

WESSEX
GROUP
OF 6TH FORM
COLLEGES

WORKING IN HAMPSHIRE
PORTSMOUTH
SOUTHAMPTON

STAFF
TRAINING &
DEVELOPMENT

7

STAFF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

CONTENTS

What we offer

Evaluation and impact

Where next?

What are the lessons?

This booklet describes the joint staff training and development undertaken by the Wessex Group. It examines the impact of what is provided and offers tips about managing joint training in a cost-effective and low maintenance way, including common inset days for all staff.

WHAT WE OFFER

The Wessex Group¹ provides local training opportunities using external and in-house expertise. This incorporates:

- **Bespoke programmes** – commissioned to meet the needs of partnership colleges and delivered locally
- **In-house training programmes** – run annually for groups of staff
- **One-off events** for a local audience
- **Work shadowing**

Bespoke programmes

The Wessex Group offers a range of bespoke development opportunities to its staff and senior managers. There are annual **leadership programmes** for future, middle and senior managers as well as for support staff team leaders. From 2011, an accredited coaching programme with a focus on building capacity and improving performance is also offered to senior staff in the partnership (see booklet 4, page 8).

The crucial benefit of bespoke programmes is that they reflect the agreed needs of Wessex Group colleges. They are designed to enable the content to flex to meet the needs of the participants and the changing external context. An Executive Group for Leadership Programmes sets the direction and success criteria for

¹ Formerly the Hampshire Sixth Form Colleges' Partnership

bespoke programmes and monitors quality. A decision has been taken not to apply for accreditation of the programmes to prevent their format and content being set in stone. More information on these programmes can be found in booklet 4.

In-house training programmes

A number of annual training and induction events take place within the partnership. **A newly qualified teacher (NQT) induction** programme is held each year attended by large groups of NQTs – on average around 30 each year. The size of the cohort across the partnership is made up of small groups within individual colleges who otherwise might not have had the chance to meet with a larger group of NQTs. The group size also attracts in-house and external trainers to a larger audience.

There are three sessions during the NQT qualifying year and the programme and content are kept under **review** by the Partnership Manager. From time to time, the group of NQT induction managers meets to conduct a longer term review of feedback and evaluation data and the programme is reshaped to better reflect what NQTs want (see case study overleaf). Speaker/contributor briefings are created to ensure that messages about the style and format are reinforced. The Wessex Group's values and current priorities (see booklet 2) are also taken into account in designing the days and there is a strong focus on building in good practice from experienced staff in the partnership.

Each college provides its **governors** with in-house induction based on the specific format and structure of governance in their own college. The partnership also provides a broad induction session using an accredited governor trainer who is also a college principal. The benefits of bringing together governors from different colleges who are new or relatively new in post are highly valued by course participants. Feedback repeatedly highlights the value of meeting with peers in different environments.

The session is usually over one evening and the focus is on the statutory requirements surrounding governance of corporations, together with a brief outline of the composition and structures of corporations, the role of further education, leadership and management, 'good' governance and training and development opportunities. There is also time for a briefing on the current landscape of sixth form policy and practice and some practical exercises using real examples facing corporations.

CASE STUDY

NQT Induction Programme

Autumn term – Introduction to the network and practical tips

- Introduction to the network
- Time management
- Introduction to pastoral role
- Choice from 10 workshops with experienced Wessex Group practitioners including classroom management; supporting students needing help with their learning; effective marking and feedback; use of ILT; lesson observations
- Tips from a recently ex-NQT.

Spring term – Managing classroom behaviour

External trainer focusing on understanding how to build solutions; core principles for effective behaviour management; the language of choice; practical techniques and strategies with a strong reference to each participant's context back in college.

Summer term – Looking forward

- Improving classroom performance – a range of skills and strategies
- an introduction to performance data and how it is used
- Career and professional development – with senior staff panel
- Continuing the practice of professional reflection.

Student governors have a separate induction at a time which suits most colleges. Not all appointments/elections of student governors take place at the same time of year and at the time of the session – normally late in the summer term – there is a range of experience levels in the group. This works well as it allows students to learn from each other, to share concerns and to ask each other questions. The induction incorporates expertise from within the partnership and there is a mix of group work with presentations from a clerk, Principal, ex-student governor, and the Partnership Manager. As well as some of the statutory guidance on governance, there is an emphasis on meetings protocol and communication skills which are designed to be useful in a wider working context.

One-off events

Bringing trainers to the Wessex Group rather than despatching staff from many colleges to many national events makes sense for many reasons – not the least of which is cost. The partnership has an ad hoc programme of training and briefing events which reflect the training and continuing professional development (CPD) needs of colleges throughout the year.

The impetus for these events can vary. The many networks (booklets 2 and 6) that meet as part of the Wessex Group often have training and development as a standing agenda item. The staff development officers can make suggestions in their group meetings and discuss likely viability of a joint event; or the Partnership Manager will assess likely

demand between meetings via email. The Vice-Principal (Curriculum) Group will share common concerns about particular subjects as will the Curriculum Support Groups and the shared cost of attracting a senior examiner to a local training day represents a considerable saving to colleges as well as providing an opportunity for learning from peers in a local setting. In addition to curriculum briefings and training from exam boards, Wessex Group training has included:

- **Dealing with challenging behaviour**
- **Managing underperformance**
- **Funding formula**
- **Chairing skills for governors**
- **Financial skills for governors**
- **Having difficult conversations**
- **Minute taking**
- **Dealing with students with mental health problems**
- **Presentation skills**
- **Equality and Diversity training for staff and governors**
- **Customer services**
- **Assertiveness training**

The opportunity to bring groups of staff with a common interest together has led to a number of **briefing** sessions. These have been particularly valuable as policy is unveiled, new initiatives are launched or when major consultations are under way. Principals and Chairs have held joint events to consider the Machinery of Government changes, the 14-19 agenda, capital funding etc. Other staff have requested briefings, for example on the Diploma, funding changes, the Institute for Learning, Equality and Diversity. The partnership has been able to attract speakers to the relatively large audience across the 11 colleges and the costs (if there are any) are diluted.

Not all staff have the opportunity to attend the many network and peer meetings run by the Wessex Group. The Curriculum Support Groups tend to be attended by one member of staff per college – though this is not always true. There are some networks for support staff although not all are catered for. This was one of the reasons behind a decision to hold a **common inset day**.

Common inset day – without tears

A day is selected each year for all colleges to run a variety of training events – many of which will be open to all Wessex Group Colleges. The content of each college's day is determined by the colleges themselves although the planning of the day has significant input from members of the Staff Development Officers' Group who encourage and facilitate the organisation of particular sessions. The Curriculum Support Groups and the Vice-Principal (Curriculum) Group also identify areas that they think ought to be offered and organise what they want themselves.

A programme of the open events is compiled and circulated to colleges with details of content, timing, trainer, booking information and any fees (most sessions are free unless the host college has incurred an additional charge). Bookings are taken by individual colleges and may be on-line or via email depending on college systems.

There are advantages to working this way:

- the logistics of organising are shared across the colleges
- the light touch central planning allows for a balanced programme
- a variety of staff groups are catered for
- subject teachers can get together in larger groups than usual.

Support staff often have a variety of roles and responsibilities. Offering a peer group for a particular aspect of their role would be impractical as they may need to attend many different groups. From time to time, groups of staff are offered **support staff open days in other colleges**. This provides an opportunity for staff to meet in a different environment and to share ideas and approaches to their roles. The focus of each day varies and has included adult education, reprographics, reception, admission, copyright. The sorts of issues that will be discussed naturally reflect the interests of the groups of staff attending, but each group is asked to come prepared with things to share with other colleges – for example, a problem that they have solved, a way of working that has improved the delivery of the service they provide, queries or requests for ideas from similar departments in other colleges.

Work shadowing

The Wessex Group runs a work shadowing scheme open to all staff in the partnership. The scheme provides opportunities for staff to learn in some depth how colleagues in other colleges operate and there is recognition that there could be different reasons for wanting to do this, including:

- **Preparation for promotion and/or career development**
- **Development opportunity to learn about different approaches**
- **Project management** – for example shadowing someone who is leading a particular aspect of a staff member's current or future role.

The scheme operates relatively simply and informally. An expression of interest form is circulated throughout the partnership and offers to host are collated by the Partnership Manager. Once participants have been put in contact with each other, they plan a placement to meet the aims of the shadow. Placements are mostly of one or two days duration, although for a specific project the timetable may be spread out over a longer time.

There is some tracking and evaluation to ensure that the matches have worked well and to assess whether the individual aims were met.

EVALUATION AND IMPACT

The Wessex Group evaluates the quality of each event and feedback is collated and circulated within the partnership. Periodic longer term reviews are undertaken and different groups within the partnership take on responsibility for monitoring specific programmes eg the NQT induction managers, staff development officers, the Executive Group. Principals receive regular reports of training events, uptake, colleges attended and evaluation feedback.

It is more difficult to measure the impact of one-off events and this is something that is revisited by members of the Staff Development Officers Group who share their approaches to assessing impact in their own colleges. The assessment

of impact and long-term value of the larger development programmes is discussed elsewhere in this resource (see booklet 4).

WHERE NEXT?

There is always scope to do more joint staff training events although the degree to which staff development priorities will change and be funded has to be taken into account.

It might be worth considering developing an annual programme of events, although the flexibility of providing one-off training as the need arises is a strength and some flexibility would need to be built in to accommodate this. The S7 consortium of colleges provides almost all staff training for the participant colleges and there is obviously scope for a much wider remit. Individual colleges would still need to champion their own training causes to match their specific training needs as identified through self-assessment, action planning and the staff appraisal system. The existence of the Staff Development Group within the Wessex Group allows us to keep the balance of partnership vs individual college training under constant review.

An on-line booking system which generated data for delegate lists and mailing of joining instructions would reduce the administration needs. This is currently under development.

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS?

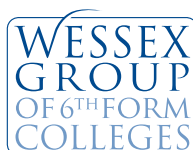
Whilst there are specific lessons for individual events, the general findings of evaluation and softer feedback are that:

- It is **less expensive** to organise local events using external trainers than it is to send small groups of staff to national events – obvious but true!
- Staff value events that are **local** and with peers
- The opportunity to **discuss** with peers during the training is therefore vital
- The critical mass to ensure the above is usually **12 members of staff** although this can vary depending upon the cost of the trainer
- The size of the Wessex Group staff cohort provides an attractive platform for **national speakers**
- The **range** of staff with access to joint training is considerable and includes governors and support staff as well as teachers and managers
- Having training in colleges provides a relevant context with **access** to IT and resources AND keeps costs down
- The existence of peer groups across the partnership helps to ensure that training needs are **identified** and corroborated.
- Peer groups also play a valuable role in **monitoring** and review of joint training
- A local programme of events can tap into both **external and in-house expertise** which enriches the content
- **bespoke** programmes reflect the agreed priorities and needs of Wessex Group colleges

TIP

The critical mass for training groups is usually 12 members of staff and up to 16.

This helps to ensure that the cost of the trainer is shared into a manageable fee for individual colleges. It also allows for delegates to maximise learning from peers.



WORKING IN HAMPSHIRE
PORTSMOUTH
SOUTHAMPTON

This resource has been written by Liz Winn

www.wessexsfc.ac.uk

Published in 2011

Copyright © Wessex Group of Sixth Form Colleges 2011