

The Consultant Leadership Pilot Programme for Headteachers in Wales

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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales



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Introduction

- 1 The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to raising the quality of school leadership in Wales by providing development opportunities for headteachers. These opportunities are part of the National Headship Development Programme (NHDP). This programme includes the three main stages of professional development for headteachers. These are the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), the Professional Headteachers' Induction Programme (PHIP) and the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH). In February 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government undertook a quinquennial review of the NHDP.
- 2 The review identified that there was the potential for experienced school leaders in Wales to use their skills and experience to support school improvement, both in their own schools and in other schools in their local authority area. To address this issue, the Welsh Assembly Government decided to run a pilot aimed at headteachers who have completed the three existing stages of professional development.
- 3 In 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government published 'Revised National Standards for Headteachers in Wales'. The Standards provide guidance which underpins the NHDP in Wales but does not define its structure.
- 4 The Welsh Assembly Government asked Estyn, as part of the 2006 – 2007 remit, to provide advice about the outcomes of one of the pilots. This is a programme called the 'Development Programme for Consultant Leadership'. It is an existing programme in England and is provided by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL). Twenty-four headteachers from across Wales took part in the training pilot in Wales between July and October 2006.

Background

The Development Programme for Consultant Leadership

- 5 In England there is a five-part Leadership Development Framework¹. The final stage is called 'consultant leadership'. Consultant leadership is undertaken when an able and experienced leader is ready to put something back into the profession by taking on training, mentoring, inspection or other responsibilities. The 'Development Programme for Consultant Leadership' provides training to help headteachers in this stage of their development. Candidates need to have at least five years' experience as a headteacher and to be able to provide evidence of successful leadership. They should also normally have completed the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH).
- 6 The development programme focuses on gaining coaching skills which are required to respond to the specific needs of a leader who is working with the consultant. It is based on a framework of relevant competencies. The programme philosophy is that leaders are able to achieve their own solutions to their own problems through a process of supported dialogue.
- 7 The training is provided through face-to-face contact with tutors and access to materials on the NCSL website.

The pilot programme in Wales

- 8 Although the 'Development Programme for Consultant Leadership' is an existing programme in England it was delivered as a pilot in Wales.
- 9 For the pilot study in Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government funded places for 24 existing headteachers on the initial training programme of six days and a further six days after the programme for them to undertake consultancy work. This would involve them working away from their own school. The Welsh Assembly Government asked all Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in Wales to nominate suitable headteachers, one of whom should be the headteacher of a Welsh-medium school. At least one headteacher from every LEA in Wales was offered the training. The Welsh Assembly Government selected the final candidates. These candidates were divided into two equal groups who undertook the training at different times.
- 10 The headteachers who completed the programme came from 16 primary, five secondary and three special schools.
- 11 The training programme was split into two residential modules and was led by two staff from the NCSL. The training was undertaken in Llangammarch Wells and at the NCSL's Learning and Conference Centre in Nottingham.

¹ <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/publications/ldf/publications-ldf-implications.cfm>

12 Inspectors gathered evidence about the impact of the programme from:

- interviews with the NCSL tutors;
- a survey of all the headteachers who completed the programme;
- follow-up interviews with a representative sample of 25% of headteachers who completed the programme;
- a survey of all the LEAs represented; and
- a meeting with headteachers led by the NCSL tutors.

Main findings

- 13 The Development Programme for Consultant Leadership is a good programme which develops the skills of headteachers to support school improvement. However, the training materials and programme content does not take account of the Welsh language or the Welsh context.
- 14 The programme is based on a coaching approach. Headteachers in the pilot respond well to this approach.
- 15 All headteachers on the pilot programme are very positive about most aspects of the programme. They make good use of the skills they acquired in the context of their own school.
- 16 The programme created the opportunity for headteachers to form a professional network across Wales. This helps headteachers to share good practice and provide mutual support in school development.
- 17 The programme is an effective next step for headteachers who have completed the LPSH. However, the time spent away from their own school is a potential barrier to some headteachers working as consultant leaders within a local authority area.
- 18 LEAs were involved in the process of selecting candidates for the programme but they did not receive detailed selection criteria from the Welsh Assembly Government which reflected the requirements of the programme. In addition, after the initial selection of candidates, the LEAs did not receive sufficient information about how headteachers would be used to support school development within their authority.
- 19 None of the headteachers are undertaking any consultant leadership activities within their LEA after their training.
- 20 Overall, this programme is beneficial to headteachers in Wales to help them to develop the skills and competencies to support others in school leadership positions. However, the programme is not appropriate for all headteachers and therefore the programme is not suitable as a mandatory part of the career development for all headteachers.

Recommendations

The Welsh Assembly Government should:

- R1 produce a booklet which clearly sets out the NHDP and the place of the programme as one of a range of options in a clear career progression for headteachers within it;
- R2 make sure that LEAs are given clear and relevant criteria to help them choose the most suitable headteachers for training as consultant leaders;
- R3 provide detailed information to headteachers and LEAs about the aims of the programme and how headteachers and local authority managers will use the programme to support school development. This information should make clear the time commitments involved and ensure that headteachers are aware that they may be used to support other schools beside their own. This information should be available from the start of the programme;
- R4 develop a version of the training, which incorporates the Welsh language and context; and
- R5 involve LEAs as partners in future developments of this programme so that they fully understand the content of the programme and how it will be used to support school development.

The impact of the consultant leadership programme on headteachers and LEAs

The selection of headteachers

- 21 The Welsh Assembly Government sent a broad outline of the background to the pilot and how it would be funded to all LEAs. The LEAs were able to access full details of the programme from the link provided to the NCSL website. However, with a large number of headteachers to choose from, the information given to LEAs did not contain clear enough criteria for selecting headteachers for the pilot.
- 22 A panel in the Welsh Assembly Government made the final selection of candidates for the pilot after nominations from the LEAs. The LEAs were not informed why particular headteachers were chosen. Nearly all of the headteachers did not know why they had been chosen.

Issues arising from the development programme coaching method

- 23 The National Standards for Headteachers in Wales require headteachers to adopt different leadership styles as appropriate. The Consultant Leadership programme provides one of these styles. As such, it is a suitable next step for some headteachers who have completed the current three stages of professional development. It is not suitable for all headteachers as successful use of the programme depends on identifying headteachers who will benefit from developing this aspect of their leadership and who have the appropriate skills to carry it out effectively. This means the programme is not suitable as a mandatory part of the career development for all headteachers.
- 24 Although the programme develops coaching skills well, the method needs to be understood by all parties to be used effectively. At present, LEAs have a limited understanding of the coaching approach used in the development programme. This may prevent them promoting its use effectively in schools and for staff development across the local authority area.
- 25 The coaching strategy used in the programme is effective only if enough time is given to build trusting relationships between the consultant leader and the colleague being supported. The programme's approach will not be effective in a realistic timescale if a consultant leader is imposed on a school without appropriate consultation. In addition, some headteachers are unwilling to undertake consultant leadership activity if this involves long absences from their own school to establish a suitable working relationship with staff in another school.
- 26 The training and programme materials do not reflect the particular educational context in Wales or use the Welsh language. At present, the NCSL has no staff able to teach through the medium of Welsh. The opportunity exists for headteachers in the pilot to become accredited as trainers and to provide training in Wales to others in both Welsh and English.

Impact of the development programme on headteachers

- 27 Very few headteachers were clear about the concept of consultant leadership at the start of the training. They were also unsure what was expected of them before, during and after the training. Despite this, the content of the programme had a powerful motivating effect on all the headteachers involved. Headteachers became very positive about most aspects of the programme.
- 28 All the headteachers interviewed have increased their own skills through attending the training. They make good use of these skills in their own schools to develop the learning of other teachers, including those in school leadership positions. However, many of the headteachers do not want to act as consultant leaders outside of their own schools. A very few would not have undertaken the training if they had known this was part of the programme.
- 29 The training equips headteachers with good skills to support schools in both primary and secondary sectors. However, nearly all the headteachers interviewed reported they would prefer to work locally with colleagues in their own sector.
- 30 The headteachers value particularly the opportunity offered by the programme, to train and discuss issues with other headteachers from different sectors and geographical areas in Wales. The programme provided a good opportunity for headteachers to form a professional network across Wales. Headteachers in the programme want this to continue and be extended to include all colleagues in a 'national network' which can share good practice, make common responses to consultations and provide mutual support in school development.

Impact of the programme on LEAs

- 31 LEAs were not clear before the pilot study about the intended outcome of the pilot programme and their role within it.
- 32 The Welsh Assembly Government did not explain clearly enough to LEAs how they should be involved in working with the headteachers after their initial training in consultant leadership. No headteachers are currently being used to help support school development outside of their own school. As a result, there is no evidence yet of any wider impact of the pilot within LEAs.