



Suffolk TA Network Annual Conference Impact Report

Trinity Park Conference & Events Centre, Ipswich
Monday 2nd October 2023

By Abi Joachim



Contents

- 3 Introduction – conference background
- 4 Conference programme
- 5 Teaching Assistants' perceptions
- 6 Teaching Assistants' perceptions
- 7 The best thing about the conference
- 8 Areas for improvement
- 9 Future conference themes and training needs
- 10 Acknowledgements and thanks

“Getting a wide range of information all in one place”



According to national statistics, there are currently 281,094 FTE teaching assistants employed in England, representing 3 in 10 of the FTE education workforce.

In 2020, funding was secured from the Ipswich Opportunity Area to promote and support the work of teaching assistants in Suffolk through a local TA Network.

Since its launch, the Suffolk TA Network has grown to a membership of over 530 teaching assistants and offers its members a needs led package of training and development opportunities.

As a network, we recognise the need for quality professional development opportunities for teaching assistants to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to effectively support students in school. We also passionately believe that teaching assistants need the same professional opportunities to network and share best practice.

With these aims in mind, the concept of an annual Suffolk TA Network conference was formed.

Conference Background

According to the National Autistic Society, more than one in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK. During 2022-23, the Suffolk TA Network launched the Communication and Interaction (C&I) Specialist Network and has been well-attended. As C&I has been raised by our members as a significant training need we decided to choose this as our theme for the 2023 annual conference.

The Suffolk TA Network has been thrilled to collaborate this year with the Suffolk County Council Communication and Interaction (C&I) Service to plan and deliver the conference.

The conference was held on Monday 2nd October 2023 at Trinity Park Conference and Events Centre in Ipswich, offering a full day of professional development and networking to colleagues across the county.

The conference was attended by 152 teaching assistants from across Suffolk.

The day opened with a keynote speech by Dr Ivana Lessner Listiakova. This was then followed by a series of SLCN themed workshops delivered by a range of specialist guest speakers (full programme on page 4).

Teaching assistants were also given the time to network with each other and share ideas and experiences.

The Suffolk TA Network annual conference is targeted specifically at teaching assistants and aims to provide high quality, relevant professional learning opportunities for teaching assistants in Suffolk and to inspire other areas of the country to follow suit.



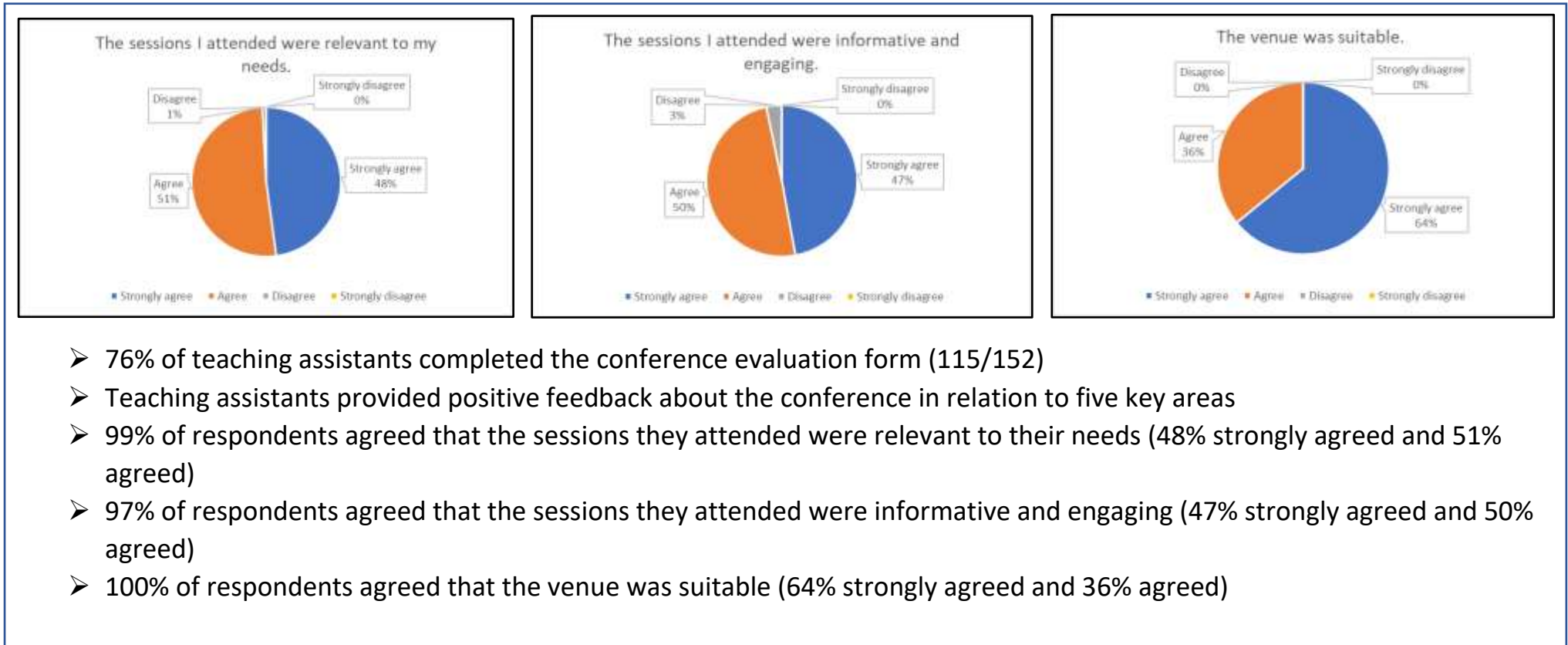
Conference Programme

	<u>Room 1</u>	<u>Room 2</u>	<u>Room 3</u>	<u>Rooms 4</u>
Keynote speech – 9.30-10.00	Dr Ivana Lessner Listiakova			
Session 1 – 10.00-10.40	Strategies for supporting anxiety Jane Albery, Claire Goddard & Jenny Baskett	The Power of Welcome Lucy Spink, Amanda Firmin & Jo Wright	Supporting your students at risk of Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Rebecca Sleightholme & Katie Matthews	Raising awareness of ASC and girls Rachel Christmas, Sarah Jackson & Julia Groves
10.40-11.00	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
Session 2 – 11.00-11.40	Strategies for supporting anxiety Jane Albery, Claire Goddard & Jenny Baskett	The Power of Welcome Lucy Spink, Amanda Firmin & Jo Wright	Supporting your students at risk of Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Rebecca Sleightholme & Katie Matthews	Raising awareness of ASC and girls Rachel Christmas, Sarah Jackson & Julia Groves
Session 3 – 11.40-12.20	Understanding masking and how to identify and support this in the classroom. Annie Clements			
12.20-13.00	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
Session 4 – 13.00-13.40	Coping in a crisis – support for de-escalation Rachel Christmas & Lucy Spink	Supporting sensory processing difficulties Julia Groves & Jane Albery	Emotional Regulation, including The Zones of Regulation Sarah Jackson, Amanda Firmin & Jenny Baskett	Practical ideas for using visuals Jo Wright & Claire Goddard
13.40-14.00	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
Session 5 – 14.00-14.40	Coping in a crisis – support for de-escalation Rachel Christmas & Lucy Spink	Supporting sensory processing difficulties Julia Groves & Jane Albery	Emotional Regulation, including The Zones of Regulation Sarah Jackson, Amanda Firmin & Jenny Baskett	Practical ideas for using visuals Jo Wright & Claire Goddard
Closing – 14.40-15.00	Closing Statement Abi Joachim & Toni Wainwright			

“Engaging topics”

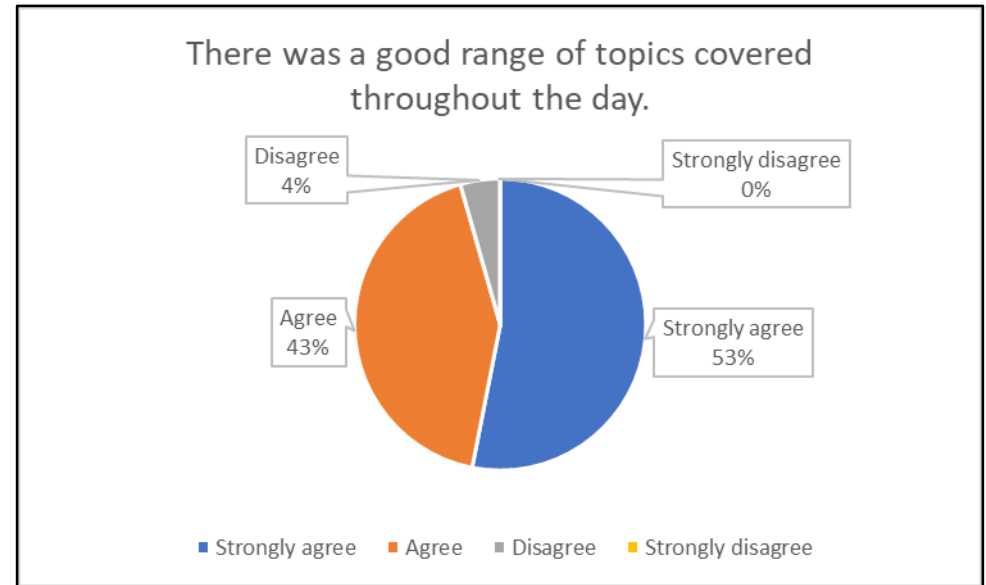
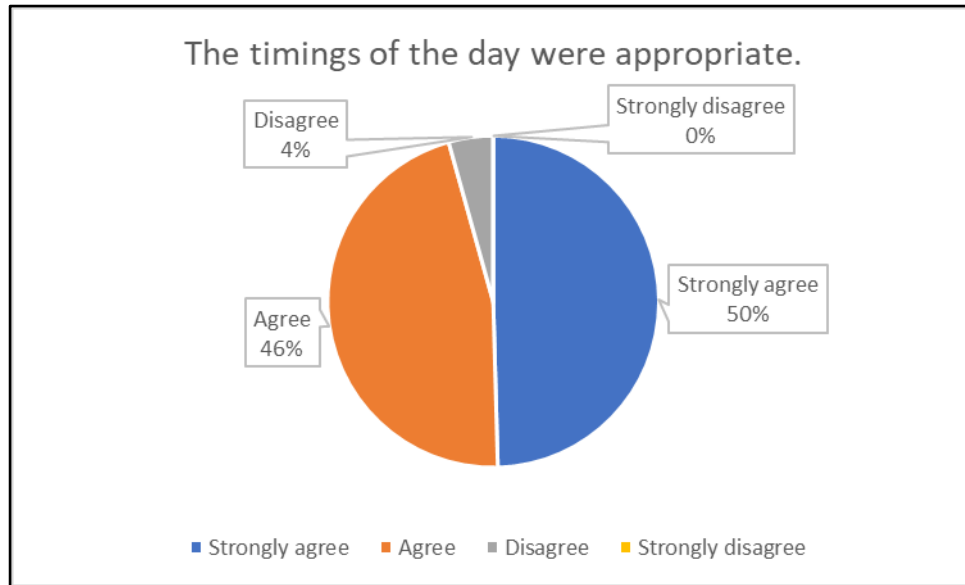
Teaching Assistants' Perceptions

“Very informative”



“Knowing we do have support from colleagues”

“Feeling supported” Teaching Assistants’ Perceptions *“Feeling appreciated”*

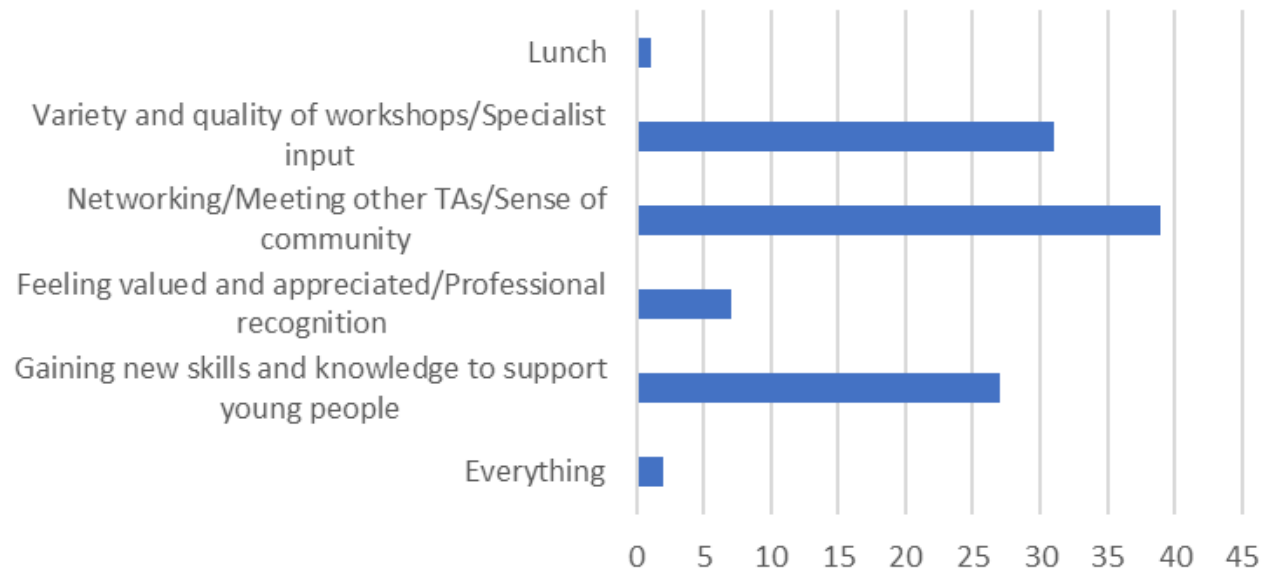


- 96% of respondents agreed that the timings of the day were appropriate (50% strongly agreed and 46% agreed)
- 96% of respondents agreed that there was a good range of topics covered throughout the day (53% strongly agreed and 43% agreed)

“Gaining knowledge to put into practice”

The Best Thing About the Conference

What was the best thing about attending the conference?



Out of the 115 completed evaluation forms, 83% responded to the question 'What was the best thing about attending the conference?'

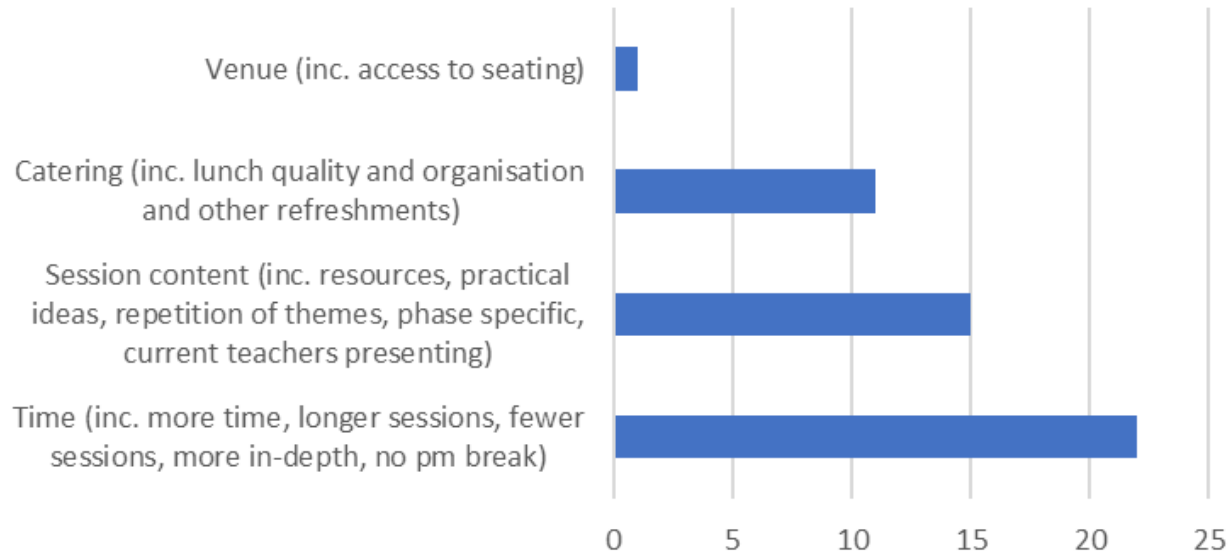
In order to analyse these responses effectively, they have been grouped into six categories (some responses covered more than one category).

The chance to network and meet other teaching assistants (39) and the variety and quality of workshops/specialist input (31) were identified most frequently as positive outcomes of attending the conference, while the opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge (27) was the third most common response.

"Informed presenters sharing great knowledge and ideas"

Areas for Improvement

What would have made the conference more effective?



Out of the 115 completed evaluation forms, 37% responded to the question 'What would have made the conference more effective?'. In order to analyse these responses effectively, they have been grouped into four categories.

The main area for improvement identified by respondents was related to time (22) and this was predominantly around the length and number of sessions. For future conferences, considerations will be made regarding session length and programme organisation.

The second most common response related to session content (15). For future conferences, any possible overlaps in content will be addressed. Catering (11) and venue issues (1) will also be considered in future planning.

Catering (11) and venue issues (1) will also be considered in future planning.

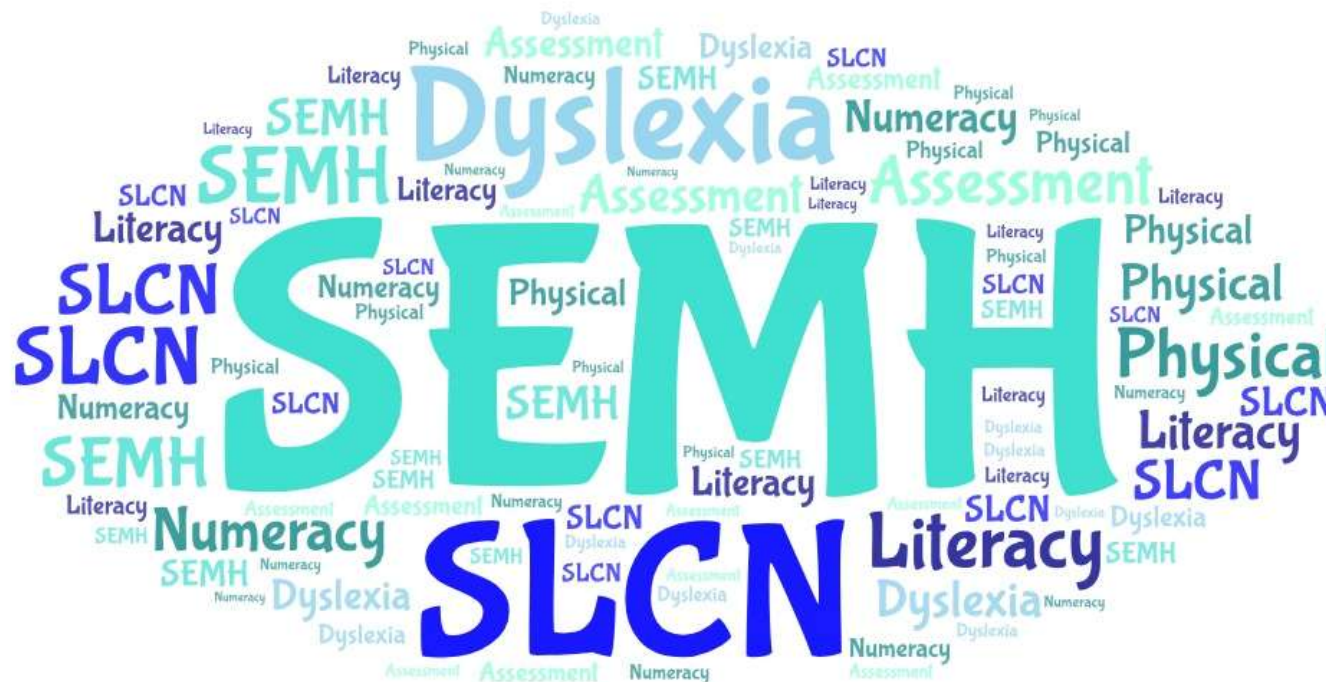
Catering (11) and venue issues (1) will also be considered in future planning.

"Lots of little nuggets of useful stuff"



Future Conference Themes and Training Needs

“Connecting with other school staff, sharing ideas and strategies”



“Lots of suggestions of ways to deal with individual pupil’s needs”



Acknowledgements and Thanks

The Suffolk TA Network's second annual conference would not have been possible without the support and funding provided by Suffolk County Council and the guidance and assistance of Claire Darwin.

Trinity Park Conference & Events Centre, Ipswich and their staff ensured the smooth running of the conference.

Huge appreciation and gratitude go to our amazing speakers from the following organisations:

- Suffolk County Council Communication and Interaction (C&I) Service
 - Suffolk County Council Psychology and Therapeutic Services
 - Autism & ADHD

and our brilliant keynote speaker, Dr Ivana Lessner Listiakova

I would also like to thank Lynne Percival from Westbourne Academy for her support on the day of the conference, Toni Wainwright from Suffolk County Council for her help, support and collaboration before and during the conference and Sue Hubbard and the team at Suffolk CPD and Jackie Lower for their tireless work behind the scenes.

Finally, the biggest thank you goes to all the amazing teaching assistants who attended the conference, and those who were unable to attend, and the schools that believe in the TA profession and the importance of TA CPD.

“Listening to all the fantastic knowledge, ideas and resources that we can use”