

Jacky has used the SLCF in various capacities; for herself, as an audit for the teachers at her school, as this case study will explore, as part of a course run for Teaching Assistants. She is both a SENCO at Woodham Ley Primary School in Essex and an Independent Chair of a Consortium of eight schools. In her role as Chair she organises training and peer to peer reviews of school to school practice and school to school support.

“As a Local Champion for The Communication Trust I was invited to attend the Local Champions’ Annual Meeting in London earlier this year where they gave us a virtual tour of the new SLCF before it was launched. I realised then it was something that would be useful for our teaching assistants (TAs) but that they might not find time to do it on their own.

We were running a Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants (MITA) course at the time but wanted to develop something specialised alongside it because of the prevalence of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) in the Braintree area of Essex. We wanted to skill up the people working with those children who have SLCN so we put together the one-year MITA SLCN course for the TAs.

Senior Leaders attend the course with their TAs for the first session and they go through the SLCF together. This allows Senior Leaders to think about the needs of the school as a whole as well as individual TA’s learning needs. I then tailor the skills, knowledge and understanding in the subsequent training sessions according to the gaps identified by the SLCF. At the end of every session the group completes a ‘reflective log’ in which they have another look at the SLCF and map their progress to see how they’re developing as the course goes on. They then complete a final SLCF audit in the last session.

For the tasks between sessions I send them back to certain strands of the SLCF and ask them to reflect on those in particular and how they relate to their school or their own practice. By getting them to think about what they do already and what their school does it helps puts the learning into context.

I don’t recommend they start at a particular level as it’s the progression that’s important but we do aim to get everyone onto the Enhanced level by the end of the course.

Lots of improvements have been seen in practice, including adaptations to schools’ environments and information leaflets being put together for parents. Some TAs have gone on to run Talk Boost sessions, which they might never have had the confidence to do had it not been for the training they received following signposting from the SLCF, and for the reflections on their own knowledge.

In my group this year there are a couple of teaching assistants who’ve been Communication Champions in their schools for quite some time and would consider themselves to be experts. They said that when they did the SLCF they didn’t realise how many gaps they had in their own knowledge. The SLCF covers such a wide range of skill areas, from working with parents to the communication environment, and also English as an additional language so it really does challenge people to think about their practice.



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We definitely plan to continue what we're doing. The course seems to be working really well and has certainly helped the TAs skills and knowledge in speech, language and communication. The feedback we get at the end tells us it benefits the TAs CPD and I could certainly recommend the tool to others."

Jacky, SENCO, Woodham Ley Primary School