of special educational needs either reached sixteen or left the Borough. It was pointed out to the Head teachers that if they wanted money in special needs it would have to be taken from somewhere else.

August 1995

The LEA had begun to act on the Windsor management report's recommendations and the Council's need to shed half a million pounds from the special needs budget to prevent further capping on the LEA.

The central special education needs staff announced that they would be reviewing the number of hours allocated to statements from September 1995. As a result, drastic changes were announced.

- * "All CSAs currently working on a supply (claim) basis terminated on 21st July, 1995.
- * All CSAs employed on temporary contracts terminating on 21st July 1995 did not have their contracts renewed but were automatically included on the supply list.
- * Arrangements were made to transfer permanent employees to schools where vacancies occurred from schools that needed to lose the hours. It was hoped that these transfers could be managed in the local area.
- * If, at the end of the process of having transferred employees into vacant posts, schools still had an outstanding number of hours to fill, that number of hours would be confirmed and arrangements made to fill them on a supply basis only until further notice.
- * The temporary additional hours currently worked by a number of permanent CSAs also ceased at the end of the summer term and should

those hours still be required, they were added to those to be worked on a supply basis". (From Circular letter 153/94/95)

October 1995

A further announcement in October stated that the total number of assistant hours available in schools was to be further reduced in response to the need to bring spending more into line with the money available. This was viewed as a response to the severe difficulties resulting from the Government's policies for funding education and schools. Schools were told that an assessment was to be made in each school of the number of hours of support time required to meet the needs described in statements.

"This may result in changes to the CSAs working with groups of pupils. It is important to understand that in the vast majority of cases individual CSAs have not been attached to individual pupils. The total amount of CSA time available in the school is an additional resource for the school to use to support the provision for pupils with statements". (Primary Circular Letter 12/95/06)

The Education Programme Area Director outlined to schools the following consequences if funding was not reduced:

- * "the historic trends of SEN expenditure would continue;
- * year-on-year SEN expenditure would consume a greater share of total LEA spend;
- * the extra spend could only be abated against the ASB (schools' budgets) and discretionary exceptions to the PSB (services to schools);
- * this would lead to a severe reduction in school budgets;
- * this position would directly and indirectly lead to increased demands for statements;
- * uncontrolled SEN spending might fuel the need (self-fulfillingly) for additional (future) spending." (op cit)

In October all the Chairs of Governors were sent a letter, "Review of Curriculum Support Assistant Provision". This made them aware that the current level of expenditure on the CSA budget would be £350,000 overspent by the end of the year without appropriate action and that the target of 22 per cent reduction meant that no more than £200,000 would be overspent. The budgetary situation was outlined as follows:

TABLE 2: CURRENT SITUATION ON CSA BUDGET (1995/96)

	£
Expenditure to 31 August	951,500
7/12 of permanent to 31.3.95.	984,000
26 weeks of permanent to 31.3.95	345,000
2% sickness	<u>20,000</u>
	2300,500

Budget: £2,065,000

Overspend: £236,000

Projecting 1996/97

	£	
Permanent CSA	1,724,000	(including pay award and increments)
Supply	528,000	
2% sickness	34,500	
	<u>2,286,500</u>	

Shortfall of £221,500

(Note: Superannuation for part time workers will push this up)

The letter also confirmed that during the summer nearly 1,400 hours had been reduced from secondary schools and 250 hours from primary schools. Now a further target of a total of 2,100 assistant hours was to be reduced. This meant 1,800 hours from primary and about 250 from the secondary schools. The new target was to be achieved by 1st December 1995 and schools were to be informed by the 10th November. This meant that the actual 9,482.5 hours that were current were to be reduced in target to 7,382.5.

TABLE 3: CURRICULUM SUPPORT ASSISTANTS: SUMMARY OF ACTION AND CURRENT POSITION NOVEMBER 1995

	Secondary (%)	Primary (%)
Hours in Statements	4722.5 (42)	6607 (58)
Actual hours as at 1.12.95.	2857.5 (41)	4166 (59)
Target Hours	3170 (43)	4210 (57)
Reduction	1865 (39)	2441 (37)
Variance	312.5	44.0

Unallocated (New statements; re-deployment difficulties) 356.5 hours

The following issues underpinned the rationale for the cut back in the CSA Service:

- * the SEN budget was cash limited but the demand for these services was recognised to be potentially limitless;
- * 3.15% of the school population had statements. This was 1.15% higher than the national target and higher than the national average;
- * the socio-economic context of the LEA was a material contributory factor to the demands of the budget and the number of statements.

However, the most important explanation seemed to be historical. Demands for the statements had been seen as a route to obtaining additional funding above the school's LMS formula shares. Also schools in the LEA had not adapted to the specific changes in their roles and responsibilities under the 1993 Education Act.

There was also recognition that the SEN budget in particular had not been controlled and managed as it might have been. Thus it was quite clearly stated to schools that

"In the SEN context the LEA is: enabler, regulator, advocator and purchaser. Correspondingly, schools are providers for children with special needs, to whom the LEA owes a statutory duty. At present, the LEA supplements the schools provider role with defined (in house) resources. These new but crucial (relational) distinctions have not been recognised. This can (and does) lead to unrealistic expectations. In common with many other LEAs nationally this has led to an SEN budget that is inexorably and intrinsically out- of-control, for example: expectations (unrealistic) are leading to year on year spending accretion. Left unresolved, this position would lead year by year to eroding the Aggregated Schools Budget and the Discretionary elements of the PSB. (This would lead inevitably and unavoidably to the need for substantial redundancies in schools and the LEA itself)".(Primary Circular letter 12/95/96)

The immediate action therefore was to provide a school by school analysis and identify those pupils who had physical dependence on adults for which there would be little or no flexibility in their provision. There was also a need to identify the needs expressed in the other statements so that the minimum support required overall could be assessed.

In the medium term, action was required to establish clearer criteria to decide whether formal assessment was needed for individual pupils as well as establishing more effective criteria for the levels of need when a statement was required. It was also

decided to devolve/delegate the special needs funds for all but those with the greatest levels of need. Additionally the LEA had decided to identify schools where provision for particular types of needs could be developed. (Information source Primary Circular letter 12/95/96).

November 1995

By now although the target hours 3,170 in secondary, 4,210 in primary and special had remained the same, in order to provide some resource for new statements or difficulties arising from the deployment of assistants, provision for 356.5 hours of further savings had been made. The net effect of these factors had been an increase in the necessary reductions. The actual savings made in primary and special were 2,441 (plus 334), and that in secondary was 1,865 (plus 255.5).

The Chief Advisory and Schools Services Officer apologised that the actual savings turned out to be larger than originally planned and regarding the additional difficulties that this caused, he commented that,

"The proportion of actual hours in each sector was very close to the proportion of hours in statements".

A letter to parents in the middle of the month outlined the reduction in the total amount of support available and explained that

"It was no longer possible to stop Central Government cuts affecting services. The Council was able this year to put just under one million pounds extra into schools own budgets, but this amount still did not cover all the money needed for the extra pupils in schools or pay awards.

Although special needs support has been reduced, there will continue to be enough to meet the needs of pupils. The way the support is provided may, however, change. In order to make the best use of the support available, there may be changes to the way it is used. More use will be made, for example, of groups of pupils working together on appropriate work.

In most schools there will be some change in the Curriculum Support Assistants employed. This will be kept to the minimum and any new to a school will be made aware of pupils' special needs and get to know them quickly".(Circular letter 45/95/96)

6.2.2 Summary

The above indicates the usual manner in which schools received information regarding levels of SEN resourcing, i.e. assistant time for statemented pupils. However, contacts were not only by letter distributed via the school bag. The envisaged reduction in assistant hours late in the academic year 1994 to 1995 and then again in September to December 1995 was brought about by a personal approach from two LEA officers to schools. The following is based on the personal account of one of these officers at the time.

6.3 The process of reducing assistant hours in schools: unstructured interview of one of the two serving officers effecting the cuts. (Appendix 5 and 6)

Two officers, in the late Spring of 1995, were asked to save £500,000 from the special needs budget by cutting assistant hours. They began by looking at every single statement over a period of two to three weeks. This meant reading the reports and reading the statement itself. They then tried to identify which children could possibly share support. In order to do this they were given some guidance. They were to classify the children with learning difficulties into two groups. Group 'A' were children with severe learning difficulties, physical difficulties and sensory impairment who were not considered able to share support at all. All the other children were poured into group 'B'. The officers then looked at group 'B' children, again sifting out the ones they thought could share assistant support. Recommendations were made according to which children it was felt could share assistant time with others and how much time they could share. There seemed no reference to any principles of inclusion, or indeed any educational principles at all.

At first this was done as a paper exercise and the schools were not consulted. When the officers had worked out approximately the number of hours they were going to retain in each school, they contacted every school in the Authority to ask two questions. One of the special needs officers elaborated,

"Could they come up with any savings themselves? – Then, having given them our financial scenario, we would say, "Look is this a reasonable solution to it?" Following that, after we had spoken to every school and they had either argued that we hadn't given them enough hours or that the wrong children were sharing, we came to some compromise and we passed all the information we

had gathered on to staffing who were then going to implement this reduction in CSA time. Unfortunately, by the time staffing started to contact schools with information about the reduced CSA hours, the schools had had time to rethink what they had said in the first place and so the two officers became involved again".

One particular officer made the decision that a lot of savings could be made when children transferred from primary to the secondary sector. He commented,

"So I contacted each secondary school in alphabetical order one day and felt that I had got the 'phone stuck to the side of my head. It was an horrendous day. I had to say to them for example, school A might have got 150 hours and they were expecting the 150 hours to transfer up with the children who were coming in September and I said, 'Look, of that 150 hours, how much could you lose?' So through negotiation with the school, the school said, 'Perhaps we could definitely do with 90 hours of that 150.' So I agreed and in effect we saved 60 hours of support in the school - this is the equivalent of three CSAs on 20 hours.

Then I asked them to identify savings in years 8, 9, 10 and 11. We looked at every statemented pupil in the school and negotiated more savings. What I was hoping would be the case in effect, without much prompting, did tend to happen. I saved the same number of hours from these years as I saved from CSA hours on pupil transfer. This meant that in effect there were a number of children moving up from primary to secondary school and they were being absorbed into the school's current level of support, which might well have been considered enormous anyway. This information was then passed to staffing and the end result was that in the 14 secondary schools where they had been expecting something more than between 1,200 to 1,300 hours of support, we made over 1,000 hours of savings.

This was OK but it was not enough. The next decision that was made was that all temporary CSA contracts were to terminate from July 21st this year. It was anticipated that where there were gaps in schools, people on permanent contracts at schools that had hours to lose, would be moved in to fill the gap. When staffing had made this decision and the letter was sent out explaining to schools what would happen, this caused some concern because some of the best CSAs were on temporary contracts. They would rather have lost someone on a permanent contract who was not quite as effective. The office, of course, has to follow the employment laws, rules and regulations and they have to look at people on temporary contracts first, and so schools felt that they were going to lose out. To help get over the problem, all temporary staff were immediately put on to the supply lists and if there were any gaps after staffing had done all the moving about, then the schools were allowed to go back to the supply lists and employ somebody that they felt was very good on a day to day basis until they had a job to advertise on a permanent contract.

We needed to save £500,000 and we had now cut primary schools to the bone. In the past we might have left CSAs in primary schools if some

statemented children were moving out and on to secondary schools because there was another statemented child on the way. To save time, we allowed the CSAs to stay. We cannot do that any longer. When children leave the primary schools, then the CSAs have been notified that they must leave. This has caused a lot of upset.

Unfortunately we have already started to get a backlash from secondary schools. In the past they have been quite willing to accept the Authority's policy on integration and take in children with learning difficulties, providing they had support. Now when I am talking in schools about individual pupils, the school managers are starting to change their mind and not wanting to support the policy perhaps as much as they did in the past. Some schools have actually said that the Authority cannot expect them to take children with certain sorts of difficulties, namely the ones with severe learning difficulties. By that I mean those who would be at the extreme end of the moderate zone, for example, Downs syndrome, children with cerebral palsy and children with behavioural problems as well.

Schools have said to me on a number of occasions that the LEA is going to have to stop and look at setting up some sort of provision for these children. Whether it would be special school or unit provision or some other funding targeted to particular schools is not the issue. They are making it quite clear that they are not happy with what is happening, so the issue of a reduction in CSA hours is having a wider effect on the schools' attitude towards special needs and this is something the Authority is going to have to get to grips with now and not when it is forced upon them, perhaps in 12 to 18 months.

Two particular groups are making a lot of 'phone calls to us at the moment. There is a lot of concern from the CSAs themselves, wanting to know what is going to happen to them. All that we can tell them at the minute is that someone will be contacting them to give them advice re their move on to another school.

We are also getting a lot of calls and letters from parents who are just as affected by what is happening. So the whole CSA exercise has generated a lot more work as a knock-on effect and it prevents us from getting on with other things that we want to do. However, we understand that it is important that we give satisfactory answers both to the CSAs and parents who ring in. We know we have to spend some time explaining the situation and giving them information to try and put their minds at ease. Otherwise we simply say that everything will be sorted out for September, but we are not sure quite how it is going to be done. Even answering these 'phone calls can be difficult because we do not have the information at hand to explain to the public what in fact staffing have done with regard to individual CSAs and consequently the provision for individual statemented pupils.

I have sympathy with some of the primary school who have suddenly realised that although they have been used to having a number of CSAs, they may now be cut down to one. This will be a difficult situation for them to cope with despite the fact that the support has always been supplied to cater for statemented pupils' needs. Their argument, of course, is that they have a number of other children who are not on statements who used to benefit from

that support. So if a statemented pupil was in any particular class with maybe two, three four or even five other children who had similar difficulties but had not got a statement, then all the group would benefit from having a CSA in the classroom. Now the CSA has gone, the schools are having to cope without the indirect support they have relied on in the past.

Writing new statements has also become really difficult. Of course we have some children who have a lot of problems and who may need quite a substantial level of support during the school week. We are having to look very carefully at the level of support which already exists in the schools and make children fit into those levels. Schools are now coming back to us and saying that the individual children will have 'access' to the 'existing level of support'. They feel that they are being faced with an impossible task.

What we have to try and do when writing new statements is to ask children of the same age to share support. We are not making the child in the reception class or bottom infant class share with someone in the top junior class. However, in some cases I know that this is actually happening. Depending on the type of problems that the children present, I suppose I'm saying that we now tell the heads, "We give you the CSAs and you deploy them as you see fit. So you decide how much support the people in the bottom infant or the top junior class require. You have, say, 25 hours to be shared between them and you work it out". Again they would counter this argument by saying that three children with learning difficulties often need support at the same time, usually in the morning when they are at their most alert. If CSAs are shared, this can't always be managed.

The schools are also cross that we are in effect delegating the responsibility of meeting pupils' needs to them. I really think we have always done this, but the schools are now starting to use this argument as the reason why the LEA should delegate the CSA money. In other words, if you are delegating the responsibility to us, why don't you give us the money as well. I feel that is a strong argument, which is going to be put by heads in Barnsley to the LEA within the next 12 months.

We did try to look at the different methods by which we could reduce the CSA time. One of these was to try and top slice every child's hours in proportion to the total number of individual hours they each received. To be honest, there was no really satisfactory method to do this and so we decided to stick to the criterion we were given and which was set up by people who really don't have anything to do with special needs. We feel that the group criterion was targeted because people were asking for the wrong information. They were only wanting to know which children definitely needed support - they could only look at this from a financial viewpoint".

6.3.1 Summary of interview analysis

An ex deputy head teacher, this officer clearly understood the difficulties that both primary and secondary schools were experiencing as assistant hours were reduced in what appears to be a quite arbitrary and purely fiscal manner. There is also evidence

of the schools offering a verbal backlash against accepting pupils with moderate to severe learning difficulties without sufficient LEA resourcing.

The results of this interview evidences that the LEA's response to budgetary crisis was both to develop a more sophisticated system of SEN allocation via stiffer statementing criteria and to invite external consultants to advise on a revision and streamlining of its SEN procedure. Interestingly when even this failed to check the spiralling decline and in the face of swingeing central government cuts, the Council took unilateral executive action. It demanded an immediate cut in SEN teaching assistant costs but left the implementation of that decision to its officers. The manner in which assistant hours were eventually delegated by the study LEA to its schools became totally arbitrary - a personal matter of negotiation between one LEA officer and each school's SENCO. Really the question was, "How few hours do you need to cope?" How the resources might meet the needs of individual children was not discussed. The interview recorded with the LEA officer clearly outlines both his and the schools' frustration with the lack of parity and the LEAs budget cutting at any cost.

6.4 Chapter Summary

The LEA realised that the costs of SEN funding were out of control. A political decision was made, top down, to cut the SEN budget. The only effective way to reduce spending and avoid redundancies was to reduce the only provision available, i.e. assistant hours given to statemented pupils in individual schools. This chapter described the internal processes that took place in the period from July 1994 to November as the LEA took control of the SEN spend.

Chapter 7: DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES 1 AND 2

7.0 Introduction

The following chapter draws together the separate strands of SEN policy and practice at local level in the case study LEA and analyses the influences of national initiatives. The key issues structure the discussion.

7.1 Key Issues 1 and 2

Key Issue 1

To describe and evaluate how legislation and national initiatives influenced SEN policy, administration and financial management in the case study LEA.

Key Issue 2

To describe and evaluate the impact of the case study LEA's SEN policies on the level of SEN resourcing offered to schools.

7.2 Discussion

Central government's reform in the early 1990s radically altered SEN protocol in schools whilst still adhering to the inclusion principles of the Warnock Report and the 1981 Education Act. Head teachers and governors were to ask teachers to operate a system that would identify and meet the needs of SEN pupils in their classrooms.

The dilemma for all the parties involved, parents, pupils, teachers and the LEAs alike, was that implementation was to be within "available funding", or to be "cost neutral". Perhaps then it is not so surprising that LEAs across the length and breadth of the land sought to redress the balance of funding SEN pupils and used the Code of Practice to establish that schools had some of their own SEN provision in place. This process was inevitably burdensome for schoolteachers and SENCOs in particular. It required enormous amounts of time and energy to devise IEPs and complete the paperwork at each stage of school based assessment.

The Audit Commission (1994) had reported

"the lack of clarity about what constitutes SEN and about the respective responsibilities of the school and LEA although most LEAs had either issued new SEN policies or had revised existing policies in the last 18 months. In general policies:

- * were lengthy and not well focussed;
- * contained little or no reference to aims and objectives;
- * were not supported by the use of performance indicators." (p 26)

Schools found their voice nationally via the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT). Whilst recognising the LEA burden, the NAHT suggested that mainstream education was inappropriate for some individuals. Interestingly, this argument was not simply based on educational grounds, i.e. that such individuals needed a highly specialised curriculum, but was also framed,

"as a consequence of:

- * the avoidance of prejudicing the education of the peer group;
- * the efficient use of limited resources." (NAHT 1997 p1)

Policing the system effectively also absorbed LEA officers' time. But the crucial point is that whilst there was now some recognition that the process did allow a proper consideration of each SEN pupils learning difficulties, the resourcing for SEN matters was a political decision and varied according to each LEA's and school's individual circumstances.

There is documented evidence that different LEAs give disproportionate amounts of money into school budgets for special educational needs according to a variety of idiosyncratic measures, for example, school meals.

The LEA's squeeze on resources was matched by other public demands for enhanced SATs and GCSE examination results from schools. Again the evidence pointed to the fact that SEN teachers were being drawn into mainstream timetabling, the implication being that pupils were relying on the support of assistants more than ever before. Hence the extreme consternation expressed to the LEA officer by SENCOs as their assistants hours were cut.

In the case study, the two parties, the LEA and the schools, were not able to resolve their differences. The LEA became a voice at the end of the telephone cutting resources and the schools were left to manage SEN pupils' curricular support with the hours that remained. Resourcing was seen as the key to a successful curriculum for all and yet how the SEN legislation was to be financed was to be an issue constantly and consistently ducked by Central government. This left the whole infrastructure no

alternative other than the evolution of a quagmire of provision. It was up to LEAs and the individual schools largely to determine not only how the SEN procedure would operate at local level, but also how the needs of pupils and their families were to be met on a week by week, day to day and hour on hour basis. In the LEA examined, assistants were really the only support offered to statemented pupils. Any cuts would mean a significant reduction in the provision.

The chapters in this sub study have all repeatedly confirmed that the debate on assistant provision as the main mechanism of inclusion in the LEA was exclusively carried out in budgetary terms. Oddly the question of whether individual pupils needs could be met by using other service provision, e.g. information technology or perhaps a learning support teacher was never considered.

And yet, as chapter 12, sub study III, will reveal, SEN provision was made up, by and large, by a group of women who had no training and little experience of the educational needs of pupils with learning difficulties.

The final sub study IV will evaluate the evidence to find out whether training assistants to work more effectively with SEN pupils enhances their academic progress. Should untrained assistants be allowed to work with SEN pupils who have the most educational difficulties?

Meanwhile, sub study II begins. The focus of the report now shifts, to describe and evaluate the historical employment practices of LEA's towards assistants in the United Kingdom. Particular emphasis is placed on the employment of assistants in the case study LEA, on their role and their management in the classroom by schools. Additionally, the assistants' managers in the intervention schools of the study are asked to comment on the training received or, in the case of the control schools, the training that they would like to see occur.

SUB STUDY II : A sub study to describe and evaluate the historical employment practices of LEAs towards assistants throughout the United Kingdom. Particular emphasis is placed on the employment of assistants in the classroom by schools. Additionally, the assistants managers in the intervention schools are asked to comment on the training received or, in the case of the control schools, the training that they would like to see occur.

Chapter 8 THE EMPLOYMENT OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN SCHOOLS: A LITERATURE REVIEW.

Chapter 9 AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ASSISTANTS BY THE LEA.

Chapter 10 HOW WERE SCHOOLS MANAGING THEIR ASSISTANTS?

Chapter 11 DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES 3 AND 4.

KEY RESEARCH Issues 3 and 4

Key Issue 3 To describe and evaluate the pattern of recruitment, deployment and management of assistants by one LEA.

Key Issue 4 To describe and evaluate the deployment and management of assistants within schools in one LEA.

This sub study describes and evaluates the historical employment practices of LEAs towards assistants throughout the United Kingdom. Particular attention is then paid to the employment of assistants in the case study LEA and to their role and management in the classroom by schools.

Chapter 8 begins with a full literature review of assistants in their para-professional role of supporting pupils with learning difficulties and leads to Key Issues 3 and 4.

Chapter 9 is an historical overview of the management of the assistants by the LEA

Chapter 10 describes how the 5 secondary schools were managing their assistants. The tensions in the relationship between each school and the LEA;

individual teachers working with assistants; their role with respect to teaching staff and pupils; the assistants pattern of working and an evaluation or appraisal of individual assistants are all sought via semi structured interviews with the 5 special needs coordinators (SENCOs).

Chapter 11 is the joint narratives of the SENCOs and the LEA officers describing a more complete picture of the pattern of the recruitment, deployment and management of the assistants in the LEA.

Discussion then centres on Key Issues 3 and 4 as follows:

Key Issue 3

To describe and evaluate the pattern of recruitment, deployment and management of assistants by one LEA.

Key Issue 4

To describe and evaluate the deployment and management of assistants within schools in one LEA.

Chapter 8: THE EMPLOYMENT OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN SCHOOLS: A LITERATURE REVIEW.

8.0 Introduction

Over the past two decades evidence has mounted that a growing group of non-professionals is being employed to directly support our children's learning. They work in mainstream and special schools, in the nursery, primary and secondary sectors. They have been variously described as auxiliaries, helpers, ancillaries, teachers' aides and helpers and nursery, general classroom, non-teaching, special support and special needs assistants. The roots of these different titles are clearly explained by Clayton (1990). In this report the group will be referred to using the general term 'assistants'.

Chapter 8 concentrates on reviewing the literature that describes the evolution of the assistants as teachers' aides, their conditions of service, management and appraisal by LEAs and schools; their role, prior experience, recruitment and training.

8.1 Early history

Early literature highlighted the assistant's potential role in supporting learning programmes and raising general educational standards. (Plowden 1967). By 1975, the highly regarded Kennedy and Duthie (1975) study for the Scottish Department of Education had been published. This acknowledged the Government's intent to meet other objectives such as the employment of auxiliary assistants once the recommended teachers staffing standards had been met. In fact the figures for the number of ancillary staff in the nursery and primary sectors, excluding administrative staff and laboratory assistants, represented an overall increase in staff of 10 per cent between 1970 and 1972, compared to an increase of 1.9 per cent for pupils and 10.9 per cent for teachers in the same period.

In effect, Clayton et al (1990) revealed just how substantial the increase in the number of assistants being employed by LEAs might be, when they discovered a 382 per cent growth in hours allocated to SEN pupils in Wiltshire in the mid 80's.

Research from Leicester University (Moyle and Suschitzky 1997) argued that head teachers were buying assistants as a cheap alternative to teachers,

"The Department of Education and Employment figures show the number of support staff more than doubled between 1991 to 1996 while the number of teachers rose by only 3.2 per cent. The research highlights this practice in infants schools, fuelled by government support to reduce adult/child ratios." (p8 TES 27th March 1988)

The use of untrained assistants to support pupils' learning difficulties was queried and it was suggested that schools should audit the assistants' duties and responsibilities. The Green Paper Excellence for all Children (1997) acknowledged that in January that year,

"Over 24,000 LSAs (full time equivalent) were working in mainstream primary and secondary schools in England. Almost 16,000 LSAs were in maintained and special schools. Numbers have risen sharply in recent years, probably in response to the increase in the number of pupils with statements being educated in mainstream schools." (s 6 para 13 p65)

8.2 Conditions of Service

Little is known about the conditions of service that entail for assistants. Wigley et al (1989) provided information that clarified the precise nature of the assistants' pay and conditions of service in that LEA. They all held temporary contracts. The assistants were paid approximately £2.80 per hour,

"For a maximum of 27 hours per week. The number of hours can be increased or decreased at short notice. They are not paid for school holidays, but have a leave entitlement of twenty days plus statutory bank holidays. Wages are paid on a monthly basis throughout the year." (4.1.2. p3)

In Woolf and Bassett's (1985) survey, 21 of the 27 respondents had a specific contract although it related mainly to their working hours and payment. However, it appeared that the assistants themselves felt it would be difficult to write a job description, explaining that it was not what was written on paper that was most important but rather 'time and understanding' of SEN pupils. The study's recommendations describe the assistants' pay as 'totally inadequate' and suggests that this might eventually lead to a difficulty in finding people of a suitable calibre to do the work. At the time of writing the authors concluded that the old adage 'you get what you pay for' certainly did not apply in the case of assistants working in schools.

The evidence of Stewart Evans' (1991) more recent research suggests that the majority of assistants are still on part-time or on temporary contracts, some recruited locally by the school and others by the LEAs. Even those with permanent contracts might be moved from school to school, e.g. in the case of transfer from primary to secondary. It was felt that there was some resentment because the assistants had originally been appointed to a particular school and were used to working in that environment with those particular staff. However,

"some LEAs did appoint centrally and allocated staff to clusters of schools in order to encourage continuity and offer greater job stability; such appointments tended to be full-time and contracts longer." (Fletcher Campbell et al, 1992. 141)

The Professional Development Committee of BATOPD NEC (British Association of Teachers of the Deaf) undertook a 1995 survey, regarding the pay and conditions of employment of non-teaching staff providing classroom support for hearing impaired pupils and students in the British Isles.

This survey found that almost all the assistants in Schools for the Deaf were employed on permanent full time contracts although they were deployed on a wide range of duties, gradings and pay scales. However, it seemed that the greatest variation occurred in training opportunities. It was viewed with "serious concern" that a considerable proportion of the assistants had received little or no induction to the job and very little post employment training. The report recommended that a nationally recognised title would support validated training and nationally agreed pay scales.

8.3 The management and appraisal of assistants by LEAs

Although there is some research, cited in this study, regarding the association of assistants and LEAs with regard to conditions of service, little work is recorded which explores the management or appraisal of assistants by the LEA.

However, the NASEN (1998) draft Policy on Learning Support Assistants (Classroom Assistants) has incorporated the LEA's responsibilities with respect to "recruitment, deployment, support and monitoring". It states that the LEA should

- ** have a clear statement of policy related to LSAs and be willing to offer guidance to schools in terms of their roles, deployment and taking into account local circumstances, what is seen as an appropriate balance between teaching staff and LSAs;
- * provide schools with clear guidance on pay and conditions for LSAs and develop a career structure linked to this;
- * audit the existing training opportunities and the training needs of the schools and LSAs;
- * provide (or negotiate through HE and FE institutions or other providers) initial and advanced training opportunities, including opportunities to study for nationally accredited courses;
- * ensure that where the provision of LSAs arises through a statement of Special Educational Needs, the statement includes clear information about the purpose of the support;
- * ensure that there is an equitable allocation of LSA support according to the needs of the students and schools;
- * monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the LSA provision and the impact it is making within the schools and on individuals;
- * establish a database of LSAs including their qualifications and experience and ensure that schools have access to this at the time of appointments and also when supply cover is necessary;
- * identify and disseminate information about good practice at individual and school level." (op cit Section C p2&3)

This document also declares that the LEAs should work under the leadership of Central Government, who would initiate,

"a coherent framework for professional development and linked career structure." (Op cit p4)

8.4 The management and appraisal of assistants in schools

It might be pointed out that the assistants working in mainstream schools, especially large secondary schools, would be quite different from those working say, in small primary schools. In the former, the size of the system might create problems of communication and the need to adjust to a greater number of teaching staff would make varying demands on their time and effort. The ambiguity of the assistants' role is slightly easier to resolve in the primary sector because individuals normally work for most of the day with one teacher in the same classroom.

Yet as early as 1984, Hodgson et al (1984) were indicating that assistants were being managed in a number of ways in different schools. Some worked independently of the teaching staff, others were given their duties by the special needs co-ordinator, the

head teacher or even the school matron. The study observed that in all the cases where the assistants worked separately and independently of the mainstream staff, they had access to information about pupils that the teachers did not have. The teachers, in their turn, resented having to go to the assistants for this same information, feeling that they should have priority of access. It was commented that this resentment could be 'dissipated' if there were more open procedures for allocating the assistants workload.

"It was noticeable that in schools where the use of ancillary staff was democratically decided, their time was organised to ensure it was for the optimum benefit for staff and pupils alike. The deployment of ancillaries in these situations was decided by teacher discussion at staff meetings and by mutual agreement between teacher and ancillaries". (Op cit. p74)

Additionally, having an extra pair of hands in the classroom can critically affect teacher relationships if the assistant does not understand particular classroom management or aims, or if there is a difference of opinion between the teacher's and the assistant's expectations of pupils. Other instances of conflict may occur if the assistants are officially line managed by someone other than the class teacher, e.g. the SENCO or the peripatetic support teacher. In instances where the particular skills and knowledge of an assistant are mismatched with the learning difficulties of a pupil, job satisfaction is reduced. Yet Fletcher Campbell (1992) claims that identified expertise can provide a valuable resource to enhance the curriculum experience of all pupils.

Other studies reveal negative outcomes where teachers and classroom assistants have not had a common dialogue in negotiations. Clunies-Ross (1984) found that teachers working with partially sighted children felt uncertain about when and how often to check the pupil's progress, because they didn't want to interfere unnecessarily with the assistant's work even though they felt responsible for the outcome. Kolvin et al (1981) found that teachers were uncomfortable acting as disciplinarians if the assistants gave the children affection and support. At the same time they realised that neither the adults nor the children were certain in all instances about who was in charge of the class.

Other surveys have examined how schools discuss and organise assistants' work. Clayton (1993) found that briefing between teachers and assistants was often done

during the own time of both, e.g. at break and after school hours. This is often the assistants' unpaid time. He comments,

"When the Welfare Assistants hours were allocated by the LEA, no special allowance was made for preparation, support or training and decisions about this were left entirely to the head teacher. To be specific, two thirds of the class teachers reported that their head teachers have ensured that sufficient built in time was available for planning special needs programmes with their assistants, while the remainder, apart from 5 per cent who did not plan at all, did so by using their own and welfare assistants time. Sixty eight per cent of the teachers reported that they had sufficient built in time to monitor these programmes, 17 per cent did not but used breaks and out of school hours, and 15 per cent did not monitor programmes at all". (op cit p195)

He concludes that if assistants have to be actively directed, the management and organisation of their work is not only time consuming but also stressful for teachers.

The Stewart-Evans survey (1991) examined the use of assistants appointed in mainstream primary schools to support children who had a statement of special educational needs related to behaviour difficulties. The greatest degree of satisfaction for the assistants came from their involvement in discussions with the class teacher (58 per cent), the head teacher (39 per cent), and other school staff (30 per cent). Interestingly although 88 per cent of the assistants felt that the behaviour difficulties of their pupils was the major difficulty, only 24 per cent said they were working with a behaviour modification programme or using recommended strategies and only one assistant had received advice on strategies from the special needs co-ordinator. At the same time, the assistants expressed their greatest dissatisfaction with their lack of involvement with people outside school, i.e. parents, the educational psychologist and other professionals.

Bell (1985) had earlier confirmed that although the majority of respondents wished for some supervision, most were satisfied with their current management whether this was a senior school manager or a teacher. Additionally, three quarters of the sample also wished for an informal appraisal of their efforts. Some even mentioned that pupil progress would be a good measure of the assistants' effectiveness at work. HMI (1992) acknowledged that few assistants were included in schools appraisal schemes.

Woolfe and Bassett (1988) suggested that head teachers needed to be aware that the teachers' duties might begin to fall more onerously upon the assistants' shoulders, perhaps as a result of changes in the teachers' own pay and conditions of service. Consequently tension could develop in the working relationship of both parties. In fact, Thomas (1991) goes much further in the discussion of his own small scale research. He suggests that the nature of the team including teachers, assistants, parents and other specialists, is extremely fragile. It appears that role ambiguity tends to make individuals rely more heavily on the quality of interpersonal relationships and the ability to 'get on' with other team members. He recommends further investigation ,

"To suggest guidelines on the establishment and operation of effective teams". (Op cit : p197)

The management implications for schools that employ assistants is further thought through by Fletcher-Campbell (1992). She argues that as the responsibility for supporting assistants relies mainly upon the class teacher, it is incumbent on senior managers to ensure that teachers are adequately supported in this task, and also that a whole school policy is developed in relation to the work of assistants. This would mean that teachers and assistants were clear in their aims for the cognitive and social development of individual pupils and classes. The pedagogy adopted to meet any individual education programme objectives would then be reached by consensus and not contradicted for the assistants by the demands of the teachers they worked with and other specialist staff, e.g. the SENCO.

By the late 1990s, as assistants became more established as a para-professional group, the need for whole school policies regarding their role and management became evident, as did the inability of teachers themselves to manage effective learning for SEN pupils with the support of an extra adult in the classroom.

The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) 1997 consultation paper on national standards for SENCOs stated that they,

"Ensure that all those involved in the teaching or support of pupils have the information, support and development necessary to secure improvement in teaching and learning and sustain staff motivation. ... SENCOs ensure the establishment of regular meetings between the SENCO, learning support assistants and other teachers to review the needs, progress and targets of pupils with SEN." (p 10)

The Green Paper (1997) argued for a more inclusive practice for SEN pupils in mainstream schools and also suggested that the success of its proposals depended

"in large measure on how far they are reflected in the work of mainstream schools ... The SENCO oversees the schools' provision for SEN, including the work of learning support assistants (LSAs), advises and supports fellow teachers, and liaises with parents. The SENCO also contributes to the in-service training of school staff." (S6 p61)

Balshaw (1998) describes the complex issues involved in the deployment of assistants and suggests that whilst it is not useful to simplify these, it might be more effective to pay attention to whole school issues with regard to classroom practice. She poses the following questions to schools:

- "Does the list of activities the assistant carries out - as outlined in answer to the questions listed previously - appear on an up-to-date job description?
- Do all teachers know what is on the job descriptions of assistants both in general and at a more specific level in relation to the one(s) they work with most often?
- Were the assistants involved in drawing up these job descriptions?
- Do staff in school often ask assistants to do inappropriate tasks?
- Do they ask the 'Will you just ...?' question which diverts assistants from what they should be doing?
- Do assistants feel confident enough to say 'no', if they're asked to do something inappropriate?
- Do assistants ever feel they are a 'minder' to a particular child, or group of children, for hours on end?
- Are any assistants made to feel unwelcome in some classrooms?
- Has any of this been discussed at a staff development day in the school?
- Do joint planning sessions take place during assistants' contract hours?
- Do they get paid for attendance at staff development sessions?
- Does their contract reflect clear commitment to some 'non-child contact' time for planning and debriefing sessions?
- Is the school in charge of these kinds of financial and contractual issues, or is it still the responsibility of the local education authority (LEA) in some cases?
- Discussion of these kinds of question at a whole staff development session can lead to much more clearly focused priorities for action in school. When developed effectively it:
 - Supports the assistants' identification of need
 - Develops a more positive ethos about their tasks and status in the school
 - Reminds all staff (and not just the SENCO) of their responsibilities to these colleagues, through supporting their practice
 - leads to a more effective learning environment where it matters most, for the children." (p cit p12)

8.5 The role of the assistant

A direct comparison between early research and current evaluations of the assistant's role presents a shift away from the task of predominantly physically caring for special needs pupils and towards more direct education instruction.

Heggarty (1982) describes their support as critical in integration.

"Their availability can determine the feasibility of a programme, and the way in which they are deployed its success or failure". (op cit p177)

At the time of writing, Heggarty was clear that many teachers were happy to allow special needs pupils in their classes simply for the 'social benefit' that they thought might accrue. The same staff were possibly insufficiently trained themselves in the skills and knowledge necessary to allow effective learning for the same pupils to take place. Four main roles were undertaken by the assistants, described as care, educational, para-professional and general. Caring included physical care, e.g. dressing, toileting, walking and feeding - indeed the care role was often the initial reason for employing assistants in the first place. However, there is evidence that some schools allowed a more educational role, with the assistant working under the teacher's direction with one pupil or in a small group, thus freeing the teacher to concentrate on teaching, or perhaps carrying out direct instruction with pupils. The para-professional role involved carrying out programmes devised by speech therapists or physiotherapists, who could then monitor and evaluate the pupil's progress. The general role allowed the assistant to act as a mother figure or friend to pupils.

Brennan (1982) confirms that assistants were often initially employed as a physical support for children with sensory or mobility difficulties. More recently, Fletcher- Campbell has argued that pupils with a physical disability or sensory impairment may need help getting to the lessons and settling down in class. She infers that the assistants should not remain with a pupil "needlessly as this only serves to highlight the difference between the pupil and his or her peers". (p141)

Hodgson (1984) grouped assistant activities into three similar roles - care, general and educational. General duties here were slightly extended to involve preparing and marking work, using audio visual aids and general administrative tasks. The

multiplicity of tasks performed by assistants is reinforced in later studies. By the 1980s, research was reporting generally,

"more educational duties than housekeeping or care with liaison duties being added to the list. General classroom duties such as tidying up equipment and marking work were considered not to be a legitimate part of the support assistants duties". (Bell 1988, p 130)

Woolfe and Bassett (1988) evidence that most of the respondents in their study

"spent 75 per cent or more of their classroom time on educational activities like maths work and hearing children read, indicating that their duties usually overlapped with those of the teacher during lesson time". (1988,p 62)

It should be noted that most of the respondents also worked during the lunchtime or did break time duties. They believed that they were mainly employed to help with the child's social integration and did not see themselves in a role that involved 'sharing teaching duties' with the teachers, but rather as a 'back-up aid'.

Clayton (1989) was able to divide the Wiltshire assistants tasks into two main areas. These were instructional, and general care and supervisory duties. Over 90 per cent of the respondents did in fact directly supervise or assist small groups of children in teaching tasks. A slightly smaller number helped individual children and monitored their progress. Indeed only four assistants simply helped one child. Approximately half the respondents gave physical support, e.g. first aid to pupils, made or cared for teaching aids or joined the classroom management of pupils with behavioural difficulties. Again it was noted that least time was spent on cleaning, administration and recording duties. Generally, the frequency of these activities did not vary and were irrespective of the child's particular type and severity of learning difficulty. Clayton suggests that today's welfare assistants are particularly involved in the learning process of pupils.

Wigley et al's (1988) report evaluated the assistants' role from three separate viewpoints. The most frequent response from assistants (and teachers) indicated that they acted to help motivate and encourage children whilst developing their cognitive skills. At least one assistant also mentioned that working with EBD children also involved 'protecting' others in the class. The teachers delineated the assistants' support more clearly, stressing that their work, in terms of the content of what was being taught and the approach used, was very important. Several teachers were concerned that SEN

pupils should be taught by unskilled workers. The head teachers interviewed were clearly favourably disposed towards the help offered by assistants. However, some felt that their opinions were coloured by a poor relationship between the school and a particular assistant or they had had to deal with teacher resentment about the extra time needed to prepare work for the assistants, or were themselves unconvinced about the rationale of employing assistants for this kind of work.

8.6 Which activities are out of the assistants' remit?

Welty and Welty (1976) supported in a later article by Kolvin et al (1981), established various types of work that they did not envisage assistants participating in.

These included,

"organising the curriculum, evaluating pupils, making subjective entries in pupils' records, deciding on educational methods and materials, developing evaluation instruments, conferring with parents, referring students for special help, making lesson plans, deciding on discipline methods, setting classroom policy or counselling students in their educational plans". (as cited Clayton, 1993 p 193)

8.7 Assistants working in effective teams

Balshaw proposed six principles for in-house staff development that should be offered to classroom assistants:

1. to know exactly what their role and responsibilities are and be involved in regular reviewing and monitoring them;
2. to understand and be part of the communication system of the school;
3. to be seen positively as part of a range of provision for meeting special needs by all members of school staff;
4. to be part of the school team and regarded as partners in team development;
5. to be encouraged to examine their personal skills, and do this in collaboration with the team in order to capitalise on these;
6. to examine, with colleagues, their needs for development and training, and receive support in the school for meeting these needs." (cited Upton 1991: p142)

In stating these principles Balshaw recognises that any training offered by a local education authority or other external professionals does not address the issues which are influenced by the specific ethos, organisation and practice of each school.

Classroom teachers may utilise assistants as one of an instructional team. Green (1985) defined the current uses of the term "Team Teaching" under the following models:

1. **The Trump Plan.** This American model envisaged a team of teachers taking part in large group or key instruction, after which small groups of pupils began independent study either individually or in small groups supported by teachers.
2. **The Warwick Model.** Many teams in Britain adopted this method in the 1960s. In the United Kingdom, several classes would be brought together for a lead lesson whilst one teacher conducted follow up classes for up to 30 pupils. Opportunities could be provided for more individualised learning programmes within the class.
3. **The Mini-School.** A group of pupils in a given year were supervised by a team of teachers over a range of subjects for a substantial part of their timetable. It was hoped that the staff would ensure continuity for the pupils by moving up the school with them. The teams would regularly meet to plan and co-ordinate the work of the pupils in their 'mini-school'. This model differs from the first two in that it was hoped that the academic work and pastoral care of pupils would be supported together by a stable learning base.
4. **Support teaching.** This model supports two members of staff in their single class at the same time, working alongside each other. It was essentially viewed as a means of improving teacher / pupil ratio or 'of helping younger staff to learn by observation of more experienced colleagues'.
5. **Joint or co-operative planning.** Here, teachers within a single department or across the curriculum create an inter-disciplinary course. This model is currently used in many secondary schools, particularly in technology, humanities and science departments. Whilst pupils are taught by one teacher, the team plans the overall course and the range of resources that would be used.(p 70).

Green cites the problems listed by teachers who were team teaching in the 1970s or early 80s. These included the loss, through re-appointment, promotion or retirement, of teachers who had initially planned team teaching and assumed responsibility for its

introduction in the school, because if their successors lacked the enthusiasm or skills needed for this type of approach, it flagged very quickly. The teachers also had to be committed to this method because of the additional hours it entailed in compiling suitable syllabuses, preparing resources for large numbers of pupils and organising follow up activities whilst co-ordinating the work of all the pupils and staff.

It was also clear that team teaching would fail if head teachers were opposed to the strategies. Most of the literature referring to the use of assistants as an 'extra pair of hands' in the classroom has adopted the 'support teacher' model above. In addition, Kline (1987) in his review of the efficiency of additional support in the classroom explains,

"The purpose is to serve a population that has been characterised as poorly motivated, the lowest of the low achievers, and as having a long history of failure. When one realises that the learning disabled adolescent also has poor study skills, basic reading skills ... and skills deficits that are generalised rather than specific, the scope of the teachers job becomes very formidable". (Op cit: p25)

He emphasises that planning is the predominant role in managing assistants in the classroom. They should know the lesson plan, including the specific methods and materials to be used, have an adequate training (including modelling) of the instructional skill and an opportunity for guided practice. He argues that the assistant should also be able to deliver a formative and summative evaluation of the pupil's work so that classroom teaching is assessed by means of pupils' progress. In this manner the teacher can keep final responsibility for the overall curriculum objectives to be met by pupils and the methodology to be used to achieve these targets.

Kierstead (1986) outlined the managerial system for a class of pupils who are conducting both group and individual activities. This system has three main components - the task, the student work cycle and the teacher work cycle.

The task might comprise of both long term and short term goals. Short term goals might be approached within half a term and constitute IEPs.

The student work cycle would be a study skill that could be generalised to other classes whereby students gather what they need for the lesson, carry out their work and

have it checked by teachers who record their progress. Pupils would then begin their next assignment.

The teachers' work cycle might be split into two. Firstly they would mark and monitor students' work, deciding who would need immediate help and who would need the minimum of attention because they could work independently. Secondly, as part of the teaching process, the teacher would be aware of those who were showing signs of difficulty or ready to begin a new task.

This type of management tries to ensure that those pupils who are most assertive do not receive all the attention but that equal attention to student work is given, as attention according to need. In this situation teachers are not there just to instruct the class but also to lead the facilitation of learning using all the resources available, including the assistants' extra pair of hands.

Thomas (1987) supports the view that if pupils with special educational needs are to be incorporated into mainstream classrooms, teachers need to move away from focusing on help for individual children and towards planning the management of resources, time and personnel, in order that pupils with learning difficulties receive help when they need it. Whilst he also found that numerous 'other' persons might be involved in the classroom, e.g. parents, young people from YTS schemes, etc., there were clear indications that their involvement declined in the classrooms of older pupils.

In addition, Algozzine (1988) in his paper to identify the task which special educational teachers rated as important for their assistants to be able to complete, found differing patterns depending on,

"The type of instructional model in which the teachers taught and the age of students served. These findings suggest that para-professionals need to have different competencies, depending on the type of educational setting in which they are employed". (1988 p 258)

Goodman (1990) proposed that assistants should be accepted as integrated members of the 'instructional team' for SEN pupils. To carry out their duties would require two areas of competence. They would need to have skills and knowledge to support children directly. This means that the "responsibility for learning becomes shared by the teacher and the para-professional" (page 202). The assistant would then learn to act as a support service to the teacher, e.g. by being familiar with all the

classroom rules and general classroom management. Goodman also supports the principle that the teacher is responsible for assessing and evaluating pupils' work and then planning the future curriculum from the basis of this evaluation. However, as facilitator, the teacher "assigns the instruction and behaviour management duties of the para-professional". The role of the assistant is broadened so that they might function independently with the child or children for whom they are responsible. This "might involve daily lesson planning, commercial curriculum selection or the production of individually designed teacher made material". Goodman also expects the assistant to be able to teach the child and monitor his/her progress. A consistency of approach between the teacher's and the assistant's authority to praise and sanction pupils is also considered paramount. This raises concerns about where teachers would gain the necessary class management skills as well as the knowledge for teaching special needs pupils.

It is also clear that to support this model, assistants would also need to be highly trained in instructional and classroom management.

Interestingly, Bell (1985) suggested that there is little literature surrounding the professional support of assistants. The focus is more usually on the duties of their job. Kolvin's study incorporated a fortnightly professional support meeting for assistants. This was deemed insufficient by the participants.

Hayes (1994) study of the role of assistants allocated to statemented pupils in a secondary mainstream school illustrated that teachers and assistants appeared to have a positive regard for each other but that this was not extended into the development of a supportive working relationship. In fact, teachers were "confused and uncertain regarding their responsibilities towards assistants and, indeed, assistants expectations of them". In fact one fifth of teachers reported that they were not informed of the presence of statemented pupils in their classrooms and lacked important information regarding these individuals. As a result, it was unlikely that the teachers and their assistants would meet the needs of special needs pupils in their classes.

On the positive side, the teachers in many departments in this school were preparing differentiated materials for the assistants to use with statemented pupils. Each department was expected to nominate a member of staff who would co-ordinate special needs developments within that particular curriculum area and who would be given leave to attend training in the area of special needs. In September 1994, a new special

needs co-ordinator was appointed and for the first time the school had an appointee who had a working knowledge and experience of managing special needs. Additionally, initiatives for assistants' training were under way and plans for future training had already been established. It is important to mention one exceptionally outstanding model of assistant deployment in the school in which three assistants and a teacher were seen to work,

"Collaboratively and effectively with a low ability and a behaviourally problematic class of 11 pupils. Whilst two assistants worked alongside their pupils for the duration of the lesson, the third assistant worked with a group of five pupils, reading the maths problems for them and encouraging them to explain the processes involved. Importantly, this assistant received special training from the teacher and her resulting confidence and ability to sustain learning within her group was evident.

Above all, the co-ordinating role of the teacher was manifest. He/she floated from child to child, seeking explanations for their answers and offering praise and encouragement. Where a child was experiencing difficulties, he/she attended to that problem before moving on. Moreover, in his/her role as classroom manager, he/she not only addressed all instances of misbehaviour but also interacted with assistants, asking for feedback on pupil performance and advising on further learning. In this instance, the teacher appeared confident of his/her role in relation to that of the assistants, hence the latter assumed active educational roles which benefited both teacher and pupils."(p 57)

8.8 Prior experience and recruitment of assistants

Although both the Plowden and Warnock Reports had envisaged that assistants should be engaged because of their personal qualities, it was further expected that successful applicants would have a good general education and that continued in-service training would be received once employed. Indeed the Plowden Report was visionary in its anticipation of future incentive allowances for additional responsibilities and a planned programme of training that could provide a career route to teacher training.

Kennedy and Duthie described the following selection criteria:

"It would be desirable to admit both younger and older persons for each has something different to contribute and individual teachers have preferences for auxiliaries of different ages. Potential assistants should be selected:

- * who have had experience with children in a group or who exhibit a sympathy for and understanding of small children;
- * who are articulate;

- * who can play a musical instrument or at least read music (this requirement was stressed by the majority of teachers and auxiliaries);
- * who have some artistic ability;
- * who exhibit manual dexterity particularly in the context of audio visual equipment.

We do not believe that auxiliaries who lack formal qualification should necessarily be excluded from entry to these courses. The consensus was that a probationary period would be desirable and that this should extend over a period of 3 to 6 months". (1975, p 5)

Studies done in the mid 80's serve to illustrate the diversity of recruitment and selection policies found among LEAs.

Hegarty and Evans (1985) suggested that of the assistants in integration programmes in 14 LEAs,

"Two thirds had some professional training, generally the NNEB qualification; though its relevance was strictly limited, a number of LEAs insisted on the NNEB qualification for appointment as classroom assistant." (1985: 176)

It was also clear that the vast majority of assistants had no prior experience of pupils with learning difficulties. Only four had some minor involvement, e.g. doing voluntary work in a special school. However, they also found although that one LEA in their study appointed only qualified personnel, two others preferred to employ trained assistants although this was not an explicit policy. A fourth LEA stated its preference for employing mothers who had experience of bringing up their own children. The latter position was in line with the findings of the Warnock Committee who commented that assistants were often chosen because they were sympathetic to children and had parenting experience.

Hodgson et al (1984) also found that some schools preferred their assistants to be qualified but looked for a standard of inter-personal skills that would allow teachers to relate to the assistants more easily, especially in the secondary sector.

An analysis of 100 questionnaires returned from assistants in Clayton's Wiltshire study revealed,

"Almost all the Welfare Assistants had experience of bringing up children on their own but only one in five had experience of children with special needs. Many had worked in schools as voluntary helpers (80 per cent) and nearly half had previously worked as Welfare Assistants albeit in a 'general' rather

than 'special' capacity. Just over half had been involved with playgroups and approximately one third with a youth or uniformed organisation. Respondents also listed as other relevant experience work as a midday supervisory assistant, school secretary, Sunday school teacher, helping with a 'summer play scheme and YTS experience in an infant school. Overall, 84 per cent of those questioned were able to offer three or more different kinds of experience (they also noted) that less than half of the assistants had formal school or FE qualification and that one third did not possess qualifications of any kind. On the other hand, approximately one quarter listed typing and secretarial training and nearly one in five were qualified first aiders. The number with professional qualifications, for example, in teaching and nursing, was small, comprising six teachers, eight general nurses and four nursery nurses and one physiotherapist. Only three were graduates ... Thirty seven per cent of the assistants had received more than one type of training."

(Clayton 1990 p195)

Woolf and Bassett's (1988) small scale study of 27 assistants working in special schools was also able to detail that 21 had no qualifications, 2 were NNEB trained, 1 was a State Registered Nurse and 3 had other qualifications, mainly first aid certificates.

Although Heggarty (1985) presented a promising two thirds of assistants with some professional training, generally the NNEB, he also suggested that the value of that training was limited. In fact, in 1982 the course was revised in response to new recommendations in 1980, to include a short section on abnormal development, learning, social and emotional difficulties and physical disabilities. It is possible that the paucity of other recognised vocational training makes this qualification the one most favourably cited by assistants, teachers and head teachers alike. Lowden (1985) found that most of the assistants in the 13 per cent of special schools for children with moderate learning difficulties had this qualification. The assistants in Bell's study (1988) stated that a formal qualification should be necessary and in the main opted for the NNEB Certificate, although other relevant experiences were also thought to be important.

There is little literature relating to the recruitment of any individuals who undertake work as assistants. Whitham (1987) revealed that head teachers appointed the assistants in his study and might either formally interview candidates, appoint people they knew, appoint people recommended to them or take on assistants whose contracts had just terminated in another school. Wigley et al (1989) studied a group of assistants working in a Northern LEA, whose pupils came from a rich diversity of cultural and

religious backgrounds. They made comment that no male assistants were employed at the time, although,

"... if our sample is representative, the number of workers from ethnic minority groups appeared to be proportionate." (page 3)

8.9 Training

In the States, by 1983, Lindsey had listed the five steps that could be taken usefully to induct assistants into their role. These were:

1. Introducing the para-professional. This includes attending staff meetings; discussing their role using various resources, e.g. question and answer sessions and audio visual aids; visiting schools and observations.
2. Conducting in-depth in-service experiences. The assistants would have in-service training with assistants to include "roles of the para-professional; developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, diagnostic and instructional techniques, pedagogic materials equipment, mainstream and procedures, communication systems, staff and parent training issues".
3. Scheduling and observations which include pre and post observation discussions could extend the assistants' understanding of the different educational contexts and the roles of other staff in school and the LEA.
4. Using supervised teaching experiences. The assistants should practice well planned and supervised assessment and teaching techniques.
5. Ongoing in-service and supervised activities. Assistants should have the opportunity to accept further in-service training and support, perhaps via a monthly staff meeting. (op cit p469)

Lindsey further thinks through the inherent problems in employing assistants. First, their existing skills and experience should be recognised and used. Second, a job description should be drawn up and supported by an in-service programme. A certificate should be awarded to assistants who were trained. Additional activities would be structured to promote the necessary competencies for assistants who were in difficulty.

In this country, the Plowden Report's (1967) early cry for a mixed mode of training for assistants, both in college and in the classroom 'on the job' was echoed by Warnock who noted that, in the main, assistants had to rely on the staff in their individual institutions for support and advice.

Kennedy and Duthie's study (1975) suggested that much of the assistants' work would be of a practical nature and would serve as a support to both teachers and pupils. Thus it was deemed proper that training should be classroom - based, with additional training in the theoretical aspects of the job to be carried out in other 'training institutions'. It was also recommended that time should be allowed for the assistants to talk to each other and the lecturers. The tutors, the school teaching staff and head teachers would assess their work. It was envisaged that the assistants would benefit from an extended programme of training, beginning with an in - service programme. The suggested priority training areas included lessons in voice delivery and the handling of groups of pupils, as well as,

"Printing and writing, objective tests and their marking, school libraries and their learning resources centres, audio visual aids and materials used in primary schools and to educational theory and practice." (Chapter 5. Section 3)

It should be noted that the report specifically states,

"If the rate of development of educational technology continues as it has in the recent past, the auxiliaries will have to be familiar with a wide range of equipment and associated software." (Chapter 5. Section 3)

The NFER research of assistants' training in the late 1970's as reported by Hegarty (1985), presented a promising two thirds of assistants with some professional training, stating that this was 'generally the NNEB qualification'. He supported initial and early in-service training and was keen to focus on the readily available resources at local level, insisting this should not be a question of,

"Making good the deficiencies ... or providing a substitute for formal full time in-service course (or part time equivalents)". (1985: 178)

He also discussed other methods of training that would make advantageous use of professional contacts found in school, e.g.

"Formal collaboration; working together on a common professional task; having contact with expertise; team teaching; visits and meetings". (p 178)

By 1988, Goacher et al were advising that 28 per cent of their respondent LEAs had given their assistants specific training to help implement the 1981 Act. In a small scale research study, Bell (1988) found that less than half the assistants surveyed in a

large Northern LEA were receiving any in-service training, although most said that they would like some support of this kind. Although "aspects of teaching, the curriculum, child development and school organisations" (page 30) were amongst the training topics called for,

"There was no consensus view about the frequency of training preferred or about possible teachers and preferred methods of course delivery". (Page 30)

Wigley et al (1989) suggested that there was an overwhelming consensus of agreement regarding the benefits of training for assistants. Class teachers wished for,

"Training for teaching the child, for example, developing skills in task analysis, in planning objectives based learning, in questioning techniques and in carrying out a teaching programme ... as well as ... record keeping, preparing games and worksheets, working with groups of less able children and behaviour management". (4.7.1.)

They also thought that assistants needed information about the nature of children's special needs. Support assistants in the study tended to "focus on the needs of the child they were currently working with" (4.7.2). They particularly requested the following: Training about aspects of integration, teaching language skills, about physical or sensory disabilities, to include the use and care of equipment as well as care of the children. One assistant also considered that it would be relevant to offer a course relating to issues of race, disablement and gender. The head teachers in the study suggested on site - training perhaps supported by the SENCO with sandwich courses at the local FE College. However,

"There was some feeling that class teachers had time to make only a limited contribution to the training need." (Page 13)

Barber's research (1986) also noted the assistants' own desires for additional training in the following areas: reading, language development, help with writing, medical and physical problems, working with parents, behaviour management and the assistant's own role.

Hilleard (1988) found that the assistants employed in Hampshire special schools were carrying out an educational role to support pupils and their teacher colleagues. However, a number of respondents,

"Expressed frustration concerning inadequate training and lack of career structure, poor relationships with some teaching staff and low salaries". (Cited Clayton 1990: 28)

Hilleard suggested that a certificated training scheme as part of a structured career pathway would provide additional job satisfaction.

Clayton offered one day induction courses to assistants in Wiltshire. The aims of the courses were

- " to acquaint special welfare assistants with a range of difficulties and needs which they were likely to encounter;
- to introduce them to ways in which they could contribute to the education and management of the children to whom they were assigned;
- to provide an overview of special education in Wiltshire, especially the way in which welfare assistants fit into this provision;
- the 1981 Education Act and implication for integration, and the statutory assessment process, as a result of which special welfare assistance is allocated;
- to provide opportunities for course participants to meet and share ideas with colleagues from other schools and with members of the support services". (1990, page 74)

The evaluation of the courses indicated that these taster sessions were welcomed and that the assistants looked forward to receiving extended courses in areas including behaviour management, computer assisted learning, first aid and physical and medical difficulties. It also appears that the assistants were concerned to receive courses that would help them to meet individual children's needs. The teachers and head teachers who were surveyed wished the training to incorporate more general skills and knowledge about "classroom teaching routines and methods". Head teachers also included first aid and behaviour management skills. Class teachers asked for speech and language communication skills and special educational needs generally. Clayton wondered whether the assistants' narrowly prescriptive perception of their training needs reflected their inexperience and paradoxically their lack of training.

It should be noted that the demand for training is not wholly universal. Both Heggarty (1985) and Clayton (1990) realised that a small proportion of the teachers and head teachers interviewed felt that no further training was necessary. The reasons given varied, including the fact that individuals already had adequate qualifications, for example, the NNEB certificate, or were qualified teachers themselves, or were experienced in the job. However, Lewis (1991) following a survey of 43 primary

schools found that untrained assistants were being used as support teachers resulting in "inappropriate intervention thus inhibiting pupil progress".

The method of training assistants remains a thorny issue. Clearly, individuals and groups who are currently working on programmes of induction and training argue against sole use of teacher support. Balshaw (1991) reports that,

"Teachers are neither prepared nor trained to manage or train assistants in their classrooms and that the management of both the LEAs and the schools in many cases had simply not addressed this issue". (Cited Hayes 1994: 22)

Goodman (1990) reinforces the argument that teachers find it difficult to support assistants because of their existing time restraints, lack of manpower, curriculum pressures and the general absence of support services. She goes further,

"It is unlikely that teachers, without the benefit of training or experience, will be able to use (assistants) to the maximum benefit of handicapped children". (p12)

More positively, we return to Clayton (1993) to promote the possibilities that Heggarty had mentioned were offered by contact with different agencies particularly the speech therapists and physiotherapists.

In 1994, the Secretary of State dropped the proposal to recruit unqualified personnel for a one year route to nursery and infant teaching following the rejection of such a scheme by teachers. In May 1995, Doug McAvoy, the NUT General Secretary, told the present Secretary of State that any plans to allow schools to recruit unqualified nursery teachers in order to meet the Prime Minister's commitment to provide pre-school places for all 4 year olds, should be considered. (The Teacher April/May 1995). 1994 also saw the establishment of the pilot scheme of STAR (Specialist Teacher Assistant Record). This is a competency based course that is designed to equip the learner with the skills and knowledge necessary to support classroom teachers in the National Curriculum areas for maths and English at Key Stage 1, i.e. in reception classes. There are no specific selection criteria for candidates and the local college has learners who are employed both by LEAs and by schools themselves. To date all the learners have at least 3 GCSEs and some have A levels. Initially there was no certification at the end of this course. Presently participants are awarded 160 CATS points.

Clayton (1993) refers to the concern that teacher unions have expressed that,

"Welfare assistants although a much welcomed resource, nevertheless, might pose a threat if used to dilute the teaching profession". (1993: 193)

The first few LEAs to set up their own training schemes (interestingly often crucially supported by the local Psychological Service) included Wiltshire's SAINTS pack (1989) Oxfordshire's OPTIS (1988), Calderdale's ALSS (1991), the Leeds experience (1992) and Barnsley's SNAPT (Special Needs Professional Assistants Training) programme. All these courses are designed to induct assistants into their role and provide training to develop working relationships with teaching staff and pupils. They also cover skills and methods that will enhance the support the assistants offer to basic teaching processes. In addition, individual people have written and published numerous manuals for individual schools to buy and use.

Lorenz in particular is quite clear about some of the main considerations guiding the initiative that supported the training of special needs assistants in Leeds.

These were

- " *
- * the lack of guidance offered to schools on roles and responsibilities;
- * the absence of relevant job descriptions;
- * unclear management structures and lines of responsibility;
- * a lack of training;
- * a lack of support and feelings of isolation among assistants;
- * low status and lack of training." (Lorenz 1992: 31)

By the time the Green Paper 'Excellence for all Children' (1998), was published, the term "Learning Support Assistant" was established and LEAs were being urged to provide training for their learning support staff. The paper did acknowledge that some LEAs (though fewer than half) acted as training providers and some of these had,

"Developed accredited courses with higher education institutions and Training and Enterprise Councils" (S6 para 15 p 65)

Yet there is evidence that training can make a difference. Studies, such as the following two, indicate the efficiency of training. First, Farrell and Sugden (1985) revealed that extended courses can allow classroom assistants to make significant gains in the acquisition of skills and knowledge of teaching techniques. Their study and evaluation of an EDY course for classroom assistants in a school for children with

severe learning difficulties indicated that the improvement in the assistants' technique was maintained over a 10 week period. It is interesting to note that in an informal discussion with the assistants both during and after training, they suggested that they found the "Technical jargon rather daunting" (1984; p195).

Secondly, in 1988 undergraduates and graduates in psychology and para-professionals were shown to have a significantly increased diagnostic accuracy in psychopathology. The findings showed,

"... that if lower levels of education and experience are sampled, a robust relationship between accuracy of diagnostic categorisation and both relevant education and experience can indeed be demonstrated." (Lambert and Wertheimer p.50)

8.10 Summary

The value of a well trained para-professional group to support teachers and children with learning difficulties in the classroom has been recognised for several decades.

However, without central government's direction, LEAs have employed staff who all have a variety of training and experience in a hugely ad hoc manner. Assistants usually found themselves poorly paid, sometimes without contracts stating conditions of service, and submitted to inadequate or absent management and appraisal systems in school. The assistant's role was generally defined by working practice and at best included working as an effective member of an instructional team.

The remainder of this sub study, Chapters 9, 10 and 11, discusses the case study LEAs management of the assistants employed to support statemented pupils around the themes of Key Issues 3 and 4.

8.11 Key Issues 3 and 4

Key Issue 3 To describe and evaluate the pattern of recruitment, deployment and management of CSAs by one LEA.

Key Issue 4 To describe and evaluate the deployment and management of CSAs within schools in one LEA.

Chapter 9: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ASSISTANTS BY THE LEA.

9.0 Introduction

The development of Key Issues 3 and 4 continues the narrative of the whole study and moves the arena of research away from a national forum and towards the work of the case study LEA and its schools to support statemented pupils.

Chapter 9 closely describes the management practice of the LEA towards teaching assistants employed to support statemented pupils in all the Borough's 14 secondary, 3 special and 112 primary schools. The serving officer who held line management responsibility for the assistants was the same LEA officer who was responsible for cutting assistant hours to schools, as reported in Chapter 6. A contents analysis of his personal reflections of this time, recorded in the autumn of 1995, as well as the evidence of other LEA documentation of events, is included in this chapter.

9.1 Methodology

This chapter presents a continuation of data collecting within the envelope of a case study approach. The information gleaned from an interview with one of the two statementing officers describes his role with respect to the LEA's management of the assistants during the period studied. In fact he worked as the dominant player of a team of two. The second officer left after a few months to take up the Headship of a special school and so was unavailable for further comment. However it was anticipated that the latter would add little further comment to the existing information. The interview reported was achieved using an unstructured interview schedule (Appendix 5 and 6) and analysed by content analysis. The themes of the interview emerged consistently and with great energy in a tremendously coherent narrative. Thus large sections of the transcript are included in the final draft to illustrate the focus of the administrative process. The themes identified by the officer included,

- ❖ The usefulness and necessity of keeping records
- ❖ Management of the assistants by the LEA
- ❖ Reviewing the support available to each statemented pupil
- ❖ The LEA's enhanced ability to consider and effect fair funding between schools

The phenomenological approach of this research is most clearly evidenced here (and in the accounts of the 5 SENCo's in Chapter 10), as the social understandings of the interviewees' working life are used to illuminate the inquiry. The assumption is that the important reality is what they perceive it to be.

9.2. A history of the assistants management from study's inception to 1995 in the case study LEA

In 1992, the LEA's then special needs officer used lined sheets of A4 to write down the information she needed. She first blocked the paper into schools, about six lines covering each school, and then the name of the child, the number of hours the child was entitled to and the name of the assistant were all entered. As more and more children received statements in any particular school, the spaces became too small. When assistants left there were crossings out and new names were entered on the same paper. When hours were increased it was crossed out and new numbers entered. The system was no more than an untidy notebook. Yet it ran for as long as J. was working for the LEA and was the system that was inherited by the next special needs officer. J. took up post in 1984 and retired in 1992. However, at about this precise time the number of assistants was increasing at such a rate that any further written additions would have just made the record unmanageable and incomprehensible. The new post holder began to use the computer to record the same details.

9.3 Managing the deployment of assistants to schools in 1995

The LEA employed the first assistants in 1983 when the 1981 Education Act was implemented. They had always been employed by Central Office but from January 1995 the recruitment of assistants transferred to schools. This was a step towards the total delegation of SEN funds to schools although at the time they were still funded centrally. When a new statement was written, if it wasn't possible to increase the hours for those who already worked in the school, head teachers would have to consult a supply list to cover the work. When they did find somebody on the supply list, the post was then advertised and applicants returned their forms to the Education Office, which then forwarded them on to schools who short listed and interviewed the selected

candidates. Schools would then inform the office of the name of the person who had got the job, but the money was still held centrally. The Authority was always aware of the fact that assistants need training and in the future intends to organise a system by which schools and assistants can receive training. Exactly how this is going to be done has not been decided yet. However, it was intended that a Working Party should be set up to look at the problem and put forward proposals to the Principal Officer for Special Services for how the training of assistants might be carried out. Even in the future, if and when money for assistants is devolved to schools, the Authority would still need to keep a detailed record of assistants, including where and with whom they were working. This is because the Authority would still have a responsibility and a duty to provide for children through statements of special educational needs and therefore would need information relating to the amount of support that the schools already have, the number of children who are already on statement in the school and the types of problems that the children have.

This arrangement for the recruitment and deployment of assistants changed in the Autumn Term 1995 when schools were allowed to interview and recruit assistants from the general supply pool, only, already interviewed and accepted by the staffing section of the LEA. One of the consequences of the transition was that there never seemed to be enough assistants to fill schools vacancies, despite the fact that the section held continuous rounds of interviews every few weeks to cope with the demand.

The following interview details how the LEA effected the first round of cuts in assistant hours to schools in mid 1995 as told by the officer who decided and negotiated the hours with schools.

In February 1995, the officer charged with reducing assistant hours discussed his role of managing the assistant time allocation to schools,

"We started by trying to establish exactly how many CSAs were working for us at that time, which schools they were in and how many hours they worked. Now we had some evidence from the staffing section downstairs, but the way that their computer printed the information off, it didn't do it by school - it just gave you a long list of the CSAs' names and the school that they worked in and the number of hours that they were contracted to work. Even all that information needed collating, so if you wanted to know how many CSAs Willowgarth had got for example, you had to go through the whole list to find out which CSAs worked at Willowgarth, and that, of course, was exactly the type of information we did want. So we decided not to exactly start from

scratch but we sent out a letter to all the heads, asking them to enter information onto this proforma of the child's name, the CSAs name who worked with the child and the number of hours the CSA was contracted to work, and whether the CSA was a Non-teaching Assistant or a Nursery Nurse. We got a good response as a first attempt. I would think that a good 85 per cent of heads returned the information fairly quickly and M. then took on the task of collating. He had people typing information onto a programme which was set up by D. and then M. and I contacted the heads personally at the schools which had not replied, asking them politely if they had not received the letter and perhaps we could send them another one. We got some of the information over the 'phone.

So in the end, M. was able to produce a sheet that he keeps in a file. He has a hard copy on computer which does take a bit of work to keep updated, but he has now got a file where there is a sheet on every school with a list of the names of the children who are being assessed, a list of the names that are on statement, the number of hours they are entitled to as per what it says on the statement, and the names of the CSAs, plus the contracted hours and whether they are Nursery Nurses or Non-teaching Assistants. When alterations need to be made, M. usually writes a note on the sheet itself and then passes it on to one of the girls to update it on the computer and a new sheet then comes out to M. and he puts it in his book.” (Appendix 5)

9.3.1 The usefulness of keeping a computer database is recognised

The LEA was quickly changing its modus operandi from a pen and paper exercise to the fast, efficient, multi-tasked computer. The benefits were obvious and the officer quickly took on board the new possibilities that the complete database would offer. He really felt that the limited availability of computers was the only thing hindering his team's progress in this task. For the first time, it would be possible to keep an up to date record of,

1. The details of hours of CSA allocation for statemented pupils.
2. The CSAs' qualifications, where they worked and their experience of supporting different kinds of learning difficulties.
3. The number of hours support put into each school.
4. All the information above could be used to offer information to the LEA on request or to hold informed debate with the schools or perhaps with external agencies.

This officer also discussed how the information from two different pieces of software could be combined,

“Another way in which we use it is to keep other people who work with children with special needs up to date on the numbers of CSAs who are in certain schools and who should be working with whom. It has been really,

really useful and what we are doing at the moment is seeing how we can tie that information into the SIMS programme which is also on computer. The information you would be able to drag off would be - well here we have a child with ten hours of support, if you link into SIMS it will actually tell you why he has got a statement and details about when the review date is due on the statement and things like that. We are actually working on a procedure to link that information with other programmes that will give us more information.”(op cit)

9.3.2 Management of the assistants by the LEA

The officer understood that if he was able to clearly and accurately identify information about the CSAs and how much support was available in each school for various pupils then this put the LEA in a very favourable position. The chance to take a look at all the allocated CSA provision across the authority allowed the LEA to put the onus of support back onto the schools and forced them to take the responsibility for providing an appropriate education for the statemented pupils in their care.

“The biggest advantage is that M. now knows the total number of hours that the children on statement are entitled to and the total number of hours that the school has actually got and he can make a quick calculation to see whether the two figures tally and if they don't, then something can be done about it. It also enables him, when he gets enquiries from parents or schools saying that they haven't got their total allocation of CSA time, to say, "Well according to the sheet which I have, and you received a copy asking you to contact me if you felt that there were any anomalies in it on such and such a date, you have not contacted me so I assumed that the information that you sent to me was correct". It is a way of helping him to deal with enquiries from all kinds of people - parents, speech therapists, schools, medical people, support services.”

This new approach, as described above, did appear to frustrate some schools who had been used immediately asking local women whom they "knew" to fill in any gaps in hours the school had suffered. Now they had to accept individuals who had been sent perhaps from some way away, perhaps because of a sudden surplus at a different school. It was usual not to send any details of the assistant to the school before (or after) they took up employment.

As is revealed from the themes identified in the content analysis (Appendix 6), as well as directly from the transcript above, the primary purpose of the review and resultant changes was related to improving data quality for administrative changes, keeping central control of the process through possession of an "agreed" description of

the employment situation and using the database to distribute a limited amount of resources more "fairly".

"We have found throughout the last eighteen months that this sort of information has been invaluable to us for all kinds of reasons, not least for exercises that we have had to do this morning, when people will ask for information about how many CSAs have you got, where do they work, that type of thing, we have got it at our fingertips. But it also helps people like me who are writing statements, who look to see what the total overall hours are within that school, so that I can make a decision as to whether the school really ought to be getting another large chunk of support or not. So I use it and use it to our advantage in that way as well."

The assistants themselves found this approach particularly hard. In July at the end of each academic year, the LEA could give no assurance of where they would be working the following year until a day or two before the end of term. It was not until late in the summer that the Authority's officers expected to know which statemented pupils were anticipated on roll at which school in the Autumn Term and they would adjust each school's assistant hours entitlement accordingly. After these calculations were finalised, current and future provision in each school were balanced and, finally, the assistants and schools were informed.

Some assistants might find themselves being relocated to a different school, even to a different sector after working for several years in the same place. There was little, if any, time to say goodbye to staff or pupils.

By 1997, 428 assistants were employed either full or part time on a permanent or temporary basis. Two hundred and thirty six of these worked in the LEAs 112 primary schools and 192 in the 14 secondaries. Assistants working in the special school sector were employed directly by the schools themselves.

In fact, the assistants were to remain centrally employed by the LEA as the resource allocated for statemented pupils in mainstream schools until April 2002. This was in spite of LEA plans to review a devolution of more of the SEN budget to the schools in September 1999.

9.3.3 Reviewing the support available to each statemented pupil

The officer suggested that the database had enabled him to recognise more clearly some of the flaws in the system This included the existing inconsistencies between the hours

of CSA support offered to pupils who were statemented at different times and who were being educated in different schools. He was able to attribute this situation to two main factors. The first was the previous lack of sufficiently detailed and up to date records. The second was an acknowledgement of the poor criteria that defined the LEA's response to the type and severity of each pupil's learning difficulty.

9.3.4 The LEA's enhanced ability to consider and effect fair funding between schools

The officer mentioned the financial cutbacks that were being imposed and reasoned that the LEA was contracting out far more CSAs than it could afford. Again the new database would play a vital role, providing information to help inform "cutbacks." What this officer did not appear to take on board, is that he had no criteria for cutting hours to schools. In fact, as Chapter 6 indicates the cuts that occurred later that year were implemented by arbitrary negotiation between this same officer and the schools. The evidence based knowledge from the database that was available undoubtedly gave the LEA the edge and enabled these negotiations to take place. Access to information was much easier and allowed the officers of the authority to negotiate the level and reductions of hours allocated in schools,

"What we are finding is that in the past, when we look at statements of children with similar problems, there is a big discrepancy in the number of hours that we actually gave say perhaps for the first child on a statement to what we might write now. We have actually brought about I think both by the budget problems which we are having and also with the large number of CSAs we have already employed, in that it could be argued that some schools have got more than their fair share of CSAs for whatever reason, and then there are other schools that you would think have not got quite enough and we are trying to redress the balance at the moment. This is particularly tied in to the delegation of funds of CSA, whereby a formula is being worked out to give schools a base line of CSA support that the school will know they are entitled to and then the Authority will then allocate resources above that baseline, but exactly how it will work out I am not quite sure. We are now taking into account more criteria than we did in the past about the reasons why a child is getting a statement - that is tied into the Code of Practice of course - and whether perhaps we have been giving too much support to certain sorts of disabilities, or certain sorts of learning difficulty and we are trying to redress the balance."

The notion of "fairness" appears to be based on this interviewee's perception of an equal sharing out of the resources between all the schools. When the available budget

was later further reduced by local politicians and senior administrators, schools simply had to accept the situation. It is clear that the officer implementing the cuts recognised that individual differences and special educational needs do exist. However, he clearly rejects this as a reason for the basis of a different resource allocation when he suggests,

"Some people would argue that you can't have consistency because we are talking about individual children and a learning difficulty in one child is more severe than in another and therefore the severity of the problem means that the child should get more support. But what we are finding is that in the past, when we look at statements of children with similar problems, there is a big discrepancy in the number of hours that we actually gave say perhaps for the first child on a statement to what we might write now. We have actually brought about I think both by the budget problems which we are having and also with the large number of CSAs we have already employed, in that it could be argued that some schools have got more than their fair share of CSAs for whatever reason..."

Clearly, the increasingly efficient administrative data collection allowed an easier method of reducing hours to schools, in line with the newly redefined budget. In this LEA the criteria for allocating resources was parity between the schools rather than the individual special needs of the children, or even the efficient management of the performance of the LEA's main resource for statemented pupils, i.e. the teaching assistant workforce.

9.4 Chapter Summary

Within the space of 12 months, the LEA had completely changed over from a paper and pencil system of recording pupil, school and assistant hours allocation to a fully automated computer database.

Really, the cuts were effected in a subjective and arbitrary manner according to what the officer felt was any school's fair share of the resources available. No mention was made of any individual pupil's level of need. The additional knock - on effect, which was that assistants did not know where they would be working the following year, nor schools which assistants would be working for them, exemplifies the harsh impersonal manner that typified the LEAs decisions and relationship with schools. Yet these changes appear accurately to reflect a change in the LEA's institutional priorities

The following chapter describes and evaluates the schools' own patterns of managing their teaching assistants.

Chapter 10: HOW WERE SCHOOLS MANAGING THEIR ASSISTANTS?

10.0 Introduction

This chapter explores Key Issue 4, "describing and evaluating the deployment and management of assistants within schools in one LEA" to pose the following questions as elaborating themes in semi-structured interviews;

- What was the role of the assistant and was any monitoring or evaluation of their work carried out?
- Who managed the teaching assistants and how was this done?

The recollections of the 5 SENCOs in local secondary schools provide narrative structuring as temporal and social organisation are triangulated with those opinions already proffered throughout the literature review and in chapter 9. This sub study's discussion and the following chapter, Chapter 11, interpret and recontextualise the interviews within a broader frame of reference.

10.1 Methodology

The five secondary schools (3 intervention schools D, P, R and 2 control schools H and E), involved in the experimental case study, were also chosen to investigate how the secondary schools were managing their assistants in the case study LEA.

At interview twelve months through the assistants training programme, the 5 SENCOs discussed the practical aspects of managing the assistants on a daily basis and gave a flavour of the complexity of the issues they regularly considered, e.g. curriculum areas, personality of the teachers and, of course, the learning difficulties and needs of the individual statemented pupils.

The more structured interviews in this chapter allow an easier comparison of the text, to identify similarities and differences in the individual SENCO's responses via content analysis. It also applies more focus really to press the SENCOs for their knowledge and understanding of the impact of the LEA's special needs policy on their working lives; their feelings about the process of SEN policy making and their understanding of the impact of the SEN fiscal policy in the classrooms of the Borough's schools. (Appendix 8)

At this stage in the research, the interview guide combined explorative, hypothesis testing and follow up questions to triangulate with all the other information that had been previously gathered. I was keen to create an intellectual and an emotional dimension to these conversations via individual description and interpretations of previous events as they have been described earlier in the study.

10.1.1 Data Set: The Schools

Of the 14 secondary schools in the Borough, five were incorporated into the study. The 3 intervention schools, D, P and R, were all chosen because the researcher had worked in each as the school's psychologist. She had also briefly worked in E but chose H as the second control school because of the number of statemented pupils and its close geographical proximity to the Schools' Psychological Service. The schools were also matched in terms of age and size of pupil population, free school meal uptake and the number of statemented pupils.

Each of the schools is described in more detail in a school analysis that was drafted using information from the last 1991 census of the Metropolitan Borough Council Wards. These profiles provided a helpful update on the socio-economic data available for the electoral ward of the schools studied. The data also provided profiles of the areas in which all council services were delivered. (Barnsley Development Office Economic Reviews 1995-1998).

All this information was combined with school SEN policy documents, SENCOs' interviews, OFSTED reports and other published LEA figures to build a school analysis for each of the 5 schools taking part in the case study (Appendix 7).

A summary of the school analyses indicates that all 5 schools were smaller institutions, which expected to educate all pupils of secondary age living within the local ward until they were aged 16. Statemented pupils were supported in mainstream classes, although E streamed by pupil ability. The figures quoted by SENCOs and found in school documents all indicate a sharp rise in the number of assistants and statemented pupils from Christmas 1994 and continued to its height in late 1995.

10.1.2 Data Set: The SENCOs

The SENCO from each of the 5 schools was invited to discuss both current and past levels of SEN support, i.e. teaching assistants hours offered by the LEA and how they managed that provision to support statemented pupils effectively within a secondary school context. The interviews were semi structured, taped and then transcribed and analysed. (See Appendix 8)

10.2 Results

The results are set out and further explored under the main headings discerned from a content analysis of the transcribed interviews. These are set out in themes as follows,

- 10.3 Findings of interviews with SENCOs to discuss the management of the assistants
- 10.4 SENCOs meetings with the assistants
- 10.5 Teachers working with assistants
- 10.6 Monitoring and evaluating the assistants' work
- 10.7 The role of the assistants
- 10.8 The different ways in which assistants received information about pupils
- 10.9 The assistants' timetables
- 10.10 Training in context

10.3 Findings of interviews with SENCOs to discuss the management of the assistants

There was a consensus among the group that it was the SENCOs who managed the assistants. This was done using fairly unsophisticated techniques, as E explains,

"I've been responsible for placing them with children and that is really as far as my managing goes. I'm just responsible for saying, well you go and work with that class, you go into science and you are going into technology. I plan their timetable. When they get to the subject areas, each teacher in the area will work in a different way from any other".

H. also suggested that the reason SENCOs manage CSAs is that they see them more often than other members of staff. H. was also expected to relocate the assistant if any of the stated children were away in one particular group.

Perhaps R. was more reflective, arguing that the assistants could basically,

"Draw up the timetables themselves after I've discussed it with them and they just come to me to confirm any changes they want to make. They have one free a week and they sometimes say, 'Can I change my free so that I can be with such and such a pupil, because that child is moving to something else'. What I'm saying then is that very often the CSAs are involved in matching themselves to a pupil, so when they are drawing up their timetables, they share the load. All the children will probably come across most of the CSAs some time during the year. I've got to say that it's all to do with the small number of CSAs we have and what is manageable. It's also in large part to do with the fact that they get on together. I know that sooner or later we are going to get someone who doesn't work as well as the rest and in the same team spirit and this will require an additional management skill from me to sort the situation out. At the moment though, I simply manage the ultimate decisions and take other managerial decisions, such as asking them to do some clerical work and to set up various odd programmes of work".

D. described in more detail the difficulties of arranging the assistant timetables around who was available at a particular time for certain groups of pupils. He also explained that pupils in a Year 7 maths group had demands made on them, which were markedly different from the demands made on those doing modern languages or science in Year 9 when the groups were set. He quite simply tried to have the same assistant for the same child for the same subject. This meant that an assistant would go with a child for two History lessons a week and might cover a different child for three English lessons. He felt that this system worked for most of the time although, occasionally, a child had two assistants for one subject. This might present as one assistant for two lessons and one assistant for another one. This mix was blamed on the hours allocation of assistants. He also discussed the tensions of comparing the relevance of PE staff asking for assistant support in PE for a pupil with the demands made for support for the same pupil in English because his literacy skills were so weak.

By 1995, D's school had also discussed with some staff linking the assistants' work to departments but,

"It was felt that because the pupils were split into ability groupings in Year 7 and, for example, in modern languages, if there were five classes on at the

same time then there might be a demand for five CSAs at one particular time. At another time the modern languages department would not make any demands for CSA time because there were no statemented pupils in that area then. There would be advantages to the system. The CSA would know where the materials and everything else was stored. However, given the disadvantages that if a CSA left then it left a big hole to fill in terms of the curriculum."

D. was concerned that in the current employment situation, the assistants could be taken away from schools at a day's notice with no consultation. This would then leave the school unable to meet the needs of the child. D. had also talked through this possible departmental system with the assistants themselves. It appeared that,

"Although some of them liked particular subjects, they would not like to do, for example, maths all the time. They enjoyed the mixture of subject areas. In the same way they had stated that they did not want to be with the same child all the time either".

P. suggested that in her school, when the responsibility for statementing pupils moved to the heads of school, it had also seemed appropriate that the person who was responsible for the statementing process was now responsible for seeing that the pupils' needs were met by the teachers and the assistants. The management of assistants in this school was going to move on to a departmental basis. The SENCO felt that some degree of specialism might help both the assistants and the pupils. Currently priority was being given to core subjects such as English and Maths to make sure that the statemented pupils actually received the hours of time that they were allocated,

"Because time is so tight and the need is so great, but we do need to see that people have not only generally supportive skills but specific curriculum skills as well".

On average, the SENCO's reported that it took up to one hour per week actually to supervise the assistants' work.

10.3.1 Summary

The SENCOs discussed the difficulties of supporting pupils and teachers within the limits of a secondary school timetable. Generally the SENCO managed the assistants, although they appear to be able to negotiate their support.

10.4 SENCOs' meetings with the assistants

In schools R and P, the assistants met informally once a week to discuss their concerns, if any and to disseminate information with their line manager, E commented,

"We meet once a month formally in that we have a planned set time when everybody gets together, but we always meet informally at breaks and lunchtime or any time anybody has got any problems".

H suggested,

"I suppose what we really should do and it is finding time to do it, is have a meeting perhaps once a week or once a fortnight to see how things are going".

D also confirmed that he met his assistants on an ad hoc basis, although he was available in the staff room every morning before school, if they needed to speak to him.

10.4.1 Summary

The SENCOs recognised the importance of regular contact with the assistants they line managed. In practice, there was little evidence of a formal management system operating between the CSAs and their line manager, the SENCO in any of the 5 schools.

10.5 Teachers working with assistants

H and E discussed how staff manage assistants in their classrooms. H suggested that,

"Certain staff work and work well with a certain CSA because they now know what is expected of them in that classroom. Also, whereas one CSA will have a teacher say about her "I don't want her", another one will say, "Yes please because she works really well with me". My job then is to juggle the CSAs around because they usually don't want to work with the former teacher either. They know who they get on with and will say to me, "I don't care who you put me with, but please don't put me with X. But if you do, I will understand and I will do it".

H additionally suggested that other members of staff had not got the same experience of assistants as she had and so were not yet quite sure how to deal with them. This was especially so if they only had one or two periods a week with special needs groups.

"They simply don't have time to stop and think, "I've got this extra person half a day a week. What do I do with them?"

She also felt that some staff found it difficult to exert themselves as they would normally do when someone else (an assistant) was in the classroom. She felt it took time for the teachers to get used to the SEN pupils, the assistant and the group before behaving as they would normally.

D and P both commented that the staff had now got used to having assistants around. D suggested,

"There used to be a situation in the beginning for some staff. I really think the last teacher who used to find it very difficult, has this year, given the nature of the child she has had in front of her, welcomed the assistant support with open arms. Normally the problem is if I take the assistant away, the teachers ask me how they are going to do without!"

All the SENCOs also were concerned that the teachers did not have the skills or knowledge to provide the correct materials for SEN pupils. They were concerned themselves that the assistants were actually providing the work and supporting the pupils. This situation seemed especially pertinent if the school had been run along traditional academic lines and joined with the local comprehensive. Some of the staff from the former institution might have found SEN pupils joining their classes particularly difficult. The reticence of some of the older and mature teaching staff was also commented upon. As R. mentioned:

"One man in particular will say, 'OK he's good (the pupil) when he's with me and he is well behaved and writes reams and reams of stuff', but we (SENCO and CSAs) know he is actually not learning. But this member of staff is very well intentioned."

What was interesting was the SENCOs admission that they had very little or even no influence over the manner in which assistants supported statemented pupils in individual classes. D. moved on to comment:

"From my point of view I would like to see them moving around the classroom, seeing more able pupils as well as the less able one or ones with a statement, developing materials, and under the direction of the classroom teacher, not necessarily being in the classroom but preparing work for the following week. This has a slight problem. I cannot say this is the way they will work because some classroom teachers want the CSAs to sit with one pupil. Some pupils require a one to one depending on their difficulty, whether it is behaviour or attention or whatever. The way a child presents also varies, as does their degree of learning difficulty. In science you are going to possibly need a one to one if a child has got a very short

concentration span, a great deal more than when you are in maths when the task is constantly changing".

10.5.1 Summary

The SENCOs acknowledged the limited experience of instructional team management held by members of staff. Some commented that older more established teachers had revealed an initial reluctance to accept teaching assistants into their classrooms. However, most teachers were concerned if they weren't offered support in classes where SEN pupils were present.

The SENCOs were beginning to think about the type of support the assistants might offer although one person at least acknowledged that this depended upon the teacher's management style and the pupil's needs.

10.6 Monitoring and evaluating the assistants' work

None of the assistants in the five schools questioned had any type of check on the quality of their work. They were not part of any staff appraisal system either. However, R. mentioned that her assistants fill in details of all the programmes they are involved in and how many periods of class contact this activity takes up. The SENCO then compares this with the number of hours allocated to pupils with statements. In this manner, she ensures that the pupils are receiving the provision set out in their statements. However, the actual work the assistants do is not monitored in this situation. What should be stated is that in more than a dozen hours of detailed questioning, not one of the five SENCOs ever suggested that they were concerned about any individual assistant's work. Rather they felt that this working group gave enormous value for money.

10.6.1 Summary

Despite acknowledging the assistants worth as members of an instructional team, the SENCOs appeared unconcerned that their schools' appraisal systems were not extended to the assistants as well as teachers.

10.7 The role of the assistants

In June 1994, in response to the researcher's memo, the legal representative for the Borough Secretary suggested that

"There seems to be no legal definition of the role and responsibilities of Curriculum Support Assistant (CSA)... The CSA is an assistant and should work under the supervision of the class teacher. It is my understanding that the main difference between a qualified teacher or a student teacher and a CSA is in the responsibility which the teacher bears for managing a class ... The role and responsibilities of the CSA should not vary significantly according to who the employer is. Almost certainly working conditions and expectations will vary between different LEAs." (Letter PS/SB HP192)

In the light of the advice above and with no written directive from the LEA regarding the assistants' role, how did the SENCOs define the tasks they did? Below the 5 SENCOs discuss how they expected the assistants to work.

In the five schools there was a clear notion that assistants should not work solely with a particular child for the number of hours that they were working. Rather they were expected to work with groups of children in lessons, those with statements, others with special educational needs and other children in the class who might need help at any one time. All the respondents mentioned how quickly assistants were able to observe exactly who needed help in the classroom, regardless of the pupils' abilities. Various tasks were mentioned throughout the SENCO interviews as being within the assistants' remit. Although there was no consensus, the tasks mentioned were:

- * Preparing materials
- * Brushing up their knowledge of what is in any pupil's Statement
- * Working on the computers
- * Tidying the cupboard
- * Just sitting talking to the teaching staff
- * Working with statemented pupils
- * Withdrawing groups directly to teach them
- * Reading test papers to small groups of SEN pupils
- * Counselling
- * Helping to draw up programmes of work.

All the SENCOs very obviously perceived the assistant's role as supporting individuals and groups of children and supporting the teaching staff. R mentioned that the individual teacher's needs and demands could be quite different,

"that is partly to do with the age and experience of the teacher and his or her experience of working with assistants".

P stated that:

"We do not require our assistants to actually develop teaching materials or to prepare materials in any way. This is the main responsibility of the classroom teacher and not part of what assistants were appointed to do. That is not to say that we do not value their advice when looking at what are appropriate materials to use. This means that their work is about actually enabling kids to access the curriculum, whether it be re- interpreting what is said or what is written and enabling pupils to make a response to that material. My view is that as the curriculum becomes better differentiated, assistants would increasingly be able to work on the thinking that the kids are involved with as opposed to simply enabling access. Staff and assistants would then help them develop their concepts and skills rather than time being spent on access as it is at the moment. I think a lot of time now is actually spent enabling the kids to access what is already there. That must change".

In contrast, H described the work of the assistants in the English curriculum,

"They have started to look at what materials we haven't got and produce material that will suitably reinforce the gaps. They have spent a term producing some super materials based on Skill Teach and the words in the stories. So they have been writing their own stories and poems and doing illustrations. I think we have proved to them that they can do it and now we hope that they are going to go into subject areas and say, 'Yes, I can. Give it to me and I will do this for you. "

Perhaps the middle of the road was suggested by D, who commented that he would not expect an assistant to write programmes of work, although he/she might know and advise, better even than the English teacher, which resources are available. Exactly what is being taught should be organised by the teacher but D recognised that in practice it often depends upon the assistant's experience.

Three schools, E H and R, mentioned the stresses that occur when dealing with particularly difficult pupils. They describe these individuals as "not wanting to do anything, talking all the time, refusing to work". In this situation the SENCOs commented on how well the assistants worked together as a team. E stated,

"If one of them was having a particularly difficult time with an awkward pupil, the team looked at the timetable and shared the pupil out between them so that one CSA was not expected to cope with one individual all day".

At the same time it was recognised that different assistants had different talents and that one or two were particularly effective in being able to motivate difficult children.

E also emphasised that assistants were able to help particular pupils with the personal life skills that the school might otherwise not be able to give them. D suggested that pupils could also become very conscious of assistant support. This embarrassment always seemed more apparent as the pupils grew older, for example, in years 9, 10 and 11.

The number of assistants in any particular school influenced the way they were used. For example, H elaborated that when they had only four assistants, they worked mainly in the core subjects of English and Maths.

"They never went anywhere else, whereas now we have got enough to put support into PE and swimming so they themselves are getting more involved in all aspects of school life, not only in the classrooms".

To emphasise this point, two schools listed other activities that their assistants took part in as extra curricular activities, e.g. sports days, drama productions and sewing costumes.

All the SENCOs accepted that the assistants were directly teaching pupils with whom they sat or whom they advised.

All the SENCOs were also in agreement about the tasks they specifically did not want assistants to do. These included the washing up, menial work, administrative work and being left with a class although R commented, "Though I've done it myself as a class teacher". In P's school, one assistant also worked through the lunch hour as a school meals supervisory assistant.

10.7.1 Summary

Although there were no existing national or LEA guidelines as to the role of the assistant, the SENCOs discussed the great variety of tasks and the different emphases the assistants offered to their work. This included enabling access to the curriculum for individuals or groups of children with learning difficulties, also supporting the teachers in class.

10.8 The different ways in which assistants received information about pupils

In school H, the assistants are given information about the pupil they are going to work with by the SENCO, who commented that she actually only has very brief information herself.

"The school relies mainly on the formal statement, but they have been a little bit airy fairy and have not really tried to show how the special needs are to be addressed.

The previous school reports are often not helpful but I like to go into the junior schools and question the teacher and see the child and talk to the children.

In this school, the assistants do not see the statements, which were kept in a file in the deputy head's room. They talked instead to the SENCO, the child and teachers. However, this latter information seeking situation is often reversed and the teachers use the assistants as a 'sounding board' to check that they are pitching work for the child at the correct level."

In the other 4 schools, all the assistants had complete freedom of access to the information on the pupils' statements. Several SENCOs inferred that it was a 'two way system really', because the teacher and assistants learn from each other. A specific example quoted by H described how a child with cystic fibrosis came to school and the assistants had some INSET on this disease. They were able to supplement the teachers' knowledge.

10.8.1 Summary

In 4:5 schools, the assistants were encouraged to read the child's statement for information regarding the nature and severity of each individual's learning difficulty. In the 5th school the assistants had to rely on information passed to them by the SENCO and other teachers.

10.9 The assistants' timetable

In the Autumn Term 1994, 12 months into the study and during the period of training the assistants, further research attempted to assess and evaluate their pattern working in all 5 intervention and control schools. Would the assistants' self reports backup the SENCOs' descriptions of their working practice? All 5 SENCOs asked their assistants to fill in timetables and 27 out of a possible 39 replies were received, including some from each school. (See Appendix 9)

The first noticeable school difference was the timing of the school day. Some schools ran to 6 periods, others only 5.

The assistants themselves worked between 15 and 27.5 hours a week. Seven individuals indicated that they thought their hours were "attached" to a particular pupil with whom they were supposed to work. Others remarked that they worked a practice of "shared" hours. This meant that if more than 1 statemented pupil worked with the assistant in a group, the hours the group worked together counted against each individual pupil's allocation.

What was clear was that an assistant could work with as few as 3 pupils or incredibly, with as many as 60. One woman reported reading with small groups to 2 to 3 different teenagers in half hour stretches over a two week rolling period!

The assistants worked on a 1:1 basis with pupils, supported pupils in mainstream classes and led small group withdrawal work.

They worked the breadth of the curriculum and could be asked to team up with members of staff in English, History, French, Science and General Support all in one day. No one reported working mainly in one curriculum area. Working across the year groups, with relatively little support mentioned in Years 10 and 11, further compromised their days.

In practice the assistants mainly appeared to work with statemented pupils although working with other pupils who had learning difficulties was mentioned. Some of these other pupils were stated to be at Stage 1 of school based assessment.

10.9.1 Summary

A brief self reported resume of the assistants' timetables, endorsed the SENCOs' understandings of the variety of the work that was being undertaken, both in terms of task and the numbers of pupils that the assistant might be expected to work with.

10.10 Training in context

In the Autumn term of 1994, half way through the training, the SENCOs varied in their need for assistants to be trained. In control school H, it was suggested that the staff in her school had picked up all the skills and knowledge they needed whilst on the job. However, she did also offer that when a doubly incontinent Year 7 child came to the school that year, she kept going to the head teacher and asking who was responsible for taking care of her. His reply was that it was the assistant who was working for her. Unfortunately when this child came to school she was only given 12 and a half hours assistant time. In this case the assistant's role was not well defined.

"They were expected to clean her up. We were not told what to expect and assistants should have specific training to support this type of difficulty".

The second control school E, suggested that assistants needed dyslexia training although other sorts of knowledge would be 'accidental' rather than 'deliberate' knowledge. She was not sure what other training might be useful or whether her assistants needed any induction to school life as most of them already had children of their own who had "gone through the system".

ON the other hand, the SENCOs in the intervention schools were far more specific. R requested training for assistants that would enhance a greater understanding of the problems with which children present, e.g. learning difficulties, physical and emotional and behavioural difficulties. She also suggested that, as well as understanding children, it was just as important for assistants to have a working knowledge of how the larger comprehensive schools are run. This SENCO also worked hard to prepare those assistants in the feeder junior schools who might come up with their statemented pupils the following year. She knew that the assistants themselves were very nervous about the size of the school. They were invited to come up once a week with their charge during the transition period. She reflected on the big change for the assistants because they

were so used to working in a 1 to 1 situation. She gently made it clear to them that they would be working with and meeting a wide range of difficulties within a different group of children.

Three of the schools, P, R and H, particularly mentioned induction processes for new assistants. In R school, new assistants were given time to sit and read the statements of pupils and were encouraged to listen, contribute and ask questions in the weekly meetings. They were shown the basic system of assessments and the child with whom they would be going to work was discussed at some length. They were also introduced to the teachers with whom they would be working and the other assistants discussed their various roles and duties in schools. There was also an opportunity to sit in class and simply observe experienced assistants working. Unfortunately, this induction stopped in early 1994, when the increase in the number of assistants who were being employed in school to support pupils overloaded the induction system. In school P, the deputy head teacher stated,

"We have been taken by surprise this year because we have suddenly moved from a team that has been with us for a while to a growing team which is increasing daily, never mind weekly, so no we haven't got a regularised induction process. Any induction would be for all the staff so it wouldn't be different for different groups of people working within the school".

When E was asked whether the school ran an induction programme, she replied,

"No we don't. They are going to come in September. They are going to walk through the door and we are going to say, 'there you are - get on with it'".

E was asked,

"Are these people who may have absolutely no idea of what the job entails? Is it true that they might not have children of their own, never worked with special needs children, never done youth clubs, Guides or Brownies?"

She commented that,

"They probably will have some idea because they are probably going to be permanent staff transferred from other schools, because if they are not permanent from other schools, I want my CSAs back that I have just lost!"

In 1995, D explained the difficulties that had occurred during the period of training that had taken place in his intervention school. What he says illustrates his opinion of the training and more generally, follows the feeling of the other SENCOs at the time in response to the LEA cuts,

"When the training was first introduced, the time was set on Thursday mornings, then for the following 10 weeks, the CSAs were not available at this time. It is a problem when the same subject is hit each week. In effect this meant that pupils might have no support for half their geography or history lessons - whatever lessons they had. It also meant taking all the CSAs away from pupils whom it deemed would need cover still. The LEA initially said that it was OK for those with a medical or genetic condition to be allowed cover, for example, someone with Williams syndrome or Downs. However pupils with EBD did not have cover regardless of how they presented and this was a real difficulty for the same teachers week in and week out.

What we originally wanted and appreciated was the input into strategies for reading and listening and supporting pupils' reading skills. Perhaps now there needs to be something to do with counselling because the CSA is often in a very close relationship with pupils who have learning or behavioural difficulties. They sometimes want someone to talk to and assume that as an adult you will respond. Anyway I feel golden opportunities have been missed by someone just jumping in instead of just sitting, waiting, asking open ended questions and in a non-judgemental way just encouraging the child to speak and to relate to someone and have a safe point of contact.

The course on behavioural strategies was also good, but like any other course I think it probably needs a short reminder in order just to reaffirm the strategies that do work. Perhaps spelling needs to be addressed as well, because that's across the whole curriculum and one I personally find hardest to teach. If only someone could come up with something that would be useful.

The other drawback is that the school made an investment in terms of time. However, there is no guarantee and this is not a question, of course, but there is no guarantee that schools are actually going to benefit given the time commitment. For example, CSAs are transferred at a day's notice to a different school, so if schools become accommodating and encouraging and appreciate the training of CSA staff, other people get the benefit without any input, if you like.

The other thing is that after a while, perhaps because of the lack of instant feedback on the certification, some of the enthusiasm that was initially generated by the CSAs began to flag. We should also remember that there will be no long term remuneration whether they take extra qualifications or not".

10.10.1 Summary

A clear difference is highlighted between the approach of the three intervention schools and that of the two control schools, to training the assistants in specific skills and knowledge. The control schools expected their assistants to use their own personal experiences and to absorb the information they needed to know almost by osmosis. The SENCOs of the intervention schools appeared far more clued in about the training that might be needed to support pupils with learning difficulties.

As the SENCOs were all interviewed half way through the training period, it is possible that this fact in itself had contributed to raising their awareness of training needs in the latter three schools.

10.11 Summary

By 1995, the number of new assistants in each school and pressure on the SENCOs timetable meant that any induction processes that might have previously been arranged for this group were no longer available. The only formal LEA training was that offered to those individuals in the 3 intervention schools. The two control schools did not appear to feel they had missed out on these training opportunities.

In the absence of a clear directive from the LEA on how assistants might pursue their role, SENCOs perceived that the assistants supported both statemented pupils and their teachers. However, there were differences between schools in the level of responsibility accorded to the group, e.g. in the degree to which they prepared teaching materials for pupils. None of the schools had written an assistant job description or had written guidance for other staff on how to use this "extra pair of hands" effectively.

The SENCOs appeared to consider the needs of their pupils as paramount when planning the assistants' timetable, although each variously discussed the assistants' needs when working with other staff in other curriculum areas. Little time was formally timetabled to meeting the assistants themselves and the tasks they carried out in the classroom depended upon the class teacher with whom they worked.

The assistants self - reported working in various ways with a number of statemented and non-statemented pupils. They could be working in a different curriculum area with a pupil from a different year group or with different teachers every lesson of the day.

The assistants had freedom of access to all pupil files in 4:5 of the schools. The 5th school was a control school.

Chapter 11: DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES 3 AND 4.

11.0 Introduction

This sub study has attempted to describe and evaluate present and historical employment practices of both LEAs and their schools towards assistants throughout the United Kingdom. The literature review in Chapter 8 gave rise to Key Issues 3 and 4 as follows;

Key Issue 3

To describe and evaluate the pattern of recruitment, deployment and management of assistants by one LEA.

Key Issue 4

To describe and evaluate the deployment and management of assistants within schools in one LEA.

Chapter 9 paid particular emphasis to the recruitment, deployment and management of assistants in the case study LEA. Chapter 10 paid regard to the opinions of the 5 SENCo's in the study with respect to the deployment and management of the assistants in their schools.

11.1 Discussion

The LEA employed curriculum support assistants to resource the needs of SEN pupils and allocates each pupil access to a stipulated number of hours of assistant time. Exceptionally, in the case of pupils who have specific learning difficulties (dyslexia), an hour's tuition from one of the learning support teachers may be awarded. As the LEA supported one of the highest rates of inclusion in the country, it may be assumed that the assistants are being employed to support the learning of pupils who will have a wide range of difficulties and who might normally be placed at special schools in other LEAs.

As suggested in the literature review, this para-professional group has grown enormously in Barnsley. In the early 1990s it was possible for one LEA officer to keep several pages of hand written A4 paper to record the whereabouts of assistants, with whom they were working and for how many hours. Today 428 assistants are employed

to support 1,177 pupils on statement. The schools themselves directly employ an unknown number of non-teaching assistants. Over the years, the process of recruitment has changed and the assistants are now interviewed and offered a contract by the staffing department of the local authority before being employed in schools. This, at least, ensures that everyone is properly vetted before working with young people. However, the LEA does not have a written job description to offer prospective employees or to give to the Borough's schools. From this point of view the lack of a written specification for either party or for the LEA discriminates against the assistant who cannot possibly argue role boundaries individually.

Indeed it is clear that the "role" is most often decided in negotiation with different teachers within the confines of the classroom. Perhaps this is not so difficult in primary schools where the assistant often works all day in the same classroom with the same children and the same member of staff. There is no doubt that different tensions exist for assistants in secondary schools who might work only for specific lessons, say 35 minutes to 1 hour 10 minutes a week with one child in a specific room or with different teachers in particular curriculum areas. Add to this the fact that the assistant may not have an understanding of the subject at the level being taught, for example, German GCSE, and role ambiguity abounds.

The SENCOs in the study clearly recognised these tensions and appeared to work keeping the needs of individual pupils paramount whilst negotiating the difficulties of working within a secondary school timetable. However, as they spent little time talking to the assistants, either individually or in a group, their main concerns were administrative, i.e. fitting the number of hours required to each pupil.

This observation is additionally evidenced by the findings of Warwick University's 'National Survey of Perceptions of Special Needs Co-ordinators' (DFEE 1996), which suggested that

"In secondary schools, the SENCO had 0.3 minutes a week per pupil, considering all the pupils in school ... (They) had just over four minutes per pupil with SEN per week. When the range of duties expected of SENCOs is considered, the amount of time in respect of individual pupils seems risible."
(p.29)

Yet the same survey suggests that it was "remarkable" that given the extra workload the Code of Practice had produced for SENCOs, both primary and secondary schools were not planning to employ even more extra non teaching staff to meet the pupils' needs.

It is a cause for concern that the SENCOs reported that even they had very little time at all to spend discussing the assistants' work. It seems that the teachers in the secondary sector do not feel the need to communicate lesson plans, individual education plans (IEPs) or the monitoring and assessment of statemented pupils' progress to the support they have in the classroom, namely the assistant. Crucially there was also a complete lack of formal feedback, monitoring or an appraisal of the assistants' work although all interviewed felt that the assistants were "tremendous value for money". There was some agreement amongst the school SENCOs about tasks the assistant should NOT do, including washing up, menial and administrative work and being left in charge of a class. It is arguable whether this informal policy is adhered to in practice. One might also wish to question why assistants should not perform an administrative role. Again the assistants' role ambiguity is felt by the SENCOs in schools who have not drawn up written job specifications for their own institutions. Possibly they have never been asked to consider this task or had experience of drawing up a job specification before. All the staff need to be made aware of the skills trained assistants might competently perform as suggested in the literature review, e.g. helping to devise IEPs, differentiating work, recording and monitoring pupil progress, testing pupils etc.

The issue of teachers having little training or expertise in assistant management may be compounded by the fact that they might also have little knowledge of SEN issues as well. It is possible that an assistant may have a better understanding of an individual pupil's capabilities than the teacher. This is a more likely scenario in the secondary sector. It appears that teamwork and clear and direct lines of communication, at least between subject teachers and the assistant, are essential to promote effective learning for SEN pupils. The Teacher Training Agency and the Green Paper support this notion, the latter stating,

"In January 1997, over 24,000 learning support assistants (full time equivalent) were working in primary and secondary schools in England. Almost 16,000 LSAs were in maintained special schools. The contribution of LSAs is central to successful SEN practice. (p64) A "whole school approach" is therefore

essential. This will be possible only if teachers and other staff are confident that they can support children's special needs..." (op cit p62)

As the-on-the-job training of assistants develops, and, possibly, as they are more experienced working with a particular teacher in a specific subject area in secondary schools, an assistants' area of specialisation may become more significant. If a particular assistant has had training in supporting in Maths lessons, and has worked well at the lower end of a secondary school with members of the Maths department to support a handful of statemented pupils in their lessons, the SENCO will be under pressure from those teachers and her own best instincts to try to deploy the school's team of assistants in such a way as to keep that assistant with that teaching team. She will justify this, quite appropriately as developing the skills and working relationships in the team to make the assistants' work as effective as possible. However, this will only be completely possible if a particular assistant is employed out of the school's rather than the LEA's resources to support statemented pupils, as in the latter case the formal contract for the school will be for individuals to support a single named child rather than be deployed across the school to best effect. Apart from this formal restriction, the mobility of the assistant employed will present a significant challenge to the SENCO in managing the total assistant time/budget across all the children who could benefit. Mobility might be affected by the presence of a certain number of statemented children with a changing pattern of difficulties attending the school, or the financial generosity of the LEA, or the limitations of the school budget. The emphasis on team working will also make mentoring or peer tutoring between particular teachers and particular assistants more likely. In the future this may even be a planned team approach.

For those assistants who obviously are not about to undergo initial teacher training and yet do not have the opportunity to take up secondments or other external courses to enhance their competencies in this area, consideration should be given to peer coaching. Swafford (1998) accepts Kovic's (1996) recommendations for peer coaching between SEN teachers and ordinary classroom teachers suggesting that the coaches,

".. should provide procedural and affective support to teachers through frequent teacher-coach meetings, team meetings, classroom observations, and informal conversations. Objective feedback during post-observation conferences is important for facilitating professional dialogue among the teachers and helping them reflect on their practice. Assisting teachers as they work toward thinking

flexibly and creatively about modifications of materials, curriculum plans, time management, and use of personnel is another important job of a coach. Encouraging teachers to take the initiative to identify and solve their own problems rather than relying on the coach is also important. When a number of teachers are working together, the coach also assists in clarifying their roles and responsibilities and identifying and solving problems related to communication." (In Swafford p81)

Perhaps if teachers begin to feel more at ease with the knowledge that they actually can meet the needs of pupils with a diverse range of difficulties, they might then have the energy - if they were given the time - to take responsibility for properly managing and liaising with extra support staff in their classrooms.

It seems iniquitous that one of the SENCOs in this research suggested,

"Normally the problem is if I take the assistant away, the teachers ask me how they are going to do without!"

Mel Ainscow (1997) discusses the inappropriate use of assistants as a new form of segregation within a mainstream setting,

"Thus we see the proliferation of largely untrained classroom assistants who work with some of the most vulnerable children on individual programmes. When such support is withdrawn, teachers feel that they can no longer cope. And, of course, the formal requirement for individual education plans laid down by the Code of Practice, is encouraging colleagues in some schools to feel that many more children will require such responses." (Op cit p3)

Without doubt, the LEA has arranged for assistants to be the central SEN resource because they are relatively easy to 'move' geographically from school to school. Those on part time contracts are also easier to "hire and fire". Although there is no suggestion that the LEA is deliberately behaving in a cavalier manner, the school representatives interviewed did not like being unsettled by gaining new faces each September and then possibly losing them at the end of the year. They also felt that their pupils were losing the continuity they needed with SEN staff. The LEA led process placed extra strain on the SENCOs when asked to release their assistants for training, prompting one to ask why they should bother training assistants who were going to move on and work in another school.

The additional practice of drafting statements and reassessments allocating access to assistant support for 'X' hours per week instead of delegating each named pupil a set weekly period, marked a new trend.

The schools saw the move away from named pupil hours as letting the LEA off the hook and allowing them fewer hours in school than allocated as "access" on the statements. The SENCOs now had to manage the assistants' timetables so that pupils received their "access" entitlement. The LEA, on the other hand, could see no reason for giving several pupils in their own year group the support of their own personal assistant. They were also encouraging schools to be more creative and flexible in their use of assistant time. If Johnny needed support in maths, did he also need support in PE or basic skills?

As a participant in the arena, it was difficult for the author not to assume that these measures were in part cost-cutting exercises, as they began in Spring 1995 coinciding with the run up to the general moratorium in April 1996.

11.2 Chapter Summary

This section has considered the evidence, from a wide range of sources, to describe and evaluate the pattern of recruitment, deployment and management of assistants by the LEA and schools.

Sub Study III continues with an elaboration of the future training needs of this para-professional group, in order effectively to support pupils with learning difficulties.

SUB STUDY III: a sub study to identify the training needs of the teaching assistants working in the case study lea.

Chapter 12 THE ASSISTANTS OWN DESCRIPTION OF THEIR PAST EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING AND FUTURE NEEDS.

Chapter 13 THE HEAD TEACHERS AND SPECIAL NEEDS CO-ORDINATORS PERCEPTIONS OF THE FUTURE TRAINING NEEDS OF THE ASSISTANTS WORKING IN THEIR SCHOOLS.

Chapter 14 DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES 5, 6 AND 7

KEY RESEARCH Issues 5, 6 and 7

Key Issue 5

To describe the prior experience and training of assistants in the study LEA.

Key Issue 6

To ascertain the assistants self perceived future training needs.

Key Issue 7

To ascertain the future training needs of the assistants perceived by the Borough's Head teachers and Special Needs Co-ordinators.

Introduction to Sub Study III: Chapters 12, 13 and 14

The employment of assistants in any great number to support statemented pupils in the Borough, did not impact on mainstream schools until the Spring Term of 1993. By the end of the academic year, this para-professional group formed a distinct if discrete group in all the secondary schools staff rooms, often appearing in greater numbers than the total number of teaching staff for any of the other subject areas.

Historically studies had called for assistants to be employed for their personal qualities (Plowden 1967, Kennedy and Duthie 1975, the Warnock Report 1978) although there had also been a call for good quality in service training. Lambert and Wertheimer's (1988) study indicated that both experience and enhanced training did

improve the diagnostic accuracy in psychopathology. The main literature review relating to the training of assistants is reviewed in Chapter 8.

During the period of the study a very small number of LEAs were beginning to offer one day in-house unaccredited in service training to assistants. Generally these focussed on an induction to the role of the assistant and the varied nature and needs of pupils with learning difficulties (Clayton 1993).

Research of practice in the case study LEA revealed that generally assistants had some professional training and most were mothers who had experience of bringing up their own children and who had additionally been involved with their children's schools in a general and usually voluntary capacity. However, the vast majority had no prior experience of pupils with learning difficulties.

Aims of the sub-study

In the case study LEA, the main resource used to support the integration of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools was teaching assistants. As the overall thesis is aimed at describing the way in which inclusion worked in this particular LEA, the experience and previous training of the assistants, as well as the training which they and their managers felt they needed to "do" the job, was an important part of the picture. Accordingly, the specific purpose of this sub-study was to research the skills and knowledge that schools' and the assistants themselves felt was necessary, in order to effectively support pupils with learning difficulties in inclusive classrooms.

There were two elements to this sub study, one to discover the assistants' perception of their own needs, the other to investigate the school's perception of the assistants' needs.

Chapter 12 utilises empirical research methods to provide a detailed description of the prior experience and training of the assistants, as well as their self perceived training needs.

Chapter 13 is a second investigation of the group's future training needs as perceived by Head teachers and SENCOs. This part of the research was wholly conducted using self-completed questionnaires to the large response rate expected.

The data analysis conducted in chapter 12 and chapter 13 was relatively easy and incorporated basic statistical analysis using SPSS for Windows.

Chapter 14 discusses the match of the bottom up and top down perspectives via Key Issues 5, 6 and 7 as follows:

Key Issue 5

To describe the prior experience and training of assistants in the study LEA.

Key Issue 6

To ascertain their assistants self perceived future training needs.

Key Issue 7

To ascertain the future training needs of this para-professional group as perceived by the Head teachers and special needs co-ordinators of all the Borough's schools.

Chapter 12: THE ASSISTANTS' OWN DESCRIPTION OF THEIR PAST EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING AND FUTURE NEEDS.

12.0 Aim of this chapter

This chapter reports on the survey to gather more information about the experience of assistants working in all the Borough's mainstream nurseries, primary, secondary and special schools and to identify their training needs. A bottom up perspective was employed as the research reached out to every establishment employing non-teaching assistants and nursery nurses and every LEA employed assistant. This contrasts with the top down approach of Chapter 13, which asks schools' managers for their views.

12.1. Methodology

This survey investigated the assistants' perceptions of their own training needs and is thus directly linked to Key Issues 5 and 6.

- Key Issue 5: To describe the prior experience and training of the assistants in the study LEA.
- Key Issue 6: To ascertain the self perceived future training needs.

12.1.1. Data collection methods chosen

The data collection method chosen for this study was the self-completed questionnaire. This was because a large number of assistants worked in schools in the case study LEA, including NNEBs, LEA employed and schools' own employed assistants. At this stage there was no central register of who all the assistants were. As there were no obvious methods of identifying any systematic variables across the group, which might have led to a comprehensive sampling of the total population, it was decided to reach as many of the target population as possible. The questions to be asked were relatively straightforward, so no difficulty was anticipated in constructing the questionnaire around key issues 5 and 6. The questionnaire was designed to be capable of computer analysis.

The alternative method could have been to interview a sample of the assistants. This would have posed considerable problems as referred to above both because of the

uncertainty of any adopted sampling procedures achieving a representative sample, also the time it would have taken. In addition, the extra sensitivity of interview methodology to subtle nuances in the self perceptions of the assistants was not considered necessary. The aim of the study was to gather a clear and representative, if fairly crude declaration of training needs which might be used to help design a training programme for the Borough, as well as to provide information for this study.

In 1994, the authoress had also applied for a DFEE grant for £350,000. Twelve months later, after the research had been completed, the funding was received and further funding was matched "in kind" from the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University. The money was given to train all the secondary assistants in the LEA's mainstream and special schools. Two years after the research finished, a further £400,000 was received to train all assistants in the primary sector.

12.1.2 Sample of informants

The sample of informants sought was as near as possible to a total sample of all assistants working in the study LEA at that time. The LEA only kept records of all the 428 assistants whom it centrally employed. The survey was sent to all the LEA's educational establishments and Head teachers were also invited to photocopy the questionnaires for all their teaching assistants, that is those employed directly by the school as well as those employed by the LEA.

In the event, 430 questionnaires were returned, which was considered a huge response. Of these, 132 assistants (30.6 per cent) worked in the secondary sector, 132 (30.6 per cent) in primary, 19 (4.4 per cent) in nurseries and 38 (8.8 per cent) in one of the 3 special schools.

If, as seems likely, the usual non-return rate of 30 – 40% for questionnaire surveys of this type applies, then one possible reading of the return rate is that the schools were also employing about 400 assistants directly themselves, and the sample return is about 50 to 60% of both groups, the LEA employed and the school employed. An alternative reading might be that more than 50% of the LEA employed assistants replied, as they would constitute an "involved sample" who had some relationship to the subject matter of the survey and possibly had something to gain from it, even though the questionnaires were anonymous. In this case, there would have been proportionately

fewer school employed assistants replying, and so likely to be a lesser number of assistants directly employed by schools. In any case, the sample returned was high enough for meaningful conclusions to be reached..

However the survey as a whole, may have suffered from the usual bias of all self completed questionnaires i.e. the informants who were more involved with the topic and were possibly more likely to take up training if it were offered, may have been more likely to return the questionnaire. However there seemed little that could be done to actively counter this bias and at this, the interpretative stage in the survey, the most appropriate response may be to take a slightly sceptical view of the likelihood of the proportion of the informants who say they would like training actually taking it up.

12.1.3. Data Analysis

The questionnaire was designed to give a descriptive picture of the training needs of the assistants. It was analysed to give this description rather than to prove any hypotheses. The answers were coded and then analysed by SPSS for Windows, using frequencies and cross tabulations. The huge data set was first simply described using frequencies and cross tabs. When apparent differences did emerge from the descriptive data, these differences were declared as Contingency tables and tested for significance using Chi-Square analysis.

12.1.4. Pilot Study

A pilot questionnaire was devised after completing the literature research. The first page replicates a previous questionnaire used by Clayton (1990) to establish the prior experience and training of his own research group of assistants in Wiltshire. The purpose of including this page was to compare the baseline results of the experience and academic attainment of the two groups, that is the assistants in Clayton's study and the assistants currently working in the case study LEA. This enabled the present research to achieve an external comparative perspective on the similarities of its teaching assistants to at least one other LEA.

The rest of the questionnaire sought to prioritise the curriculum areas that the assistants wished to be trained in. The pilot questionnaire was given to a group of 17 assistants in one primary and one secondary school. There were 14 returns.

From this pilot a number of changes were made including presenting the questionnaire as a series of specific closed questions in the hope that ease of completion would encourage a greater rate of response. The open questions originally used had made the responses difficult to interpret. The last question was open and the only question to seek the assistants' personal views on their future career aspirations. These comments were painstakingly retrieved as invaluable qualitative data and are often quoted in the results as illustrative material. (Appendix 10).

12.2 A summary of the results

12.2.1 The assistants' own description of their past experience and training and their future training needs

When asked specific question, "Do you have any experience of the following?" the replies were as follows in Table 6. The vast majority of assistants had children of their own, although a sizeable minority 1/10 had not. Many respondents had acquired a range of experiences of being with children.

TABLE 4: THE ASSISTANTS' PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

<u>Yes %</u>	
Bringing up your own children	88
Registered child minder or nanny	12
Foster parent	35
Helping with the upbringing or education of a handicapped or difficult child	68
Nursing ill children	57
Organising or assisting with a playgroup	59
Organising or assisting with a youth or uniformed organisation	38
Voluntary helper in school	79

The assistants were then asked what other relevant experience they brought to the job, 85 per cent did not reply. Of those who did, the following were mentioned: school meals supervisor, church/Sunday school teacher, dance teacher, librarianship, swimming teacher, teacher for local brass band, athletics and gym coaches, teacher for cycling proficiency test, working with handicapped teenagers, residential care officer and previous work with social services.

The next question tried to ascertain the level of training and qualifications achieved. These results were:

TABLE 5: ASSISTANTS' PREVIOUS TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

<u>Qualifications</u>	<u>Number of Assistants</u> <u>(n=430)</u>	<u>Yes %</u>
Teaching (PGCE, teachers certificate)	7	2
Nursery nursing (eg NNEB)	88	20
General nursing	15	4
First Aid (eg St.John's, Red Cross)	239	55
Typing or other secretarial course	154	36
School - other qualifications (eg GCE, CSE, GCSE, 16+)	318	74
'A' level,HND,BTEC,City & Guilds,NVQ	138	34
Degree	4	1

At least three quarters of respondents indicated that they had some qualifications at GCSE level although few had any formal FE or HE qualifications.

Quizzed about any other relevant training for the job, the respondents volunteered that they had had training in the following areas.

TABLE 6: TRAINING ALREADY RECEIVED BY ASSISTANTS

	<u>Number of Assistants</u> <u>(n=330)</u>	<u>%</u>
Information technology	235	54
Portage training	38	9
British sign language/Makaton etc.	36	8
Health professional associated training (specified responses included occupational therapy, chiropody, nursing etc.)	34	8
Youth work	15	4
Counselling	15	4
Dyslexia training	8	2
Charles Cripps INSET day	7	2
Governor training	6	1
Swimming instructor	3	1

The assistants were also asked how long they had worked for the LEA as paid assistants. They replied as follows:

TABLE 7: NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSISTANTS HAVE WORKED FOR THE LEA

	<u>Number of Assistants</u> (n=430)	<u>%</u>
Under 12 months service	27	6
1 to 2 years	45	10
3 to 5 years	188	44
6 to 10 years	155	36
No reply	15	4

Additionally, the assistants were asked how many hours a week they were employed.

TABLE 8: HOURS PER WEEK WORKED BY THE ASSISTANTS

<u>Hours worked</u>	<u>Number of Assistants</u> (n=430)	<u>%</u>
35	25	6
27.5	89	21
25	111	26
22.5	23	5
20	60	14
17.5	11	3
15	44	10
12.5	26	6
Under 10 hours	21	5

When the number of hours the assistants worked per week was condensed from 9 groups into 5 smaller groups, it appeared that the number of hours worked and the sector that the assistant worked in were significantly related, ($p < .0001$). This is because 22 of the assistants who worked in special schools worked for 35 hours a week, a further 9 for 27.5 hours and 1 for 25 hours. Only 1 assistant worked less than half time and the remaining 5 worked more than 12.5 and up to 25 hours per week. This means the majority of special school assistants worked longer hours than their mainstream counterparts. Also, $19/25$ assistants working 35 hours a week, had worked for the authority for at least 3 years and were well-established members of staff.

With respect to training, the assistants requested courses in the following areas:

TABLE 9 : COURSES REQUESTED BY THE ASSISTANTS

	<u>Number of Assistants</u> <u>(n=430)</u>	<u>%</u>
Supporting good behaviour	307	71
Supporting speech & language development	278	64
Supporting spelling	252	58
Supporting reading	252	58
Supporting handwriting	249	58
Counselling	249	58
Supporting mathematics	249	58
Supporting speech therapy programmes	244	57
Supporting information technology	235	54
Supporting science	215	50
Supporting teachers in the classroom	213	49
Child development	213	49
Supporting study skills	196	45
Supporting occupational therapy programmes	193	45
Supporting physiotherapy programmes	192	44
Supporting medical illness	167	39
First Aid	148	34
The role of the Assistant	130	30
An induction package	85	20

They also requested courses to fulfil other training needs. These were: in the areas of child development, psychology, dyslexia, the National Curriculum, differentiation, medical syndromes (Autism, Downs, Cerebal Palsy), swimming, keeping pupils' records lifting and handling, child protection issues, Makaton, Braille and epilepsy. A further analysis of these results using Chi Square, indicated that primary and secondary assistants were more likely to, and did, ask for training in spelling, science, mathematics, handwriting and study skills than expected whilst their nursery and special school counterparts were observed to be less likely to ask for this area of training ($p < .0001$).

It was also observed to be very highly likely ($p < 0.01$), that the primary and secondary assistants would ask for more training in reading and special schools less; secondaries wanted more training in behaviour and nurseries less; primaries wanted more training in ICT the special schools and nurseries were noticed to ask for slightly

less than expected. The secondary and nursery assistants wanted more specific help with speech therapy programmes, special schools slightly less. The secondary, primary and special school assistants all asked for more information on child development.

The assistants were then asked to prioritise 3 from the total list of areas mentioned as their immediate training needs. The following priorities were recorded from those who replied to this question.

TABLE 10: ASSISTANTS' PRIORITY OF TRAINING NEEDS

	<u>Number of Assistants</u> (n=430)	<u>%</u>
Speech & language development	126	29
Behaviour management	112	26
Mathematics	100	23
Reading	95	22
Information Technology	90	21
First Aid	70	16
Counselling	63	15
Spelling	63	15
Handwriting	44	10
Supporting teachers in the classroom	34	8
Child development	32	7
Physiotherapist	28	7
Science	20	5
Occupational therapist	17	4
Study skills	9	2
The role of the assistant	6	1
An induction course	3	7
Hearing impairment	3	7
Visual impairment	1	2
Art and Craft	1	2
Social skills	1	2

The specific methods and/or commercial packages that the 199 assistants who responded to this question mentioned that they would like to be trained to use included:

TABLE 11: THE SPECIFIC SKILLS AND/OR COMMERCIAL PACKAGES THE ASSISTANTS WISHED TO BE TRAINED TO USE

	<u>Number of Assistants</u> <u>(n=175)</u>	<u>%</u>
Reading recovery	115	26
Counselling	69	16
"Any to do the job better"	38	9
Beat Dyslexia/Toe by Toe	14	3
Information Technology	12	3
Kuman maths	6	1
British Sign Language	5	1
Basic skills	4	1
Social skills	2	4
Working in special schools	1	2

The assistants responded to the question "Do you have any preference for the time when training might take place?" stating as in Table 12 below:

TABLE 12: THE ASSISTANTS PREFERENCE FOR THE TIME TRAINING MIGHT TAKE PLACE

	<u>Number of Assistants</u> <u>(n=341)</u>	<u>%</u>
During the day	203	47
A mixed mode of delivery	66	15
"No preference" was stated	27	6
Evening	20	5
Twilight	13	3
School Inset days	12	3

Nearly half the respondents wished to train during the day whilst a sizeable minority (15%) requested a mixed mode of delivery.

But what occupational choices might the assistants move into with training?

TABLE 13: THE ASSISTANTS OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES AFTER TRAINING

	<u>Number of Assistants=410</u>	<u>%</u>
Go on to Higher/other qualifications	198	46
To work in a social service day centre	64	15
Specialist fostering for social services	27	6
CSA working in a special school	111	26

Almost one half of those surveyed indicated that they might continue with further training, although others mentioned that they would be interested in working in special schools, very few appeared to want to work outside of education.

Finally, the assistants were asked whether they had any further comments. Twenty-four discussed the issue of progression in terms of skills, experience, training and remuneration. Comments included:

'I want to be recognised for the training I've done.'

'Can we please have certificates to say what area we've been trained in?'

'The responsibility and work involved does not reflect the salary paid to the CSA.'

However, whilst one assistant felt that there was "no room to progress", two others declared that they were joining a teacher training course and another the Child and Family Studies course at Bretton College the following academic year. Seven assistants specifically said that they would not undertake further training without financial remuneration. On the other hand, a further twelve individuals suggested any training would be welcome although one did mention,

"As a new assistant it is very difficult for me to state any particular training I might need to enhance my job."

Two assistants mentioned that they would like to train alongside other assistants as a team to help more inexperienced colleagues. Others asked if they could exchange ideas with other assistants and visit other schools.

Two assistants took the opportunity to state that they would like to know in the Summer Term where they would be working in September. Several assistants asked variously for local training, mentioned that working evenings was difficult and suggested that schools were not always willing to pay for them to attend courses.

Just two assistants said that although they were prepared to "support" physiotherapy and the work of other health professionals, they were not willing or

trained to undertake interventions requiring professional skills and training. As one confirms,

"Physios etc. are highly trained and highly paid, a sheet with exercises and instructions is of no real help."

Lastly, one assistant took the opportunity to pass comment upon the needs of the pupils she worked with.

"Some of our SEN pupils will leave school totally dependent on their family or others, without basic skills, for example, washing, ironing, personal hygiene, diet and general survival ... (They) in my opinion require further teaching and guidance to be independent."

12.2 Summary

A vast majority of the assistants had brought up their own children and worked as a voluntary helper in school before being employed as an assistant. Almost three quarters of the respondents had previous training and qualifications to GCSE standards; half had received training in ICT.

More than 80 per cent of the respondents had worked for the LEA for 3 years or more and more than half of the total group worked a full day; those working in special schools were also timetabled for break and lunchtime supervision as well.

From the total list of courses requested by assistants for training, 50 per cent or more of the respondents asked for 11 courses. However, a two level choice pattern has emerged even within this range, as there are clear differences between sectors in the profile of courses they would choose. For example, special school assistants were more likely to ask for training in physiotherapy exercises and an understanding of speech and language development; primaries requested more training in ICT and secondaries in behaviour management.

Further analysis of the questionnaire indicated that nearly half the assistants wished to train during the day and, interestingly, nearly half the assistants suggested that they might go on to take further training if it was offered.

Chapter 13: THE FUTURE TRAINING NEEDS OF ASSISTANTS AS PERCEIVED BY THE BOROUGH'S HEAD TEACHERS AND SPECIAL NEEDS CO-ORDINATORS

13.0 Introduction

A top down perspective was employed as the research reached out to every establishment employing non-teaching assistants and nursery nurses and asks schools' managers for their views as to the training needs of their school's own and any LEA employed assistant they managed. This contrasts with the bottom up approach of Chapter 12 and looks for a systemic analysis of the needs of this para-professional group as a whole in the different sectors within the LEA.

13.1 Methodology

The findings of this chapter meet the question of Key Issue 7 head on by utilising the data set, data collection and data analysis as described below.

Key Issue 7

To ascertain the future training needs of this para-professional group as perceived by the Head teachers and special needs co-ordinators of all the Borough's schools.

13.1.1 Data collection methods chosen

The survey reported in Chapter 13 includes the returns of the self reported questionnaire sent to all the LEAs school SENCOs and Head teachers from mainstream primary, secondary and special schools. Every head teacher and SENCO from all 116 primaries, 3 separate nurseries, 14 secondary and 3 special schools were sent questionnaires to indicate the type and extent of training they felt their assistants needed. This chapter reports the results of this survey. Each recorded their own school assistants SEN training needs. It was hoped that this would provide an alternative systemic viewpoint of training needs from a professional teaching base of respondents who might bear in mind the learning difficulties of particular children in their own schools rather than to the personal wishes that the assistants had proffered.

A group of three head teachers were shown the pilot questionnaire that exactly replicated the questions asked of the assistants themselves in chapter 12. They suggested

that not all the assistants in any one school would be expected to or needed training in every particular curriculum area and so the final draft asked schools to decide whether all, some or none of their assistants required training.

13.1.2 Sample of informants

A total of 272 questionnaires were issued, two to every mainstream, special school and nursery in the Borough. To obtain a top down whole school systems view, half the questionnaires were sent to the head teachers themselves, the rest were to be completed by the SENCOs who might be expected to have a more 'on the ground' understanding of the individual needs of pupils in their schools.

Only 116 replies in total were received from 5 secondary head teachers, 8 secondary SENCOs, 57 primary head teachers, 41 primary SENCOs, 3 nursery teachers and 2 special school head teachers. In total, these represented the responses of $\frac{10}{14}$ (71 per cent) of secondary schools, $\frac{63}{98}$ (64 per cent) primaries, $\frac{3}{5}$ (10 per cent) nurseries and $\frac{2}{3}$ (66 per cent) special schools. Several SENCO responses mentioned that their Head teachers had given them the forms to fill in. From this it was understood that despite the covering letter to schools, the head teachers had not felt the need to represent their school's view by spending time completing the same questionnaire twice. In two phone calls to Head teachers, they also acknowledged that it was their SENCOs who had a much firmer grasp of the assistants' training needs and that they themselves had not felt able to answer the questions adequately. This point had not been brought out in the pilot study. At this time a decision was made to continue the analysis of the data set with the results received (Appendix 11).

13.1.3 Data analysis

As in Chapter 12, these results are expected to offer a descriptive picture of the possible training needs of the assistants from a schools perspective. It was analysed for description rather than to prove a hypothesis. The answers were coded and then analysed by SPSS for Windows, using frequencies and cross tabulations. The huge data set was first simply described using frequencies and cross tabs. When apparent differences did emerge from the descriptive data, these differences were declared as Contingency tables and tested for significance using Chi-Square analysis.

13.2 Summary of results

13.2.1 General trends

As a general comment, using summaries of the statistics, more than 60 per cent of all the respondents felt that all the assistants should be trained to support mathematics, reading, good behaviour, ICT, first aid and supporting teachers in the classroom.

Over 50 per cent of all respondents agreed that all assistants should be trained to support pupils' spelling, handwriting, understanding child development and to the role and induction of their job.

Thirty five per cent of the respondents felt all assistants should receive training so that they could support pupils' study skills or counselling and 45 per cent to support science.

Paramedical courses were not deemed a high training priority and were requested for all assistants by the following percentage of respondents.

TABLE 14: PARAMEDICAL COURSES AS REQUESTED BY ALL RESPONDENTS (N=144)

Course requested	Percentage of Respondents (Yes)
Speech and language development	47
Speech therapy	30
Supporting medical illness	26
Physiotherapy	21
Occupational therapy	20

Yet all the head teachers and the SENCOs agreed that not every assistant required training in all of the areas. This rose to as high as 41 per cent for medical illness and 36 per cent for study skills and dropped to as few as 10 per cent for supporting teachers in the classroom, 11 per cent for Mathematics and 12 per cent for ICT.

The Head teachers and their middle managers, the SENCOs, offered varying descriptions as to the assistants training needs in their schools.

13.2.2 Secondary school responses

In the secondary sector the SENCOs also requested other training in the following areas:

TABLE 15: ASSISTANT TRAINING REQUESTED BY SECONDARY SENCOs (n=4)

Number of SENCOs	Supporting the following curriculum area
3	ICT
1	Diagnostic testing
1	Differentiation
1	Sensory impairment

None of the secondary head teachers who responded indicated that their assistants had training needs other than those already ticked. Table 18 indicates their training priorities:

TABLE 16: ASSISTANT TRAINING PRIORITIES REQUESTED BY SECONDARY HEAD TEACHERS AND SENCOs

N=6 Head teachers	N=20 SENCOs	Supporting the following curriculum area or skills
2	-	Speech and language development
2	3	ICT
1	2	Behaviour
1	4	Reading
1	2	Spelling
2	2	Supporting teachers in the classroom
-	1	Counselling
-	1	Mathematics
-	2	First Aid
-	2	Study skills
-	1	Differentiation
-	1	Occupational therapy
-	1	Handwriting

Training for specific methods and commercial packages were requested as follows:

TABLE 17: ASSISTANT TRAINING REQUIRED IN SPECIFIC METHODS AND COMMERCIAL PACKAGES AS DETAILED BY SECONDARY HEAD TEACHERS AND SENCOs

(n=4) Head teachers	(N=3) SENCOs	Supporting the following curriculum area or skills
3	1	Reading Recovery
1	-	Beat Dyslexia
-	1	Social Skills
-	1	Working in special schools
-	1	ICT
-	1	Distar

13.2.3 Primary school responses

In the primary sector, the head teachers and SENCOs added the following to their assistants' training needs.

TABLE 18: ASSISTANT TRAINING REQUESTED BY PRIMARY HEAD TEACHERS AND SENCOs

(N=5) Head teachers	(N=7) SENCOs	Supporting the following curriculum area or skills
2	2	Special educational needs
4	-	Monitoring and record keeping
2	1	Professionalism in the assistants role
1	1	A curriculum specialism
1	-	Parent partnership
-	2	Dyslexia
-	1	Arts and crafts
-	1	Autism
-	1	Child psychology

Both groups prioritised their assistants' training needs as follows:

TABLE 19: ASSISTANT TRAINING PRIORITISED BY PRIMARY HEAD TEACHERS AND SENCOs

N=40 Head teachers	N=49 SENCOs	Supporting the following curriculum area or skills
19	19	Mathematics
17	15	Reading
11	10	ICT
10	13	Behaviour
8	13	Speech and language development
8	3	First Aid
4	9	Supporting teachers in the classroom
3	5	The role of the assistant
2	1	Child development
1	2	Handwriting
1	7	Spelling
1	-	National Curriculum
1	-	Counselling
1	3	Individual education programmes
-	3	Science

Training in the following specific methods and commercial packages were requested for the assistants.

TABLE 20: ASSISTANT TRAINING REQUIRED IN SPECIFIC METHODS AND COMMERCIAL PACKAGES AS DETAILED BY PRIMARY HEAD TEACHERS AND SENCOs

N=14 Head teachers	N=20 SENCOs	Supporting the following curriculum area or skills
18	22	Reading recovery
3	3	Kumon maths
2	3	Skill Teach
2	-	Beat Dyslexia
1	1	Counselling
1	-	Any help to do job better
1	-	Phonics
-	1	Distar
-	1	Portage

13.2.4 Informal comments

Room for informal comments at the end of the questionnaire allowed the Head teachers and SENCOs to express more personal concerns as qualitative responses.

13.2.5 Summary of the head teachers' qualitative responses

The head teachers made relatively few comments. However, 5 respondents stated that their assistants availability for any training would depend on the level of cover offered.

More positively, 4 respondents welcomed the fact that the LEA was taking an interest in the assistants' personal development. Another was concerned that there would be equality of opportunity to receive training not more opportunities for larger primary schools or those with a higher incidence of special educational needs. One request was made for recognised qualifications to follow any training, yet another that pay should be linked to expertise.

Finally, 1 of the head teachers requested that the LEA should not constantly change the assistants round from school to school, especially if they had been trained. He also expressed concern that,

"The least qualified people seem always to be in the front line with pupils having the greatest need."

13.2.6 Summary of the SENCOs' responses

The SENCOs on the other hand only made 3 comments between them. However, these were all pertinent, pragmatic and succinct, directed to the heart of meeting pupils' needs.

"If a child has a specific training need, training needs to take place before contact begins."

"Its difficult to prioritise training as needs change according to the needs of the children on the SEN register."

"The training my assistants have received has not only increased their subject area knowledge, but also given them a clear focus and confidence for dealing with our children."

13.3 Chapter Summary

More than two thirds of the secondary schools and more than half the primary schools in the Borough responded to their questionnaires.

All parties (Head teachers and SENCOs) from the two sectors largely matched in their prioritisation of assistant training required. This included training in mathematics, reading, ICT, behaviour, speech and language development and first aid.

Chapter 14: A DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES 5, 6 AND 7.

14.0 Introduction

This section discusses both the results of the postal questionnaire to the assistants and the future training needs of this para-professional group as ascertained by postal questionnaire to the Head teachers and special needs co-ordinators of all the Borough's schools as follows,

- 14.1 The prior training and experience of the assistants
- 14.2 The assistants self perceived training needs
- 14.3 A discussion of schools' needs for assistant training

14.1 The prior training and experience of the assistants

This large assistant survey provided a wealth of information regarding the previous experience and training of the LEAs current para-professional group.

Nearly all had children themselves and a majority claimed that they had helped bring up a handicapped or difficult child, nursed ill children or helped in a play group. Many had also been voluntary helpers in school before taking up paid employment as an assistant. Indeed a much smaller minority had had paid work with children in another capacity. Just over $\frac{1}{10}$ had worked as a childminder or nanny and a very few as a foster parent. It seems likely that this group of individuals had experience of schools through direct contact with their children and were not applying for jobs in systems that they had no knowledge or understanding about at all.

Paradoxically, one might wonder whether their limited experience of school life brought about a narrowly prescriptive perception of what the job that they were applying for would involve - before they took up employment! This might be especially so if they had had little experience of SEN pupils as appears to be the case. Of the wide range of other relevant experience the assistants felt that they had brought to the job only a small handful stated that they had worked with "handicapped teenagers".

Within the group, 16 of the total number had a degree and 7 some kind of teachers certificate. Otherwise nearly three quarters stated that they had achieved some sort of

qualification during their compulsory school life. This, of course, means that more than a quarter of the assistants working with SEN pupils in the LEA have no school qualifications whatsoever, although it is possible that they may have taken some of the secretarial examinations listed.

A good one third of the group had taken post compulsory education and more than one fifth were NNEB trained. Surprisingly few (15) had any professional medical training as a qualification although more than half the group had a first aid certificate.

The range of qualifications evidenced is quite narrow and limited very largely to compulsory school or FE qualifications. Other relevant training mentioned by the assistants focused largely on courses which would help them in their day to day working practice with individual pupils, for example, portage, counselling, Makaton etc., with understanding the complexity of school management, for example, governor training or supporting and enhancing their skills and knowledge in a particular curriculum area of dyslexia, IT or being a swimming instructor.

A large majority of the total number of respondents (nearly 80 per cent) had worked for the LEA for at least 3 years and a relatively small number of people (72 or 16 per cent) had been employed within the previous 2 years, reflecting perhaps the degree of rationalisation that had taken place in the previous 12 months as the moratorium on assistants had held and vacancies were not filled. However, bearing in mind how long these individuals had been in post, abysmally few indeed with the exception of the 54 per cent who had had some IT inset, claimed to have received any other type of relevant training to meet the needs of the pupils they were working with.

By and large, the assistants who worked in special schools experienced the longest working week. They were also well-established members of staff. In part this may be attributed to the fact that auxiliary help for teachers has a long tradition in special schools.

14.2 The assistants' self perceived training needs

From the reports of officers in the LEA, this para-professional group's numbers had quickly grown so large and unwieldy that any LEA training simply was not feasible and no training other than the schools own INSET had been offered for some years.

It appeared that as the LEA's only resource to maintain the effective inclusion of statemented pupils of all ages in mainstream schools, the assistants themselves recognised that they did have substantial training needs in a variety of curricular areas. In fact, the group were not particularly keen for an induction post employment or to learn more about the role of the assistant. Rather the following courses were prioritised by more than 20 per cent of the assistants; speech and language development, behaviour management, mathematics, reading and information technology. Further analysis revealed that it was the primary and secondary assistants who were keen to pursue the more academic skills required by pupils, for example, spelling, reading, science, mathematics, handwriting and study skills.

The special schools were more likely to request basic programmes for physiotherapy and knowledge of speech and language development, but not courses for carrying out speech therapy programmes. They were also less likely to request ICT training and reading courses than anticipated. More in depth research would be needed to establish whether there is enough professional expertise in special schools, for example, speech therapists, for assistants not to feel the need for more training in some health authority related programmes. Perhaps special schools are more likely to have resident health professionals who carry out the majority of individual education programmes themselves without relying on additional support, or it may be that the medical staff are being recognised by the assistants for the informal yet informative INSET they have already given to those who need it?

Although a quarter of the group stated that they wished to stay in or work in a special school, nearly half the group had a more open view of any future training and suggested that they might use the courses as a stepping stone to Higher and other

qualifications. Few (15 per cent) said that they would work outside education, say in social services.

Again, a handful of assistants took the time to assert their need for recognition of the training that they had already completed. Their frustration was evident when they discussed their lack of a career structure or of any financial reward to extra training.

There were more positive and thoughtful comments from assistants who recognised the benefits of talking to other assistants in other schools and visiting or work shadowing colleagues as well. Most of the group who responded wished further training to take place during the day.

It seems appropriate to close this discussion with the specific observation that one assistant made regarding the needs of the SEN pupils themselves and as such was reflected by so many other who were concerned to "do anything that would help me do my job better".

These comments all show some realisation that their training could only be part of a process. This process was inexorably related to the curriculum that schools as an organisation had to take on board, especially when identifying the skills SEN pupils would need to be confident, comfortable and reassured, accepted as individual and independent members of the community they would eventually choose to live in.

14.3 A discussion of schools' needs for assistant training

This section discusses the future training needs of this para-professional group as ascertains by postal questionnaire to the Head teachers and special needs co-ordinators of all the Borough's schools.

Overall, a response rate of 66 per cent from the primary and 71 per cent from secondary schools was to be expected if a little low. Yet of those who replied, at least half felt all assistants needed training in mathematics, reading, ICT, spelling, handwriting, child development, their own role as assistants and supporting teachers in the classroom.

These skills and areas of knowledge would undoubtedly be of great value to support pupils with learning difficulties and all other pupils in their schools as well. Paramedical training was requested for all assistants in a relatively small number of schools, perhaps reflecting the needs of a much smaller group of children with very specific needs. However, 40 per cent of respondents did want all their assistants to train in speech and language development.

As indicated, very few staff at either level requested specific training or prioritised training other than reading recovery. It would be interesting to investigate whether this represents a lack of knowledge on the part of schools as to the range of commercial materials or methods available for supporting learning for SEN pupils.

Generally the top 4 training priorities mentioned in the secondary sector coincided with the top 5 in the primary sector, although 3 particular features were apparent. Firstly, Maths was a top priority for both head teachers and SENCOs in the primary schools but was only mentioned by 1 secondary SENCO and no secondary head teacher for whom the acquisition of literacy skills was paramount.

Second, no secondary SENCOs prioritised training in speech and language development although 2 Head teachers did. Does this reflect the fact that most children appear to be able to communicate relatively easily by the time they reach secondary age or that teachers do not recognise their difficulties?

Third and interestingly, a few head teachers were open to the notion of the assistant's role extending to include skills not directly related to 1:1 or small group teaching, for example, parent partnership and monitoring and record keeping.

14.4 General summary Chapters 12 and 13

Lastly the few asides of both head teachers and SENCOs again raised issues of pay, accreditation for training and keeping assistants in their own school once trained. These are echoes of the previous concerns discussed with the SENCOs in Chapter 10 and the assistants themselves in Chapter 11.

It also seems that all the parties in all sectors, the upper and middle management in schools, that is, the head teachers and SENCOs, and the assistants themselves, were most keen to support the basic range of literacy skills and although numeracy skills support was not mentioned at all by secondary head teachers and only by 1 SENCO, it was top priority for both groups in the primary sector.

Perhaps one should conclude this discussion with the most serious consideration of all. Why hasn't the LEA, or indeed Central Government, funded research that evaluates the effectiveness of using assistants to support the inclusion of special educational needs of pupils with statements in mainstream schooling? A review of the literature could find little research discussing the efficacy of support of trained as opposed to untrained assistants or research comparing the effectiveness of supporting pupils with SEN in mainstream classes using classroom assistants as opposed to integrated units. However, the review did demonstrate that training para-professionals enhanced their skills to work more effectively with their client group. (See Lambert and Wertheimer 1988).

In the last sub study, the author presents further methodology and discusses the results of the research programme to discover what progress children made when working with assistants, and to discover if they made more progress when working with assistants who had had some training in the area of the curriculum assessed. This stage of the research project seemed a necessary extension of the overall case study, to discover at least a little evidence on the progress the children made when the LEA had 'de facto' adopted the policy of using assistants in mainstream classes.

Sub Study IV the effects of training assistants on statemented pupils' academic progress

Introduction to Sub Study IV: Chapters 15 and 16

The literature review in Chapter 8, indicated that no studies in the United Kingdom, or indeed found elsewhere, have attempted to measure the efficacy of training teaching assistants in terms of the academic progress of the pupils they support. However, published papers have indicated that the majority of training conducted nationwide at this time was ad hoc, and research tended to pay attention to the experience, prior training and working conditions of assistants as an emergent para-professional group, rather than the impact of assistant training for pupils.

Aims of the sub-study

The primary aim of this sub study is to inquire whether training assistants enhances the academic performance of statemented pupils with special educational needs. Quantitative research methods are employed for this section of the report.

Chapter 15 sets out to investigate whether the intervention of training assistants had any effect on the scholastic attainment of statemented pupils in their charge.

Chapter 16 discusses the findings as centred around Key Issue 8, as follows:

Key Issue 8

To evaluate the effectiveness of appropriate training for teaching assistants in terms of pupil progress.

Chapter 15: THE EFFECTS OF TRAINING ASSISTANTS ON STATEMENTED PUPILS' PROGRESS: AN EVALUATION

15.0 Introduction: Aim of this chapter

This chapter investigates the results of training assistants to enhance the academic performance of all the statemented pupils with special educational needs, using quantitative research methods

15.1 Methodology

The general design of this study was a test- intervention-retest design in three secondary schools with no intervention in two control schools. The intervention was to train all the teaching assistants who were working with statemented pupils in the three schools over a two year period. The assistants in the control schools undertook no training at all during this time.

The statemented pupils in all five schools were tested for academic attainment three times between the Autumn term 1993 and the end of the Summer term 1995. Testing took place at the start of the assistants' training, at the end of the training period in the Summer term 1994 and twelve months after the training had finished in the Summer term 1995. In all, the training took place over a period of four school terms.

A more detailed explanation regarding the methodology follows as,

15.1.1 The sample of schools

15.1.2 The assistants data set and details of their training programme

15.1.3 The sample of pupils

15.1.4 Data collection methods chosen

Next a detailed results section follows an analysis of the collected data. A further discussion of the results may be found in Chapter 16.

15.1.1 The sample of schools

Of the 14 secondary schools in the Borough, five were incorporated into the study. The 3 intervention schools, D, P and R, were all chosen because the researcher had worked in each as the school's psychologist. She had also briefly worked in E but chose H as the second control school because of the number of statemented pupils and its close geographical proximity to the Schools' Psychological Service. The schools

were also matched in terms of age and size of pupil population, free school meal uptake and the number of statemented pupils.

A description of each school was drafted using information from the last 1991 census of the Metropolitan Borough Council Wards. These profiles provided a helpful update on the socio-economic data available for the electoral ward of the schools studied. A summary of the analysis indicated that all 5 schools were smaller institutions, which expected to educate all pupils of secondary age living within the local ward until they were aged 16. Pupils attended post-16 education at the local Further Education college. Statemented pupils were supported in mainstream classes in the three intervention and one of the control schools, although the last control school, E, streamed by pupil ability.

The figures quoted by SENCOs' interviews, OFSTED reports and other published LEA figures to build a school analysis for each of the 5 schools taking part, all indicate a sharp rise in the number of assistants and statemented pupils from Christmas 1994 and continuing to a peak in late 1995. (Complete schools' analysis in Appendix 7)

15.1.2 The assistants data set and details of their training programme

The assistants in 3 intervention schools, D, P and R, were trained to support

1. Pupils' maths skills development;
2. Pupils' good behaviour;
3. Pupils' literacy skills development;
4. Pupils' non verbal life and social skills;

No training was ensured by agreement in the 2 other control comprehensive schools (E and H). In fact during the time of this study, the training in the 3 schools was actually the only LEA training offered at all to any centrally employed assistants. To avoid further effect, there were no other measures in the control schools, e.g. assistant questionnaires or management surveys.

Due to the peripatetic nature of their employment, a core of 20 assistants (6 from D, 5 from R and 9 from P) took all 4 courses. However, all newly appointed assistants to the schools were encouraged to take the training offered. Each module was discrete and did not expect any baseline of skills or knowledge.

All the training took place between the Summer term 1993 and the Summer term 1994. The courses required 24 hours of group contact with the tutors and additional individual tutorials, as requested or deemed necessary by the tutor. These were generally short chats at break times or immediately following a session.

Each assistant received 1 credit at Level 2 (equitable to GCSE standard), accreditation from the Open College Network for attending the course and completing the course sheets during class time. A further 2 credits at Level 3 (equivalent to 'A' level standard) was awarded for additional home study and the production of an essay or perhaps a seminar or case study.

Generally, the assistants found the courses useful as general background knowledge, especially about their own schools and the LEA's SEN system and policies. The tutors were well regarded speech therapists, LEA learning support teachers and psychologists. The venue, the local professional development centre, was thought to be central and appropriate.

The delayed training for the assistants in the control schools was a means of managing the very restricted training resources. An evaluation of the methods of meeting special needs is an ethically necessary part of the process of meeting those needs, i.e. to determine the extent to which the methods chosen are actually achieving the desired ends.

The fact that training took place at all indicated general support for effective special needs provision from management. The LEA's psychologists and learning support teachers, who knew the different school systems taught the assistants. These professionals often personally knew the assistants in their working role and, more importantly, knew the pupils themselves. This added value to the quality of any dialogue mediating the workplace, the training, the relationships between the assistants and pupils and the various needs of individual pupils. Training was expected to cover an understanding of basic numeracy, literacy and comprehension skills. It was expected that these skills were generic and that they would allow effective support to pupils across the curriculum. Courses on behaviour management and improving non verbal social communication were included, so that assistants could set behavioural borders and recognise the pupils' own style of communication more readily. The workshop nature of each course was specifically created to support the self reflection of an adult

model of learning. It was felt that this would improve the assistants' skills, knowledge and confidence in their job.

15.1.3 The Sample of Pupils

The details of every statemented pupil's educational disability, gender, family situation, presence/absence of trauma, whether they received free school meals and school year at entry to study were recorded from all five schools. These details of each pupil's situation, which might be relevant to the intervention outcome, were recorded as follows (Appendix 12).

Category 1 The nature of educational disability, taken from one of 6 categories, including:

- emotional and behavioural difficulties
- specific learning difficulties (dyslexia)
- sensory impairment
- physical disability
- medical difficulty

Category 2 Gender: male/female

Category 3 The pupil's family situation on a 6 point categorical scale including:

- living with 2 biological parents
- living with step parent
- looked after child
- living with one parent
- living with grandparents
- looked after child

Category 4 The presence of trauma during any period of the research, defined as

- parental separation or divorce
- bereavement
- chronic illness
- more than 80 per cent absence from school

Category 5 Individual pupil take up of free school meals.

Category 6 The school year of entry to study. The pupils were recorded in Year 7, 8 or 9, as an indication of their age at the start of the training intervention.

15.1.4 Data collection methods chosen

The assistants' training was carried out between the Autumn term 1993 and July 1995. Data collection of the pupils took place over a 2 year period and involved hundreds of hours of testing. The quantitative data was the data collection of every statemented pupil in Years 7, 8 and 9 in all 5 schools.

All the statemented pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 in all 5 schools were tested for literacy and numeracy skills attainment. Each pupil's reading age and a comprehension age were tested and analysed using the Neale Individual Analysis of Reading. This instrument was chosen because it provided objective measures of these skills. Each pupil's number skills age was recorded using the British Ability Scales (BAS) number skills test, a psychometric test with use restricted to psychologists.

15.2 Data Analysis

Although the researcher had taken statistical advice from the outset, the mathematical analysis of the pupils' data eventually involved a complex 3D matrix, which required the advice of a professional statistician.

Pre intervention test (T1) was taken in the Autumn term of 1993. Statemented pupils were tested again at the end of the academic year in July 1994 (T2) when all the assistants' training had been completed. The pupils took further final tests 12 months after the training had finished in July 1995 (T3).

The first time point was performed prior to any relevant training in the areas under investigation. Thus each pupil had results recorded at this point as a baseline (the time point at entry into the study). Also, the school year at this time point was taken as an indication of age of the pupil. Only those pupils with a baseline and at least one other assessment were included in the analyses. Out of a database of 128 pupils, 99 were included in the final analysis.

In addition to the data collection and the analysis described below, an initial matching of the attainments of the pupils was performed. It seemed reasonable to assume that the pupils in all the schools would be matched as groups on the variables at the outset of the study, due to the general similarities of the schools and the pupil characteristics within them. In fact when the initial attainments of the pupils at T1 in

both groups were checked statistically using chi-square, there were no significant differences between the groups' mean attainments.

The primary aim of the study was to investigate whether intervention had any effect on the last two assessments in maths, comprehension and reading. Schools were, therefore, classified into intervention status - 'yes' for those receiving training, and 'no' for those not.

The baseline assessments in each of the three areas were first investigated for differences between schools and age of pupil (as defined above) using analysis of variance (ANOVA), prior to the analysis of any effect of intervention. The model for the examination of baseline age evaluations took the form;

$$\text{maths age} = \text{school} + \text{school year (7, 8 or 9)} + \text{random error}$$

The main analysis used a repeated measure ANOVA, to allow for measurements across time on the same pupil and took the following form.

$$\text{maths age} = \text{time*intervention} + \text{random error}$$

The assumptions of Normality for ANOVA were examined by the use of Normal probability plots and examination of residuals to assess homogeneity of variance requirements.

Due to the investigative nature of the study and the high number of statistical tests involved, the one per cent level of significance was used.

Where the time effect was statistically significant (as indicated by the Greenhouse-Geisser adjusted level of significance) the evaluated age was assessed at each time point individually using the ANOVA model. When several evaluations are taken on the same individual those evaluations tend to be correlated with each other. As these evaluations are taken over time the correlation can be taken into account by performing a repeated measures analysis of variance. This type of analysis enables us to investigate the effects between pupils (intervention or no intervention), within pupils (time) and any interactions between the two types of effects (intervention by time) as follows,

$$\text{maths age} = \text{intervention} + \text{random error}$$

This model was repeated for comprehension and reading evaluated ages.

The least squares means (the expected value had the design of the study been balanced across the two groups) and corresponding 95% confidence intervals were also produced for each of the three parameters at each time point and intervention status (yes/no).

Due to the investigative nature of the study and the high number of statistical tests involved, the 1% level of significance was used. All tests were two-tailed.

15.3 Results

The results of the intervention, that is, comparing the academic attainments of pupils at the three intervention and the two control schools, are set out in the following order,

15.3.1 Results of investigating baseline characteristics of the pupils (T1)

15.3.2 Baseline assessment information (T1)

15.3.3 Mathematics assessment (T1-T3)

15.3.4 Reading comprehension assessment (T1-T3)

15.3.5 Reading age assessment. (T1-T3)

15.3.1 Results of investigating baseline characteristics of the pupils.

As the measurement at baseline showed no differences in ability or personal details, thereafter the scores of each child were compared with their own baselines inside their own group. Thus the measures of change were the sum of individual changes, rather than the average for the group. It is possible that the “average for the group”, may have been slightly distorted due to any differences within group composition e.g. the nature of pupils’ disabilities. The following table summarises the frequency of categories in each of the recorded baseline characteristics:

TABLE 21: FREQUENCY OF CATEGORIES AS RECORDED IN BASELINE CHARACTERISTICS

Category		Intervention n = 63	Non-intervention n = 36	Total pupils n = 99
Type of Learning Disability				
	1 Physical	1	2	3
	2 Emotional and/or Behavioural	8	2	10
	3 Sensory deaf/blind	0	0	0
	4 Medical	2	0	2
	5 Congenital	3	0	3
	6 Solely learning difficulties	37	25	62
	7 Specific Learning Difficulty Dyslexia	12	7	19
Gender				
	1 Female	19	8	27
	2 Male	44	28	72
Family				
	1 Single parent	12	3	15
	2 Grandparents	1	1	2
	3 Fostered	0	0	0
	4 Looked after child	2	1	3
	5 2 parents (biological)	41	23	64
	6 2 parents (step)	7	8	15
Trauma*				
	1 Yes	6	2	8
	2 No	57	34	91
Free school meal entitlement				
	1 Yes	19	18	37
	2 No	44	18	62
School year start**				
	7	41	28	69
	8	18	8	26
	9	3	0	3

*Trauma: e.g. accident, divorce, bereavement, parent in prison

** One pupil did not have a year recorded

The majority of pupils in the study were type 8, solely learning difficulties = (62/99), gender=2, male (72/99), family=5, living with both parents (64/99), had not suffered any trauma=type 2, (91/99) and were in year 7 at entry to the study (69/98)- one pupil not having a year recorded.

The majority also had a statement of special educational needs for general learning difficulties and/or dyslexia (72/99). Almost two thirds lived in families including both their biological parents. Eight pupils had suffered a traumatic incident during the duration of the intervention. The father of one had been sent to prison and another pupil had been involved in a car accident and broken his leg. Other pupils had been subject to family divorce or bereavement.

A total of 60 per cent (36/63) of the sample analysed were from the intervention schools. No formal statistical analyses were performed using the category of disability information, due to such large majorities in a single category. This was a regrettable. It would have been useful to have information about whether children with certain types of special need benefited more than others from the assistants' training. However, attempting to categorise children by their type of special need and plan on that basis does ignore the general drive for inclusion arguments. It also disregards the huge overlap of similar needs across children with different types of primary disability, and so any information arising from such categorization would itself have been very suspect. Chi-Square tests were used to test for significant differences between the two groups of pupils on gender balance and incidence of free school meals. No differences found at $p < .05$ levels.

15.3.2 Assessment of baseline information for pupils' academic attainment

A two-way analysis of variance was used to examine baseline mathematics, comprehension and reading evaluated ages. These comparisons showed no statistically significant differences between any of the intervention and comparison schools or the school year at entry to study. This indicates that the intervention and control groups were effectively matched on those measures at the beginning of the study.

15.3.3 Mathematics assessment

The repeated measures ANOVA showed a statistically significant difference between the time points in Maths assessments ($p < .001$). The interaction between time

and intervention status was not significant ($p=0.88$). When this was investigated at each of the three time points individually using ANOVA, fitting the intervention status, no statistically significant differences between the intervention and non-intervention schools was found. The 95 per cent confidence interval from the intervention group overlaps that from the non-intervention group at each of the time points.

The least squares means (lsm), and corresponding 95% confidence intervals (95% CI), for evaluated age (months) are given below:

Intervention status	Baseline T1		assessment T2		assessment T3	
	lsm	95%CI	lsm	95%CI	lsm	95%CI
No	89	84 - 94	96	91 - 100	97	91 - 103
Yes	91	87 - 95	98	94 - 101	99	94 - 103

Both groups of schools show an increase in evaluated maths age, compared with prior to the start of relevant intervention, but there is little difference between the intervention/non-intervention groups at each time point in the study.

15.3.4 Reading comprehension assessment

In assessment of comprehension, there was both a statistically significant time difference ($p<.001$), and a time by intervention status difference ($p<.001$), i.e. there was a difference over time, regardless of intervention, plus a difference between intervention/non-intervention was shown at the second evaluation (end of year) and at the final evaluation (12 months post study). Only the 95 per cent confidence intervals at baseline were shown to overlap.

As seen in the Maths assessment, both sets of scores increase over time. Comprehension evaluated age showed a higher mean comprehension age than those in the non-intervention schools at both assessment T2 and assessment T3 ($p<.001$ in both cases).

The corresponding least squares means, and 95% confidence intervals, are summarised below:

Intervention status	Baseline T1		assessment T2		assessment T3	
	lsm	95%CI	lsm	95%CI	lsm	95%CI
No	73	56-80	80	70-90	82	73-92
Yes	77	74-85	102	94-110	108	100-115

15.3.5 Reading age assessment

Similar results were seen in reading. Statistically significant time and time by intervention status effects were shown ($P < .001$ and $p < 0.0081$, respectively). At the individual time points only the final assessment showed a statistically significant difference between the intervention and non-intervention schools ($p = .0075$). The difference at the middle assessment, however, was only marginally non-significant ($p = 0.011$).

The least squares means, and 95% confidence intervals, are summarised below:

Intervention status	Baseline T1		assessment T 2		assessment T3	
	lsm	95%CI	lsm	95%CI	lsm	95%CI
No	71	65 - 77	79	70 - 88	84	85 - 93
Yes	77	71 - 82	94	87 - 101	101	93 - 108

Again the scores increase with time in both groups, but the advantages of the intervention group over non-intervention are marked at the final assessment. However, the 95 per cent confidence intervals show the high degree of variation in the data.

15.4 Conclusion

The assessments of maths, comprehension and reading ages show that the pupils, in general, tend to improve with time, regardless of any intervention. However, the results from this study suggest that in comprehension and reading ages the intervention schools show a greater improvement compared with no intervention at the end of the academic year, and that this improvement is maintained (and possibly increased) 12 months later.

It must be stressed that interpretation of these results should be made with caution, as statistical issues such as the evaluation of sample size requirements and stratification techniques to achieve an acceptable distribution of pupils across relevant categories were not addressed at the planning stage. For these reasons this report was restricted to a single analysis examining the effect of intervention, without any investigation into baseline characteristics, school and age at entry into the study.

15.5 Chapter Summary

Five schools were included in this study, which was set up to investigate the effect of intervention in the training of assistants. The assistants from three of these schools received this training, but teachers from the two remaining schools did not.

Pupils were assessed for their maths, comprehension and reading ages prior to any training, at the end of the two school years during which training was given, and at 12 months after completion of training.

A repeated measures analysis of variance model was used to analyse the data. Evaluated age was shown to increase with an increase in time, regardless of any intervention in training, across all three assessments. However, in reading and comprehension there was a greater improvement shown in those pupils from the intervention schools than in those from the non-intervention schools. This higher level of improvement was shown in comprehension age at the end of the school year in which training was given, and at 12 months later in both reading and comprehension ages.

It was not possible to ensure an acceptable distribution of pupils across relevant categories in the five schools. The qualitative information recorded for each pupil, regarding type of learning difficulty, gender, family situation, presence/absence of trauma and eligibility for free school meals, was unique to the individual attending each school and really represented a true description of the personal circumstances of all the stated pupils to be found in the schools at that time.

For these distribution reasons, this section of the study was also restricted to a single analysis examining the effect of the intervention, without any investigation into baseline characteristics, school and age of entry into the study. However, the assessments of maths, comprehension and reading ages show that the pupils, in general, tend to improve with time, regardless of any intervention. In fact, the results from this study suggest that in comprehension and reading ages, the intervention schools show a greater improvement compared with no intervention at the end of the academic year, and that this improvement is maintained (and possibly increased) 12 months later.

Chapter 16: THE EFFECTS OF TRAINING ASSISTANTS ON STATEMENTED PUPILS' ACADEMIC PROGRESS: A DISCUSSION OF SUB-STUDY IV

16.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses key issue eight and so evaluates the effectiveness of appropriate training for teaching assistants in terms of pupils' academic progress.

16.2 Discussion

The results of this sub-study appear strongly to suggest that statemented pupils' maths, reading and reading comprehension skills increase as they grow older. However in reading and comprehension there was a greater improvement shown in those pupils working with trained assistants from the intervention schools than in those pupils studying in the non-intervention schools. This higher level of improvement was shown in comprehension age at the end of the school year in which training was given, and at 12 months later in both reading and comprehension ages.

It remains for further research to examine why supporting reading skills generally is more effective for pupils taught by trained teaching assistants than supporting mathematics. It is possible that the assistants themselves felt more confident in their own skills and knowledge in this area. In fact an informal measure of the assistants' level of literacy is taken when they complete the application forms for their post. The LEA does not interview prospective candidates unable to read and complete these forms correctly. No such measure of an assistant's level of understanding of numeracy is required

It should also be noted that the assistants were separately trained in strategies to enhance pupils' confidence, self esteem and attention to task, as well as in the discrete curricular skills and knowledge.

In addition, there may be other characteristics of the training itself, which have contributed to its effectiveness, although these particular possibilities would not address the differences currently found between the effectiveness of training in literacy support skills and training in Mathematics support skills. Such characteristics might be:

* the comparative length of the programme. Even one module (the minimum amount of training possible for assistants whose pupils were being monitored) comprised about 30 hours of training, as well as completion of written work for accreditation. This is a substantial amount of training for people who previously had undergone virtually no training related to education, and so its impact through novelty, authority and relevance for practice on the trainees may have been greater than the effect of, say, an LEA continued professional development course for teachers.

* the fact that, in addition to the length of each module, most assistants took more than one module and saw this particular training as an important personal challenge, achievement and career related commitment. These factors would have increased the assistants' commitment to the learning.

* the fact that the costs of the training were supported by the LEA, and the time was taken as work time would increase the learners' perceptions that their role was valued by the school management and the LEA and increase their identification with the learning.

* the tutors were the current author and other educational psychologists and would have been known to the assistants as part of the local educational education hierarchy. This would have increased their credibility as tutors.

It may be that including other aspects of the children's learning in the courses could have further increased the effect of the training across the set of modules. The answer to this will have to wait for further research, on such topics as medical difficulties, physical difficulties, the role of the assistant, counselling skills etc.

How far is it necessary to give the assistants more understanding of the complex socio-emotional needs or strategies that SEN pupils often misinterpret or feel overwhelmed by?

Certainly, the early indications of this study show that pupils should be supported / taught by a para-professional group trained in a number of aspects of special educational needs teaching and learning.

Current developments and local training initiatives within the LEA pose the question that this part of the research might be considered unethical today, in as much as it could be said that training was withheld from some assistants in the comparison schools for a period of two years, therefore some children possibly did not have as much effective support in school as they might. This is because the time resources, which, in fact, were used in conducting the evaluations in the intervention and comparison schools, (the surveys of necessary content and structure of training from the perspectives of the assistants themselves and the Heads and SENCO's of the schools concerned, and the attainment testing of the children involved), were not used to train the assistants in the comparison schools as quickly as they could have been. In turn, this might have meant that some children's attainments could have suffered as a result of the research being carried out. This, however, assumes that the educational processes in schools are always effective in delivering the desired outcomes without any evaluation, a very questionable assumption. Without detailed evaluations, educationists risk spending much time and resources on processes that have very little or no effect on children's achievements, but satisfy the adults involved because of the face validity of the procedures. This is a considerably greater fall from ethical grace than devoting some resources to questions of evaluation, which might have been directed towards more direct service provision, especially if that service provision is not already thoroughly evaluated. Evaluation is an ethical necessity for effective education.

16.3 Summary

The results of Section IV of this study indicate that pupils with learning difficulties supported by trained assistants make more progress in their reading ages and reading comprehension than similarly able pupils supported by untrained assistants.

Chapter 17: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

17.0 Introduction to the aims of this chapter

This thesis has charted the resolve of central government, the case study LEA and a group of teachers and their SENCOs in five local mainstream secondary schools to provide an inclusive education for statemented pupils in their charge.

The data gathering for the research began in September 1993 and ran until the end of the academic year, July 1995. All the documented sub studies took place at designated times within this period.

Chapter 17 is the final discussion and concludes the author's review of the research results. Perhaps more importantly, six years after the study, it discusses whether the research might inform and contribute to the debate regarding how to educate all our children as citizens in the second millennium. Has the research made any difference as to how one might support and measure the efficacy of education for one of the most vulnerable groups in society, pupils with special educational needs - and if so, how? Has investigating the Key Issues had any impact on the education provided for statemented pupils in the case study LEA in 2002?

The chapter is sub divided into several different areas to promote logical argument and embrace the complexities of supporting inclusive education for pupils with a wide range of learning ability. These are as follows,

17.1 Review of methodologies used in this study

17.2 The philosophy of inclusive education

17.3 The role of central government

17.4 The role of LEAs

17.5 School systems and continuing professional development

17.6 Teaching assistants supporting teaching and learning

17.7 Staff training in the case study LEA since the end of the study

17.8 Lessons learnt

17.9 Summary and Conclusion

The key issues restated serve as a reminder of the original focus of the study.

Key Issue 1

To describe and evaluate how legislation and national initiatives influenced SEN policy, administration and financial management in the case study LEA.

Key Issue 2

To describe and evaluate the impact of the case study LEA's SEN policies on the level of SEN resourcing offered to schools.

Key Issue 3

To describe and evaluate the pattern of recruitment, deployment and management of assistants by one LEA.

Key Issue 4

To describe and evaluate the deployment and management of assistants within schools in one LEA.

Key Issue 5

To describe the prior experience and training of assistants in the study LEA.

Key Issue 6

To ascertain the assistants self perceived future training needs.

Key Issue 7

To ascertain the future training needs of the assistants as perceived by the Borough's Head teachers and Special Needs Co-ordinators.

Key Issue 8

To evaluate the effectiveness of appropriate training for teaching assistants in terms of pupils' academic progress.

17.1 Review of methodologies used in this study

The study began with a central interest in the role and effectiveness of the support assistant in supporting children with special needs. Fairly soon, however, it was realised that to give a complete picture of how the study authority had used assistants in supporting children, the investigation had to include some aspects of central government's policies and the central administration of the LEA. The two main aspects were the gradually changing financial arrangements under which the authority supported schools to provide special educational provision in mainstream schools, and the developments of the special needs "policies" as an organised way of co-ordinating

activities across the borough. At this point it became clear that the case study methodology was a necessary theoretical frame of reference, to incorporate as much relevant information as possible into the examination of the questions round the deployment of the assistants, in what was seen as an inclusive pattern of local special educational provision. Looking back from the end of the study and its report, the adoption of the case study methodology still seems the appropriate way to conceive of the study, but it could have been extended with advantage in certain areas. In sub-studies I and II, the principal area for possible further extension would be to broaden out the groups from whom information was gathered during the central data-gathering period of the study, 1993-95. In particular, the views of the head teachers generally, and possibly the heads of the five schools directly involved in the other aspects of the study, could have been included in gathering data about the financial arrangements for supporting inclusion- or integration as it would have been referred to then. This could have been collected as interview data, probably in an unstructured interview format, and would have given a very useful school based perspective on the effects of the "policies" and the financial arrangements. It would also have given a more direct way of assessing the influence of the overall aims of inclusion in the head teachers and other professionals' view of the nature of the provision. This in turn could have clarified further the possible role of the LEA in supporting the aims of inclusion. Other groups from whom similar information could have been sought might have been educational psychologists and support teaching teams, the governing bodies of the five study schools, and the parents of the children centrally concerned. In the event, such data was impossible to collect in the context of this study during that period of time, due to the workload of the researcher.

In sub study III, the training, deployment and management of the assistants, was based on anonymous questionnaires, and this still seems an appropriate way to access the information. However, in view of the high level of return of the questionnaires, it would have been helpful if more information had been available about the subcategory of assistants who had returned each questionnaire. This would have been possible if the questionnaire had included such questions as whether the assistant was employed by the LEA or the school.

In sub study IV, the progress made by the children and the possible associations between the progress and the training of the assistants, was in many ways the most time consuming, and gave the most methodological difficulties. It was anticipated that balancing the intervention and non-intervention groups across the various categories of special need and other associated variables would be a difficulty, as the groups should to be as similar as possible. It was also anticipated that individual children with different types of special needs in their statements would join and leave the school over the period of the study. However, the general uncertainty over how accurately the categorisation of special needs taken from the children's records actually reflected the real difficulties of learning faced by the children and the possibility of children having multiple special needs, reduced the possible validity of the matching of the groups. The similar uncertainty of the actual effects of various events which may hinder learning (for example the various classes of trauma recorded) may have had a similar effect. Using simple Chi-square calculations, the intervention and non-intervention groups did not have statistically significant differences between the proportion of children with learning difficulties, with "dyslexia", or with sensory or physical difficulties, when compared with those in each group who had other possible forms of special need. The only possible way of improving experimental control of these special needs factors would have been to do complete re-assessments of all the children using the same criteria at the same time. The groups could also have been matched better if each group (intervention and non-intervention) had been built up by choosing individual children to join the group on the basis of the type of special need they had. This would have meant that the study would have had to be done over a longer period of time, or extra schools added to the intervention and control groups. Neither of these changes would have been possible, and so the current situation is probably the best that can be reasonably hoped for.

17.2 The philosophy of inclusive education

The inclusion debate still exists on many different levels despite many articles covering more than three decades that details its social and academic benefits to SEN pupils. Crowther et al (1999) suggest that empirical research evidence surrounding the inclusion debate draws no firm conclusions and that studies too often have

methodological limitations. Hopefully this study will offer some evidence of a longitudinal study emphasising SEN pupils' academic attainment as a measured outcome of an intervention. Even then, one can monitor the outcome of a particular intervention in its own context, but it is difficult to attribute to the intervention itself and even more far fetched to generalise to other settings. How much research then is needed to confirm findings? Without detailed evaluations, educationists risk spending much time and resources on processes that have very little or no effect on children's achievements, but satisfy the adults involved because of the face validity of the procedures. This is a considerably greater fall from ethical grace than devoting some resources to questions of evaluation that might have been directed towards more direct service provision, especially if that service provision is not thoroughly evaluated already. Evaluation is an ethical necessity for effective education.

17.2.1 Competing Values

Eight years have passed since the start of this study. The philosophical stance of an inclusive school is one that is accessible to all children from the start of their education. Dyson and Millward argue that the focus of inclusion hitherto

'..has been too narrow and the scope of their actions too limited, all they have succeeded in doing is contorting special education into a variety of ever more sophisticated forms without generating the changes in its mainstream environment on which any real removal of barriers depends'. (In Ballard, 1999, p 164)

Norwich (2001) recommends that the education debate discusses the processes of enabling inclusion as well as defining the desired "state" of inclusion because,

"rather than inclusion when we talk about educational values and practices. This double aspect phrase captures some of the need for inclusion to co-exist with other values." (p 21)

For example, and in a broader setting, the rights of parents to choose where their child should be educated has been a widely espoused philosophy that subsequent governments have fostered in the hope of pushing up academic standards. Is it possible that the exercise of that choice by some families might actually disadvantage others? This is an example of different values evoking competing rights. Tensions do exist

about the rights of all children to participate in mainstream schooling. Where are the rights to be educated of 36 children in a class of 37 when one of their number presents with severe and disturbing emotional behaviours that they need constant teacher attention and supervision? In this example, different individuals' rights are competing. One might also configure this tension as the right of the individual versus the right of the group, or the right of the minority set against the majority. Barton and Armstrong (1999) see this as,

"optimising the combination of multiple values" (p5).

Listening to and valuing what children themselves have to say might also be considered fundamental to inclusive education. But what if mainstream pupils say no? They need to have confidence in the informed decision making of adults.

Barton and Slee (1999) argue that schools can only appreciate their purpose and internal values of who is to be valued, why and with what values within broader social and moral terms. The predominantly motivating feature of the last few years has emphasised competition within and between institutions,

"The outcome for schools has been a more fragmented, polarised and selective culture, reinforced by greater surveillance. Survival of the fittest mentality, an increasing interest in image and marketing, is a reflection of the tendency for education to be viewed as a commodity, a private good. This reinforces a desert-based conception of equity (Nozick 1976) which creates winners and losers"(p5).

Society categorises education. Schools have beacon status, are in special measures or are failing. So groups of children are identified by their needs, autistic, EBD or visually impaired etc or by the type of educational programme that they are being offered. Farrell (2000) suggests that even the new draft Code of Practice attempts on the one hand to view pupils' difficulties in terms of one or more general needs in the four areas of communication and interaction; cognition and learning; behaviour, emotional and social development; and sensory and /or physical needs difficulties. The same document then appears to refine its definition by further categorising the areas so that teachers may be better helped to identify need. These contradictory values means that schools that "fail" to live up to the desires and expectations of parents and increase their outputs are named and shamed. This pathologising of a single school is a mirror of society's broader view and has become accepted focus on the political landscape. In terms of the social divide

then, those who already suffer difference, disadvantage and discrimination are seen as failures of their own making and there is little reflection on the wider political and economic role and responsibility of elected governments to support enabling inclusive policy and practice in education. Bicklen (2000) suggests that educators find it difficult not to categorise disability because they too readily imbibe their values through the "dominant culture's non-disabled lens" which they in their turn perpetuate as imposed understanding and popular cultural stereotypes. Instead, he urges mainstream society to honour the contrasts of the different lived experiences of people in our society; to create and find contexts for experiencing competence and to hear the insider's viewpoint about disability. The presumption is that pupils with disabilities already have some insight about the kinds of experiences skills and knowledge they have to enable them to become effective learners. Also, that teachers should not presume that their ideas about what is happening in the classroom accurately reflects how the person with disability experiences them. Archer (2001) too, promotes a shared understanding of the separate and sometimes disparate values of inclusion between policy makers, practitioners and researchers in a way that allows each to reflect on the empirical evidence of different inclusive models.

17.2.2 Professional pressure groups

The mention of the inclusion of children with special educational needs into mainstream classes still promotes highly charged emotional debate. The polarised voices of discord range from the CSIE Inclusion Charter which argues that disabled people who are segregated into special education are discriminated against, to the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) views that it is impractical to educate children with severe and complex needs in mainstream schools. The CSIE claims,

"The charter does not accept that segregating children with disabilities or difficulties in special schools can be classed as positive discrimination on the grounds that the separation is for their benefit. There is now no teaching that can take place in a special school that is not also taking place in an ordinary school, somewhere. The segregation of a minority group, based on a natural attribute such as disability or learning difficulty, gives distorted messages to all members of society as to who is eligible to membership of the mainstream, and who is not.

There is no compelling body of evidence to suggest that segregated special education has significant benefits for pupils compared with ordinary

school placements with appropriate support. On the contrary, American research shows that children do better academically and socially in ordinary schools (Harvard Educational Review, November, 1987). A work produced in 1992 highlighted a string of disturbing findings by different researchers on the negative effects of segregated education." (CSIE p3-4)

Yet the NAHT (1997) supports the need for special schools as a positive choice for,

- * "Children with severe and complex physical, sensory or learning difficulties who require special facilities, teaching methods and expertise. It is impracticable to provide these in a mainstream school.
- * Children with severe emotional and behavioural disorders who have a very great difficulty in forming a relationship with the others. Their behaviour is so extreme and unpredictable that it causes severe disruption and inhibits the learning and progress of others in the school.
- * Children with less severe difficulty of such a complex combination that despite special help in a mainstream school they fail to thrive and they would benefit from the intimate ethos and the setting of the special school." (S5)

This organisation valued special schools as a centre of expertise and specialist facilities in a single resource base. There would also be access to medical and therapeutic input here if necessary. The issue of ensuring value for money and establishing a funding formula for specialised provision including special schools, is clearly underpinning the recommendation of the NAHT report as it looked for the best possible match between pupils need and provision. The Head teachers did not review research and literature that discussed either the philosophy of equality of opportunity for all or heed the calls of various disability pressure groups to be included in mainstream education. Indeed managers who were feeling the tension of providing an adequate education for children who are very challenging to teach wrote this paper, but a definition of severe difficulties is completely tautologous. Who defines severe? Possibly Head teachers and their staff who feel they cannot effectively teach a child in their care, perhaps through lack of skills, knowledge, resources or other effective LEA support systems. It may become a de facto justification of schools' senior management teams desire to be able to exclude anyone they wish. However, they may have some real justification with the resourcing and structure issues if, for example, they claim,

"We are structured, resourced and staffed on the assumption that we lead 25-30 to a class in one room with one adult, with desks, paper and blackboards

as main items of equipment. These arrangements do not permit us to lead effectively some children with complex intellectual and educational needs." (op cit p3)

17.2.3 Availability of resources

One must have sympathy with the above rationale. To some extent the national history of statementing and the local LEA funding for assistant hours, is a recognition of this fact without actually admitting it. Remember, no additional SEN monies have ever been offered by central government to cover the costs of the new statutory procedures begun with the 1981 Education Act.

In fact a DfEE sponsored study, Research Report RR89, (1999) concluded that educational support for sen pupils was "resource intensive", costing £1.5 billion (Audit Commission and HMI, 1992) in England and Wales. The research was based on a survey across 8 LEAs and 33 schools, including 7 different types (primary, secondary and all age-special, primary and secondary mainstream and primary and secondary mainstream with a unit). The team analysed MLD support in 33 schools in 8 education authorities and found a lack of evidence about the effectiveness - or otherwise - of the most common interventions including smaller class sizes, the use of assistants, setting by attainment, intervention by education authorities and differentiation in mainstream classrooms.

This is an interesting study as it is a field study examining on-going practice in schools. The lack of results indicates that at best educational managers need to take seriously questions of evaluation of the effectiveness of their on-going provision for children with special needs. Continuous evaluation is difficult to achieve, however, so the quality of regular services, when they are not being evaluated, needs to be monitored. It also indicated that researchers need to take seriously the definition of the services they are evaluating and that the research is taken far enough to identify the limits of the effectiveness of practices that have been shown to be effective under tightly controlled conditions. Without specification of the context of implementation of educational programmes, blanket assumptions of the effectiveness of any teaching methods by educationists are suspect. In its simplest form, the conclusions of the Newcastle study are hard to interpret except at the broadest level, because contextual factors such as the extent of the training of the classroom assistants involved in the

schools are not mentioned. Even if such factors were outlined in the research report, the training involved in this current study is very likely to be considerably greater than the average across a number of schools in the 8 LEAs discussed in the DfEE 1999 report.

The report did, however, state that it was cheaper to educate children with MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulties) in mainstream rather than special schools and that their education was also marginally better in the mainstream school. The study measured this group as children with milder difficulties who "were making slow but discernible progress within the National Curriculum" (p20), as opposed to those with more severe learning difficulties "making only very limited progress within the National Curriculum". Any of the pupils might also have significant emotional/behavioural and or sensory/medical difficulties. The research described itself as "explorative and its findings as indicative" (p17). The key findings suggested that,

- The costs of pupils vary considerably from school to school
- Special school costs were consistently higher than costs for similar pupils in mainstream schools. The average costs for pupils in units were lower than special school costs but were higher than in mainstream schools in the same phase without units
- There was a considerable variation in costs within the same type of placement.
- Pupils with more severe needs usually but not always attracted more resources.

"Much attention is focussed, in resourcing MLD provision, on identifying pupils' needs and creating provision to meet those needs. However the research findings suggest that much less attention is focused on the questions of whether the resulting pattern of resourcing is *efficient, equitable* and *effective*. There is, therefore an urgent need for schools and LEAs to begin to monitor more closely both how they deploy their resources and the outcomes which that deployment generates."(p 7)

These pupils represented one of the largest groups of pupils with special educational needs and accounts for a significant portion of SEN costs spent.

"The price for support for pupils with mild difficulties ranged from £1,700 to £9,700 and for children with more severe problems from £2,300 to £10,000." (TES 8.1.99 p16)

17.2.4 The efficacy of segregated schooling

There is also some question as to whether children attending special school are effectively taught. In fact the challenge of meeting the needs of these children makes special schools nearly four times more likely to be placed under special measures than a mainstream school - with schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties even more likely to fail inspection and hence to find it hardest to come out of special measures for EBD pupils, while such schools comprise only around 20 per cent of all special schools. (TES. 25.9.1989).

The University of the West of England researched the action plans of special schools placed under special measures and suggested that "defined targets, strong Heads and external support from local authorities" were key factors in improving such schools.

In January 1997, Estelle Morris, the Minister in charge of special schools, stated:

"Inclusion is not being seen as a staging post for total inclusion, but special schools are too isolated, their expertise is locked up. We must be able to pursue their expertise in mainstream schools. They should become specialist schools for SEN, not special schools. (TES 9.1.98)

The Government appeared to stand firm to the notion of inclusion when the Green Paper "Excellence for all Children" (1997) was published. The Right Honourable David Blunkett, MP, stated:

"The great majority of children with SEN will, as adults, contribute economically; all will contribute as members of society. Schools have to prepare all children for these roles. That is a strong reason for educating children with SEN, as far as possible with their peers. Where all children are included as equal partners in the school community, the benefits are felt by all. That is why we are committed to comprehensive and enforceable civil rights for disabled people. Our aspirations as a nation must be for all our people."
(Forward)

Special schools, however, have been a powerful lobby for public relations and, combined with vocal parental pressure groups and huge public sympathy for children in need, LEAs find it difficult to challenge the purpose and culture of a special school. To open up the special school remit, will offer staff the possibility of suddenly engaging in a far wider brief and they may need support to recognise their personal strengths and their new role towards pupils with learning difficulties and CPD contributions to teachers in mainstream schools.

The findings of this case study reflect these tensions. It is argued that without recognition of these philosophical or idealised arguments for inclusion by interested professionals and school managers, the current structures of the LEA may not have been adequate for supporting the inclusion of the vast majority of statemented pupils.

17.3 The role of central government

Throughout the study period, national SEN funding arrangements were described to be various, often tortuous, never equable between LEAs and sometimes legally disputed. In the case study LEA, a lack of funding diminished the training and resources needed for an efficient level of education for pupils with the greatest difficulties to access the curriculum. These tensions have been laid open for examination and analysis.

All the results, followed by a discussion of the relevant key issues at the end of every sub study, indicated that the philosophy of inclusive education has been neither influential nor relevant to the adoption of teaching assistants support to help meet the needs of statemented pupils in mainstream secondary schools. The case study LEA simply had no other substantive special provision readily available to alternatively offer pupils and their families. Indeed the Principal Psychologist had argued that this was a system that was meant to be although there was no mention of the due process of consultation or any public relations exercise to achieve it. The added incentive of this status quo for the LEA was that it now had a fast and effective, albeit unpopular and dubious means of reducing special needs expenditure when necessary, whilst still meeting statutory obligations to statemented pupils. If the SEN budget overran, assistants hours to schools were summarily chopped.

National political restrictions implemented as local financial policy, appear to have completely driven the adoption and maintenance of this inclusive form of provision. The dominance of nationally determined developments in the provision outlined in this case study is a particularly good example of the operation of the philosophy notion of "economic rationalism" (Barton and Lee, 1999). The political interest is to minimise expenditure and maximise financial accountability to meet centrally set 'targets' of expenditure. Sub studies 2 and 3 clearly chart the subsequent effect of subordinating the management of educational processes to the financial management of allocated budgets. Currently, writers such as Barton and Lee (1999)

identify current mechanisms to minimise expenditure with such as the competition policy operated by the Conservative Government 1992-97. The philosophy can also be operated with other policies to minimise expenditure, e.g. current concerns with 'best value policies'.

Economic rationalism led the LEA's officers to devise and operate systems of special educational needs provision which eventually responded only to financial management imperatives and to the exclusion of any other active educational consideration e.g. inclusion, or meeting individual needs. However, the process and results of economic rationalism does not have to exclude the delivery of an inclusive style of provision. In fact, the case study LEA still has one of the lowest proportion of children in segregated provision in the country although the research indicates that there was no evidence either the schools or the LEA in general, were paying attention to the philosophy of inclusion as an organising principle. Similarly, policy making at LEA level generally ignored the philosophy of meeting individual needs, except that teaching assistants were employed and free to meet "individual needs", as far as they were allowed or able to do and this, in spite of these concepts being at the heart of the 1981 and 1993 Education Acts.

There seem to be two main difficulties with this state of affairs. Clearly, serving officers e.g. the SENCOs who are involved in the delivery of the educational provision to individual pupils need the principles that guide their work to be relevant to working with children. Thus the philosophy of inclusion and meeting individual needs will continue to be essential for all those professionals in direct contact with the children. However, because of the dominance of economic rationalism in the management of the system, Head teachers in schools and the LEA will always find it very difficult to allow considerations from the pupil-centred educational philosophies to interfere with management decisions, especially when the implications of inclusion and meeting individual needs run against the implications of economic rationalism. This means that educational change will be very difficult to achieve if the inclusionist camp cannot command and use arguments from economic rationalism to sway decision makers.

The other main difficulty is that if there are to be any challenges to the system of provision designed and managed under the dominance of economic rationalism, those challenges have to question the dominance of economic rationalism itself. These kinds

of challenges can be seen elsewhere in the political and educational systems e.g. the position taken by the Liberal Democrat party in the 1997 election of advocating one penny on income tax to boost spending on education, or the principle of hypothecating taxes generally. What these arguments are in effect saying is that the philosophical position of valuing effective education should take precedence over that of controlling spending at existing levels. These kinds of argument model an approach to challenge economic rationalism. The suggestion is that if economic rationalism is not made subservient to other child-centred policies in education, the overall public good will suffer and individuals currently learning in the system will also suffer. However, because this challenge is a general political challenge, it has to be made in the political arena at local but more importantly at national levels.

Riddell et al (2000) argues,

"Overall, it is clear that the dominant policy framework in England draws on elements of both the bureaucratic and legal models, themselves associated with managerialism and marketization. Although professionalism still dominates in Scotland, there are some signs that in the future this system too will be more tightly rule-bound and governed by the legal process....In both systems, the consumer / legal policy framework is enjoying increased popularity. Much closer to a US system, this model sits uneasily with cosy notions of professionals offering service to grateful users which characterised the post-war welfare system....As a legal policy framework becomes more firmly established it is possible that there will be a growing awareness both of its negative features and also of the partial nature of its application. Furthermore, although parents' rights have been strengthened, there is no regulated consultation with children in either England or Scotland. Change in this area may be driven by recently enacted human rights legislation." (p 633)

The new SEN Code of Practice (DfES 2002) is effective from 1 January 2002. From this date LEA, schools, early education settings and those who help them, including health and social services, must fulfil their statutory duties to children with special educational needs whilst having regard to the Code.

There have been some changes to the original document. The updated version also takes account of the SEN provisions of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 as follows:

"A stronger right for children with SEN to be educated at a mainstream school

New duties on LEAS to arrange for parents of children with SEN to be provided with services offering advice and information and a means of resolving disputes

A new duty on schools and relevant nursery education providers to tell parents when they are making special educational provision for their child

A new right for schools and relevant nursery education providers to request a statutory assessment of a child." (Op cit pIV, s7)

17.4 The Role of the LEA

Perhaps the early evidence of this research explains in part why nationally and certainly in the case study LEA, politicians have had to make decisions in view of the resources being made available to them in accordance with central government policy. The consequence of this decision making toppled through the hierarchy of serving officers, rippling out into all areas of education, including special needs. In this respect the officers were so busy reducing education expenditure, no one came forward to lead policymaking for special needs evaluation. All the LEA brought to local schools with regard to SEN matters were arguments over the assistant hours to be allocated or, as often as not, reduced.

17.4.1 Future Developments in the Statementing Process.

Undeniably, the figures for the LEA show a gradual increase in the number of pupils with a statement. The government review "Getting in on the Act : A review of progress of special educational needs" (1998), found the number of statemented children was up 35 per cent since 1992. However, more statemented children were in mainstream schools nationally, - up from 40 to 55 per cent. The proportion of children with statements ranges from less than 1 per cent in some LEAs to more than 4 per cent in others. It seems that nationally the criteria that determines the level a pupil should be at in order to be identified as having a special need, still varies with different LEAs.

In 1997, the Green Paper again recognised that monies were pouring into SEN administration that could be used to give practical support for pupils. At the same time, it was suggested that statements might be acting as barriers to inclusion because specifying particular educational provision reduced schools' flexibility. There was also a

recognition that the fight for more resources via the statementing route was setting up a perverse incentive in schools and encouraging them to exaggerate pupils' difficulties. By 1999, DfEE statistics were indicating that 3 per cent of all pupils in schools had statements. This number had increased 27 per cent since 1994, the year the Code of Practice was first introduced. The same statistics confirmed concerns for the wide variations in the percentage of pupils statemented in different LEAs. This varied from 2 percent to 4 per cent. The DfEE document (1998) "Meeting Special Educational Needs: A Programme of Action" reaffirmed the principles of the Green Paper. A further framework for changing SEN management was identified by the Coopers and Lybrand Report (1995). This was a study of 59 LEAs' budgets. The recommendations included a three pronged approach for prevention via early intervention; a thorough audit and identification of existing priorities and strengthening the criteria for referral and assessment whilst concentrating resources on high incidences of need. The outcomes of the 1990s also included proposals for a new Code of Practice by 2002, which would simplify the administrative burden for schools yet clearly emphasise the roles and responsibilities of school and the LEAs. At the same time the proportion of children needing a statement was to be reduced and statements were to be completed within time limits. It was clear though that in the future any statements were to focus on the needs of and future objectives for the child and that schools were to determine how to meet those objectives with delegated resources. The new responsibility for LEAs appeared to be both to devise an equitable devolvement of the SEN budget to schools and to identify procedures to make schools fully accountable for the enhanced resources they received. Also schools were to acknowledge their responsibility in terms of the efficacious support they were offering SEN pupils both with and without statements

17.4.2 Future developments in funding for SEN.

It is still important to acknowledge that the total amount of allocated SEN budget varies considerably between LEA's. The effect of this is that individual children with the same needs may receive different levels of support, depending upon where they live

Without firm criteria, the LEAs were finding themselves spending more and more money on special needs in order to conform to their statutory duties. The TES report (27.11.98) states:

"The competitive nature of the performance driven system that emerged in 1988 is not naturally sympathetic to resource-intensive special needs pupils and this had placed pressure on the relationship with local education authorities." (p12)

Yet the report goes on to outline a recent hearing in the House of Lords that stated that local authorities could not escape a legal duty to provide for special needs because of a shortage of resources. Reflecting that the government still appears determined to curb further local authority spending, including special needs, the article continued,

"The Lords said the council was in an unenviable position - prevented from getting the other cash it needed from either central government or local taxation - but added, to permit a local authority to avoid performing a statutory duty on the grounds that it prefers to spend the money in other ways is to downgrade a statutory service to a discretionary one." (op cit p12)

Excellence in Schools (1998) was clear that school management and leadership should have better support from LEAs and that special educational needs would be an integral part of the wider programme for raising standards. The Education Network (TEN) pamphlet (1998) had argued,

"The future survival of LEAs depends not only on their effectiveness as partners with central government and schools but also on their relevance to the needs of classroom teachers ... For most classroom teachers, it is the internal decision making structure of the school which provides direction at present, not the LEA." (p6)

The government indicated that it intended to control the balance between LEA and school expenditure in Fair Funding (1998). The Schools Standards and Framework Act (1998) described resources available to schools as the Local Schools Budget (LSB) and the amount delegated to schools as the Individual Schools Budget (ISB). The recent White Paper, Schools Achieving Success (2001a) proposes the notion of a Schools Forum in every LEA to involve schools in decision making as to the equitable distribution of resources. By 2001, the target of LSB to be devolved to schools was 85%. This was suggested to increase to 87% by 2002.

Until April 2001, there was no change in the way the case study LEA funded SEN provision. This position changed. The case study LEA will need to express with increasing clarity an understanding of the ways it funded additional SEN provision in

schools. At the same time, the schools themselves were requested to explicitly identify the special needs element in their own budget as well as that offered via the LEA's own special needs purse.

Other LEAs have already adopted other methods of resourcing, often choosing to devolve money more 'equitably' by resourcing school based stages of assessment as well as statements. All are finding difficulty identifying the most effective way of grading the incidence of SEN in different schools. In order to promote positive action, funding free school meals is still the most commonly used indicator. This presents its own problems especially in secondary schools because only the 'take up', that is, not the 'eligibility' figures can be used.

In 2000, a further government Report, "Who holds the purse: funding schools to meet special educational needs", attempted to describe the advantages and tensions that resided in the different models of delegation. Many authorities were delegating funds through formula funding. Others had adopted an audit approach although this was often criticised for producing perverse incentives and conflict by rewarding poorly performing schools; increasing the bureaucratic burden on schools and being expensive to maintain. Formula funding could operate at different levels. Resources might be allocated according to individual children's needs, usually referred to as banding, or according to proxy indicators such as free school meals entitlement, the number of children on the Child Abuse Register or the results of formal testing for key years or the whole school. The Report suggested that some LEAs were already seeking a third model of funding which involved earlier intervention in an effort to support inclusion. These LEAs were using groups of schools to distribute resources for pupils with complex needs. Typically, the local partnership arrangement brought together specialist SEN support staff and serving officers, Head teachers and SENCOs. They had already begun to operate on the presumption that a statement was not needed for SEN pupils to access resources in mainstream schools and that the statementing process itself was too bureaucratic, time consuming and expensive. Rather, schools were often able to bid, either individually or as a "family" of schools for extra resources whilst only a very small percentage of the school population, perhaps 1 percent, would be monitored on a statement. These would normally be children with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Other LEAs were still operating in a piecemeal fashion and schools might receive their SEN budget from a mixture of designated allocation which could include a nominal part to enable differentiation for all pupils; SEN pupils needs based on testing and free school meals data and finally, the statemented pupils budget.

The above discussions and the continuing national debate on how best to fund special needs provision, highlights yet again the importance of identifying 'economic rationality' as a key philosophy in the system of implementation of the provision of special needs. It is only when it is so identified that the potential conflicts between the management of the system based only on that philosophy and management based on child-centred philosophies such as inclusion and meeting individual needs, become evident. When the conflicts are evident and the relative intellectual positions of management philosophies are recognised, then decisions can be made which do support inclusion and meeting the pupils' individual needs effectively. The idea of 'fair funding' is clearly an attempt by national government to dilute the dominance of 'economic rationality' as a management philosophy by introducing the notion 'fair' into the concept. Without more local and devolved decision making, however, it will be difficult to implement special needs provision in the spirit of that word 'fair' because of the impossibility of central definition of what it means in the special needs context. Does 'fair funding' mean that all children with a special need should receive everything their parents think would benefit them? Local moderation of claims by local professionals at least might give a chance that the philosophies of meeting individual needs and inclusion would be given a higher profile in decision making.

In the future, Fair Funding will also require the LEA to consider much greater flexibility in how support is provided. The most likely outcome is that money will be devolved to the schools who will then decide how to resource their SEN pupils themselves. The LEA would then need to develop a system to monitor the quality of that provision and provide advice to schools. The alternative is that it would be leaving the responsibility for pupils with special needs, particularly those without statements, to schools alone with no way of holding them accountable.

As Trans and Docking (1998) elaborated,

"To a degree, schools find the issue of "effectiveness" an intractable problem to solve owing partly to the subjectivity involved in judgements over children's

learning and behaviour and partly to the lack of hard-edged criteria by which added value may be assessed." (p51)

This study has perhaps demonstrated ways this can be done, but it is a bottom up, research based approach using empirical methods over a period of time. To use these methods effectively, LEAs and central government will need to change their top down culture and practices rather radically to examine the needs of special educational needs pupils via hard data. Otherwise, given all their other current priorities, it is highly unlikely that schools, unaided by their LEA, will be able to meet the challenge.

17.4.3 Future developments in traditional support services

The purpose and function of LEAs has evolved to reflect their new facilitative position in relation to the schools. They will no longer provide all the services to meet schools' needs. Circular 10/99 "Social Inclusion: Pupil Support", set out the stance of the new generation of LEA's which must provide planned and cohesive services in tandem with Social Services and Health Authorities on a number of levels.

"The LEA has a strategic planning role interpreting the educational, social and economic vision that is now informing national policy." (Page 4)

The DfEE and NASEN (2001), recently joint funded research to examine the developing roles of SEN support services in LEAs across the country. The authors acknowledged the complexity of analysing the findings due to the constant state of flux in the size, diversity and range of services offered by the respondent LEAs. The role of the learning support services appeared to have changed most, affected by the changing roles of the LEAs as their finances were devolved. Whilst debating whether delegation and inclusion really could be compatible, the report made 16 recommendations for schools, LEA support services, LEA policy and central government that aimed to pinpoint ways of achieving the best of both aims.

"It is argued that funding, responsibility and inclusion are inextricably linked and that financial delegation in the area of SEN is best considered, like inclusion as a process not a state....a number of barriers need to be taken down by schools, support services, local and central government, to ensure that the different strands of current policy are compatible....central support will need to be maintained for certain areas of activity at local level. However there is a

need for greater clarity at local level about the nature of these functions and how they are best evaluated." (Op cit, p 29)

With no absolute answers, LEAs continue to wrestle with profiling their core central services. Does this relate to the identification, incidence or severity of pupils' needs, or perhaps to the execution of statutory duties with follow up monitoring and evaluation? Whatever the future circumstances, educational practice will evolve and continue to be informed by rigorous research that should allow for the complexity of the issues involved.

As LEAs delegate an ever larger portion of their budget, central support services are beginning to diminish at precisely the time that the schools are being expected to adopt a more inclusive education system. When schools are given the additional money through delegation, do they accept the additional responsibility that goes with it. In conclusion it states,

"a number of elements need to be in place to ensure that delegation of SEN support is compatible with meeting pupils' needs and achieving greater inclusion. It is argued that funding, responsibility and inclusion are inextricably linked and that financial delegation in the areas of SEN is best considered, like inclusion, as a process not a state."

17.5 School systems and continuing professional development

Jo Walker (1992) outlined the processes whereby mainstream schools are able to promote successful inclusionist policies by paying attention to planning the curriculum instead of letting it emerge on an "ad hoc basis".

"The challenge is to enable the pupil to access the lessons but not to feel isolated. The way support staff are viewed can therefore determine the success or failure of the programme .. Finally, in schools with successful integration programmes, an element of evaluation was incorporated as an integral part of the overall planning of the curriculum." (p84)

In the study findings, in each school the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) acted as the manager to the assistants, making sure that they supported pupils effectively in the curricular areas in which the pupils had most needs. Neither Heads of Department nor individual teachers appeared to ever meet the assistants to formally discuss the targets for statemented pupils. It was very rare for the assistants to have any

preparation before the lesson or even to know more specifically what was going to be taught. The SENCO then remained the key worker to whom the assistant brought any curricular/pupil/personal concerns. Yet the study indicates that SENCOs realised meetings between themselves and the assistants as a group were beneficial - even essential, but were still carried out in an ad hoc manner, if at all.

The role of the SENCO with respect to the efficient deployment of SEN resources in schools, including the human agencies, was finally recognised when the consultation paper on the National Standards for Special Educational Needs Co-ordination was written in July 1997. It suggested that the SENCO was responsible for the co-ordination and provision of an education that meets the needs of SEN pupils. The paper envisaged that the SENCO might,

- * have a professional knowledge and understanding of special education issues teaching and pupil learning styles,
- * have the ability to motivate and manage staff including themselves, teachers and teaching assistants,
- * deploy all available resources effectively to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties.

However, in this study, as clearly described by the SENCOs, the assistants and the LEA representatives alike, it is also the ability of the instructional team to provide effective teaching and learning opportunities for SEN pupils that will make the difference. As special needs information is not commonly found in PGCE courses (the normal route to teaching for teachers in secondary schools), one might expect teachers to suggest that CPD is generally useful. However, the NUT's report from Strathclyde University, "Schools Speak for Themselves" (1996), found that their teacher respondents placed staff development as the fifth lowest in terms of the priority of schools. Doug McAvoy, the General Secretary for the National Union of Teachers, suggested that because of the CPD ethos,

"teachers do not feel there is any point in exploring new ways of teaching if they do not conform to the objective of an increasingly didactic framework."
(TES 13.6.97 p27)

Yet research exists to expand very positively the benefits of staff development for teachers and pupils, for example Kovic (1996) used peer coaching to facilitate inclusion and found that

"objective feedback during a post-observation conference is important for facilitating professional dialogue among the teachers, helping them to reflect on their practice. Assisting teachers as they work towards thinking flexibly and creatively about modification of materials, curriculum plans, time and management and use of personnel is another important job of a coach. Encouraging teachers to take the initiative to identify and solve their own problems rather than relying on the coach, is also important. When a number of teachers are working together, the coach also assists in clarifying their roles and responsibilities and identifying and solving problems related to communication." (p148 in Welding 1996)

This type of in-service support would also seem to work well when used to foster relationships and an understanding of roles within instructional teams.

Margerison's (1997) study of teachers and para-professionals (teaching assistants) engaged in collaboration, conferencing and observation with each other, revealed that the process allowed each to identify their own professional development needs and, most importantly, it produced educators who are constantly striving to improve the ways in which they work to meet the needs of their pupils. (p117)

To repeat, in the 5 study schools, the school systems were still slow to broach the issue of managing and working in instructional teams with assistants either with individual teachers or on a departmental basis. If good working practice, that is, set skills and knowledge, is not passed on between colleagues, it is easy to see why school managers might presume that cheaper assistants if not 'just as good' as a teacher, would certainly 'do'. Properly identified instructional team members may actively work together to ensure that the deficit mode of individual learning gives way to an interactive model. Hegarty (1990) discusses the notion as the interaction of individual pupils to the context of the whole learning environment including the content and organisation of the curriculum, staffing, in-service training and home/ school relationships.

If assistants are working with SEN pupils directly, they will need frequent contact with the teacher to reaffirm their professional competence. This feedback also dually represents supervision and training.

Perhaps then one should look forward to the promise of continuing professional development as an integral and consistent part of every teachers working life. The use of grants for educational support and training might be reviewed in order to establish a more consistent support between the LEA and school whereby the LEA might direct and co-ordinate CPD, partnership with local FE colleges and Higher Education institutions. Each school's own development plan should address teachers and assistants professional long term career needs as well as the immediate, possibly short term school priorities to meet the needs of current SEN pupils. Jenny Corbett (2001) argues that strategic long term planning for funds and staffing; a self reflection of ourselves as educators and members of the school and local community and sharing the perspectives of other related service providers and the disabled movement will all drive the criterion for successful opportunities to enable inclusive schooling. Thus a new understanding of a connective pedagogy that is "connecting" with an individual learner to make a meaningful learning experience might evolve.

17.6 The role of OFSTED and other agencies in supporting a culture of inclusive education

The Guidance for Inspectors in Schools (2000) demonstrated the government's willingness to embrace a wider whole school approach to inclusion. It emphasises the responsibility to provide "equal opportunities for all pupils whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background." The Guidance spells out what Inspectors should look for with respect to the provision offered to and the subsequent attainments of a whole range of different groups of pupils including,

- Girls and boys;
- Minority ethnic and faith groups, travellers, asylum seekers and refugees;
- Pupils who need support to learn English as an additional language
- Pupils with special educational needs;
- Gifted and talented pupils;

- Children 'looked after' by the Local Authority;
- Other children, such as sick children; young carers; those from families under stress; pregnant school girls and teenage mothers; and any pupils who are at risk of disaffection and exclusion.

The focus however is to ensure that an inspection evaluates all aspects of a school's effectiveness and improvement and expects staff to provide evidence of self evaluation in respect of

- School results and pupils' achievements,
- Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development,
- The quality of curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
- Partnership with parents and carers
- How well the school is managed
- The school's care for it's pupils.

Inclusive schools should have a 'culture of acceptance articulated through leadership'. (Thomas, 1992, p 192).

The staff should expect to work in a collaborative manner. The instructional team might include the SENCo teachers and assistants as school representatives and representatives of LEA services such as psychologists, Advisers, PRU staff. Other external agencies such as Social Services and Health would be very much in evidence where an open system is soundly in place. The whole team would need to meet to set objectives and organise how they are going to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts. More important are the many pedagogic and professional considerations that will inevitably be generated by this process. Special educational needs teaching will no longer be seen as the domain of a few with specialist skills and expertise. If all teachers are expected to have the skills and training to manage the learning of all children, then they should plan to broaden every child's participation in mainstream classrooms by using the strengths of the team members to facilitate learning and understanding as well as task completion. In this situation the assistant works as a catalyst to promote learning and social interactions and is not an unwitting barrier with too much one-to-one help for a designated pupil. Other professionals who in time may or may not be school based

certainly may not be so evident by their physical presence in the classroom. However the expertise that educational psychologists might offer to school systems, perhaps in support of policy making, or indeed as training, advice or even therapy to smaller groups of or individual teachers, pupils and families all influence the confidence of staff in the within school support that they can rely on to enhance their classroom practice. In the same way, health professionals may only be concerned with a small number of children in a school. Their present role is often to train assistants how to carry out individualised speech therapy or physiotherapy programmes. Their future might include, for example, advising the nursery and Key Stage 1 team members as to the expected norms of speech and language and physical development. A further discussion of the implications of delayed and or abnormal development might ensue whenever necessary.

17.7 The Development of Teaching Assistants as a Paraprofessional Group here to stay

Farrell et al (1999) have previously commented on the role, management and training of teaching assistants. Their study involved visits to 4 LEA services, 6 non-resourced and 6 additionally resourced mainstream schools, 3 special schools and 2 schools/resources maintained by voluntary organisations. A further questionnaire was sent to FE and HE colleges, LEAs and voluntary organisations. Information on 339 courses was provided, 91% of which were run by FE colleges and LEAs. An average of 67% of training providers offered courses to assistants returning questionnaires. They discerned no difference between the role of assistants working with SEN pupils and those working generally in classrooms, although the lack of time to plan with teachers was thought to reduce their effectiveness. The assistants might be managed centrally by the LEA, in which case they generally had permanent contracts of employment and were more likely to be offered induction and training, or be employed directly by the schools. There was a strong tide of opinion that a coherent career and salary progression should be linked to a core accredited national training. The assistants themselves were concerned about the issue of pay and training. What was clear was that only 20 % of those assistants interviewed wanted to become teachers. Currently the assistants considered that the non accredited training they were offered did not meet their needs. These findings were supported by the joint UNISON/NFER survey (1998) of classroom

assistants in 1,984 primary schools asking why they had not attended a training course since at least September 1995. Reasons given included the feeling that completing a course would neither improve their pay nor enhance the work. A percentage of the assistants also indicated that their employer refused to pay for the course.

Sixty three per cent of the assistants provided other reasons, including:

1. No course details were available.
2. No interest in the course offered.
3. No course vacancies.
4. Don't get paid for time attending the course.
5. No time to do the course.
6. Do not meet the entry criteria for the course, for example, for serving teachers only.
7. Newly appointed to the post.
8. Family/child care commitments.
9. Transport difficulties.

This list should be treated with incredulity. The first 6 reasons reveal the function of the importance given to training by the LEA and its staff and are easily solved in principle. The issues raised in 7 and 8 are common to many people and may be resolved by timetabling training locally, perhaps in each secondary schools pyramid in work time or early evenings with crèches on site.

Also surely assistants newly appointed to the post are precisely those who should receive at least some formal induction.

In fact all the opposition listed relates back to the lack of LEA support for schools to get assistants trained for reasons of no policy, no finance, few staff with expertise or time to run the courses and accessing the curriculum. It was with some trepidation then in the late Spring of 1999 that I read the government was to recruit 2,000 assistants taught them for 15 hours and then enlist their support in a direct teaching role for the Assisted Literacy Support Programme. For this, thousands of 8, 9 and 10 year olds who did badly in National Curriculum tests aged 7 would receive four 20 minute lessons a week aimed at helping them to read the expected standard for their age by the end of their primary schooling. (Yorkshire Post 24.5.99 p3).

In "Excellence in Schools: Teachers and Staffing", Estelle Morris' (2000) has confirmed the tremendous contribution,

"well managed and well-trained assistants can make in driving up standards in schools...experience confirms that the greater involvement of trained teaching assistants in the learning process in no way detracts from teachers' own unique professional skills and distinct responsibilities. In fact it reinforces the teacher's role. It is the teacher whose curriculum and lesson planning and day to day direction set the framework within which assistants and other adults work. But I believe best practice in teaching is evolving, partly in response to the increasing contribution of good quality support staff. Good teachers are now choosing to enrich their own direct contact with pupils with the skilled direction of the growing number of support staff at their disposal." (foreword)

The Government has now mapped out a programme of recruiting 20,000 teaching assistants to work in primary and secondary schools by 2002, making £350 million available from Standards Funds to support their induction and higher level training. Greater clarity over role and qualifications pathways were also promised. These have still have not been delivered more than 12 months later, although additional support has been made available through the unaccredited training materials, " Supporting the Teaching Assistant: A Good Practice Guide".

The latest (2001) NASEN document celebrates the increasingly important role that teaching assistants now play, supporting teachers and pupils. It acknowledges the concerns that this group may be seen in terms of "relatively low financial cost, compared to teachers." It also charges central government with the responsibility for providing a clear and coherent national framework for professional development that is linked to a career structure and pay scales. The LEA's role would be pivotal, ensuring strategic "recruitment, deployment, support and monitoring" of assistants and maintaining a database of their qualifications and experience.

17.8 Continuing professional development in the case study LEA since this study period

17.8.1 Teachers' professional development

Although no information was obtained regarding teacher interest in CPD during the study, the LEAs psychological service ran short twilight courses throughout this period for teachers interested in various aspects of special educational needs. Typically, titles included language development and disorders (early years), autism and behaviour

management. The courses were generally very well attended by nursery and primary teachers. In September 1997, 2 primary teachers were funded on the In Service Certificate in Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia), a one year part-time course at the University of Sheffield. In September 1998, sponsored by the LEA, 14 SENCOs (12 primary, 2 secondary) began the part-time "In-Service Certificate in Social and Educational Studies: Special Educational Needs Co-ordination". This was taught by the psychologists and other LEA serving officers. Although the University of Sheffield accredited the course, teachers met at a local venue, the LEAs professional development centre. In 2001, both courses were still running in the LEA.

17.8.2 Assistant training

In 1995, the LEA Schools' Psychological Service wrote bids for external funding from the Single Regeneration Bid (SRB). Initially, £100,000 and the following year a further £300,000 was awarded, solely to support assistants training in the area of special educational needs. The Borough's Special Needs Assistants Professional Training (SNAPT) Programme began in January 1996 although no one was employed to run the programme until January 1998.

The training has allowed the LEA to fund its commitment to inclusion as assistants from nurseries, the special schools and every primary and secondary school were all offered equal opportunities for training. The assistants were paid "additional hours" if they attend at night, twilights or weekends and Head teachers were offered cover costs if training took place during the day.

The courses are dually accredited at Higher Education level 1 by the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University or at lower Open College Network levels equivalent to GCSE and A level standard. No one attends a course without receiving some form of certification.

The SNAPT programme was based on the results of the research surveys described in Chapters 12, 13 and 14 of this study and has been universally welcomed by the LEA, schools and the assistants themselves. Currently several hundred staff have undertaken at least one of the following:

- Understanding stressed behaviour in pupils
- Counselling skills in schools

- The psychological development of school pupils
- Self Esteem: its relationship to special educational needs
- Language development and disorders
- Supporting information technology
- Special needs education: legislation and policy since 1944
- Positive pupil management
- Supporting mathematics
- Supporting literacy
- Providing access to the curriculum
- The role of the special needs teaching assistant
- First Aid
- Aromatherapy
- Body massage
- National Children's Deaf Society (NCDS) courses
- RNIB courses
- Working with able and gifted pupils
- TEACCH (offered Borough wide December 1999 to teams of assistants accompanied by a teacher.

In addition, SNAPT tutors were encouraged to undergo their own induction programme, including advanced ICT skills. Each also has £250 annually to spend on their own preferred CPD.

An OECD (2000) reported on the SNAPT programme as an exemplar of good practice in the UK,

"The initiative had been carefully planned and developed; the goals were clearly defined and the results were being rigorously evaluated." (p 189)

Two dozen assistants have already transferred straight onto Year 2 initial teacher training.

17.8.3 Lessons learned

By the summer of 2000, the DfEE had produced videos and other materials to support a 4 day, 24 hour equivalent, induction course for assistants that LEAs could order at no charge. The course was divided into the equivalent of 4 modules that included mathematics, literacy, behaviour management and the role of the teaching assistant. LEAs were able to apply for Grant 38 monies to fund the training. One serious shortcoming for assistants in the case study LEA, was the fact that there was no accreditation attached to the course. The same course in the SNAPT programme offered 10 credits at HE level 1 for the same 24 hour contact time. The special needs Advisor bypassed the SNAPT project, ordered the materials and set up induction training for new teaching assistants. She refused to consider spending the same money to deliver the SNAPT programme to staff instead and declined to give a reason. Accordingly, there was an instant cessation of SNAPT when the date for funding ceased. The DfEE had advised the project manager that the Grant 38 money should be given to the training. Unfortunately the Adviser insisted that it had already been spent and was not available to SNAPT anyway. The whole training programme moved from the psychologists remit and will be included in the LEA Advisers portfolio in January 2002. Schools have been informed that there will be no courses running next Spring term although courses have been promised for the Summer Term 2002. This has clearly upset schools and, most of all, assistants, many of whom are part way through a planned programme of learning at degree level that they have been following for several years. With no definite remit in the future and with such a gap of time and no overlap of personnel, it will be difficult for the LEA to arrange equivalent accreditation under the new minimalist training structure. This change represents a great loss to the LEA of an efficient accredited training scheme. It may set back effective inclusion in the Boroughs on its current model by a number of years.

17.9 Summary and Conclusion

The Warnock Report (1978) identified that up to 20 per cent of a school population might have special educational needs at some point in their school career. However the development of special needs education has largely concentrated upon identifying pupils with learning difficulties and treating their skills deficits. It is argued

that the government's earlier initiatives to open up an access to the curriculum for this group of children has generated yet another strand of educational policy which cannot be sewn seamlessly into the whole fabric of our schools. The broader picture, which has more recently emerged in the last five years, endorses a mainstream curriculum that all children might share. An inclusive school embraces individuals with learning difficulties and also those who need to be socially included. This extended interpretation requires a cultural change in schools' values and philosophy as well as the strategies employed to restructure the organisation and curriculum for pupils.

The rise in the number of all non-teaching staff in schools continues, including the employment of nursery assistants, special needs support staff, secretaries, bursars and other admin/clerical staff. Secondary non-teaching staff numbers rose by 5 per cent between 1997 and 1998, mostly accounted for by a growth in special needs support staff from 7,700 to 8,800 (School Teachers Review Body 1999 Report).

By 1998, Tony Blair seemed set to underpin the modernisation of the profession with a further 20,000 strong army of classroom assistants in addition to the existing 57,000 elite corps of super teachers. A Green Paper proposed the development of a national training framework for assistants based on national vocational qualifications.

"From this, the assistants will be on track to progress to becoming fully qualified teachers". (TES 2.10.98 p12).

This study would seem to clearly indicate that assistants can raise the academic attainment of statemented secondary aged pupils in at least their reading and comprehension and can do so irrespective of the extent of the instructional process the assistant is involved in with the pupils' subject teacher.

Until now it has been difficult to promote the validity of employing assistants to support SEN pupils because so very few studies relate to the efficacy of this approach. The research in this LEA unequivocally supports assistants training. As more assistants are trained nationally and as SENCOs and schools learn how to manage this group through experience and SENCO training, studies in the future may demonstrate more precisely the value of effective training. This is not to suggest that assistant training alone will suffice without drawing to the attention of mainstream teachers the need for

team building. Also the precise nature and duration of any training the assistants should receive in a national scheme in order to be fully prepared to support pupils with learning difficulties has not been discussed or evaluated. The assistants in the case study undertook a minimum of 100 hours class contact with additional time being spent on individual tutorials when tutors felt they were needed or when the assistants requested them. It should be noted that the assistants were not simply given skills and knowledge in supporting reading and supporting mathematical skills development, they all completed two additional modules, the first enhancing non verbal life and social skills and the second to support pupils' behaviour positively.

All the training was geared to support special educational needs pupils and not those who had little or no difficulty accessing the curriculum. The notion of allowing those with least skills and knowledge access to teach those pupils with most learning difficulties - even if supervised by a teacher, is hard to reconcile, especially when it appears that once in⁴post many classroom assistants do not attend further training courses.

This study is a case study in one LEA. It does not mean that identical mechanisms will apply in other LEAs, where local political concerns may have been stronger, local LEA officers more numerous and child-centred concerns presented to the elected politicians in a different way. Thus the historical legacy of special educational needs provision may be a product of different local pressures in other LEAs. Other research will be needed to demonstrate that.

Research thus far has been logically necessary. Now, through early research results, further research is empirically necessary to confirm that pupils may progress socially, emotionally and academically from the support of trained assistants. If it also happens that it is cheaper to educate the pupils in local schools, then these are likely to be deciding factors in the debate to promote inclusive education. Indeed, children who attend their neighbourhood schools may enjoy more social support through parental links. One view is that segregating children into special schools also alienates their families from the local community. Appositely it may be argued that parents with children who have severe learning difficulties appreciate the support of special school staff and also other parents, and can share the mutual empathy and understanding of the tensions arising from having an SEN child in the family.

However, if society still resists understanding the development of an inclusion policy in relation to changes that effect the education of all children, then these children's free and equal participation in our society as adults is also compromised. Perhaps it is appropriate and timely for further political discussion to be focussed nationally. Far reaching socio economic targets must move the debate away from simply helping children with learning difficulties and towards constructing whole learning environments with discreet, supported access for all according to their individual level, pace of study and other personal needs.

Finally, Dyson and Millward (1999) have an essay test for inclusive schooling,

"Could a young person leave a school which was, by common agreement, 'inclusive' and move into an adult world where he or she would experience discrimination, marginalisation and disadvantage? If, as we suspect, the answer is 'yes', to develop a form of inclusive schooling that enables that young person to survive in the short term, is part of a co-ordinated attack on the sources of discrimination, marginalisation and disadvantage in the long term." (Page 164)

Chapter 18: RECOMMENDATIONS

18.1 Introduction

The following recommendations summarise and take forward many aspects of this study and are divided under the following headings:

- Teachers and teaching assistants
- Schools
- Local education authorities
- Central government.

18.2 Teachers and teaching assistants

Teachers should develop their skills and understanding of teamwork, and managing the role of the para-professional in SEN teaching and pupil learning.

Teaching assistants roles may be different according to the needs of the child they are working with or the school system they are working in. Their job specification should be clearly defined in each context. Continuing professional development should be regarded as an integral part of every teacher and teaching assistant's working life.

Teaching assistants should be given the opportunity to see their training programme as a career structure to move on to teacher training or further courses of study at HE level with the view to achieving at least undergraduate degree status.

SENCOs should be particularly supported to take up accredited training in the area of SEN policy and practice.

18.3 Schools

The senior management teams of all schools should develop a system to manage employed support staff. This should also include regular non-teaching time for advice and consultation.

Regular monitoring and appraisal should be offered to teaching assistants as part of the school's whole staff appraisal system.

All special needs monies, staff and other resources should be clearly identified in the school budget.

The senior management team should ensure that all assistants are offered the appropriate level of information to clarify the needs of the pupils they are working with.

Schools should make resources available to provide induction and training for assistants as part of the school development plan.

18.4 Local Education Authorities

LEAs should direct and co-ordinate continuing professional development (CPD), using grants for educational support and training to negotiate and establish a solid foundation of consistent support to schools.

LEAs should help identify and support good practice in special schools promoting its dissemination and developing working links with mainstream partners.

The case study LEA should seek further funding or channel existing grants to support the SNAPT programme or to financially support assistants on other training courses.

Serving officers of the LEA, for example, educational psychologists (and educational psychologists in training), should be encouraged to use the research element of further training such as the Ed.D. to meet identified research needs of LEAs or chosen schools or client groups.

Serving officers of the LEA, individual schools and any other interested groups or individuals, should be encouraged to report and disseminate good SEN practice wherever it is found.

LEAs should maintain a database of assistants' qualifications and experience, e.g. type of learning difficulty and age range of pupils worked with.

LEAs should support schools to both recruit assistants and monitor their work.

18.5 Central Government

Central Government should centrally co-ordinate a framework for the training and professional development of teachers and teaching assistants to enhance their skills, knowledge and understanding of the curricular and socio-emotional needs of pupils with learning difficulties.

Central Government should promote research that describes and discusses more fully how trained teaching assistants may support pupils with learning difficulties.

Special needs funding should be clearly identified to recipient LEAs.

Clear national guidelines should be offered to standardise the statementing criteria of pupils for individual LEAs.

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Appendix 2; Transcribed interviews with Principal Educational Psychologist.

's special needs policy is something that is developed rather than being planned. I don't recall any stage at which it's been planned.

If we start with the 1981 Education Act. In 1983 when the 1981 Education Act was implemented, quite serious notice was taken, not just of the letter but of the spirit of the 1981 Education Act and a group of officers got together to look at how the LEA was going to respond to the act. A decision was taken at that time that, what we now call inclusion, then referred to as integration, was going to be the guiding principle. That was decided at officer level and wasn't something that politicians were involved in. What happened at that point was essentially, that our assessment procedures under the act were developed and those were then fed through to schools using the 5 stage ??

What happened, was that schools were initially very very slow at seeing the implications of that, and we started with a very small number of pupils being assessed, and they tended to be pupils with more severe difficulties. When those pupils were assessed, then the outcome of the assessment, because of the decision that had been taken about integration was that those pupils, whether they were down syndrome or whatever their needs were, were to be retained in mainstream schools with additional support being provided. Now in the early days, we looked to provide nursery nurse support in many cases, people who were qualified, but very soon, very quickly, the supply of such people dried up, and increasingly people with no qualifications whatsoever, were basically employed to support pupils in mainstream schools. The take-up, if you look at it in those ways, was actually really quite slow in the early days, but nevertheless, people who were assessed, the outcome was usually mainstream school placement with a support system of some kind. That in turn had an effect upon our special schools particularly our schools with kids with moderate learning difficulties and very soon their populations began to dwindle as a result of the policy for placement of kids in mainstream schools, and that led to the closure of one MLD school in 1987, the closure of the last MLD school in 1991, so we were left in a situation where we did have special schools for children with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties and for physical difficulties, but we had no provision for moderate learning difficulties at all other than placement in main stream schools with support and the same was true also of children with a range of needs from Language disorders through to behavioural difficulties, specific learning difficulties, we had no specialist provision whatsoever for them and in each case children were placed in mainstream schools. Schools were allocated support and by and large that support was untrained, unqualified, pairs of hands if you like, to work supporting the kids under the direction of the teachers in mainstream schools

Those developments took place really quite slowly between 1983 and 1991 (early 1990's) but by 1994, when the code of practice was published, two things happened, first of all the authority revised it's procedures to fall in line with the code of practice, and secondly, aligned to that, schools became increasingly sophisticated and increasingly but actually belatedly realised, that by having children identified as having special needs, that was probably the only way open to them in attracting more resources to the schools. The only other way schools, following the 1988? Act whichever it was, could attract additional funding was by a) by recruiting more pupils or b) by identifying pupils as having special educational needs. So schools got more wise

to that and the number of more statutory assessment grew. Partly because the code of practice said so, but also to try to manage the demand of statutory assessment and resources to support teachers in the mainstream schools, the LEA developed criteria to try to restrict or make more transparent the types of pupils who may be assessed. The criteria were applied, consulted on with the schools and agreed that they had been in place since 1994. Around that time also the number of requests for statutory assessment and in fact the number of statements and therefore the amount of money being spent on supporting kids in mainstream schools, was so large that it was taking an unacceptable amount of the total schools budget. That led to a diminution in the amount of support provided in schools by the authority going through a cuts exercise.

As far as the quality of provision in mainstream schools for statemented pupils were concerned, I think it is true to say, that between 1983 and mid to late 1990's there was very little training in terms of support systems. What training there was, the first sort of training related to training for teachers on how they could work effectively with support assistants and there was a rolling programme of training for that, but that probably came to an end when again in the early 1990's. Training was offered to support assistants on what we used to call Baker Days, so when there were closure days, typically on the 4th or 5th May, a day's or two day's training was offered to support assistants at that time that they could opt into, something from a menu basically. So there was no co-ordinated training really, if there was it was on the job by the teachers in the schools, people learning as they went on.

The integration of that policy, or practice that developed in 1983 as I stated, and carried on right through the 80's and has in fact carried on right through the 90's, basically was sustained by a number of factors: one was that there were people in key posts that had no brief for special schools at all, people who had a genuine commitment to integration. We had an SEN advisor, who I think joined us in 1983, who came from another authority and he had a very real commitment to the integration of kids with special needs into mainstream schools. We also had an officer who was responsible for special education who possibly did not have an ideological commitment to integration, but who was a stickler for regulations and legislation's and things like that. Because the 1981 act had a commitment to that, then that was how it should be and that is how those two complimented each other. Also, the psychological service who were instrumental in making recommendations and so on, ever since the late 70's had been very reluctant to make recommendations for special education and in fact the decline in special school numbers had started long before the implementation of the 1983 act, so there was a psychological service also, that was committed to not making special school placement. I think there was another factor as well, which was not necessarily a major factor, but was relevant, that although many of the main stream schools were reluctant to retain children with special needs, many of them particularly head teachers, were also aware that the quality of provision in our special schools, particularly MLD schools was not very good, and there was a genuine desire, certainly on the part of some schools, to actively retain and integration with special needs, and I think that had a mushrooming effect. All of this, I suppose the closure of the special schools made a difference – we had also, I had omitted to mention, closed a third MLD school in the very early 80's and two remedial centres, so there wasn't really any

were being admitted into special schools who did not have the kind of needs that our remaining special schools had typically admitted, such as severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple, they didn't have that they had kids with other needs, so our special schools, one of them in particular, became populated with quite a diverse range of need. In my view that was very unfortunate.

The other thing about policy was, is that as we became more aware that LEA's were becoming increasingly under scrutiny, and as it became apparent that all was not well within our special school sector and that we needed to reorganise our special schools, the issue of not having a written special needs policy became current. Work started in 1997 or 1996, but in 1998 the LEA actually published it's special needs policy for the first time. By and large the essence of the policy, was very much an inclusive policy, and that went through the council with very little question, it was adopted by the elective members with essentially very little debate. We'd then gone on to reorganise our special schools, or moved to reorganise our special schools, or to rationalise our special schools. That was driven by, I suppose, by what was called the SEN executive, which comprised of the Principle Officer of Special Needs, the Head of Additional Needs Support Services and the Principle Educational Psychologist, who jointly were charged with steering the policy of practice in special needs for a particular period in time, probably between 1996 and 1998/1999. This year has seen the appointment of an advisor for special needs who has now taken over some of those responsibilities.

Going back to the question of what sustained the practice or the policy of integration, a further sort is the angle for the parents. By and large the aspirations of parents of kids with special needs, is to keep them in mainstream schools, so consequently, the policy was actually popular with parents and conflicts that we have had with parents over the years have tended to focus around how much actual support in mainstream schools they get, not on the issue of whether they should be in mainstream schools or whether they should be in special schools. I suspect that had the policy been more unpopular, i.e. had parents aspirations for their children been to go to special schools and had those parents been decipherous and approached elected members, then the situation would have been very different, but that very patently isn't the case. Parents by and large in Barnsley, want their children educated in the mainstream schools in their own communities.

So why don't we just give them extra teaching hours.

I think the policy of providing support in the form of what were called community? Support systems, basically arose because they were cheap at the end of the day. Certainly in the early days when recruiting wasn't difficult, by and large we were getting people who were very good at what they did and had some pretty spectacular results, and that is not to say that the people we recruit nowadays are not similar, but there was such a choice basically in days gone by, which you understand there isn't now, that I think we were able to recruit some very good people who did some very effective work and not only schools, but schools and parents appreciated the work and were quite prepared to accept the practice. The situation in the future could well be different, along with other authorities, Barnsley will be moving, in the not too distant future, to a system where instead of the support assistants being managed centrally and allocated to schools and being LEA employees, that schools will be funded, given money

special provision for kids to go to and by and large, those schools who were not committed to integration, begrudgingly accepted that they had to accept kids from the community. So there were a whole host of reasons as to why the practice perpetuated itself and eventually, after it had been going for 12 years or so, between 83 and 95, people had become to accept that this was the norm and very little questioning went on as to where a kid should be placed.

Things started to change a little bit. After the cuts in C.S.A.'s in 95, there was more of a pressure, more questioning about how schools could meet needs. This was accompanied by other pressures on schools to do with national curriculum, later on to do with ofsted, other pressures on schools that perhaps made people perhaps less accepting of the policy – when I say policy, it was never written down anyway, it was something that had become policy through custom and practice.

Do you think that the lack of an advisor could have been an influence?

There wasn't a lack of an advisor – the special needs advisor that I started talking about earlier, he was with us for a long time and I think in fact he didn't leave until 91/92 or something like that. We then got another advisor, who was an advisor for primary education but also had a responsibility for special needs. Now his background was totally in the primary sector, he had no knowledge, no real understanding and certainly no sympathy with the special school sector at all. So the commitment from the advisory point of view continued. When he had a change of job and we got yet another advisor, who with a responsibility this time for assessment, but with an element of special needs, that that particular person had been in Barnsley for a very long time anyway and was very much into the Barnsley thing, so had no commitment to special schooling once again. So we then had an interim period I would say, of maybe 2-3 years, before we had an advisor for special needs. I don't think, in fact I know, that we would not have employed an advisor who had a commitment to a segregated system, because I was on the interviewing panel twice for the advisors job and in each case, people who were interviewed perhaps with that perspective, heads of special schools for example were interviewed for the job and were never considered suitable, in fact, we didn't employ it. We weren't without an advisor because we couldn't recruit or we didn't have the money, we were without an advisor because we never got a candidate who we thought were appropriate for the job.

Going onto things more recently, we have had some change in personnel, we have had some change in circumstances. We have begun to, as a response to pressure I think, to need, we have begun to develop some other provision in terms of what we consider a continual of provision, because we had always been the two schools, special schools or main stream with support. We set up the resource bases for autistic kids, and children with emotional/behavioural difficulties in secondary level, and it is likely that in future we may well set up other resource base provision as well. Other things that happened over the years, were that because we had no continuum of provision, there were a particular group of kids always with moderate learning difficulties, but possibly with associated behavioural difficulties, language difficulties, a touch of autism whatever you want to call it, kids for whom it was very difficult to meet the needs of in main stream schools, basically by the remaining schools not having very effective or very clear admissions policies and the LEA being prepared to muddle through, children

basically, associated to particular statements and they will have the freedom to spend that in a way that they choose. So whether they will spend that on support assistants, whether they will spend that on teachers, whether they will spend it on something else, remains to be seen.

Do you think it's right to give the heads money.....

Well, I think that answers the question, at the end of the day and I guess that opens a whole other issue, is that something that we as an LEA haven't done, is that we have never as an LEA commissioned an evaluation into the effectiveness of the support that we provide for pupils on statements with special needs, and in fact that is one of the things that our OFSTED have highlighted, that we simply do not know enough about how effective the provision that we make is – we don't know. There is some implication within education that Headteachers and people on the ground are the best people to judge and that they in some way can evaluate or have the knowledge, I'm not sure that I I think I know that.....

I think the money will be devolved to schools in such a way, that it will be devolved rather than delegated, that means the money will have to be spent on the purposes for which it has been given rather than just being a part of the School pot...

Open Codes derived from analysis of interviews with Policy Leaders.

Codes from interview with Chief Education Officer.

Number of mentions.

	<u>Identifier for code</u>	<u>Description of codes for meanings of significant statements.</u>
4	pol-co	intention to co-ordinate policies (through committee structures)
1.	pol-acpt	political acceptance (of policies etc by elected members)
2.	fin-cont.	financial control (through budget limits or budget approval)
2.	pol-lead	policy leaders (named senior officer for each policy approval)

Codes from interview with Principal Educational Psychologist.

Number of mentions

	<u>Identifier for code</u>	<u>Description of codes for meanings of significant statements.</u>
3	inc-id	integrationist/inclusivist ideology
1.	inc-reg	integrationist/inclusivist regulations from DfEE/DfES
1.	inc-comp	comparisons between provision which support inclusion
2	inc-spse	closure of special schools
1	inc-rej	rejection of inclusive practice
1	inc-aqu	acquiescence to inclusive practice
1	inc-estestablishment of inclusive practice as normative
5	fin-contfinancial control
1	inc-qus	questioning of inclusion as a policy
1	exc-prs	external pressures leading to less acceptance of inclusion
2	inc-con	inclusive practice consistently supported (through staff appointments)
1.	pol-rev	policy review process
1	sps-est	establishment of special provision
2	pol-inf	“informal” status of policies when first introduced, (without formal approval by politicians.)
1	pol-lead	policy leaders
1	inc-par	parental support for inclusive practice
1	fin-del	financial delegation to schools
1	evl-lac	lack of evaluation of provision
1	pol-dev	continuous policy development as a process
1	sps-crit	criteria for access to special provision
1	inc-led-ass	assessment processes led by inclusive aims
1	sna-app	appointment of special needs assistants
2	sps-abs	absence of special provision of certain types
1	inc-tch-snas	inclusion delivered by teachers leading S.N.A.s
1	inc-fin	inclusion leading to financial gain for schools.

Appendix Four; General categories of response from interviews with
Policy Leaders

General groupings of codes identified in both interviews.

From the above list, it can be seen that the codes could be grouped into categories based round:

1. Policy-	pol-co, pol-accept pol-lead pol-rev pol-inf pol-dev	co-ordination of policies policy acceptance policy leader policy review informal policy policy development
2. Inclusion	inc-id inc-reg inc-comp inc-spse inc-rej inc-aqu inc-est inc-qus inc-con inc-par inc-led-ass inc-tch-snas inc-fin	inclusive ideology inclusive regulations. comparisons supporting inclusion inclusion via closure of segregated provision rejection of inclusion acquiescence to inclusion establishment of inclusion questioning of inclusion consistent support for inclusion parental support for inclusion assessments led by inclusive aims inclusion delivered by teachers with SNA support in class inclusion leading to financial gain
3. Financial	fin-cont fin-del	financial control financial delegation
4. Special provision	sps-est sps-crit sps-abs	establishment of special provision criteria for access to special provision absence of special provision
5. External pressures	exc-prs	external pressures
6. Evaluation	evl-lac	lack of evaluation of provision
7. Special Needs Assistants	sna-app	appointment of special needs assistants

NB; Two codes (pol-lead and fin-cont) were used in both interviews.

OFFICER OF THE LEA

We were asked to save £500,000 from the Special Needs budget, and it was decided that the savings would be made from the CSA side of the Special Needs budget. It was described to us that there was not a separate pot for special needs, there wasn't a separate kitty for special needs issues, there was just one big pot of money and the special needs issues was taking too much of that pot and it was starting to become weighted towards the fact that if we carried on in the same way in the next few years, schools would be receiving as much money for special needs as they were in their school budgets in the first place. So it was decided to cut the special needs budget in order to try and give schools more money in the first place. So we were asked to look at every single statement, a colleague and myself and we spent two to three weeks looking through everybody's statement, reading the reports, reading the statement itself, and we were asked to try and find which children could possibly share support. In order to do that we were given some guidance, the guidance was to classify the children into two groups. Group A, were children with severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities, sensory impairments, children that we would consider not to be able to share support at all. Then all the other children were put into group B, and then we looked at group B children again and from group B, sifted out the ones that we thought could share and we went through every single statement doing that again. Following that we then had to recommend which children could share with who, and how much they could share, so we did a paper exercise that in effect was cutting the amount of hours that children were going to get access to separately from schools, schools were not consulted at this point. When we reached these figures, we then contacted every school in the authority, to ask them two questions, could they come up with any savings themselves and then to give them our scenario and say look is this a reasonable solution to it. Following that, after we had spoken to every school and they either argued that we hadn't given them enough, or the wrong children were sharing, we came to some compromise and we passed all that information on to staffing who were then going to in effect carry out or implement this reduction in CSA time.

It didn't quite work out like that because as soon as staffing started to contact schools, schools had had a re think about what they said to us in the first place, so we became involved again. It was decided, well I took the decision that where a lot of savings could be made was where children were transferring from primary school into secondary school, but secondary school would be expecting a certain amount of support to come with the children so I made the decision that this was where we could make some real savings. So I contacted each secondary school in alphabetical order one day and felt that I had got the phone stuck to the side of my head, it was an horrendous day and I said to them, look you've in effect for example, school A might have got 150 hours, they were expecting the 150 hours to transfer up with the children that were coming in September and I said, look of that 150 hours how much could be lose. So through negotiation with the school, the school said, perhaps, well we could definitely do with 90 hours of that 150. So I said fine, we'll stick with the 90 hours, so in effect we have saved 60 hours of support there, which is if you like 3 CSAs on 20 hours. Then I said to them, well I've got to ask you now to look and identify savings in years 8, 9 10 and 11, so we then looked at everybody in the school and through negotiation again they came up with some savings. What I was hoping in each case, would be that in this situation I have given you, I have agreed that they would have 90 hours of time that would come with year 7, I was hoping that they would save 90 hours from years 8, 9, 10 and 11 and in effect without much prompting that's what tended to happen. So that in effect there were a number of children moving up from primary school

and the secondary school were just absorbing them into their current level of support, which is enormous anyway. So we then followed that and passed all that information to staffing so I think it worked out that in the 14 secondary schools, they were expecting something more between 1200 and 1300 hours of support transferring with their year 7 pupils, in effect we actually gave them 110 hours, so we had made over a thousand hours of savings, which was good, but its not enough, but I will come on to that in a minute.

Following that a decision was made that the best way to go about it was for staffing to terminate all temporary contracts, from the 21 July this year. So then what would happen is where there were gaps in schools, people on permanent contracts at schools that had to lose hours would be moved in to fill the gaps. When staffing had made this decision and the letter was sent out explaining to schools what would happen, this caused some concern in some schools because some of the best CSAs were on temporary contracts, and they said, well I would rather lose someone on a permanent contract that is perhaps not quite as effective, but the office of course have got to follow the employment laws, rules and regulations and they have to look at people on temporary contracts first, and they can't do that.

To help get over that problem, all the temporary contract people were immediately put on to the supply list and if there was any gaps after they had done all the moving about, all the logistics of it all, if there were still any gaps, then schools were allowed to go back to the supply list and employ somebody that they felt was very good back into school on a day to day basis until the job can be advertised and confirmed and set up with someone on a permanent contract. So in effect that person that the school really liked could do that, and what is going to happen next year is that they are going to try and weed out the CSAs that are on permanent contracts that are considered to be ineffective or not as effective as they ought to be to try and come up with a smaller CSA force but better skilled. So at the moment, staffing are still ringing round, CSAs are still trying to contact schools in order to tell them how many hours they have got to lose because there are people on temporary contracts, how many hours they have got to lose because children are moving out of their school, who is moving in and its causing a bit of concern, there is a lot of hassle on regarding that.

Following all this exercise we identified about £300,000 of savings on a full year and that's a full year effect, and that's just from those CSAs, we thought we had done a really good job, but its not enough, because as I've said we needed to save £500,000 and its even less, because we are now well in to the financial year, its not a full year effect, the £300,000 that we think we have saved is a full year effect and we have actually been employing them from Easter until this point, so it's not a full year effect, so in actual fact its about £230,000 which is approximately half the amount of money that they expected us to save, so in some respects we have failed to hit the target quite considerably. I mean its 50% less than we wanted to save, but we have cut primary schools to the bone, in the past we have been able to leave CSAs in primary schools of children that were moving out and going to secondary, because there was another statement on the way, to save time we have allowed the CSAs to stay in, we have not allowed them to do anything like that any more. When children have left the primary schools then the CSAs have left and that has caused a lot of upset as well. There is still a large number of CSA hours in the secondary schools, I think in all this the secondary schools have come off better than some primary schools because they have still got a huge

amount of support, what in effect they have done as I said earlier, they have absorbed a lot of children moving in without actually taking any extra, so that if you have a school with 300 hours of support they are actually now going to spread that among a lot more children but its still a huge amount of support and that the question of what level of support should be in school still needs to be addressed.

I think the way to make further savings is to start to look at issues like that, but we have already started to get a backlash from secondary schools, because in the past where they have been quite willing to accept the authority's policy on integration and accept children providing the children had support they've have taken them, we are finding now when I am talking to schools that they are actually starting to change their mind and they are not wanting to support the authority's integration policy perhaps as much as they did in the past, and some schools have actually said that the authority cannot expect them to take children with certain sorts of difficulties, namely the ones with severe learning difficulties, by severe learning difficulties, I mean the children that would be at the extreme end of the moderate learning difficulty, Down's Syndrome, children with Cerebral Palsy perhaps, children with behavioural problems as well, and they actually have said to me on a number of occasions, the authority are going to have to start and look at setting up some sort of provision for children, whether its a special school, or whether its Unit provision or some other funding is targetted at one school and the children go there, but they are making it quite clear that they are not very happy with what is happening and so it's having an effect, a wider effect on the sort of schools attitude towards special needs and one which the Authority is going to have to get to grips with.

They will have to start thinking about it now, the authority are aware of the fact that schools are saying this and they need to start to think about it now and not actually when it is forced upon them, perhaps in twelve or eighteen months down the road, they need to be thinking about it now. We are getting a lot of concern from actual CSAs wanting to know what is happening to them and all that we can tell them at the minute is that someone will be contacting them to tell them to move on to the next school. We are getting a lot of phone calls and letters from parents at the moment that seem to be affected by what is happening, so this exercise has generated a lot more work, not just to carry out the exercise itself, but the knock on effect of it. This has created a lot of extra work and that prevents you from getting on with other things that you want to do, but it is important that the CSAs ring in or the parents ring in that we are actually giving satisfactory answers so you have got to spend a bit of time, explaining the situation and giving them information to try and put their mind at rest or tell them that you know everything will be sorted out for September, but we are not quite sure how it is going to be done.

One of the problems, of course is that they are bringing the special needs department, its actually the staffing department that are carrying all this through, we are not quite sure what is the up to date state of play, what the situation is, so we are try our best down in special needs to answer the questions, but sometimes we have to refer them on to someone else, perhaps we ought to refer them on to somebody else straight away, but we don't quite see it like that. At the moment, the CSA situation in primary schools, there are always winners and losers in this game, certain primary schools could have upwards of 6, 7 children that are moving out to secondary school and that has made a real mess of the number of CSA hours they have got, and some primary schools have sort of realised the shock of the fact that where they have been used to having a number of CSAs in their school that maybe they have been cut down to 1 and they find that a difficult situation to cope with despite the

fact that the support is supplied to cater for children with special needs and if the children have moved on, and there is no children there, then they should expect that the support will be moved out, but their argument of course is that they have got a number of other children that are not on statement that used to benefit from the support, so if a child was in a particular class with maybe 2, 3, 4 or 5 other children that perhaps have similar difficulties but have not got a statement, that those children would benefit from having a CSA in the classroom and now they are having to disappear, so the primary schools are having to cope with these children that have had indirect support in the past.

In order to try and get over the winners and losers situation we looked at all methods in which we could reduce CSA time, one of which was to try and top slice every child's hours, so that we knocked an hour off somebody with 10 hours support, we knocked 2 hours off somebody with 15 hours support, 3 hours off 20 hours support and 4 hours off somebody with 25 hours support, to try and even it out, or then again we looked at another situation where we took an hour off everybody's statement, so that would involve that we classified as A's earlier on, in the end there was no real satisfactory method of doing it, other than sticking to the criteria that we have given, this criteria was set by people that really don't have anything to do with special needs; and perhaps were asking for the wrong information, hence the reason why they asked us to put them into categories, they were wanting to know which children definitely needed support, they were looking at it from a financial point of view and that was all.

It has made it really difficult for writing statements, as soon as we have finished this exercise, because we've got some children of course who have got lots of problems who maybe need quite a substantial amount of the school week supported, we are having to look very carefully at the level of support that is already in the school and make children fit in to existing levels of support which is now beginning to come back at us from schools, because they are saying, look, you have written a new statement, or you have written 2 new statements for my school and in both cases you have written that this child will have access to the existing level of support, I can't do that, it is impossible.

Now what we try to do is make children of the same age, share support, so that if it's an Infant and Junior school, we are not making the child in the reception class or bottom infant class, share with someone in the top junior class, but in some cases, that does actually happen, it depends on the type of problems that the children have got, what I am getting on to is that we are saying to the heads, like we have always said, we'll give you the CSAs and you deploy them as you see fit, so you decide how much support that the people in the bottom infant class and how much support the child in the top junior class require, you have got say 25 hours to be shared between them and you work that out.

Now they countered that argument by saying but we often find that they both need the support at the same time, usually on a morning when the children are at their most alert and they want to target it in a morning and they can't do that if they have to share it, but what they are also saying to us is we are actually in effect delegating the responsibility to them which we have always done, but they are starting to use this argument now as the reason why we should delegate the money, because we have always said that schools get this CSA from the central pool and they deploy them as they see fit, but they have never used that as the argument that they are using at the moment, which is, well in effect you are delegating the money to us because you are delegating the responsibility, so why aren't you giving us the money as well, or instead so I feel that in the next twelve months, that is going to be a strong argument that is going to be put by heads in Barnsley and at the moment, Barnsley are looking at how money for CSAs can be delegated, the accountants in the

Authority have already suggested that the Authority does delegate the money in a sort of banding formula already, because children through the statements get 5 hours or 10 hours or 12½ hours or 15 hours or 20 hours or 25 hours of support and in some cases 27½ hours of support, so the Authority is actually seen as a level of resourcing and are using it as a sort of framework for introducing bands of support, so there is some sort of common ground between some heads that are saying that you are actually delegating this responsibility out to us now, why they should just start to use this argument now I think its because things are getting tight, so there is some common ground between what the heads are saying and some heads are wanting and what the Authority are perceiving is happening already.

Now it is interesting that this idea of the banding has come from the financial side of the education department, the special needs department have never looked at it like that, because of the situation that we find ourselves in when you are writing statements you are looking more closely at the level of support that is actually going into the school, you have got to do that and we have been doing that for some time, for the last 18 months we have been looking at records of what is going into the school, which children are of a similar age who might be able to share, what this exercise has done is just speeded up what was already happening, we were doing it through a natural way of things, but because they decided that we must save this money, it has exaggerated what we were doing and made us focus more on that type of approach, it has actually speeded it up, we started last year, I mentioned earlier on about the secondary school's taking children who were going to share support, we actually started this last summer, where we grouped children together who were coming from feeder schools into one secondary school, and Mike Kidd and myself said, there are two children going into this particular school, one has got 15 hours of support, the other has 15 hours of support, that should be 30, we are actually asking the school to take 20 or through negotiation be prepared to concede 25, so we were saving blocks of 5 hours at a time in some cases more, and there was a bit of a backlash from that last year, so schools were if you like getting used to what was happening. We in the special needs department were actually, as I said earlier trying to put this plan into operation, but we were doing it gradually, what these savings are going to do is focus on what we were doing and make it happen much quicker than we thought we would have to, because we have always been conscious of the fact that certain schools have far too many hours, but to go back to the fact that we felt that we have not got that much option, the options that are open to offer children provision within the authority are limited and you've got the pressure of parents, you've got the pressure of schools and if you have only got one method of satisfying the statement ie the CSAs then what are you going to do, that's the only thing you can offer. Schools have seen it as a way of getting extra resources into school.

Two years last April was when we had a reorganisation of jobs and responsibilities, how it affected special needs, we did have an AEO for special needs who was Roy Hepworth who retired and his job or his role was replaced by a Principal Officer for Special Services, now within the departments, it was split up below that officer, there were 3 senior managers appointed, or 3 senior managers, they weren't new appointments, they were people who were doing work in special needs any way. There was a manager who was given responsibility for managing the Curriculum Support Team and writing statements for children with learning difficulties and another manager focussed on managing the Sensory Impaired Service and a Portage Under Fives area and wrote statements for children with physical problems and sensory impairments and there was another person that dealt with the behaviour side, that was two years ago and that is a system that worked until the summer of 1995 and it has changed again.

Appendix Six; Open codes derived from interview with statementing Officer.

Appendix

Results of Content Analysis – Statementing Officer Interview.

The interview with the statementing officer in post at the time of the 1995 SEN budget review was transcribed and content analysed, to identify the themes emerging related to the key issues three and four. The following themes emerged;

Theme No;	Code	Frequency	Description of theme
1	en		enumeration of employment details.
2.	in-ap-en		inappropriate prior enumeration
3.	en-proc	(2)	enumeration procedure (2)
4.	en-comp		enumeration completed
5	en-dec-res		enumeration decision on resources
6.	en-dec-adv		enumeration decision to advantage of LEA on resources.
7.	en-comm		enumeration for communication inside LEA
8.	en-cont		enumeration for control of other parties
9.	en-rel		enumeration to relate to other data in LEA
10	en-diff		difficulties in enumeration
11.	en-res		enumeration for resource allocation
12	en-res-red	(2)	enumeration to reduce resources (2)
13	ind-nds		individual needs of children
14	en-res-fair	(2)	enumeration for fair allocation
15	en-del-res		enumeration for resource delegation
16	res-ad-unc		uncertainty of any additional resources.

As can be seen, the majority of the comments made were concerned with the role of the review of recording of employment details of Assistants were concerned with the need to control and reduce resources given to schools. As the transcript was so dense in these comments, the whole transcript is also included in the text as an illustration of how dominant these themes were in the role of this particular individual.

A school analysis of the 5 secondary schools investigated
in the case study LEA

The three intervention schools

School D

The 1991 census indicated that the population of Darton ward had slightly increased (1.25 per cent) to 11,956 since the last census was carried out in 1981. Darton had more owner occupied housing than was the average in Barnsley although the age structure of the population was similar to the rest of the Borough. The predominance of family housing is shown by the above average percentage of households with between 2 and 4 residents. The average household size was 2.54. 76 per cent of housing is owner occupied, 5 per cent private rented, 1 per cent Housing Association and 18 per cent is council owned. In 1991, 10.3 per cent of the economically active population were unemployed. By 1995, this figure had reduced to 8.9 per cent declining even further to 4.5 per cent by July 1998.

D had 950 pupils aged between 11 and 16 in 1993. (Today there are 965). The aims of the school

"stress effective learning and high academic standards and commit the school to the maintenance of a secure and caring environment, the promotion of pupils' self-esteem and a respect for others and the equipping of pupils to take their place in a democratic society. The school sets itself annual targets for improving GCSE performance as does each department .. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress."

OFSTED (1994) recorded that 30 pupils (2 per cent) were on the special needs register, 16 at level 1 of school based assessment, 18 at level 2 and 6 at level 3. Thirteen pupils had a statement of special educational

need. At the beginning of the assistant training, 7 pupils in Year 7 had a reading age of below 6.09 years. Two of these pupils were statemented for learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The others were not on school based assessment.

All pupils were included in mainstream classes until the autumn term of 1994. At this time a small unit was funded by the LEA for a group of 5 pupils with moderate learning difficulties who were in Year 7. The funding allowed staff to use the units extra teacher "time" of 20 hours a week with the group. The school concentrated on supporting and extending the pupils' basic maths, literacy and spelling skills as part of a cross curriculum scheme of work. All other pupils were in mainstream classes. Streaming was begun in Year 9 for maths and English.

School P

The 1991 census indicated that the population of Monk Bretton had fallen by over 5 per cent to 11,572 since the last census. The council rented sector (34 per cent) was considerably larger than average whilst there were proportionately less home owners (54 per cent) and few renting privately (3 per cent). The vast majority of dwellings (70 per cent) were semi-detached; the average household size was 2.41. In 1992, over 16 per cent of all the economically active population was unemployed. This figure was reduced to 9.9 per cent in 1995 and 6.3 per cent by 1998. There is still a high proportion of

people in part-time employment and occupations are of a predominantly manual nature.

School P is situated 2 miles east of Barnsley town centre and its catchment area includes both privately owned and council housing in the neighbourhood of Lundwood and Monk Bretton. There are approximately 850 pupils and 50 teachers including those on part-time contracts. The age range of the pupils is 11 to 16 years. Form groups are the organisational and pastoral basis of the school and each year consists of between 6 and 8 forms. Although the tutor is seen as being of fundamental importance, the academic and social welfare of the pupils rests with the Head of Upper and Lower schools. All Year 7 pupils are taught in mixed ability groups. In Years 8 and 9, each department determines their own preferred organisational structure and setting occurs in mathematics and modern languages. An option system operates in Years 10 and 11 which enables pupils to follow the examination courses best suited to their needs. All pupils follow a common core of study to examination levels and the requirements of the National Curriculum.

At the beginning of this study an individual needs pupil monitoring team was on-going in school. This comprised of the Head of Lower School, Head of Upper School, Head of Maths and Head of English. Its role was to

"establish and maintain appropriate provision - both internal and external - for pupils with a special individual need. These special individual needs will relate both to pupils with learning difficulties as well as pupils with advanced learning skills.

The group will identify the pupils and monitor provision and change the nature of provision when required, using both school and LEA resources. Head of School will be responsible for gathering up-to-date extra curriculum information on a pupil as well as information concerning parents and external agencies. Head of Maths and Head of English will supply up-to-date information about provision in their respective areas."

(Staff Handbook, June 1992)

The group met at least once a term and more if the need arose. Staff who were concerned about appropriate provision for pupils took their concerns to a member of the team for discussion. In the summer term 1993, there was no special needs co-ordinator at school. However, 2 curriculum support assistants had been employed by the LEA to support the pupils with statements. By the autumn term 1994, a SENCO had been appointed, but was on long-term sick leave and the assistants were being managed by 2 senior members of staff - the training manager and the deputy head of school.

In the spring term of 1994 an evaluation of a project that had been carried out in mathematics took place. The teacher had involved 1 assistant who supported the Year 7 pupils, 3 mornings a week. The teacher had trained the assistant so that she could work with SEN pupils competently and develop their understanding of mathematical concepts. The report suggests

"It is important that any assistant who works with the materials developed by the teacher has been trained. The lack of training has been evident on occasions when other assistants have been given the activities to do and the teacher has explained that it is important that the pupils talk and explain what they are doing as indicated in the activity. Pupils would instinctively prefer not to talk about what they are doing but just get it over with and move on to the next task. Due to the assistants lack of training, they had not understood the philosophy behind the teachers methods and have

allowed the pupils to do the activity as they wish and, on occasions, have even told the pupil what to say. This defeated the whole purpose of the activity; it is not the role of the assistant but clearly demonstrates that training is essential in this circumstance."

(ref. Priory School 1994 p4)

The teacher involved in the training described above was the member of staff who devolved the accredited maths training to all 3 intervention schools. The Report concluded that the main achievement of the project had been to enable the teachers to deliver lessons using a different style of teaching to SEN pupils. Also, it was realised that the assistants could provide similar teaching with suitable training - and noted that this could have "implications for other curriculum areas". Generally the pupils and staff felt that more learning had taken place and that this had given pupils more confidence. This had also led to suggestions that some pupils learning and attitudes had been enhanced in other areas of the curriculum.

School R

The population of Royston Ward had grown by 6 per cent to 11,139 in the 1991 census. The breakdown of the population by age is similar to the Borough average. Sixty four per cent of houses are owner occupied, 4 per cent private rented and 32 per cent are council owned. The average household size is 2.51. Eleven per cent of the economically active population was unemployed in 1991, 9.1 per cent in 1995 and 5.8 per cent in July 1998.

R has a school population of 600 pupils aged 11 to 16 years old. It was not until 1989 that the first

pupils with a statement of special educational need for general learning difficulties joined the first year at school. A full time assistant was appointed to support this pupil's integration. There were 5 other assistants working in school by July 1994, 2 of them worked full time. By September, the sudden influx of statements for pupils currently on role or about to start Year 7 brought the total number of assistants to 13, including 6 full-timers and the rest working between 7 and 20 hours each. It was anticipated that this number would increase again before Christmas as the 3 pupils on Stage 4 of school based assessment received their statements. In December 1994, the number of pupils with statements rose to 21. This meant that 3.5 per cent of the school's pupils were statemented which was more than average the overall official LEA figure for the Borough.

TABLE 1: RANGE OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AT SCHOOL R IN DECEMBER 1994

Year	Number on Statement	Learning Difficulty
7	8	Downs Syndrome (2) Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia 2) Learning Difficulties (3) EBD (1)
8	4	Learning Difficulties (2) Specific Learning Difficulties (1) EBD (1)
9	6	Specific Learning Difficulties (1) Learning Difficulties (2) Learning Difficulties and EBD (1) Social and Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (2)
10	2	Learning Difficulties (1)
11	1	Specific Learning Difficulties and EBD (1)
TOTAL	21	

In addition there were more pupils at Stage 1, 2 and 3 of school based assessment. School expected that the majority of the latter group would proceed on to the stage of formal assessment. The SENCO observed that the number of assistants hours in school had almost tripled and there were more than twice as many staff. In fact, although this group was not considered a department because the school SEN policy states that special educational needs is an issue "to be taken on board by each and every member of staff", there were now more assistants than teachers associated to any of the other discrete curriculum areas.

The two control schools

School H

The population of the South West Ward has remained relatively stable in the last 10 years at 9,423. The breakdown of the population by age shows a lower percentage of children and a higher percentage of pensioners than the Borough average. It has the highest percentage of households without children and the lowest percentage of school children. The vast majority of homes are in the private sector (75 per cent), mainly owner occupied but with a high proportion (10 per cent) privately rented. The council sector (13 per cent) is far smaller than average. Two per cent of the houses belong to a housing association. Half of all the dwellings in the ward are terraced with relatively few semi-detached housing. The average household size is

2.23. In 1991, 11 per cent of the economically active population was unemployed. In 1995, this figure was 8.8 per cent and in July 1998, 5 per cent.

There are 912 pupils at the school in total and 49 full-time equivalent teachers. The school organisation of pupils with special educational needs centres on separate "special" classes in most subject at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, SEN pupils are generally taught in a lower set for the core subjects. Pupils whose special needs are less severe are taught in mainstream classes and the OFSTED report (1993) suggested

"For those pupils who have the severest learning difficulties, programmes of study are planned thoroughly and materials are modified appropriately so that they have access to the basic curriculum. There is a variety of teaching and learning styles which ensures good progress and appropriate for high achievement. Statemented pupils are well supported and appropriately challenged. However, those pupils with less severe learning difficulties who are in mainstream classes, do not make progress in line with their "ability" well. It was also noticed that assistants were well managed in special classes but less well-managed in mainstream groups 'when lesson planning at times inhibits their interaction with the pupils'."

The SENCO emphasised that a whole school policy for special needs had not been developed in September 1993 and that the formative process of establishing what staff and pupils needed from in-class support was ongoing. In 1990, the first assistant was appointed for 7 hours a week to support a pupil with general learning difficulties. By 1994, 7 assistants had joined the school and worked for 120 hours to support 9 pupils on statement.

Statemented pupils were found in the following years:

TABLE 2 : STATEMENTED PUPILS AT SCHOOL H AND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ASSISTANTS HOURS SUPPORT RECEIVED

Year	No. of pupils	Hours of support
7	1	10
8	6	70
9	2	25
11	1	15

With the exception of 1 Year 8 pupil, the stated pupils were allocated to small special needs groups in their corresponding years. The Year 11 pupil was pursuing GCSE courses and was therefore to be found in mixed ability sets or with her own small group in English and Maths.

School E

The population of Athersley has fallen more rapidly than anywhere else in the Borough (by 10.7 per cent) since the 1981 census. The population now stood at 8,863. The average household size was 2.67 and was the largest average size in Barnsley. There were more single parent households than in any other ward. The population was relatively young in comparison with the rest of the Borough with the highest percentage of residents in the 0-15 year age group and the lowest number over the age of 75. Fewer people owned their own homes than in any other ward (31 per cent) and the ward had the highest percentage of council housing (64 per cent) in Barnsley. Three per cent of housing is private rented and 2 per cent belonged to a housing association. Athersley has

the highest degree of overcrowding with a high proportion of households with 5 or more residents (approximately 5 per cent). In 1991, unemployment ran at 21.5 per cent, in 1995, 14.9 per cent and in 1998, 9.2 per cent.

School E has 745 pupils aged between 11 and 16 years old. The school was formerly of social priority status with its N o R being below the national average for a comprehensive school. Pupils are drawn from 7 feeder schools and only a low proportion are from high social class households. Unemployment in 1993 was more than double the national average. The percentage of school leavers to participate in education beyond 16 plus is well below the national figure.

"There was no information available about pupil attainment on entry to the school. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is at the average for maintained schools in Metropolitan Authorities. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above that of the LEA and more than double the national average. Pupils receiving Scheme of Aid is in excess of 58 per cent. The school operated on 2 sites in 1992-93 as a result of the closure of a neighbouring school. In July 1993, the school moved to one site, previously occupied by the other school and it was extended by an additional building programme."

(OFSTED Report April 1994, p2)

This report also suggested that standards of achievement for SEN pupils was generally satisfactory in relation to their abilities. It then mentioned that Year 7 pupils were set after initial testing on entry in English and maths. Sometimes pupils moved from a special needs class back into other mainstream classes although "this is limited".

"The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is influenced by small

groups, additional support and low attendance particularly at Key Stage 4 where in some lessons almost individual attention can result.

Additional support for pupils with statements of educational need is provided by assistants appointed by the LEA. In many situations the assistant support is effective and valuable; in some it is not well used. Arrangements for the maintenance and review of statements are satisfactory. There are effective links with external agencies. Procedures and practice for assessment, recording and reporting back are required. Individual education programmes are not achieved. Class teachers are responsible for matching the curriculum to learning needs and tasks are generally well matched to pupils abilities.

High levels of support in some lessons, coupled with a small group, allow close attention to the development of basic skills in English and mathematics. However, there are insufficient opportunities within those lessons for pupils to apply the skills through the wider programmes of study in those subjects.

Whilst the provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, there are some issues which need to be addressed. These include the production of a policy, the development of individual education programmes, a review of curriculum breadth and balance for some pupils in Key Stage 4 and improvement of attendance."

(p22)

The report went on to suggest that the school has strong leadership provided by the Headteacher, which has created a well ordered environment in which the pupils and staff could work. However, although curriculum content and range was suggested to be satisfactory there was a need for more balance in history, religious education and information technology. The quality of teaching was seen to be satisfactory or better in 89 per cent of the lessons. The majority of lessons had clear goals and purposes although the special needs group had their learning difficulties carefully addressed, the work was considered to be somewhat

"undemanding and repetitive in English and mathematics, with an over emphasis on the teaching of a narrow range of deals." (p19)

As a result of the OFSTED inspection, a review of special needs suggested that by December 1994 the special needs co-ordinator, monitored by the Head of Lower School would set up monthly special needs meetings to review the deployment of the assistants within the classroom. At the same time, the Head of Lower School would produce a report on the deployment of assistants within the classroom by July 1995. This report was never written.

PAGE
NUMBERING
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differentiation in terms of pay or hours or even security of tenure with a new job based on what qualification you have, school has no say, or this school doesn't anyway, in who has a job and who has not. So those we do train, we can't even say we would like to keep these, the ones that say 'sod this I'm not getting trained' may be the ones that the LEA says, they are contracted, they are staying, fine.

The difficulties faced recently are the CSAs are employed by the LEA on a contract, before now they have always arrived on a first day in September and said, you have got me for 20 hours, which means re-vamping most of the timetable to accommodate 20 hours, unless they've had the same child all the time. The issue of redundancy has made for a lot of bad feeling in terms of terminating the contracts, especially with the LEA saying one thing one day, and probably its my own fault, but I had a feeling that the CSAs have got a right to know as soon as possible when their contract is being terminated, informing the CSAs and then being told a different criteria the following day, and then on the third day to be told I can use my original criteria, but then this was getting too much, so I just scrapped it and left it. There is a lack of continuity, the lack of a contract means lack of continuity. It is very difficult then for a CSA to be motivated to produce something now, believing then its going to be of benefit to her or her friends, in a years time when it comes up next with some other kids in the curriculum. One CSA has put in two hours a week mostly for this year, developing something called maths steps, luckily she is stopping although her hours are being reduced, but she is stopping, she wants to see it implemented, next year very few CSAs are going to be prepared to give that sort of commitment because they don't know if they are going to finish it, see it or do anything, but that's a contractual thing with the CSAs.

In every school I have ever been in, the CSAs are abused like mad, I would not ask a CSA to see a parent, in fact I would positively discourage a CSA seeing a parent, especially on their own, they do not get paid for that, I would not expect the CSA to take any flack or be in a position to take any flack, I would not expect a CSA to write IEPs, have an input into is fine, because probably they know what resources are available better than say the English teacher, I expect them to have an input into what is in terms of materials and things, what is being taught will suggest ideas, but that then depends upon their experience. I would not expect the CSA to do, unless its really desperate, clerical work or that's about it really.

Yes, one has responsibility for every child in the class, the CSA does not have that responsibility, they have got one child. Her responsibility is if you like..... classroom teacher.

Off hand no.

What happens to the Special Needs pupil

All pupils are allocated to a mixed ability form group, based on information from primary schools including the information on statemented pupils the pupils are allocated on the basis of ability, friendship groups across seven classes, basically it is mixed ability, they all follow the same curriculum and wherever possible, pupils with special educational needs remain in the class with their peers.

Two years ago there were approximately 16 pupils in receipt of a statement of special educational needs with about 9 CSAs over the last two years this has increased to, at various times, 30-31 pupils being either in receipt of a statement or at the formal assessment stage, and at September 1994 there were 19.

CSAs working between 25 hours and 15 hours, the 15 hours were either allocated to a morning session 5 days a week. One lot of 15 hours, one could not work on 2 days and one person on 15 hours couldn't start work before 9.30 and had to leave by 3.00pm, so her hours tended to be 10 until 2.30 for five days. At half term that number was reduced to 16 and what it is for next term, being the last day of this term no one knows.

The hours taken off were, 80 hours, the actual number of hours left I would have to check on. They left us with something like 300 and something hours.

The LEAs response to that is the fact that the contracts are of a temporary nature and they run until that half term period, so all CSAs should understand that the contracts are expected to be terminated, they are then renewed from that half term until, the next half term. The notice I got, was maybe up to 2 weeks that we would have to lose some hours. At half term that was OK because a lot of the year 11 kids left, so we lost the hours, normally we have kept those hours so that we can start preparing things for next year, materials can be collated and re-vamped, re done in preparation for next year, this year the CSAs have been taken away and I was given in the end about 10 days notice. I was told to make my own criteria for which ones I wanted to lose of those that had the temporary contract, so long as I could justify it, to inform them, it seems only fair to inform them as soon as possible, so I selected three people and informed them.

They were selected on the basis of how good they were at the job and their relationship with the pupils, their relationship with staff and the quality of the work they produced, they were done on those grounds. Having informed these people with the LEAs acquiescence, the following day someone else in the LEA rang me up and told me which three I had to make redundant and whose hours were to be reduced, this meant that someone travelling from the other side of Barnsley has 10 hours a week who has to be accommodated between certain hours in the day and a very good CSA was then lost, but that created a difficulty in terms of credence. I found it rather embarrassing because although the LEA say that they will be the ones to tell the CSAs, the CSAs are also going to say why them?, so I thought it just saves a lot of bother and it is more personal rather than just receiving a letter in the post to say express that maybe some of the reasons, and leave it that way. Then the LEA just tell me to get rid of. The situation now at the end of this term, is that I was told on Wednesday night, who had permanent contracts, who I would be keeping and there was 14½ hours to allocate on a daily supply basis. I then informed the CSAs because it only gives them 2 days notice in effect and one CSA who has skills that we can use, I asked her if she wanted the 14½ hours next term, by midday the LEA had informed me that some other people had got permanent contracts, and this position is still not resolved, and even though its about midday on the last day of term I am told I will be informed on the hours and which CSAs will be working for next term, sometime today. This is really good.

For next term, I have no idea. Also I don't know how they have allocated the hours for which pupils. I don't know whether a child called Phillipa Senior, whose parents want her to go to Crevesford, Crevesford is apparently full, so the child is probably going to come here. She is a Down's girl, with 25 hours CSA support, I don't know if their calculations include that 25 hours or not, and so on.

My management role is basically to allocate the CSAs to classrooms, where a pupil in receipt of a statement of special educational needs is, this is done on the basis of a), there is no particularly order in this, the pupil's needs, the curriculum demands made upon that pupil, for some they are going to find English easy, Maths hard or visa versa, so that comes into it. The class teacher involved, some relate better, more sympathetically, or empathy whatever word you want with less able pupils, some just ignore them totally, certain curriculum areas like modern languages prove a difficulty for some children and not for others. The availability of the CSA hours, basically who is available at that particular time and the groupings of the pupils. If the pupil is in with a group say doing a Maths course, that demanded a lot different to those doing a modern languages in year 8, which are different to languages in year 9, where they begin to get set and same with Science, so those things are taken into consider, on the basis of that you have a mixed batch. What one tries to do is have the same CSA for the same child for the subject. So a CSA will go with a child for two History lessons a week, and cover a different child for three English lessons, this works most of the time, occasionally the child received two CSAs, one CSA for two lessons, one CSA for one, but this is because of the hours allocation of CSAs.

How CSAs work with staff is due to what develops along with their own personal confidence, if they are starting from fresh, they are very much in a subservient position, and from that point of view I would like to see them moving around the classroom, seeing more able pupils as well as the less able ones or the ones with the statement, developing materials, and under the direction of the classroom teacher, not necessarily being in the classroom but preparing work for the following week or whatever, this has a slight problem, I cannot say this is the way they will work, because some classroom teachers want the CSAs to sit with one pupil, some pupils require a one to one depending on the difficulty, whether its behaviour or attention or whatever, and it also varies between subjects. In Science you are going to possibly need a one to one if a child has got a very short concentration span a great deal more than when you are in maths when the task is constantly changing.

No, to allow the staff to request CSA support I am going to get over flooded, I had thought about having a meeting with heads of departments each term, where they bid for time and make a case for it, the problem with this is that I am not in a position to know from the top of my head whether the CSA timetable will fit to the subjects and it is very difficult then to compare the relevance of the bid from PE to assist the child to come into PE because otherwise he misses school with the demands made by English because his literacy is so poor. There are swings and roundabouts.

Its alright giving a CSA to a department, but because the pupils are split into mixed ability grouping especially in year 7 and 8 for example, modern languages, there are five members of modern languages department, there maybe demand for five different classes, five CSAs at one particular time, and at another time there will not be any demand because nothing is going on in that area. The advantages of the system is that fine, the CSA, take History, knows where the materials are and everything else, the disadvantages that if that CSA leaves, then it leaves a big hole in terms of the curriculum to fill. Given the employment situation with the CSAs they can be taken away from school basically with one days notice and no consultation, this would then leave us in a worse position to meet the needs of the child anyway, also having discussed it with the CSAs, although some of them like Maths, they would not like to do Maths the whole time, all the time and only Maths, they enjoy the mixture, the same as they would not want to be with the same child all the time.

Most of the CSAs when they arrive here if they haven't worked in a secondary school before, like every teacher, like every adult, it's somewhat daunting, these are big kids, you only see them outside a school situation, or whatever. Within a term, I would say all of them realise that the children are the children, they can relate to them on a one to one, in a group situation, it is not as daunting as they originally thought. Some of the behaviour ones a lot of the CSAs find it difficult to work with for the reason of either disciplining and their role. But I will come to that bit later on and the classroom management situation OK.

New CSA, they are free to move around, we try to encourage them to do so.

Some staff dislike working with some CSAs, the same as some CSAs dislike working with some staff.

Everyone has now got used to it, there used to be that situation in the beginning, I think really the last one who used to find it very difficult has this year, given the nature of the child she has had in front of her, has welcomed the CSA support with open arms. Normally the problem is if I take the CSA away, what are they going to do without. One of the main problems they have still got here, is with one or two modern languages. The classroom teachers

HIGH SCHOOL TIMETABLE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Assembly					
Period 1	Social Studies Christine Whiting	Maths Daniel Hepworth	Maths Daniel Hepworth	Social Studies Christine Whiting	Form P Yr 10 C. Whiting
Period 2	Science Christine Whiting	English James Richmond	French Christine Whiting	Science Diane Taylor	English Thomas Snell.
BREAK					
Period 3	P.E Chris Winfield	English Diane Taylor	English Diane Taylor.	Supported Studies C. Whiting	Social Studies Christine Whiting.
LUNCH					
Period 4	Supported Studies Yr 10	German Rachel Leman.	English James Richmond	French Christine Whiting Diane T Taylor	English Diane Taylor
Period 5	French Christine Whiting	Maths Chris Winfield	English Michael Harrison.	English Diane Taylor	Supported Studies C. Whiting
BREAK					
Period 6	Science Diane Taylor	German. Lee Nowodny	Maths J. Richmond L. Firth.	English J. Richmond L. Firth.	Science D. Taylor.

- 1 Name of CSA 1
- 2 Hours worked 27 1/2
- 3 Are your hours attached to any particular pupil? If so, how much and to whom
NO
- 4 Name the statemented pupils you are working with during these times as far as possible
- 5 Please try to fill in this timetable stating whether you are in:
 - a) a subject lesson
 - b) small group of 1:1 withdrawal
- 6 Add your type of work activity eg. general support (ie just helping with normal lesson, reading, work experience etc).

THE BARNSELY SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS' PROFESSIONAL TRAINING (SNAPT) PROGRAMME - SRB2 BID - CSA QUESTIONNAIRE

1 Please name the school you work at EDWARD SHEERLEN

2 Please tick the appropriate box to indicate whether you have any experience of the following:

	Yes	No
a) Bringing up own children	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Registered child minder or Nanny	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Foster parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Helping with the upbringing or education of a handicapped or difficult child	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Nursing ill children	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Organising or assisting with a playgroup	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Organising or assisting with a youth or uniformed organisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Voluntary helper in school	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Other relevant experience. Please state _____		

3 Please tick the boxes for any training and qualifications you hold.

	Yes	No
a) Teaching (eg PGCE, teachers' certificate)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Nursery Nursing (eg NNEB)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) General Nursing (eg SRN, SEN)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) First Aid (St John's, Red Cross)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Typing or other secretarial courses (eg RSA, Pitman etc)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) School and other higher qualifications (eg GCE, GCSE, CSE, 16 plus)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) 'A' level, HND, BTEC, City & Guild, NVQ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
h) Degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

levant training. Please state _____

have you been employed as a CSA? (include periods of work in schools as well)

months

years

years

years

hours a week are you employed as a CSA? 25

request training in the following areas (Please tick each line)

ng Spelling Yes No

ng Mathematics Yes No

ng Handwriting Yes No

ng Science Yes No

ng Reading Yes No

ng Study Skills Yes No

ng Good Behaviour Yes No

ng Speech and Development Yes No

ng Physiotherapy Yes No

ng Speech therapy Yes No

ng Occupational Programmes Yes No

ght take place?

sources you would (counselling etc)?

TO DO THE

11 If you are interested in working for more qualifications, please tick any of the options below that might interest you in the future.

a) To go on to higher or other qualifications

b) To work in a Social Services day centre

c) Specialist fostering for the Social Services

d) CSA working in a Special School

e) Other (Please state)

12 Any other comments

Thank you

S BASKIND
Chartered Educational Psychologist

SER/Ps/SB/MF/L1460
04 03 96

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Appendix Eleven; Sample Questionnaire for Heads and SENCOs.

THE BARNSELEY SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS' PROFESSIONAL TRAINING (SNAPT) PROGRAMME - SRB3 BID

1 School Name St J.M.

2 Respondent's Post

Headteacher

SEN Coordinator

Other
Please state _____

3 We would request training for assistants to support pupils in the following areas:

Please tick each line

Area	All Assistants	Some Assistants	Do not require training in this area
Supporting Spelling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Mathematics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Handwriting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Science	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Reading	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Study Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Good Behaviour	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Speech and Language Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Physiotherapy Programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Speech therapy Programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Occupational therapy programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting medical illness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Information technology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting Teachers in the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Also The Role of the Assistant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An induction package	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
First Aid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Child Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Counselling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4 Other training needs

5 Please prioritise three areas for training

Supporting Reading

Supporting Mathematics

Supporting Good Behaviour.

6 Are there specific methods or areas you would like assistants to be trained to use? (eg Reading Recovery, Distar, counselling)

Reading Recovery.

7 Do you have any preference for the times when training might take place? Please give details.

Inset days.

8 Any other comments.

Thank you.

S BASKIND
Chartered Educational Psychologist

SER/PS/SB/MF/L1460 - 22.5.97

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Appendix Twelve; Sample Questionnaire to record student backgrounds

NAME Rachael YEAR 9 DATE June 96 SCHOOL _____

DETAILS

- 1 Type of learning difficulty - physical
- sensory (blind/deaf)
- EBD
- medical
- also - {congenital delay
- {developmental delay

2 Year Group (relevant?) Yr7, 8, 9

3 Gender female

- 4 Family - lone parent (mum/dad)
- grandparent
- fostered
- childrens home
- 2 parents (biological)
- 2 parents (step)

- 5 Trauma - accident
- divorce
- bereavement *NA*
- other (moved address)

SESSIONS

- 6 School absences - illness _____
- truancy _____
- lates _____
- exclusions _____

7 Free School Meals

N/A

Division of Education & Child Psychology, selected papers Vol 12 no 21 (p45-57).

Using assistants to support the educational needs of pupils with learning difficulties: the sublime or the ridiculous?

Sue Baskind and David Thompson

Over the past two decades evidence has mounted that a growing group of non-professionals is being employed to directly support our children's learning. They work in mainstream and special schools, in the nursery, primary and secondary sectors. They have been variously described as auxiliaries, helpers, ancillaries, teachers aides and helpers, and nursery, general classroom, non teaching, special support and special needs assistants. The roots of these different titles are clearly explained by Clayton (1990). In this paper the group will be referred to using the generic term "assistants".

What can a review of recent literature reveal about the group and the circumstances that have promoted their number? What policies guide the assistants' recruitment and conditions of service under the terms of their contract of employment? What are their qualifications and experience prior to employment? Do they receive further training? What exactly is their role in relation to supporting SEN pupils and how are they managed in schools?

The recent history

Early literature highlighted the assistant's potential role to support teaching programmes and raise general educational standards (Plowden, 1967). Later the Wamock Report (1978) stressed a more specific focus of employment, to support the learning of children with special educational needs. They could provide care for those children or carry out educational programmes as directed by the teacher, thereby freeing the latter to attend to the learning of others in the class.

By 1975, the highly regarded Kennedy and Duthie study for the Scottish Department of Education had been published. It acknowledged the government intent to meet other objectives such as the employment of auxiliary assistants once the recommended teacher staffing standards had been met. In fact the department's figures for the number of ancillary staff in the nursery and primary sectors, excluding administrative staff and laboratory assistants, represented "an overall increase in staff from around 1970 to 1972 of 10 per cent compared to an increase of 1.9 per cent for pupils and 10.9 per cent for teachers in the same period".

More than a decade later, Coacher et al. (1988) researched into the effects of the implementation of the 1981 Education Act. They ascertained that 77 per cent of respondent LEAs recorded a substantial increase in the number of assistants they employed, although 17 per cent reported no change and 6 per cent stated that no staff of this type were employed by them. Clayton et al. (1990) revealed just how "substantial" this increase might be when they discovered a 382 per cent growth in the number of assistant hours allocated to SEN pupils in Wiltshire in the mid 1980s. Interestingly, the Coacher study also found that a corresponding 76 per cent of LEAs had increased the number of secondary aged pupils with special educational needs into mainstream schools. One might note that:

some 31 per cent of LEAs also recorded substantial increases in the number of mainstream-based special needs teachers and 39 per cent in the number of teachers employed in special units ... At the same time ... some 18 per cent of authorities recorded a substantial decrease in numbers of special school teachers with less than 2 per cent registering redeployment. (1990a, p-80)

Several government publications swiftly followed the wake of the 1988 Education Reform Act. All aspired to inform and clarify the position of special educational needs pupils within mainstream education. The 1989 HMI survey of SEN pupils in 38 LEAs did not mention the use of assistants in schools, whilst the 1992 HM review emphasised the increased scope for their use with the advent of LMS. Nearly all the 150 schools surveyed had conducted or were in the process of conducting reviews of their staffing arrangements. It was considered that the assistants' work was so important that aspects of the teaching and learning processes would diminish without it.

The 1989 Children Act and the 1993 Education Act have both further broadened and firmly established the statutory rights of all children to receive an education appropriate to their learning difficulties. Schools are now commanded

to accept the responsibility of educating all their pupils. Special needs is firmly on the agenda for governing bodies and Headteacher who are in control of and responsible for the running costs of most aspects of school life.

The 1993 Act's attendant Code of Practice clarifies the process that individual schools n-do use to identify and assess, teach and monitor individuals whose rate of progress gives cause for concern. Yet there are many tensions for the new 9-1 managers to take into consideration which are increasingly difficult to resolve with regard to teaching pupils with "special educational need-., Traditionally their staff have required a high level of expertise", often gained after additional in-service training. Teaching groups are small and pupils are sometimes taught on a withdrawal basis. It is not unusual to work on a one-to-one basis with one adult.

The Audit Commission (1992) made it dear that many headteachers acknowledged the expense of educating SEN pupils simply because they normally require more adult attention However, the Coopers and Lybrand report (1988) had already alerted the government to the resultant pressure from schools, faced by the LEAS, to provide infinite funding from a bottomless pit of resources to meet additional SEN pupil needs.

In addition, the 1994 2.9 per cent pay award to teachers is to be supported by schools without any reimbursement from central government. This has left many headteachers in the invidious position of losing staff from their school roll. There is some evidence to suggest that under such circumstances it is special educational needs teachers whose hours are reduced as they are pulled into more traditional mainstream teaching to cover 'timetable gaps" (Baskind and Thompson, 1994).

As Lorenz (1992) points out:

Thus whether resources for children with special needs have been delegated to schools by their LEA or retained centrally, the need to- make "efficiencies' has become a predominant consideration. Clearly by employing assistants rather than teachers or even nursery nurses, schools and LEAs can make real savings. (p.27)

Recruitment and prior experience

Although both the Plowden and Warnock Reports had envisaged that assistants should be engaged because of their personal qualities, it was further expected that successful candidates would have a good general education and that continued in-in-service training would be received once employed. Indeed the Plowden Report was visionary in its anticipation of future incentive allowances for additional responsibility and a planned programme of training that could provide a career route to teacher training

The studies of Hegarty et al. (1985) and Hodgson et al. (1984) both serve to illustrate the diversity of recruitment and selection policies found amongst respondent LEAs in the early 1980s. The former suggests that of the assistants in integration programmes in 14 LEAS:

Two thirds ... had some professional training, generally the NNEB qualification; though its relevance was strictly limited, a number of LEAs insisted on the NNEB qualification for appointment as classroom assistant. (Hegarty, 1985, p.176)

It was also dear that the vast majority of assistants had no experience of pupils with learning difficulties. Only four had had some minor involvement e.g. doing voluntary work in a special school.

Hodgson also found that some schools preferred their assistants to be qualified but looked fox a standard of interpersonal skills that would allow teachers to relate to the assistants more easily, especially in the secondary sector.

An analysis of the assistants in Clayton's Wiltshire study concluded that one third had no qualifications at all, although one quarter had some secretarial or office training and almost one fifth were qualified first aiders. Six of the assistants were qualified teachers. However with regard to their experience:

Almost all had brought up children on their own and 80 per cent had had voluntary experience working in schools. Approximately half had organised or helped with playgroups and a similar number had previously worked as welfare assistants. However, only one in five had had experience of handicapped or difficult children. (Clayton, 1989, p.100)

Woolf and Bassett's (1988) small scale study of 27 assistants working in special schools revealed that 21 had no qualifications, 2 were NNEB trained, 1 was a state registered nurse and 3 had other qualifications, mainly first aid certificates.

The authors could find very little literature relating to the gender of any of the individuals who undertook to work as assistants. However, Wigley et al (1989) studied a group of assistants working in a Northern LEA, whose pupils came from a rich diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds. It also suggested that although no male assistants were employed at the time, "... if our sample is representative, the number of workers from ethnic minority groups appears to be proportionate" (p.3).

Conditions of service

The Wigley et al. study also provided additional information which clarified the nature of the assistants' pay and conditions of service. They all held temporary contracts "for a maximum of 27 hours per week. The number of hours can be increased or decreased at short notice. They are not paid for school holidays, but have a leave entitlement of twenty days plus statutory bank holidays. Wages are paid on a monthly basis throughout the year." (4.12, p-3)

The assistants were paid approximately £2.80 per hour.

In Woolf and Bassett's survey, 21 of the 27 respondents had a specific contract although it related mainly to their working hours and payment. However, it appeared that the assistants themselves felt it would be difficult to write a job description, explaining that it was not what was written on paper that was most important but rather "time and understanding" of SEN pupils. The study's recommendations describe the assistants pay as "totally inadequate" and suggests this might eventually lead to a difficulty in finding people of a suitable to do the work

The evidence of more recent NFER research still suggests that the majority of assistants, "were part time, or on short term contracts and recruited locally by the school. However, some LEAs did appoint centrally and allocated staff to clusters of schools in order to encourage continuity and offer greater job stability; such appointments tended to be full time and contracts longer" (Metcher-Campbell, 1992, p.141).

Training

Much uncertainty surrounds the effectiveness of training assistants, much dithering as to the extent of training afforded by schools and LEAs, and no training guidelines exist at all in the various government publications which have paid regard to educating pupils with special Educational needs. This predicament is despite over 20 years of faithfully reported research which evidences the need and huge demand for pre-service, induction and the follow up training requested by teachers, headteachers and the assistants themselves.

Plowden's early cry for on the job training of assistants was echoed by Wamock who noted that, in the main, assistants had to rely on the staff at their individual institutions for support and advice.

Kennedy and Duthie's study (1975) suggested that much of the assistant work would be of a practical nature and would serve as a support role to both teachers and pupils. Thus it was deemed proper that training should be classroom based with additional training in the theoretical aspects of the job to be carried out in other "training institutions". It was also recommended that time should be allowed for the assistants to talk to each other and the lecturers. Their work would be assessed by the tutors, the school teaching staff and headteachers. It was envisaged that the assistants would benefit from an extended programme of training beginning with an in service programme. The suggested priority training areas included lessons in voice delivery and the handling of groups of pupils as well as "printing and writing, objective tests and their marking, school libraries and their learning resources' centres, audio visual aids and materials used in primary schools and to educational theory and practice" (Chapter 5, Section 3).

It should be noted that the report specifically states

If the rate of development of educational technology continues as it has in the recent past, the auxiliaries will have to be familiar with a wide range of equipment and associated software. (Chapter 5, Section 3)

The NFER research of assistants' training in the late 1970s, as reported by Hegarty (1985), presented a promising two thirds of assistants with some professional training stating that this was "generally the NNEB qualification". Some of the LEAs indicated that the NNEB diploma was a pre requisite for the job. However, Hegarty suggests that the value of the training was limited. In fact, in 1982 the NNEB course was revised in response to the Davies (1980)

recommendations to include a short section on abnormal development, learning, social and emotional difficulties and physical disabilities. Hegarty too emphasised providing local custom-built training courses using services that were already available.

By 1988, Coacher et al. were advising that 28 per cent of their respondent LEAs had given their assistants specific training to help implement the 1981 Act. In a small scale research study, Bell (1988) found that less than half the assistants surveyed in a large Northern LEA were receiving any in-service training although most said that they would like some support of this kind. Although "aspects of teaching, the curriculum, child development and school organisations" (p.30) were amongst the training topics called for, "there was no consensus view about the frequency of training preferred or about possible teachers and preferred methods of course delivery" (p.30).

Clayton's research summarises the demand for induction type training as well as training in general and specific skills such as the general role of the assistant, behaviour management and first aid. It also appears that the assistants were more concerned to receive courses which would help them to meet individual children's needs. The teachers and headteachers in the same survey wished the training to incorporate more general skills and knowledge about "classroom teaching routines and methods". Clayton wondered whether the assistants' narrowly prescriptive perception of their training needs reflected their inexperience and paradoxically their lack of training.

Wigley et al. (1989) suggested that there was an overwhelming consensus of agreement regarding the benefits of training for assistants. Class teachers wished for 'training for teaching the child e.g. developing skills in task analysis, in planning objectives based learning, in questioning techniques and in carrying out a teaching programme (as well as), record keeping, preparing games and worksheets, working with groups of less able children and behaviour management". (4.7.1).

They also felt that assistants needed information about the nature of children's special needs. The support assistants in the study tended to "focus" on the needs of the child with whom they were currently working (4.7.2). They also requested the following training about aspects of integration, teaching language skills, about physical or sensory disabilities to include the use and care of equipment as well as care of the children. One assistant also considered that it would be relevant to offer a course relating to issues of race, disablement and gender. The headteachers in the study suggested on site training perhaps supported by the SENCO with sandwich courses at the local FE college. However, "there was some feeling that class teachers had time to make only a limited contribution to the training need" (p.13).

A small number of LEAs have now set up their own training schemes (interestingly often crucially supported by the local psychological service). These include Wiltshire's SAINTS pack (1989), Oxfordshire's OPTIS (1988), Calderdale's ALSS (1991), the Leeds experience (1992) and Barnsley's SNAPT programmes. All these courses are designed to induct assistants into their role and provide training to develop working relationships with teaching staff and pupils. They also cover skills and methods which will enhance the support the assistants offer to basic teaching processes.

Lorenz in particular is quite clear about some of the main considerations which guided the initiative to support the training of special needs assistants in Leeds. These were

- the lack of guidance offered to schools on roles and responsibilities;
 - the absence of relevant job descriptions;
 - unclear management structures and lines of responsibility;
 - a lack of training;
 - a lack of support and feelings of isolation among assistants;
- low status and lack of training. (Lorenz, 1992, p.31)

It should be noted that the demand for training is not wholly universal. Both Hegarty (1985) and Clayton (1990) realised that a small proportion of the teachers and headteachers interviewed felt that no further training was necessary. The reasons given varied, including the fact that individuals already had adequate qualifications, e.g. the NNEB certificate, or were qualified teachers themselves or were experienced in the job.

The role of the assistant

A direct comparison between early research and current evaluations of the assistants role presents as a shift away from the tasks of physically caring for SEN pupils and towards more direct educational instruction.

Hegarty et al (1981) describes their support as critical in integration. "Their availability can determine the feasibility of a programme, and the way in which they are deployed its success or failure" (p.177).

At the time of writing, it was clear that many teachers were happy to allow SEN pupils in their classes for the "social benefit" that might accrue. These same staff were possibly insufficiently trained themselves with the skills and knowledge necessary to allow effective learning for pupils to take place. Thus the assistants were often under-utilised and might be restricted largely to a caring role. Indeed this was often the initial reason for employing them. However, there is evidence that some schools allowed a more educational role, working under the teacher's direction with one pupil or in a small group. They might also carry out a programme devised by a speech therapist or physiotherapist who could then monitor and evaluate the pupil's progress. Brennan (1982) confirms that assistants were often initially employed as a physical support for children with sensory or mobility difficulties.

Hodgson et al. (1984) commented on the fact that although many assistants were initially employed in a care role, they could make "a considerable contribution to the educational welfare. Additionally, they might carry out many general duties looking after equipment and recording TV/radio programmes. It was also noted that the assistants might prepare worksheets for the class and mark finished work.

In 1983, Lindsey's paper provided a fruitful clarification of possible tasks a similar para-professional group might pursue in the United States.

I. Facilitating diagnostic procedures as an integral part of the identification and assessment process eg.

observation of pupils

administration of individual and group tests

assisting the interpretation of test and relating results to the multidisciplinary team.

2. Securing and disseminating instructional equipment and materials

- gathering a central list of SEN equipment and materials, LEA resources
- setting up equipment to use with pupils in classes.

3. Modifying existing equipment and materials

differentiating existing materials and converting them e.g. on to cassette
working as an amanuensis or as a reader.

4. Developing Individual Education Programmes

- to initiate procedures to contact parents, teachers and other pertinent individuals
- to reserve and arrange rooms where IEP meetings are to be held
- to ensure all the materials needed for the IEP meetings are available.

5. Introducing new pupils to the "learning difficulty' concept by

- a) reducing pupil anxiety
- b) explaining their role
- c) working in a one to one and small group setting with SEN pupils
- d) chaperoning pupils on transfer to other schools, especially into the secondary sector.

6. Providing one to one instruction

- to be instructional via a developmental, supplemental or tutorial nature.

7. Providing small group instruction

to teach small groups as directed by the classroom/subject teacher in support of IEP objectives.

8. Assisting related service personnel

- to carry out IEP programmes devised by health service personnel, behavioural and or learning support services, psychologists etc. in conjunction with related training and subsequently following up, monitoring and evaluating pupil progress. (83,469)

Brennan (1989) suggested that assistants should be used "to enable teachers to individualize and extend the curriculum" (p.104) and suggested different methods of supporting pupil learning as follows:

- Supervision of ongoing work to free teachers for individual or small-group work
- Supervision of repetitive work or practice
- Supervision of generalisation of established skill or knowledge
- Conversation with disadvantaged or ~ pupils who need extended conversational experience
- Supervision of small groups on out-of-school projects
- Contribution of local knowledge in environmental projects
- Point of contact with local people who may contribute to curriculum
- Assistance with pupils who have problems with mobility
- As a reinforcer, in behavioural learning
- As a recorder in experimental teaching or in establishing behavioural base lines
- As a contributor of any personal skill in practical or artistic activities
- As a potential contributor of additional local knowledge in any relevant aspect of curriculum development.

By the late 1980s, research was reporting generally:

more educational duties than housekeeping or care with liaison duties being added to the list. General classroom duties such as tidying up equipment ... and marking work were considered not to be a legitimate part of the support assistants' duties. (Bell, 1988, p.130)

Woolf and Bassett (1988) evidenced that most of the 27 respondents in their study

spent 75 per cent or more of their classroom time on educational activities like maths work and hearing children read, indicating that their duties usually overlapped with those of the teacher during lesson time. (p.62)

Despite this, most assistants believed that they were mainly employed to help with the child's social integration and did not see themselves in a role which involved "sharing teaching duties" with the teachers.

Clayton (in Evans, 1989) was able to divide the Wiltshire assistants' tasks into two main areas. These were instructional, and general care and supervisory duties. Over 90 per cent of the respondents did in fact directly supervise or assist small groups of children in teaching tasks. A slightly fewer number helped individual children and monitored their progress. Indeed only four assistants simply helped one named child. Approximately half the respondents gave physical support (e.g. first aid) to pupils, made and cared for teaching aids, or joined the classroom management of pupils with behavioural difficulties. Again it was noted that least time was spent on cleaning, administration and recording duties.

The Wigley et al. report evaluates the assistants' role from three separate viewpoints. The most frequent response from teachers and assistants indicated that they acted to help motivate and encourage children whilst developing their cognitive skills. At least one assistant also mentioned that working with EBD children also involved "protecting" others in the class.

The teachers delineated the assistants' support more clearly, stressing that their work in terms of the content of what was being taught and the approach used was very important. Several teachers were concerned that SEN pupils should be taught by unskilled workers.

The headteachers interviewed were clearly favourably disposed towards the help offered by assistants. However, some felt that their opinions were coloured by a poor relationship between the school and a particular assistant, or they had had to deal with teacher resentment about the extra time needed to prepare work for the assistants, or were themselves unconvinced about the rationale of employing assistants for this kind of work.

Goodman (1990) proposed that assistants should be accepted as integrated members of the "instructional team" for SEN pupils. To carry out their duties this would require two areas of competence. They would need to acquire skills and knowledge to support children directly. This means that the "responsibility for learning becomes shared by the teacher and the para-professional" (p.202). The assistant would then learn to act as a support service to the teacher e.g. by being familiar with all the classroom rules and general classroom management.

This emphasis on supporting improved communication between the teacher and pupils was also illustrated by the HMI (1992) report which accepted that assistants additionally maintained records for assessment and opened up children's access to the curriculum, particularly with regard to sneaking, listening, reading and writing. They sometimes met the school's psychologist and carried out programmes devised by other professionals working with the child.

Management

As early as 1984, Hodgson et al. were indicating that assistants were being managed in a number of ways in different schools. Some worked independently of the teaching staff, others were given their duties by the SENCO, the headteacher or even the school matron.

Bell (1988) confirmed that although the majority of respondents wished for some supervision, most were satisfied with their current management whether this was a senior school manager or a teacher. Additionally, three quarters of the sample also wished for an informal appraisal of their effort. Some even mentioned that pupil progress would be a good measure of the assistant's effectiveness at work. HMI (1992) reasoned that few assistants were included in schools' appraisal schemes.

Woolf and Bassett (1988) suggested that headteachers needed to be aware that teachers' duties might begin to fall more onerously upon the assistants' shoulders, perhaps as a result of changes in their own pay and conditions of service. Consequently, tension could develop in the working relationship of both parties. In fact, Thomas (1991) goes much further in the discussion of his own small scale research. He suggests that the nature of the team, including teachers, assistants, parents and other specialists, is extremely fragile. It appears that role ambiguity tends to make individuals rely more heavily on the quality of interpersonal relationships and the ability to "get on" with other team members. He recommends further investigation "to suggest guidelines on the establishment and operation of effective teams" (1991, p.197).

The management implications for schools who employ assistants is further thought through by Fletcher-Campbell (1992). She argues that as the responsibility for supporting assistants relies mainly upon the class teacher, it is incumbent on senior managers to ensure that teachers are adequately supported in this task and also that a whole school policy is developed in relation to the work of assistants. This would mean that teachers and assistants were clear in their aims for the cognitive and social development of individual pupils and classes. The pedagogy adopted to meet any individual educational programme objectives would then be reached by consensus and not contradicted for the assistants by the demands of specialist staff e.g. the SENCO.

Implications for practice in secondary schools

Some of these issues have been tackled seriously in Coalford, a small northern LEA, with a very low rate of segregation, where 400 assistants are employed as provision to support statemented pupils, with a wage bill exceeding two million pounds. The schools have also employed considerably more from their own budgets, to help themselves support those children with special needs without a statement. In order to support the schools and make them more effective, the school psychological service, with considerable backing from the special services section, other professionals, and the LEA generally, set up a training programme in a pilot group of secondary schools. After reviewing the work above, and consulting the managers in five secondary schools, the training team planned four modules. These were:

- a) reading development for secondary pupils
- b) mathematics development for secondary pupils
- c) behavioural development for secondary pupils
- d) social skills development for secondary pupils.

The courses were structured and standardised, in order that they could be offered as credits at levels 3 and 4 of the regional open college federation, giving them status as access courses and credits in higher education for those assistants wishing to continue their studies. The standardisation would also help the evaluative research project, as the courses would be given by different trainers over time.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the assistants' training, statemented pupils in the project schools were asked to complete reading and maths tests, a self esteem inventory, and a bullying questionnaire. This data gave some monitoring information. In addition, the impact of the courses was assessed using questionnaire and interview data from the school staff and the assistants themselves.

At the present time, the first evaluations of the courses have been completed, to give formative guidance to the training procedures (Baskind and Thompson, 1995). Some of the findings, such as the need for assistants to have at least half a term working in school before taking the course in order to give them a context for the training offered, or that the special educational needs co-ordinator operated as the main in-school support for the assistants, can be easily understood and incorporated into the planning of training. Others are much more serious and have large implications for the way schools manage their special needs provision.

One of these findings relates to the mismatch between the assistants' knowledge and skills as they complete the training, and the knowledge and skill of the mainstream class teachers with whom they are working. Even after such a brief training, because the course did include detailed skill training in areas such as the assessment of reading and detailed techniques to support children when learning to read, it was found that the teachers could not easily find a place for these newly acquired skills and knowledge in subject based lessons. This is undoubtedly related in turn to the minimal coverage of special needs issues in standard secondary school training, and the fact that the teachers' classroom management practices are W-adapted to making the best use of the assistants and their new skills. This finding does, however, have major implications for the management of assistants in secondary schools, as it implies that the SENCO will de facto have to be the main supervisor and manager of assistants and their work, not the mainstream class teacher; and also that for most effective deployment of the assistants, the mainstream teachers will also need to have some training in approaches to special needs in the mainstream classroom and ways of using time. The difference with primary schools is, of course, that in primary schools, the class teacher is in a much better position to act as an assistant's work manager. They are likely to be much more knowledgeable and skilled in methods of teaching basic subjects and will have a much better overview of the overall learning patterns of particular children because they teach them all the time.

A second major finding is related to this. From the evaluations, it was clear that the expected role of the assistant differed not only from school to school, but from class to class inside the same school. In practice, their role appears to be constructed via individual negotiation between themselves and each subject teacher, sometimes moderated by the SEN coordinator. This negotiation is likely to be more productive and lead to best use of the assistant's time if the mainstream teacher is reasonably well informed about the ways in which assistants can work with children, and if the teachers in a school share some perspectives on this.

Both of these points from this evaluation, together with the work reviewed above, indicate that assistant training cannot be approached separately from a consideration of the training needs of the mainstream subject teachers. At the minimum, it indicates that assistant training needs to take place in schools where the school is working towards a whole school special needs policy. This should describe how assistant's can work with children in a variety of classes and using a variety of methods, where the staff development programme is working towards all the subject teachers being aware of the teaching methods used in teaching the basic skills, and the typical difficulties in learning faced by children with special needs. To be successful the co-ordinating role of the SEN Coordinator has to be taken seriously with time allocated for the duties which relate to the actual workload involved. The schools involved in this research are already changing their practice and patterns of organization to meet some of these needs.

Discussion

In 1995, there appears to be an enormous, although W-defined, growth in the number of assistants working at all levels in the secondary sector. They are employed by both LEAS, usually to support the learning difficulties of statemented pupils, and possibly increasingly by schools themselves.

Current research has recorded their background experience and qualifications. We have some realization of their potential role and know that they are moving gradually away from simply being the teacher's helper. Now they appear to be carrying out direct instructional tasks either in one to one situations or with small groups. This supports the pragmatic view that assistants are directed teachers. They may also be asked to carry out the work of associated professional agencies such as speech, occupational and physiotherapists.

Are teachers trained either to efficiently support the learning needs of SEN pupils or to manage a classroom team?. In fact there is some evidence to support the notion that LNS has squeezed the specialist teacher's time available to support pupils in school.

If assistants are truly to become an integral member of school-based teams, should they (in the best interests of the children themselves) be provided with an effective and certified training model leading to a structured HE/career route?

There may also be an incidental gender issue if it is found that many of the assistants are women who choose the job because it seems to fit their life experiences and fits in with their own family needs. Why don't their male counterparts apply for these posts? The pay and conditions of service are poor. However, one can envisage an enormous number of adults who would welcome the opportunity of re-entry into the world of work, combined with further study.

Clearly the fact remains that assistants appear largely welcomed by teachers and headteachers alike. However, 'if schools and LEAs are beginning to employ cheaper, non-professional personnel to support the teaching and learning systems set up in individual institutions, they should be aware that to date there is little research into the effectiveness of this group of educationalists.

This paper recommends the following for future research. It is by no means an exhaustive list.

- studies of the efficacy of the assistants work;
- an analysis of the tasks performed by assistants in both primary and secondary schools;
- studies of the possible change in service delivery of special needs education. This should relate to the assistants' role as teacher support, as support to pupils' learning and to the delivery of the curriculum;
- research into the number of assistants currently employed across the different LEAs. This should also include some note of the ratio of assistants to teaching staff in schools;
- research into an effective training model for assistants;
- research describing the view of pupils who are supported by assistants

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ARE ASSISTANTS EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTING HEARING-IMPAIRED CHILDREN IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS?

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to explore the issues of the role and training that surround the assistants employed to support hearing-impaired pupils in mainstream primary schools in one LEA. The assistants' role is investigated as perceived by the assistants themselves, the class teachers, a peripatetic teacher of the deaf and the Head of Service for pupils with sensory impairments. The research was carried out in Coalford LEA on account of its interest in the role and training of all the assistants within the Authority. Six primary schools and one infant school were involved in the study. Each was supported by the same peripatetic teacher.

INTEGRATION AND THE HEARING-IMPAIRED PUPIL

The impact of the 1981 Education Act and more recently the 1993 Education Act (DFE, 1993) and its attendant Code of Practice (DFE, 1994) has been especially noticeable in the area of deaf education. Webster (1995) estimated that two-thirds of the 30 000 children with significant hearing impairment in the UK were currently being educated in mainstream schools. Lynas (1986) outlined several factors which facilitated this integration:

Hearing losses in young children are more likely to be diagnosed early, so children receive the appropriate hearing aids at a younger age.

The increasing quality of hearing aids and radio hearing aids has resulted in a greater amplification of sound over a wide range of frequencies. This has made a large contribution to the improvement of children's spoken language.

More sophisticated and effective teaching techniques used by teachers of the deaf have encouraged the development of deaf children's spoken language. A hearing-impaired child equipped with improved oral communication skills can more easily be integrated into an ordinary classroom.

The implications of the 1988 Education Reform Act (DES, 1998) gave all children the opportunity to study the National Curriculum, but, whilst the entitlement was welcomed, the new emphasis on testing and assessment brought difficulties for the hearing-impaired in the area of language and communication. Palmer and Sellars (1993: 37) stated:

Deafness is arguably, perhaps unexpectedly for hearing people, the most difficult for teachers to deal with, since in its severe forms it is not so much the deprivation of sound but the deprivation of language which creates a barrier to learning.

The Berkshire research project (1991) evaluated the integration of hearing-impaired children and found that since the introduction of the National Curriculum teachers felt they had lost their previous flexibility to modify the curriculum formally to meet the needs of hearing-impaired children. Also, the demands of the curriculum had made it more difficult to withdraw the children for support teaching and consolidation. The general conclusions obtained from the project were that more human and physical resources were needed. It was suggested that some cost-effective changes may have to occur in the future, 'for example, a reconsideration of the role of the visiting teacher of the deaf and of non-teaching assistants' (Palmer and Sellars, 1993: 43).

Many LEAs are employing assistants to meet the challenge of providing for hearing-impaired pupils

in local schools. Webster and Wood (1989) pointed out that the responsibility for educating those pupils was falling increasingly on mainstream teachers and their assistants - that is, on people with no specialist knowledge or experience. Therefore, as Harrison (1986) suggests, the education of the large majority can successfully take place only if there is some kind of service for the hearing-impaired, to support the knowledge and skills of mainstream staff. Consequently, the peripatetic teacher of the deaf has a very important role to play in the team, passing on specialist skills and knowledge to both teachers and assistants working together.

A LITERATURE REVIEW

The assistant's role

Literature outlines more specifically the roles undertaken by the assistants supporting hearing-impaired children in mainstream schools. Brennan (1982) states that assistants were often initially employed as a physical support for children with sensory difficulties. In 1981, Hegarty et al. outlined the assistants' role as being to accompany hearing-impaired children to lessons, act as interpreter and execute aspects of the support teacher's role. More recently, Watson (1992) outlined in more detail the methods of effective support that may be offered to hearing-impaired pupils:

- 'Pre-tutoring' - which involves preparing for a lesson before it takes place, enabling the pupil to have access to key vocabulary and concepts prior to the lesson.
- 'In class support' - which may involve the assistant working with a small group containing a hearing impaired child and offering assistance where there is a lack of understanding. Alternatively, the assistant may take notes for the hearing-impaired children while they are listening.
- Revision of work already presented, or 'post-tutoring' (Webster and Wood, 1989). This relies on there being a summary of the lesson material and content.

Tait (1994) highlights the fact that detailed knowledge is needed by the supporting adults if the hearing impaired children's language development is to be facilitated. Sensitive handling is vital; the adults need to know when to talk and when to pause. They also need to make sure that they are not controlling. The tasks to be undertaken by teachers and assistants are very complex and require both a specific and considerable level of knowledge and skills. As Webster and Wood (1989:196) clarify.

... sustaining a child's attention on relevant features, breaking a task into more manageable steps, explaining and clarifying, introducing additional activities and materials, 'fixing' a child's experience by 'supplying a useful word or underlining a concept, prompting a child when failure is met, sustaining listening, checking understanding, encouraging the child to reflect and relate new concepts to old, discussing ways of tackling a problem, providing rapid feedback and praise, and guiding children's thinking to the point where they are able to uncover solutions for themselves.

There are differing views on how support should be offered to hearing-impaired pupils in mainstream classes. Payne (1991) points out that it is often assumed that the pupil should always be offered support within the classroom rather than being withdrawn. On the other hand, Watson (1992: 85) argues that hearing impaired pupils benefit from both support within the classroom and periods of withdrawal, as 'away from the noise of the classroom, the hearing impaired pupil can derive maximum benefit from his hearing aids'. The fact that a child with a sensory impairment will need support only in certain circumstances is emphasised by Fletcher-Campbell (1992), who also suggests should not stay with the child when help as their presence highlights the difference between the pupil and his/her peers.

The assistants role in planning, managing and evaluating individual Education Plans (IEPS)

As Webster and Wood (1989) emphasise, if a hearing impaired child is to be successfully integrated into a mainstream class there needs to be frequent collaboration between all the adults involved in her/his education, including the teacher, the assistant, the peripatetic teacher of the deaf and the parents. The assistant has an important role to play in this process on account of her/his close involvement with the hearing-impaired child. This includes feedback about performance and progress on the current IEP, monitoring the child's work and discussing the effectiveness of a particular programme. Webster and Wood suggest that because time is very rarely allocated for such meetings, it is often difficult for the instructional team to find time to plan and evaluate. In his study, Clayton (1991) found that the majority of teachers met with assistants during their

break-time and after school hours. This was because when the LEA allocated the assistants' hours, no allowances were made for lesson preparation, training and staff support time. A research project by Palmer and Sellars (1993) revealed that visiting teachers of the deaf had to find time to meet with school staff to prepare, plan, assess and record. These researchers also reported concern about lack of liaison time and that they thought that appropriate meetings should be formally time-tabled

The assistant's prior experience and training

The importance of training all assistants working with pupils who have special educational needs has been recognised since the Plowden report (DES, 1967). Suggestions have included pre-employment rather than on-the-job training (Warnock Report, 1978; Balshaw, 1991; Goodman, 1990); prior qualifications, (Bell, 198A) and general in-service work (Kennedy and Duthie, 1975; Mortimer, 1989). The assistants' lack of training has been a major cause for concern over the last three decades. During this time there has been an enormous increase in the growth of this para-professional group of workers (Baskind and Thompson, 1995).

Assistants working with hearing-impaired children in mainstream schools require training in the specific needs of hearing-impaired children, as well as general training. In its *Guide for the Inspection of Schools with Deaf Children* the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS, 1995) states that inspectors should ensure that 'staff working mainly with deaf children are appropriately qualified... should have access to appropriate training and support'. Its 1994/95 course for assistants (NDCS, 1995) included language development; reading and writing skills; the assistants' role in the classroom; relationships with teaching staff; the effect of the new 1993 Education Act and Code of Practice for support staff; technology issues; communication issues/issues of deafness and the deaf child and the family/deaf community.

THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This paper explores the issues of the role and training of assistants employed to support hearing-impaired pupils in mainstream primary schools in one LEA. The assistants' role is investigated as perceived by the assistants themselves, class teachers, a peripatetic teacher of the deaf and the Head of Service for pupils with sensory impairments. The research was carried out in Coalford LEA because of its interest in the role and training of all the assistants within the Authority. Six primary schools and one infant school were involved in the study. Each was supported by the same peripatetic teacher of the deaf.

METHOD

The research focused on nine of the twenty-eight assistants employed by the LEA to support ten hearing-impaired children in mainstream primary schools (one of the assistants supported two pupils in one primary school), ten class teachers, the peripatetic teacher of the deaf and the LEA's Head of Service for children with a sensory impairment. The assistants were asked to complete a questionnaire about their prior experience and training and future training needs, their role in planning and executing IEPs, their general and more specific day-to-day duties, and the support they received to help them work more effectively with hearing-impaired individuals. Likewise, the class teachers were invited to state their personal prior experience and training and future training needs, and the needs they perceived the assistants should have, how they managed and supported each assistant as a member of the instructional team and what they thought the role of the assistant entailed. At interview, the Head of the Sensory Impaired Service and the peripatetic teacher of the deaf responded to similar questions to those put to the assistants and the class teachers. Classroom observations tested both the teachers' expectations of the assistants and the assistants' perceptions of the various activities they themselves carried out in class.

RESULTS

The assistant's role

None of the teachers expected the assistant to work with one hearing-impaired child exclusively but rather in groups with others both inside and outside the classroom. Nine teachers expected the assistant to reinforce the content of a lesson with the hearing impaired child after the lesson (post-tutoring). However, only three teachers expected the assistant to go through a lesson before it took place (pre-tutoring). All the teachers expected the assistant to interpret instructions and language for the hearing-impaired child, and the majority expected the assistant to undertake other activities specific to working with hearing-impaired children, such as modifying materials and dealing with hearing

aids. With regard to tasks unrelated to the hearing-impaired child, half the teachers expected the assistant to deal with a crisis and two expected the assistant to supervise a class while they themselves worked with individuals or groups (see Table 1). All the teachers felt that the assistants were very successful in meeting their expectations.

Table 1: Teachers' expectations of assistants working with hearing impaired children

	Yes	No
Work with the hearing-impaired child exclusively	0	10
Work with the hearing-impaired child in a group with others	10	0
Work with the hearing-impaired child in the classroom	10	0
Withdraw the hearing-impaired child for work outside the classroom	10	0
Go through a lesson with the hearing-impaired child prior to the lesson	3	7
Reinforce the contents of a lesson with the hearing-impaired child after the lesson	9	1
Interpret instructions and other language for the hearing-impaired child	10	0
Deal with the hearing-impaired child's hearing/radio aids	9	1
Help to devise teaching programmes for the hearing-impaired child	8	2
Help to plan activities for the hearing-impaired child	7	3
Modify materials for the hearing-impaired child	7	3
Set up equipment for the class	3	7
Keep records of the hearing-impaired child's progress	10	0
Deal with messages, interruptions and crises	5	5
Supervise the class while teachers work with individuals or groups	2	8

The views of the peripatetic teacher supported those expressed the staff.

The assistant's role is to support the child in achieving its academic potential by doing language work; working with a child in groups; working under the direction of the teacher and the teacher of the deaf. They are not there to mix paint!!

This view is supported by a job description specifically drawn up for assistants working with hearing impaired pupils in the unit for primary children with hearing impairment in the Authority, which states:

It is not expected that any part of the assistants' duties would be considered 'domestic' and there are no tea/coffee making duties or classroom cleaning or tidying to be undertaken only that related to the task in hand.

The overall aim of the assistant, then, is to support hearing-impaired children in a wide range of situations and in ways which benefit those children's specific educational needs. The assistants' own perception of their role was that they should support the teacher generally; for example, with general care and medical assistance:

As a helper to implement the views of the teacher.

Extra help I suppose; it would be impossible for the teacher if I wasn't there.

To change the batteries in his hearing aids.

To keep X happy and to promote his self-confidence.

Three of the assistants reported that they also had a domestic role in school. One was in charge of refreshments, the maths equipment and ringing the bell.

In response to the specific question 'What tasks do you do to help support the hearing-impaired pupil?' all the assistants focused on activities related to language development, such as:

Encouraging X to speak with other children.

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Helping her learn key words.

Making sure he understands what he is to do.

Making sure that X has heard what the teacher has said.

1

Implementing programmes set by the speech therapists - we do very specific things, word endings, tenses. She has a great problem with tenses, saying 'I talk' instead of 'talked'. She reads her reading book to me, and reads back what she has written to me.

Four of the assistants commented that they post-tutored, but none indicated that they pre-tutored hearing-impaired children. All but one said that they mainly worked in groups with other children and only occasionally worked with a hearing-impaired child in a one-to-one situation. This was so that the child did not become too dependent on the support. Eight assistants said that they worked with the hearing impaired child both inside and outside the classroom. One assistant worked outside the classroom only on 'intensive language work'. Other ways in which the assistants supported the hearing-impaired child included helping with maths work and arts and craft work, developing the child's self-confidence and independence, and playing games.

Classroom observation

The classroom observation of one assistant suggested that approximately 70% of the time was spent supporting the hearing-impaired pupil so that she could successfully carry out set tasks, by:

- going over the teacher's instructions with X to make sure she understood,
- asking X questions on the vocabulary and content of the set work,
- helping X to look up words in the dictionary,
- going over X's writing with her, checking for missing words, and confirming what she wanted to write next.
- prompting X to draw a picture.

Twenty per cent of the time was spent with other children, either helping them with their work or answering their questions about the set task. The remaining 10% of time was taken up by dealing with an interruption, sorting out books at the beginning of the lesson while the teacher was talking to the class, and making coffee for the teacher.

The assistant's role in planning, managing and recording IEPs

Generally, seven of the ten assistants felt they were receiving direction and guidance from both the class teacher and the peripatetic teacher. However, when asked more specifically, four assistants said they were not involved in planning the day-to-day activities:

The class teacher has already planned so she will just say we are doing such and such and I would like you to do such and such.

The teacher plans for her week and I have to fall in line with her. I am told what to do.

In response to the question 'How much work is left up to you?', eight of the nine assistants felt that most of it was left to their own initiative once the teacher had said what the child should be doing. Interestingly, all ten teachers said the assistants were involved in planning their own duties as one reported:.... to an extent I will say that I want her to work as class support up until, say, playtime, and she then will decide what to do, whether to work with X in a group with a game, or to work with X alone with his speech therapy programme. She gets sheets and games from the speech therapist and the peripatetic teacher.

Similarly, the assistants felt that they were not necessarily told by the peripatetic teacher what was expected of them but that she was always available to discuss any problems that may occur and give suggestions and advice on what to do. One assistant stated:

We discuss what is needed and she advises me on what to do. She sometimes helps me out with suggestions for games and tells me what we should be aiming at.

All ten teachers said that the assistants were involved in planning and recording the hearing-impaired child's progress. Again, there is a mismatch in the perception of the teacher and the assistants themselves. When asked 'Are you involved with assessment and record keeping?', five assistants responded that they were and four said that they were not. Five assistants felt that they could be more involved. Two commented:

Sometimes I feel that I know him better than some of the other people who are having meetings about him. Although my opinion is asked for, I sometimes think it is not valued. They think, 'Oh well, she's only an assistant'.

Yes, I would like to be more involved so that I know that I am doing the right thing. I sometimes wonder if I am doing the right thing.

It appeared that opportunities for the assistants to discuss their role was limited and that any discussion was done on an informal basis.

The assistant's prior experience and training

When asked, the teachers had mixed views on how important they felt it was for an assistant to have had experience with the hearing-impaired prior to their appointment. One thought it was not important and only three felt that it was important enough to make a difference. Seven of the assistants also felt that it was not necessary to have experience or qualifications for the job and that personal qualities such as common sense and a caring attitude were more important. The peripatetic teacher of the deaf suggested that whilst it would be useful for assistants to have experience of working with the hearing-impaired, such people would be difficult to find. Similarly, the teachers felt that prior qualifications were not very important.

Personal qualities such as common sense, flexibility and the willingness to learn were stated to be more important. Another teacher commented:

Life experience and the age of a person is important but not exclusive. It depends on the assistant, but I think a combination of attitude, knowledge and instinct is the most important.

The Head of Service stated that, if applicants had reached a certain level of academic ability and had some signing skills, that would be of benefit, but, because it was the LEA's policy to appoint people who were 'cheap', it was not always possible to get people who had relevant qualifications.

The peripatetic teacher mentioned that for some years no course has been run by the LEA specifically for assistants working with hearing-impaired children. This had not always been the case, and previously the Support Service for the Hearing-Impaired had used two Authority INSET days to get together assistants working with hearing-impaired children. She explained that the reasons given for having to stop the courses were that the school INSET days now befell at different times and that it would be inappropriate to expect assistants to attend courses after school without pay. If courses were run during school time, 'You would be taking them away from the one thing you are saying they are important for'. However, one assistant commented on the fact that it was especially useful to get together and talk with other assistants working with hearing-impaired children who were perhaps experiencing the same problems.

Eight of the assistants thought that they would like further training. Information about hearing/radio aids, strategies for communicating with the hearing-impaired, language development and first aid were perceived to be areas of training which would benefit them most. For their part, all the teachers felt the assistants would benefit from further training. Their preferred areas were perceived to be similar to those of the assistants; however, they thought that first aid would not be particularly useful but working with parents would be. None of the teachers had themselves received any training in the education of the hearing-impaired prior to having a hearing-impaired child in a class. As a result, all those interviewed felt that joint training of assistants and teachers to maximise the learning of hearing-impaired pupils would be very useful. All the assistants also felt that some joint training would be useful, one commenting:

All teachers work differently and expect different things from assistants, so I think it is important that they are all trained how to use assistants effectively.

The support of the peripatetic teacher of the deaf

Eight teachers met the peripatetic teacher once a week, the other two once a fortnight. Seven teachers also involved the assistants in the meetings, and two responded with 'Sometimes it depends on whether she is busy with other

things'. One teacher did not involve the assistant. The peripatetic teacher of the deaf emphasised that she liked to meet the teachers and the assistants informally, due to the limited time:

We meet together over cups of coffee at playtime and lunch-time. I always try not to make it into a big thing because they have thirty other kids to deal with. Often, in their eyes the hearing-impaired kid is much less a problem than a child with appalling behaviour.

None of the assistants had met with, or spoken to the educational psychologist in relation to the hearing-impaired child they were supporting.

Job satisfaction

All the assistants indicated a high degree of job satisfaction. However, three expressed dissatisfaction with the money they were getting. One also mentioned the lack of a career structure for assistants.

DISCUSSION

It was encouraging that all the assistants had gained a varied experience of working with children in a variety of settings. This was obviously valuable for providing a basis for working with children in a school setting. However, only two assistants had had experience of children with special educational needs and of those two only one had worked voluntarily with a child with a hearing impairment.

The recruiting policy of Coalford LEA is restricted for monetary reasons, as the assistants with qualifications such as the NNEB are more expensive to employ. As stated by the Head of Service, 'It is usually the policy of the LEA to appoint assistants who are cheap, and although applicants with experience of the deaf and relevant qualifications would be preferable, it would be difficult to see how this could be achieved when the monetary rewards are so low, and the job offers very little security with temporary and short-term contracts. Also, the post offers very little opportunity for career development.'

All the respondents interviewed considered the assistants' main role to be educational. This was supported by the data of the classroom observation which suggest that the assistants spent most of their time assisting the hearing-impaired pupil in a group of his peers. The teachers agreed that the assistants supported the child's language development. This took place primarily in groups both within the classroom and in short periods of withdrawal. However, it could be argued that the tasks described by those interviewed could be applied to any special needs child supported in a mainstream classroom. They did not altogether reflect the very specific role of the adult supporting a hearing-impaired child as described by Webster and Wood (1989), Watson, (1992), Tait (1994), and Erting (1994), which requires specialist knowledge and skills to promote and consolidate language development. These findings are not surprising, considering the minimal amount of specific training received by the assistants both prior to and during their work. It is also interesting to note that all the teachers felt that the assistants were successful in meeting their expectations, which reflects the teachers' lack of knowledge of the specific needs of hearing-impaired children and suggests the need for further training of this group of professionals as well.

Mainstream staff must equip themselves with and keep upgrading their specialist knowledge and skills. Therefore, the issue of training is very important, especially in relation to unqualified assistants who are employed to carry out the specific role of supporting a hearing-impaired child. The quality and quantity of training need to be considered so that assistants can become more effective in facilitating learning and teachers can become more effective managers of the system. Although the majority of Coalford's assistants had attended a session on hearing aids run by the Support Service for the Hearing-Impaired, the peripatetic teacher explained that running other specialist courses for the hearing-impaired was not feasible for the following reasons..

- School INSET days no longer coincided.
- The LEA had even stopped running the induction course for assistants due to the unmanageable increase in their number working in the Authority.
- There is no separate budget set aside for assistant training.

It was considered that the joint training of teachers and assistants would be valuable to maximise learning as none of the teachers in the present study had had any training in the education of the hearing-impaired prior to having a

hearing-impaired child in a class. Balshaw (1991) has emphasised the value of collaborative enquiry as part of the whole school approach by assistants and teachers working together in a problems solving way to further their own development.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study demonstrated a very positive attitude in the working relationship between teachers, assistants and the Support Service for the Hearing Impaired in supporting hearing-impaired pupils and ensuring their successful integration into mainstream primary schools. The assistants are undoubtedly a valuable resource if hearing-impaired pupils are to be successfully integrated. However, to obtain full benefit, many considerations have to be taken into account, including a clear description of roles and responsibilities in the form of a job description, high quality and relevant training programmes for both assistants and teachers, clear and effective management of school and LEA special needs support systems and input and cooperation from the Support Service for the Hearing-Impaired.

As a consequence of the previous observations of Watson (1992) and Webster and Wood (1989), Coalford's peripatetic teacher of the deaf is spending her time in an advisory capacity but at least sees the teachers frequently, usually once a week but always once a fortnight. However, this meeting is informal and unstructured. The current post holder's input is obviously welcomed by teachers and assistants alike. It would appear that in the absence of any organised LEA training, her work is pivotal in enhancing the mainstream staff's skills, knowledge and confidence.

Finally, it is suggested that future research could include a detailed analysis of the role of the peripatetic teacher of the deaf in supporting teachers and assistants working with hearing-impaired pupils in mainstream schools, the development of a training package for assistants and teachers of the hearing-impaired in mainstream schools and an investigation into the views and perceptions of hearing-impaired pupils themselves.

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A study to investigate the effects of training teaching assistants in terms of pupil progress

INTRODUCTION

'Coalford' is a rural Metropolitan Borough in the North of England. There is a palpable commitment to inclusion in education and CSIE figures suggest that the LEA includes more statemented pupils in mainstream provision than do most other authorities. The support for statemented pupils is additional teaching assistant hours offered directly into schools from the authority's central SEN purse. Yet even into the mid 1990's, there was still no evaluation of the efficacy of this type of approach to SEN issues.

The primary aim of the Coalford Study was to investigate whether the intervention of training assistants had any effect on the scholastic attainment of statemented pupils in their charge. A literature review found no similar studies in the United Kingdom, or elsewhere, that had attempted this type of intervention. Published papers indicated that the majority of training was ad hoc and research rather tends to pay attention to the experience, prior training, working conditions and role of assistants as an emergent para-professional group and not to the impact of assistant training in terms of a pupils future academic performance.

PROCEDURE

All the statemented pupils in five of the Boroughs secondary schools were included in the study. The teaching assistants from three of the schools received training in

- supporting reading
- supporting mathematics
- supporting positive behaviour
- supporting non verbal life and social skills

The teaching assistants from the two remaining schools received no formal training at all during the study period. Prior to any training, all the statemented pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 were assessed for their number skills, reading and reading comprehension ages. Further assessments were taken at the end of the training (18 months later) and 12 months after the completion of training. Details of each pupils home circumstances were also recorded. These included:

- type of learning difficulty
- gender
- family situation
- presence/absence of trauma
- eligibility for free school meals

A repeated measures of analysis of variance model was used to analyse the data. Due to the investigative nature of the study and the high number of statistical tests involved, the one per cent level of significance was used. Only those pupils with a baseline taken prior to any intervention and at least one other assessment were included in the analysis. Out of a database of 128 pupils, 99 were included in the final analysis.

RESULTS

Investigating the baseline characteristics of the pupils

The following table summarises the frequency of categories in each of the recorded baseline characteristics.

	Category Intervention 1	Non Intervention 2	Total	
Type of Learning Disability	1. Physical	1	2	3
	2. Emotional and/or behavioural	0	0	0
	3. Sensory deaf/blind	8	2	10
	4. Medical	3	0	2
	5. Congenital	3	0	3
	6. Solely learning difficulties	37	25	62

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	7. Specific learning difficulty (dyslexia)	12	7	19
Gender	1. Female	19	8	27
	2. Male	44	28	72
Family	1. Single Parent	12	3	15
	2. Grandparents	1	1	2
	3. Fostered	0	0	0
	4. Looked after child	2	1	3
	5. 2 parents (biological)	41	23	64
	6. 2 parents (step)	7	8	15
Trauma	1. Yes	6	2	8
	2. No	57	24	91
Free school meal entitlement	1. Yes	19	18	37
	2. No	44	18	62
School Year start	7	41	28	69
	8	18	8	26
	9	3	0	3

TABLE 1: FREQUENCY OF CATEGORIES AS RECORDED IN BASELINE CHARACTERISTICS.

The majority of pupils in the study had a statement of special educational needs for general learning difficulties and/or dyslexia (72:99). Almost two thirds lived in families including both their biological parents. Ten pupils had suffered a traumatic incident during the duration of the intervention. The father of one had been sent to prison and another pupil had been involved in a car accident and broken his leg. Other pupils had been subject to divorce or bereavement.

No formal statistical analyses were performed using any of the baseline characteristics due to such large majorities in a single category.

A total of 60 per cent (36/63) of the sample analysed were from the intervention schools.

Baseline information assessment

Examination of baseline maths, comprehension and reading evaluated ages showed no statistically significant differences between schools or school year at entry to study.

Maths assessment

The repeated measures ANOVA showed a statistically significant difference between the time points in maths assessments. When this was investigated at each of the three time points individually no statistically significant differences between the intervention and non-intervention schools was found. The 95 per cent confidence intervals from the intervention group overlaps that from the non-intervention group at each of the time points.

Reading comprehension assessment

In assessment of comprehension, there was both a statistically significant time difference and a time by intervention status difference, that is, there is a difference over time, regardless of intervention, plus a difference between intervention/non-intervention schools was shown at the second evaluation (end of training year) and at the final evaluation (12 months post study). Only the 95 per cent confidence intervals at baseline were shown to overlap.

As seen in the maths assessment, both sets of scores increase over time. However, in the case of comprehension evaluated age, those pupils in the intervention schools show a higher mean comprehension age than those in the non-intervention schools at both assessment 2 and assessment 3.

Reading age assessment

Similar results were seen in reading. Statistically significant time and time by intervention status effects were shown. At the individual time points only the final assessment showed a statistically significant difference between the intervention and non-intervention schools. The difference at the second assessment, however, was only marginally non-significant.

Again the scores increase with time in both groups, but the advantages of the intervention group over non-intervention is marked at the final assessment. However, the 95 per cent confidence intervals show a high degree of variation in the data.

Discussion

It was not possible to ensure an acceptable distribution of pupils across relevant categories in the five schools. The qualitative information recorded for each pupil regarding type of learning difficulty, gender, family situation, presence/absence of trauma and eligibility for free school meals was unique to the individual attending each school and really represented a true description of the personal circumstances of all the statemented pupils to be found in the schools at that time.

For these distribution reasons, this section of the study was also restricted to a single analysis examining the effect of the intervention, without any investigation into baseline characteristics, school and age of entry into the study.

The results of this study appear to strongly suggest that as might be expected, statemented pupils' maths, reading and reading comprehension skills increase as they grow older. However, in reading and comprehension there was a greater improvement shown in those pupils working with trained assistants from the intervention schools than in those pupils studying in the non-intervention schools. This higher level of improvement was shown in comprehension age at the end of the school year in which training was given, and at 12 months later in both reading and comprehension ages.

The clear indications are that assistants can raise the academic attainment of statemented secondary aged pupils in at least their reading and comprehension and can do so irrespective of the extent of the instructional process the assistant is involved in with the pupils' subject teacher.

It remains for further research to examine why supporting reading skills generally is more effective for pupils taught by trained teaching assistants than supporting mathematics. It is possible that the assistants themselves felt more confident in their own skills and knowledge in this area. In fact an informal measure of the assistants level of literacy is taken when they complete their application forms for their post. Prospective candidates unable to read and complete these forms correctly are not interviewed by the LEA. No such measure of an assistant's level of understanding of numeracy is required.

These findings are not backed up by other 1999 government sponsored research at Newcastle University which suggests that smaller teaching groups, supported by assistants, may not be the best way of helping special needs pupils (Research Report number 89). The team analysed MLD support in 33 schools in 8 education authorities and found a lack of evidence about the effectiveness - or otherwise - of the most common interventions including smaller class sizes, the use of assistants, setting by attainment, intervention by education authorities and differentiation in mainstream classrooms.

The report did, however, state that it was cheaper to educate children with XMD (Mild Learning Difficulties) in mainstream rather than special schools and that their education was also marginally better in the mainstream school. These pupils represented one of the largest groups of pupils with special educational needs and accounts for a significant portion of SEN costs spent.

"The price for support for pupils with mild difficulties ranged from £1,700 to £9,700 and for children with more severe problems from £2,300 to £10,000."

(TES 8.1.99 p16)

Until now it has been difficult to promote the validity of employing assistants to support SEN pupils because so very few studies relate to the outcome of this approach. It is hoped that this study unequivocally supports assistants training. As more assistants are trained nationally and as SENCOs and schools learn how to manage this group through experience and SENCO training, more studies in the future may demonstrate more precisely the value of effective training. This is not to suggest that assistant training alone will suffice without drawing to the attention of mainstream teachers the need for team building.

Research thus far has been logically necessary. Now, through early research results, further research is empirically necessary to confirm that Pupils may progress socially, emotionally and academically from the support of trained assistants. If it also happens that it is cheaper to educate the pupils in local schools, then these are likely to be deciding factors in the debate to promote inclusive education-

What has not been discussed in this study is precisely the nature and duration of any training the assistants should receive in order to be fully prepared to support pupils with learning difficulties. The assistants in the case study undertook a minimum of 100 hours class contact with additional time being spent on individual tutorials when tutors felt they were needed or when they were requested by the assistants. It should also be noted that the assistants were not simply given skills and knowledge in supporting reading and supporting mathematical skills development, they all completed 2 additional modules, the first enhancing non verbal life and social skills and the second to support pupils' behaviour positively. All the training was geared to support special educational needs pupils and not those who had little or no difficulty accessing the curriculum. The assistants then were separately trained in strategies to enhance pupil's confidence, self esteem and attention to task as well as the discrete curricular skills and knowledge. How far is it necessary to give the assistants more understanding of the complex socio-emotional needs or strategies that SEN pupils often misinterpret or feel overwhelmed by?

It was with some trepidation then in the late Spring of 1999 that I read the government was to recruit 2,000 assistants taught them for 15 hours and then enlist their support in a direct teaching role for the Assisted Literacy Support Programme. For this, thousands of 8, 9 and 10 year olds who did badly in National Curriculum tests aged 7 would receive four 20 minute lessons a week aimed at helping them to read to the expected standard for their age by the end of their primary schooling. (Yorkshire Post 24.5.99, p3).

The notion of allowing those with least skills and knowledge access to teach those pupils with most learning difficulties - even if supervised by a teacher, is hard to reconcile, especially when it appears that once in post many classroom assistants do not attend further training courses. This is demonstrated by the joint UNISON/NFER survey (1998) of classroom assistants in 1,984 primary schools asking why they had not attended a training course since at least September 1995. Reasons then given included the feeling that completing a course would neither improve their pay nor enhance their work. A percentage of the assistants also indicated that their employer refused to pay for the course.

Sixty three per cent of the assistants provided other reasons including:

1. No course details were available
2. No interest in the course offered.
3. No course vacancies
4. Don't get paid for time attending the course
5. No time to do the course
6. Do not meet the entry criteria for the course, for example, for serving teachers only
7. Newly appointed to the post
8. Family/child care commitments
9. Transport difficulties.

This list should be read with incredulity! The first 6 reasons reveal the function of the importance given to training by the LEA and it's staff and are easily solved in principle. The issues raised in 8 and 9 are common to many people and may be resolved by timetabling training locally, perhaps in each secondary schools pyramid in work time or early evenings with creches on site. Also surely assistants newly appointed to the post are precisely those who should receive at least some formal induction. In fact all the opposition listed relates back to the lack of LEA (or central government) support for schools to get assistants trained for reasons of no policy, finance, staff with expertise or time.

Concluding Comments

The rise in the number of all non teaching staff in schools continues, including the employment of nursery assistants, special needs support staff, secretaries, bursars and other admin/clerical staff. Secondary non teaching staff numbers rose by 5 per cent between 1997 and 1998, mostly accounted for by a growth in special needs support staff from 7,700 to 8,800 (School Teachers Review Body 1999 Report).

By 1998, Tony Blair seemed set to underpin the modernisation of the teaching profession with a further 20,000 strong army of classroom assistants in addition to the existing 57,000 elite corps of super teachers. In the Spring/Summer 2000 the DfEE in conjunction with the TTA has now proposed that will set out the development of a national training framework for assistants based on national vocational qualifications. From this, the assistants will have the opportunity to progress to becoming fully qualified teachers.

My concluding comment are reserved for the proposed framework. it is hoped that:

- all assistants will receive a core training, combining discrete curricular skills and knowledge including special needs training so that they may work effectively to provide access to the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties.
- further training opportunities will also allow the teaching assistants to specialise e.g. in sensory impairment, autism or pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Specialisms may be followed in accordance either with the assistants personal preference or in response to their schools needs i.e., the description of the learning difficulties of pupils on roll.
- training should be made available on a part-time basis, accredited and follow a mixed mode of delivery i.e., day, twilight and evening to head off the difficulties of covering for staff absence in schools.
- any registration expenses to the affiliated FE/HE institution should be not be paid for by the assistants themselves.
- the assistants would also receive additional hours pay for the hours trained. For example, the vast majority of the assistants in Coalford are women and this payment allows a group of low paid workers to afford the incurred child care costs. Additionally, payment for attendance values the training for all involved.

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Newcastle University. *Research Report No. 89.* TES p 16.

Appendix Sixteen; Job Description for Assistants in the Study LEA.

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOB DESCRIPTION

PROGRAMME AREA/DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION AND LEISURE

SERVICE AREA: **SECTION:**

POST REF: **GRADE:**

RESPONSIBLE TO: The Headteacher of the school in which the CSA is employed.

EMPLOYEE SUPERVISION: None **DATE AGREED:**

DETAILS OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Curriculum Support Assistants are employed to work with pupils, who are the subject of statements of special educational needs, in the mainstream school setting. Such pupils require support because they will have one or more of the following difficulties:

Emotional and behavioural, physical, learning, medical, communication.

The CSA will work as part of a S.E.N. team in school and will work under the direct supervision of the class teacher in primary settings and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) in secondary settings. The CSA may work with a statemented pupil individual or with a small group of statemented pupils or with a small mixed group of statemented and non-statemented pupils. The CSA may be required to carry out any of the duties within the range of specified duties outlined below but may not be expected to have to carry out all of the specific duties.

Specific - The main duty is to facilitate an individual child's access to and progress in the curriculum, usually by assisting him or her in class. The role is strongly related to the individual education plan (IEP) of the pupil.

This is achieved by:

- implementing predetermined teaching and other support programmes
- helping with physical skills, including movement around the classroom and school, and the manoeuvring of pupils out of and into wheelchairs for standing or toileting purposes (appropriate physical adaptations will be provided such as hoists and the CSA will be given training in manual handling)
- use of communication aids
- dressing, undressing
- toileting
- feeding
- dealing with minor crises
- general subject support for an individual
- addressing Individual Education Plan (IEP) requirements
- giving feedback and suggesting development
- record keeping
- supporting pupils with medical conditions and physical disabilities
- individual support for particular physical aspects of the curriculum such as PE, including swimming
- giving support with emotional and behavioural problems
- encouraging independence

To provide support to the statemented pupil through:

- being familiar with the pupil's needs
- raising self esteem
- encouraging autonomy
- being a support to a group whilst keeping the needs of the statemented pupil paramount
- furthering the development of IEP targets

The Role of the Special Needs Assistant
Sue Baskind@

- assisting in the organisation of resources for statemented pupils
- assisting in the adaptation and preparation of materials specifically for the use of the statemented pupil
- supporting work in subject areas
- supervision of statemented pupils in the classroom and at breaktimes and lunchtimes (in such circumstances the CSA would have their break and mealtimes at other times in the school day as close to the normal break and mealtimes as possible)
- assisting with the organisation of displays relating to the work of pupils with statements of special educational needs.

To communicate with the classteacher and SENCO

To communicate with parents and other agency staff when requested to do so by the school

Other duties which are determined by the Statement of Special Educational Needs or by the classteacher or SENCO and which do not significantly alter the nature of the post.

And any other duties commensurate with the grade and falling within the scope of the post, as requested by Management.

Res/PS/L