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# Leadership development programme for current and aspirant directors of children's services

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A scoping study report March 2009

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## Executive Summary

This scoping study was undertaken to provide the NCSL with an overview of some of the key issues likely to impact on their work in developing a leadership programme (LP) for serving and aspirant directors of children's services in England. The study incorporated a review of available literature to address specifically a number of areas, including:

- defining effective DCS leadership
- identifying key skills needed by DCSs
- assessing current DCS leadership development provision
- exploring current issues and challenges facing DCSs

It was intended that the study should generate proposals on what elements might usefully be incorporated by any emerging LP, as well as identifying areas requiring further investigation during this developmental phase. The following summary includes key findings and recommendations emerging from the work.

### Leadership in the DCS role

The study explored a number of models that might usefully be used to generate a definition of effective leadership in the DCS role, including 'charismatic'; democratic versus autocratic; transactional versus transformational; situational; and distributed. Each of these models is characterised by a different type of leadership style (eg supportive, directive, participative, charismatic, networker), each of which have some resonance with the likely demands on DCSs. It appears likely, therefore, that 'leadership' in the context of the DCS role will incorporate a number of these archetypes (most notably the 'charismatic' and 'transformational' models) in some form of 'hybrid' model.

The literature was found to identify a number of issues deemed likely to present particular challenges in relation to DCS leadership skills, including:

- knowledge gaps
- responding to evolving challenges
- service integration
- commissioning and pooling budgets
- concerns about securing next generation
- demands/scale of job

Similarly, reviews of staff perceptions indicate that – while there is understanding of the potential impact that more effective leadership can make on the delivery of children's services – there is scope for improvement in the leadership performance of existing DCSs. Having said this, effective leadership has been identified as crucial not only in Children's Services in the UK, but across public sector organisations throughout the world, and it is recognised that this can be delivered at all levels within organisations to address a range of common issues, notably silo management, atomisation of service delivery and failing services.

The DCS position is a relatively new one, and understanding of the particular challenges facing DCSs is only beginning to emerge. There are, however, a number of factors which combine to present DCSs with a unique set of challenges, all of which impact on the leadership style they adopt, including:

- the requirement for them to maintain a close working relationship with the lead member for children's services
- their direct accountability to the DCSF (in some cases for services delivered by services/agencies outside their own line management structures), allowing for the potential of radical intervention by them in cases where they deem performance to be unacceptable (as exemplified by recent developments in Haringey and Doncaster)
- the fact that Children's Services bring together services from two distinct sectors (each reflecting different professional priorities, practices and cultures), and commission work from a wide range of providers

The different challenges presented by these characteristics require DCSs to apply different leadership styles in different contexts, for example allowing staff to take greater responsibility for their own work, while at the same time keeping a close watch on their performance (especially in relation to outcomes for children), and being prepared to intervene when necessary. This means that the DCS will be required to exhibit a wide range of leadership characteristics and apply them in a multitude of roles. For example, a charismatic leadership style (incorporating character traits such as inspiration, courage, articulateness, strength/confidence and adaptability) will be required for developing and communicating a vision, working with the LMCS, and public relations. Likewise, directive leadership (ie strategic-thinking, communicative, ability to drive change, robust under pressure and decisive) will be appropriate in setting clear, measurable and achievable goals for service delivery and managing (under-)performance. More participative and supportive leadership styles (which are empowering, respectful, trusting, and sensitive) will be useful in building inter-disciplinary teams and incorporating the views of service users. Finally, a networking approach to leadership (with collaborative characteristics that inspire confidence) may be more appropriate in promoting (and, where necessary, directing) inter-agency working.

## **DCS skills requirement**

The report incorporates consideration of a range of skills which are likely to be required of DCSs to meet the requirements of these challenges, and in adopting a range of different leadership styles. The report proposes that the emerging DCS Leadership Development Programme incorporate the delivery of training to develop these skills, grouped under the following headings:

- Knowledge of the policy and political context (including a full understanding of children's rights, and safeguarding).
- Understanding of leadership models, styles, characteristics and responsibilities.
- Communication (including promoting awareness of children's issues, and dealing with the media).
- Strategic development (including commissioning).
- Supporting/developing staff (including effective challenge of individuals' practices).
- Knowledge management/performance management.
- Partnership working (including aligning/pooling budgets).

## **Leadership development**

Consideration is given in the report to a range of leadership development programmes and initiatives already in operation, providing an opportunity to both appreciate what other agencies are doing to increase the leadership skills set in their sector/setting and to consider which models most closely reflect the likely aspirations/needs/challenges faced by DCSs. The summary includes a number of initiatives and frameworks, all of which it is suggested offer potential for adaptation in the development of the DCS leadership development programme, including the following:

- ADCS: Virtual Staff College.
- IDeA: Academy for Executive Leadership.
- SCIE: Social Care Leadership Development Programme.
- MSC: National Occupational Standards for Management & Leadership.
- Leadership Centre for Local Government.
- Centre for Excellence in Leadership.

### **Key Recommendations**

The report acknowledges the possibility that, rather than develop a discrete DCS programme, it may be deemed more appropriate to commission different elements from a range of existing initiatives. Whatever approach is taken to commissioning, it is suggested that delivery be provided at national, regional and local levels, allowing for DCSs to engage with the programme in a manner most suited to their own learning style and circumstances. It is also suggested that access to the programme be afforded to professionals from outwith Children's Services and the local authority sector, thereby allowing for inter-disciplinary learning and cross-cultural exchange.

It is also suggested that consideration be given to the following issues:

- accreditation: whether or not/how the leadership development programme is to be accredited
- assessment: how participants' progress/attainment against the different elements of the framework (proposed in section 5.2) are to be assessed
- programme evaluation: a systematic approach to evaluating the impact of the programme – both on individuals' leadership capacity and on the effectiveness of services delivered under their leadership – needs to be designed and set in place at the outset of the programme

## Introduction

The aim of this report is to present the findings of a rapid literature review of the evidence base into what constitutes effective leadership by DCSs and the main challenges facing DCSs. In particular, the research aimed to establish:

- what effective DCS leadership looks like
- what leadership development provision is currently in place for DCSs
- the effectiveness of any such provision
- key skills needed by DCSs
- current issues and challenges facing DCSs
- professional training needs of DCSs
- ongoing support and developmental needs of DCSs
- succession planning issues and challenges
- the support and development needs of aspirant DCSs

The main focus of the study was a review of all existing literature, including research reports, government publications, and any other grey literature as appropriate together with information from any key datasets that exist for local authority/children's services workforce. It was intended that the study should include information on:

- the role and remit of the DCS, not only as a leader of children's services but also as a member of the local authority corporate team
- the required skills and qualities needed by DCSs and aspirant DCSs
- training and development needs and access to relevant training and development opportunities for DCSs
- needs for, and access to, mentoring and support opportunities for DCSs
- evidence of the impact of any existing leadership development provision
- professional development and career routes taken by DCSs and aspirant DCSs

It also considered the main challenges identified in previous research conducted by York Consulting on behalf of the DCSF, including:

- local perceptions of knowledge requirements for potential leaders of children's services
- whether current children's workforce development strategies focus on the needs of senior leaders
- the existence of succession planning strategies
- the ability to attract future leaders of children's services from non-local authority backgrounds

Finally it set out to assess the state of research on leadership in the sectors covered by the DCS remit, identifying key research gaps and suggestions for further research.

The challenges presented by the task were not inconsiderable. For example, reporting on the findings of a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature into leadership in SMEs, public and voluntary sectors, Thorpe et al observed that "the extent of empirically based knowledge of leadership in these sectors was very limited" (2007, p.8). This reflects the observation by Gordon & Yukl (2004, p.360) that "countless studies have been conducted over the past half century to determine why some leaders are more effective than others, but the answer is elusive and researchers are still attempting to answer the question".

Given that the role of DCS is relatively new, it was anticipated that there would only be a limited amount of literature relating specifically to this role, and this proved to be the case. However, there is a considerable amount of literature in the public realm, which was accessed utilising a robust search strategy (detailed in Annex 1). This approach resulted in the identification of a substantial but manageable amount of relevant references, allowing sufficient focus for the study to proceed. The content of the materials included in the review did not align seamlessly with the focus of the research questions as detailed above, so new headings were devised for the collation and reporting of the findings.

## Defining effective leadership

### Leadership models

The study of 'leadership' is not a new science, with various leadership theories having been devised as a means of describing or evaluating individual and organisational performance. Some of these models are described briefly here, with particular emphasis given to those which appear – on the basis of a rapid appraisal – to offer the most potential for informing decisions about the best way to promote effective leadership in the delivery of high quality children's services.

A traditional approach to analysing leadership emphasises the traits of the leader, and tends to rely on the 'heroic/charismatic' characterisation. A number of studies have identified the main leadership traits and skills of the charismatic leader, as illustrated by the following (adapted from Stogdill, 1974):

**Traits:** adaptable to situations; alert to social environment; ambitious and achievement-orientated; assertive; co-operative; decisive; dependable; dominant; energetic; persistent; self-confident; tolerant of stress; and willing to assume responsibility.

**Skills:** clever; conceptually skilled; creative; diplomatic and tactful; fluent in speaking; knowledgeable; organised; persuasive; socially skilled.

An alternative perspective is to consider the behavioural approach of leaders, as exemplified by the Continuum of Leadership Behaviour (Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1958) which distinguishes between: managers who adopt a democratic approach to decision-making, allowing a substantial degree of freedom for subordinates to make decisions; and those who operate in an autocratic manner, making and communicating decisions, expecting their subordinates to implement them. Crucially, while the more subordinate-centred style was found to generate greater degrees of satisfaction among the workforce, it did not necessarily tally with enhanced performance.

There has been an increasing emphasis on the differences between transactional and transformational leadership in much of the literature relating to public sector service delivery. In this distinction, transactional leadership relies on "the concept of exchange between leaders and followers. The leaders provide followers with resources and rewards in exchange for motivation, productivity, and effective task accomplishment" (Nahavandi, 2006, p.240). This model can be further sub-divided by the particular approaches to management, such as management-by-exception (ie when the leader arranges to monitor and correct follower performance) or contingent reward (where the leader rewards followers who achieve the objectives or execute the tasks as required). Of particular relevance to public sector/service organisations<sup>1</sup>, transformational leadership is a "relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (Burns, 1978, p.4). This approach is so called as it is perceived as being capable of transforming followers' self interest "for the good of the group, organisation or society, while also enhancing followers' expectations and abilities, and their willingness to take risks" (Bass & Avolio, 1993, p.7). Transformational leadership has been found to "correlate positively and strongly with measures of objective performance" (Bass et al, 1996, p.11).

An alternative perspective on leadership incorporates situational analysis, which recognises that different situations require different responses. For example, drawing from empirical research on chief executives' work, the Classification of Managerial Roles (Mintzberg, 1975) suggests that managers play ten fragmented roles in a 'high interruption environment' (ie where half of the activities last less than nine minutes), categorised under three headings:

- **interpersonal** (figurehead, leader, liaison)
- **information** (monitor, disseminator, spokesman)
- **decisional** (entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, negotiator)

<sup>1</sup> See details in the following section, *Public Sector Leadership*, which refers to work by Alimo-Metcalfe

Howell and Costley (2001) attempt to bring together considerations from each of these schools of thought, matching leader behaviour, traits/characteristics, follower characteristics, and the situation which demands their leadership. Their analysis results in the generation of a typology incorporating seven leader types, fit for various behavioural processes and situations:

1. **Supportive leaders** (those considerate, people oriented leaders).
2. **Directive leaders** (fit for repetitive or work spread between sites and for cultures that prefer status well defined).
3. **Participative leaders** (who, by careful listening to disparate voices, are able to craft an alliance).
4. **Reward and punishment leaders** (transactional).
5. **Charismatic (heroic) leaders.**
6. **Boundary spanning (network) leaders.**
7. **Leaders who build and forge social exchange** (also networkers).

The final two leadership types reflect the emerging concept of distributed leadership, which has been characterised (Wilkinson, 2007, p.1) as:

“a more subtle and less linear form of leadership (in which) the leadership function is shared or distributed amongst those with the ability and experience necessary to ensure the function is carried out to the benefit of the wider organisation”

In the distributed model, leadership activity is constructed from “the interaction of leaders, followers and their situation in the execution of particular leadership tasks” and leadership practice is seen as a “practice distributed over leaders, followers and situation” (including organisational structure and socio-cultural context) – as opposed to being “solely a function of an individual’s ability, skill, charisma and/or cognition” (Spillane et al, 2004, pp.10–11). The distributed perspective also allows for understanding of leadership practice to be based on “studies of practice that are context-sensitive and task-specific (thereby allowing for the organisation or setting to be viewed as) the most appropriate unit for thinking about the development of leadership expertise” (op cit, p.29). This view is reinforced by the assertion that organisations are “likely to be more effective when the leadership function is distributed or shared” (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 571). Similarly, Gronn (2008a, p.152) asserts that “by de-monopolising leadership and potentially increasing the sources and voices of influence in organisations beyond just one, distributed leadership has helped widen the span of employee and member participation”.

Recent literature (eg Gronn, 2008b; Chapman et al, 2008) has seen an increased focus on ‘hybrid’ models of leadership, recognising the ‘proliferation’ of scenarios in which practitioners apply different elements from a wide range of leadership models (including those summarised above), as appropriate to their context. Indeed, Chapman et al (op cit, p.12) assert that “context was found to be an overriding factor” in determining which leadership models are applied. A variation of this approach is one which attempts to develop an integrative leadership framework to explain the impact of leadership on subordinate and organizational performance, incorporating “multiple skills, traits, behaviours, leadership styles and situational variables in a single theoretical model” (Fernandez, 2003, p.4). Having tested the application of such a framework (in an educational performance context) Fernandez suggests that ‘sophisticated’ integrative frameworks should include reference to:

- a range of leadership behaviours (eg decision-making approaches, goal-setting and other strategic activities, intrinsic and extrinsic motivational tools, efforts to manage the organization’s culture, and to encourage entrepreneurial/innovative behaviour by subordinates)
- different types of power exercised by the leader

- the leader's impact on performance under varying conditions
- the impact of different combinations of power on organizational performance

It is also suggested that such a framework should include:

“... additional situational variables, including the level of support from subordinates, the degree of autonomy from external interference enjoyed by the leader, the degree to which the task is structured, the position power of the leader, the level of group cohesion, and the type of interdependence among work units” (op cit, p.33)

### **Practitioners' views of leadership**

An Institute of Management Studies (IMS) study of middle and senior managers from all sectors (Horne & Stedman Jones, 2001) identified a number of characteristics that participants felt leaders should ideally possess, including the following (the figures refer to the percentage of respondents who identified the characteristics as being important):

- inspiration (55 per cent)
- strategic thinking (41 per cent)
- forward-looking (36 per cent)
- fair-mindedness (23 per cent)
- courage (21 per cent)
- supportiveness (20 per cent)
- knowledge (19 per cent)

Of these characteristics, it was reported that only 11 per cent of respondents said that their leaders exhibited 'inspiration' in reality, whereas they felt that current leaders were more likely to be knowledgeable (39 per cent) and ambitious (38 per cent). The research also found that current leaders are “more vulnerable and exposed perhaps than ever before” (op cit, p.3), due to the perception that organisational demands overshoot the reasonable limits of individual performance. As a result, it concludes that successful leaders are “those who learn to share these challenges by empowering and trusting their teams” (op cit, p.3).

Building on the perceived need for leaders to be 'inspirational', further research (DTI, 2004) into the views of business leaders and their staff (or 'followers') quantified the most prevalent leadership characteristics among 'inspirational' leaders, including:

- strong communication – storytelling and listening
- clarity of vision and ability to share it with their people
- very strong focus on priorities
- regular use of reflective periods
- real confidence and trust in their teams
- respect for employees and customers
- commitment to developing people
- clear standards of ethics and integrity
- willingness to take risks

## Public sector leadership

A report on a study of public sector leadership across the OECD countries (OECD, 2001, p.12) defines the public sector leadership 'problem' as:

“how to develop more public officials who can draw others into a strong spirit of public service geared to the needs of contemporary society, and thereby make their services to government and to citizens more effective”

Crucially, this characterisation acknowledges that public sector leaders need to secure commitment from their staff (as opposed to their compliance) and allows for leadership development to focus not only on those currently in 'leader' roles, as it recognises that “officials at all levels exert influence on others” (op cit, p.3). The report further concludes that the approach to leadership development needs to be “based on a clear diagnosis of the challenges being faced” (op cit, p.29), citing silo-management, atomisation of service delivery and 'failing' services among a range of scenarios likely to require different leadership solutions.

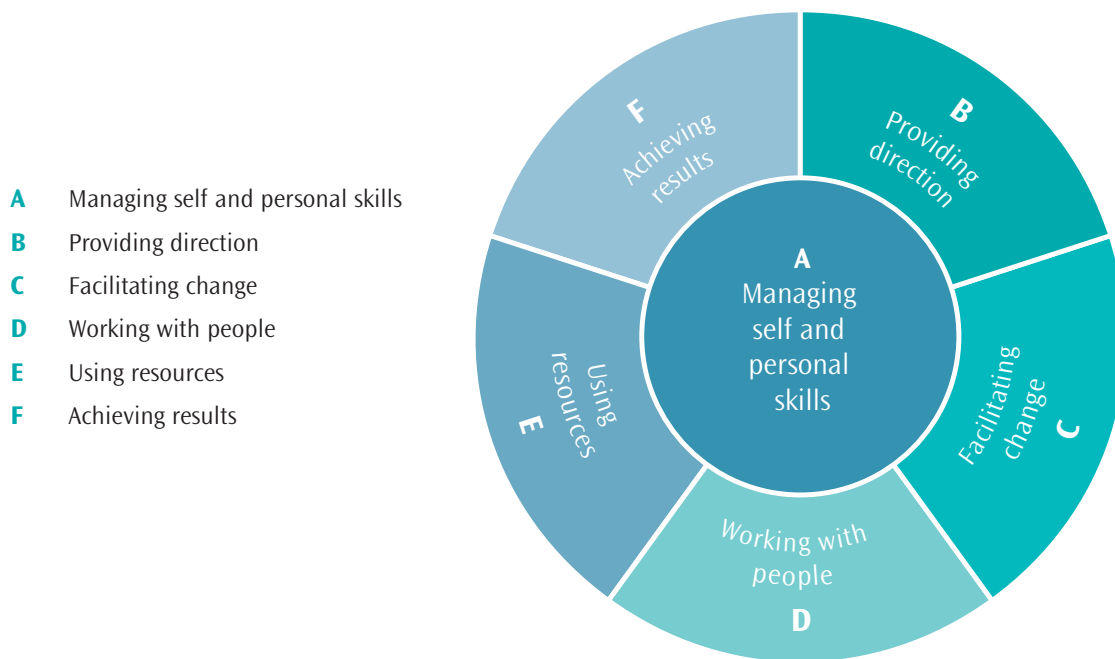
Recognising the importance of the emerging leadership agenda in the public sector, the Public Finance journal issued a leadership development supplement in June 2004. This included the assertion that public sector leadership is “about teamwork”, emphasising the increasing requirement for staff in local authorities, the health service, education and the civil service to work with each other, and suggesting that “it makes sense to foster the ability to work across departmental and disciplinary boundaries” (Pickard, 2004, p.4). Pickard's analysis also highlights the reality that leadership can be expressed by staff at all levels within the public sector, and in a wide variety of settings, emphasising the relevance of the distributed leadership model.

Asserting that “good leadership is too scarce in the public sector” and that the demands on leadership are growing, the report of a Government research study into public sector leadership (PIU, 2001) concluded that improving leadership “must be a priority” for the public sector. This reflected the findings of LGMB-sponsored research (Alimo-Metcalf, 1998), which found that the leadership competencies judged to be most important for management effectiveness (and which – coincidentally – were those which required most development) included developing others by coaching, appraisal, goal-setting, follow-up and empowerment (p.1). Additionally, this research identified – through a survey of local authority workers from across the country – the characteristics exhibited by effective (transformational) leaders in evidence in local government, including (p.31):

- providing support for staff's personal development
- charisma
- communicating clear vision and strategic plan
- empathetic
- empowering
- able to gain confidence of elected members and the public
- integrity
- intellectual capacity
- entrepreneurial (ie willing/able to take risks)

The Management Standards Centre (the Government-recognised standards setting body for the management and leadership areas) describes the key purpose of management and leadership as being to “... provide direction, gain commitment, facilitate change and achieve results through the efficient, creative and responsible deployment of people and other resources” (MSC, 2009, online).

The National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership (MSC, 2008) are presented under seven headings, as detailed below and summarised in the accompanying graphic:



A survey of middle and senior managers in the public sector conducted for the Chartered Institute of Management (CIM) found the concept of leadership to be a “complex and contested subject”, comprised of two discrete elements: a specific role in an organisational process; and a set of characteristics displayed by individuals (Charlesworth, et al, 2003, p.4). As with the IMS research, this survey identified the key components of the public sector leadership skills set – found, however, to be demonstrated in only 30% of organisations – as being:

- clarity of vision
- integrity
- sound judgement
- partnership working (both with politicians and across a diverse range of organisations)
- communication skills
- engaging employees with the vision
- creating an enabling culture

The Ministry of Defence (MoD, 2000) has identified the following nine essential features of leadership:

- inspiration
- empowerment
- personal strength and sensitivity
- recognition and support

- team building
- articulate vision and values
- innovative challenge
- examples
- decisiveness

The findings from the recent Local Government Workforce Survey (LGA, 2008a)<sup>3</sup> include information relating specifically to leadership, as summarised below:

- 92 per cent of authorities had taken action to develop their current and future leaders, both political and managerial
- 89 per cent of these authorities reported that their actions had been effective
- only 52 per cent of authorities reported having taken effective action to develop senior managers that reflect the diversity of their community/workforce; only 31% to develop political leaders likewise

A recent Cabinet Office policy paper on public service delivery characterises 'world class public services' as those which include (Cabinet Office, 2008, p.12):

- a focus on excellent outcomes
- personalised approaches
- fairness and equity
- good value for money

Further, it asserts that the delivery of high quality public services relies on citizen empowerment, strategic leadership (from central government) and a 'new professionalism', in which the workforce is energised and "innovation, consistency, continuous self-improvement and responsiveness are driven from within the public services themselves" (p.14). Excellent leadership and management are highlighted, in this context, as being central to the quality of public services. In particular, the need for services to "work more closely together, pooling resources, sharing experience, and enabling future leaders to learn from the experience of those in a range of services" (p.31) is emphasised.

Exploring one approach to translating this policy drive, it has been argued that public services are "distinctive because they are characterised by claims of rights of citizens to services that have been authorised and funded through some democratic process" (Coats & Passmore, 2008, p.4). Further, they assert that a 'public value' approach to leadership offers the potential to "insulate public services from the permanent revolution of structural change" as it enables (p.13):

- development of a respect for professional judgement as a characteristic to be cherished, but also to be challenged
- involvement of the public in setting service objectives (while recognising the risks associated with allowing those with the loudest voices to have the final say)
- assessment of the contestability of policies against their outcomes and the principles of accessibility/equity

In the latest guidance on how they intend to conduct the Comprehensive Area Assessment, Ofsted (2009, p.14) advises authorities that – as well as the quality of service provision and how well outcomes are being achieved – inspectors will "consider the quality of service leadership and management, ambition and prioritisation" in each local authority children's services across the country.

3 [www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/mar/12/childrens-directors-sharon-shoesmith](http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/mar/12/childrens-directors-sharon-shoesmith)

In considering its importance in the delivery of public services, Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe (2006, p.311) assert that “leadership is in no way the sole responsibility of one, or even a few, top managers, but rather collective engagement of individuals working at all levels and in every part of the organisation”. They assert (op cit, pp.311–12) that the demands for this sharing of responsibility is reinforced by the need for ‘connectivity’ and inclusion throughout the organisation, as:

“it connects individuals at various levels, stakeholders inside and outside the organisation, and it stresses the crucial importance of sculpting shared visions, networking, encouraging individuals to challenge the status quo, active involvement in exploring new approaches to ways of working, and the creation of a culture in which both individualism and shared purpose thrive”

The 2001 IMS study (see section 2.2, above) found that the majority (77 per cent) of the respondents (middle and senior managers) strongly endorsed a ‘relational’ model of leadership. Here, the primary task of leaders is described as being “to shape compelling organisational goals and unlock the potential of others to achieve them”; however, respondents also recognised that “strong, directive leadership, as identified in an ‘individual’ model was necessary in some circumstances” (Horne & Stedman, op cit, p.2).

In a previous review of the literature, Perren and Burgoyne (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of leadership competencies. This process drew together 1013 leadership abilities from the literature into 83 ‘nodes’, which they then grouped under 8 ‘meta-groups’, as summarised in the following table:

People abilities	Task abilities	Strategic thinking abilities
1 Manage and lead people	5 Manage information	8 Think strategically
2 Manage self	6 Manage resources	
3 Lead direction and culture	7 Manage activities and quality	
4 Manage relationships		

While the foregoing illustrate different ways of analysing leadership, in practice it is likely to be the case that different situations will require leaders to exhibit different traits and behaviours to address the challenges of their organisation/role, and that “the most effective leaders are able to use a range of styles in dealing with different situations” (PIU, 2001, p.21).

A further conceptualisation of leadership in the public sector (Chesterman & Horne, 2002, p.20) asserts that leadership is “a phenomenon conferred on groups and individuals by others. It is not a role that comes automatically from seniority, age or electoral mandate. It is not a role that individuals can assume for themselves. Leadership is not self-mandating”. Participants in the research that informed this work characterised leadership as “activity which mobilises adaptation”, and – of particular relevance here, as it challenges the need to focus on the leadership qualities of DCSs and other senior Children’s Services staff – as something defined by “collaborative endeavour” (op cit, p.20). Critically, Chesterman & Horne (op cit, p.20) assert that leadership:

“implies multi-directional motion rather than linear motion, adaptation rather than change, and influence through rather than on the environment. This presents a big challenge to the conventional assumptions about leadership embodied in much current policy, where the emphasis is on identifying individuals capable of carrying out demanding, predefined leadership roles”

## DCS Leadership

The approach to considering how best to characterise leadership in relation to the DCS's role was informed by input from two current directors, whose descriptions of the context within which they have to work made it possible to 'ground' the research. The following summarises some of the characteristics described by them, all of which combine to make this a unique role, with a similarly unique set of leadership challenges, all of which need to be taken into account when devising the DCS leadership development programme:

- a heavily regulated and front-line focused social care system
- an increasingly devolved schooling system, with each institution making semi- or completely autonomous decisions
- heading up the biggest service in the local authority
- open to the public gaze, subject to “media attack” at all levels and in all parts of the service, and – consequently – prone to being treated as a “political football”
- re-connecting disparate services that were previously separated (eg education, health, social care), at the same time disaggregating services (eg social care and health), with the danger of creating new ‘silos’

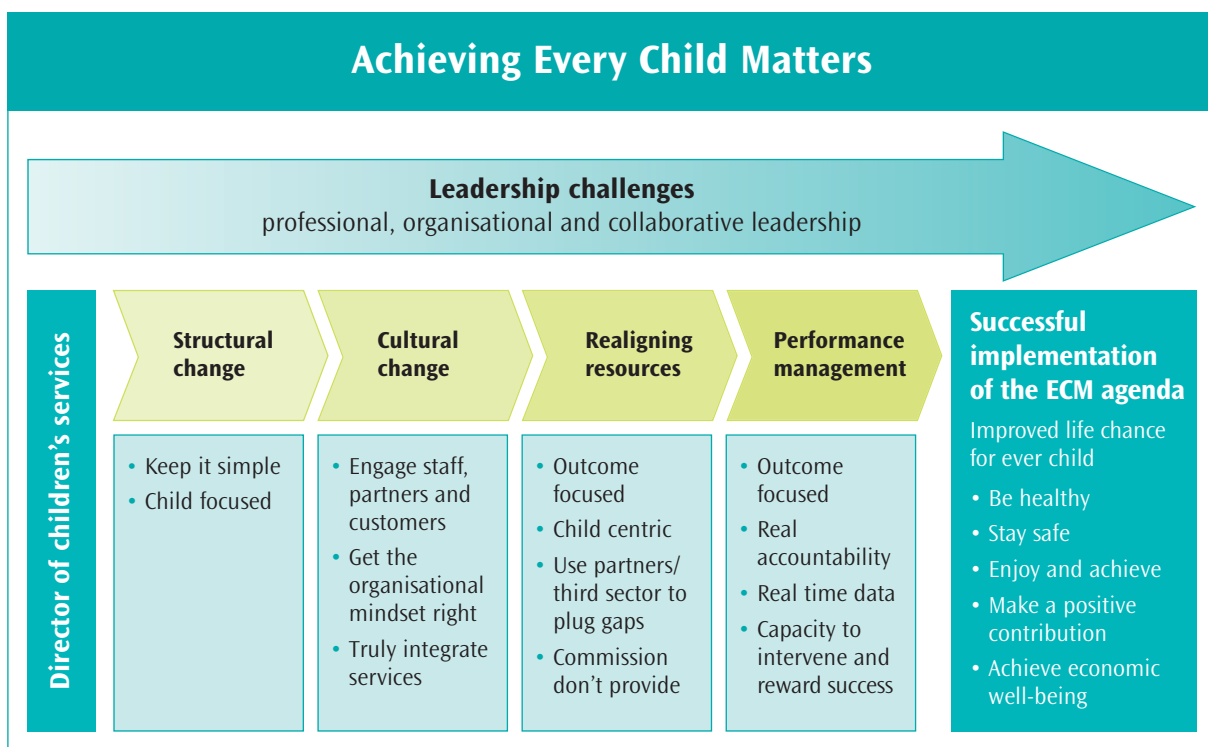
A number of specific tasks associated with the DCS role were also identified in this way, several of which are summarised below to illustrate the range of immediate management and leadership challenges facing DCSs in the highly charged environment created by the foregoing issues:

- Building a strong and collaborative senior team to optimize impact and create a “forward facing, collaborative internal climate”.
- Developing a true learning organisation – increasing the rate of knowledge transfer and transformation – to ensure success.
- Devising and re-designing Services, to create structures that support “safe” experimentation and encourage creativity by combining and recombining knowledge in different ways to establish and maintain high trust environments where boundaries and practice can be challenged to “squeeze out” more efficiency, service improvement and impact.
- Introducing business management systems to cover issues such as commissioning, capital strategy planning, contract management/performance review, and asset management.

This view of the complexity of the challenges facing DCSs – particularly in balancing the parallel objectives of the need to secure school improvement and safeguard children – is reflected in the findings of research conducted recently by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL). Cited in various media<sup>3</sup> (12th March 2009), John Dunford, ASCL's general secretary, emphasised the fact that DCSs are “responsible for everything that happens to children in their area, accountable to a huge range of bodies, spending a high proportion of the working week on corporate committees and are as vulnerable as school leaders to being sacked”. The research – based on a survey of 65 school leaders – found that the prevailing view among this level of management within Children's Services is that their local authority is “not as good” since it had amalgamated children's social services and education.

The different perspectives cited in the literature about the way in which the DCS role is perceived by incumbents and commentators presents an illustration that offers some encouragement to those engaged in devising a DCS leadership development programme. While Dunford maintains that – due to these conflicting challenges – the job of Director of Children's Services has become “the job from Hell”, one DCS contacted in compiling this review describes the role of DCS as “the best job in the world”. It may, then, be possible to engage existing and aspiring DCSs in an emerging Leadership Development Programme, focussing on the positive aspects of the job, and highlighting the way in which it can help them overcome competing or/and conflicting priorities.

The following graphic is presented as one way of representing the leadership challenges facing Directors of Children's Services in implementing the Every Child Matters agenda. From this, it may be surmised that DCSs are confronted with a range of leadership challenges in pursuing the objectives of the ECM agenda, all of which apply in a complex of overlapping priorities, particularly structural and cultural change and the need to realign resources and implement a more sophisticated performance management framework<sup>4</sup>.



It is to be expected that any model developed for inclusion in the DCS leadership programme would build on the National Professional Development Framework for leaders and managers in children's services (DSCF, 2008b), which asserts that continual professional development of senior managers is a key ingredient for the successful implementation of the ECM agenda and ensuring the continuation of the improvements to services (p.6). This is based on a vision for leadership in children's services (p.9), which aims to have:

“Resilient, well-informed, creative and innovative leaders with the requisite skills, knowledge and experience to ensure the effective delivery of integrated provision for children, young people and families at the local level”.

4 Developed by Rockpools Recruitment Consultancy <http://www.rockpools.co.uk/news.asp?id=55>

The competency elements of the Framework include:

- essential knowledge, skills and behaviours required to lead effectively
- personal characteristics which individuals need to bring to the leadership role
- practice characteristics which leaders draw upon to undertake the core management functions effectively

The Framework acknowledges that leadership attributes will be required by staff operating at all levels of the children's workforce, and will vary depending on the individual set of circumstances. The generic leadership abilities encapsulated in the Framework include (op cit, p.9):

- developing a vision for children's services in their area/sphere of responsibility and communicate that clearly and persuasively to others
- creating a culture of inter-agency working whereby the needs of children, young people and families transcend traditional professional perspectives
- setting clear goals for their service that are measurable and achievable, as well as aspirational and inspirational
- planning, commissioning and delivering services effectively in partnership with others, including statutory, third and private sector organisations
- using evidence and the experience of team members to understand the needs of local communities and prioritise activities on the basis of evidence and evaluation
- listening to the views of all children and young people, ensuring that they are taken into account in policy development and service delivery
- building and motivating effective and high-performing inter-disciplinary teams in the context of leading and managing the change required to secure reformed children's services, and working effectively across existing and future organisational boundaries

The Framework requires that development activity for anyone leading and managing services for children, young people and families – including those aspiring to senior roles – should “build on these themes and reflect the principles of the framework” (op cit, p.11).

Guidance on leading and managing integrated children's services (DfES, 2006) highlights seven aspects of management and/or leadership, all of which might equally/particularly apply to the Director's role:

- achieving outcomes
- safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child
- providing direction
- leading and managing change
- working with people
- managing information
- communicating and engaging effectively with children, young people and families.

Implicit in the statutory guidance on their role is the need for DCSs to have the skills associated with the close working relationship they are expected to have with the Lead Member for Children's Services, whose leadership responsibilities are distinguished from those of the DCS by their focus on “political rather than professional” matters (DfES, 2005, p.17). Additionally, the guidance requires that DCSs have the “appropriate skills and

experience to provide strategic leadership in the planning, commissioning and delivery of children's services, and to lead a programme of cultural and, as necessary, organisational change" (p.10, emphasis added); and that they "provide leadership and create the conditions for others to perform and to innovate, and will be responsible for creating the framework for the effective delivery of children's services" (p.12, emphasis added). Three key aspects of their leadership role receive considerable emphasis in the guidance, namely:

- A focus on the needs of children and young people, stressing the need to improve outcomes for them and to put them "at the centre of service provision, rather than provision being built around organisational boundaries and professional disciplines". (p.13)
- The need to drive forward change and "lead the transformation of children's services".
- Their participation in decisions around the full range of council services as well as building and leading "robust partnership arrangements to ensure public, private and voluntary organisations ... align appropriate resources ... against agreed priorities". (p.14)

Recent research into DCSs' training and development needs generated a range of professional characteristics (or behaviours) which stakeholders considered to be important, including (DCSF, 2008a, p.10):

- leading by example, with an empowering and open style
- displaying a confident professional demeanour, to inspire others
- the ability to anticipate, manage and take risks
- working collaboratively and in a way that develops the skills of others
- a commitment to developing others
- the ability to remain robust under pressure

Participating DCSs identified a number of other issues considered likely to influence effective delivery of their role, including:

- the corporate and political demands of the role
- the mismatch between the statutory responsibilities and decision-making powers
- the expectations associated with the size and breadth of the role
- the emphasis on responsibilities across all ECM outcomes

Looking specifically at children's workforce issues, Hartle et al (2008) describe a number of leadership models, all of which offer potential in considering the best way to assess the effectiveness of the approach taken by DCSs. The two matrices summarised below offer insights into how the national DCS leadership development programme might group leadership roles, reflecting the range of challenges faced by DCSs:

- The Essex Leading for Children matrix, developed by Essex County Council with the NCSL and the OPM (Essex FLARE, 2006; Essex Grid for Learning, 2006) incorporates short statements describing the kinds of dispositions, skills and behaviours required at each level of management/service delivery (including DCS) for each of the following features of leadership (Hartle, et al, op cit, p.42):
  - championing
  - managing complexity
  - guardianship

- emotional intelligence
- facilitating change
- securing benefits
- The Hay Group Profile matrix describes three discrete leadership roles, each of which feature in the role of DCS, as described (Hartle, et al, op cit, p.40):
  - **Operational** – traditional management accountability for tangible end results (the DCS is identified here as being accountable for delivery within the system as whole, generating system-level principles, structures and initiatives).
  - **Co-ordination** – project or network type roles with ambiguous accountabilities (with the DCS connecting, facilitating and leveraging the processes, players and programmes of the system as a whole).
  - **Policy/Strategic** – advisory, planning or staff type roles responsible for support, policy and innovation (the DCS shapes the concepts and strategies which underpin the system as a whole; and is an acknowledged thought leader).

At the time the new role of DCS was being proposed during the transition of the Children's Bill 2004 to the implementation of the Children's Act, several articles were published in practice journals, consideration of which provides an insight into the kinds of attributes and issues anticipated by them.

For example, *Children Now* asserted that few jobs are “as senior or hotly debated as the proposed new director” and that DCSs “are not going to get an easy ride”; and emphasised the view (previously articulated by the ADSS) that there was a risk that “local authorities may get so distracted by structural reform and who gets the top post that they risk losing the essential focus on integrating children's services” (Bond, 2004a, pp.22-3). The “key requirements” for the new role identified in a subsequent *Children Now* article included the following (Bond, 2004b, pp.22-3):

- ability to drive change
- truly child-centred
- a social entrepreneur
- championing a vision
- a credible leader
- an innovator
- builder of strategic partnerships

The Local Government Chronicle concerned itself with the fact that it appeared that more newly appointed DCSs came from an education background than from children's social services. However, it acknowledged that the question of their professional background would most likely “fade against the persistent challenge of meeting children's needs” (Francis, 2004, p.19). Community Care feared that the consequence of this over-reliance on Directors with an educationalist background was that “former education directors do not have sufficient experience and understanding of child protection” (Neate, 2005, p.24).

Subsequently, data reported in the Municipal Journal suggested that these early fears were unfounded, with the background of appointees up to July 2005 (by which time over half of English LAs had appointed new DCSs) being around 50:50 split between education and social services (Carroll, 2005, p.17). The article asserted that

former educationalists “have the edge in terms of sector knowledge”, but – accepting the corporate nature of the role – acknowledged that “many other qualities required can be gained in social care”. Necessary skills highlighted in this article included:

- empathy with service values
- grasp of modernising agenda for children and young people
- ability to operate effectively in corporate arenas and partnership settings
- strategic resources management skills
- leadership

## Summary

In the most recent analysis of the progress made by Children's Services in safeguarding, Laming (2009) emphasises the importance and complexity of the DCS's role: “balancing the many different demands of the role requires significant levels of determination and leadership skills” (p.19). As well as detailing a number of key skills required by DCSs (referred to in Section 3), Laming further asserts that they “must lead by example by taking a personal and visible interest in frontline delivery” and that “decisive and effective leadership of a DCS” requires them to be “committed to creating a supportive culture for children's services” (p.20). This confirms the foregoing analysis that a range of leadership styles will be required of the DCS in order for them to meet the full range of challenges they are likely to face in their role.

In view of this, the following matrix – incorporating a summary of leadership styles, some of the characteristics DCSs need to exhibit in implementing these styles, and examples of the roles in which these styles are likely to be most appropriate – is offered as a potential starting point from which to develop a model of DCS leadership as part of the development programme. Such a matrix would present the authorities with a detailed framework against which to assess DCS's performance, bearing in mind the requirement that “the performance and effectiveness of the most senior managers ... services should be assessed against the quality of the outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people” (Laming, 2009, p.18).

Participation in decisions around the full range of council services as well as building and leading robust partnerships

Style	Characteristics	Roles
<b>Charismatic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspirational</li> <li>• Courageous</li> <li>• Articulate</li> <li>• Strong/confident</li> <li>• Adaptable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Developing and communicating a vision</li> <li>– Accountability (to the public, politicians and regulatory/inspection authorities)</li> <li>– Public relations</li> </ul>
<b>Directive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic-thinking</li> <li>• Communicative</li> <li>• Ability to drive change</li> <li>• Robust under pressure</li> <li>• Decisive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Setting clear, measurable and achievable goals for service</li> <li>– Managing (under-)performance</li> <li>– Planning and commissioning services</li> </ul>
<b>Participative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowering</li> <li>• Respectful</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Using evidence and the experience of team members to understand the needs of local communities</li> <li>– Listening to the views of children, young people and their families</li> <li>– Building inter-disciplinary teams</li> </ul>
<b>Supportive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathetic</li> <li>• Trusting</li> <li>• Sensitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Championing and challenging service delivery</li> <li>– Building capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Networking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence-inspiring</li> <li>• Collaborative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Participating in Council's executive decision-making</li> <li>– Creating culture of inter-agency working</li> <li>– Working with LMCS</li> </ul>

Driving forward the transformation of children's services

Focussing on the needs of children and young people, stressing the need to improve outcomes for them and to put them at the centre.

## Identifying skills and challenges

### Key skills needs

The previous section identified some of the key elements of the DCS's leadership role, and highlighted the unique combination of characteristics that need to be exhibited by senior managers of children's services. In order to ensure that current and aspiring DCSs can exhibit these characteristics, it is anticipated that each individual will need to cultivate a set of skills and abilities. This section incorporates evidence from the literature about these skills.

The research into DCSs' training and development needs also identified seven core themes (DCSF, 2008a, p.8), each of which incorporated the knowledge, skills and abilities considered necessary to meet the demands of the role:

- shaping the future
- leading the partnership
- strategic management
- the corporate and political dimension
- safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
- intelligent commissioning
- workforce development

The National Professional Development Framework asserts that senior managers working in local authority settings, partnership settings (such as Children's Trusts) and other organisations are likely to have been "subject to considerable change", and that it is increasingly likely that they may be required to oversee service areas for which they have "little or no direct professional experience" (op cit, p.18). This situation is offered as a rationale for providing opportunities for them to further develop their skills for both their current and anticipated leadership and management role. The knowledge, skills and behaviours identified in the Framework as required to lead effectively in the context of children's services include (op cit, p.11):

- knowing the legislative framework and understanding strategic, commissioning and policy development
- building a shared value base, and a culture of responsiveness
- listening, building alliances and challenging others
- promoting awareness of the child's right/need to be safe and how their practice contributes to the wider ECM agenda
- focussing on improving service performance and quality

Recent research into the skills requirements of leaders of children's services (LGA, 2008b) has identified the following areas as key to the part of the DCS role in supporting lead member for children's services (LMCS). The findings recognise the importance of helping the LMCS to "become highly effective political leaders of children's services" (p.2), and assert that their relationship with the DCS in particular is "crucial and seen as requiring a complementary approach to the task, underpinned by trust, mutual respect and clarity about the two roles" (p.4). Included in the recommendations arising from this work are implications for the DCS, who it is suggested should focus on:

- sustaining/managing their relationship with the LMCS
- accounting for their service, decisions and impacts ... to LCMS, Council, DCSF, parents, and the wider public

While the report identifies the following skills and attributes as being required by LMCSs, it is implicit that there is merit in seeking to develop them (or at least an understanding of them) in the DCS:

- political skills and experience
- substantive knowledge of the subject
- the capacity to make things happen
- skills in engaging and communicating with people, including the public
- a depth of commitment to children, young people and their families (passion)
- a proactive approach to seeking information and seeking change (pro-activity)
- an ability to sustain a strong relationship between the DCS/LMCS (proximity)
- an understanding of how best to work in partnership with others, including those beyond the council (partnership)
- the ability and capacity to plan for long term change as well as short term goals (patience)

Commissioning of services is one area of management in the delivery of public services achieving increasing prominence, as the government looks to local authorities to 'steer' service provision as opposed to delivering services. Guidance to Children's Trusts to help them improve their practice in commissioning services (DCSF, 2007) suggests that organisations engaged in successful joint commissioning:

- have excellent data and information management systems
- exhibit a strong performance management culture
- undertake a thorough needs analysis, including full consultation with children, young people and parents
- are willing to shift resources where necessary to meet new priorities
- invest in creating a skilled commissioning function, ensuring that commissioning staff have the right training and opportunities for continued professional development
- establish a shared understanding of commissioning among all partners, including a common terminology

In addition, the following strategic characteristics tend to be present:

- a commitment by all members of the Children's Trust to adopt new ways of working
- strong and effective leadership, particularly when difficult decisions have to be made
- a clear vision for commissioning, signed up to by all key partners, so that they know what their goals are
- well-developed relationships between partners, with an emphasis on trust. This includes transparency between commissioners, partners and providers over data, budgets and priorities.

### **Current issues/Skills gaps**

This review identified a number of issues considered likely to feature significantly on the agenda of DCSs in the near future, most of which derive from the main governmental policy drivers framed within the Every Child Matters agenda (eg the Laming Review; Children's Workforce Development Strategy 2020). Three main areas relating to DCS leadership emerged from the literature as presenting particular challenges to children's services.

For example, proposals to develop the DCS Leadership Programme emerged after the publication of the Joint Area Review of services for children and young people in Haringey, undertaken in light of the special circumstances

surrounding the case of 'Baby P' and with a focus on safeguarding. Succession was identified as an issue by the NCSL prior to the study being undertaken, and information was sought on this as it is perceived as a means of addressing potential future shortcomings in children's services leadership. Generic workforce issues were included, as these were felt to give context to the challenges facing local authorities and DCSs in particular.

Additionally, priority was attached to Children's Trusts, as these have been identified in discussions with DCSs whose views were sought in shaping this review as the main vehicle through which local authorities and DCSs are most likely to drive forward improvements in outcomes for children, in partnership with other key local agencies.

## Safeguarding

Having found the arrangements for the leadership and management of safeguarding by the local authority and partner agencies in Haringey to be "inadequate", the recent Joint Area Review (Ofsted, 2008) highlighted that there was "insufficient strategic leadership and management oversight of safeguarding of children and young people from Haringey by elected members, senior officers and others within the strategic partnership" (p.3). The JAR report included a number of recommendations, which – although specific to the circumstances prevailing in Haringey – will have resonance in other local authority areas; some in particular (including the following) are likely to inform guidance on emerging leadership models for children's services:

**"assure the competence of leadership and management in all areas of children's services and develop clear and effective accountability structures" (op cit, p.5)**

This recommendation arises from the inspectors' concerns about a number of strategic and operational areas, over which they assert (or imply) the DCS should bring their influence to bear as part of their leadership role (pp.10–12):

- (i) Relationship, accountabilities and lines of communication between key organisations and individuals at all levels are "not sufficiently clearly defined", and not all stakeholders are "clear about their remit or how their work links with, or overlaps, with the work of others".
- (ii) Making explicit reference to the roles of the DCS and the Assistant DCS, the report asserts that current management arrangements fail to "facilitate sufficient independent challenge", and that the management arrangements for independent review are "insufficiently independent of operational line management in social care".
- (iii) While it is acknowledged that all Children's Services are required to operate within a clearly defined performance reporting framework, the report states that there is an over-reliance on national and local performance indicators, which "does not enable understanding of the quality and effectiveness of service provision on the ground". In particular, the report calls for greater attention to be given to "evaluating the quality of front line practice and quantifying the impact of services upon children".

This last point is reinforced by Lord Laming's assertion (2009, p.19) that children's services managers "must assure themselves that the assessment of risk of harm to each child and young person is being undertaken effectively and that the referral and assessment processes in Working Together to Safeguard Children are being followed intelligently and effectively". Emphasising the need for DCSs to play a central part in this process (ensuring that "decision making, communication and information sharing within and between each of the local services is effective in keeping children safe even when those services are under pressure"), it is further asserted that "the DCS should also develop sufficient personal knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and child protection" (Laming, op cit, p.20).

## Succession

The LGA Workforce Survey (2008a) discovered that 86 per cent of councils operate 'grow your own' career pathways, but does not give details about the nature or impact of any of these. A recent survey of middle managers from across the children's workforce (Hartle et al, 2008) concluded that there are several barriers to their leadership development, falling into four broad categories:

1. Inadequate strategic planning for leadership development (including: the lack of a consistent pattern of provision of learning opportunities across the middle manager population with most training available only on an ad hoc basis, while the identification of training opportunities is usually the result of individual initiative; and a failure to create clarity about the key leadership skills required at middle management level).
2. Limited access to coordinated leadership training and development (including: poor communication of opportunities, and the lack of formal or systematic processes for identifying and developing potential leaders within organisations; along with a failure to provide training to prepare middle managers for integrated working).
3. Insufficient funding (existing arrangements which fail to facilitate multi-agency leadership training activities, and a lack of consistency across Children's Workforce agencies).
4. Time constraints (with most middle managers citing a heavy workload/time commitments as an obstacle to them participating in leadership training).

Of particular relevance to the challenge of developing future leaders of Children's Services, further research (conducted mainly in the private sector, where many of the challenges of 'talent retention' coincide with those in the public sector) generated a set of recommendations to ensure organisations "draw in the range and numbers of people (they will) need to be future leaders but without making everyone in an organisation a promise (they can't keep)" (Czerniawska, 2007, p.19), including:

- start with demand, not supply – the skills their organisations need, as opposed to those they already have
- articulate the objective criteria they'll use to judge whether someone is a high-performer or not, requiring better (and more objective) information than is currently available in many organisations
- tell people what they're doing so everyone feels included
- ensure that managing talent is a responsibility of all managers, not just "talent managers"
- be joined up: organisations need to ensure that the decisions they take about resourcing and development are consistent with their overall strategy
- to broaden their definition of diversity to include – for example – different patterns of working and managing, not just demographics
- focus on developing high-potential people by giving them a diverse range of experience
- help people navigate their way through the complex networks that underpin organisations
- encourage people to see work and life as integrated, not as opposing elements that need to be balanced
- get people to choose: organisations can't be made diverse any more than individuals can be told to be empowered

The views of existing DCSs (fed into this study via the ADCS) have helped to identify one additional issue in relation to succession planning, in relation to the need for close liaison with the LMCS. It is felt that it is unlikely that future candidates from outside the local authority sector will have had significant experience of managing this type of relationship. As a result, the opportunity to draw from a wider pool of expertise and professional backgrounds is likely to be limited, unless provision can be made for aspirant DCSs from outwith the local authority sector to work with elected members as part of their continuing professional development.

## General workforce issues

The Local Government Workforce Survey (LGA, 2008a) reported that 41 per cent of councils have devised strategies to address their most critical workforce issues. Of particular relevance to leadership development, specific difficulties reported by councils include:

- development of political and managerial leaders that reflect the diversity of their local areas
- skills gaps in change management (27 per cent), strategic commissioning (21 per cent), organisational development (20 per cent), and business processing improvement (19 per cent)

The findings from a recently conducted survey of public sector staff (Schofield et al, 2008) highlight a number of issues and challenges for public sector managers, including the following, which relate specifically to leadership:

- only 55 per cent of respondents regard top leadership in their organisation as 'effective'
- only 39 per cent of respondents feel that top leadership in their organisation are moving towards a more consultative approach to decision-making
- only 36 per cent of managers who responded believe their organisation is doing enough to develop the next generation of leaders
- 70 per cent of managers who responded report that they are increasingly required to manage cross-functional and virtual teams
- 74 per cent of respondents feel that management roles in their organisation are increasingly about influencing people over whom they have no management responsibility

The CIM research presented a similar perception of leadership, with only 33 per cent of public sector managers rating the leadership of their senior managers a high quality. It also highlighted the emphasis on standards, targets and procedures as a barrier to imaginative management and leadership, something which is felt is likely to impede the reform agenda as managers and leaders are constrained in their ability to respond to the change agenda with innovative and more flexible ways of working (Charlesworth et al, 2003, p.5).

The research into DCSs' training and development needs found that there were no significant unmet support needs, but – nevertheless – identified (DCSF, 2008a, p.22) the need for better co-ordination of support in relation to:

- addressing knowledge gaps of other children's services
- developing skills to support commissioning
- improving access to and co-ordination of coaching arrangements

## Children's Trusts

The views of existing DCSs (fed into this study via the ADCS) highlight the fact that they are – through their involvement in local Children's Trusts – responsible for leading the strategic direction of other partners in the locality, and can expect to be held accountable for related outcomes without the normal attendant line management arrangements. This reflects the fact that the further development of Children's Trusts has been identified (Audit Commission, 2008a) as an area of work requiring attention by DCSs in the immediate future, as "continuing uncertainty about the purpose of the new arrangements may be a barrier to their success' (p.28). Particular issues identified by the Audit Commission as requiring attention (at strategic, executive and operational levels) in order to improve outcomes for children in the future include: strengthening governance

arrangements and improving partnership working; developing joint commissioning arrangements; and aligning/pooling resources. In addressing these, it is asserted that “the greatest benefit comes from common ownership of problems, rather than merely responding to external direction” (op cit, p.65), suggesting that DCSs face the additional challenge of attempting to generate this local consensus while at the same time meeting the requirements of the nationally-driven agenda.

A number of DCSs were interviewed – as part of the assessment of the effectiveness of Children's Trust arrangements (Audit Commission, 2008b) – to secure their perspective on the progress of/challenges to Children's Trusts. The following were identified by DCSs as barriers to achieving effective Children's Trust arrangements (the figures refer to the percentage of respondents who identified the barriers as being important):

- financial pressures in partnership agencies (77 per cent)
- insufficient funding to deliver children's services agenda (60 per cent)
- lack of financial information on children's services spending from partner agencies (54 per cent)
- financial priorities of partners (53 per cent)
- changes in partner agencies (41 per cent)
- workforce development issues (41 per cent)

### **Tackling child poverty**

One area highlighted in guidance for Children's Trusts (DCSF, 2008c) is the need for better co-ordination of activities to tackle child poverty. Children's Trust partners are identified as having “a central role in tackling the causes and consequences of child poverty” (p.26) and are required to “assess the contribution that each of their services could make to tackle child poverty” (p.26). The guidance places DCSs at the centre of work to take this agenda forward, asserting that “effective and knowledgeable leaders and managers are needed in all areas of practice which impact on outcomes for children, young people and families. In the forefront of this are the directors of children's services, their leadership teams and the partner organisations of the Children's Trust” (p.46).

Building on the findings of research into how Children's Trusts can make a significant difference in ‘narrowing the gap’ in outcomes between ‘vulnerable’ children and the rest, recent guidance (LGA, 2008c) identifies a number of roles for local leaders of children's services, including:

- take a long-term focus in the provision of programmes and interventions to remediate disadvantage, to monitor and track progress in reducing the gaps in outcomes and to use evidence-informed analysis and strategy to support this
- use and hold a multi-perspective and outward focus through partnership support, joint commissioning, integrated working, joint needs-based training for professionals and enabling the inclusion of the voice of children and families
- lever the potential in the Children and Young People's Plan to drive forward improvements

The National Foundation for Educational Research has been commissioned to conduct further research into leadership issues in relation to the Narrowing the Gap initiative. Due to report in the immediate future, this research addresses the following research<sup>5</sup> questions:

5 [www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/pims-data/outlines/narrowing-the-gap-leadership-theme.cfm](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/pims-data/outlines/narrowing-the-gap-leadership-theme.cfm)

- What are the key features of leadership necessary to achieve change and narrow the gap in outcomes for vulnerable groups?
- Is leadership that is effective for narrowing the gap different from leadership that is effective generally?
- Are there any significant contextual factors/conditions that have supported local leadership in relation to children's services?
- What is most important in terms of growing and developing local leaders of the future?

Recognising the important role held by local authorities in helping to realise the government's target of eradicating child poverty by 2020, three Councils were recently awarded Beacon status for their work in preventing and tackling child poverty. This award recognises their efforts in addressing the requirement for them to "prevent those at risk from falling into poverty, tackling material deprivation and improving the life chances of children to end cycles of deprivation" (IDeA, 2009), and will result in the generation of information that can be accessed (via the IDeA website<sup>6</sup>) by other local authorities.

## Summary

Drawing from the foregoing discussion about the skills required as well as those perceived to be lacking, the following table incorporates a range of skill sets on which it may be appropriate for the DCS Leadership Development Programme to focus in the first instance. These are offered as a potential starting point from which to develop elements of a course.

Skills set	Potential focus of training
<b>Policy and political context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Knowing the ECM framework (particularly in relation to children's rights, safeguarding, Children's Trusts).</li> <li>– Developing awareness of/ability to work in political environment.</li> <li>– Sustaining relationship with the LMCS.</li> <li>– Accountability.</li> <li>– Public sector modernisation agenda.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Models.</li> <li>– Application of different styles in various contexts, and the characteristics which DCSs need to exhibit in order to lead effectively across the whole range of responsibilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Engaging and communicating with people, including the public.</li> <li>– Promoting awareness of the child's right/need to be safe and how practice contributes to the wider ECM agenda.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Understanding strategic, commissioning and policy development.</li> <li>– Planning for long term change as well as short term goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Developing/supporting staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Different professional values, ethics and practices.</li> <li>– Effective challenge of individuals' practices.</li> <li>– Managing pressure.</li> <li>– Building a shared value base, and a culture of responsiveness.</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge management/ Performance management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Focussing on improving service performance and quality.</li> <li>– Taking a proactive approach to seeking information, with a focus on outcomes.</li> </ul>
<b>Partnership working</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Understanding how best to work in partnership with others, including those beyond the council.</li> <li>– Listening and building alliances.</li> <li>– Knowledge of other services.</li> <li>– Joining-up services (at strategic, executive and operational levels).</li> <li>– Effective challenge of external services' management.</li> </ul>

## Leadership development provision

### Current/planned provision

The following summaries provide an illustration of the types of leadership programmes currently available to DCSs and senior managers in other public sector organisations.

#### **ADCS: Virtual Staff College**

The Virtual Staff College (VSC) is a professional development company, wholly-owned by the ADCS. The College's mission<sup>7</sup> is to “promote the professional development and competence of all staff working in the strategic management and operational delivery of education and children’s services in local authorities and their stakeholders and, through this, increase the capacity of LAs to respond to change”. VSC is ‘virtual’ in that it works in partnership with other organisations (including a Principal Partners scheme with a core group of universities) which deliver a range of professional development opportunities devised collaboratively with the College. These are delivered to reflect the contents of a Competence Framework for senior managers of Children’s Services, comprised of a Children and Young People’s Management Functional Map and a complete set of Occupational Standards.

The VSC runs three management development programmes, which are based on five full days of attendance, comprising both taught and group work elements. The design of the course ensures that learning is “embedded in professional experience in the workplace”, and the content includes a requirement for participants to: carry out a professional development analysis; produce a management development project (with appropriate supervision from line managers and tutors); engage in pre and post seminar reading; and (if they wish to receive accreditation) complete pieces of reflective writing at the end of the year. Accreditation (awarded by the University of Exeter) is offered at different levels, including a Post Graduate Certificate in Education, Diploma and Masters level qualifications.

Other provision promoted/supported by the VSC includes:

- a series of Action Learning Sets, seminars and short courses
- bespoke CPD programmes delivered at regional level or/and for individual local authorities/ Children’s Trusts
- input to workforce development planning, helping local authorities (working individually and collectively) to anticipate and plan for CPD needs

#### **IDEA: Academy for Executive Leadership**

The Academy for Executive Leadership (AEL) has been created in response to the need – as identified by senior executives in local government – for a programme that would go far beyond familiar day-today leadership issues to explore the longer-term strategic, political and democratic matters that will shape the future of local government and local communities. Delivered in partnership with SOLACE Enterprises and Ashridge Business School, the AEL comprises two, three-day residential modules, plus a 24-hour residential module. The modules address the following themes:

- personal leadership in context
- political and strategic leadership
- providing community leadership

7 [www.virtualstaffcollege.co.uk/index.html](http://www.virtualstaffcollege.co.uk/index.html)

### **SCIE: Social Care Leadership Development Programme**

Run (on behalf of SCIE) by the King's Fund, Birmingham University (INLOGOV, Institute of Local Government) and The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, the programme is targeted at senior managers in adult social care with either lead responsibility for commissioning or an equivalent provider role. The programme is based around three core themes, each covered by a discrete module:

- Leadership for Social Care Outcomes.
- Personal and Organisational Leadership.
- Community Leadership.

The programme's delivery includes 'whole cohort events', individual coaching, and learning sets that support the practical application of leadership in participants' own daily work. Participants are encouraged to register for the University of Birmingham Postgraduate Certificate in Strategic Social Care Leadership (which has been designed specifically for this programme), and are able to apply for transfer to the MSc in Social Care Leadership and Management.

A more detailed breakdown of course content for these, and the following, is provided in Annex 2:

- MSC: National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership.
- Leadership Centre for Local Government.
- Centre for Excellence in Leadership.
- MoD: Defence Leadership and Management College.

Other relevant initiatives identified (but not investigated further) in this rapid review include:

- Centre for Management and Policy Studies.
- Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.
- NHS Leadership Centre.
- Scottish Leadership Foundation.
- Welsh Public Sector Management Initiative.

### **Effectiveness of existing provision**

The 2008 PMI survey suggests that – while regarded as an accessible and cost-effective option for delivering leadership and management training – public sector employees do not value e-learning highly (Schofield et al, 2008). Instead, they indicate a preference for a personal coaching method, presenting a challenge to the sector as it is more expensive to deliver than other methods, such as e-learning.

The 2003 CIM survey (see section 2.3, above) found that organisations are relying overmuch on “traditional and formalised methods” of delivery, and indicated that more effective leadership development methods are those which focus on “the impact of individual behaviours and which build in time for reflection and feedback” (Charlesworth et al, 2003, p.6).

The 2001 IMS survey (see section 2.2, above) also concluded that the most effective leadership development methods are:

- formal mentoring (38 per cent)
- project management (31 per cent)
- 360-degree feedback (30 per cent)

In a study on the effects of transformational leadership training (including a one-day session, and four follow-up sessions) to senior managers in a Canadian bank (Barling et al, 1996), 'significantly positive impacts' were ascribed to participants, in terms of employee perceptions of their leadership and employees' own ratings of their organisational commitment, as well as quantifiable performance measures.

As an illustration of the effectiveness of one of the leadership models described above, research into the impact of engaging leadership on the productivity of multi-professional mental health 'crisis resolution teams' has illustrated that an 'engaging' leadership style has a more positive effect than either 'visionary leadership' or 'leadership capabilities' on both staff morale and the team's performance (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2008).

A recent evaluation (DCLG, 2008) of the government's Capacity Building Programme for Local Government reported – among other things – on the way in which geographical considerations impacted on the effectiveness of delivery. This programme aimed to assist local authorities respond to the challenges of public sector reform and incorporated a range of training programmes and other interventions (including the Peer Clearing House, the Advanced Leadership Programme and the Leadership Academy) delivered through national programmes, regionally-based improvement partnerships and targeted support for 'failing' authorities. Benefits and disadvantages were identified for each level of provision, including the following (pp.78–80):

<b>Delivery level</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>National</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Learning and sharing knowledge and expertise within the sector.</li> <li>– Facilitation of networks.</li> <li>– Good quality providers and provision.</li> <li>– Strong individual level benefits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Often seen as overly centrally directed.</li> <li>– Not perceived by sector as responsive to local needs.</li> <li>– Perceived as expensive.</li> </ul>
<b>Regional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Encourages partnerships between local authorities.</li> <li>– Encourage shared learning between partners.</li> <li>– Can help to sustain a focus on shared improvement objectives, through peer pressure, monitoring and support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Resources can be diverted to establishment and infrastructure costs rather than delivery of improvement activities.</li> <li>– Gaining and sustaining commitment of partners can be challenging.</li> <li>– Involves large-scale resources.</li> </ul>
<b>Local</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Good fit with local plans and strategies leading to strong organizational commitment.</li> <li>– Context in which delivered opens possibilities for significant change to cultures, skills and systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Doesn't automatically ensure outward focus or learning from elsewhere.</li> </ul>

In conclusion, it was asserted that programmes of support should be developed at the “appropriate level – national, regional or local – to the type of support being offered, its objectives, and the needs of authorities” (p.83). The findings of the evaluation suggested that poorer performing authorities had found it more difficult to engage in/benefit from regional and national initiatives, and it was concluded that this level of intervention would be “better targeted at middle- and better-performing authorities, with investment in lower-performers reserved for more tailored interventions” (p.84). The report also emphasised the need for future evaluations of such capacity building endeavours to incorporate consideration of its impact on “the delivery of local outcomes” (p.84).

One element of the capacity building programme that was highlighted as offering the potential for leadership development was peer support. This is consistent with the findings of recent consultations by the CWDC which have found that “a blend of face-to-face and virtual networking opportunities would be welcomed” by assistant directors and heads of service (CWDC, 2009, online). A review of the literature about peer review (Hawtin, 2008) highlights the fact that peer support, review and challenge is used as an improvement tool in a range of contexts in the public sector, and emphasises the potential benefits of these methods, including their impact on service quality, personal and professional development, and the strengthening of collaborative arrangements.

## Examples of alternative provision

### Provision in other countries

While this rapid review has failed to identify specific examples of leadership training provision for DCSs or their equivalents in any other country, several initiatives and sources of information likely to be of value in devising a programme in the UK have been identified. For example:

In the USA, the US Office of Personnel Management has defined a set of key characteristics and leadership competencies – Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) – used in training/selecting their most senior public service leaders. The five ECQs are made up of 27 competencies, summarised as follows:

- **Leading change** (includes innovation, external awareness, strategic thinking and vision).
- **Leading people** (includes conflict management, cultural awareness and team building).
- **Results driven** (includes accountability, customer service, problem solving and technical credibility).
- **Business acumen** (financial management, HR management, and technology management).
- **Building coalitions and communications** (includes influencing/negotiating, partnering, and political savvy).

Public service leaders can participate in ongoing training (the ‘Leadership Journey’) provided through various programmes by the Office of Executive and Management Development, including:

- Leadership for a democratic society
- Treasury executive leadership

In France, public sector leadership training is delivered by a range of institutions, including (most notably) Ecole Nationale d’Administration<sup>8</sup>.

### **Provision of other forms of leadership development**

The following brief list provides an illustration of the range of initiatives that – directly or tangentially – address leadership development in other parts of the public sector in the UK:

- National Professional Qualification for Headship (NCSL).
- Principal's Qualifying Programme for Further Education.
- National Police Improvement Agency (Operation Quest).
- NHS (eg Breaking through programme; Gateway to leadership).
- DCS regional and sub-regional peer networks (ADCS).
- LA/NCSL Coaching support (ADCS).

### **Leadership frameworks & questionnaires**

A review of leadership theory and competency frameworks was undertaken by the University of Exeter Centre for Leadership Studies in 2003 (Bolden et al, 2003). From this work, the following list of Leadership Frameworks is presented as an illustration of the multitude of models that might be applied to the DCS Leadership Programme:

#### **Public sector frameworks**

- Senior Civil Service Competency Framework.
- DfES - Management and Leadership Attributes.
- Northern Ireland Senior Civil Service Core Criteria.
- Scottish Executive Framework.
- Ministry of Defence (Defence Leadership & Management Centre, Leadership Attributes Framework).
- EO for Local Government – Compendium of Competencies.
- NHS Leadership Qualities Framework.
- National College for School Leadership – Hay McBer Model.
- Senior Executive Service.

#### **Generic frameworks**

- CEML Framework of Management and Leadership Abilities.
- METO (Management Enterprise Training Organisation) Management Standards (superseded by the MSC National Occupational Standards).
- Investors in People Leadership and Management Model.
- EFQM Business Excellence Model.
- Institute of Chartered Management – Chartered Management Skills.
- IMF (International Monetary Fund) Management Competencies.
- Hamlin's Generic Model of Managerial and Leadership Effectiveness.
- The Zenger Miller Grass-Roots Leadership Model.

## Questionnaires

- Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (Halpin, 1957).
- Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 2000).

In concluding their review of leadership theory and competency frameworks, Bolden et al (2003, p.37) assert that leadership is conceived as:

“a set of values, qualities and behaviours exhibited by the leader that encourage the participation, development and commitment of followers ... (in which) the ‘leader’ is thus promoted as the sole source of ‘leadership’ ... seen to act as an energiser, catalyst and visionary, equipped with a set of tools ... that can be applied across a diverse range of situations and contexts”

Arguing that an over-reliance on frameworks of competencies is unhelpful, they propound an alternative view of management and leadership standards, which they believe should focus less on individual characteristics and more on “ethically and socially acceptable forms of behaviour” and outcome-focussed assessments of what helps improve organisational performance.

## Summary

Bearing in mind the final observations cautioning against an over-reliance on frameworks, the examples of leadership initiatives/programmes included in this section present a range of options for structuring the delivery of a DCS leadership development programme. While the summaries presented at the end of Sections 2 and 4 provide an illustration of the way in which the leadership models, style, characteristics and competencies might be grouped to reflect the unique challenges of the DCS role, the programmes presented here offer alternative perspectives worthy of consideration. While it is imperative that the programme offered to DCSs from September 2009 incorporates elements tailored to address their unique set of circumstances, it may be appropriate when considering how best to commission delivery of the programme to either ‘buy into’ some of these programmes, or to style the content/delivery model on one or more of these approaches.

## Summary and conclusions

The following sections present a summary of the main findings of the foregoing review of literature on leadership, and incorporate recommendations about what these findings suggest should be done to ensure that the evolving DCS leadership development programme results in improvements in the impact and effectiveness of children's services.

### Leadership style

One of the key challenges in developing a DCS leadership programme will be identifying which leadership styles are most appropriate in which settings, how to help DCSs recognise when to apply the appropriate style, and devising a delivery mechanism that helps them best develop their skills in order to be able to adopt these different styles as required. As suggested by the cabinet office report into public sector leadership, it is likely that DCSs will be required to exhibit the full range of leadership styles. However, the foregoing interpretation of the literature suggests that it may be appropriate to emphasise certain approaches over others (or to incorporate them in some kind of 'hybrid' model) in the evolving DCS leadership development programme, particularly:

- individual (recognising the fact that the DCS is personally accountable for many of the performance measures of the service, and that there is evidence this is what their staff are looking for)
- relational (with a focus on a transformational and distributive approaches)
- situational (acknowledging that the DCS role requires skills in inter-personal, informational and decisional contexts)

In judging which models to include in the programme, and the weight to be attached to them in its delivery, consideration needs to be given to a range of challenges experienced uniquely by professionals engaged in the delivery of children's services, as highlighted in the following illustrations:

- (i) While a distributive model (eg allowing staff at different levels to be responsible for decisions in a range of settings/contexts) might be deemed suitable – as it allows for individual growth in professionals at all levels of the organisation – it may be felt that it also dilutes accountability. This is an issue of particular significance in children's services, especially in relation to safeguarding where the Haringey JAR report emphasised the need for senior managers to be more centrally involved, particularly in challenging decisions.
- (ii) In trying to promote public service values in the delivery of children's services, the DCS will ordinarily aim to gain the commitment of their staff to the strategic direction of their service, encouraging trust and respect throughout their workforce. However, with an increasing concentration on performance management, it is also likely to be the case that there are many aspects of their role with which children's services staff members are simply required to comply to remotely determined conditions. Achieving a balance between these two approaches will be crucial to keeping staff commitment and motivation levels high in a particularly demanding environment. This level of sensitive leadership will be further complicated by the need, at the same time, to initiate a dialogue between senior managers and staff that generates a more qualitative understanding about the effectiveness and impact of the service.
- (iii) In comparison to their peers on local authority senior management teams, the DCS's role is complicated by the significance of the legal responsibilities they have for their service, and the need for them to manage a relationship with the lead member for children's services, who is also governed by a set of legal requirements. The added sensitivities of the profile achieved nationally by perceived failings in children's services, complicated further by the effect of local politics, means that the DCS – while needing to be seen to lead – will sometimes be being led in different directions by different imperatives.

## Leadership skills, competencies and behaviours

One potential route to follow in devising the DCS leadership development programme will be to identify a set of skills, competencies and behaviours that it is felt are necessary for effective DCSs to exhibit. If this approach is taken, it should build on the DCSF's professional development framework for leaders of Children's Services, although further attention would need to be given to:

- (i) determining the 'right' balance between skills, competencies and behaviours, to ensure the DCS Leadership Development Programme does not focus too much on one aspect (ie judging whether or not requiring DCSs to adhere to a specific set of competencies is the best way to ensure the development of effective leadership)
- (ii) identifying the range of skills and competencies to incorporate into the framework (including people, strategic thinking and communication skills in particular)
- (iii) classifying the forms of behaviour deemed most likely to secure effective leadership in the full range of Children's Services contexts

It may be necessary to incorporate in the DCS Leadership Development Programme support and guidance to participants in how to apply these skills, competencies and behaviours in a range of contexts. The following brief list provides an illustration of the complexity of the issues to which DCSs and their colleagues in Children's Services are likely to need to apply these:

- revised procedures for safeguarding children
- commissioning services
- pooling budgets
- personalised budgets
- performance management and outcomes-based management
- developing and managing partnerships

## Leadership development provision

The examples cited in this review provide ample illustration of the range of approaches that could be taken in developing a DCS leadership development programme. Indeed, rather than develop a discrete DCS programme, it may be deemed more appropriate to commission different elements from a range of existing initiatives. Whatever commissioning route is adopted, the following is suggested as a delivery model, as a starting point for further deliberation:

**National provision:** building on the NCSL model, courses/modules/seminars/etc. could be delivered at a central location, allowing DCSs from across the country to meet, share experiences and learn together. A peer support/mentoring element could be included in the programme, co-ordinated at a national level, administered via some form of 'clearing house', with one central agency (eg ADCS, NCSL, CWDC) holding contact details of DCSs who have passed successfully through the programme (including receiving peer support training), and who have agreed to provide a pre-determined amount of time to somebody else going through the programme.

**Regional provision:** several government department and agencies operate within regionalised structures, and provide workforce development opportunities to their staff at a regional level (eg NHS workforce strategy and education commissioning activities are co-ordinated at a regional level; CWDC provides support through a team of regional development managers). Leadership development programme content could be delivered in conjunction with/through /alongside extant courses, allowing DCSs to develop stronger relationships with others operating at their level in

other organisations/sectors in their region. The regional level offers the most potential for the delivery of the proposed national peer support/mentoring element (ie with peers selected from within the same region, to minimise travel), both on a one-to-one basis and in the organisation of peer networks.

**Local provision:** it may be appropriate for local continuing professional development programme to incorporate opportunities to allow extant and aspirant DCSs (along with other local agencies' senior managers with a responsibility for children's services – and safeguarding in particular) to access leadership training, development and support at a local level. This would ensure that their development is aligned with local children's workforce development strategies/activities, and that they nurture colleagues from within their own organisation and from partner organisations in their locality.

**Individualised provision:** while there are cost-savings to be achieved from centralising and co-ordinating provision, consideration needs also to be given to allowing for the individual to participate in training that helps them meet their own personal development needs and/or to address the specific challenges of their job. Thus, some funds could be ring-fenced for a small bursary scheme, to allow individuals to participate in bespoke or non-mainstream provision. Additionally, alternative learning routes are required, to allow DCSs to participate in ways suited to their learning styles and personal/professional circumstances. An e-learning route and a mentoring programme are two such forms of delivery that could be included in the programme. It will be necessary to provide opportunities for Tier 2 leaders and aspirant DCSs to participate in the programme. As well as providing them with a discrete route (where they access training and peer support with/from colleagues in equivalent position in other organisations), it may be appropriate to offer work-shadowing opportunities, allowing them to spend time with DCSs who have completed the relevant elements of the Programme.

Three further related issues require consideration:

- **accreditation:** whether or not/how the leadership development programme is to be accredited
- **assessment:** how participants' progress/attainment against the different elements of the framework (proposed in section 5.2) are to be assessed
- **programme evaluation:** a systematic approach to evaluating the impact of the programme – both on individuals' leadership capacity and on the effectiveness of services delivered under their leadership – needs to be designed and set in place at the outset of the programme

## Further research needs

Continuing exploration of a number of key areas will be required to ensure that the development of the programme meets the needs of the individual DCSs, their services and the children, young people and families who rely on the services they provide. These include the following:

- **Skills:** What skills are needed, in what contexts? What skills are held by existing DCSs? What is the ideal the skills sets of future leaders?
- **Impact:** What approaches to leadership development work best? What impact does the programme make on its participants, their services, and service users?
- **Leadership in Context:** What demands on the leaders of children's services are made in response to the different imperatives that drive the many and various elements that make up the service? In what circumstances is it appropriate for reliance on a more distributed form of leadership, and when should DCSs implement the charismatic style?

Commentators have expressed concern about the tendency for policy-makers to focus over-much on leadership as a cure-all for a wide range of social and organisational ills. For example, Gronn (2008a, p.142) highlights the "somewhat promiscuous inclination to think of virtually every initiative on the part of teachers and administrators

as leadership". Also considering leadership in the school setting, Spillane et al (2004, p.6) observe that "... if leadership is an organisational quality ... then investigations of leadership that focus exclusively on the work of individual positional leaders are unlikely to generate comprehensive understandings of the practice of leadership". These concerns might be useful in shaping further exploration of the most appropriate means of responding to the challenges facing Children's Services, particularly as they experience increased public scrutiny of their safeguarding role. Thus, in parallel to development work in response to the already-articulated drive for more effective leadership, further research might usefully uncover those areas of service management and delivery that could be improved by introducing different mechanisms and initiatives.

This last point brings into focus the concern that what is being described as 'leadership' may simply be good 'management'. Bennis & Goldsmith (2003, p.9) assert that "there is a profound difference between management and leadership ... to manage means to bring about, to accomplish, to have charge of or responsibility for, to conduct. Leading is influencing, guiding in a direction, course, action, opinion". Rost (1993) identifies a number of ways in which leadership can be distinguished readily from management: in the leadership scenario, influence as opposed to authority is used to modify the behaviour of followers, and both leaders and followers intend real changes (which must reflect the 'mutual purpose of both'); while managers use authority (and/or coercion) to induce change in the behaviour of their subordinates, in a scenario where the focus is on the continued delivery of services, which are themselves merely the result of co-ordinated activities (pp.149–51). Research into the value of a range of surveys conducted regularly by various government departments/agencies and other bodies found that there is widespread acceptance (ie across academic, government and public sector and private sector representative bodies) that there is a need for greater clarification and tightening of definitions to ensure that there is some consensus around what is meant by these terms. Additionally, the research found that there is a need for "good quality, reliable and regular data and research that ... map(s) not just skill areas but also skill deficiencies" (Tamkin & Denver, 2006, p.30). As well as addressing the definitional issues, it was suggested that research is needed to review the development paths of managers and the impact of development techniques and opportunities (p.44). Specifically, it concluded that a number of emphases are required, including (p.68):

- impact on delivery (as opposed to leadership capability in isolation)
- analysis of management practice to aid understanding of "what sort of management matters"
- consideration of management practice in times of change and under pressure

Similarly, research into the need for management and leadership development (Burgoyne et al, 2004, p.4–5) suggests that future research needs to be more coordinated, with a focus on:

- longitudinal/comparative studies (eg impact of leadership at different levels of organisations, effective leadership approaches – and ways of developing these, variations between sector, size and life-stage of organisations, and at the national level)
- more evaluation research (ie built into management and leadership development initiatives)
- understanding how management and leadership capability contributes to performance, and how the different channels through which this operates are activated in different contexts
- identifying which education, training and development processes are effective in developing management and leadership capability, to find out what works for what purpose in what situations, and how to fine tune the precise design of management and leadership development in particular situations

It may be helpful, therefore, for further research to include consideration of elements of children's services that would benefit from better management as opposed to more effective leadership, to inform organisations where to assign their newly developed leaders and where to focus their skills development endeavours in the future.

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## Annex 1: Search Strategy

### Introduction

The approach adopted for the Review was devised to be sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency and quality, and sufficiently flexible to be developed and tailored as the Review progressed. Our approach was:

- comprehensive: drawing on a wide range of sources to identify research relevant to the topic
- focused: clearly addressing the aims and objectives identified above
- rigorous: identifying and critically appraising the evidence using explicit and agreed criteria
- transparent: documenting the review process

### Sources

Our approach to the literature search used multiple overlapping strategies to ensure all relevant documents were identified. The key databases searched included:

- The Social Science Citation Index.
- International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.
- Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (incorporating ASSIA, ERIC, Sociological Abstracts Social Services Abstracts and Worldwide Political Science Abstracts).
- The IDOX Information Service Database.

All these databases were searched for articles, books and other literature published between 1997 and 2009; however, relevant material published prior to 1997 and to which we were guided<sup>9</sup> was also included. Literature from/relating to the UK was given priority, although it is acknowledged that there will be much to be learnt from other parts of the world (particularly Western European countries), so all searches were undertaken in such a way that international sources were incorporated.

Extensive searches of the World Wide Web was also undertaken, using a number of user-friendly search engines (including Google, Google-Scholar and Yahoo), as these have been found on previous occasions to be useful in filling gaps, particularly in the 'grey' literature.

Discussions were also held with key stakeholders (including contacts at the NCSL, Association of Directors of Children's Services, IDeA and other public sector support agencies with whom we are in contact), as a means of identifying key documents, especially 'grey' literature.

### Search terms

A range of approaches were adopted to interrogate the databases, utilising differing combinations of search terms, both as MeSH headings and free text.

The following combination of terms were used to expose literature relating to generic leadership issues:

**Leadership + Definition/defined**

**Leadership + Successful/effective**

The following combination of terms were used to expose literature relating to leadership issues pertinent to the public sector, and honing in on the DCS role (accepting from the outset that there is likely to be little in the public domain about DCS leadership per se):

**Leadership + Public sector**  
**Leadership + Local government modernisation/LGMA**  
**Leadership + Local authority**  
**Leadership + Management**  
**Leadership + Children's services**  
**Leadership + Social services**  
**Leadership + Education**

The following combination of terms were used to expose literature relating to the skills which DCSs should exhibit in order to fulfil the requirements of their roles (accepting from the outset that there is likely to be little in the public domain about DCS roles per se):

**Role + Director of children's services/DCS**  
**Skills + Director of children's services/DCS**  
**Role + Public sector manager/Director**  
**Skills + Public sector manager/Director**  
**Role + Local authority manager/Director**  
**Skills + Local authority manager/Director**  
**Role + Director of social services**  
**Skills + Director of social services**  
**Role + Director of education**  
**Skills + Director of education**  
**Role + Lead member for children's services**  
**Skills + Lead member for children's services**

The following combination of terms were used to expose literature relating to the training and development needs of public sector managers/DCSs:

**Director of children's services/DCS + Training needs/Development needs/Training and development**  
**Public sector manager/Director + Training needs/Development Needs/Training and development**  
**Local Authority Manager/Director + Training needs/Development needs/Training and development**  
**Lead Member for children's services + Training Needs/Development Needs/Training and development**  
**Director of social services + Training needs/Development needs/Training and development**  
**Director of education + Training needs/Development needs/Training and development**

The following combination of terms were used to expose literature relating to the type of support (including courses, advice service and mentoring schemes) available to public sector managers/DCSs, and to the impact of Leadership development programmes:

**Leadership + Courses**

**Public sector leadership + Courses**

**Local government leadership + Courses**

**Local government leadership + Support**

**Public sector leadership + Support**

**Leadership + Mentoring**

**Leadership + Peer support**

**Leadership + Support**

**Leadership development programme + Content**

**Leadership development programme + Impact**

As the study progressed, more specific search terms were used, particularly on www-searches, to reflect issues emerging from the analysis of references obtained and accessed already.

9 \* For example, the NCSL identified the following as key references in the tender brief:

*DCSF (2008); Training & Development Needs of Leaders of Children's Services; Research Report No. DCSF-RW050 (conducted by York Consulting); London; Department for Children, Schools & Families.*

*DCSF (2008); 2020 Children & Young People's Workforce Strategy; London; Department for Children, Schools & Families.*

*DCSF (2008); Leading and Managing Children's Services in England: a National Professional Development Framework; London; Department for Children, Schools & Families.*

*Ofsted (2008); Joint Area Review of Haringey; London; Department for Children, Schools & Families.*

*DCSF (2008); Safeguarding the Young and Vulnerable: DCSF Response to Joint Chief Inspector's Report 2008; London; Department for Children, Schools & Families.*

*DCSF (2007); Statutory Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Directors of Children's Services and the Lead Members for Children's Services; London; Department for Children, Schools & Families.*

*NCSL (2008); Successful Leadership for Promoting the Achievement of White Working Class Pupils; Nottingham; National College for School Leadership.*

## Annex 2: Leadership development initiatives/programmes

### SCIE: Social Care Leadership Development Programme

Run by the King's Fund, Birmingham University (Institute of Local Government) and The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, the programme is targeted at senior managers in adult social care with either lead responsibility for commissioning or an equivalent provider role. Three discrete modules each address a core theme:

#### 1. Leadership for social care outcomes:

- outcomes-centred planning
- power, empowerment, rights and risks
- equality and diversity
- user and community involvement
- performance management and quality assurance

#### 2. Personal and organisational leadership:

- understanding and developing yourself as a leader
- individual and team leadership
- leading change in organisations
- systems and complexity
- understanding under-the-surface dynamics in organisations, teams and individuals
- creating a user-focused learning culture

#### 3. Community Leadership:

- partnership and networks
- integrated commissioning and service delivery
- social inclusion
- community capacity building
- negotiation between community, voluntary and statutory organisations

The programme's delivery includes 'whole cohort events', individual coaching, and learning sets that support the practical application of leadership in participants' own daily work. Participants are encouraged to register for the University of Birmingham Postgraduate Certificate in Strategic Social Care Leadership (which has been designed specifically for this programme), and are able to apply for transfer to the MSc in Social Care Leadership and Management.

Details can be obtained from the SCIE website, via the following link:

[www.scie.org.uk/workforce/ldp.asp](http://www.scie.org.uk/workforce/ldp.asp)

**Contact details:**

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Programme Administrator  
SCIE, Goldings House  
2 Hay's Lane  
London, SE1 2HB

T: 020 7089 6920

E: elizabeth.scott@scie.org.uk.

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Practice Development Manager

T: 020 7089 7112

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**MSC: National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership**

The complete set of National Occupational Standards for Management and Leadership are listed below. The standards are 'proven' benchmarks of best practice and have been developed based on extensive consultation with genuine managers doing real management jobs. They offer a practical resource to aid decisions in everything from day-to-day matters like recruitment and selection to long-term issues such as the recognition and development of future leaders.

**Section A Managing self and personal skills**

- A1** Manage your own resources.
- A2** Manage your own resources and professional development.
- A3** Develop your personal networks.

**Section B Providing direction**

- B1** Develop and implement operational plans for your area of responsibility.
- B2** Map the environment in which your organisation operates.
- B3** Develop a strategic business plan for your organisation.
- B4** Put the strategic business plan into action.
- B5** Provide leadership for your team.
- B6** Provide leadership in your area of responsibility.
- B7** Provide leadership for your organisation.
- B8** Ensure compliance with legal, regulatory, ethical and social requirements.
- B9** Develop the culture of your organisation.
- B10** Manage risk.
- B11** Promote equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in your area of responsibility.
- B12** Promote equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in your organisation.

### **Section C Facilitating change**

- C1** Encourage innovation in your team.
- C2** Encourage innovation in your area of responsibility.
- C3** Encourage innovation in your organisation.
- C4** Lead change.
- C5** Plan change.
- C6** Implement change.

### **Section D Working with people**

- D1** Develop productive working relationships with colleagues.
- D2** Develop productive working relationships with colleagues and stakeholders.
- D3** Recruit, select and keep colleagues.
- D4** Plan the workforce.
- D5** Allocate and check work in your team.
- D6** Allocate and monitor the progress and quality of work in your area of responsibility.
- D7** Provide learning opportunities for colleagues.
- D8** Help team members address problems affecting their performance.
- D9** Build and manage teams.
- D10** Reduce and manage conflict in your team.
- D11** Lead meetings.
- D12** Participate in meetings.
- D13** Support individuals to develop and maintain their performance.
- D14** Initiate and follow disciplinary procedure.
- D15** Initiate and follow grievance procedure.
- D16** Manage redundancies in your area of responsibility.
- D17** Build and sustain collaborative relationships with other organisations.

### **Section E Using resources**

- E1** Manage a budget.
- E2** Manage finance for your area of responsibility.
- E3** Obtain additional finance for the organisation.
- E4** Promote the use of technology within your organisation.
- E5** Ensure your own actions reduce risks to health and safety.
- E6** Ensure health and safety requirements are met in your area of responsibility.
- E7** Ensure an effective organisational approach to health and safety.
- E8** Manage physical resources.
- E9** Manage the environmental impact of your work.
- E10** Take effective decisions.

- E11** Communicate information and knowledge.
- E12** Manage knowledge in your area of responsibility.
- E13** Promote knowledge management in your organisation.
- E14** Support team and virtual working.
- E15** Procure supplies.
- E16** Select suppliers through a tendering process.
- E17** Outsource business processes.

### **Section F Achieving results**

- F1** Manage a project.
- F2** Manage a programme of complementary projects.
- F3** Manage business processes.
- F4** Develop and implement marketing plans for your area of responsibility.
- F5** Resolve customer service problems.
- F6** Monitor and solve customer service problems.
- F7** Support customer service improvements.
- F8** Work with others to improve customer service.
- F9** Build your organisation's understanding of its market and customers.
- F10** Develop a customer focussed organisation.
- F11** Manage the achievement of customer satisfaction.
- F12** Improve organisational performance.
- F13** Manage quality systems.
- F14** Prepare for and participate in quality audits.
- F15** Carry out quality audits.
- F16** Manage the development and marketing of products/services in your area of responsibility.
- F17** Manage the delivery of customer service in your area of responsibility.
- F18** Prepare sales proposals and deliver sales presentations.
- F19** Sell products/services to customers.

Details can be obtained from the MSC website, via the following link:

[www.management-standards.org/content\\_1.aspx?id=10:5406&id=10:1917](http://www.management-standards.org/content_1.aspx?id=10:5406&id=10:1917).

#### **Contact details:**

Management Standards Centre  
3rd Floor, 2 Savoy Court  
Strand,  
London, WC2R 0EZ

T: 020 7240 2826

E: [management.standards@managers.org.uk](mailto:management.standards@managers.org.uk).

## **IDeA: Academy for Executive Leadership**

The Academy for Executive Leadership has been created in response to the need identified by senior executives in local government for a programme that would go beyond familiar day-to-day leadership issues to explore the longer-term strategic, political and democratic matters that will shape the future of local government and local communities.

Delivered in partnership with SOLACE Enterprises and Ashridge Business School, the AEL comprises two, three-day residential modules, plus a 24-hour residential module 3.

The first two modules, delivered by Ashridge and SOLACE Enterprises, integrate cutting-edge techniques with experiential activities taken from real life incidents. Action learning and peer group reflection, sharing and support also form part of the programme. Module 3 is delivered by SOLACE Enterprises and the IDeA.

The programme has been designed to enable participants to:

- enhance their understanding of live strategic issues in local and central government and progress organisational development
- focus on maximising opportunities for performance improvement
- fulfil personal development needs through guided reflection and change
- develop leadership strategies and implement significant action plans
- meet the challenges of leadership and public sector reform in modernising councils and service delivery
- explore and experience, with peers, effective leadership practice
- enhance the effective relationships of political and managerial leadership
- develop high-performance relationships, teams and partnerships.

## **Module key themes**

### **Module 1: My personal leadership in context**

- Providing effective leadership to organisational improvement, this being an essential and recurring element of the programme.
- Exploring beliefs and assumptions associated with leadership and, by examining current leadership themes, defining personal leadership perspectives, developing a personal leadership proposition and identifying one's own distinctive contribution as a leader.
- Focusing on the role that 'emotional intelligence' plays in effective leadership.
- Appreciating personality preferences of self and others and determining the impact that differences in preferences have upon leadership style.
- Building self-awareness and deep personal insights by receiving feedback on one's leadership style and personal impact through 360-degree feedback generated from participants' managers, peers and direct reports.
- Challenging participants' perspectives on strategy in local government and exploring the strategic process.
- Honing leadership skills through a series of highly focused activities, exercises and facilitated coaching, including through exploring and practicing difficult conversations.

### **Module 2: Political and strategic leadership**

- Examining the evolving public sector context which shapes the kind of leadership needed, with a focus on leading in a political environment.
- Participating in a simulation designed to integrate learning on the programme, giving participants' opportunities to test their leadership styles, receive feedback and to challenge views on leadership in a highly experiential way.
- Focusing on personal lifestyle and how as a leader to be renewed and sustained by building on personal leadership propositions.

### **Module 3: Providing community leadership**

- Exploring community leadership, place-shaping and applying personal leadership in a political context to deliver improved community outcomes.
- Bringing it all together by reviewing and applying learning, clarifying personal leadership insights and personal development planning.
- Providing an opportunity to explore leadership propositions through interaction with an inspirational guest speaker.

A senior IDeA learning consultant will be actively involved in all three modules.

Details can be obtained from the IDeA website at the following address:

[www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=1701171#contents-6](http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=1701171#contents-6)

#### **Contact details:**

Liz Cole

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E: [liz.cole@idea.gov.uk](mailto:liz.cole@idea.gov.uk).

### **Leadership Centre for Local Government**

The Leadership Centre gives chief executives, leaders, their corporate management team and the cabinet the opportunity to shift their thinking on leadership so they can fundamentally transform their communities for the better. They work with authorities in the following ways:

#### **Local leadership projects**

A local leadership project helps an authority to understand its capacity for leadership and move into a position to determine what it needs to do in order to develop.

#### **Leadership of place**

The LCLG has set up a Practice of Place, which is a community of 60 key individuals in local government who, over the next 18 months, will explore what it means to shape place and how to go about doing it.

## **Civic Pride**

A unique programme designed to encourage confident, capable and visionary local leadership among local government politicians, Civic Pride is made up of five programmes that promote and support local politicians at each stage of their political lives, helping to reinvigorate local democracy.

## **Leadership Development Suppliers' Database.**

The LCLG has worked with over 100 of the country's major suppliers of leadership development to build up a database of the services they have to offer. The database provides local authorities with details of their leadership partner supplier organisations, namely:

- Common Purpose.
- Lane 4 Management Group Ltd.
- Nicholson McBride.
- OPM.
- Praesta.
- SOLACE Enterprises.
- Stanton Marris.
- The Tavistock Institute.

The database also contains:

- Details of what our leadership partners and over 60 other leadership development suppliers can offer in terms of leadership development services and support.
- The facility to contact the Leadership Centre for reference details for all leadership development suppliers listed in the database – not just the leadership partners.
- Case studies of other organisations which have used these suppliers, so they can obtain customer feedback on the quality of the services being offered.
- A searchable facility for authorities to find leadership development services in proximity to the authority.

Details can be obtained from the LCLG website at the following address:

[www.localleadership.gov.uk/](http://www.localleadership.gov.uk/).

### **Contact details:**

Warwick House  
25 Buckingham Palace Road  
London, SW1W 0PP

T: 020 7630 2180

E: [info@localleadership.gov.uk](mailto:info@localleadership.gov.uk).

## **CEL: Centre for Excellence in Leadership**

Merging some of its functions in October 2008 with the QIA into the Learning & Skills Improvement Service, the CEL remit was to foster and support leadership improvement, reform and transformation throughout the FE sector. It serves the existing and future leaders of all providers within the further education and skills system, including FE colleges, training and work-based learning providers, adult and community providers, offender learning, specialist colleges and voluntary organisations.

The Leadership in Practice programme has been designed as a leadership development programme relevant for the new focus of the FE system, as identified in the white paper and the Foster and Leitch reviews.

It builds on its successful CEL precursors, the Modular management programme and Leaders of teachers, and is particularly appropriate for first and second line managers in curriculum and business support areas. This programme is designed to move individuals from a personal understanding of their own leadership strengths and development needs through to an understanding of the difference between the management of learning and leadership.

Details can be obtained from the CEL website at the following address:

[www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/default.aspx](http://www.centreforexcellence.org.uk/default.aspx).

### **Contact details:**

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Coventry

West Midlands, CV1 2TE

Lancaster Leadership Centre

Lancaster University Management School

Lancaster, LA1 4YX

T: 0870 211 3434

E: [enquiriescoventry@lsis.org.uk](mailto:enquiriescoventry@lsis.org.uk).

## **MoD: Defence Leadership & Management College**

The Defence Leadership & Management Centre (DLMC), sits within the Defence College of Management and Technology, which is part of the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom. The mission of the DLMC is to improve the ability of our people to lead, manage and command, by giving them the necessary vocabulary, tools and techniques to be able to operate at the strategic levels of Defence. The long-term objective is to become the first port of call for advice, education and training in Leadership, Management and Finance, across the Ministry of Defence, and where appropriate, the wider public sector.

The DLMC aims to equip MoD Personnel with the necessary vocabulary, tools and techniques to be able to operate at the strategic levels of Defence. The DLMC provides opportunities for education through a series of bespoke programmes, short courses and academic qualifications to personnel up to and including 4-star rank. Course development is underpinned by an active research programme.

## Defence Strategic Leadership Programme

A one week residential foundation module designed to enhance strategic leadership at the corporate and strategic level across defence. Followed by a series of three electives designed to meet individual developmental objectives identified during the programme.

### Aims:

- to encourage greater self awareness and understanding of the interaction between leader and the 'team' within a context of contemporary thinking
- to explore the corporate environment in which defence is managed and examine the attributes and concepts required to deliver solutions to the strategic challenges
- to examine examples that both maximise and limit the potential performance of board/top team
- to give participants the opportunity to exchange leadership experiences with senior executives from non-defence related organisations
- to reflect and consider future developmental needs

### Objectives:

By the end of the foundation module delegates will have gained a greater self-awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses and more importantly how they are perceived as a leader. They will have gained insight into the strategic context of top level decision making and the demands of leading Defence at the highest level. The delegates will also have gained a deeper understanding of how ethics, complexity and ambiguity impact on the challenges of leading in the strategic environment.

### Designed for:

All one-star officers and ML3 members of the Senior Civil Service serving in the MoD and certain OF5 (Band B1) in strategic posts. Participation by other government departments is welcome. Previous participants have come from the Cabinet Office, NHS, NIO, DWP, DEFRA, GCHQ, Home Office, FCO, Police and Fire Services, HMRC, NSG.

Details can be obtained from the DLMC website at the following address:

[www.da.mod.uk/colleges/dcmt/defence-leadership-and-management-centre](http://www.da.mod.uk/colleges/dcmt/defence-leadership-and-management-centre).

### Contact details:

Defence Academy of the United Kingdom  
Headquarters, Greenhill House  
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Wiltshire, SN6 8LA

T: 01793 785615

E: [dlimcdeliveryteamadmins@defenceacademy.mod.uk](mailto:dlimcdeliveryteamadmins@defenceacademy.mod.uk).

## Publications and resources also available from NCSL:

NCSL programmes for school leaders at all levels. [www.ncsl.org.uk/programmes](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/programmes)

Publications and resources available to download and order. [www.ncsl.org.uk/publications](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/publications)

The Leadership Library is a free unique resource bringing together some of the best leadership and management thinking from around the world. [www.ncsl.org.uk/leadershiplibrary](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/leadershiplibrary)

The Learning Gateway is a single access point to all NCSL's online learning tools and resources. It provides access to talk2learn, a vibrant online community of over 120,000 members. [www.ncsl.org.uk/learninggateway](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/learninggateway)

The Tomorrow's Leaders Today campaign is about finding, developing and keeping great headteachers. [www.ncsl.org.uk/tomorrowsleaderstoday](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/tomorrowsleaderstoday)

ECM Leadership Direct is an online resource exploring the implications for Every Child Matters for schools and school leaders. [www.ncsl.org.uk/ecmleadershipdirect](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/ecmleadershipdirect)

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E: [enquiries@ncsl.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ncsl.org.uk)  
W: [www.ncsl.org.uk](http://www.ncsl.org.uk)

NCSL's remit now includes leaders of schools, children's centres and children's services. To reflect this we're changing our name.

Find out more at  
[www.ncsl.org.uk/changing](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/changing)