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One Minute Guide: The Role of Workforce Development in a 'Learning' Culture

What is this about?

[One Minute Guide \(OMG\) No. 021](#), published back in March 2013, covered the topic of a 'Learning Organisation'. This edition continues with the theme highlighting the role that workforce development has to play in the promotion of a 'learning' culture.

What happens in Workforce Development?

Tasks such as the commissioning learning and development activities, workforce monitoring, recruitment and retention, induction, delivery of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) and co-ordination of practice education are delivered by the [Workforce Development Team](#) in the Children's Trust.

Learning and development activities, such as training, coaching, mentoring, shadowing, action learning sets etc. are only a small part of what contributes to a 'learning' culture. These activities need to be joined up to strategic planning and informed by the 'business', including feedback from service users, specifically children and young people, either provided directly through consultation and participation or via compliments, complaints and comments.

What activities are commissioned need also to be informed by the results of quality assurance audits, 'health' checks, 'deep dives' and the monitoring of Management Information, including score cards and quarterly reports. When these get shared with Workforce Development, they can help inform any gaps in knowledge, skills or experience that need addressing.

The Workforce Development Team also support evidence informed practice in partnership with Research in Practice, Making Research Count (MRC) and Community Care Informs and by managing the [Evidence Informed Practice](#) mailbox, responding to requests for research and other resources.

How can this help me with my role and development of my practice?

The Workforce Development Team is available to support you! A fully joined up 'learning' organisation, with feedback systems in place, will ensure that that the workforce is enabled to deliver its role, as outlined in various action plans, such as the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), either directly with service users or in support of those that deliver that work. If feedback is not received, resources cannot effectively be targeted to those areas that most need it. Workforce Development can support you as an individual or your Team, by identification of appropriate learning opportunities, with facilitation of a Development Day or provision of resources such as DVDs, books and hand outs.

Do I have a part to play?

The whole of the workforce has a part to play – a ‘learning culture’ can’t happen without you! You can support Workforce Development and the continuous improvement of Children’s Services as a ‘learning’ organisation by engaging with the following activities:

- Providing your feedback on what is going well, and what needs to be improved, plus suggestions of how this might be achieved. This can be undertaken with managers via Team Meetings, One-to-One Meetings/Supervision, Performance Management Reviews, with the Principal Child and Family Social Worker (PCFSW) at a Social Work Briefing, completion of the annual Social Worker ‘Health’ Check or direct to the [Children's Services Staff Feedback mail box](#).
- Engaging with the Corporate [Performance Management](#) process, agreeing with your Line Manager your Personal Development Plan (PDP) and ensuring that any general development needs get incorporated into your Team Training Plan as this, plus your PDP, will help Workforce Development identify what training needs to be commissioned.
- Encouraging the service users that you work with, particularly children and young people, to provide feedback so that their views can inform their own assessment and care planning, via the new FLUID consultation tool, advocacy or through the Children in Care Councils (CCiCs), but can also be collated and included in the feedback reports that are presented to the Children’s Trust Management Team (CTMT) and the Children’s Services Management Team (CSMT) that inform strategic planning and resource allocation.
- Speak to your Line Manager about how you could take part more formally in the development of services perhaps by joining the Voice of the Child (VoC) Working Group..
- Complete the Evaluation Form, provided at the end of any training delivered as part of the CS Learning and Development Programme or the [LSCB Training Programme](#) and participate in post-training follow up to ensure that we deliver the right training, to the right people by the best providers. Information on these forms is collated with independent observations of training, carried out by members of the Workforce Development Team as part of our quality assurance processes.
- If you are a manager, have an ‘open’ door policy, be accessible to your staff and transparent in your actions and planning to enable employee engagement and support the growth of your team.
- As part of your Performance Review and Planning, discuss with your line manager whether you are able to contribute to learning and development activities perhaps by coaching another member of staff in something you are skilled in, cascading training that you have attended within your Service Area, becoming the ‘go to’ person or Subject Matter Expert (SME) on a topic that you have developed a high level of knowledge and skill base in, offer a shadowing opportunity or, if you are social worker, becoming a Practice Educator in order to support the social workers of the future.

The above are just suggestions – you will be able to think of more. Additionally, just some simple actions, such as showing someone a short cut on an ICT package or offering to be the audience for a colleague to practice a presentation with contributes to a 'learning' ethos and will ultimately benefit service users.

How can I find out more?

If you would like to find out more or discuss any ideas that you have in relation to workforce development and our learning culture, please contact the team at workforcedevelopment@redbridge.gov.uk