



valuable assets

a general formal investigation into the role and status
of classroom assistants in Scottish schools

FINAL REPORT

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- Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)
- General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS)
- GMB
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- National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)
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About this investigation

Valuable Assets is an investigation under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. The legislation gives the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) the power to undertake general formal investigations into deep-seated issues of gender equality or discrimination, and to make recommendations about how to achieve equality between men and women.

In January 2006, following the results of our exploratory research into the role and status of classroom assistants in Scotland and the emerging concerns about their low pay and status, we began a programme of research and information gathering as part of a general formal investigation.

Since January 2006 we have undertaken:

- A national survey of classroom assistants, teachers and head teachers in primary schools
- Interviews with 15 local education authority Directors of Education
- A national survey of classroom assistants about working extra hours/ overtime
- Nine focus groups with classroom assistants in secondary and special schools
- A survey of EIS and NASUWT members, who are teachers, about the tasks done by classroom assistants
- A survey of all 32 local authorities about their classroom assistant workforce
- Independent job evaluations of 11 classroom assistants working in primary schools across three local authorities, using an equal value assessment tool
- Independent job evaluations of eight classroom assistants working in secondary schools across four local authorities, using an equal value assessment tool
- Consultation meetings with the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) and the Society of Personnel Directors in Scotland (SPDS)
- Consultation meetings with the Scottish Executive Education Department
- Consultation meetings with 6 local authority education and personnel departments
- Consultation meetings with trade unions and occupational and professional regulatory bodies
- Research into Scottish Executive education policy
- Legal research into term-time working practices
- Direct input from individual classroom assistants from the 'have your say' section on the EOC website
- Four advisory board meetings



Executive summary

The EOC has undertaken this first ever Scotland specific general formal investigation because classroom assistants are almost exclusively women, term-time workers and are amongst the lowest paid Scottish local government workers. As a relatively new occupation, in less than ten years since their introduction, numbers of classroom assistants have increased three-fold and the signs are that they are likely to continue to increase.

The work done by classroom assistants provides a valuable contribution to children's learning and development. However, this investigation has found that because of the nature of their work, their desire to work with children and the perfect fit for many working mothers, classroom assistants are a classic illustration of how work associated with women's traditional domestic and/or caring role is undervalued. Classroom assistants, therefore, can often be described as both 'labourers of love' and 'captives of love.'

What do classroom assistants do?

Classroom assistants work in primary, secondary and special schools carrying out a range of tasks, under the direction of teachers and within the following four general headings:

1. Contributing to the effective organisation and use of resources
2. Contributing to the quality of care and welfare of pupils
3. Supporting the needs of pupils in effectively accessing the curriculum
4. Supporting the quality of learning and teaching in the classroom

Task headings one and two were expected to contain more basic duties. Headings three and four were expected to be part of the classroom assistant role if they had the appropriate level of training, experience or qualifications to undertake what are considered to be more *complex* duties.

Since their introduction in 1998 the focus of classroom assistants' work has become primarily about supporting pupils and teachers in the learning process. This has led to a small but significant number of classroom assistants stretching into the work of professionally trained teachers, undertaking tasks that involve:

- Teaching new concepts
- Assessing the learning and development of pupils
- Looking after a class
- Planning the curriculum

Our independent job evaluation research identified four significantly different levels of classroom assistant jobs, although local authorities, in line with the Scottish Executive 1999 implementation guidance tend to recognise one or two different levels. The reason for the different and higher level of classroom assistant work was found to be dependent on the extent of involvement in the teaching and learning process and the type of learning, care and welfare responsibilities undertaken.

What and how are they paid?

Typically classroom assistants are paid between £5.68 and £7.58 per hour, although pay rates differ in each local authority. Classroom assistants reported universal dissatisfaction with their level of pay. This related, in particular, to their perception that pay is so low because of a failure to recognise the complex nature and extent of work in which they are involved.

Classroom assistants work term-time, normally between 8.45am - 3.30/4pm, five days a week. They receive paid annual leave that must be taken outside the school term. Their salary is then spread evenly across 12 months providing a regular monthly income that enables continuity of service and prevents the negative future impact of frequent breaks in national insurance contributions. Due to their employment status classroom assistants cannot receive unemployment benefits for those weeks of the year when they are not working or on paid annual leave. Therefore, the annual salary of classroom assistants ranges from around £6,810 - £10,089 and between £567 - £841 per month.

The 'value' of classroom assistants

Independent job evaluation research carried out as part of this investigation sought to determine the 'relative value' of classroom assistants in comparison with other typical local government jobs. The evidence from the evaluation exercise indicates that all classroom assistant jobs are of greater *value* (in equal pay terms) than typical, male dominated, facilities maintenance assistant/labourer jobs. Therefore, we would expect classroom assistants to be paid at higher levels than this group of predominantly male employees.

Further, those classroom assistants who are involved in planning, delivering and evaluating learning and/or are providing complex care and learning support to pupils with additional support needs demonstrated that their jobs were of *equal value* to typical local authority craft workers. Therefore, in accordance with the Equal Pay Act, we would expect classroom assistants undertaking these tasks to be paid at the same level as this group of predominantly male employees.

It was also identified that a significant number of classroom assistants (67% of those responding to our survey) are working extra hours. In most local authorities classroom assistants hours are based on class and pupil contact, therefore there is little scope to undertake planning, preparation, liaison and professional development work. The result is that this work is being done before or after school, both within the school and at home.

How are their skills and careers developed?

The majority of Scotland's classroom assistants have achieved or are working towards achieving the Professional Development Award (PDA) or the relevant Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) and receive training to assist them in their day-to-day duties. However, despite the nature of the work done by classroom assistants, qualifications or continued professional development are not essential requirements for entry or, perhaps more importantly, for development or progression in the job.

The level and type of qualifications available for classroom assistants were criticised by some local authorities because the qualifications available did not provide further or ongoing development for those classroom assistants who had already obtained their PDA. The lack of transferability of skills, qualifications and experience to and from other areas of the children's workforce also frustrates classroom assistants who feel as if there is nowhere for them to progress to.

A classic example of the undervaluing of 'women's work'?

Providing equal pay for work of equal value and addressing any undervaluing of jobs requires recognition of the nature of the work carried out by men and women and ensuring that in assessing their work there is no bias or sex discrimination. This involves not only a technical exercise comparing the skills, responsibilities and effort within individual jobs, but also consideration of societal values and pressures that can allow undervaluing to exist.

For classroom assistants, the undervaluing of the work they do may have come about because:

- The work they are doing is not 'visible' in formal job descriptions
- The skills and nature of responsibilities of their work have been inappropriately 'valued'
- The work is seen as a 'vocation' mainly for women who love working with children and will forego equal pay
- The 'value added' by classroom assistants is hard to quantify
- The work 'varies' from their previous formal training and work experience but fits in with their required working patterns and childcare needs

Time for action - Who can make change happen?

Our vision:

All classroom assistants receive equal recognition, for the demands and responsibilities of their work, with other male dominated jobs of equal value.

The role each classroom assistant plays in contributing to the education and learning process is recognised and rewarded fairly and appropriately.

The levels of knowledge and skills required to undertake the range of support for learning tasks that many classroom assistants evolve into is officially recognised through a career and qualification structure. This structure will allow classroom assistants to demonstrate their knowledge and skills at the same time as securing the highest standard of education in Scottish schools.

It is time to deliver this vision for classroom assistants, teachers, pupils and parents. The only way in which change will happen is if there is a concerted effort of all involved, including: classroom assistants, teachers, unions, local authorities and government. Central to achieving long-term positive change is:

1. The creation of a national action group led by local authorities and involving the Scottish Executive and trade unions to address the factors contributing to the undervaluing of classroom assistants
2. The development of a national framework of job roles providing recognition and clarity about the actual work of classroom assistants
3. The framework of job roles should be used by local authorities to establish career progression routes for classroom assistants with links to job demand, qualifications, training and continued professional development
4. A new 'Support for Learning' Higher National Certificate (HNC) should be developed and promoted to recognise the progression (both actual and potential) to more complex and involved support for learning tasks. Steps should be taken to ensure transferability of this qualification to and from other jobs across the children's workforce
5. The General Teaching Council for Scotland's (GTCS) remit should be expanded to include the development and promotion of skills, qualifications and standards for classroom assistants. The GTCS should also be responsible for developing a system of registration for classroom assistant jobs in Scotland

6. The Scottish Joint Council National Agreement on pay and conditions should be amended to require local authorities to calculate paid annual leave entitlement in days rather than hours
7. Time should be built into classroom assistants' contractual working hours to allow for the appropriate planning, preparation, liaison with colleagues and CPD necessary to perform their role effectively
8. The national action group should establish a short-life working group to produce and disseminate good practice guidance for local authorities and schools to raise the profile of best practice deployment, team working and school management. The short-life working group should also refresh the Scottish Executive guidance provided to local authorities and schools to address the findings from this investigation and to reflect the clarity brought about by the introduction of a national framework of job roles
9. The EOC and forthcoming Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) should use the evidence gathered from the classroom assistant formal investigation to develop a strategy and action plan to effect policy change and to raise awareness of the undervaluing of women's work with employers and policy makers

It is imperative for local authorities to take action, without delay, to ensure that they are meeting the requirements of the Equal Pay Act, the Sex Discrimination Act and the Gender Equality Duty. Therefore, individual local authorities must consider the findings from this investigation and:

10. Revisit the current evaluation of classroom assistant roles by carrying out equal pay audits using the EOC Equal Pay Review Kit and a non-discriminatory job evaluation system. This exercise should pay particular attention to making sure the job evaluation scheme used is fit for purpose and whether or not it is being implemented properly

Introduction



Since 1998, classroom assistant numbers have expanded from around 1,000 to 15,000 as the government-led national classroom assistant initiative was rolled out across Scottish primary schools and then extended to secondary and special schools. During this time, educational policy has developed considerably in Scotland and a consequence is that the work of classroom assistants has evolved significantly. As a result an estimated £292.9 million has been provided by the Scottish Executive to local education authorities, which has been used to increase the numbers of classroom assistants.

Across local authorities there are a range of job titles for pupil, learning and classroom support roles. Data collected during this investigation indicates some local authorities can have as many as eight job titles for these types of school support roles. The most common job title is Classroom Assistant, although Learning or Pupil Support Assistant are also increasingly popular titles. There is also an increasing number of school support roles that combine the two previously distinct jobs of 'Classroom Assistant' (providing general classroom, learning and teaching support) and Special Educational Needs Assistant (providing one-to-one support to children with additional support for learning needs). To capture all these roles the investigation has used the term classroom assistant.

Classroom assistants are almost exclusively female, typically aged 31-50 years and tend to be concentrated at the top of this age range, in the 41-50 year group, with those in secondary and special schools usually older. They are typically partnered and have children of school age.

Classroom assistant jobs are very popular and there is no shortage of applicants. The job provides an ideal fit for women returning to employment after having children looking for an additional second income with hours that match school times and terms. Having school-age children or liking work with children are the main reasons why many classroom assistants want to do the job. This is also reflected in the description of the necessary characteristics classroom assistants

should be able to demonstrate, for example being flexible/adaptable, willing to be directed but having initiative, having empathy and being a good listener. As one parent stated: **'they must have a good knowledge of children as well - mothers really.'**

Thus classroom assistants can be described as 'labourers of love', in that they make a positive choice because they like working with children; and 'captives of love', in that their employment opportunities are constrained by having children, and the need to balance childcare and work.

Our investigation has found that there is no doubt among head teachers, teachers, parents and Directors of Education about the significant contribution classroom assistants are making to pupils learning.

'I don't really see how a classroom can run without them.'

(Parent)

'Sometimes you get a classroom assistant who comes along and they've got their ECDL or they've got some enhanced qualification, and they're worth their weight in gold.'

(Director of Education)

However, classroom assistants believe that the high levels of job satisfaction they derive from the job should not mask their concerns about the low levels of pay and the lack of career development opportunities.

'I have to point out that I and many of my fellow colleagues love our job but we are being exploited.'

(Classroom assistant)



The emergence of classroom assistants

The Scottish Office introduced classroom assistants into primary schools in 1998. The aim was to lower the pupil-adult ratio in primary schools and raise standards of pupil attainment by freeing teachers' time to teach. These classroom assistants were to work under the direction of teachers.

The initial 1999 Scottish Office implementation guidance outlining the job of classroom assistants provided general advice to local authorities about the deployment and employment of classroom assistants in primary schools. Each local authority was expected to determine appropriate pay and terms and conditions and to use the implementation guidance to inform the creation of detailed job descriptions.

'We took basically the national guidelines and altered them to suit specifically for ourselves and therefore we produced our own job description, competencies and person specification for the post.'

(Director of Education)

Subsequent Government policies for the provision of Scottish education have extended the deployment of classroom assistants into secondary and special schools and broadened the work that they do. Therefore, the practice in local authorities and individual schools has become dependent on the needs of local services as well as open to local interpretation.

Which tasks?

Annex B of the 1999 national implementation guidance identified a number of duties and responsibilities within four task areas.

1	To contribute to the effective organisation and use of resources
2	To contribute to the quality of care and welfare of pupils
3	To support the needs of pupils in effectively accessing the curriculum
4	To support the quality of learning and teaching in the classroom

The tasks in areas one and two were regarded as more basic, practical and *administrative tasks* requiring a short period of induction training and undertaken with 'straightforward' guidance from teachers.

In contrast the tasks in areas three and four were more complex and focused on *supporting learning*, still under the direction of teachers, but which require additional training or rely on classroom assistants having previous training, qualifications and experience.

The 1999 implementation guidance recommended that the tasks within areas one and two were suitable for classroom assistants on entry into the job and *expected* that task areas three and four would require additional training.

The movement into all schools

During 2001 the Teachers' Agreement, *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century*, was introduced. This policy centred on improving the work and employment of teachers although it had an indirect effect on classroom assistants. Annex E of the Teachers' Agreement identified a list of administrative and other non-teaching tasks, which were no longer to be undertaken by teachers. The Agreement also recognised that classroom assistants were to be introduced into secondary schools. However it was not made clear whether classroom assistants in secondary schools should follow the tasks outlined in Annex B of the 1999 implementation guidance or the list of tasks in Annex E of the Teachers' Agreement. Nor was it clear from the Teachers' Agreement whether *all classroom assistants in all schools* were to follow Annex E in addition to or instead of Annex B.

And then some more tasks

The range of tasks undertaken by classroom assistants was extended to include pupil discipline and social inclusion through the *Better Behaviour - Better Learning* Joint Action Plan of 2001 and the *Education (Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004*.

The Teachers' Agreement had already suggested that classroom assistants should contribute to maintaining pupil disciplinary records but this role was now expanded. Under the 2001 Joint Action Plan classroom assistants were to be involved in 'discipline strategies in all schools' and asked 'to help troubled and troublesome children.' The requirement for classroom assistants to work with disruptive pupils was reiterated in the 2004 *Update to Better Behaviour - Better Learning*.

At the same time, the *Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004* widened the definition of special needs from pupils with intellectual and cognitive learning needs to incorporate pupils with social, emotional and behavioural issues. In addition, prior to the 2004 Act, the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000* had enshrined the inclusion of pupils with special needs in 'mainstream' schools. As a result more pupils are now classifiable as requiring Additional Support for Learning (ASL) needs to which local authorities must respond. Dealing with pupils with complex welfare, care and learning needs and behavioural issues therefore became an integral part of some classroom assistants' work.

The result of the introduction of national initiatives and legislation has led to the situation where classroom assistants represent an increasing and not insubstantial proportion of the school workforce. They are now carrying out a broad range of important tasks that involve supporting learning and teaching in Scottish schools.



What classroom assistants do and why

What they *should* do

There is consensus in Scotland that classroom assistants should undertake tasks under the direction of teachers and head teachers that support the learning and teaching process and that classroom assistants will do a variety of tasks in their job.

EXAMPLES OF TASKS ENVISAGED IN 1999 GUIDANCE

1. To contribute to the effective organisation and use of resources

- Preparing and mounting displays
- Photocopying and distributing lesson materials
- Cataloguing classroom materials and equipment

2. To contribute to the care and welfare of pupils

- Providing care for minor accidents
- Playground monitoring
- Toileting

3. Supporting the needs of pupils in effectively accessing the curriculum

- Supporting children with educational and practical tasks
- Helping pupils with tasks where there are physical difficulties
- Helping pupils organise their work and follow instructions

4. Supporting the quality of learning and teaching in the classroom

- Keeping children on task
- Monitoring pupil progress and report back to the class teacher
- Supporting and encouraging children to work together

What they *actually* do

The national survey of over 2,000 head teachers, teachers and classroom assistants asked each occupational group about the tasks that classroom assistants performed in schools. The findings told us that classroom assistants do still carry out the tasks as outlined in the 1999 implementation guidance.

TASKS DONE BY CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS, REPORTED BY:			
Tasks	Head teacher	Teacher	Classroom Assistant
Preparing classroom materials	99%	98%	98%
Supervising non-teaching areas	94%	94%	97%
Providing comfort and care for minor accidents	96%	98%	99%
Discussing with the teacher how pupils coped with the learning activities	99%	99%	98%
Providing learning support to individuals or groups of pupils	90%	95%	99%

There is also evidence suggesting that the tasks undertaken by the majority of classroom assistants have become more focused on providing support for learning and/or working with pupils with severe additional support needs.

'There were some teachers who I would say saw them as "Could you clean the paint pots out?" That doesn't happen [now] ... They are there really to support the learning of the children and the children come first.'

(Head teacher)

The investigation found that with regard to supporting learning and teaching virtually all classroom assistants are involved in work that *supports or assists* the teacher in the teaching and learning process. Of the 934 teachers responding to the EIS and NASUWT survey:

- 98% agreed that classroom assistants support and encourage pupils in paying attention
- 97% agreed that classroom assistants help pupils organise their work and follow instructions
- 97% agreed that classroom assistants support/guide children with practical activities
- 89% agreed that classroom assistants reinforce learning techniques
- 71% told us that classroom assistants take a group for reading or maths

Evidence of role stretch in supporting learning and teaching

The investigation also found evidence that significant numbers of classroom assistants are undertaking support for learning tasks that are considered to be more complex and require a greater degree of involvement in the learning process. From the same EIS and NASUWT survey, of the 934 teachers responding:

- 44% told us that they discuss the use of the curriculum with classroom assistants
- 37% told us that classroom assistants evaluate pupils learning and take remedial action
- 30% told us that they plan lessons/education tasks with the classroom assistant
- 24% told us that they seek the input of classroom assistants in planning lessons

It is also clear that some classroom assistants are working beyond the initial policy intent as described in the 1999 implementation guidance. From the

“Although we have no teaching qualifications as such, our job involves teaching to a certain degree.”

(Classroom assistant)

national survey of head teachers, teachers and classroom assistants there is evidence to suggest that a small but significant number of classroom assistants are undertaking tasks that not only support learning but also stray into the work of professionally trained teachers.

TASKS DONE BY CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS, REPORTED BY:			
Tasks	Head teacher	Teacher	Classroom assistant
Assessing the learning and development of pupils	57%	60%	67%
Teaching new concepts	24%	28%	56%
Setting learning tasks	32%	26%	56%
Planning the curriculum	13%	10%	13%

And supporting this suggestion of role stretch, the teachers responding to the EIS and NASUWT survey told us that:

- 29% of classroom assistants mark pupils work
- 20% of classroom assistants look after a class until a teacher arrives
- 17% of classroom assistants explain new learning concepts to individuals or groups
- 5% of classroom assistants help to plan the curriculum

‘I have been a classroom assistant for almost seven years and I have my PDA in Classroom Assistants and also a SVQ Level 3 Playwork along with several other CPD courses. My job has totally changed from the day I started. More often I am left alone with a group of children could be 5-12, to “teach” them a new concept. ... ’

(Classroom assistant)

Evidence of role stretch in managing pupils' behaviour

As a result of the introduction of the *Better Behaviour - Better Learning* initiative classroom assistants reported that they are increasingly working with disruptive pupils who often have very challenging behaviour and as a consequence may become more involved in the teaching and learning process. Two types of scenarios were reported during our investigation. One involves classroom assistants being left alone to take either one or a group of children, who have been removed from the rest of the class and help them work through the lesson and learning tasks.

'... in our school there is another [classroom assistant] that does the Better Behaved Better Learning Unit which is the room which they send the kids to prevent them from being excluded ... she is left with those kids every day and she is expected to teach them.'

(Classroom assistant)

The other scenario that was reported demonstrated a more supporting or assisting role being undertaken by classroom assistants working with disruptive pupils.

'We have a behaviour base...there is always a teacher and two members of staff, usually pupil support assistants or auxiliaries, in there at all times regardless of the number of children in there.'

(Classroom assistant)

Classroom assistants who were providing support to pupils with additional support needs reported that they regularly work with pupils with very challenging behaviour. They told us that this was because of the nature of their role in supporting pupils with sometimes complex learning and care needs.

'You are not just working with their educational needs, their primary care needs, their special care needs, medication, you are also having their

behaviour, you know challenging behaviour. And you have to deal with that at any time of the day, you don't know when it is going to happen.'

(Classroom assistant)

Evidence of role stretch in care and welfare

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to establish procedures for identifying and meeting the needs of every child requiring additional support in order for them to benefit from education. This investigation has found that as a result of this change in legislation classroom assistants are now dealing with more complex aspects of care and welfare, especially with regard to pupils with severe ASL needs. In both 'mainstream' and special schools, classroom assistants may offer support in areas such as toileting, changing tracheotomy tubes, tube feeding, administering diazepam, administering oxygen, physiotherapy and applying restraint techniques.

Classroom assistants undertake these, often complex, welfare and care tasks (sometimes with little or no training) without additional pay and often feel a moral obligation or tacit pressure from schools to do these tasks. One classroom assistant recalled how her colleague had learned to work with visually impaired pupils:

'She did it herself in her own time because she thought that would benefit the child that she worked with.'

Another emphasised the impact on the school or pupils:

'Our school couldn't function unless we were prepared to do a lot of these things, I mean there are some children who wouldn't even be in the school if we weren't prepared to do these things, but it's a huge responsibility on the pay that we are getting.'

The level of responsibility held by classroom assistants undertaking these duties is illustrated by one assistant who explained the nursing tasks she performed:

'This wee boy had to be resuscitated about twice a week and given oxygen.'

Another classroom assistant speaking of a child with severe epilepsy told us of the pressure she felt:

'... if you don't administer [the procedure] at the right time or within a certain time, that child could die ... I went on a trip to London with her and I was aware of that the whole time.'

Why is role stretch happening?

The findings from the investigation suggest that role stretch is not directly driven by local authority policy. Instead, the reasons for role stretch seem to lie largely in individual school practice and the individual characteristics of classroom assistants. This has meant that classroom assistants will often use their own initiative in explaining new learning concepts to individuals or groups, drawing on possession of specific skills, such as ICT, art and music.

'Now if you were to describe maybe what you might think of as a baseline skill level, most of the classroom assistants we have are able to perform well above that.'

(Director of Education)

'A lot of them have a great wealth of other skills that they bring, some are very creative and artistic and it's just recognising the strengths of the individual ... so it's about head teachers finding out what the strengths are and capitalising on that.'

(Director of Education)

The EIS and NASUWT survey of teachers found that in answer to how they learned to instruct classroom assistants when they are in the class the vast majority of teachers relied on custom and practice.

- Custom and practice (91%)
- Head teacher instruction/guidance (51%)
- The school has an established policy/protocol (32%)
- Scottish Executive guidance “Working with Classroom Assistants - Material for Teachers” (31%)

Another part of the reason for role stretch, in particular into teaching tasks, could be attributed to the lack of clear direction given to teachers, both those in the job and student teachers, which means that they are unclear of the specific role of classroom assistants and therefore allow them to become more involved in teaching.

Government education policies have also had an impact on the duties and responsibilities of the school workforce. In their day-to-day work and in workforce planning head teachers, teachers and classroom assistants have responded to national education policies and priorities and this appears to have had an overarching impact on how the role of classroom assistants has developed.



Classroom assistant pay

Classroom assistants are local government employees and levels of pay are determined by each of the 32 local authority employers. The majority (76%) of the 25 local authorities who responded to our classroom assistant workforce survey placed classroom assistants on job grades that pay full-time workers between £9,865 - £14,577 per annum.

Within this group of local authorities, almost three quarters (74%) start classroom assistant salaries at the first point of the nationally agreed pay scales for white-collar local government workers, £10,938 and allow progression up to £14,577. The highest salary range reported to the investigation was £10,938 - £18,324.

The Scottish Joint Council National Agreement pay rates are based on 37 hours a week, 52 weeks a year for full-time employees. In some local authorities full-time weekly hours range from 35 - 37 hours. Therefore, classroom assistant hourly pay rates typically range from £5.68 to £7.58. However, one local authority pays up to £9.52 per hour.

The actual pay classroom assistant receive is, of course, pro-rated to reflect that the hours they work are less than the standard full-time hours. So in practice, classroom assistants are paid less than the salary range suggests, reflecting the number of hours and weeks worked. Classroom assistants work, typically, 8.45am - 3.30/4.00pm, Monday - Friday, 39 weeks a year.

This means that the typical pay of classroom assistants ranges from £6,810 - £10,089 per year and £567 - £841 per month. One authority pays up to £11,974 per year which equates to £988 per month.

In the majority of local authorities classroom assistant pay progresses along a pay spinal column and is related to years of continuous service. Pay ceilings are reached when employees reach a specific length of service. Therefore, for many classroom assistants factors such as qualifications, training and actual job content or demand do not affect their level of pay. However, these factors will

**“I am not doing this job because
it gives me pocket money.”**

(Classroom assistant)

have an effect on the quality of support for learning and education pupils receive as well as the level of support provided to the class teacher.

Classroom assistants conveyed their dissatisfaction with their levels of pay during this investigation, feeling strongly that their pay does not reflect the demands made of them.

‘We all feel undervalued but are so dedicated to the jobs we do. That dedication should and must be rewarded by giving us a living wage. I want to make the difference in helping and caring for the pupils in my care but I also wish to be recognised for the worthwhile job I do.’

(Classroom assistant)

How classroom assistants are paid

Classroom assistants, like many female dominated jobs in the education sector, are term-time workers. They do receive paid annual leave entitlement and this has to be taken outside the school term.

Like many term-time workers, classroom assistant pay is spread evenly across 12 months to provide a regular income, continuity of service and prevent breaks in national insurance contributions. The current employment status of term-time workers is such that they are not eligible to receive unemployment benefits during the weeks when they are not working or on paid annual leave.

The Scottish Joint Council National Agreement on pay and conditions of service sets out a minimum provision of paid general annual leave of 20 days. For employees with at least five years continuous service the provision is increased to 25 days. Almost all (83%) of the local authorities responding to our workforce survey provided paid public holidays in addition to general annual leave.

The minimum amount of paid annual leave provided to classroom assistants reported by local authorities was 23 days and the maximum was 47 days.

The National Agreement allows local authorities to calculate paid annual leave entitlement, 'where necessary' in hours, rather than days. This may lead to a 'double pro-rating' of classroom assistants' paid annual leave.

Double pro-rating happens when the calculation for entitlement to annual leave is based on hours, rather than days worked. Where this happens, it reduces the amount of days annual leave which classroom assistants are entitled to be paid for, because they work slightly shorter days than normal 'full-time' workers. This practice has a negative impact on the salary received by classroom assistants, who are already amongst the lowest paid local authority workers.

The potential impact of 'double pro-rating' on classroom assistants can be seen by using the data provided by one local authority in response to the EOC workforce survey. Using an example of a classroom assistant who is paid £5.68 per hour, working 27.5 hours per week, 39 weeks a year and where annual leave entitlement is calculated in hours rather than days the difference in annual salary is a reduction of £248. This equates to a loss of 3.6%.

	Hrs per wk	General annual leave	Public annual leave	Wks worked per yr	Wks paid per yr	Annual salary
Full-time worker	37 Mon - Frid 7.4 hrs a day	20 days 148 hrs	11 days 81.4 hrs	45.8	52	£10,938
Term-time worker	27.5 Mon - Frid 5.5 hrs a day	20 days 148 hrs	11 days 81.4 hrs	39	45.2	£7,060
Term-time worker pro-rate	27.5 Mon - Frid 5.5 hrs a day	14.86 days 110 hrs	8.18 days 60.5 hrs	39	43.61	£6,812

71% of classroom assistants worked extra hours after school.

Some classroom assistant work is *unpaid*

During our focus groups a large number of classroom assistants told us that they frequently undertook work outside their contractual hours. This was reinforced by the response to our overtime survey, which indicated that nearly three quarters of the 1,282 classroom assistants who responded were working overtime or extra hours.

Of those working overtime or extra hours, 62% said that they were never paid, 20% were sometimes paid and 18% were always paid.

In terms of the amount of overtime or extra hours (paid and unpaid) usually worked by classroom assistants, 37% regularly worked extra hours on less than 1 day a week, 35% regularly worked extra hours between 1-4 days a week and 18% reported that they worked extra hours on 5 or more days a week. 10% did not answer.

The main activities that were being done during these extra hours were:

- Liaison with teachers/ attending staff/ planning meetings (46%)
- Preparation of learning materials (47%)
- Performing clerical work (41%)

Between 30 and 39% of those working overtime reported doing the following tasks:

- Preparing the classroom
- Personal preparation for lessons
- Supervising children during school hours
- Supervising children outside of school hours
- Providing non-emergency care
- Dealing with emergencies involving children

A small but significant number of classroom assistants reported:

- Assessing and recording work (15%)
- Delivering learning (12%)
- Planning the curriculum (4%)

The high number of classroom assistants working extra hours does include participation on school trips and extra-curricular activities, which may not occur frequently. However, the significant numbers of classroom assistants undertaking extra hours for the purposes of planning, preparation and liaison with teaching staff raises questions about the way in which their contractual hours are determined and whether there are sufficient hours in the day to undertake the range of tasks expected.

We wanted to find out the reasons why classroom assistants were working extra hours, in particular to determine if this was motivated by personal choice or was because of the expectations of teaching staff. There was a mix of responses.

- 56% felt an obligation to the pupils
- 51% did so because they enjoy the work
- 55% felt there was not enough time during contracted hours
- 38% did so at the request/expectation of the Senior Management Team
- 30% did so at the request/expectation of the teacher
- 25% did so because of staff shortages in the school

The 'value' of classroom assistant jobs

The Equal Pay Act states that women and men are entitled to equal pay not only when they are doing the same job, but also when they are doing different jobs where the skills, effort and responsibilities involved are of an equivalent level or standard.

68% of classroom assistants were working above a basic level.

As part of our investigation of classroom assistant jobs we undertook a job evaluation exercise of 19 classroom assistants across seven local authorities from both primary and secondary schools. The job evaluation exercise used an independent equal value assessment tool, following the principles outlined in the Equal Pay Act. This involved evaluating the demands, in terms of skills, effort and responsibility, involved in each classroom assistant job.

Four different levels of classroom assistant jobs were identified, each with significantly different levels of job demand. The explanation for the different levels of demand within certain classroom assistant jobs lies in the extent of their involvement in the teaching and learning process. The more involved a classroom assistant is in the teaching and learning process the more job demands are placed on the role.

Of the 19 jobs evaluated, six (32%) were identified at *level 1*, eight (42%) were identified at *level 2*, four (21%) were identified at *level 3* and one (5%) was identified at *level 4*. Therefore, 68% were working above a basic level. Although the sample used in the job evaluation is very small, the findings are consistent with the evidence from the surveys and focus groups showing role stretch in support for learning and teaching and care and welfare tasks.

Therefore, of key importance is that some classroom assistants are doing jobs, which are more demanding than other classroom assistant jobs. So where classroom assistants are paid on the same grade or level, those classroom assistants who are carrying out the more demanding jobs are not being remunerated for the greater level of job demand and responsibilities.

To identify the 'relative' value of classroom assistant jobs, compared to the skills, effort and responsibilities of typically male or female dominated jobs in local authorities we undertook a comparative job evaluation exercise. This told us:

- All classroom assistant jobs are measurably more demanding than the least demanding clerical, administrative and secretarial assistant jobs

- All of the classroom assistant jobs evaluated are more demanding than typical, male dominated, facilities maintenance assistant/labourer jobs
- The classroom assistant jobs working at the more and most demanding levels are more demanding than the typically male dominated higher level facilities maintenance assistant role
- The classroom assistant job that demonstrated the highest level of demand, when compared to a typical male dominated craft worker, involved equivalent levels of demand

The evidence from this investigation indicates that all classroom assistant jobs are of *greater value* (in equal pay terms) than the typical male dominated facilities maintenance assistant/labourer jobs in local authorities. Therefore, in accordance with the Equal Pay Act, we would expect classroom assistants to be paid at higher levels than this group of predominantly male local authority employees.

Using the independent equal value assessment tool, the classroom assistants who are involved in planning, delivering and evaluating learning and/or are providing complex care and welfare and learning support to pupils with additional support needs demonstrated that their jobs are of *equal value* to typical local authority craft workers. Therefore, we would expect the classroom assistants undertaking these tasks to be paid at the same level as this male dominated group of local authority employees.

However, information reported to the EOC during this investigation suggests that in some local authorities, as part of the implementation of the single status agreement, there are proposals to reduce classroom assistant pay and grading. This is contrary to the expectations of our independent job evaluation research.



Developing the workforce

Qualifications

The Professional Development Award (PDA) for classroom assistants was introduced to support the 1998 Classroom Assistant Initiative and aimed to provide classroom assistants with the training required to undertake support for learning tasks.

Once in the job, and to provide themselves with the knowledge and understanding required to support learning, many classroom assistants have obtained qualifications. Some have qualifications directly linked to working with children and education. Others have a range of specialist qualifications in areas such as art and design, ICT, foreign languages and music, which they brought with them to the job.

- Just under a half of classroom assistants in primary schools and a third in secondary have the PDA
- Over 20% of classroom assistants in primary and 10% in secondary schools have the S/NVQ for classroom assistants
- Around three-quarters of classroom assistants have at least Standard Grades or 'O' Grades
- A significant number also have qualifications beyond compulsory schooling such as Highers and 'A' Levels
- Around a sixth have HNCs or HNDs
- More than one in ten has a degree

During consultation meetings with local authorities they told us that they faced increasing difficulties finding suitable qualifications for classroom assistants. The PDA was reported as no longer providing the right level of training and development required to support learning and teaching. For those who had obtained the PDA, there was no advanced level of qualification for them to work towards. Local authorities also reported difficulties with the SVQ for classroom assistants because of a lack of appropriate and affordable workplace assessors.

Achieving national standards

No local authority specifies that classroom assistants must have or be working towards a relevant classroom assistant qualification. It is surprising that despite the nature of the work undertaken by classroom assistants, qualifications or continued professional development are not essential requirements for entry or, more importantly, development in the job.

Furthermore, there is no occupational or professional body regulating the work of classroom assistants, working to raise standards of practice or promote their education and training. While there are UK wide occupational standards for classroom and teaching assistants, in Scotland these standards are only used for developing the SVQs.

Independent bodies regulate other occupational and professional groups in the children's care and education workforce. All teachers in Scotland have to be registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) and therefore must have obtained the relevant graduate qualification and completed the teachers' probation period. In addition to regulating the teaching workforce, a key part of the role of the GTCS is to ensure Scotland's high standards of education are maintained and developed. For example, two of the principle aims of the GTCS are to contribute to the development of a world-class educational system in Scotland and to maintain and enhance professional standards in schools and colleges in collaboration with partners.

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) regulates the social care workforce and aims to protect those who use social services, to raise standards of practice and to strengthen and support the professionalism of the sector's workforce. Early years workers and practitioners were recently included within the remit of the SSSC and a system of registration has been introduced for managers, practitioners and support staff. Therefore, those working in the sector need to be able to demonstrate that they have achieved or are working towards the nationally agreed standard/qualification for their level of work.

44% of respondents told us they worked extra hours for professional development, only 8% were always paid for this work.

The absence of any requirement for classroom assistants to demonstrate that they have achieved an agreed national standard means that the occupational standards are not being used to their full potential or to the benefit of pupils, parents, teachers, local authority employers and classroom assistants. In addition, the occupational standards for classroom assistants are not matched, nationally or locally, to agreed standards of education service provision that classroom assistants could be expected to meet.

Training and continued professional development

Despite the lack of regulation or requirement to meet agreed national standards, head teachers, teachers, educational professionals and classroom assistants themselves, told us that training is essential and beneficial to classroom assistants, pupils and teachers.

The majority of classroom assistants told us they receive a wide range of training and continued professional development to allow them to meet the needs of pupils and teachers. The majority of this training involved learning specialist theories and techniques to overcome the barriers in accessing the curriculum for children who have additional support needs or learning specialist techniques for working with disruptive pupils. This training is not formalised, accredited or provided uniformly.

Our overtime survey also provides an indication of the commitment and potential of classroom assistants towards continued professional development and training. 44% of respondents told us they worked extra hours for professional development, only 8% were always paid for this work.

The type of training and professional development reported to be done outside their contractual hours included:

- Studying for the PDA/ SVQ for classroom assistants (42%)

- Research/ training on dealing with challenging behaviour (38%)
- Research/ training on medical procedures and/ or medication (32%)
- Research/ training on dealing with autism spectrum disorders (33%)

Few classroom assistants complained of a lack of continued professional development and access to training. Those who did raise this as an issue told us the reasons for not receiving adequate training were either insufficient budget or because they were not considered part of the teaching staff.

However, despite of the high numbers of qualified and trained classroom assistants and the demand for and supply of continued professional development, in areas such as specialist learning support and care and welfare of pupils, there appears to be a lack of formal recognition of the skills and responsibilities involved in supporting children and young people's learning.

'I've got a friend who does three nights a week in ASDA and she makes double what we make ... you don't need qualifications to do this job, but you do have a lot of responsibilities.'

(Classroom assistant)

A 'sticky floor'

The investigation has found that for the overwhelming majority of the 15,000 classroom assistants in Scotland there are few career development opportunities to progress to more demanding and rewarding work. There is also limited transferability of the skills, qualifications or training they have achieved to and from other areas in the children's workforce, such as early years practitioners.

Only one local authority told the investigation about the steps that have been taken to develop a career path for classroom assistants.

“Short of doing the teacher training course,

there’s not a lot.”

(Classroom assistant)

Workforce development in South Lanarkshire

Following a best value review in 2002, South Lanarkshire Council changed its support for learning structure. In consultation with staff and unions, the authority consolidated the four roles of reception, basic administration, care and welfare of pupils, and classroom support to create the new post of school support assistant (SSA).

A new management structure was also introduced, creating opportunities for career progression. Line management responsibilities for school support staff is held by a Team Leader located in every school who liaises with the head teacher and clusters to ensure service aligns with needs of pupils. Out with individual schools, the authority has created 21 clusters comprising secondary school/feeder primaries/early years establishments and SEN establishments which will become learning communities as other learning services such as libraries become involved.

The creation of ‘job family’ structures throughout the authority is also envisaged to allow for transfer to other service areas. Training is available in the four core areas as well as in specialised tasks and leadership. The authority is also working with colleges to develop a SVQ that covers all the tasks involved in the consolidated school support role.

However, in Scotland there is growing interest and recognition of the need to achieve a well-qualified children’s workforce including teachers, early years workers, those working beside teachers and in other children’s care and support services. Despite this, the children’s workforce remains fragmented and classroom assistants, in particular, have not been included in recent initiatives to up-skill parts of the workforce.

The Scottish pedagogue model

A more flexible and overarching approach to achieving highly skilled and qualified workers who are involved in providing the wide range of care and education services to children has been suggested by Children in Scotland.

Their 'Scottish pedagogue' model takes a more inclusive and long-term approach to workforce development within the sector and offers a model for improving qualifications and developing a common professional framework across a number of areas such as: early years, family support and residential care as well as those who work alongside teachers in schools.

This approach offers solutions to long-term demographic issues relating to the changing demand for children's services, provides the potential for a flexible workforce who have the skills and qualifications to work both within and across children's services and supports wider workforce planning within local authorities. The model recognises and supports the work undertaken by classroom assistants in supporting learning and the care and welfare of pupils, within a framework which supports the policy thrust for better integrated children's services.

Local authorities also told us that that the current lack of career opportunities and development is a situation they would like to change.

'... one of the other issues certainly local authorities would like to see is that the Government has invested significantly in the McCrone settlement for teachers ... I would like to see that widened to what I'd call an Education Profession for the 21st Century and to look to see how we can give better career progression to all these categories of staff including classroom assistants.'

(Director of Education)



A classic example of the undervaluing of women's work?

To provide equal pay for work of equal value and address any undervaluing requires recognition of the nature of the work carried out by men and women and ensuring that in assessing their work there is no bias or sex discrimination. This involves not only a technical exercise comparing the skills, responsibilities and effort within individual jobs but also considering societal values and pressures that can allow undervaluing to exist.

Factors that can contribute to 'undervaluing'

One of the key requirements reported by teachers, head teachers and classroom assistants to do the job was experience of being a mother. Indeed the overwhelming majority of classroom assistants have dependent children and reported that this enables them to have the skills and experience required for the job. The hours and location of work fit with their childcare and family responsibilities too.

Recent EOC research suggests that the skills and demands involved in jobs where women predominate are often given low valuation. This is largely due to the assumption that these skills are 'natural' deriving from women's essence as mothers and carers. It is also assumed that having these skills gives rise to high levels of job satisfaction that offset the low monetary reward. Classroom assistant roles are typical of these kinds of jobs that are given low value.

The turnover rate for classroom assistants is very low and vacancies are filled easily. While there may be other 'flexible' work options open to women on returning to work after having children, these options tend not to have the same ideal fit with school hours, term-time work pattern and be within a short distance from home and children's schools. Local authorities are the sole employers of classroom assistants and in reality there is restricted choice for women who are looking for employment, which provides such an exact fit with their childcare responsibilities.

For classroom assistants, the undervaluing of the work they do may be as a result of:

- The work they are actually doing is not 'visible' in their formal job descriptions
- The skills and nature of the responsibilities of their work have been inappropriately 'valued'
- The work is seen as a 'vocation' mainly for women who love working with children and therefore it is assumed they will forego equal pay
- The 'value added' by classroom assistants is hard to quantify
- The work 'varies' from previous formal training and work experience that classroom assistants may have and fits in with their required working patterns and childcare needs



Our Recommendations

The importance of action

This investigation has found that classroom assistants are now an integral part of the school workforce, highly respected and relied upon by teachers, head teachers, pupils and parents. And yet the full extent of the range and demanding nature of the work done by classroom assistants is not recognised in their pay or position within the occupational hierarchy. Recognising and appropriately rewarding the work of classroom assistants is important for many reasons.

- It is important for individual classroom assistants, whose skills and experience will be properly rewarded, whose pay will be increased to reflect accurately the demands of the job thus, bringing benefits to their families as well as themselves
- It is important for local authorities to pay the appropriate rate for the job, to develop and progress employees, and to be complying with sex discrimination and equal pay laws
- It is important for Scotland's future because it will contribute to a higher performing education system, supporting the next generation, who are the workforce of the future

The only way in which change will happen is if there is a concerted effort of all involved: classroom assistants, teachers, unions, local authorities and government. We believe that the following action is necessary if we are to ensure there is fairness and equality for classroom assistants.

Making change happen

What we have found:

- Classroom assistants were first introduced to enable the Government to meet its target of achieving a ratio of no more than 15 pupils to 1 adult in the primary school sector by 2002
- Numbers have expanded from approximately 1,000 in 1998 to current levels of approximately 15,000, with various job titles
- The work of classroom assistants has evolved and expanded
- Since the initial review of the classroom assistant initiative by the Scottish Executive in 2002, there has been no national monitoring or auditing of the employment and deployment of classroom assistants despite the significant additional public funding provided to increase their numbers

Why change is needed:

- Many of the issues raised in this investigation cannot be resolved by employers alone. The outcomes sought will only be achieved by employers, trade unions and government taking a co-operative approach

RECOMMENDATION 1

A national action group should be created, led by local authorities in partnership with the Scottish Executive and trade unions, to address the factors contributing to the undervaluing of classroom assistants. This group should be responsible for taking forward the findings and recommendations from this investigation.

Recognising the actual work being done

What we have found:

- Classroom assistants jobs have evolved and expanded since their introduction in 1998
- There are four distinctly different levels of classroom assistant jobs, however the majority of local authorities identify only one or two
- There are significant and increasing numbers of classroom assistants providing more complex support for learning and teaching and care and welfare of pupils
- Some classroom assistants roles are straying into the work of professionally trained teachers

Why change is needed:

- To recognise the extent to which classroom assistants jobs have evolved and expanded into more complex support roles
- To recognise the different skills, knowledge and experience required to undertake the different roles of classroom assistants
- To clarify and formalise the boundary between supporting learning and teaching
- Consistency and clarity in roles and associated qualifications will assist local authorities with workforce planning and quality of service arrangements

RECOMMENDATION 2

The national action group should develop a national framework of job roles providing recognition and clarity about the actual work of classroom assistants.

Recognising the actual work being done

What we have found:

- 70% of classroom assistants in primary schools have either the PDA or SVQ Level 3
- 44% of classroom assistants told us that they work extra hours for professional development
- 72% of these classroom assistants told us they were never paid for undertaking professional development
- There is no link between job demand, qualifications, training and grade
- In the majority of local authorities there are no career development opportunities, including progression or transferability to other similar occupations
- The way in which the work of classroom assistants has evolved suggests there is a progression from entry to the more demanding levels of work
- There is growing recognition and awareness of the need and benefits of achieving a highly skilled and well-qualified children's workforce in Scotland

Why change is needed:

- To recognise the different levels of work and skills needed for the role
- To recognise the impact of training, qualifications and experience on performance and the level and type of work in which classroom assistants are involved
- To motivate classroom assistants to achieve continuing professional development
- To clarify the position of classroom assistants within the school workforce
- To ensure that classroom assistants are meeting expected standards when working with children and in the provision of education and learning

RECOMMENDATION 3

Local authorities should use the framework of job roles to establish career progression routes for classroom assistants with links to job demand, qualifications, training and continued professional development.

Workforce development

What we have found:

- In the majority of local authorities there is a lack of formal recognition of the skills, knowledge and experience required within the range of tasks performed by classroom assistants
- There is a lack of national direction to resolve the problems facing the local authorities who are reporting that there are currently no suitable qualifications to meet their service delivery needs, the training needs of classroom assistants and that overcome the often costly problem of workplace assessment

Why change is needed:

- The lack of formal accreditation given to much of the training and education of classroom assistants undermines their status, in particular in relation to the rest of the children's workforce
- There are educational benefits to pupils and parents of a workforce that is properly trained, appropriately qualified, working to agreed standards and effectively and appropriately regulated
- Workforce development benefits local authorities by creating a skilled, well qualified workforce that is flexible to work within and across services and by predicting the skills needed for future service demands

RECOMMENDATION 4

A new Support for Learning Higher National Certificate (HNC) should be developed and promoted for classroom assistants to recognise the actual and potential for progression to more complex and involved support for learning tasks. Steps should be taken to ensure transferability of this qualification to and from other jobs across the children's workforce.

Workforce development

What we have found:

- Classroom assistants, although a significant and growing group within the children's workforce, are not regulated by a system of registration
- There is no national body driving forward standards
- The SSSC have adopted an appropriately flexible approach to registration for early years workers that could be mirrored for classroom assistants
- The GTCS is the most appropriate body in Scotland to oversee standards because of its knowledge and understanding of the remit of teachers and the Scottish education system

Why we need change:

- Occupational standards for supporting learning and teaching can be used to recognise the levels to which classroom assistants should be and are working. They can inform job descriptions, help in recruitment and selection, deployment and performance appraisal and also identify training and career development needs
- Occupational standards will also provide clarity confirming the boundary between the remit of classroom assistant and that of teachers
- A system of registration, administered and regulated by the GTCS will help to increase the visibility and status of classroom assistants at the same time as providing high quality service provision that meets the needs of pupils, parents and employers

RECOMMENDATION 5

The GTCS's remit should be expanded to include the development and promotion of skills, qualifications and standards for classroom assistants. The GTCS should also be responsible for developing a system of registration for classroom assistant jobs in Scotland.

Achieving fair and appropriate working practices

What we have found:

- Classroom assistants are amongst the lowest paid local government workers, with the normal salary ranging from £6,810 - £11,974 per annum
- Classroom assistants are contracted to work from 8.45am to 3.30/4.00pm, 5 days a week, 39 weeks a year
- Actual paid annual leave varies across local authorities starting at a minimum of 20 days
- The terms of the Scottish Joint Council National Agreement allow for the calculation of leave to be based on hours, 'where necessary'. Therefore, there is the potential for the double pro-rating of paid annual leave entitlement
- We estimate that when employers apply the practice of double pro-rating classroom assistants are losing around 3% of their annual salary

Why change is needed:

- Classroom assistants are amongst the lowest paid in the public sector and their low pay is compounded because they are term-time workers, with annualised pay. The practice of calculating annual leave entitlement in hours, rather than days therefore has a particularly negative effect on the salary of some of the lowest paid public sector workers
- Local authorities who calculate annual leave entitlement for some of their employees based on hours and others based on days may be vulnerable to challenges under the Equal Pay Act and the Part-Time Workers Regulations

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Scottish Joint Council National Agreement on pay and conditions should be amended to require local authorities to calculate paid annual leave entitlement in days rather than hours.

Achieving fair and appropriate working practices

What we have found:

- The majority of classroom assistants have their contracted hours allocated, in full, to class or pupil contact time
- 67% of classroom assistants reported working extra hours, either paid or unpaid
- 62% of those who reported working extra hours told us that this was never paid
- 46% of those doing extra hours were doing so to liaise with teachers, attend staff or planning meetings
- 36% of those doing extra hours were doing so to prepare themselves for lessons or learning support, for example reading over a subject
- 38% worked extra hours at the request/expectation of the Senior Management Team
- 30% worked extra hours at the request/expectation of the teacher

Why change is needed:

- Classroom assistants are already among the lowest paid public sector workers and any failure to pay them for the actual number of hours they are required to work compounds their low level of pay
- To recognise and accommodate the work many classroom assistants are required to do, such as planning, preparation and teacher liaison, within their contractual hours

RECOMMENDATION 7

Time should be built into classroom assistants' contractual working hours to allow for the appropriate planning, preparation, liaison with colleagues and CPD time necessary to perform their role effectively.

Supporting local authorities, schools, teachers and classroom assistants

What we have found:

- Many different pupil, learning and classroom support roles now exist
- The 1999 implementation guidance does not provide clarity about the deployment of classroom assistants across primary, secondary and special schools
- The 1999 implementation guidance does not reflect the additional responsibilities placed on local education authorities by new policies that have an impact on the deployment of classroom assistants
- There is a lack of clarity around the legitimate role of classroom assistants and where the boundary with teaching sits comfortably

Why change is needed:

- Local authorities, schools and teachers should be provided with up-to-date guidelines for the deployment of classroom assistants to ensure they are employed efficiently, effectively and fairly
- Some of the problems identified in this investigation could be resolved through better planning, organisation and management of classroom assistants
- Clear, brief and up to date guidance could be used as part of teaching staff's CPD and would provide new and existing teachers and head teachers with information that explains the different remits of classroom assistants

RECOMMENDATION 8

The national action group should establish a short-life working group to produce and disseminate good practice guidance for local authorities and schools to raise the profile of best practice deployment, team working and school management. The short-life working group should also refresh the Scottish Executive guidance provided to local authorities and schools to address the findings from this investigation and to reflect the clarity brought about by the introduction of a national framework of job roles.

Tackling the undervaluing of women's work

What we have found:

- Classroom assistants are overwhelmingly female (98%) aged between 31-50 with dependent children
- The penalty for part-time/term-time working, women's unequal share of family responsibilities, the concept of women being the second earner and historical discrimination in job and pay hierarchies all contribute to the undervaluing of classroom assistant jobs
- The circumstances of classroom assistants that lead them to accept their employment conditions have led to them being described as both 'captives of love' and 'labourers of love'
- Classroom assistants are a classic example highlighting how and why 'women's work' is undervalued

Why change is needed:

- To raise awareness of undervaluation as a factor contributing to the gender pay gap
- To assist employers and policy makers to take proactive steps to explore the way in which value is attributed to work in order to reduce the gender pay gap

RECOMMENDATION 9

The EOC and forthcoming CEHR should use the evidence gathered from the classroom assistant formal investigation to develop a strategy and action plan to effect policy change and to raise awareness of the undervaluing of women's work with employers and policy makers.

Providing equal pay

What we have found:

- Classroom assistants are among the lowest paid local government workers, normally with a starting salary of £5.68 per hour
- Increases in pay are linked to length of service but not to job demand or qualifications
- There are four distinctly different levels of classroom assistant jobs, however the majority of local authorities identify only one or two
- When evaluating classroom assistant roles, following the principles of the Equal Pay Act, the level of skills and responsibility required match the demands of typical male dominated roles that are usually further up local government occupational and pay hierarchies
- In some local authorities, as part of the implementation of the Single Status Agreement, there are proposals to reduce classroom assistant pay and grading, contrary to the expectations of our independent job evaluation

Why change is needed:

- The results from the independent job evaluation of 19 classroom assistants provide local authorities and trade unions with a benchmark from which they can test the results of their own job evaluation exercise
- If local authorities fail to evaluate classroom assistant jobs using best practice job evaluation methods then this leaves them vulnerable to challenges under the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act
- The Gender Equality Duty places a statutory duty on local authorities to promote gender equality and eliminate sex discrimination, and a requirement to publish an equal pay statement
- It is imperative for local authorities to take action, without delay, to ensure that they are meeting the requirements of the Equal Pay Act, the Sex Discrimination Act and the Gender Equality Duty

RECOMMENDATION 10

Local authorities must revisit the current evaluation of their classroom assistant roles by carrying out equal pay audits using the EOC Equal Pay Review Kit and a non-discriminatory job evaluation system. This exercise should pay particular attention to making sure the job evaluation scheme used is fit for purpose, and whether or not it is being implemented properly.

APPENDIX 1 Primary research

External research commissioned by EOC (Scotland) for Valuable Assets

Scottish Centre of Employment Research (2005) *The Role and Status of Classroom Assistants in Scotland: A Pilot Study for the Equal Opportunities Commission (Scotland)*, Research Report 8, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

Scottish Centre of Employment Research (2006) *Valuable Assets: A General Formal Investigation into the Role and Status of Classroom Assistants in Scotland's Primary*

Schools. A study for the Equal Opportunities Commission (Scotland), Research Report 11, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

Hastings, S., Paddison, L., Hawkins, K. and Leslie, S. (2006) *Assessing the Value of the Work of Classroom Assistants in Primary Schools*. A report for the Equal Opportunities Commission (Scotland), Glasgow.

Hastings, S. and Leslie, S. (2006) *Assessing the Value of the Work of Classroom Assistants in Schools: Supplementary Report on Secondary Schools Classroom Assistants*. A report for the Equal Opportunities Commission (Scotland), Glasgow.

Scottish Centre of Employment Research (2007) *Valuable Assets: Phase 2 of A General Formal Investigation into the Role and Status of Classroom Assistants in Scotland's Secondary and Special Schools. A study for the Equal Opportunities Commission (Scotland)*, Research Report 14, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

The Scottish Centre for Employment Research also conducted a survey of overtime working. 4000 questionnaires were sent to classroom assistants in Scotland with a response of 1282.

The research reports can all be found on www.eoc.org.uk/valuableassets

Internal research undertaken by EOC (Scotland)

- Survey of EIS and NASUWT members who are teachers and head-teachers in Scottish schools
- Term-time working position paper
- Statistical profile of classroom/pupil/learning support assistants in Scottish schools
- Anecdotal evidence collected via the Valuable Assets website 'have your say' section

APPENDIX 2 Secondary documents used in the investigation

Audit Scotland (2006) *A Mid-Term Report: A First Stage Review of the Cost and Implementation of the Teachers' Agreement A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century*, Scottish Executive: Edinburgh.

Audit Scotland/HMIE (2003) *Moving to Mainstream: The Inclusion of Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*.

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General Teaching Council Scotland (2003) *Classroom Assistants: A GTC Position Paper*, GTCS, Edinburgh.

Data Services (2006) 'Pay for teaching assistants', *IDS Pay Report*, No. 953, May, 12-14.

MacDonald, C. (2006) 'Inclusion, but at what cost?', *The Herald*, 13 May and 'Special needs education queried'.

Munn, P., Johnstone, M. and Sharp, S. (2004) *Discipline in Scottish Schools: A Comparative Survey Over Time of Teachers' and Head Teachers' Perceptions*, SEED, Edinburgh.

Pirie, A., Head, G. and Brna, P. (2005) *Mainstreaming Pupils with Special Education Needs: An Evaluation*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

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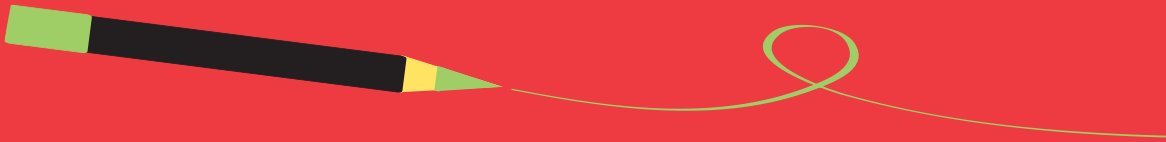
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