# Further Education Learning Support Workers National Education Workforce Survey 2021
## Analysis of open text comments

## 1. Workload

> **Overall themes from suggestions to make work more manageable open text comments**
> - additional paid hours/increase working hours;
> - less administration/paperwork/meetings;
> - employ more staff;
> - more support for staff;
> - access to the appropriate technology for staff/students.
>
> **Total number of responses: 580**
> **Total number of open text responses: 62**
> In response to:
> *Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that you are able to effectively manage your existing workload within your contracted working hours? (select one) (when either disagree or strongly disagree was selected, the open text question was asked "Do you have practical suggestions on what changes would help to make your workload more manageable?"*

**Analysis of comments relating to how workload could be more manageable:**

### 1.1. Additional paid hours/increasing working hours (16 comments)
- Further education learning support workers felt that additional hours were needed in order to complete the required tasks for the role.

Examples
*We simply require additional hours for the post, in order to support the teachers in the manner they require.*

*Increasing contracted hours to include personal development within the field of education.*

*Increase contract hours to reflect on the job. LSAs are on minimal hours because looking from the outside it seems we only support in the classroom and that is definitely not the case.*

*Extend my hours employed.*

### 1.2. Less administration/paperwork/meetings (15 comments)
- Administration was stated as a factor for the increased workload and if this was decreased this would help make workload more manageable.

*Less unnecessary paperwork.*

*More structure less ticking box exercises.*

*More hours or less paperwork.*

### 1.3. Employ more staff (12 comments)
- Additional staff was suggested to help share the current workload.

Examples
*Additional staff plus automated systems.*

*More staff to support role.*

*Hire more staff.*

*Employ more people in my position…….. no indication of hiring another person. This leads to more work being spread throughout the team.*

### 1.4. More support for staff (11 comments)
- Some felt that the current support on offer was not sufficient and that more was needed to help further education learning support workers.

Examples
*More supportive line manager.*

*More 1:1 support.*

*The department needs to have a partially loaded lecturer with spare hours to allow for holiday & sickness cover.*

### 1.5. Access to the appropriate technology for all staff / students (6 comments)
- By everyone having the appropriate technology, this would eliminate technology issues that arise which prove to be time consuming.

Examples
*Paid opportunities to plan, convert resources for digital learning.*

*Working remotely has created many issues with the learners, and how they can learn.*

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**Overall themes from why workload has increased due to blended learning open text question**

**Additional work reasons**

- learners requiring additional support (one-to-one/pastoral/welfare);
- challenges of remote working;
- ICT – availability of equipment / reliability of IT systems;
- insufficient time for preparation, marking, feedback and reflection;
- administration requirements and / or paperwork;
- unfair distribution of the workload/ division of tasks.

**Practical suggestions for improvement**

Due to only a small number of suggestions being provided within this question, no prominent themes could be established. Below details some examples which were however provided.

**Total number of responses: 580**
**Total number of open text responses: 164**
In response to:
7. How has delivering blended / remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic affected your workload? If "it's increased slightly" or "it's increased significantly", the following open text question was asked "If your workload has increased slightly or significantly, please explain what the additional work has been and any practical suggestions on how this could be improved"

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**Analysis of comments relating to why workload has increased:**

**1.6. Learners requiring additional support (one-to-one/pastoral/welfare) (53 comments)**
- It was felt that blended learning has led to increased support to students from further education learning support workers;
- Some students are struggling to engage, or are experiencing wellbeing issues which has led to increased workload.

Examples

*It takes far longer to explain work to students as being at home makes them far too relaxed and uncompliant.*

*While some learners have adapted to online learning, for others who were already struggling in class - it has presented additional challenges in terms of being able to ask and access support at the time. Time and persistence is needed to show care and concern for learners and enabling them to better manage their time and take control of their own learning. Working with them on this has been very rewarding.*

*I am continually getting emails that learners are not accessing their classes on line and this means I am having to chase them up and encourage them to engage so that they can achieve their qualification.*

**1.7. Challenges of remote working (37 comments)**
- The process of remote learning has increased workload;
- This is due to a variety of factors such as communication now being online rather than face to face (which is more time consuming) and learning how to support effectively in a blended learning environment.

Examples

*Working remotely has created many issues with the learners, and how they can learn.*

*Conversations with staff no longer take a 3 minute chat in the corridor, but numerous emails... Many staff are at breaking point with trying to support our learners, as well as home-school, family worries and day to day duties.*

*It takes so much longer to write clear instructions rather than just speaking to a student.*

*Not only the time needed to design and create new resources but the huge amount of training we have had to provide to other staff and learners. The lack of digital knowledge and familiarity with online tools was unbelievable.*

### 1.8. ICT – availability of equipment / reliability of IT systems (29 comments)
- Technology issues has meant that further education learning support workers have to solve these issues taking them away from their current workload.

Examples
*The technology in the college is poor. Wifi has been down for weeks - plus there are many spots in the college where signal is normally not available. This factor increases workload as you are trying on numerous occasions to do a task before it is down.*

*As an LSA we are not entitled to note pads while we work from home. I believe this is unfair, considering LSAs constantly use paper to produce notes/learner notes, lists of outstanding work, and keywords/information that the Lecturer has stressed is important.*

### 1.9. Insufficient time for preparation, marking, feedback and reflection (29 comments)
- Preparation has increased due to resources needing to compatible for blended learning;
- Practical subjects require more planning for blended learning, as these subjects are usually taught and supported face to face;
- Marking is also more time consuming online.

Examples
*Marking online takes longer – extension of the time limit.*

*Preparation of online teaching materials has hugely increased.*

*Now spend most days preparing work and marking work sent by learners.*

*Delivering on-line sessions but also an increase in marking the work digitally.*

*My role is much more practical in the setting, so planning activities for online learning is taking more time than it would be if I was physically in work.*

### 1.10. Administration requirements and / or paperwork (17 comments)
- Some felt that blended learning has increased the amount of administration and paperwork;
- This is due to the increased number of emails and more form filling in regards to tasks such as monitoring engagement.

<u>Examples</u>
*More paperwork to complete.*

*Even more paperwork to complete and don't have time for.*

*A higher proportion of my time has been spent typing emails.*

*I complete more administrative work when I am working from home. I log every hour of my day which I do not do at work.*

*Supporting learners online requires more admin to arrange and maintain sessions.*

### 1.11. Unfair distribution of the workload/division of tasks (7 comments)
- Some comments were raised regarding tasks that now need to be conducted by further education learning support workers as a result of blended learning which has added to workload when already working at capacity;
- It was felt that some tasks should either be postponed or redistributed to other areas due to increased workload from blended learning.

<u>Examples</u>
*I've been in work all day and still expected to do CPD like all the other LA's who aren't in work.*

*Being tasked to contact at risk students and work with them on top of our usual workload.*

**Practical suggestions for improvements made by respondents:**

Due to only a small number of suggestions being provided within this question, no prominent themes could be established. Below details some examples which were however provided:

<u>Examples</u>

*I don't know how this can be improved apart from recording everything we do and uploading examples onto our classroom. Getting learners to record their practical activities and upload them onto classroom.*

*It could be improved with more time away from the screen. Most days sessions are back to back on line, in front of a screen, with no regular breaks.*

*Logging off when contracted hours are complete (letting learners know when I am available).*

*Time for learners' welfare should be added onto tutors' timetable alongside teaching and admin hours.*

*To be given more time to do everything that is expected within working hours.*

*Improvements….more support from managers and better communication as to what each individual member of staff is actually doing in regards to their workload.*

*We are in the process of developing an improved assessment sheet that can be used prior to meeting learners to make the initial process less time-consuming as well as developing and sharing resources and good practice.*

## 2. Professional Learning

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**Overall themes from open text comments professional learning**

- ICT skills including digital/blended learning;
- subject and/or phase knowledge;
- mental health and wellbeing;
- coaching and mentoring;
- improving Welsh language skills;
- behaviour management and support.

**Total responses: 580**

**Total open text responses: 277**

In response to:

*Question 15. In which areas would you welcome further development to help you be a more effective education professional? (please list up to three areas)*

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**Analysis of comments relating to the main professional learning themes**

### 2.1. ICT skills including digital / blended learning (86 comments)
- ICT/Digital training was the most popular suggestion in regards to professional learning. It was felt that additional training in this area would help support blended learning.

Examples
*Coaching skills and further IT training.*

*Regular digital training in order to keep up to date with digital platforms used within the college. Google package training hub which can be accessed at your leisure.*

*Even though I now feel very confident in supporting students online I feel it would still be beneficial to receive specific training on this and to see if there are more efficient ways of supporting online. Specific training in how to deal with challenging behaviour effectively.*

### 2.2. Subject and / or phase knowledge (62 comments)
- Professional learning in the subject supported was also a popular suggestion, along with specific training in regards to the further education learning support role in their subject area.

Examples
*More relevant technical training and industry relevant experience.*

*More professional development which is specific to LSAs.*

*Relevant training for my role, I find that I undertake training for higher graded job roles.*

*Training specific to LSAs. A lot of training is not useful to our role.*

### 2.3. Mental health and wellbeing (32 comments)
- Additional training in mental health and wellbeing was also suggested as an area for professional learning in order to support staff and colleagues.

Examples
*More training in supporting students who have mental health difficulties and a more detailed awareness of substance misuse.*

*I would like to re-do the mental health first aid course and learn more about mental health and adolescents.*

*Mental Health and Wellbeing for Staff.*

*More training in mental health.*

### 2.4. Coaching and mentoring (18 comments)
- More specific training in relation to coaching and mentoring was also suggested.

Examples
*Coaching and mentoring.*

*Learner Coaching.*

### 2.5. Improving Welsh language (12 comments)
- Some further education learning support workers stated that they wished to improve their Welsh language skills.

Examples
*Continuous learning of the Welsh language.*

*The Welsh language.*

*Welsh language skills.*

*More opportunity to use Welsh in the classroom to boost the numbers who can speak it and to hit the 1 million target.*

### 2.6. Behaviour management and support (11 comments)
- Dealing with challenging behaviour effectively was also a theme regarding desired professional learning.

Examples

*More training in behaviour management & alternative curriculum/alternative teaching/support methods.*

*Dealing with volatile behaviour.*

*Specific training in how to deal with challenging behaviour effectively.*

*Behaviour Management provided by an external source not internal.*

*I'd like to receive training in behaviour management.*