

# Leadership Programmes 2026

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# **What people said about our 2025 Programmes**

**"Content was good with a good range of activities"**

**"I have enjoyed all the sessions and appreciated how much I have learnt"**

**"Very well delivered"**

**"Stayed engaged throughout - was a good interactive session"**

**"The team building task was effective for collaboration and assessing leadership"**

**"The presentation / panel was a great opportunity to engage with SLT"**

**"Coaching was helpful to me"**

**"Content is good - useful, applicable and research led"**

**"Great information & strategic thinking measures to use in daily tasks"**

**"Enjoy listening to each other's experiences"**

**"Making it clear & simple how to manage difficult conversations!"**

**"I have enjoyed all the sessions and appreciate how much I have learnt"**

## Leadership Programmes 2026

The Wessex Group of Sixth Form Colleges is committed to developing its staff to become leaders.

Building on 20 years of success in leadership programmes for Future, Middle and Senior Managers, the Wessex Group is once again offering a programme of leadership development activities for 2026. To enhance informal networking, mutual trust and individual engagement we plan on holding all sessions face-to-face (though we can quickly adapt), and we remain committed to offering high quality, useful and inspiring programmes for all leadership levels.

Our programmes for Middle and Senior Managers are run as 3 separate sessions each of 2 days duration - 6 days in total. The Middle Managers and Senior Managers programmes are residential. Our Future Managers' programme comprises an initial 2-day session and 4 further individual days, so is also 6 days in total. Our Future Managers' programme is accredited, leading to the ILM Level 5 Certificate in Leadership and Management.

- **Future Managers** – an accredited programme for nearly or very new managers who are planning a career in sixth form college leadership and are taking first steps.
- **Middle Managers** – development for current middle managers, from those new in post to managers with some experience.
- **Senior Managers** – a leadership programme for senior managers who may be new in post and/or planning a further career move within sixth form college leadership

**IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT ELIGIBILITY** - The Leadership programmes for Future, Middle and Senior Managers are open to **ALL staff in the Wessex Group including teaching, non-teaching and support staff**, provided that they meet the general and specific course requirements.

### ENTRY CRITERIA

The Wessex Group's Leadership Programmes are prestigious and highly valued by those that have taken part in past training. It is expected that applications to take part in the programmes will be from staff who:

- have demonstrated commitment to their personal and career development
- are interested in furthering their career in colleges
- have been **recommended** for leadership development by managers who recognise their potential
- are interested in improving the impact that they have on the success of their college
- are committed to the completion of any required course work and assignments
- are committed to attending **all modules** of their programme. Unfortunately, those unable to attend the first sessions will forfeit their places on the rest of the programme as well as the fee if their place cannot be filled.

Colleges will be expected to support delegates by ensuring that they are up to date on current college policies and strategy; that they have access to materials required throughout the programmes and that they are able to take time away from the 'day job' to attend each module.

## The Programmes

### Future Managers

This programme has been tried and tested over nearly 20 years. It is aimed at new or aspiring first line managers who may be working in a curriculum or business, learning or support area. The course began as a Wessex/LSIS (Learning and Skills Improvement Service) pilot and has been developed to equip staff with the confidence, self-awareness and knowledge to **move into** leadership positions e.g. Head of Department, Business Manager or Manager of another aspect of support services.

The programme consists of three modules focusing on:

- Self-management and leadership
- Leading others
- Leading within my organisation and the sector

There is an opportunity for this accredited training to lead to a Level 5 Certificate with the Institute for Leadership and Management (ILM) and there will be a requirement for project work and assignments to be completed between and after modules. Action Learning Sets run throughout the programme and allow course participants to build a strong, supportive peer network whilst working through the course content in practical scenarios. Delegates also have the opportunity to take part in a leadership survey leading to a detailed report on their preferred styles and leadership behaviours.

**Who should apply?** Those applying to the course are likely to be new managers or people with the potential to progress to a leadership role in the near future, in both teaching and non-teaching areas of the college. Candidates are likely to have had little or no formal leadership and management development.

*See also page 3 for general criteria for admission to 2026 programmes.*

#### **Dates:**

6 sessions January to July 2026

**Thursday and Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

**Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026 tbc**

**Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2026**

**Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

*In response to feedback, no modules will run in May.*

## Middle Managers

This highly successful leadership development programme for Middle Managers aims to provide participants with an understanding of leadership qualities, skills and behaviours as well as to provide opportunities for developing and practising skills for key roles and tasks.

The programme provides six cohesive training days (in blocks of 2 days each) led by professional facilitators/trainers. There will be opportunities to work on real issues and concerns, allowing delegates to draw on the programme content in an environment supported by experts. Each delegate will have a written report and 1:1 coaching/feedback from a 360° survey conducted at the start of the course. Further diagnostic surveys are included and the results explained in a supportive setting. Opportunities for short term placements in other partnership colleges can also be arranged.

Programme content will cover:

- Personal Leadership Development (2 days)
- Decision-making, priorities and approaches to change
- Leading the team: building relationships and capacity
- Culture, Strategy and Vision
- Review, reflection and forward planning for personal development

Each successful candidate will be allocated a mentor who will preferably not be a line manager and will be a senior post-holder. It is expected that participants will interact with mentors around 3-4 times during the year.

**Who should apply?** Newly appointed and existing middle managers with the potential for further leadership responsibilities in Wessex Group Sixth Form Colleges. This might include:

- Non-teaching staff with a managerial role in planning, service development and other support areas
- Heads of curriculum departments
- Managers of tutorial provision
- Staff with a role in improving quality in sixth form colleges by managing the delivery of key components of provision

*See also page 3 for general criteria for admission to 2026 programmes.*

### Dates:

**Thursday and Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

**Tuesday and Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

**Thursday and Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November 2026**

## Senior Managers

This Leadership Programme has been tailored to the needs of senior managers within the Wessex Group since 2008. Working with national training providers, as well as the skills and experience of existing senior managers, this course consists of 6 days of professionally facilitated training (in 3 blocks of 2 days). Each delegate will have a written report and 1:1 coaching/feedback from a 360° survey conducted at the start of the course. Opportunities for short term placements in other partnership colleges can also be arranged.

Programme content will cover:

- Personal Leadership Development (2 days)
- Understanding and developing strategy and vision
- Leading organisations and managing change
- Leading people
- Review, reflection and forward planning for impact

There will be some reading and project work between the course sessions and in the time between the linked training days there will be the opportunity to work on real issues and concerns, drawing on the lessons from the training within a supported environment. Principal mentors will be allocated to all those on the Senior Managers' Programme. Preparation will be needed in advance of the first session and instructions will be provided to those successful in securing a place on the programme.

Potential candidates need to be aware that some of the content of this programme is similar to that on the Middle Managers' Programme. However, the course has been designed to ensure that learning is relevant to leading in a *senior* role.

**Who should apply?** Existing, new and aspiring senior managers who are operating at the level of or are in regular contact with Senior Management Teams. Candidates' applications will have been endorsed by their Principal and are likely to be from:

- Assistant and Vice Principals
- Senior Support Staff with a strategic role
- Heads of Faculty with a role in college strategy development

*See also page 3 for general criteria for admission to 2026 programmes.*

### Dates:

**Wednesday and Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> February and 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

**Tuesday and Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

**Thursday and Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November 2026**

## Core Knowledge for Leaders

After last year's successful first run, we are again offering this popular one-day event for staff typically at Future and Middle Manager level with sessions covering:

- sector context, statutory and financial outline, union activity
- reputational management and professional conduct – self and others
- using policies and procedures
- seeing the bigger picture and cross college activity
- review, reflection and realistic planning for impact

### Date:

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2026**

Look out for further details coming in the spring!

## Course Fees

The costs of all programmes run by the Wessex Group are shared between those taking part. Without complete information about training and venue costs and candidate numbers at the time of advertising each programme, the final fees cannot be determined. We therefore ask for **an advance payment once delegate lists have been confirmed** and this may be adjusted upon the completion of the course. However, our estimates have tended to be accurate over the years.

We have worked hard to reduce costs as much as possible and have negotiated with trainers, venues and other providers. This year's fees are based on cohorts of 11. There has been a small increase in fees this year for Middle and Senior Managers, with Future Managers fees being the same as last year. Fees remain subject to small changes as agreed by the Wessex Group Executive for Leadership Programmes and may even reduce if large numbers of delegate bookings are made. The programmes continue to be keenly priced as well as highly relevant. Course fees estimates are as follows:

| Course                                   | Advance payment <sup>1</sup> |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Leadership Programme for Future Managers | £1,950                       |
| Leadership Programme for Middle Managers | £1,880                       |
| Leadership Programme for Senior Managers | £1,880                       |

## How to apply

Following discussion with your Staff Development Officer, line manager and senior managers, an application should be submitted electronically by your staff development officer via the Wessex Group website no later than Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Enquiries should be directed to the Wessex Group Manager, Gillian Cross [gillian@wessexsfc.ac.uk](mailto:gillian@wessexsfc.ac.uk)

## Links to booking:

FUTURE: <https://wessexsfc.ac.uk/courses/event/detail/533>

MIDDLE: <https://wessexsfc.ac.uk/courses/event/detail/527>

SENIOR: <https://wessexsfc.ac.uk/courses/event/detail/530>

Or go to the Training and Development page on the Wessex Group website and search for the course.

**Closing date: Friday, 7th November 2025**

## Book now!

Please book as soon as possible, preferably well in advance of the closing date. We need to ensure that we have enough people to run each course, so that we can make suitable arrangements such as venues, activities etc. in good time, and set in train the pre-course preparation. Once the delegate lists are agreed, the commitment to payment is finalised, required and non-refundable.

In the event of oversubscription for courses, arrangements have to be made to decide how places will be allocated (via the Wessex Group Executive Group for Leadership Programmes). Booking is not a guarantee of a place. This will be confirmed soon after the closing date.

*Gillian Cross – Wessex Group Manager*

<sup>1</sup> Paid following invoice which will be sent after programmes have been confirmed and delegate lists finalised.