Developing & Supporting Effective Teaching Practice in the Lifelong Learning Sector

GUIDANCE FOR PROVIDERS

acett

CENTRES FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHER TRAINING

The Association of Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training

LIFELONG LEARNING UK

Skills for Learning Professionals

Contents

Introduction

This document is a plain English guide to developing and supporting effective teaching practice, based on review of existing studies and conversations with people who support teachers[1] and trainers through their initial teacher training programmes.

The guidance is developed for small learning providers whose staff undertake Initial Teacher Training and other professional development in the learning and skills sector. It will, however, be useful to all providers no matter what size or sector.

The terms 'effective teaching practice' and 'mentoring' are used throughout the guidance. The definitions we are using are below:

Effective teaching practice

The range of sustained processes and practices through which teaching practitioners become proficient in all dimensions of teaching in the lifelong learning sector, and by doing so contribute to the development of the sector and its organisations.

Mentoring

The range of sustained processes and practices through which experienced teaching practitioners support less experienced practitioners to become proficient in all dimensions of teaching in the lifelong learning sector, and by doing so contribute to the development of the sector and its organisations.

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[1] We have used 'teacher' as a generic term for 'teacher, trainer or tutor' and 'student' as a generic term for 'student, learner or trainee'.

Why support effective teaching practice

Research and inspection have shown that organisations which invest in qualified teaching staff and give them opportunities for professional development are more successful than those which do not.

The benefits of having confident, capable and experienced teaching staff include:

- improved income generation, productivity and performance across the whole organisation

- improved staff motivation, performance and retention

- better and more inclusive teaching

- better learner success rates and retention

- better capacity to manage change effectively

- increased capacity to meet the responsibilities involved in inspection (OfSTED and other agencies) and membership of the Institute for Learning (IfL)

- more effective implementation of the curriculum into teaching practice

- staff who understand their subject more deeply

- staff who are less isolated; and

- an improved culture of teaching and learning and an awareness of what works best.

Supporting effective teaching practice for initial teacher training trainees and encouraging mentoring practices in your organisation will help you achieve this success.

How you can use this guidance

The six sections in this guidance describe the resources to look for outside your organisation and the key factors that will help you make the best use of those resources within your organisation.

At the end of each section there are action points that you can use to assess or review your organisation's activities. These action points are also collected together in the appendices of this guide.

Throughout the guidance, there are examples of best practice from the sector and links to some video success stories you can find online. Descriptions of helpful resources and further reading are also included to help you get started.

These steps will help you organise your approach:

- ask someone from every level of your organisation to look at this guidance

- agree on something in every section that you will find out more about

- plan how you intend to make use of the information

- implement your plan

- review the results and make any further improvements; and

- share your experience with another organisation.

The 'external architecture' - what is available outside your organisation

Working with others

Networking, co-operating and sharing expertise have many advantages, and wherever you are based, there should be ways you can get help.

To work with others, to set up or even share a scheme to support effective teaching practice would help all participants avoid duplication of effort and resources and benefit from others' experience. This is particularly important for smaller learning provider employers who can sometimes find it challenging to support their staff on training programmes because of resource issues.

Networking of this kind has been shown to make a real difference to all involved. You could get access to facilitated networking, possibly through Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETTs), awarding organisations or institutions, work based learning providers, adult and community learning organisations, professional associations and other groupings.

This can help you and your employees to feel part of something bigger, whilst helping you to achieve your goals at the same time.

Make plans and take action to:

- encourage your teaching staff and management to join external networks, activities and support systems

- share what you experience through those networks

- use this intelligence to compare with your own organisation; and

- plan how you can improve to match the best examples.

A work based learning mentor network

Nineteen small work based learning providers share a bank of trained mentors through an innovative and successful scheme developed and managed by the training providers association, in partnership with the West Midlands Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (WMCETT),

This bank of mentors represents a wide range of occupations and provides support for staff in member organisations who want to engage in professional development, including teaching qualification and progression.

This scheme is particularly useful for small work based learning provider employers, some of whom find it difficult to support their staff on training programmes primarily because of resource issues. A lack of staff within individual organisations suitable for mentoring trainees and a lack of capacity to release those who are suitably trained have also been identified as key difficulties.

Lack of mentoring support for staff can result in low levels of achievement in teaching qualifications and professional progression, low levels of staff retention and high numbers of staff without teaching qualifications.

The scheme has created a pool of mentors for providers to use for specific occupational mentoring. Eleven providers agreed to release suitable staff for the pool in the first instance and member organisations agreed protocols and established financial support for wage subsidy.

The network centralises the administrative support and management of the mentor scheme which enables the project to implement overall quality assurance. This includes standardisation meetings for mentors and developing a mentor job description and person specification, which provides an outline of mentor roles and responsibilities.

In addition, the project has produced resource materials, including two handbooks; one a mentoring skills handbook and the other a handbook of procedures, along with training workshops and university accredited structures for mentors.

Watch the video success story on youtube.com and visit the West Midlands Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training website to learn more.

Finding information and resources

Much research has been undertaken into good teaching and how it can be developed, with particular emphasis on mentoring. By searching the internet, visiting other organisations, getting them to visit you and encouraging your staff to search and visit others, you will find advice, guidance, summaries of research, example documentation, resources, case studies, videos and slideshows.

The resources you'll find online will give you access to a range of situations you might not be able to find 'live' such as examples of teaching at different levels; mentoring; master classes in subject teaching; teaching in different settings, and the non-teaching aspects of the role. Some resources are listed in this guidance to give you a start.

Make plans and take action to:

- encourage all staff to search, online and through visits with other organisations, for guidance and resources

- discuss and share the results so they are useable across your organisation and across networks/groups of organisations

- develop a series of bookmarks / bank of resources for further and future internal use; and

- share these resources outside your organisation (for example, through your website, social networking or through networks and associations).

Attributes and attitudes for mentor champions

With a focus on initial teacher education, a collaborative partnership project was developed by the Centre for Inclusive Learning CETT (CETTCIL) to support the role of subject specific mentors in the workplace through the development of mentor champions**.**

The wide group of practitioners and sector organisations involved in the partnership came from adult and community education, local authority basic skills service, police service, work based providers, further education colleges and national specialist colleges. Most organisations had a mentor scheme in place but they did not have a policy for mentoring or a whole organisation approach to support consistency and sustainability. Mentors often worked alone even when there were a significant number of mentors in an organisation.

The project gathered data from organisations, mentors and teacher educators to identify the role of a mentor and the skills and attitudes that mentors required to operate effectively. The resulting skills and attitudes analysis provided the opportunity to examine the definition of a mentor. A definition of a mentor champion and the key strengths in relation to this role were agreed.

The partnership designed, validated and delivered a training programme that supports the needs of mentor champions. Whilst a mentor needs strong subject knowledge this was not necessarily a factor for the mentor champion where organisational skills, time management, decision making skills were more important. An appreciation of quality issues relating to standardisation and moderation of teaching practice observations were cited as being a very significant responsibility for the mentor champion.

The CETTCIL programmes hold quarterly standardisation meetings, which involve teacher educators and mentors from a wide range of teaching and learning settings to ensure the quality of mentorship across the sector. Both practice skills and subject knowledge are examined at these meetings and this has resulted in changes to the observation schedule, to expand the knowledge and understanding of the trainee teachers in their second year of study.

There has also been the opportunity to share good practice and enable the mentors to become more reflective in their practice. This has had an impact on subsequent mentor training in that these skills and attitudes are incorporated in the training and participants are encouraged to make further suggestions to ensure that the process is continuously evolving.

Future plans are currently being established to identify the needs of organisations in order to enable them to establish mentor schemes that can be led by mentor champions. This will help ensure quality and meet the needs of external inspection regimes.

Visit the Centre for Inclusive Learning CETT (CETTCIL) website for further details on mentor champions.

Useful links for this section

Easing the journey from occupation to teaching (LONCETT)

A PDF guide to download intended 'for new and trainee teachers who are entering further education for the first time and for those professionals who mentor and support them.' Produced by the London Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (LONCETT).

Mentoring staff (Excellence Gateway)

A website for everyone involved in staff mentoring. The focus is on developing mentoring in 14-19 vocational education but the principles can also be applied in other learning situations.

The 'internal architecture' - how to make it work in your organisation

Senior management responsibility

In 2004, OfSTED commented on what it was about grade 1 providing organisations that made them successful, one crucial factor was:

> *a realisation by their leaders that an educational establishment's central purpose*
> *is to place the education and success of their learners at the heart of what they do*
> *(OfSTED 2004: p20[2])*

This applies to all organisations who are involved in teaching, training and tutoring. Ensuring your managers sign up to, and actively take part in, establishing and maintaining a commitment to initial teacher training and continuous professional development will help you ensure high quality teaching and learning.

Make plans and take action to:

- ensure your senior management are involved in and committed to setting the learning tone and purpose of the organisation

- enable senior management to explore and recognise the benefits of supporting effective teaching practice, particularly mentoring

- engage staff at all levels in considering the best ways to support that involvement in practice

- agree small, simple, achievable steps forward; and

- establish opportunities for staff at all levels to find out more, spread the work, celebrate success and be examples for others.

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[2] OfSTED (2004) *Why colleges succeed*. London: OfSTED.

A cascade model of mentoring with support from senior managers

One of the member organisations of the Success North CETT has a management culture which provides a strong support for mentoring. Their 'cascade model' ensures that mentoring experience is passed along through the organisation and the skills and knowledge of their teachers is continually updated.

As one of Success North CETT's placement partners, this organisation provides regular opportunity for teachers in training to work in the organisation in order to experience teaching in different settings.

In turn, the Success North CETT provides continuing professional development for the teachers and trainers working in placement providers, which includes mentor development activities and training.

Through their cascade model this organisation ensures that that training is sustained and developed, for example in the case of their Teaching and Learning Manager, who completed his mentoring training, mentored teachers in training, and then progressed to mentoring mentors.

The management of this organisation recognise that their approach provides three-fold benefits: mentor support for their trainee teachers, professional development for their established mentors, and a work force with skills, knowledge and experience that are continually updated.

Watch this video success story at youtube.com and visit the Success North Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training website to learn more.

Working across the organisation

However big or small your organisation is, you do not want to waste time duplicating, overlapping or repeating activity when it is not needed. That is inefficient, unnecessary and likely to de-motivate staff and suppress innovation and imagination.

When times are hard, it is even more important to be working together as a team and sharing common goals. A shared purpose is much more likely to lead to survival and growth, and be efficient than mixed messages and internal strife.

Investing time in working out how processes and practices to support effective teaching practice can operate across your organisation is time well spent.

Make plans and take action to:

- identify who will take overall responsibility for developing and supporting effective teaching practice in your organisation, and then share that responsibility across the organisation

- integrate quality assurance, teaching and learning and human resources to ensure effective induction, support systems and training for teachers

- identify internal or external opportunities for varied teaching practice, to enable teachers to teach at different levels, and to experience non-teaching aspects of the role

- produce or adapt clear policies, guidelines and documentation for effective teaching practice

- develop a system for the professional support of all staff, including teacher trainees, which includes giving a minimum number of hours pay or equivalent remission from teaching or managerial duties for trainees and mentors

- prioritise mentoring within that system, matching mentors as closely as possible to the trainee's subject to achieve genuinely subject-specific support; and

- establish evaluation processes and procedures for effective teaching practice, to identify what is working well and what needs further improvement.

Organising your mentoring scheme

Mentoring is an important part of developing and supporting teachers, particularly during their early career. Organising a mentoring scheme in your organisation can be a good place to start your approach to effective teaching practice. Key aspects of an effective mentoring scheme include:

- the purpose and overall objectives of the scheme

- an outline of the mentor's role and responsibilities, and the related competences

- a means of selecting, developing and supporting your mentors

- user friendly processes for documenting the mentoring activity

- an agreed entitlement for mentees

- support from management in ensuring mentors have time for mentoring and mentees have time to be mentored; and

- opportunities for mentors and mentees to share and reflect on their experiences and use this reflection to improve provision.

Make plans and take action to:

- gather some of the available resources designed to help set up and support a mentoring scheme

- visit organisations already involved to discuss their experience and develop further links or opportunities for networking

- draw on the expertise of those who volunteer to mentor or are experienced mentors; and

- reflect on their experience and share it with others to help standardise and moderate your mentoring scheme.

Developing and sustaining your mentoring scheme

Once you have your mentoring scheme, in order to ensure mentoring continues to help teachers improve their subject teaching, you need to ensure a well-trained and available pool of mentors. It is particularly difficult for small organisations to make use of, and contribute to, the external architecture to support this. There are actions you can take, however small an organisation you are.

Make plans and take action to:

- identify and develop prospective mentors from within your own staff team

- establish a requirement for initial training of all mentors; and

- contribute to the development of further professional learning pathways for mentors.

Mentor champion and enabler

In partnership with the Westminster Partnership CETT, a mentor champion is working to facilitate mentoring for practitioners across a consortium of local learning provider organisations. The consortium has a mixed membership of eight further education and adult and community learning providers, including smaller providers.

Many providers find it challenging to sustain good mentoring practice because of resource issues. The mentor champion has encouraged improved mentoring practice by developing systems for the member organisations to support each other and share best practice.

For example, she has compiled a 'mentor handbook' which is now used by the consortium to train mentors, and she has supported all the organisations with ideas about how to recruit new members. Resources such as Google groups, research reports, good practice documents, web-links and mentor forums are shared.

As a mentor champion, she arranges regular forums which allow for a safe and confidential environment in which mentors can openly discuss problems, share good practice and help each other overcome a variety of issues.

Importantly, the challenging issue of sustaining good mentoring practice with limited resources has been resolved: in part by the collaborative working systems outlined above, and also by member colleges providing mentors from within their own organisation, which are then added to a database.

Watch this video success story at youtube.com and visit the Westminster Partnership Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training website to learn more.

Mentoring in the voluntary sector: mentors into managers

A voluntary and community sector organisation uses a mentor who works in a management position to support teaching staff who are undertaking qualifications. The organisation works with homeless and vulnerably housed people, offering practical and creative workshops and formal learning opportunities to the people who use their services. The centre also has a café that provides on the job training, qualifications and experience.

Employing a committed manager as a mentor has helped make the mentoring and placement scheme a success. The manager qualified as a literacy teacher, and subsequently as an ESOL teacher at the Teaching Development Centre, Newcastle College, where he had benefited from mentoring support as part of the work of Success North CETT.

When he moved into his new management role, his positive experience led him to promote the benefits of mentoring to his staff. He took the Success North CETT offer of mentor development and training opportunities and decided to adopt an active role in the Success North placement and mentoring scheme, introducing mentoring across his organisation and offering placements to new teachers to give them teaching experience.

He explains; "Having recently trained in both the college's literacy and ESOL specialist courses I feel that I have an understanding of the needs of trainee teachers and mentor training that I took at Success North has enabled me to develop this role successfully."

"Teaching placements have enabled the centre's curriculum to become more varied with trainee teachers teaching in subject areas that we didn't offer. They have also enabled us to increase our delivery in areas such as ESOL where there was a need for the centre to have placement teachers with appropriate subject knowledge and skills. Mentees have brought fresh and new ideas that they have been learning in their course sessions at the Success North CETT, helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the centre."

Plans for the future are for teachers to take part in mentor training, allowing more opportunities for placements to be supported.

Visit the Success North Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training website to learn more.

Useful links for this section

Mentor Training Pack (HUDCETT)

This pack contains information that you will need to help carry out your role as mentor co-ordinator. A Mentee Handbook is also available to download.

Mentoring Mapping Project Resources (LONCETT)

London Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training have resources available on the mentoring mapping project report 'An investigation into the mentoring of trainee teachers in the lifelong learning sector in London'. The following documents may be of particular interest:

- Mentor scheme handbook Croydon College

- Mentor handbook LLU+

- Mentor tool kit Lewisham College

- Protocols for mentoring LONCETT

Mentoring in Prisons project (LONCETT)

Guidelines for good practice in supporting new and trainee teachers in London prisons.

SMILE Project (SWCETT)

Visit the website to download a copy of "SWCETT (2007) *Supporting Mentors in Adult Learning Environments: Steps to setting up a Mentoring Scheme*. Taunton: SWCETT." This is a useful checklist if you are organising a mentoring scheme. You can download the document once you register (free of charge) on the website.

Mentor Training Programme (LONCETT and Westminster partnership CETT)

A collaborative LONCETT and Westminster CETT mentoring website. An online training package, developed for mentors, is available (free of charge) to anyone who registers.

A list of suggested further reading is available in the appendices of this guidance.

Further resources

[Roles and Responsibilities of the Coach and Mentor](#) (Hibernia College)

This lesson will allow you to examine the characteristics of coaching, mentoring and counselling. It will also help you to identify the attributes and skills required in a coach or mentor.

[Peer support in learning](#) (QIA Excellence Gateway)

In Teaching and Learning Programme materials: 'Peer support brings mutual benefit. Supporters help their peers to develop persistence and motivation, both of which are characteristics of expert learners. The conversations they have stimulate each other to reflect on their learning experiences and what they each need to do in order to achieve their goals.'

[Mentoring in Education: The Mentor as Critical Friend](#) (QIA Excellence Gateway)

The Skills for Life Improvement Programme builds on previous initiatives, making best use of people, systems and materials to help deliver the Skills for Life strategy in the future. It is an innovative programme designed to support creative change in a wide variety of self-improving organisations.

[The 'Scaffolded Approach' to teaching practice](#) (Talent)

Available online via Talent (training adult literacy, ESOL and numeracy teachers) there are at least five ways to organise teaching practice, from using training groups to using a trainee's own paid employment. Each of the placement models is already being used nationally. What is new is the proposal by talent London that all trainee teachers should experience a range of placement models.

[Teaching practice placement tutor/mentor training materials](#) (Talent)

Session plans and notes for teaching practice placement tutor training. Documents include tips for giving feedback and case studies of trainee teachers. You will need to register (free of charge) in order to access this resource.

Appendices

Make plans and take action

Steps to help you organise your approach

☐ ask someone from every level of your organisation to look at this guidance

☐ agree on something in every section that you will find out more about

☐ plan how you intend to make use of the information

☐ implement your plan

☐ review the results and make any further improvements

☐ share your experience with another organisation

Working with others

☐ encourage your teaching staff and management to join external networks, activities and support systems

☐ share what you experience through those networks

☐ use this intelligence to compare with your own organisation

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☐ encourage all staff to search, online and through visits with other organisations, for guidance and resources

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Senior management responsibility

☐ ensure your senior management are involved in and committed to setting the learning tone and purpose of the organisation

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☐ produce or adapt clear policies, guidelines and documentation for effective teaching practice

☐ develop a system for the professional support of all staff, including teacher trainees which includes giving a minimum number of hours pay or equivalent remission from teaching or managerial duties for trainees and mentors

☐ prioritise mentoring within that system, matching mentors as closely as possible to the trainee's subject to achieve genuinely subject-specific support

☐ establish evaluation processes and procedures for effective teaching practice, to identify what is working well and what needs further improvement

Organising your mentoring scheme

☐ gather some of the available resources designed to help set up and support a mentoring scheme

☐ visit organisations already involved to discuss their experience and develop further links or opportunities for networking

☐ draw on the expertise of those who volunteer to mentor or are experienced mentors

☐ reflect on their experience and share it with others to help for standardise and moderate your mentoring scheme

Developing and sustaining your mentoring scheme

☐ identify and develop prospective mentors from within your own staff team

☐ establish a requirement for initial training of all mentors

☐ contribute to the development of further professional learning pathways for mentors

Further reading on mentoring

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