

Inspiring leaders to  
improve children's lives



**National College**  
for Leadership of Schools  
and Children's Services

---

Schools and academies

---

# What are we learning about... identifying talent

**Succession planning** Evidence into practice guide

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

A large, solid black rectangular redaction box covers the central and lower portions of the page, obscuring all content beneath it. The redaction is complete, leaving no text or images visible in this area.

# Is it possible to identify potential?

Surveys of teachers suggest that the appetite for headship is growing (albeit gradually), possibly in response to local succession planning. In 2008, 35 per cent of teachers responded positively when asked whether they aspired to be a headteacher – up from 32 per cent in 2007<sup>1</sup>.

Desire for headship is important for effective succession planning – but it is only a first step. The greater challenge is to identify accurately those individuals with the greatest potential and to provide an attractive pathway for their development

which will retain them within the system.

Organisations find this more difficult. After all, strong expressions of ambition for headship are not accurate predictors of long term potential. Equally, being the top performer in a more junior role is not necessarily an indicator of success in a senior leadership position. ‘Potential’ – as opposed to proven ‘competence’ – is a difficult quality to define. Research by the Hay Group<sup>2</sup>, looking across a range of sectors and organisations, suggests four important characteristics to look for.

| Characteristic                          | What is it?   | Questions   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Thinking beyond the boundaries</b>   | Strong conceptual ability. Makes useful connections between areas which are only peripherally related.      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Have they made useful connections beyond the normal boundaries of their job?</li> <li>– Can they make a complex issue straightforward?</li> </ul>                                |
| <b>Curiosity and eagerness to learn</b> | Readily takes on new challenges even when they do not represent a promotion.                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Have they taken on new tasks which they found challenging?</li> <li>– Do they display professional curiosity – for example through their reading or courses attended?</li> </ul> |
| <b>Social understanding and empathy</b> | Ability to read the subtext of others’ responses, not just explicit statements. Wants to understand others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Do they treat other people with respect?</li> <li>– Do they bring out the best in others?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Emotional balance</b>                | Ability to bounce back from adversity. Emotionally resilient.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Have they recovered and learnt from mistakes?</li> <li>– Have they used constructive criticism to improve performance?</li> </ul>  |

Specifically within the context of school leadership, further work by the Hay Group<sup>3</sup> offers suggestions for traits which might be identified with early signs of leadership potential.

These include:

- confidence and credibility
- ability to see the big picture and think of the whole school
- able to master the basics quickly and look for more
- gets involved (doesn’t look the other way or walk past incidents)

- takes the initiative and self-motivated
- intellectually curious
- resilient and empathetic

The same survey also suggested that high performing schools were five times more likely than other schools to have a formal process for identifying leadership potential. Such schools were also more likely to spend time developing potential and letting people know that their contribution had been recognised.

[See Accelerate to Headship](#)

# WHAT IF...

## I could select for potential?

Selection for potential – as opposed to existing competence – presents significant challenges. How is it spotted? Reviews of talent development programmes from across the public and private sectors show that practice varies widely in terms of the actual processes employed – each suited to its own specific context<sup>4</sup>. This is because **potential** is context specific. It is the fit between an individual's current abilities (plus their capacity to grow further), set against the likely future leadership needs of their organisation.

A review of 'talent managers' across different sectors<sup>2</sup> sought insights into the best predictors of 'measurable characteristics' of potential, termed 'growth factors'.

The review suggested that talent development managers should look for growth factors for potential that:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Can be recognised early</b>                         | Growth factors should be discernable in a variety of situations so that they can be seen in relatively junior roles and in different cultural settings.<br><b>Example:</b> An ability to think beyond immediate boundaries.   |
| <b>Are used in a variety of leadership settings</b>    | Because future roles will be different to current leadership roles, growth factors should suit different situations.<br><b>Example:</b> Demonstration of an eagerness to learn and try new ways of working.   |
| <b>Are difficult to develop</b>                        | To accelerate development, select individuals who already show characteristics that are difficult to develop from scratch. That enables development to focus on knowledge and skills which are easy to acquire.<br><b>Example:</b> Emotional resilience in the face of difficult circumstances. |
| <b>Do not carry strong risks of negative downsides</b> | Some positive attributes have potentially negative aspects – such as the balance between self-confidence and arrogance, for example. Ideally, growth factors carry few of these risk factors.<br><b>Example:</b> Over-riding personal ambition.   |

This provides a useful checklist for local talent managers who are developing assessment criteria for local talent development programmes.



[See case study section](#)

---

# What leadership skills will be needed in the future?

Consistently, research studies suggest that effective leaders are successful because they are responsive to their environment – anticipating changing requirements rather than being driven by them.

To take advantage of new policy initiatives, school leaders are engaging in a wide variety of external relationships with greater organisational complexity (and greater leadership challenge). Communication, relationship and negotiation skills are being tested in new ways as a result. More than ever, school leaders must understand the context in which they operate. Effective leaders grasp the wider social and economic context of the communities they serve in order to deliver the best for students.

Effective talent development takes account of these changing demands, shaping the skills that will be needed in the future and building sustainability into succession planning as a result.

Equally, sustainable planning means responding to the changing needs of emerging leaders themselves. There is good evidence<sup>12</sup> to suggest that new leaders developed through new-style talent programmes are less likely to want old-style leadership jobs. All-consuming headship roles appear unattractive to new, often younger, aspirant leaders. So work to develop talent must be coupled with effort to develop sustainable models of headship that people want.

## **Research in 2006<sup>10</sup> reviewed the impact of school leadership on student performance. It outlined evidence for seven “strong claims” for the influence of leaders on learning:**

School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning.

Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices.

The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices, not the practices themselves, demonstrates responsiveness to (rather than dictation by) the contexts in which they work.

School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.

School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed.

Some patterns of distribution of leadership are more effective than others.

A small handful of personal traits explain a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness.

**Examples of the leadership challenge of new policy agendas (adapted from National College publication, *Review of the Landscape*)<sup>8</sup>**

| Policy agenda                                    | Challenge   | Leadership requirement  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Personalised learning</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sharper focus on learning-centred leadership.</li> <li>- Additional external focus – eg building partnerships with parents and carers.</li> <li>- Organisational challenge of delivering a more flexible curriculum, drawing on best practice from elsewhere.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote the values behind personalisation and embed in the school culture.</li> <li>- Model behaviours of personalisation in working with staff, as well as students.</li> <li>- Use networks and partnerships to call on additional expertise and resources.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Extended schools</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of effective partnerships with other organisations to facilitate learning.</li> <li>- New leadership and governance arrangements.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and articulate a clear vision in the face of complexity.</li> <li>- Negotiate more complex frameworks of accountabilities.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Every Child Matters</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Becoming active partners within children’s trusts and other such multi-professional arrangements.</li> <li>- Leading without direct control over all key resources.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project a clear vision for new ways of working, with good distributed leadership.</li> <li>- Negotiate effective partnerships within inter-agency context.</li> <li>- Operate effectively within other professional cultures.</li> </ul>                                 |
| <b>14-19 learning agenda</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More complex partnership arrangements required with other education providers.</li> <li>- Understanding of the local and regional labour markets and economic context.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negotiating with influential and well-resourced stakeholders.</li> <li>- Balance competing (and potentially conflicting) interests to reach goals.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Sustainable schools</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing an environmental and ecological approach at school level.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop “systems thinking”, to consider wider school impact.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>New patterns of leadership and governance</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Operating within, say, a federation or another new structural model.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- System leadership skills.</li> <li>- Working across organisations with new stakeholders.</li> </ul>  |

---

## WHAT IF...

# I aligned investment in talent development with future skill requirements?

Talent development is an integral component of succession planning, shaped by real knowledge of future workforce requirements.

Other Evidence into practice guides look at planning for the future based on straightforward requirement for **capacity** – the number of leaders likely to be required. The issues in this guide focus on the future **capability** requirement – the types of leadership skills likely to be required. This is a qualitative (rather than quantitative) dimension of succession planning but demands the same focused analysis. For example:

- By way of baseline, which leadership skills matter most for the success of local schools currently?
- How will this change in (say) five years time?
- What different skills or characteristics will future leaders need to succeed?

Responses to these avenues of enquiry provide a compass bearing for future talent development,

not only guiding planning for professional development but also to align the effort of current leaders. For example:

- Is the impact of local leaders measured in a way which is consistent with changing patterns of leadership requirements?
- Are local leaders held accountable for developing future capacity and capability as well as delivering short term results?
- Is it possible within local arrangements for leaders to succeed in their school and still have external interests to support their own development?

Indeed, having identified context-specific, evidence based, leadership characteristics which best support student outcomes, they can become a 'golden thread' running through all succession activity – from development, to recruitment, to retention.



## Case study

### Identifying and developing talent to lead children's services in Leeds

Like many large, urban local authorities, Leeds faces a school leadership challenge. Analysis of workforce demography suggests that up to half of the city's headteachers may retire in the next 5-10 years.

At the same time, data also suggested a possible break in the pipeline of emerging talent – with significantly fewer NPQH graduates progressing to headship in the city compared with national average data.

The city's response has included establishment of the Leeds Leadership and Governance Centre. Drawing from National College and other national/regional programmes, the Centre will support over 20 prospective leaders each year who could be expected to take on headship within twelve months. Over time, the Centre will also target prospective leaders across children's services. The Centre aims to ensure that the city's leadership profile reflects the diversity of the wider workforce.

Participants in the programme enter through an Assessment and Development Centre (ADC). This involves a range of assessment activities which are designed to indicate 'readiness for headship' across a range of standards. Each ADC is delivered with inputs from a variety of professionals, modelling a multi-agency and integrated way of working which future leaders will need to demonstrate.

Each ADC participant receives detailed feedback from the assessment process, enabling them to identify key learning objectives for the programme itself. The Centre helps each individual to meet these objectives by providing appropriate experiential learning.

Initial evaluation has been positive, with individuals reporting that experience of the ADC has helped them to sharpen their understanding of (and readiness for) headship. By June 2009, over 30 aspirant headteachers will have undertaken the ADC process and developed a personalised learning pathway towards headship.

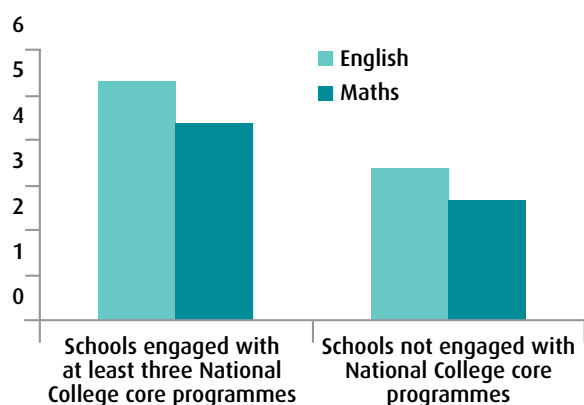
This approach is set within a wider strategy to recruit, develop and sustain school leaders, enabling the city to model the values, skills and qualities it seeks for the leaders of Leeds schools and other children's services.

**Contact:** Peter Laurence, Consultant Headteacher, Education Leeds.

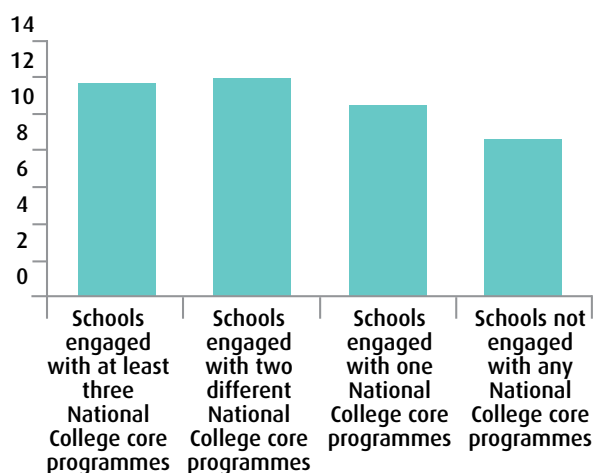
# What is known about effective leadership development?

It is worth noting that data supports what most school leaders would instinctively hold to be true: that investment in the development of talented leaders makes a positive impact on outcomes for students. Research suggests that schools which engage with National College development programmes, for example, consistently deliver stronger student outcomes at both primary and secondary level.

## Average KS2 percentage improvement, of primary schools by level of engagement with National College core programmes, 2003-06<sup>5</sup>



## GCSE (5+A\*-C) percentage improvement, of secondary schools by level of engagement with National College core programmes, 2001-07<sup>5</sup>



A significant body of research provides a solid evidence base of knowledge about effective leadership development<sup>6,7</sup>. This is summarised in the National College publication, [Review of the Landscape: Leadership and Leadership Development 2008](#).<sup>8</sup>

One review<sup>9</sup> offered a framework for leadership learning based around two polar models – a traditional approach characterised by classroom based, content-led learning, and a 21st century approach, characterised by work-based, process-rich learning. Components of each model will be appropriate for different circumstances, with a continuum of options between these extremes. In general, research suggested that:

- approaches which focus on the work context and the whole leadership team have greater impact on the school; and
- personalised programmes which focus on process rather than content are more likely to be transferred into practice



## Polar models of leadership learning<sup>9</sup>

| Traditional leadership learning | 21st century leadership learning |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Prescribed                      | Emergent                         |
| Standardised                    | Personalised                     |
| Offsite                         | On site                          |
| Classroom-based                 | Work-based                       |
| Content-led                     | Process-rich                     |
| Scale                           | Depth                            |
| Leader development              | Leadership development           |

Focusing specifically on accelerated talent development programmes, evaluation of the former Fast Track Teaching programme<sup>13</sup> offers further insights into the operation of talent development initiatives. Research suggested that:

- 'clarity of expectation' is a key factor in determining satisfaction with a high potential programme – both on the part of the participants themselves and those around them

- where work-based learning is taking place, the commitment of a host school's senior leadership team is a critical success factor. Evaluation of the current Future Leaders programme also supports this view<sup>14</sup>
- where one-to-one coaching support is offered within a programme, the quality of such support was a key determinant of overall feelings of satisfaction by participants. Where such support was judged to be tailored best to need, satisfaction was highest

Acceleration of development must also take account of participants personal development as well as professional development. Research by the Hay Group<sup>3</sup> suggested that current leaders – many of whom are now retiring – are stronger than emerging leaders specifically in respect of: their vision, political awareness, indirect influencing and alliance building skills, and long term thinking and planning. These are qualities that are often associated with experience and maturity. This sets a challenge for accelerated talent development programmes: to accelerate leadership maturity as well as professional skills.

## WHAT IF...

# I applied an evidence-based approach to local talent development programmes?

Research reveals a great deal about the ingredients of effective leadership development. And experience from accelerated development programmes at national level (such as the former Fast Track and the current Future Leaders

programmes) provides helpful pointers to what works best as well as the pitfalls to avoid. This suggested checklist for planning local talent development programmes is drawn from those experiences.

### Checklist for local talent development planning

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Is the programme focused on those leadership behaviours which are likely to have greatest impact on student learning?</b>      | Research offers insights into the leadership traits and behaviours which make a positive difference for children and young people <sup>10</sup> . Use it to shape the design of talent development programmes: from the selection process for participants to delivery and evaluation of the programme itself.  |
| <b>Is there absolute clarity of expectations for everyone involved in the programme?</b>  | This is important for participants of course, but also applies to anyone affected by a talent development programme – a participant’s current school Senior Leadership Team, any school hosting visits or exchanges, coaches etc. Although this sounds straightforward, evaluation of the Fast Track programme found that a lack of clarity of expectations was one of the most significant factors in determining satisfaction.  |
| <b>Is there an explicit performance management process for those individuals taking part in the programme?</b>                    | How will participants’ progress be followed? This enables individuals to gain feedback on how they are doing, and for programme planners to assess the impact of their investment. It also provides a pathway to exit those participants from the programme who are not developing as rapidly as expected as leaders.   |
| <b>Is the proposed programme sensitive to the needs of potential leaders of different phases?</b>                                 | There are obvious contextual differences between individuals from (say) primary and secondary backgrounds. However, review of the Fast Track programme also found more subtle differences. Primary phase teachers, for example, who tended to be younger, required a more tailored approach to their learning to maintain their motivation. In other words, differences in process as well as content may be necessary.   |
| <b>Where coaches or mentors are being used, is there a clear quality assurance and performance management mechanism in place?</b> | Coaches add a high degree of personalisation to a talent development programme – so long as the quality of coaching is good. Some programmes only use coaches who have undergone relevant training. This means investing effort to prepare coaches, setting explicit expectations about the amount and level of commitment required. Formal feedback from ‘coachees’ enables judgements about the effectiveness of coaches.<br><br>(Of course, coach training itself is an important leadership development investment for those at the appropriate stage in their career). |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>How does the programme allow for personalisation?</b></p>                           | <p>This has been shown to be a key characteristic of effective leadership learning which makes an impact. There is a balance to be struck between an individual's needs and the system needs, of course. However, in allocating resources to talent development, are there ways to enable participants themselves to shape the way investment is planned?</p>  |
| <p><b>How does the programme support diversity amongst future school leaders?</b></p>     | <p>Compared to the population as a whole, the teaching profession has proportionally fewer individuals from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background. Consequently, this imbalance is mirrored in the profile of school leaders. The Evidence into practice guide, <a href="#">What we are learning about... attracting talented candidates for headship?</a><sup>11</sup> identifies the perceived barriers to leadership amongst BME teachers.</p> |
| <p><b>How does the programme help build the future pipeline of leadership talent?</b></p> | <p>To make the greatest impact, individuals must be retained within the system and continue to move along the pathway to senior leadership and headship. This means connecting individuals through to NPQH application (where appropriate) and/or career management interventions (see section four).</p>  |

## How is talent best managed?

Talent **development** is a pre-requisite of effective succession planning. But without talent **management** – making sure that the people with the right skills are in the right places to make a difference – then investment in development will lack impact.

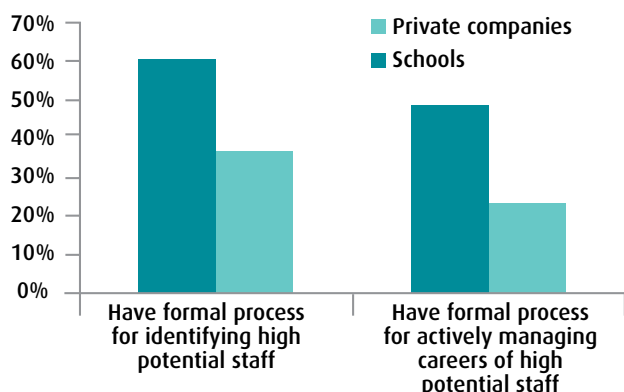
Organised talent management programmes are more commonly found in large organisations with a more centralised corporate infrastructure. Research into such programmes (across public and private sectors) identified a number of common characteristics of talent development and talent management programmes<sup>4</sup>:

- receive the active support and commitment of the organisation's top leadership
- closely integrated into strategic plans
- emphasise developmental assignments in addition to formal learning

- address specific human capital challenges such as increasing diversity, improving retention or building specific leadership capacity
- designed to facilitate broader transformational objectives
- identify talent at multiple levels within the organisation.

Effective management of talent is more challenging in a highly decentralised system such as education, in which individual schools have significant local autonomy. That is perhaps why research suggests that whilst half of private sector organisations surveyed had formal mechanisms for actively managing the careers of their high potential staff, only a quarter of schools had such a process. It is worth noting, however, that if the comparison with private sector organisations is made with just high performing schools, there is little difference between sectors.

### Incidence of talent development and talent management processes, private companies vs schools<sup>3</sup>



### Keeping careers on track

Hay Group researchers identified a series of so-called ‘de-railing’ forces which could knock development programmes off track and cause early leadership potential to go unfulfilled<sup>3</sup>. Their findings provide useful intelligence to inform talent management processes which help high potential individuals to plan their career effectively. So-called ‘de-railing’ forces were identified at both the organisational and individual level, pinpointing those moments when aspiring leaders might be deflected by lack of structural support or by their own actions.

### Potential organisational de-railers:

| Factor                      | Risk  | Response   |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Career transitions</b>   | Lack of support at key transitional stages (such as a first leadership role or a first headship) when newly developed skills are tested in a real life setting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide moral support.</li> <li>- Peer-to-peer networking.</li> <li>- Offer early feedback on impact.</li> <li>- Create space for thinking and planning.</li> <li>- Build confidence.</li> <li>- Provide early support to newly appointed leaders.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Changing job demands</b> | Development is unresponsive to changing job demands and/or fails to equip individuals for new leadership roles of the future.                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build in regular review of skills being developed.</li> <li>- Focus development on transferable skills – eg ability to adapt and learn from others.</li> <li>- Enable individuals to shape their own development to be context-specific.</li> </ul>           |

## Potential individual de-railers:

| Factor   | Risk  | Response   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Change in personal circumstances</b>          | Individual's priorities change in light of experience and/or unforeseen events.   | Talent development programmes must allow for an appropriate level of wastage to take into account normal labour market fluctuations. |
| <b>Negative aspects of high potential traits</b> | <p>Individuals de-rail themselves through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Short term achievement focus on at expense of acquiring breadth of experience</li> <li>- arrogance</li> <li>- inability to listen</li> <li>- lack of self awareness</li> </ul> <p>These are sometimes negative dimensions of positive traits such as ambition, focus and self confidence.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued coach/mentor support.</li> <li>- Constructive feedback on performance.</li> </ul> |

## WHAT IF...

# I put leadership development and career development together?

Effective succession planning makes an explicit link between talent development programmes and specified future demand for leaders. It engages aspiring school leaders by providing them with an attractive personal career path and encourages **and enables them to move along that path**.

This model sees career planning and management as a central component of leadership development planning. It supports people to move to roles where they will be most effective or where they will have the opportunity to broaden their experience for the future.

Effective talent management is personalised, responsive to the needs of aspiring school leaders as people as well as professionals. Individuals' personal aspirations and preferences – eg their level of mobility due to family commitment or their financial requirements – are just as important as professional career considerations. Effective talent managers understand these complex interactions and provide support which meets these needs as far as practicable in order to retain talented leaders.

## Talent management checklist

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Demand assessment:</b><br>What leadership skills are needed?         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– In the short term, how many headteachers are required - in which schools?</li><li>– Over the medium to longer term, what leadership capacity and capability is required to meet future need?</li></ul>  |
| <b>Supply management:</b><br>How are leadership skills being developed? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Within the school system, what resources are being invested in leadership development? Together, do those resources form a coherent pathway from early career to headship? Do early development programmes bridge into NPQH preparation, for example?</li><li>– Are there sufficient numbers of individuals entering development programmes to ensure future supply?</li><li>– For each locally funded development programme, do they display the key success criteria described in <a href="#">What leadership skills will be needed in the future</a> eg clear objectives, top team support and effective quality assurance?</li></ul>                                      |
| <b>Talent brokerage:</b><br>How can supply be best matched to demand?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Is there an effective mechanism for ensuring that would-be leadership candidates are alerted to advertised vacancies?</li><li>– Are there opportunities to match emerging leaders to temporary vacancies on an interim acting-up basis pending permanent appointments?</li><li>– Are governors well supported in making headship appointments? Are they open to appointing candidates with non-traditional backgrounds eg candidates from accelerated development programmes?</li><li>– Are candidates properly prepared for headship appointments processes?</li><li>– Do potential leaders receive personalised career planning support to sustain their appetite</li></ul> |



## Case study

### Career planning for future leaders

Future Leaders is a four year accelerated development programme for aspiring headteachers. The programme is focused on urban secondary school leadership in particular and currently operates in London and Greater Manchester. It is expanding to the West Midlands in September 2009.

In the first year of the programme, participants are placed in a 'residency school', working as part of the senior leadership team in an area of urban challenge. Their responsibilities are commensurate with an associate deputy headteacher. During this time, Future Leaders provides the participants with training and regular coaching. At the end of this year, participants must seek permanent employment independently, typically at deputy or assistant headteacher level.

The programme's participant development team provides focused support to participants on career planning and management as an integrated part of the professional development programme it delivers. The team's goal is to ensure that every participant who completes the development year makes the transition safely back into a salaried role within an urban school.

Within four months of joining the programme, participants take part in career planning sessions – from setting career goals to thinking through the process of applying for a new leadership role. Over a period of several weeks, participants think about

what they will bring to a future school and how they will present that to potential employers. The process culminates with one-to-one video analysis of their interview presentation skills. Evaluation suggests that over 80 per cent of participants believe the career support is 'outstanding' in terms of meeting their specific needs.

Individuals develop their career plans with their coach. Their progress in applying for roles is tracked (and supported) by the central team to help keep them on course. The team offers further support through marketing the programme and working with schools, local authorities and recruitment agencies to actively address their succession planning needs and identify suitable opportunities for participants.

**Contact:** Cat Matthews, Head of Participant Development, Future Leaders  
Email: [catriona.matthews@future-leaders.org.uk](mailto:catriona.matthews@future-leaders.org.uk)



## Case study

### Talent development in other sectors

Accelerated development programmes are common across a wide range of organisations in both the public and private sectors, both within the UK and internationally. Research literature provides access to a wide range of comparison case studies from other sectors<sup>4</sup>.

Whilst examples from other sectors can be a useful way of gathering ideas, they rarely reflect the challenges of talent development for school leadership which takes place within a highly decentralised system in which local organisations have far greater autonomy than would be found in most private sector settings.

Comparison with other sectors, therefore, is more useful as a means of examining trends in effective leadership development rather than seeking models to replicate.

One survey<sup>15</sup> of over 50 UK private sector companies suggested that the three most effective ways of developing people at work were: coaching; work-based assignments; and internal training. Wider research<sup>16</sup> suggested key characteristics of high-impact leadership development schemes from other sectors. Such schemes:

- use action and experiential learning to develop authentic learning processes
- encourage leaders to assume responsibility for planning and implementing their own learning experiences to meet their needs
- encourage development at three levels: self, team and organisation
- have a core mission statement or all-encompassing purpose around which the system and programmes are built, which drives all initiatives and behaviours, is aligned with corporate strategy and is clearly communicated to staff
- provide development experiences that involve innovation, creativity, strategising and thinking outside the box
- build a culture that is supportive of leadership development at all levels
- encourage multi-disciplinary experience to drive breakthrough thinking and innovation (through job rotations, global assignments, developmental assignments etc)
- use formal and/or internal mentoring to help develop leaders
- assess the development of leaders from all perspectives (peer reviews, review by superiors and subordinates)
- leverage technology and e-learning

### Accelerate to Headship

In Spring 2010, National College will introduce a new Accelerate to Headship programme to enable those with the highest potential to move rapidly to headship. It will capitalise on the talent and ambition within the teaching profession and recruit career changers with real leadership expertise.

The new programme aims to offer a personalised approach to professional and career development, with a range of high quality experiences within and outside school. It will feed directly into the NPQH programme. The goal is a cadre of highly motivated, outstanding new heads for schools in all contexts in England, able to contribute not just to their own school but also to the system as a whole.



# Sources

## Sources

- 1 ICM, 2008, The Headship Index, London, ICM for the National College
- 2 Hay Group, 2008, Potential – For What?, London, Hay Group
- 3 Hay Group, 2008, Rush To The Top – Accelerating The Development of Leaders in Schools, London, Hay Group
- 4 Early, P, Jones, J, Effective Approaches For Accelerated Leadership Development, unpublished, for the National College
- 5 National College, 2008, Making a Difference, Nottingham, National College
- 6 Lewis, P, Murphy, R, 2008, Effective School Leadership: A Brief Review Summarising Selected Literature on the Evidence for Effective School Leadership, Nottingham, National College
- 7 Glatter, R, 2008, Of Leadership, Management and Wisdom: A Brief Synthesis of Selected Reports and Documents on Leadership Development, Nottingham, National College
- 8 National College, 2008, Review of the Landscape: Leadership and Leadership Development 2008, Nottingham, National College
- 9 Bush, T, Glover, D, Harris, A, 2007, Review of School Leadership Development, Coventry, University of Warwick for the National College
- 10 Leithwood, K, Day, C, Sammons, P, Harris, A, Hopkins, D, 2006, Seven Strong Claims About Successful School Leadership, Nottingham, National College
- 11 National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services (National College), April 2008, What are we learning about...attracting talented candidates for headship?, Nottingham, National College
- 12 National College for School Leadership (National College), April 2008, What are we learning about...NPQH Graduates?, Nottingham, National College
- 13 Jones, P, 2008, Review and Evaluation of the Fast Track Teaching Programme, National College
- 14 Earley, P, Wiending, D, Bubb, S, Evans, J, and Glenn, M, October 2008, Evaluation of the Future Leaders Pilot Programme, The London Centre for Leadership in Learning and Institute of Education University of London for the National College
- 15 Oliver, K, Vincent, R, 2000, Management Development – What Gets Results? SDR, 16(6)
- 16 Centre for Organisational Research, 2001, High Impact Leadership Development, [www.cfor.org](http://www.cfor.org)

---

# Evidence into practice guide

## What are we learning about... identifying talent

### About this guide

This guide examines what we know about identifying talent and potential school leaders of the future. Although the information may be of interest to individual school leaders and governing bodies, it is designed for people who work across groups of schools in local authorities, dioceses and other local partnerships to secure enough high calibre school leaders.

#### **The guide asks four key questions:**

- Is it possible to identify potential?
- What leadership skills will be needed in the future?
- What is known about effective leadership development?
- How is talent best managed?

The guide explores some of the facts and figures to help succession planners develop their own answers to these questions and brings together key intelligence to inform local strategy.

A range of additional online resources, which include more case studies and practical tools, are available at [www.nationalcollege.org.uk/index/aboutus/publications-atoz.htm](http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/index/aboutus/publications-atoz.htm)

### Evidence into practice guides

This is one in a series of guides that share intelligence and insights into the leadership succession challenge facing schools.

Guides currently available can be downloaded from: [www.nationalcollege.org.uk/successionplanning](http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/successionplanning)

The National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services is committed to excellence and dedicated to inclusiveness. We exist to develop and inspire great leaders of schools, early years settings and children's services. We share the same ambition – to make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people.

Membership of the National College gives access to unrivalled development and networking opportunities, professional support and leadership resources.

©2010 National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services – All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced without prior permission from the National College. To reuse this material, please contact the Marketing and Communications Team at the National College or email [publications@nationalcollege.org.uk](mailto:publications@nationalcollege.org.uk).

Triumph Road  
Nottingham NG8 1DH  
T 0845 609 0009  
F 0115 872 2001  
E [enquiries@nationalcollege.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nationalcollege.org.uk)  
[www.nationalcollege.org.uk](http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk)