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Supporting the Plan

The Children's Plan, published late last year, is a very ambitious one. The Secretary of State wants to

"make this the best place in the world for our children and young people to grow up."

A complex and challenging ambition.



So, what does it mean for you in your school? As professionals who have chosen to work with children and young people, we want pupils' lives to be happy, secure and fulfilled. We want child poverty to be eradicated so our society becomes less unequal and less divided. Support staff work every day with vulnerable children and young people. Whether supporting individuals with complex needs to progress in the classroom, or working with teachers to ensure that lessons are accessible to different groups of children, support staff will be very aware of the problems these pupils encounter.

The Children's Plan has many proposals to improve services that support the most vulnerable children:

- to review child and adolescent mental health services to see how these can be improved for the growing number of children with mental health needs
- to improve parenting support and develop opportunities for parents to learn new skills; to refurbish or rebuild children's playgrounds, and improve the quality and range of places for young people to go, and things for them to do
- to support improved educational achievement for disadvantaged children
- to improve relationships between parents and schools
- to develop intensive support programmes for reading, writing and mathematics
- to improve provision for pupils with special educational needs.

We know that, too often, vulnerable pupils cannot get the specialist help they need. When they can, it is frequently only after long delays which compound the original problem. In many instances, staff in schools are supporting pupils whose challenging behaviour is a cry for help. A pupil's lack of progress in the classroom can be due to their exhaustion through caring responsibilities, or living in cramped accommodation, or because of a lack of support from home. Part of the problem of course is that services to support the most vulnerable

children are desperately over-stretched. The Children's Plan is ambitious because it attempts to solve these problems, and ensure that schools are not left to pick up the pieces.

But these things will only work if professionals work together. This is an enormous challenge. The Children's Plan requires a wide range of professionals, including those in education, social services, healthcare and youth work, to work more closely together to provide an integrated service to meet the needs of children and families. Over the past five years, support staff and teachers have made huge changes in the ways they work together and this has not been easy. It has involved taking on new roles and letting go of others, and a great deal of training both to become more proficient in particular jobs and to improve ways of working together. It has also, in many instances, changed perceptions of the work that people do. Importantly, it shows us that challenges can be met if they are planned for and implemented carefully and thoughtfully.

Support staff are committed to supporting the children who need it most. The hope is that the Children's Plan offers a realistic programme to ensure that the range of children's services will be properly coordinated, so that all children can lead happy and healthy lives, and come to school ready to learn.

Conference 2008

Conference this year was held in Torquay between **17 and 20 March**, and once again support staff issues were well to the fore during the debates. There was also a special meeting held for support staff representatives and observers on the first night of Conference. A Conference report will appear in the next issue of *ATL Support*.



Supporting each other by Jenny Inglis, ATL's lead member for support staff

I hope 2008 will be the year when we get some solid progress on pay and conditions for support staff. There are straws in the wind but I think we can all be forgiven for being sceptical after all this time and in the present climate of announcements on public sector pay. ATL will continue to keep the pressure on and if we begin to feel that promises are not being kept we will consult you as to how you feel we should respond. We have long been seen as the 'moderate' union that favours negotiation over confrontation but that does not mean we are afraid to make our views known. It is, however, a difficult and complex situation that calls for sensitive and careful responses without going for short-term gains at the expense of long-term progress.



Through reading *ATL Support* you will have heard of the support members consultative group. This is a consultative body, made up of support staff members, who meet on a termly basis to consider relevant issues and provide advice to the national official and the Executive Council. I am keen that we should expand this group in a variety of ways. Support staff are a significant slice of ATL's membership, and your roles in schools are very varied.

As reported opposite (Hello & goodbye) you will now be aware Andy Peart has undertaken a new role in ATL and has been replaced as national official for support staff by Peter Morris. I know how much the input from the current group has supported Andy, and I hope we can build on this in a variety of ways:

- by expanding the group and covering more roles – eg librarians, technicians, so there is always someone to alert us to different perspectives on issues
- by using modern communications, such as conference calls, to increase participation in the work of the group.

If you have alternative ideas about how the support staff membership can have its say, please do email me at jenny.inglis@zetnet.co.uk or ring me on **01189 780015**. Remember, I am here to represent your views and ideas and speak on your behalf and I can only do that if you tell me what those views and ideas are.

New HLTA standards are here

Revised higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) professional standards were introduced on 1 January 2008. A year-long review of the previous standards, which had been in place since 2003, culminated in the launch of the new standards by Jim Knight, Minister of State for Schools and Learning, in November 2007. The aim of the review was to achieve greater clarity to support candidates to interpret the HLTA standards and to understand what evidence to provide to secure accreditation. However, the nature and breadth of the work a TA needs to carry out to meet the standards remains essentially the same. Only candidates starting courses from January 2008 will be assessed against the revised HLTA standards.

The new standards are very similar to the previous ones. The content and principles have not changed substantively, but the wording and organisation has been amended to make them clearer and more accessible. ATL took an active part during the consultative process, and oversaw the development of the revised standards through our role as members of the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG).

For further information on the new standards, please go to the Training and Development Agency website at www.tda.gov.uk/support/hlta/resources_2007.aspx.



The changes can be summarised as follows:

Structure

The new version contains 33 standards, rather than 31, which are grouped in the same way as the teachers' standards, in three interrelated sections: covering professional attributes; professional knowledge and understanding; and professional skills.

Language

The new standards use statements the government hopes will be shorter and clearer. "Learners and young people" and "learning activities" have replaced "pupils" and "lessons" respectively.

Content

There are some very slight changes of emphasis; for example, in the "safe practice" and "personalised learning" standards.



National council ...on the way

The new national council for school support staff is scheduled to get underway in September 2008

The primary role for the new negotiating body will be to reach collective agreements on pay and conditions of service for support staff and to issue joint advice and guidance on employment-related matters. It will also ensure that there is a greater focus on the needs of schools. At present, support staff issues may not be given the detailed and specialist attention they deserve. The national council should help to rectify this.

ATL is giving consideration to the best use of the new body in improving the working conditions of our support staff members.

18/19 July



ATL helps you to support yourself

Enrolment is now taking place for ATL's next 'Supporting yourself' course, which is specifically tailored for support staff members. You will learn more about your rights at work, the role of support staff within education, and how to deal with challenging behaviour in the classroom.

The two-day course will be held in Bournemouth on 18/19 July. For more information or to book your place, contact Liz Barrett on **020 7782 1582** or email her at **lbarrett@atl.org.uk**.

Do we have your email address?

As a modern, progressive organisation, committed to providing the best possible service for our members, ATL will want to send out electronic mailings to you from time to time.

Unfortunately, we only have secure email addresses for around half of you. You can let us have your e-mail address in one of two ways:

- 1 By amending your personal details in the members' section of **www.atl.org.uk**.
- 2 By emailing **membership@atl.org.uk**.



Hello & goodbye

*goodbye
hello*

After six years with lead responsibility for ATL's support staff members, Andy Peart has moved on to pastures new within the organisation, and is now the deputy head of the legal and member services department. Huge thanks are due to Andy for carrying out what at times has been a difficult and delicate role, and he will be a hard act to follow.

Andy's replacement is Peter Morris, who joins us from the Communication Workers Union. He is looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible over the coming months, and is keen to ensure that the profile of support staff issues continues to rise in ATL.

ATL gives members the Edge

ATL and Edge Hill University have established a partnership to provide members with opportunities to secure accreditation for the professional development they undertake with ATL



Edge Hill University

Edge Hill is one of the country's leading providers of professional development for the wider school workforce and has a highly successful track record in enabling staff to gain academic credit for professional development activities undertaken as part of their role in school.

This agreement gives ATL members the ability to undertake a variety of accredited activities at both undergraduate and postgraduate level at a significantly reduced cost.

Accreditation is offered to all school and college staff engaging in professional development activities. For staff with a first degree, accreditation is available at postgraduate level, up to and including an MA in Education.

For those staff who are without a degree there is a range of accreditation at undergraduate level, up to and including foundation degrees in supporting teaching and learning or in professional development. There are also routes through to qualified teacher status for those without a formal teaching qualification. These accreditation routes are designed to be flexible, innovative and focused on impact in the classroom. They are work-based and online so you do not have to travel to study.

You can read more about the Edge Hill Partnership at **www.atl.org.uk/edgehill** or find out more by emailing **edgehill@atl.org.uk** or calling **01257 517118**.

Pay awards 2007

The 2007 local government pay award has now been agreed and has resulted in all pay scales being increased by 2.475%, with a new minimum hourly rate of £6. ATL members paid on the local government scales will now be in receipt of the new salary rate for their scale point (see table to the right).

London salaries have been increased by the appropriate London weighting allowances.

Local government pay scales are used by most schools within the state sector to pay support staff, although some local authorities have adapted them to produce a local scale.

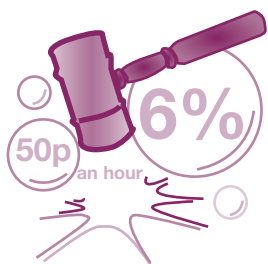
Please also note that the figures quoted are for full-time and all-year-round employment and will be reduced accordingly if you are employed on a term-time only and/or part-time basis.

For individual advice on your salary, please contact Peter Morris on pmorris@atl.org.uk.

Pay rates 1 April 2007 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Spinal column point	1 Apr 06	1 Apr 07	Spinal column point	1 Apr 06	1 Apr 07
4	£11,193	£11,577	27	£21,588	£22,122
5	£11,454	£11,737	28	£22,293	£22,845
6	£11,619	£11,907	29	£23,175	£23,749
7	£11,994	£12,291	30	£23,952	£24,545
8	£12,372	£12,678	31	£24,708	£25,320
9	£12,747	£13,062	32	£25,437	£26,067
10	£13,014	£13,336	33	£26,187	£26,835
11	£13,854	£14,197	34	£26,928	£27,594
12	£14,142	£14,492	35	£27,492	£28,172
13	£14,523	£14,882	36	£28,221	£28,919
14	£14,787	£15,153	37	£29,010	£29,728
15	£15,096	£15,470	38	£29,859	£30,598
16	£15,459	£15,842	39	£30,843	£31,606
17	£15,825	£16,217	40	£31,653	£32,436
18	£16,137	£16,536	41	£32,487	£33,291
19	£16,740	£17,154	42	£33,315	£34,140
20	£17,352	£17,781	43	£34,146	£34,991
21	£17,985	£18,430	44	£34,986	£35,852
22	£18,450	£18,907	45	£35,772	£36,657
23	£18,993	£19,463	46	£36,636	£37,543
24	£19,614	£20,099	47	£37,476	£38,404
25	£20,235	£20,736	48	£38,310	£39,258
26	£20,895	£21,412	49	£39,132	£40,101

Pay update 2008



The local government trade unions have submitted a claim for **an increase in pay for 2008/09 of 6% or 50p an hour**, whichever is the greater. At the time of going to press, talks had yet to commence, but with the government insisting on a 2% limit for all public sector settlements, the negotiations are likely to be protracted.

The official settlement date is 1 April, but as you won't need reminding, that deadline is rarely met, and this year has proved to be no exception.

Independent experiences

Do you work in an independent school? Then we'd like to hear from you. Tell us your experiences – the good, the bad and the indifferent of working as a teaching assistant or in any other support role in the private education sector. We plan to write a special feature on life in independent schools in a future edition of *ATL Support*, and are looking for members to contribute to it. If you are interested, please contact Peter Morris at pmorris@atl.org.uk, or ring him directly on **020 7782 1557**.

A helping hand for members

The ATL Trust Fund is an independent registered charity which was formed to assist ATL members, including support staff members, in times of illness or hardship. Indeed, assistance is available to both current and former ATL members and their dependants.

The Trust Fund has assisted applicants by providing grants for:

- nursing care costs and respite care
- funeral expenses
- wheelchairs, chairlifts and stairlifts
- general living expenses arising through illness, loss of employment and relationship breakdowns
- short recuperative holiday breaks.

This list is not exhaustive but please note that the ATL Trust Fund does not provide financial assistance with the repayment of loans, personal overdrafts, credit card bills and mortgage arrears.

For more information on the ATL Trust Fund, please:

- contact the Trust Fund administrator on **020 7782 1605**
- email trustfund@atl.org.uk
- visit www.atl.org.uk/factsheets and download the Trust Fund factsheet.



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