Introduction

1. It is proposed that Durham local authority designs, delivers and funds a broad-based training support package for teaching assistants across the County, with two main intentions:
   - To recognise the skills required by teaching assistants and to support them to be effective in their roles;
   - To demonstrate commitment to the professional development needs and aspirations of teaching assistants and, in conjunction with a Teaching Assistant Career Progression Board, provide practical, accessible and affordable training from which both schools and individuals may benefit.

Context

2. Schools decide what qualifications and experience applicants for teaching assistant (TA) positions need to have. There are non-statutory professional standards, but there is no statutory framework for entry requirements.

3. ‘Skills for Schools’ (an on-line guide to careers in schools, run by Unison) confirms this, as does the National Careers Service which nonetheless adds that GCSEs at A* to C in English and maths would be reasonable minimum requirements.

4. It is a reasonable assumption that TAs working with pupils with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) would be supported by the school through specific training, which may or may not include accreditation. Training offered by individual schools often depends on how a school wants to deploy its TAs, as well as the needs of the pupil(s) they are working with.

5. The National Careers Service says SEND TAs would usually need a college qualification in nursery nursing, childcare or play work.

6. Short courses (unaccredited) are widely available which cover specific needs, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), dyslexia and profound and multiple learning difficulties, and some of these are targeted at TAs. Additionally courses focus on practical classroom strategies such as positive ways of changing behaviour, and curriculum priorities such as maths teaching or understanding spelling, punctuation and grammar. In most cases such
courses have a cost, which would normally be met by the school from its continuing professional development budget.

Proposal

7. Using the framework of the ‘Teaching Assistant Professional Standards’, (jointly published in June 2016 by UNISON, school leaders’ union NAHT, the National Education Trust (NET) and the private organisation, Maximising Teaching Assistants), it is proposed that an offer is made of professional training and development that fits with the four themes of the Professional Standards document, namely:
   - Personal and professional conduct
   - Knowledge and understanding
   - Teaching and learning, and
   - Working with others

8. The offer will comprise 8 free sessions with up to 40 places available per session, on a first-come, first-served basis. In the event that the sessions become oversubscribed, further sessions may be offered.

9. It would be suggested that each head teacher works with TAs to establish their training needs, if any, according to the session outlines below, and selects a date for training that is convenient. While the training itself is offered at no charge to TAs from County Durham schools, costs of cover and transport (if any) will fall to the school.

10. A school could nominate a TA to attend all four sessions or just one, two or three, according to individual needs.

11. Additional twilight sessions covering specific needs will run. Dates for these are below. Once again, a school could nominate a TA to attend one or more than one, according to individual need. Twilight sessions are also without charge to TAs from County Durham schools.

12. Sessions breakdown:

   **Session 1: Personal and professional conduct (run twice)**
   - Understanding the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which you work as a professional member of staff.
   - Demonstrating positive attitudes and building effective relationships with colleagues.
   - Practical advice on safeguarding pupils’ well-being by following relevant statutory guidance along with school policies and practice.
   - Improving your own practice through self-evaluation and self-awareness.
Session 2: Knowledge and understanding  *(run twice)*
- Reflecting on your own practice, to identify relevant professional development needs and ways to improve personal effectiveness.
- Supporting mathematics in the classroom.
- Supporting literacy in the classroom.
- Improving your understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Understanding how to contribute effectively to the adaptation and delivery of support to meet individual needs *(practical session)*.

Session 3: Teaching and learning  *(run twice)*
- Adopting relevant strategies to support the work of the teacher and increase achievement of all pupils.
- Promoting, supporting and facilitating inclusion by encouraging participation of all pupils in learning and extracurricular activities.
- Using effective strategies to plan for and manage whole-class learning, including behaviour management strategies consistently in line with the school’s policy and procedures.
- Contributing to effective assessment and planning by supporting the monitoring, recording and reporting of pupil performance and progress as appropriate to the level of the role.

Session 4: Working with others  *(run twice)*
- How to maximise the contribution of other professionals, parents and carers by liaising effectively and working in partnership with them.
- How to ensure you make accurate assessments of what children can do and use these to inform the classroom teacher of performance and progress or concerns about the pupils you work with.
- How TAs effectively contribute to decision making.
- Working with other education, health and social care professionals, so that informed decision making can take place on intervention and provision.

13. Each session will run twice per day, first at 9.00am – 12.00, and then from 1.00pm – 4.00pm. The days will be:
- **Session 1:** **venue:** each session will take place at
  - **Session 2:** **Durham Leadership Centre**
  - **Session 3:** **Spennymoor**
  - **Session 4:**

14. Twilight sessions covering specific learning needs will be as follows:
- **How to support children with autism.**
- **Understanding a range of multiple learning difficulties and considering how a TA can contribute to support in these cases.**
- **Managing pupils with dyslexia.**
- **Promoting positive learning behaviours.**

15. Each twilight session will begin at 3.30pm and run for 2 hours.
16. Additional twilight sessions can be arranged depending upon needs identified through consultation with head teachers in the autumn term 2017.