

A National Continuing Professional Development Strategy

for EDUCATION and CHILDREN'S SERVICES
MANAGERS in WALES

Foreword

This strategy has been produced by a multi-agency group on behalf of Virtual Staff College Cymru and represents a serious commitment by all supporting agencies to ensure that senior managers in the field of education and children's services provide high quality leadership and strategic direction for the services for which they have responsibility.

Such a commitment reflects the need for both CPD and succession planning and builds on the other opportunities which are currently provided through VSC Cymru.

The importance of the CPD strategy cannot be underestimated and I commend it to you.

Mike Keating
Chair Virtual Staff College Cymru

Acknowledgement

This document draws heavily upon the work of the Virtual Staff College in Scotland and its publication 'A National Professional Development Strategy'. Our thanks go to our colleagues in Scotland for allowing us to build on their efforts.

Introduction

The planning, management and delivery of a national system of education and other services for children is an extraordinarily demanding and complex task. The role of local authorities in Wales is critical to the success of that task. Increasingly in Wales, Local Authorities are required to discharge their statutory duties with regard to the commitments made clear in “Children and Young People: Rights to Action”.


“We have set out our ambition for all children in Wales. We are determined that everyone should be able to reach his or her potential. We are passionately committed to delivering entitlements to children and young people.”

Jane Hutt, Minister for Health & Social Services and Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning; Children & Young People : Rights to Action 2004.

The Welsh Assembly Government is ambitious for Wales to have not only a world class education service but, increasingly, to foster new collaborative arrangements in order to improve outcomes for children. It has placed considerable responsibility on local government to achieve those goals in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government and with all other stakeholders.

Moreover, the nature of the task is continually changing as society itself evolves. More and more will be required from service leaders of the future and the consequences of failure will be greater. The system will need to be robust, sensitive and, above all, have the capacity to encourage change and improvement while itself being capable of initiating or responding to change. The need for support is imperative as the challenges increase.

The link between outcomes for children and the quality of management and leadership in local authorities has never been made more explicit. The inspection and public reporting of the performance of Local Authorities in Wales is now well established and the analysis of that performance is focused on the impact which each authority has made in delivering national and local priorities for education and children’s services. Future inspections will focus even more clearly on outcomes and impact on children and families, staff and communities and, most importantly, the authority’s capacity to improve.



Increasing emphasis is being placed on the provision of coherent and coordinated services. In several Councils this is leading to the creation of integrated children's services departments which are combining major elements of council provision under a single chief officer. Even where these structural changes are not taking place the demands of partnership working – as set out in “Children and Young People : Rights To Action” – require these to be addressed in other ways.

Local authorities in Wales have different levels of capacity to support and develop senior staff. The implementation of this CPD strategy will support effective succession planning and, by improving access and consistency across local authorities, benefit the individual, the organisation and the service as a whole, with a subsequent positive impact on staff morale and professional confidence.

In recent years there has been welcome investment in the professional review and development of staff in schools and other settings. It is important that equivalent attention is paid to those who lead and manage education and children's services in Local Authorities.

Finally, it is becoming increasingly apparent that preparation for senior management in the education and children's services is a critical factor for the next generation of senior and chief officers. The age profile of the current post-holders reveals that there will be a significant loss of experience to the management of the service over the next few years. Planning for succession is, therefore, a significant challenge facing most if not all Local Authorities in Wales.

A Coherent Strategy for Wales

Clearly, to be effective, any national strategy designed to address the development needs of leaders and managers within local authorities should have both theoretical coherence and practical continuity. To achieve this requires professional legitimacy combined with a practical base upon which to move forward. It will also require a standard for competent professionals to be agreed. This strategy is the basis on which such a “Standard” will be based.

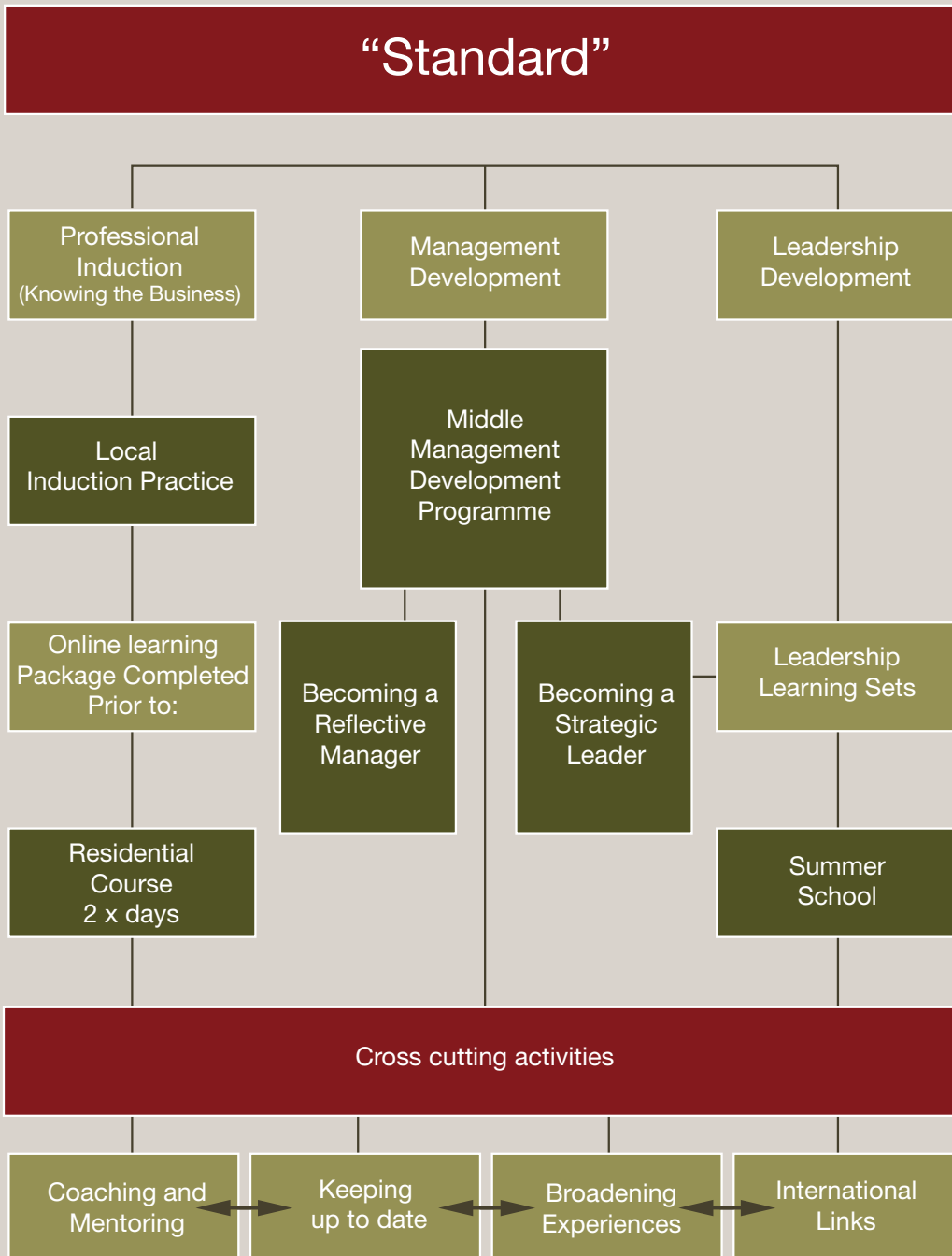
The following principles appear in most of the leading developmental theories and provide a structural basis for a systematic approach to CPD:

- 1) The central importance of both direct experience and observations of role modelling through a programme of personal and professional development including coaching and mentoring, exchanges and secondments, and international links.
- 2) The existence of periods of more intensive development in various aspects through residential courses, structured study programmes and learning sets.

It would, therefore, seem prudent to include these features in any national strategic approach to management and leadership for professionals working in Local Authorities. With this in mind, the strategy is based upon a number of key elements or units which collectively address these principles, as illustrated in the following diagram.

The diagram illustrates the central importance of a “Standard” for senior education and children’s services managers and the need for effective review and support systems to be in place in each managing Local Authority. This will ensure that regular and focused support is available to individuals to allow them to progress and improve as their careers develop. The diagram, then, displays three vital strands which will provide a range of developmental opportunities for managers to pursue in accordance with the needs they have identified through self review and in discussion with their employers. These strands have in common essential cross cutting elements which will accelerate development. These reflect the need to provide opportunities for intensive development, experience of alternative role models and up-to-date information and skills enhancement.

The CPD Strategy



Each of these key elements will now be explained.

Standard

The “Standard” for education and children’s services professionals will set out the key aspects of professionalism and expertise which the Welsh Assembly Government expects of those entrusted with the leadership and management of education and children’s services. It will serve as a template for existing and aspiring managers to determine strengths and identify development needs.

The “Standard” is underpinned by elements which permeate and support the work of senior managers in education and children’s services in Wales.

These elements are:

- Knowledge & Skills
- Personal Qualities and Values
- Professional Characteristics

Knowledge & Skills

This element identifies the essential knowledge and skills managers require to lead and manage effectively. Managers should actively engage in reflective learning to gain a greater understanding of the core management functions including:

- The Professional Role of the Manager
- Leadership and Management Principles
- Self Evaluation and Improvement

Personal Qualities and Values

This element focuses upon the personal characteristics, which individuals bring to the management role. They may be innate qualities and values and/or traits developed through personal experience.

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|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| • Commitment | • Perseverance | • Honesty |
| • Inspiration | • Creativity | • Respect |
| • Confidence | • Problem Solving | • Humour |
| • Integrity | • Empathy | • Self Awareness |
| • Consistency | • Reliability | • Impartiality |
| • Motivation | • Flexibility | • Value for Others |
| • Courage | • Resilience | |

Professional Characteristics

This element clarifies the diverse professional capabilities managers draw upon to undertake the core management functions effectively. Through their professional interactions, they should:

- apply and understand frameworks of accountability
- celebrate diversity and promote social inclusion and equal opportunities
- challenge and support
- communicate clear purpose and direction
- deal with ambiguity and change
- develop self and others
- value teams and work collaboratively

It is important that the “Standard” is subject to wide consultation and to regular review to ensure that it continues to offer a challenging vision for those who are seeking to improve the quality of their practice. VSC Cymru Link Officers from each of the 22 Local Authorities will continue to act as a sounding board for this purpose.

Experience shows that professional standards are used more extensively and become embedded in culture if they have clear means of assessment. VSC Cymru, through its Link Officer Group, will develop exemplars of assessing to the “Standard”.

It would also be possible to develop the option of formal accreditation to the “standard” through the University Partners group thus providing the possibility of a professional development qualification in the Leadership and Management of Education and Children’s Services.

Two important processes assist colleagues to identify their professional development needs and to record achievements. These are the Professional Development Analysis and the Professional Development Portfolio.

Professional Development Analysis

Effective performance management is an essential element for continuous professional development.

Recent research for VSC Cymru conducted by the University of Glamorgan concluded that professional development and review schemes for officers were in place in local authorities but that the consistency of implementation of these schemes varied considerably and Estyn has commented similarly. The notion of audit is a critical element of good performance management in order that an individual's targets are linked to those of the organisation. This way of working is not always as fully developed as might be expected. VSC Cymru is committed to supporting effective performance management and would recommend use of the Professional Development Analysis pack that has been produced by VSC Cymru supported by the Welsh Assembly Government. This resource pack guides users through a rigorous process of audit including 360° review and support.

VSC Cymru will continue to promote the development of sound performance management in local authorities. By using the "Standard" it is expected that the quality of the professional dialogue between staff and their line managers will be improved. The "Standard" will assist the dialogue by providing a common language and structure for purposeful review.

Professional Development Portfolio

One mark of a professional is the ability to maintain and enhance professional competences throughout a career. Many professions now require their members to maintain a portfolio as a condition of a membership of relevant professional bodies.

A professional development portfolio (PDP) is intended to support CPD activities and processes through the maintenance of a record of goals, growth and achievement over time. A key feature of a PDP is that individuals take personal responsibility for their own professional development. The PDP itself is the product of, and cannot be separated from, the reflection and evaluation processes required to produce it.

It is recognised that some councils will have corporate policies applying to the maintenance of a professional development portfolio. However, where these are absent, the VSC Cymru portfolio is available for use in Education and Children's Services Departments. The portfolio will complement existing performance management arrangements and will be a portable tool which can accompany colleagues throughout their career.

There are three strands supported by cross cutting activities recognised by VSC Cymru as contributing to the professional development of leaders and managers of education and children's services:

- Professional Induction (Knowing the Business)
- Management Development
- Leadership Development

Professional Induction Programme

(Knowing the Business)

At the Induction stage newly appointed staff are provided with opportunities to get to know the business of management in an education and children's services environment in Local Authority settings. This will include induction to their own Council's policy and structure but also opportunities to learn about the national context and the links between local and national government in education and children's services leadership and management.

At the heart of the professional induction programme will be a residential course preceded by completion of an e-learning package. This is intended to establish a foundation of knowledge about the context for the work of education and children's services management in Wales. It is meant to build on the induction practices already established in Local Authorities.

Management Development Programme

The Management Development Programme (MDP) consists of two distinct accredited modules designed to support career development at important milestones:

- Reflection: Becoming a Reflective Manager

The development of the reflective manager will be the priority. As individuals become more confident in their roles and the basic building blocks are in place it is important that opportunities are provided to allow colleagues to review and evaluate their work.

- Direction: Becoming a Strategic Leader

With experience and career progression comes the opportunity to influence strategic direction within an authority and the reflective manager will have opportunities to plan and prioritise the next stage of their development.

Leadership Development Programme

VSC Cymru will provide a range of opportunities to ensure that experienced leaders and managers can continue to develop skills and knowledge and also encounter alternative approaches and ideas which challenge the status quo.

The assumption is made that professionals will have accessed the opportunities made available by the MDP and are now ready for more intensive leadership development.

Learning sets will be created to allow focused, single theme, peer group interaction in contexts where the frank exchange of current challenges facing senior managers and the consideration of possible solutions is facilitated by skilled practitioners from the field. These opportunities will be characterised by openness and sharing.

An annual residential summer school will be offered to senior managers which will provide an opportunity to encounter alternative approaches to educational and children's services management and also draw on experience and expertise from outside of the public sector domain. The summer school will normally seek to cater for senior colleagues who have the potential to become chief officers and therefore contribute to succession planning.

The development and refreshment of those who are leading the service is equally important. Residential workshops for chief officers will be offered for small groups. These will be based on the principles of co-coaching and will provide opportunities for reflection, refreshment and re-focusing of professional practice.

Cross Cutting Activities

Each strand of the CPD strategy will be enriched by the opportunity to participate in a range of activities. These will include:

- Coaching and mentoring
- Keeping up to date
- Broadening experiences
- International Links

Coaching & Mentoring

A coaching and mentoring scheme will be administered by VSC Cymru for senior professionals commencing with chief officers. This voluntary scheme will offer opportunities for colleagues to mentor or be mentored by contemporaries working at a similar level either in local government or in other public services.

Keeping up to date

The pace of change in terms of policy development and legislation is rapid. The necessity for busy managers to keep in touch with local, national and global trends has never been more obvious.

Broadening Experiences

Senior officers will be offered exchanges and secondments in order to:

- observe and/or experience management and leadership in other contexts e.g. commercial, business, industry and the creative arts
- contrast and compare their experiences with those of colleagues in other Local Government settings

International Links

Senior officers will be able to observe and/or experience management and leadership in other countries.

Contrasting and comparing their experiences with those of colleagues in other countries will provide opportunities for reflection, evaluation and professional development.

Conclusion

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a sound and coherent basis for the systematic development of leaders and managers in educational and children's services.

The strategy will be monitored by the Virtual Staff College Cymru and the outcomes will be reported to the Welsh Assembly Government and the membership of ADEW on a regular basis.

In order to ensure that the strategy remains relevant to the needs of professionals working in education and children's services it will be regularly evaluated by ADEW members, focus groups including professionals working with children and young people and the link officers' network. Through this process the strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary.

