

Succession Planning in the Regions

June 2012



Introduction

The Succession Planning initiative, launched in 2010 as part of the DCS provision which transferred to the Virtual Staff College in 2011, is now entering its third year. Over 1,000 senior and middle leaders in Children's Services have participated in the core regional programmes and many more have attended 'masterclasses' or 'learning events'. As the regional programmes have become established, they have also become more innovative. All of the regions are offering training as coaches or mentors and some are now providing opportunities to develop the skills needed for peer challenge or action learning sets. The Succession Planning Grant (SPG) is also supporting a programme of transformation projects, which offer a chance for aspiring leaders to tackle some of the challenges that are currently facing local authorities.

This booklet records the progress that has been made over the last 2 years and describes the current offer in each of the regions. The range and variety of activity is impressive, as are the comments by many of the participants about the value of what they have experienced.

The Succession Planning Grant finishes in April 2013, which leaves the sector with a big challenge. Should the programme be maintained, even though the funding provided by the DfE will no longer be available? How important is it to continue the programme of leadership development for senior and middle leaders? All of the regions are being asked to develop sustainability strategies over the coming months, and the information in this booklet provides a background to the debate that needs to accompany this work.



The North East

The key objective of the North East Succession Planning Programme (NESPP) is to improve outcomes for children and young people in the region through the development of a pool of talented leadership and through the encouragement and development of aspiring leaders within the region. We are working hard to create strong and coherent links between NESPP and the regional Children's Improvement Board (CIB), as the other major development within the region with the same objective. This has led to a regional agreement to synchronise governance and planning arrangements across the two programmes.

The NESPP programme has three core activities:

1. **A 'step on/step off' leadership development programme.** This can lead to Post Graduate Certificates in leadership and/or coaching. There are four modules to the programme:
 - Coaching,
 - Strategic Commissioning,
 - Performance Improvement, and
 - Peer Mentoring and Challenge.

Each module is available for up to 34 participants (136 in total). Some may take all four modules while others may decide to do only a selection. Each participant undertakes a 360 degree assessment and on the basis of that is offered up to three individual coaching sessions. Those who go to the Post Graduate Certificate in Leadership will, as part of the programme, undertake a targeted and transformational project within a local authority or across the region.

"This programme has given me confidence in my ability to lead within an ever changing environment."

2. **Transformational Projects.** These may either be projects which the region has identified and are linked to the regional priorities in the regional CIB Delivery Plan or projects arising from LA self-assessments or Peer Challenge/Review findings. To identify the regional project areas, meetings are being held jointly between the regional CIB Programme Manager, the Regional Succession Planning Lead and the DCS(s) identified in the Plan as the sponsor for each of the CIB priorities. Those involved in these Projects may be participants on the NESPP or may be others who can bring knowledge to the area of work and at the same time develop their own leadership capability.
3. **Master Classes and Leadership Events.** These take the form of leadership events catering for up to 100 participants. Again the main focus of these events is the priority areas within the CIB regional plan. So far there has been one large event on the Munro Report. The next event is a smaller Master Class on Developing the Market and Strategic Commissioning. Another four are presently in planning.

In addition to these work streams there is on-going work to support and develop participants from last year's cohort, some of whom have already contributed to the first of the 2012 modules. The particular focus on the use of Action Learning Sets within the NESPP/CIB programme will enable those who have been through the programme to take the role of facilitators. Work is also on-going to develop the role of the regional Strategic Workforce Leads Group as part of the drive to ensure sustainability.

The North West

In the North West, we have built the current programme around the regional workforce audit (December 2011) and the independent evaluation and feedback from the first two cohorts of the Aspirant Leaders Programme (ALPs).

The programme continues to take account of the on-going changes in children's services in NW and the leadership challenges these have created, along with feedback on regional needs from the regional strategic workforce group. It is a programme which is regionally developed and is strongly owned by the Directors of Children's Services who also contribute to the delivery and governance of the ALPs programme.

Our leadership activity comprises 7 work streams. These are:

- The ALPs Leadership Development Programme of 8 core and elective sessions (Cohort 3 nearing completion and Cohort 4 commencing September 2012)
- Access to accredited mentors (3 sessions) and the opportunity to become an accredited mentor. This aspect is jointly delivered with North West Employers.
- A Programme of Action Learning Sets as part of the ALPs core programme
- A series of Transformation Projects which for 2012/13 closely link to emerging sector led activity in the NW to ensure appropriate synergy with sector led improvement
- The accreditation of the ALPs programme, for individual aspirants, in partnership with Cumbria University.
- A Step-up to leadership programme for 45 first line managers preparing to move to a T3 or equivalent post
- Development and piloting of Leadership Induction

standards and an outline induction programme for new senior leaders, in collaboration with the NW Strategic Workforce leads

- A Masterclass programme, for all ALPs cohorts led by aspirants themselves on common themes arising from 360 evaluations and from evaluation of the ALPs programme. Recent topics include Strategic Financial Management, Building Resilience and Performance Management.

Over 90 aspirant leaders have already completed the ALPs programme and a further two cohorts are planned involving a further 90 Tier 2/3 leaders from a wide range of Children's Trust agencies, including the voluntary and community sector. In addition, 48 first line managers are already signed up for the Step-up to leadership programme and a further cohort is planned for Spring 2013. More than 30 NW senior leaders contribute to the programme and over 65 wider stakeholders are involved.

Directors of Children's Services nominate relevant managers to the ALPs and Step-up programmes and there is an expectation that the programme will link with the participant's on-going supervision, learning and development.



Yorkshire and Humber

A particular feature of the programme in Yorkshire and Humber is the notion of Regional Associates. This is a team of 15 DCS nominees, (tier 2 and tier 3), the members of which work in small sub-groups to support the design and delivery of a particular work stream. This model helps to make sure that the programme is locally owned and brings direct and current leadership experience to the design and delivery of the regional offer. It is also a key element of the region's plans for sustainability. As work streams are repeated, new associates are identified to increase the range of talent development in the region

The 2012/13 programme has been mapped against emerging sector led activity in the region and provides:

- On-going support for participants on the 2011 Senior leaders programme
- A Senior Leaders programme (4 day accredited learning programme for tier 2 managers)
- An Aspirant Leaders programme (4 day learning programme exposing middle managers to leadership constructs)
- Accredited coaching (5 day, Level 7 Coaching programme, for senior managers, designed to help improve individual coaching skills and provide a pool of ambassadors to promote a coaching culture in organisations)
- Coaching skills for managers (2 day programme designed to help managers develop and practice coaching skills)
- Action Learning Sets for managers (2 day programme to help managers develop and practice the skills of leading action learning sets)
- Placements (Up to 40 placements of between 2-3 days for managers to address knowledge or skills gaps)
- Workshops: a series of workshops addressing topics identified by DCSs as having a regional relevance

- Projects: a series of projects addressing development needs in local authorities, undertaken by senior managers from across the region working in small peer challenge teams
- Local leadership activity: 3 days of support for each local authority, customised to meet leadership needs within /across children's services in that local authority area.

Over 120 senior managers are engaged in current activity (a further 65 participated in the 2011 leadership programme) and by March 2012 (following a second phase of activity), we will have engaged, in total, nearly 400 managers and senior managers from across the region.

"I expected to be stretched as part of this process and day one and beyond has done just that, I really appreciate the broader perspective on the programme with the mixture of approaches that you have provided."

DCSs recruit and select for work streams at a local level, locking selection into more general supervision and appraisal activity. The work stream in greatest demand is the Aspirant Leaders programme.

We are about to launch phase 2 of the leadership programme, with an offer informed by levels of take up on phase 1, but with the flexibility to respond to market demand for activity.

External evaluation will provide an objective analysis of the impact of succession planning activities in the region. An extensive internal evaluation of the 2011 leadership programme, which was timed to enable a reflection on the impact of the activities, indicated high levels of satisfaction with the provision from a number of perspectives:

"This is the best programme I have been on, I have been given a golden opportunity to develop and seeing the holistic picture has reminded me of my strengths but will sharpen my focus on other areas."

Feedback on the 2012/13 programme is also positive, particularly for programmes that are being run for the second time, with the senior leaders programme showing a 99% positive response from participants.

Importantly, the DCS confirm the views of the participants. This is a sample of the comments they have made to us.

Participants are... 'Keen...geed up'...'showing an understanding of and interest in systems wide leadership'...'I have managers who are able to see the bigger picture'...'I am now seeing people who can grab the agenda and run with it'...'they are more confident and outward looking'.



The East of England

The programme in the East of England is regionally developed and strongly owned by the Directors of Children's Services. It is organised around 10 workstreams:

- On-going support for participants on the 2011 Senior leaders programme
- Senior Leaders programme (5 day accredited learning programme for tier 2 managers)
- Aspirant Leaders programme (3 day learning programme for middle managers)
- Coaching skills for managers (3 day programme designed to help managers develop and practice coaching skills)
- Action Learning Sets for managers (2 day programme designed to help managers develop and practice the skills of leading action learning sets)
- Talent Management programme (for those on the Senior Leaders Programme and identified by their DCS sponsors as having the potential for rapid promotion).
- Placements (3 day placements for managers to address knowledge or skills gaps)
- A series of topical workshops addressing the regional priorities
- Projects (addressing development needs in local authorities, undertaken by senior managers from across the region working in small peer challenge teams)
- Local leadership activity. 2 days of support for each local authority, customised to meet leadership needs within and across children's services in that local authority area.

"I feel more empowered... stimulating... useful constructs... the programme gave me 'me' time... more confident... it has given me a real insight... Made me reflect on my value base... I benefitted from working with colleagues..."

Over 150 senior managers are engaged in current activity and by March 2012, following a second phase of activity, we will have engaged, in total, nearly 500 managers and senior managers from across the region.

The work stream which has greatest synergy with the sector led improvement agenda is 'projects'. Activities for this work stream will be identified as a result of needs emerging from a regional self -assessment process undertaken by each of the 11 local authorities in the region.

Internal evaluation of the 2010 leadership programme indicated that participants are more than satisfied.

"engaging and well written content... well-paced... super discussions... thoroughly stimulating... thought provoking...superb inputs... inspiring... helpful and stimulating... good balance of theory and practice... a safe environment."



The East Midlands

In the East Midlands the regional succession planning activity has been integrated with sector led improvement work to create a number of elements that build leadership capacity.

The flagship activity is the ALICSE programme – Advanced Leadership in an Integrated Children’s Service Environment. We are currently recruiting to our sixth cohort, by which time we will have supported the leadership development of almost 250 participants who are looking to develop leadership within a more integrated ‘partnership’ world. The programme starts from a personalised learning plan underpinned by diagnostics, and blends keynote inputs and work-based activity that support change management or service transformation. It leads directly to an accredited outcome with one of five universities in the region. The DCSs cherish their involvement in the programme and support their local participants to contribute to local improvement activity.

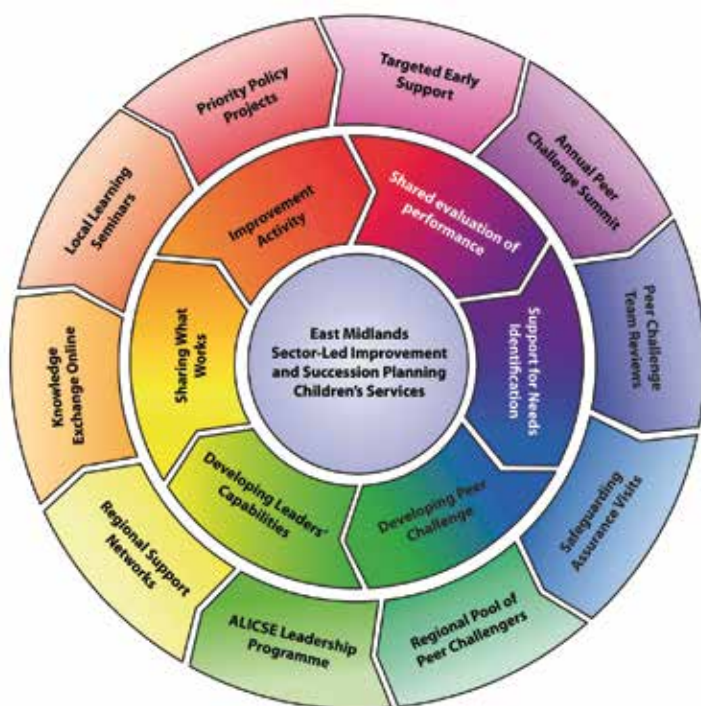
We are currently developing our regional pool of peer challengers to contribute to our scheme of peer challenge team reviews and safeguarding assurance visits. This usually engages a more senior cohort than the ALICSE programme, who are provided with training and preparation for the regional scheme. This includes a particular emphasis upon leadership behaviours for peer challenge.

We also support a number of other activities that promote learning exchange, leadership development and service improvement at a variety of levels. These include:

- Local Learning Seminars that enable local authorities and partners to share their approach to specific challenges and topical themes and exchange effective practice
- Regional support networks, some of which existed well before recent initiatives, which are being commissioned to undertake activities that directly contribute to identified regional priorities.
- Priority Policy Projects involve regional groups who are resourced to drive forward some of the most compelling improvement themes within the region.

A comprehensive evaluation is being undertaken to ensure that all activities maintain a strong sense of purpose and contribute to the intention for which they have been designed.

The strategic co-ordination and integration of succession planning with sector led improvement is bringing far greater coherence and sense of purpose to the things we choose to do on a joint regional basis. As our model and its various elements mature, so we look forward confidently to the growing importance and impact of this collaborative work.



The West Midlands

In the West Midlands, we have invested in high quality leadership development and coaching for our children's services senior aspirant leaders. The programme, called 'My Leadership Future', consists of a two day face-to-face learning event which is designed to help leaders diagnose their leadership capabilities and to identify their areas for development. Leadership models, the Resourceful Leader and DCS competency frameworks underpin this reflective programme of learning. Participants return 5 months later for the review event and completion of the programme. A menu of action learning, 360 appraisal, coaching support, DCS masterclasses, mentoring, work based research and targeted placements is then offered to delegates for them to develop their own improvement pathway.

There have been 143 participants involved in the programme to date and we are currently recruiting to the 2 cohorts taking place in the autumn. In addition, a number of master-classes, led by DCSs, have been provided for any senior or middle leader interested in the topic. Very successful master classes have been held on Sector Led Improvement and Children's Services Post Munro.

In the West Midlands we have a history of investing in coaching skills training and we already had a regional pool of accredited coaches. The peer coaching opportunities provided through the regional succession planning programme have further developed this demand for coaching training and, working with Hti, the region now offers an Enhanced 4 days Coaching Skills Programme (ECS). 6 cohorts of coaching training have been set-up with 90% already booked onto the first 2 cohorts taking place in the summer.

Altogether, over 200 aspirant senior leaders have been involved in the regional succession planning programme and DCSs in the region have been extremely positive about its impact. The regional workforce survey stressed the importance of preparing senior and middle leaders for the new world and one DCS commented as part of the regional evaluation that 'eight colleagues have

been through the programme now, and it has begun to change the way in which we do business as an authority'.

We received some good news this year from Wolverhampton University as two participants each gained a Post Graduate Certificate at Master's level in Educational Leadership and Management using their learning from MLF.

"I feel that the West Midlands programme with its reflective practitioner focus and interactive methodology is 'spot on' for this period of change. The greater DCS input is clearly beneficial too."

Our next challenge is to focus on sustainability post March 2013. We are looking at joining up our leadership development programme more closely with the recent Sector Led Improvement work and further embedding succession planning and talent development into our regional culture. We are developing a range of leadership development placements opportunities for senior leaders, which are being offered through the ADCS and RIEP regional infrastructure. Currently 2 opportunities for leadership development through placement have been created. One is for a School Improvement Mentor to support the new Head of School Improvement board at Stoke-on-Trent Council and another is for a mentor to work with Social Care Staff. These professional development opportunities are currently being advertised to all leaders across the region on a short-term basis.

Children's Services Succession Planning:

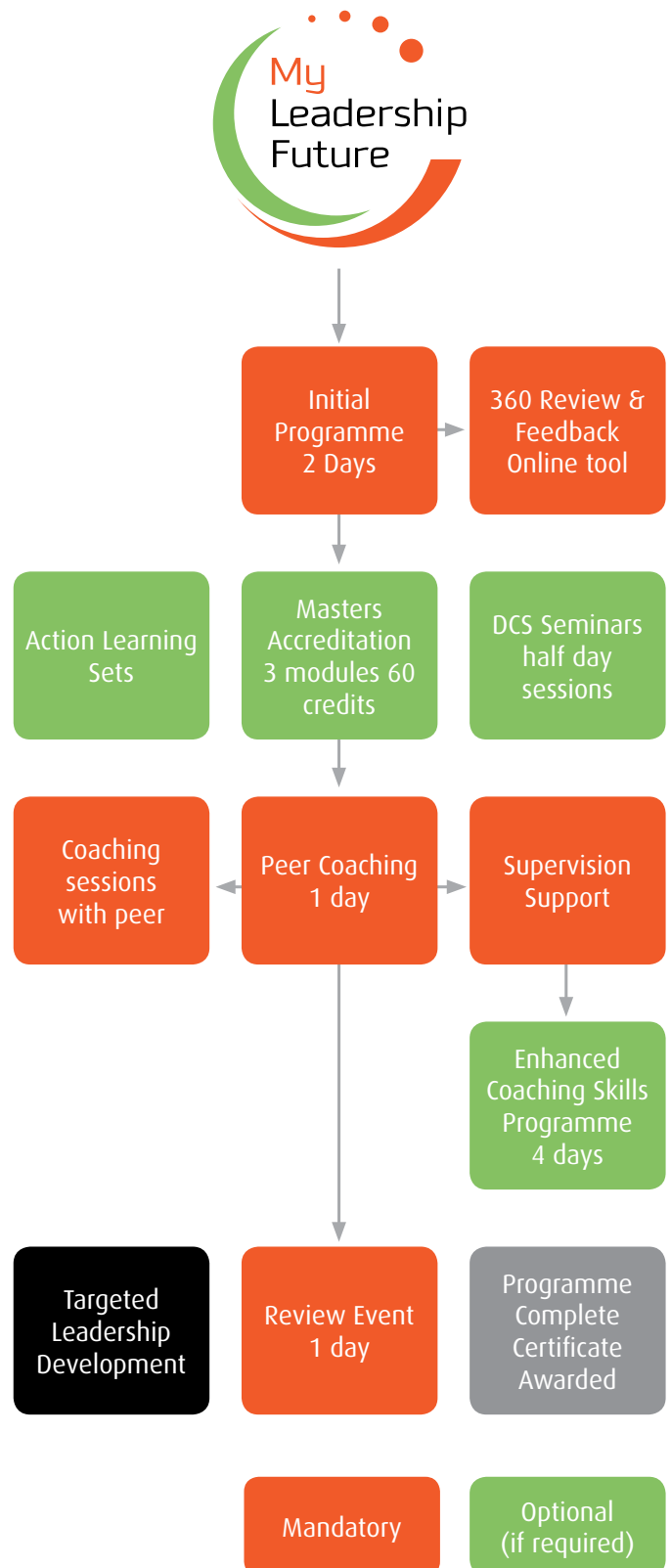
My Leadership Future is an exciting personal development programme supported by the regions Directors of Children's Services, aimed at any professional working with children and young people or for those who have combined roles in adult and children's services.

The programme is tailored to developing senior leaders who are eager to develop their leadership skills with a view to moving to a more senior post.

"Identifying & understanding my learning styles and focussing on the 8 core resourceful leader behaviours were the most useful elements of the initial programme."

"Discussion with the Director of Children's Services was excellent."

The 5 month programme (funded through the children's improvement board) will consist of the following elements as illustrated in the diagram.



Greater London

The Leaders for London succession programme, supported by the London Association of DCSs, sets out to:

- create a local leadership culture & professionalism for inspired and inspiring leadership linked to the Resourceful Leader and National Leadership Qualities Framework
- create a local leadership community to learn, share, resource and support each others' work
- optimise links with the wider DCS leadership initiative.

The design features that have informed the development of the programme are that it:

- is self-managed and self-directed
- offers a blend of different learning experiences to accommodate a range of preferred learning style among participants
- has been co-designed with participants
- challenges participants to reflect upon their leadership and development needs.

Central to the design of the programme is the belief that it is impossible to separate out the act of leadership from the person who is the leader and it is designed to balance the 'doing' and the 'being' of leadership. This is reflected in its use of conversation-based learning as a core tool and the 2 themes around which the programme has been constructed:

Theme 1 focuses on Leading from the Inside Out and covers: Leading self; Leading others; Leading systems.

Theme 2 focuses on Leading in Complex and Corporate Contexts and covers: Leading in political and corporate contexts; Integrated service delivery; Partnership working and community cohesion.

"This has been one of the most useful CDP experiences of my career to date. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to participate and to learn so much about my own leadership style and preferences."

Each participant undertakes a detailed self-assessment, including psychometrics and a 3600 evaluation based upon the Resourceful Leader, which forms the basis of their individual development plan which will shape their learning journey through the programme.

They are then expected to attend 6 group coaching sets each of which focuses on an element from within the 2 main themes. A programme of optional DCS and/or subject expert-led 'master classes' address key issues and challenges in a changing context for children's services leaders. Topics have included safeguarding, the corporate and political context, the changing landscape for schools and school leadership and new business models.

Whole community learning events offer a residential experience and provide an opportunity for participants to share their learning journey with other colleagues from their cohort and build networks with colleagues from other cohorts. Speakers with a national profile have been commissioned to strengthen participants' understanding of some of the key concepts that underpin the wider DCS provision such as adaptive leadership, wicked issues, public value, and leading for learning.

Programme participants have an opportunity to participate in a range of large-scale 'transformation projects' designed to address some of the most significant challenges that affect LAs across London.

Examples of projects initiated so far include:

- Tri-Borough Project - to explore learning and potential benefits from cross borough working
- VCS peer review - cross regional promotion of peer review in the Voluntary sector
- Youth transformation - an exploration of new models of youth service provision
- School Improvement model - a review of models of traded, outsourced and mutuals for delivery of school improvement
- PRU academies - to investigate the potential of PRUs becoming academies.

More recently the programme has begun to consider how best to build capacity to embed and sustain talent management and succession planning across the region. An important element of this has been to offer participants an opportunity to train as coaches in the expectation that they will be able to contribute to future leadership development initiatives.

“I just wanted to say how brilliant the first two days of the coaching training were, just over 2 weeks ago. I really enjoyed the 2 days and got so much from it, which I have been able to put to good use back in the work environment. I am so looking forward to the next session on 27th Feb. Many thanks for organising the training.”

To date the programme has supported in excess of 130 participants and has trained 26 coaches. Representation is from across the children’s services sector with a particularly encouraging feature being the engagement from the voluntary and community sector and health.

Evaluations from the each of the key elements of the programme have been very positive and soft intelligence from individual DCSs and ALDCs suggests significant impact in LAs where a critical mass of participants have engaged with the programme.

Work is currently underway to secure the legacy of the programme by building further capacity to sustain key element of the Leaders for London offer and by strengthening further the alignment between succession planning and sector-led improvement.



The South East

The South East programme for Succession Planning and Leadership Development in Children's services has been developed by Local Authorities and their partners across the region to engage support and develop the right senior leaders with the right skills and experiences for key leadership positions. It is strongly supported by DCSs and other senior leaders, many of whom contribute directly to the leadership programme.

The approach is highly personalised and self-directed. Participants undertake a 360 evaluation, based on the Resourceful Leader, to create their learning development plan. They are assisted in this by an individual mentor/coach. Other core elements of the programme are participation in an action learning set and attendance at an open forum event at which delegates share examples of interesting and emerging practice.

"I'm pleased I signed up for the course. I've found it illuminating and it has enabled me to consolidate and crystallize some of my own thinking. I will be disseminating ideas and useful thoughts to the managers that I am responsible for."

Participants can also select from optional elements depending upon their particular development needs, career aspirations and diary pressures. These include:

- Mentor/coach training
- Work shadowing
- Action Learning Set facilitator training.

A comprehensive programme of seminars and workshops provide an opportunity for participants to gain insights from senior leaders, speakers of national and international repute and their regional colleagues about some of the key issues and challenges that face children's services leaders in a rapidly changing context. These are always very well attended and evaluations invariably very positive. Examples include:

- Big society and new futures;
- Strategic leadership in the political and corporate environment;
- Commissioning and decommissioning;
- Skills for leadership with integrity/principled Leadership ;
- Data, performance management and development;
- Crisis Leadership;
- Enterprise and entrepreneurialism;
- Personal resilience;
- Adaptive Leadership and Wicked Issues.

To date over 150 participants have engaged with the programme across 3 cohorts. They are drawn from every local authority in the region.

"Best CPD programme of my professional career – totally hits the spot."

The region is offering a small number of internships for delegates within 12-18 months of applying for an assistant director or equivalent role. Internees will benefit from:

- short sharp exposure to the role of the DCS/AD
- joint pieces of work with an agreed mentor
- a delegated task
- pre and post internship development sessions, to include CV preparation and mock interviews
- participation in University Business management and/or Institute of Directors course.

Evaluations throughout have been positive.

The South West

The succession planning initiative in the South West set out to:

- identify high potential 2nd and 3rd tier children's services managers within the South West region and help them gain the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies to succeed in senior leadership positions
- provide a pool of talent for future Director of Children's Services roles.

The initiative is strongly supported by DCSs and other senior leaders in the region, many of whom contribute directly to the leadership programme.

A key element of the programme has been the development of a sophisticated 360 evaluation tool that has a clear line of sight to the Resourceful Leader and National Leadership Qualities Framework. The tool is also 'levelled' so that, in addition to identifying their areas of strength and relative weakness, participants gain a sense of the distance still to travel before they are ready to step up to a more senior role. Having completed the evaluation, participants are supported to develop an individual development plan, closely tailored to their distinctive needs and learning style. Every effort is made to brief participants' line managers about the programme so that they can support their colleagues on their learning journey. The other core element of the programme is participation in an action learning set.

Participants can also select from optional elements depending upon their particular development needs, career aspirations and diary pressures. These include:

- Support from a mentor/coach – a number of DCSs and 2nd tier staff have been invited to receive coaching training in the expectation that they will then provide coaching support to one or more participant,
- A placement and work shadowing programme
- A comprehensive programme of seminars and workshops that address both technical and leadership aspects of the role.

From the outset, a priority for the region has been to build capacity to deliver key elements of the programme from within its own resources. To this end, participants have been given the opportunity to receive training in coaching and mentoring and action learning set facilitation.

"Felt supported at my current level of understanding and knowledge then moved this on significantly."

Programme participants have an opportunity to participate in a range of large-scale 'transformation projects', focused on key challenges affecting LAs across the region. Each project is sponsored by a DCS and the region has commissioned additional capacity to provide support and challenge for each of the project teams. To date there have been 3 transformation projects, each of which address key challenges faced by children's services leaders:

- Preparing the South West for Sector Lead Improvement
- Developing and leading children's services within a trading environment
- Assessing the capability, capacity and enthusiasm of real local voluntary and community organisations to participate in the Big Society model of service delivery.

To date 109 participants have engaged with the programme across 2 cohorts. 20 DCSs/2nd tier leaders have trained as coaches.

The focus for the rest of the year is to extend engagement with the initiative through a residential event for 2nd tier and equivalent leaders focusing on adaptive leadership and public value and build a sustainable legacy.

Contacts

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