

SOUTHAMPTON EDUCATION SERVICES

A LEARNING ORGANISATION

A policy for continuing professional development

Rationale:

Southampton Education Services' mission is to promote even better learning for all. It follows that we in Education Services must learn as well. We have an obligation to develop our skills, knowledge and understanding to do our job as best we can - efficiently, effectively and with fairness - so that we achieve the best value from our time and effort. We have to commit ourselves to continuous improvement. If we want to improve, we need to learn.

A learning organisation learns as a whole organisation, in its teams, and through its individuals. All three of these agendas need to be addressed.

The Whole Organisation:

Principles:

Southampton Education Services, as a learning organisation, values and promotes:

- lifelong learning;
- the learning potential of all its members;
- a person-centred approach to learning;
- equality of opportunity;
- a learning culture which values diversity and flexibility;
- an outward-looking perspective;
- research, innovation, imagination and risktaking;
- a willingness to listen and respond positively to feedback;
- an interpretation of learning which goes beyond the instrumental.

Aims:

In the way that we work, we shall demonstrate that we are a learning organisation, which means that we shall

- work in partnership with others to provide mutual support for learning;
- support the learning of individual staff through professional development;
- manage information well, using information technology where appropriate;
- base decisions on reliable evidence;
- be transparent in decision-making;
- be responsive to feedback; acknowledge and rectify errors;
- evaluate our decisions and our performance;
- treat with uncertainty routes that are not clear;
- make decisions at the most appropriate level of the organisation;
- value self-esteem;
- use time efficiently;
- manage health, safety and staff welfare;
- work purposefully to achieve our aims.

Southampton Education Services exist to promote The Learning City. Equally, if any organisation is to survive and thrive, it must learn from and adapt to its environment. We shall be consistent in our dealings with others, working in close partnership. This involves seeking and learning from constructive feedback. The Strategic Education Plan identifies 'Working Together' as one of the key issues for improvement.

As well as learning from outside, we shall consistently foster learning *within* the organisation. We shall be

rigorous in our self-evaluation and we shall value research. We shall establish clear procedures to promote *learning teams* and *learning individuals* within Southampton Education Services.

The team:

The learning of teams within Southampton Education Services is centred on consistent self-evaluation using the 6 quality questions:

Why are we here?

- clarity of purpose

What do we do?

- clarity of functions and roles

How well do we do it?

- clarity of criteria for effectiveness

How do we know?

- secure evidence of performance

How are we trying to improve?

- clear priorities for learning

How do people know?

- good information for accountability

Each team within Southampton Education Services will undertake an annual review using the 6 Quality Questions and, in addition to its business and management planning, will formulate a team development plan. The Team Development Plan will incorporate learning needs generated by:

- the overall Strategic Education Plan (including research projects);
- the feedback from the 6 Quality Questions review;
- the Learning Plans generated from individual appraisal (see below).

The individual learner

Southampton Education Services will help its individual learners to:

- build their understanding of how they learn;
- be self-directed in their learning;
- engage in critical self-reflection;
- undertake research;
- use imagination in reviewing and improving their ways of working;
- question and experiment with a sense of adventure.

Objectives:

Every member of Southampton Education Services should:

- have a learning plan which is annually reviewed through appraisal;
- have a specification of the mature competencies and knowledge base relating to his or her post - learning **standards**;
- keep a record of their learning - a learning profile - which might be supported by a learning diary;
- benefit from at least 3 learning interviews with a nominated learning partner per year;
- be entitled to at least 3 days of off-the-job learning time per year.

The management of performance and professional development

As much learning occurs informally - 'on the job' - as it does from more formal training and development opportunities. This *informal learning* needs to be recognised, reflected upon and, where possible, accredited, through regular learning interviews conducted with a learning partner. This is easier if there are acknowledged referential frameworks relating to individuals' particular jobs - learning standards - against which to gather evidence of learning (in a learning profile) and evaluate it. The learning plan provides an annual framework, outlining targets and strategies identified through appraisal.

At the same time, everyone needs opportunities to participate in more *formal learning*, training and development opportunities. Individuals need to learn new skills; understand corporate procedures; acquire national perspectives; and access wider learning networks.

The provision of formal learning opportunities for individuals needs careful management. If individuals attend courses or conferences, they should *reflect* on their learning and *account* for it to their learning partner or their manager (see below). Wherever possible, individuals should be encouraged by their managers to *share* learning from courses and conferences - through papers, ICT or in team or group meetings.

Many individual learning needs should be addressed in the context of team development managed through the Team Development Plan. In addition, there will be a programme of 'Education Services Seminars' and internal courses organised where there are common needs across different teams, eg NVQ programme for support staff.

The funds for professional development are delegated on a per capita basis to Divisional Managers. Individuals may also bid into a reserve fund, subject to the endorsement of their Divisional Managers. In exceptional and appropriate circumstances, this reserve can be subsidised from the Standards Fund allocation for LEA initiatives.

All members of Education Services need to know what is expected of them, to receive feedback about how they are doing, and to know that their professional development is appropriately managed. As far as possible, this process should take the form of supported self-evaluation. Performance and development targets, performance indicators and success criteria need to be openly agreed and understood by each individual member of each section in the context of appraisal.

Day-to-day performance and professional development are entwined, but they are distinct. Individuals need an agreed work programme which outlines what they are expected to achieve: tasks with accompanying success criteria. At the same time, individuals need an agreed learning plan which outlines expectations for their professional development both on and off the job.

A pattern of meetings needs to be developed to monitor and review individuals' work programmes and learning plans. Learning will be enhanced if guided reflection is built into this pattern of meetings. It will be a matter for each section to agree the frequency of meetings and who is to be involved.