

Enhancement of Learning Support

The Professional Development Profile (PDP) Guidance for Managers



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In partnership with



The Professional Development Profile (PDP)

Guidance for managers

The *Professional Development Profile* (PDP) has been specifically designed to help organisations develop the skills of learning support assistants who are supporting learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities. The PDP is an online self-evaluation system set against relevant [National Occupational Standards \(NOS\)](#). It usually takes respondents 30-60 minutes to complete depending on their familiarity with Web-based questionnaires and the extent to which they discuss issues with their colleagues (see below). This guidance provides a brief overview of the process and how managers and organisations can make the process as successful and rewarding as possible.

The outputs of the PDP for individuals and organisations are:

- **Individual Report** - The question responses mapped to the NOS;
- **Group Report**- A summary of all LSAs in the organisation for Managers; and
- **Comparative Report** - **A comparison of profile data over time.**

Using National Occupational Standards

Identifying training and development needs

Organisations want to ensure that training and development is effective and makes the best use of resources. Training and development linked to national occupational standards (NOS) will have greater credibility and relate directly to an individual's performance in the workplace. Using the NOS to identify training and development needs means they can be expressed in terms of the required outcomes. This means training and development opportunities can in turn be identified and evaluated in relation to how well they meet these outcomes. Individuals learn and develop in different ways, and NOS clearly describe the outcomes of effective performance, which can then be linked to learning methods and approaches to help individuals apply their skills and knowledge in practice.

The Professional Development Profile (PDP) is a self-evaluation exercise that can identify each LSAs learning and development needs, and can support an appraisal or performance review with their line manager. Individual Learning Support Assistants can use the detail from the PDP to identify the performance standards and associated knowledge and understanding. This can be used as a benchmark for effective practice to assess the persons current skills and knowledge and identify areas for further training and development.

Providing development opportunities

The Professional Development Profile will also help you analyse if a training course or qualification is the most appropriate way of meeting the relevant needs. Identifying

learning needs against the needs of the workplace may also entail considering alternative approaches to traditional course-based routes for learning, such as:

- work shadowing to see how a more experienced colleague manages relevant aspects of their job role
- on-the-job project work, learner shadowing to see how an individual learner responds to different teaching styles and learning contexts
- receiving coaching or being mentored by a more experienced colleague from within the organisation.
- contributing to the learning and development of others, e.g. coaching, mentoring, giving demonstrations, or running training sessions
- visiting other organisations to observe relevant aspects of working practice
- e-learning, e.g. responding to questions and answers in electronic format, and searching the internet for specific information
- action learning or learning sets involving individuals with a common interest from within the organisation or from a group or network
- observing a colleague who has particular strengths

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Preparing your colleagues

Experience indicates that it is very important to explain to all respondents what the PDP is and what it is not. Reassurance and encouragement are key; explaining the following points is particularly helpful:

- It is an opportunity to celebrate what individuals already do well and a chance to say where, were they given more support and training, they feel that they could contribute even more.
- It is not a formal assessment that is passed or failed, and it should not be regarded as threatening.
- It is not just a means to an end; it is a valuable end in itself – a vital part of the development process.

Managing sessions

Working through the survey is much better done in teams or peer groups. Although each individual should respond for themselves, they should be encouraged to discuss the statements and their responses with one another. They should also be made aware of the explanatory text that is provided for the statements (click on the arrow icon next to each statement to see this text), and should feel free to ask

questions of the person who is running the session. There does not need to be a fixed time for finishing.

All of this will help to increase the value of the experience and to encourage respondents, who may often lack self-confidence, to give a good account of themselves, their capabilities and realistic areas for improvement.

Using reports effectively

An individual report will be provided for each respondent. It is strongly advised that these are not just handed out without guidance. Wherever possible, the distribution of these reports should be carefully supported, ideally as part of a wider review, appraisal or performance management process. The content and implications of the reports should be carefully explained to avoid confusion and concern and to make the best use of them in terms of subsequent development activities.