

Inspiring leaders to
improve children's lives

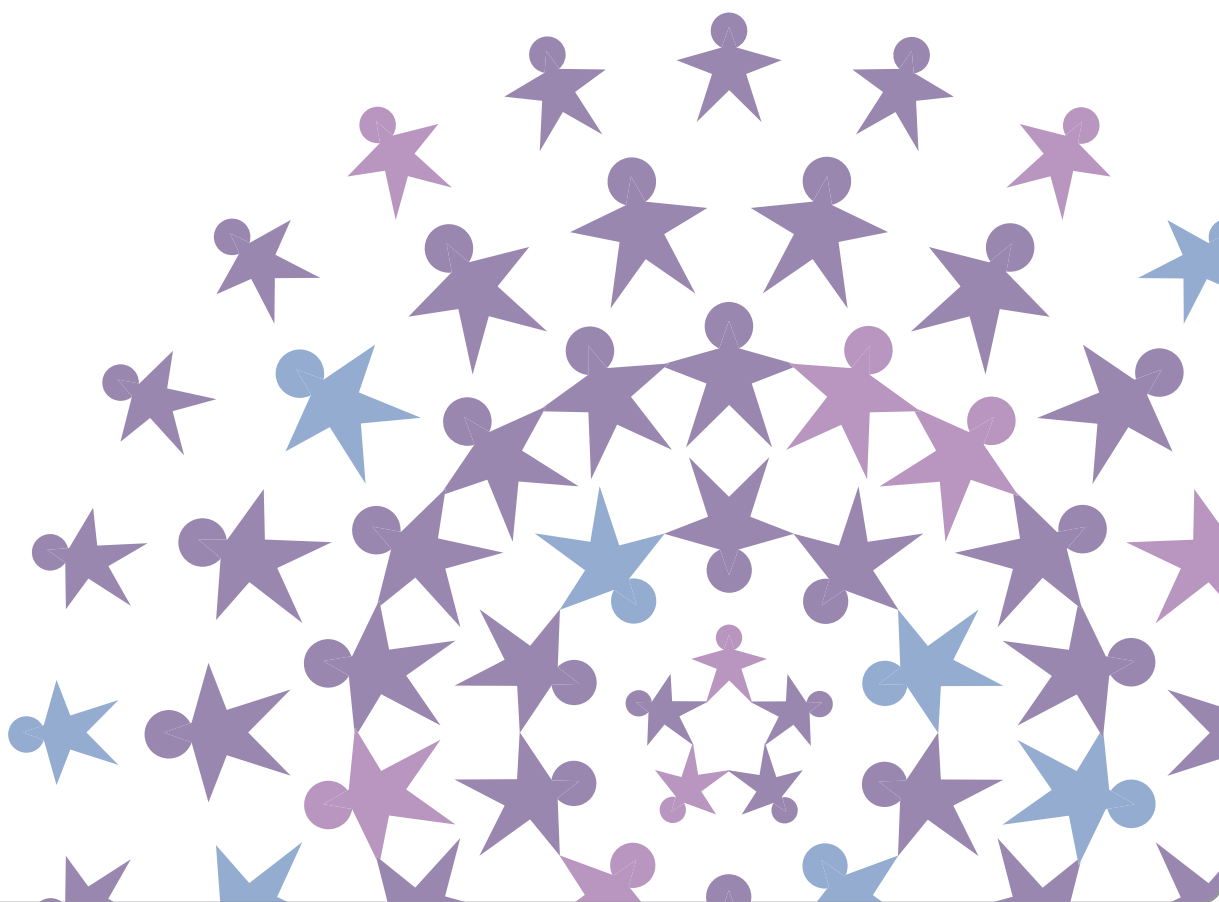


National College
for Leadership of Schools
and Children's Services

Children's services

The National Succession Planning Framework for Children's Services

Professional development



Working with
cwdc
Children's Workforce
Development Council

ADCS
Leading Children's Services

**ADCS virtual
staff college**
Developing People - Building Careers

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This document should be read in conjunction with the resources:
www.nationalcollege.org.uk/succession-planning-framework-childrens-services-resources.pdf

Introduction

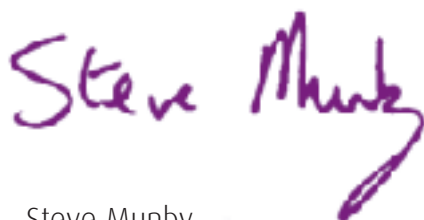
A warm welcome

Since being asked in December 2008 to take responsibility for the development of those who lead children's services, the National College and its partners have made a significant amount of progress in developing provision for serving directors of children's services (DCSs) and those aspiring to the role.

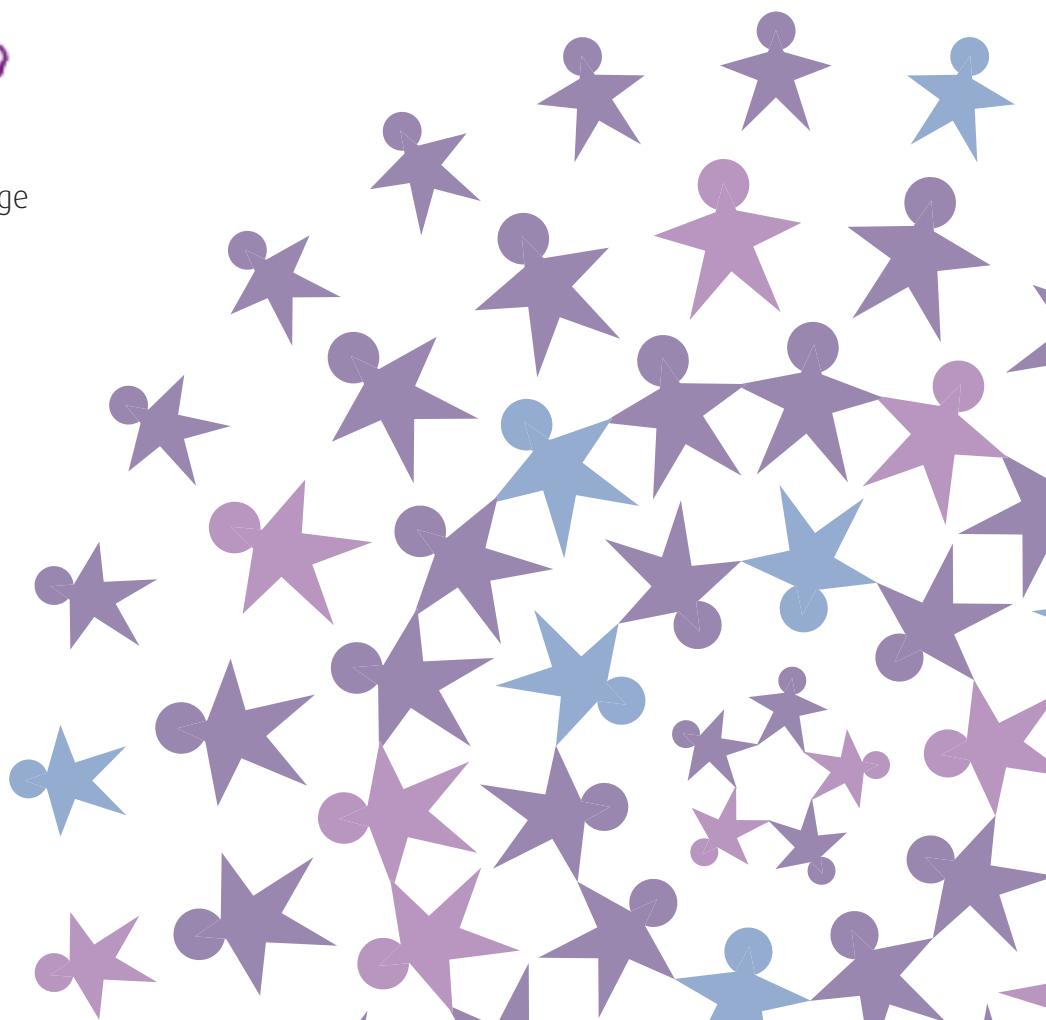
The publication of the **National Framework for Succession Planning for Children's Services** means that we have taken another important step towards providing a comprehensive range of programmes and initiatives to support leaders and aspiring leaders.

This booklet, and the accompanying ring binder, provides guidance and support for those involved in promoting succession planning in the regions. It describes the partnership between the National College and the DCS regional group, and offers a wide range of resource materials that will support the development of a regional strategy and plan.

We are committed to achieving excellence in all of the work that we do and to ensuring that what we provide meets the needs of leaders and aspiring leaders across children's services.



Steve Munby
Chief Executive, National College



Section one:

The National Succession Planning Framework for Children's Services

How to use this document:

The framework consists of this booklet, which forms section one, and section two, which provides sample resources. Sections one and two should be used in conjunction with each other to help turn strategy into practical actions at a local level. The National Succession Planning Framework for Children's Services (the framework) has been written for the DCS regional sponsors and regional leads who have been appointed to improve talent management and succession planning within the regions.

How should it be used?

The framework is intended to be a practical document that is not prescriptive or overly directive. It recognises that in each region there is a wide variety of organisations delivering a range of children's services. All these organisations will have their own approaches to, and practices for, talent management and succession planning that have been developed to reflect local organisational objectives, ways of working and needs.

The purpose of the framework is to encourage collaboration in order to achieve a 'joined-up' approach to talent management and succession planning. This will build on current processes in the region, but may also take advantage of practice from other regions and other sectors.

Why is the framework needed?

The framework seeks to ensure that at a regional level the right people are in the right place at the right time. Without effective succession planning, it will become increasingly difficult to recruit to the most senior posts in children's services in local authorities.

What is the Succession Planning Initiative designed to achieve?

The aim is to improve the recruitment of 1st and 2nd tier officers. The specific objectives are to:

- increase the number and quality of candidates for DCS posts and for second-tier posts in children's services
- create a more diverse talent pool, attracting potential senior leaders from a broader range of backgrounds (professional and personal)

- establish a more positive view of the senior leadership of children's services, changing public perceptions and professional aspirations
- support the emergence of new models of leadership, better suited to partnership working, multi-agency provision and the introduction of integrated service teams
- contribute towards more effective performance management in children's services

How does the framework link with other national and local initiatives to improve leadership within children's services?

The framework sits within a broader umbrella of initiatives, which includes:

- leadership development programmes provided by local authorities
- national sector specific leadership development programmes, such as those run by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), the Improvement and Development Agency for local government (IDeA), and the National College
- other organisational leadership development programmes, such as the provision made by the NHS
- Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP) interventions

The framework provides guidance on co-ordinating these initiatives to form a holistic approach to talent management and succession planning within the region. To support the regions in achieving this, the National College will maintain a small support team comprising:

- **National Lead for Children's Services Succession Planning** (0.4 full-time equivalent FTE) – The national lead will support the Succession Planning Initiative by creating a support network for all the regional leads, promoting their work and being accountable to the National College.
- **National Co-ordinators for Children's Services Succession Planning** (3 x 0.4 FTE) – The national co-ordinators will support regional leads to develop and implement regional plans, providing guidance and sharing successes and good practice from other

regions. The national co-ordinators will also be collating relevant national data in order to develop themes which will then be shared with the regions.

When does the Succession Planning Initiative begin?

The succession planning grant for the regions will be provided in the first instance for the period April 2010–September 2011.

The Partnership Agreement

What is a partnership agreement?

The partnership agreement is a contract between the National College and the regional DCS group to work in partnership on succession planning and talent management for senior posts in children's services. It outlines the responsibilities of the National College, and the DCS sponsor for succession planning in the region, to be nominated by the regional DCS group.

Who signs up to the partnership agreement?

The partnership agreement is signed by the DCS regional sponsor and the National College. The contents of the partnership agreement can be found in the Annex to this document.

Funding

Is funding available to support this activity?

Funding to support the development and implementation of regional strategies and plans is available.

How much will each region be allocated?

The succession planning grant is based on a formula that takes into account the size of the region and has been agreed with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and approved by the National College and its partners. For the financial year 2010–11, it is anticipated that the grant will be between roughly £130,000 and £270,000, depending on the size of the region. There is no guarantee that this grant will be repeated in future years.

How will the funding be distributed?

An initial grant of £60,000 will be made available to the region upon signing the partnership agreement. This is primarily to fund initial activity to set up the 'capacity to take action' that is, recruiting and appointing appropriate resource(s) to the regional lead role. The rest of the funding will be made available on receipt of the regional strategy and plan by the National College. The funding should be used during the period April 2010–September 2011. A key role for the DCS regional sponsor will be to hold this budget on behalf of the region.

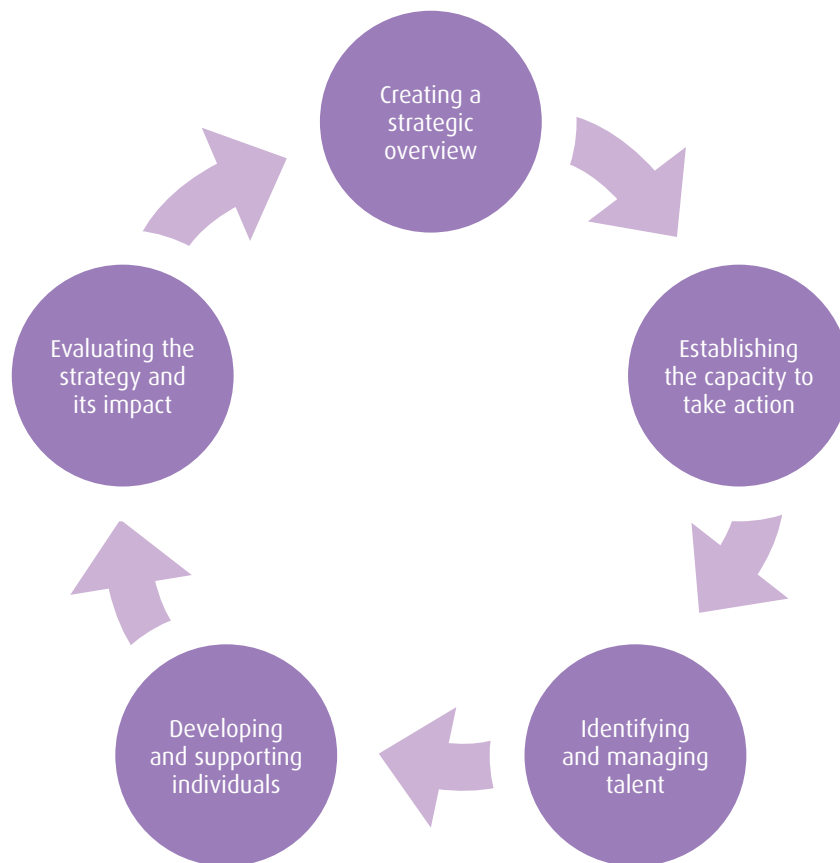
What can it be used for?

The funding can be used to support any activities within the plan. This is likely to include the cost of employing a regional lead to draw up the plan, manage the budgets and implement the programme, as well as the cost of the programme itself. Suggestions for the kind of activities that might be included in the programme can be found on p26 under 'Developing and supporting individuals'.

Who is accountable for ensuring that the funding is spent appropriately?

The DCS regional sponsor for succession planning (nominated by the DCS regional group) will be the senior responsible officer who will be accountable for ensuring that the funds are used appropriately in support of the strategy. The regional sponsor will be required to submit a quarterly report that summarises progress against the plan, activities undertaken and progress made against key performance indicators.

Figure 1: Key elements of the The National Framework for Succession Planning



Creating a strategic overview

This section is designed to help you think through the issues that need to be covered in establishing an effective regional strategy for succession planning and using it to generate a sharply focused action plan.

Introduction

Research commissioned in March 2009 by the National College from McKinsey and Co, into **Succession Planning and Leadership Development for Current and Aspirant Directors of Children's Services**, came to the conclusion that there is very little formal succession planning in local authorities and no clearly identified pipeline of talented and prepared individuals.

The fieldwork undertaken for the production of the framework, which included conversations with over 60 DCSs and other senior leaders, suggested that although this was broadly true, it did not reflect the multitude of informal arrangements that are taking place up and down the country. DCSs, it would seem, take very seriously their responsibility for developing the next generation of senior leaders in children's services. At the moment, however, they have to combine this with all the other priorities that they have within their role.

An effective strategy will take succession planning away from the margins and make sure that it gets the attention it deserves as an essential feature of any serious plan for workforce development.

This section of the framework offers advice about:

- understanding the current problems that exist in the region in relation to the recruitment and appointment of 1st and 2nd tier officers
- gathering evidence about current practice
- developing a strategy and plan that builds on this and supports better talent management and succession across the region

Guidelines

In developing a strategy and plan, it is important to:

- develop a clear view of **current practice** within individual organisations in the region
- understand **the market** by analysing the different 1st and 2nd tier roles across the region, looking at how they are rewarded and which roles are hardest to fill
- devise **a regional strategy** that takes account of geography, existing subregional partnerships and current initiatives without losing the potential benefits that are to be had from working across local authority boundaries
- distinguish between **talent management and succession planning**, making sure that both are given appropriate attention
- put a premium on creating **an appropriate culture** that rewards talent and supports aspiration

Current practice

Develop a clear view of current practice in talent management and succession planning within individual organisations in the region.

The fieldwork for the framework uncovered a wealth of good practice, particularly in the provision of generic leadership programmes. Many local authorities, for example, have mature competency frameworks, performance and development processes, and leadership development programmes that they use for identifying, managing and developing talent for their most senior roles.

Understanding where these processes exist within the region and, just as important where they do not, will help inform the contents of the regional strategy and plan and help to shape what is done at a regional level.

“Across the council, they have been working on a Directors for the Future programme which was initially aimed at assistant director level but is now moving to encompass 3rd and 4th tier posts. It looks at opportunities for mentoring and experience/expertise in different service settings. As an example, the director of adult and social services is linked to the CEO at the NHS.”

Director of Children’s Services

The market

Understand the market by analysing the different 1st and 2nd tier officer roles across the region, looking at how they are rewarded and which roles are hardest to fill.

Competition among organisations for talented professionals to work in children’s services is fierce. Many DCSs and CEOs are very concerned about where they are going to get their next generation of leaders from. Understanding the current size and composition of the children’s services’ workforce at all levels is vital.

Even though the services provided for children and young people are very similar from one local authority to another, the way in which they are provided and the organisational structures that underpin this provision vary greatly. The need to reduce costs and do more for less within public services has forced many organisations to completely rethink what services are delivered and how. Joint working between local authorities and primary care trusts, for example, has increased the number of shared 1st and 2nd tier posts. Understanding the different structures that exist across the region and the different role requirements (in terms of skills and knowledge) will provide a context and help define some of the challenges that the strategy will need to address.

Case study

Opportunities in leadership development for children’s services: London



In making provision for senior and middle leaders in children’s services, London is probably fairly representative. Research conducted with 2nd and 3rd tier officers on the development needs of aspiring DCSs helped to identify a number of key issues associated with the identification and management of talent.

Currently, learning and development tend to be highly compartmentalised. There are opportunities to develop as a specialist, but not to gain experience more broadly across the full range of children’s services. This was true both of formal training courses and where there are opportunities for more experiential learning such as work shadowing. Changing this may not be easy. Several significant barriers were identified, including the pressure of the day job, a lack of ambition from aspiring middle leaders, and very conventional recruitment practices.

The research helped to identify some specific issues where a regional approach could help, with some recommendations for consideration when developing the regional strategy and plan.

“As one of the smallest metropolitan boroughs in the country we have had problems competing with some of the salaries offered elsewhere. In the first round of recruitment, no one suitable was identified internally and the process was made more difficult because after the first attempt, the council developed a proposition to merge the role of the DCS with the post of Director of Adults. We were therefore looking for a very broad range of skills – beyond the broadened remit of the DCS role which has been much discussed.”

Chief Executive Officer

DCSs and CEOs report that the financial packages being offered are very different, even within a local area. They cite this, together with the lack of transparency and consistency between organisations about the levels and types of roles, as reasons why vacancies were remaining unfilled in some cases. Finding out the range of salaries offered to recent recruits into both newly created and existing roles, and also the reasons why posts are commonly remaining vacant for extended periods, will help to focus the strategy.

A regional strategy

Devise a regional strategy that takes account of geography, existing sub-regional partnerships and current initiatives without losing the potential benefits that are to be had from working across local authority boundaries.

There is a wide variety of needs and varying levels of maturity within each organisation in relation to talent management and succession planning across regions. Many stakeholders report the need for the strategies to be flexible to account for both the geographical and organisational make up of the region. Whoever provides support for succession planning across the region will need to understand local circumstances and be exceptionally good at creating strong networks.

The National College is developing a regional presence which will be piloted in three ‘test and learn’ regions during 2010-11 with a view to implementation across the whole country in 2011-12. This will offer an important source of support for the task of fashioning a regional strategy in partnership with other stakeholders, like TDA and the CWDC, who have a wider responsibility for developing a local workforce strategy with each authority in the region.

Talent management and succession planning

Distinguish between talent management and succession planning, making sure that both are given appropriate attention.

For many people, succession planning is seen as a tightly planned process, whereby individuals are mapped on to a series of roles that advance them through the organisation over time. Some people even understand it as being about identifying an immediate successor for a role and developing them to take over the role in the medium term. Even though that is not what succession planning should be about, the view persists.

Genuine succession planning is quite different. It is about making sure that, in a general sense, there is no shortfall in the number of potential recruits with the appropriate skills and experiences coming forward to take on senior roles and that the ‘supply’ of skills and experience matches demand and, even better, outstrips it.

Talent management, on the other hand, is about identifying potential leaders and helping them develop so that they become realistic candidates for leadership roles, and get there more quickly than they might otherwise have done.

Both are needed, and a good strategy will include both.

An appropriate culture

Put a premium on creating an appropriate culture which rewards talent and supports aspiration.

There is a reluctance to allow talented professionals to move between organisations. In particular, CEOs in some of the local authorities interviewed as a part of the fieldwork for the framework saw only the risks of losing talent; others, however, could see the benefit to their own organisation.

“The current system is relatively adversarial between groups of authorities and there are opportunities to improve this perspective, sharing talent rather than fighting over it.”

Chief Executive Officer

It will be vital to demonstrate that the strategy and plan aim, through collaboration and facilitation, to join up organisations for mutual benefit. This will ensure that there is a talent pool with enough breadth and depth to support effective succession management that focuses on skills rather than people and posts.

The role of the region

The jobs are local authority jobs and the appointments are made by elected members in individual local authorities supported by their CEOs, which raises a question about why the decision has been taken to establish a regional strategy?

The answer is straightforward. The number of posts at a senior level is so small that it is almost inevitable that individual authorities will need to look elsewhere to fill them and only by working across local authority boundaries is it possible to get sufficient critical mass to generate a programme of activity.

That means the region has a really important part to play:

To create a common purpose in a traditionally competitive marketplace

The fieldwork indicates that for the strategy to succeed it must encourage and facilitate a collaborative approach to talent management and succession planning for 1st and 2nd tier posts across the region.

To build flexibility into the strategy and the accompanying plan

An effective regional strategy will replace unproductive competition for resource with a two-way dialogue between organisations about the management of talent. There is some evidence to suggest that this happens at an informal level within the DCS community for 2nd tier posts but it needs to be extended and made accessible to other senior stakeholders.

To create, support and promote the DCS brand across the region

The current adverse publicity surrounding children's services has caused recruitment problems. Although many, if not all, of the current DCSs commented that their job was highly rewarding and fulfilling, they were concerned that the next generation of potential DCSs was being put off by a negative view of children's services in the media. It was felt that there was a strong need for any regional strategy and plan to actively promote the role of the DCS, drawing out the positive benefits of both remaining in the role and looking to the role for future progression.

To provide information and data (eg churn and turnover data)

At present, those responsible for talent management and succession planning only have a very limited view of the turnover of children's service posts within their own organisations. Only through informal contact do they get to know about trends and the performance of their own organisation relative to that of others. Many stakeholders reported that the opportunity to have information on the trends in turnover of 1st and 2nd tier posts would help to establish what could be done differently to attract and retain senior leaders. Part of the regional role will be the development of relationships with organisations to collect relevant information about the supply and demand of labour within the region.

To establish route maps for 1st and 2nd tier roles (considering the size and nature of the roles)

The fieldwork highlighted the differences between structures and roles in organisations within and across regions. There was evidence to suggest that career paths and maps did exist within organisations but not between them. By working with organisations, potential route maps could describe possible career routes that individuals could use to help plan their careers. In undertaking this with individuals, it may help to identify the breadth and depth of experience and skills development that is required by leaders of children's services within the region.

To challenge existing ways of operating

One of the main findings of the fieldwork was that there needs to be a step change in the approach to talent management and succession planning within children's services if we are to grow the breadth and depth of skills required. The focus of the strategy and plan needs to build on existing good practice as well as challenging current ways of working where these are blocking effective collaborative talent management processes.

“There needs to be more opportunities to share skills and experiences across children's trusts and to expand management opportunities for staff.”

Director of Children's Services

The role of local authorities and other organisations in the region

Being open with information, specifying when and what type of skills they will need in the future

The experience of developing the framework would suggest that senior stakeholders within children's services are very worried about the number of talented professionals that are ready for promotion. Without exception, stakeholders interviewed have been keen to engage and have readily shared their reviews and requirements. For the strategy to succeed, their role will be to continue this engagement from the development of the strategy through to implementation, supporting a collaborative approach.

Understanding and supporting the need for cross-local authority and multi-agency collaboration

Many respondents suggested that they would only support a regional approach if they saw benefit for their own organisations. Through working with peers and the region they will need to be open to seeing that this is beneficial.

Key challenges

The key challenges are:

- **securing buy-in for the strategy – gaining the agreement to and the commitment of a broad range of stakeholders will be key to the success of the strategy and plan**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 5 – Stakeholder mapping matrix and stakeholder management plan
 - resource 6 – Checklist for developing a communications strategy
- **building flexibility into the strategy and plan – ensuring that the strategy is flexible enough to respond to a wide variety of local needs over time**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 1 – Checklist for developing a succession planning strategy and plan
 - resource 2 – Template for recording and analysing current practice
- **understanding the future experience and skills requirements for 1st and 2nd tier roles across the region (the demand) and the breadth and depth of your talent pool**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 3 – Template for recording and analysing information about the demand for senior leaders within the region
 - resource 4 – Discussion guide and summary regional supply matrix
- **keeping the strategy and plan up to date**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 13 – Evaluating the strategy
 - resource 14 – Reporting progress

Establishing the capacity to take action

This section explores how collaborative working using existing and new networks in a region is the key to implementing an effective plan for improving talent management and succession planning.

Introduction

The fieldwork confirmed that much of the current activity around talent management and succession planning is at an organisation and service level. There was evidence to suggest that where collaboration across organisations and regions had taken place, this had led to step change in both the quality and quantity of candidates for 1st and 2nd tier roles.

“There is a need for a more co-ordinated approach in regions which could enable counties to work in a more cohesive way, particularly through the sharing of information and training and development approaches.”

Director of Children’s Services

“Even more stark was the perception that the current practice is, as one DCS put it, ‘adversarial between groups of authorities’ and that there is room for improvement by ‘sharing talent and experience rather than fighting over it”

Director of Children’s Services

Many participants also underlined the need for any regional support to be ‘flexible’ and based around local needs, pressures and ‘challenge’, recognising the differences in how regions are constituted.

This section of the framework offers advice and suggestions for action to support the implementation of the plan including:

- understanding the current structures, networks and stakeholders that currently exist within a region
- planning, recruiting and deploying additional resources to support talent management and succession planning activity
- encouraging wide-ranging collaboration and joined-up action across the region

Guidelines

In establishing who currently supports talent management and succession planning, it is important to:

- understand the current **formal and informal networks** that influence how talented professionals are developed and moved through roles, both within their current organisation and across organisations
- think beyond the local authority to include **wider networks** within children’s trust organisations such as the 3rd sector
- investigate the current **perceived and actual barriers** that prevent organisations working together to share and grow talent and experience
- draw on the experiences of **other wider children’s workforce strategy groups** (eg, CWDC) and from capacity from national programmes

In building additional capacity and promoting collaboration within the region, it is important to:

- clearly establish **the benefits of collaboration** for the different stakeholder groups
- build on existing networks and groups to **ensure that the strategy is sustainable**
- appoint **a regional lead** with an appropriate level of experience to make sure that networks are created and sustained and that plans are implemented

Formal and informal networks

Understand the current formal and informal networks that influence how talented professionals are developed and moved through roles, both within their current organisation and across organisations.

“The culture of regions needs to change to enable the sharing of colleagues, the giving of experience and the co-ordination of exchanges.”

Director of Children’s Services

We know that much of the activity that supports talent management and succession planning exists at organisational level. Although forums already exist within organisations (ie through corporate management teams) and through wider initiatives such as the CWDC, there is little current focus or activity on planning movement across organisations or joined-up development activity. Actions to understand better the interrelationships between existing and new networks may include undertaking a stakeholder mapping process to identify key stakeholders and the forums in which they take part and also to map where new networks may exist.

Case study

Setting up a regional network: East Midlands



For several years, senior leaders across the region in a range of forums had identified the need to provide development support for children’s services leaders and recognised the value of a regional approach to succession management and leadership development. Using the opportunity to bid for regional improvement and efficiency partnership (RIEP) funding, the directors identified children’s leadership development as a key priority for regional workforce development and were successful in obtaining a limited grant for the year 2009-10.

The directors appointed the School Development Support Agency (SDSA), a development agency in the region with a track record of facilitating a range of children’s services networks, as co-ordinator of their regional improvement plan and the project work commenced. Their work has highlighted the importance of gaining the commitment of the nine directors of children’s services to a regional improvement plan for children and young people and the importance of the culture of collaboration in the region.

Through a regional steering group structure which has wide representation and involvement of key stakeholders, they have now delivered plans to implement an East Midland’s children’s services advanced leadership development programme within the regional succession planning strategy.

Wider networks

Think beyond the local authority to include wider networks within children's trust organisations such as the 3rd sector.

The significantly widened DCS role means that traditional networks alone may not provide either the quantity or quality of candidates for 1st and 2nd tier roles or the breadth of support required to develop the right skills and experience in preparation for these roles. The fieldwork confirmed that the traditional networks currently operating within the regions need to be broadened to encourage dialogue and collaboration with all organisations that provide children's services.

"There is a role for children's trusts to play in encouraging people to move around between skills and competencies. There should be more encouragement to move across as well as up, building knowledge, expertise and more importantly confidence."

Chief Executive Officer

There was also evidence to suggest that larger voluntary sector organisations were seen as providing a new pool of potential 1st and 2nd tier officers and that some of these organisation could offer examples of particularly good practice in leadership development.

"Voluntary sector organisations should work more closely with regional consortia as the sector as a whole is delivering good practice in terms of management development."

Chief Executive Officer, 3rd sector

Perceived and actual barriers to collaborative working

Investigate the current perceived and actual barriers that prevent organisations working together to share and grow talent and experience.

Cost and political pressures are currently forcing organisations to have an internal focus on many issues including growing and developing talent. Despite the increasing concern that there are not enough sufficiently strong candidates coming through into 1st and 2nd tier roles, talent management and succession planning is seen as desirable rather than essential, something that is nice to have if the time and resources can be found.

"There is a need for external, proactive intervention from outside of local authorities to make sure the issue of talent management and succession planning is taken seriously."

Director of Children's Services

In defining regional capacity, it may be useful to understand the potential barriers that exist. For example, where there is competition for the same resources within an area, there may be a fear that talking about talented people may encourage poaching.

There will not always be a single view about the barriers and how to solve them. For example, many participants in the field support the idea that future DCSs may come from different sectors. Others, however, perceive significant skills gaps that may prevent easy interchange. Both of these observations may, of course, be true, in which case solutions will only be found through broadened networks of interest and active dialogue across the broad range of children's services organisations. One interviewee suggested that these new networks might 'break down the mistrust that exists between local authorities and 3rd sector providers'.

"There is no reason why the 3rd sector could not provide DCS candidates, ideas and different perspectives."

Director of Children's Services

Wider children's workforce strategy groups

Draw on the experiences of other wider children's workforce strategy groups (eg CWDC) and capacity from national programmes.

There is already a great deal of well-established activity supporting the development of the workforce across children's services. It is the responsibility of the children's trust to develop a workforce strategy and the work that trusts are doing is supported by the CWDC and the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA).

"The model of succession needs to link to the work of CWDC and Skills for Health."

Children's Services Adviser, health sector

The role of the RIEP was also cited as providing capacity and funding to support development activities.

"The RIEP has funded a brokerage model which enables middle managers to work in other authorities and help broaden staff experience."

Director of Children's Services

Of particular significance is the work currently being undertaken by the National College to support succession planning for headteachers. Working in regional teams, the College's National Succession Consultants are able to offer substantial experience of supporting local authorities develop the next generation of school leaders.

The benefits of collaboration

Clearly establish the benefits of collaboration for the different stakeholder groups.

Active support by organisations and senior individuals within them will only be offered if those involved can clearly see some benefit in taking part. Capacity-building within the region therefore relies on the early identification of the benefits of a more collaborative approach to talent management and succession planning.

Although there are some good appraisal and development programmes, there is no current focus on developing individuals for the benefit of a wider children's service outside people's home organisation.

In order to break down this culture across regions and nationally, regional capacity should be based on stakeholders getting benefit from taking part in the development and implementation of the strategy.

Sustainability

Build on existing networks and groups to ensure that the strategy is sustainable.

"The regional support needs to create opportunities but not be prescriptive. It needs to be about people. It needs to build upon current thinking of ADCS including the 'associate' status."

Director of Children's Services

Although there is funding available to support the development of a regional strategy and plan, as with all funding it cannot be guaranteed to exist in the future. Therefore, in order to be sustainable it is suggested that capacity to support the implementation of the plan should utilise and build on the capacity that already exists within a region. This will improve sustainability if and when funding does decrease or disappear.

Examples of how a region can build sustainability into both the networks that promote collaboration and the capacity to deliver the plan include:

- using existing network forums – and the stakeholders within them – to help shape, promote and deliver the strategy within the region
- encouraging the sharing of current provision within organisations in the region to develop future children's services leaders and ensure that more people have access to these resources
- creating pooled funding for regional development, using a small subscription from the different local organisations in the region. This could fund, for example, regional co-ordination of mentoring, placements and other provision
- investigating the options for funding from alternative sources (eg RIEP)

"The initiative ought to be about strategic support to create a sustainable legacy."

Director of Children's Services

The best way forward for succession planning to become embedded in organisations is for it to be thought of as part of the core business.

"Essentially, people are too busy for succession planning to be a part of their role."

Director of Children's Services

A regional lead

Appoint a regional lead with an appropriate level of experience to make sure that networks are created and sustained and that plans are implemented.

Our fieldwork confirmed that there was broad support for increasing the capacity at a regional level to support talent management and succession planning activity.

“A regional co-ordinator role would be helpful to each area – someone who is able to see what can be achieved locally and regionally.”

Chief Executive Officer

“At the moment, succession planning is not a priority but a nice to have – the only way it will receive impetus is through some sort of external catalyst.”

Director of Children’s Services

The funding available should be used by the region to build on existing and create new capacity to promote better talent management and succession planning and this should extend to recruiting to the regional lead role. Although a broad role description has been developed for this role, it is up to the region to decide who is recruited, how it is done and what job description is agreed.

“A regional role which moved between the authorities and in the region focused on practical action, co-ordination and dissemination of information (as distinct from strategising) would be helpful.”

Chief Executive Officer

The role description that has been developed includes a broad range of activities ranging from the organisation of development activity, senior stakeholder engagement and management through to data collation and dissemination of good practice across the region.

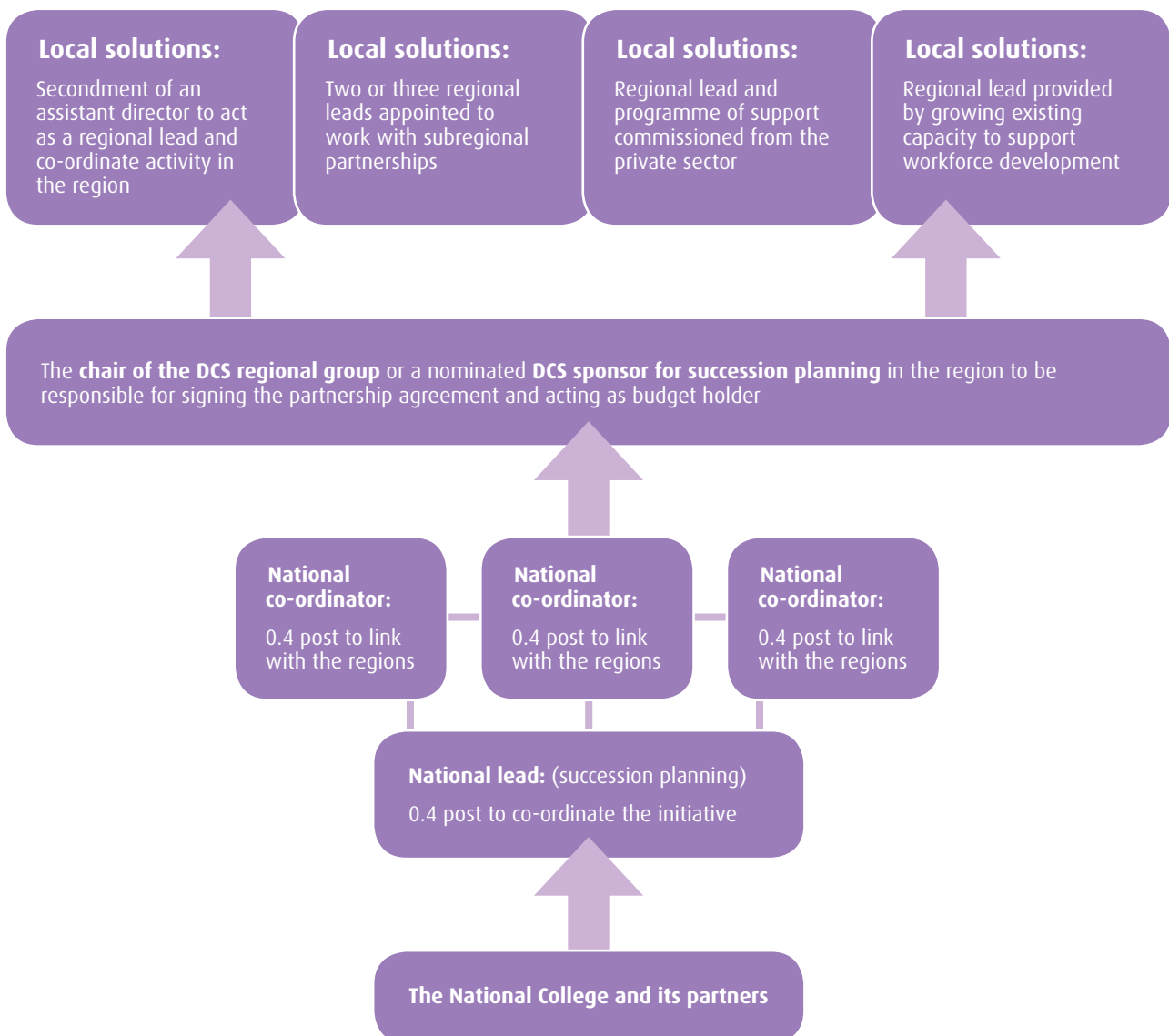
Although this role could be potentially filled by one person (which would provide regional focus), the span of activity may mean that consideration is given to the role being performed by a number of individuals.

A region may, for example, decide that an aspect of the role (eg, information gathering) is best performed by an independent consultant. Conversely, it may decide that the stakeholder management aspect of the role is best performed by a very experienced children’s services professional who may have recently left the profession. Whichever model is decided upon, the key is that the person or people recruited to perform the role should support local needs and understand the region within which they operate.

The role of the region

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the National College and the regional groups.

Figure 2: The relationship between the National College and regional groups



All of this has significant implications for the role of the region, which is illustrated in the list below. Note that the list is intended to be illustrative, rather than exhaustive.

To appoint a regional sponsor and regional lead

The role of the regional sponsor will be to oversee all aspects of the development and implementation of the regional strategy for talent management and succession planning. Within the partnership agreement, this role also has very clear accountability for ensuring that the funding allocated is used appropriately and within the funding guidelines. Other aspects of this role will vary with the requirements of the region. The regional lead has responsibility for senior stakeholder engagement and co-ordination of regional events and data collection. The role might be undertaken by a number of individuals.

The role of the regional lead has many dimensions, including responsibility for working with a range of stakeholders, co-ordinating regional activity, and gathering key information. The role might be undertaken by a number of individuals. In order to access all the support that is available, it will be very important for the regional lead to work closely with the National College as it develops a regional presence.

To create a strategy and plan

An overall strategy and plan will need to be developed to ensure activity is focused and co-ordinated. The regional plan should reflect the fact that much of the activity surrounding talent management and succession planning (identifying, managing and developing talent) happens at an organisational level. The strategy and plan for the region should not aim to control this activity but draw it together and supplement it where necessary. Involving key decision makers in the development of the strategy will be crucial to ensure buy-in to the strategy and the resulting plan.

To define a regional stakeholder map

All stakeholders should be clearly defined. This might be achieved through the creation of a stakeholder map for the region, describing their influence and current level of support.

To understand capacity at agency level for succession management

It will be important to establish which local authorities and other agencies have active succession planning processes currently in place and how these are managed and run.

To communicate the strategy

Once the strategy has been developed, the role of the region will be to communicate this to all DCSs and other key stakeholders including CEOs of agencies and other key influencers (eg elected members). The strategy should also be part of the work of creating the regional DCS brand and as such, likely talent pool candidates are an important audience.

To understand other key roles and how they interact (CWDC, TDA, etc)

It will be important to clarify roles of other partners and the part that they will play in implementing the strategy and the work that they are currently involved in, which has a focus or influence on talent management and succession in senior leadership roles within children's services.



The role of local authorities and other organisations in the region

Understanding their role and contribution

In communicating the strategy and plan, stakeholder organisations should not simply be recipients of the plan, but take an active part that reflects their contribution and ownership.

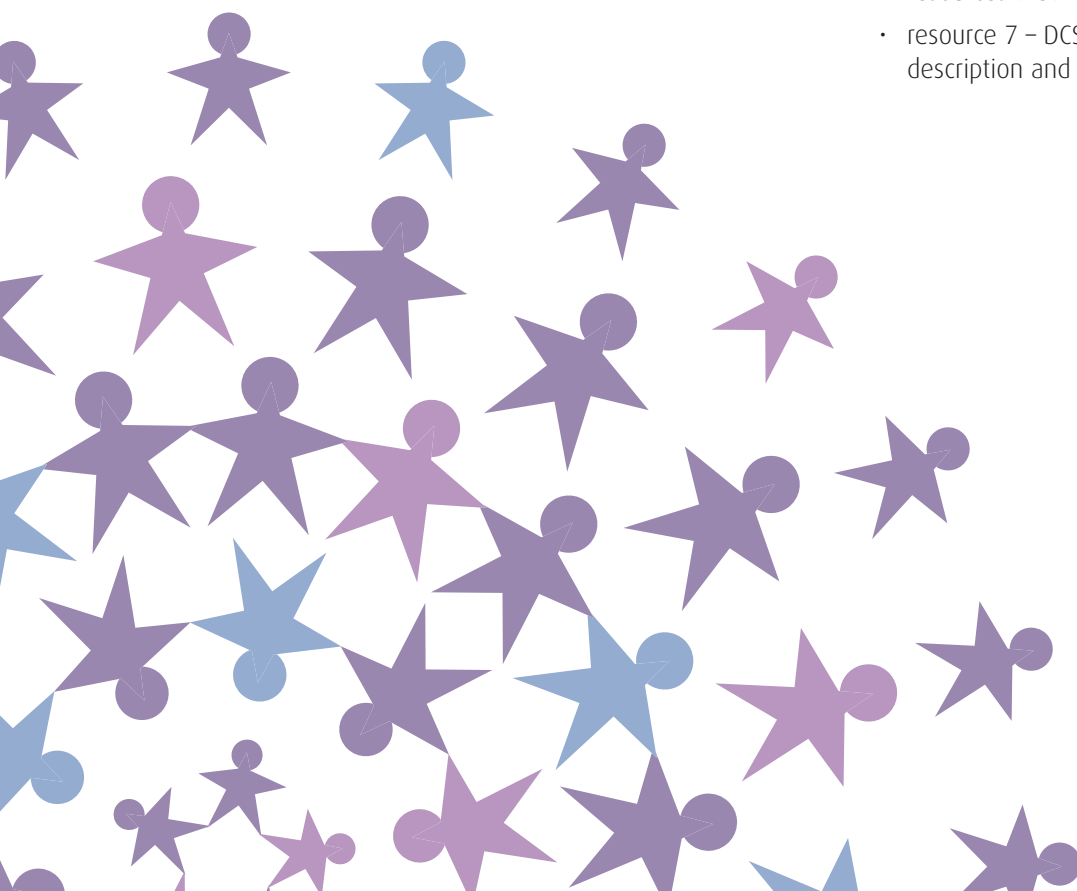
Understanding that they have to give in order to get back

As a part of understanding their role, other organisations and more specifically decision-makers within the organisation should understand that they will need to contribute actively to the plan in order to gain benefits. This will include being transparent about high potential individuals within their own organisation.

Key challenges

The key challenges are:

- **identifying, engaging and managing the wide variety of key stakeholders within the region**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 5 – Stakeholder mapping matrix and stakeholder management plan
 - resource 6 – Checklist for developing a communications strategy
- **building on existing networks and capacity to make the strategy and plan sustainable and joining up current networks to shape, promote and deliver the plan within the region**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 5 – Stakeholder mapping matrix and stakeholder management plan
- **appointing appropriate resources to regional roles that will be seen to be able to add value to current regional capacity**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 7 – DCS regional sponsor role description and regional lead role description



Identifying and managing talent

This section will help you think about how you can support the region to spot and track talented professionals and expand this group to include aspiring leaders with a broader range of skills and experience.

Introduction

The 2009 McKinsey and Co survey reported that there are, on average, 30 DCS vacancies per year across the country, and suggested that this vacancy level is set to rise because the average age of a serving DCS is 53 and most DCSs stay in post for between five and seven years. The National College has recently started tracking resignations and retirements and in January 2010 reported that there had been almost 40 DCS vacancies during the preceding 12 months.

“Latest directorate management team identified that all 1st and 2nd tier officers were over 50 and one quarter were due to retire within a short time frame.”

Director of Children’s Services

These findings were supported by the fieldwork, with the majority if not all of the participants citing difficulties in the recruitment and the retention of 1st and 2nd tier officers. Given the current level of adverse publicity about the management and leadership of children’s services, the situation is unlikely to improve in the short term.

“The recruitment challenge is difficult. In an environment where they feel disliked and bruised the DCS role is challenging, difficult and large.”

Director of Children’s Services

The fieldwork confirmed that identifying the next generation of senior leaders within children’s services was a top priority.

“It is unlikely that CEOs will know where the next good person would come from because the pools are so small and people tend to guard them jealously.”

Chief Executive Officer

This lack of a sufficiently strong talent pool was cited as a real challenge by many of those participating in the fieldwork. DCSs in particular reported serious recruitment difficulties, with a number of examples where there had been two or more attempts to recruit to the role, leading to extended vacancy periods of up to one year. The reality is that critical 1st and 2nd tier posts are frequently filled on a temporary basis for extended periods of time, with the consequence that services find themselves under significant pressure.

The fieldwork additionally identified that the issue of churn within the role was also becoming of increasing concern. Many referenced the political brutality of the role as a reason for existing DCSs to move on to different roles, or move out of the DCS role altogether.

“The heat has been turned up in the last two years because the role is politically very exposed, as has been evident from what happened in Haringey. The financial downturn has now added to the pressure because of dwindling budgets. The cumulative effect is that there are fewer and fewer people wanting to take on the job.”

Director of Children’s Services

The need to strengthen the talent pool was seen by many to be a key priority where the region could make a real difference.

“There are good people just not many to select from. The pools need to be stronger.”

Director of Children’s Services

Guidelines

In identifying talent, it is important to:

- learn from **existing initiatives for identifying talent** within the region, and capitalise on the work that has already been done
- use **feedback and data** from recent recruitment and assessment exercises to identify where there is a shortage of skills and experience
- encourage the use of **competency frameworks and standards** to ensure the identification process is consistent and objective

In attracting talent, it is important to:

- broaden and deepen the range of skills and experience in the talent pool by attracting candidates from **a wider range of backgrounds**
- promote **the DCS brand** within the region, emphasising the changing nature of the role and the positive contribution that the DCS can make

In managing talent, it is important to:

- nurture the talent that already exists at a senior level within children's services and use **the current generation of senior leaders as a key resource** for encouraging new talent
- use the **regional perspective** to broker talent within the region

Existing initiatives for identifying talent

Learn from existing initiatives for identifying talent within the region, and capitalise on the work that has already been done.

There will be processes that exist within individual organisations within the region for identifying these with potential and those who are ready to move to a role that develops them further. Encouraging the sharing of this information between organisations is key.

From the fieldwork, it is clear that many organisations do not have systematic processes for identifying talent. However, there is some evidence of development and assessment centres being used as a part of leadership development programmes.

There are also some national initiatives for identifying and managing talent. For example, the NHS has an Aspiring Leadership Programme that has been running over a number of years and is specifically aimed at developing the skills of aspiring 1st and 2nd tier roles (directors, chief operating officers and CEOs). Building and developing contacts with trusts to share information about aspiring candidates will potentially broaden the talent pool within the region. IDEa has also recently developed a talent management process for local authorities. Of particular relevance is likely to be the work of the National College itself in developing talent in schools. The National Succession Consultants have been promoting strategies for identifying and working with aspiring school leaders, and have significant experience of a range of different approaches including assessment centres, leadership development programmes, work shadowing, mentoring and internships.

There is some danger that organisations may either be protective about their talent management and succession procedures or, at the other end of the spectrum, feel that the emergence of a regional initiative relieves them of the need to do the work themselves. It is important that the region should not attempt to own these processes, but should act as a broker and supporter.

“There is a risk that the DCS talent and succession programme and aspirant programme could allow local authorities and organisations to think that succession planning is happening – that they have the box ticked but the feedback needs to be that they still do the talent spotting.”

Director of Children's Services

Feedback and data

Use feedback and data from recent recruitment and assessment exercises to identify where there is a shortage of skills and experience.

A significant number of jobs are only filled after they have been readvertised and some, at 2nd tier level, not at all on a permanent basis. The frustration that this causes was reflected in the fieldwork. Asking organisations about why they have had difficulties, and which skills and experiences they have had a problem finding, could provide some useful pointers about how the current talent pool needs to be expanded.

“I do not feel that children’s services, as a general rule, look far enough ahead – we are reactive rather than proactive. For me, the question is not ‘who from our current population can we bring up the ranks?’ but, ‘what skills do we actually want next?’ We should be asking what experience, leadership skills and personal qualities we require, and using that as a basis for decisions about succession and sourcing.”

Director of Children’s Services

Competency frameworks and standards

Encourage the use of competency frameworks and standards to ensure the identification process is consistent and objective.

Many organisations across the public and private sectors use competency frameworks or standards as part of their recruitment and performance development review processes. Encouraging organisations to have a consistent and objective way of assessing the performance and potential of leaders of children’s services should be central to any talent management process. It is not necessary to have a framework that is used universally within the region as this may be seen as an imposition, especially with organisations that use a competency framework already.

Case study:

‘A wonderful life’: managing talent in Leeds



The Children and Young People’s Plan in Leeds puts universal services at the heart of integrated working and service delivery, posing a whole new set of challenges for the leadership of children’s services.

The authority has responded by establishing a ‘talent management’ programme which is designed to produce the leaders of the future. The aim is to grow a new professionalism in Leeds which embraces integrated working without losing professional skills.

The National Leadership Qualities Framework for Directors of Children’s Services produced by the College provided the starting point for the design of the programme, even though it was only in draft form at the time. It’s at the heart of the initial self assessment process which uses interviews, self assessment diagnostic tools and a written case study to identify the development needs of the participants. A small ‘design team’ has devised a development centre based around a serious case review. It is anticipated that the day will be called ‘A wonderful life’ and will play back incidents during a young person’s life leading up to the case review. The idea is that it will include a range of scenarios, activities and tasks which will bring to life some of the functional areas required for effective service delivery.

The team is also considering the range of opportunities and experiences that might be provided beyond the development day to widen the participant’s experience and increase their confidence. They have already identified a number of key priorities which would form part of the provision for aspiring senior leaders in children’s services in Leeds – working with politicians, anticipating the CEO role, experiencing the corporate world, accountability and challenge, commissioning and so on. There are still a lot of challenges, not least in getting the right people round the table to ensure ownership, but it has been a good start.

A wider range of backgrounds

Broaden and deepen the range of skills and experience in the talent pool by attracting candidates from a wider range of backgrounds.

“We need to ensure that we approach the children’s workforce – it is the wrong paradigm to be always asking, ‘Are you a social worker or a teacher?’”

Chief Executive Officer

Very few newly appointed DCSs can claim to have the full range of skills and experience that the post demands, and almost all 2nd tier officers are, to some extent, specialists. This is, of course, one of the main reasons why the National College has been asked to provide leadership development for the sector. It is just as important, however, to create a bigger talent pool by casting the net more widely for potential 1st and 2nd tier officers. This means looking beyond the traditional local authority education and social care base to include the 3rd sector, health and wider local authority roles.

“I see the transition to DCS from aspirant as a big step up as it has to cover the whole Every Child Matters agenda. There is a mystique around the DCS role which is not real. It creates barriers for other people getting a DCS post and it remains being seen as a social care or education role. People forget that health visitors and midwives were inside local councils at one point. We need leaders who can work across these cultural divides.”

Aspiring Director of Children’s Services

The DCS brand

Promote the DCS brand within the region, emphasising the changing nature of the role and the positive contribution that the DCS can make.

All of the DCS stakeholders talked about how rewarding their role is and the contribution it makes. In spite of recent publicity, they were passionate about playing their part in promoting the role and encouraging aspirant DCSs. At least one of the national search and recruitment agencies runs regional events for aspiring DCSs, which are addressed by serving DCSs talking about their personal experience of the job.

The current generation of senior leaders as a key resource

Nurture the talent that already exists at a senior level within children’s services and use the current generation of senior leaders as a key resource for encouraging new talent.

The fieldwork uncovered evidence of significant numbers of existing DCSs moving within, or out of the sector. Retaining experienced leaders needs to be a part of the strategy and reflected in the regional plan. Despite this, it is worth remembering that some turnover helps to refresh experience.

“The big challenge is about how we can help to generate churn so that people who may be beginning to get too comfortable are supported to move into new areas, learn new things and improve their current approach. Without it some people lack edge.”

Director of Children’s Services

A regional perspective

Use the regional perspective to broker talent within the region.

In addition to taking a broad view of the talent within the region, there was support for the idea of the region playing a brokering role for the movement of talent. Many CEOs have found that regional networks are more useful than national recruitment agencies.

“The succession and talent management process should be about prioritising people that can make the biggest different – we need to find people who are doing it well and push them on.”

Director of Children’s Services

Despite this, the proposal that there should be a register of individuals interested in being considered for senior roles in the future received a very mixed response. Some felt that it might have benefits, while others felt that it would not be used, as individuals might not want to promote themselves in such an explicit way or disclose the fact that they were seeking a move from their current job. There was more enthusiasm for the idea of a self assessment based skills audit as a way of identifying and tracking skills and experience.

The role of the region

Identifying and managing talent may turn out to be the biggest challenge for the regional leads. It is a process that has to be handled with great sensitivity, and there is considerable potential for misunderstanding and conflict, not least between different local authorities. Potential senior leaders will come to light in a number of different ways, and even though the idea of a formal register is not advised, it is important to create a community of aspiring future leaders, who are kept informed about local and national developments and are supported in developing their careers. Some activities that can best be developed at a regional level are listed below.

Work with others to support the broadening of talent pools

Regions will need to identify an extended range of stakeholder groups to support the broadening of the talent pool. Finding a way of working with children's trusts is likely to be essential.

Work with local authorities and other agencies to understand current mechanisms for talent identification

The regional lead will need to engage with organisations to understand how they identify and support future leaders. This might, for example, be through personal development reviews (PDRs) or through assessment centres. Longer term, as the strategy embeds, this could also lead to sharing good practice across the region and the development of common approaches.

Promote the use of standards to objectively identify talent

There is currently no definitive set of national standards to describe the role of the DCS, though the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has published a national job description that is included in **Statutory guidance on the role and responsibilities of the lead member for children's services and the director of children's services**. The DCSF has also published **Leading and Managing Children's Services in England: A National Professional Development Framework**, which was developed in partnership with the ADCS and the Virtual Staff College (VSC) and includes a set of leadership competencies. A more comprehensive framework of leadership attributes will underpin the aspirant DCS programme run by the National College. This framework will be available for use by 3rd and 2nd tier officers.

Identify where talent could come from in the region

Identifying and actively engaging with stakeholders from other agencies will help identify new and existing sources of talent.

Identify variations in current practice across the region

The region will be in a unique position to understand the variation in current practices for talent identification and management across local agencies. The region can use its role to promote and share good practice.

The role of local authorities and other organisations in the region

Sharing information

Encouraging agencies to share information about aspiring senior leaders will be a key challenge for the region. Helping stakeholders to see the advantages of this in the medium term will be vital.

Being open about criteria and how competencies and standards are used and applied

It is likely that a wide variety of practice in terms of the objective identification of talent within the region will be uncovered. Organisations will need to see the benefits of sharing their approach to this.

Being open about what's different for the population within their organisation

Many of the organisations within the region will have processes that identify generic talent (eg for entry to leadership development programmes). The region will need to help them identify the differences that they are looking for within the talent pool that will support senior leadership progression within children's services.

Being the eyes and ears for the process of identification

The roles at a regional level will not have direct sight of the entire talent population; key stakeholders within the agencies will need to be their eyes and ears in the process.

Key Challenges

The key challenges are:

- **identifying the skills and experiences that are prominent in the regional talent pool and the areas that need developing**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 4 – Discussion guide and summary regional supply matrix
 - resource 8 – Questionnaire and summary of skills and talent audit
- **encouraging objective and systematic approaches to the identification and assessment of talent within organisations in the region**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 2 – Template for recording and analysing current practice
 - resource 9 – The high-potential matrix
 - resource 11 – Sample competency framework
- **widening the pool of talented individuals who are interested in career progression by involving and collaborating with a broader range of organisations that provide children's services**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 4 – Discussion guide and summary regional supply matrix
- **enabling organisations to spot high potential early within the region**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 9 – The high-potential matrix
- **tracking processes for skills, not people – at a regional level it will not be possible to track all people within the talent pool. Therefore, the region's role is to identify the level and quality of the skills and experience of the talent pool**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 8 – Questionnaire and summary of skills and talent audit

Developing and supporting individuals

This section provides an overview of the types of development support that the region can provide to enhance current training and development provision.

Introduction

There has been much research into the increased breadth of the DCS role. Indeed, during the fieldwork, it emerged that some current DCSs hold the view that the remit may be growing into something so wide that the job is almost impossible to do. This has significant implications for the development of future DCSs.

“There is a view that the stretch of the children’s services brief is the key challenge in recruitment and retention. The field is characterised by silos of professional experience and it isn’t until people reach a senior level in children’s services that they are asked to stretch across roles.”

Director of Children’s Services

The importance of developing and supporting individuals to develop a breadth of skills and experience before they reach senior posts has never been greater.

Despite some suggestions to the contrary, a lot of local authorities are investing in the development of their future leaders. Although this tends to focus on the broader public services leadership agenda, senior leaders in children’s services are benefiting.

Current cost constraints and the determination to do more for less mean that resources to spend on development will become even tighter. The regional role in helping to join up learning opportunities and find low-cost options for developing individuals is crucial.

Guidelines

In considering the regional role in developing individuals, it is important to:

- make the most of **existing provision across the public sector** to improve access to learning opportunities
- encourage the use of placements and other arrangements to offer **opportunities for developing experience**
- provide training and development with **a focus on gaps in current local and national provision** in order to avoid duplicating existing opportunities
- identify **career pathways** that enhance skills across the region

Existing provision across the public sector

Make the most of existing provision across the public sector to improve access to learning opportunities.

The fieldwork drew attention to the potential for joining up cross-sector learning provision. This is often difficult to achieve at organisation level, but is an activity where the region could add significant value and broker closer working ties across health, local authorities and the 3rd sector.

“It would be good to have a ‘read across’ to other leadership programmes, especially in health.”

Chief Executive Officer

“The focus needs to be on public sector leadership rather than just health or local authority. There needs to be more joint training and development.”

Chief Executive Officer

Opportunities for developing experience

Encourage the use of placements and other arrangements to offer opportunities for developing experience.

“Real people need real learning opportunities – this experience needs to be across all lines of service.”

Director of Children’s Services

The fieldwork emphasised that often the best way of preparing people for the most senior role within children’s services is by giving them the opportunity to experience what it feels like.

“There is a need to show current assistant directors how the DCS role makes a difference to outcomes. Let them see what you do by shadowing or placements.”

Director of Children’s Services

Development support needs to concentrate on the step up from 2nd to 1st tier roles rather than generic leadership. The fieldwork suggested that the most effective learning takes place through:

- action learning sets
- peer support groups that focus on themed challenges based on real issues
- coaching from existing DCSs
- mentoring from outside the current organisation
- tailored placement opportunities offering exposure to real issues

These are all activities that can be co-ordinated at a regional level.

Case study

Fostering talent: Barnsley



In Barnsley it was recognised that the creation of well-being teams (locality-based multi-agency teams) provided the opportunity to foster leadership talent and develop the attributes and skills required for senior leadership in a children’s services context.

A cadre of middle leaders was identified as having the skills to lead across boundaries and in collaboration with others. The DCS gave advocacy to the role and saw it as a route through to a senior leadership position. The locality champion continues to lead a service within the directorate while also giving leadership to one of the well-being teams and its leadership group.

Locality champions receive ongoing professional development to ensure they have a good understanding of the Every Child Matters agenda, the challenges for improvement and a grasp of the resources available to help drive improvement. They also develop their knowledge and understanding of borough-wide and locality data and the processes and tools used for effective integrated working.

A focus on gaps in current local and national provision

Provide training and development with a focus on gaps in current local and national provision in order to avoid duplicating existing opportunities.

There is already a high volume of organisation led leadership training and development available, locally and nationally. Any additional provision at regional level should focus on gaps in this provision. The fieldwork identified a number of commonly cited gaps in provision:

- political awareness
- risk-taking
- social care and protection issues
- working with elected members
- commissioning

“Experience and understanding of local democracy is critical alongside the generic core competencies. Working with members to ‘manage the art of the possible’ is a significant part of the role.”

Director of Children’s Services

Career pathways

Identify career pathways that enhance skills across the region.

Very little work has been done in a formal way to understand the career pathways that exist for senior leaders in children’s services. It may be that regions will want to undertake further research to map out potential professional journeys that develop individuals towards DCS roles. This may encompass mapping roles from a broader range of organisations that provide services to children (eg 3rd sector, health).

Although there is currently little hard information about the composition of the children’s workforce at a senior level, research by McKinsey & Co suggested that there may be some barriers to career progression which ‘relate to local authority culture and practice’ and recommended that ‘there is scope for broadening the range of backgrounds, expertise and experience’. There is clearly a case for increasing the amount of attention given to issues about diversity in the workforce at all levels.

Case study

Developing talent in the 3rd sector: South West



The national VCS-Engage project is run by Children England through Regional Development Managers. It aims to make a real impact on the capacity of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to engage in the Every Child Matters: Change for Children agenda and involves senior leaders from a wide variety of organisations coming together to share experiences and knowledge about working in children’s services from a voluntary sector viewpoint.

Informal research carried out by the National College indicated that many of the more senior staff have aspirations to become a DCS at some point in the future. They are firmly of the view that to focus solely on local government, or even the public sector, for future 1st and 2nd tier officers would exclude some really talented professionals. They would like to see:

- regional consultation about the development needs of leaders in the 3rd sector
- support for 3rd sector organisations and the individuals they employ
- tailored training sessions and action learning
- skilled coaching and mentoring, using skills from within the sector
- realistic approaches to the resource implications of extensive training
- a range of different career pathways, alongside the conventional option of being employed in local government

The role of the region

It is important that provision made in the region complements and supports the provision made by the National College, particularly the Aspirant DCS Programme. The purpose of the Succession Planning Initiative is to help potential senior leaders take considered decisions about their future careers, and to prepare them for the national DCS leadership programmes if that is the direction they wish to take. It is going to be important to make sure that there is no duplication of provision. Likewise, where there are existing local programmes (which might be specific to children's services, or wider), care should be taken not to duplicate them at a regional level.

The range of activity that the region might offer includes the following.

Identify the range of development and support that exists across the region, becoming a broker for talent development and sharing good practice

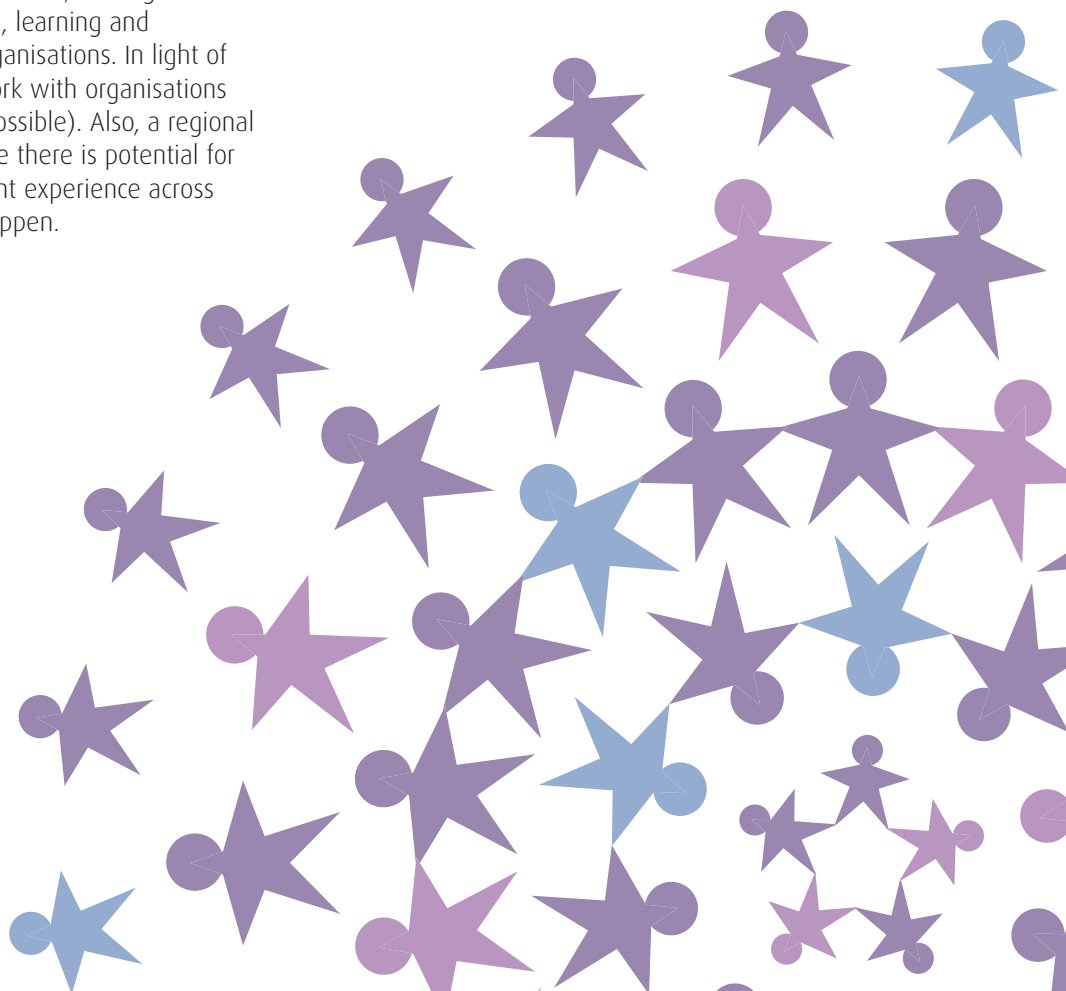
Through engagement with organisations, the region will have a unique view of the training, learning and development that exists across organisations. In light of this, the region may be able to work with organisations to share this knowledge (where possible). Also, a regional lead may be able to identify where there is potential for coaching, mentoring and placement experience across the region, and facilitate this to happen.

Work with the full range of agencies to provide opportunities for broadening experience

Individuals within a region may benefit from exposure to roles (through for example work shadowing) that are outside the scope of their current organisation (for example roles in health or 3rd sector).

Work across local authorities to facilitate movement between roles, enabling development

Through regional facilitation, organisations should be encouraged to use vacancies as opportunities for developing children's services' leaders through temporary or permanent arrangements.



Commission events and interventions not currently provided at an organisational level

It is important not to duplicate local learning activity at a regional level, but to fill key gaps in development activities. Participants from our fieldwork cited the following as examples of interventions that could be provided at a regional level:

- action learning sets specifically targeted at 2nd tier participation
- learning sessions around handling the political aspects of the DCS role
- information and learning about child protection services

“A regional programme with local flexibility including workshops, seminars and action learning sets would be helpful.”

Director of Human Resources

Case study

Developing leaders of children’s services: South East



At the Government Office: South East (GO:SE), an analysis of the figures showing the turnover of senior leaders in children’s services in 2009/10 triggered some concerns.

The children’s services adviser (CSA) team felt that it needed to provide practical support. It identified four key issues, all of which had to be addressed within a sharply focused accountability regime both at regional and national level. The common thread was the challenge of preparing for and managing change.

The programme offered participants some easily delivered approaches using simple tools in three interrelated sessions:

- planning for change and improvement
- managing underperformance
- influencing through partnership

The participants were very positive, particularly because the programme offered some simple tools to use in resolving complex problems. They also appreciated the chance to work across local authority boundaries and they plan to continue meeting.

The role of local authorities and other organisations in the region

Sharing development opportunities with other organisations

Organisations could be encouraged to share events, making places available to children's services' professionals from other organisations if there is sufficient capacity.

Contributing to defining requirements for unsupported gaps in skills and experience

Local authorities will need to work with the region to identify specific requirements currently not catered for within existing local provision.

Providing capacity for existing senior leaders of children's services to act as coaches and mentors

Many participants cited coaching and mentoring arrangements as much needed in the development of 1st and 2nd tier officers. This requires organisations to prioritise the activity of using senior children's services professionals to act as coaches and mentors for colleagues in their own and other organisations. The Mentor Plus scheme run by the National College aims to provide each newly appointed DCS with a mentor who is an experienced and successful DCS or a retired DCS with a track record of successful leadership. By ensuring new appointments have access to mentoring, the postholder can benefit from the advice and guidance of the mentor on dealing with challenging issues.

Key Challenges

The key challenges are:

- **avoiding duplication of development activity at a regional level and identifying the development and learning interventions that will make the biggest difference**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 2 – Template for recording and analysing current practice
 - resource 8 – Questionnaire and summary of skills and talent audit
 - resource 12 – Checklist of strategies for the regional programme
- **overcoming barriers to exporting talent**
- **encouraging organisations to share development solutions**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 2 – Template for recording and analysing current practice
 - resource 12 – Checklist of strategies for the regional programme

Evaluating the strategy and its impact

This section provides guidance on how to define and measure the success of the regional strategy and plan.

Introduction

Although the fieldwork indicated a broad level of support for a coordinated regional approach to talent management and succession planning, stakeholders were keen to point out that they needed to understand what the region would do to add value over and above existing processes and structures.

In order to assess the impact and the outcomes achieved through the implementation of the regional strategy and plan, it is important to define clearly at the outset the measures that will be used.

Guidelines

In evaluating the impact of the regional strategy and plan it is important to:

- establish **appropriate criteria** so that it is clear what success looks like – what gets measured gets done
- set **realistic targets**, both qualitative and quantitative
- establish **mechanisms for gathering data**
- involve **stakeholders** in setting targets and measuring success

Appropriate criteria

Establish appropriate criteria so that it is clear what success looks like – what gets measured gets done.

When developing an initial strategy and plan for the region, it will be important to create a shared vision. This should include getting stakeholders to talk about what outcomes they want to achieve quickly, and in, say, three to five years time, and how they would measure these outcomes in terms of the benefit to children and families, the workforce, children's services leaders, or their own organisation.

Realistic targets

Set realistic targets, both qualitative and quantitative.

There will need to be a balance of measures including both hard data and soft information to indicate progress.

Targets set against these measures should provide a clear focus for effort, and express what it is that the region wants to achieve.

Hard data will need to be gathered from organisations within the region. It is important to agree what data is going to be gathered and to persevere whilst building up a picture over time. In signing the partnership agreement, regions will be committing themselves to gathering a standard set of data and providing this information to the National College every quarter.

Although much harder to pin down, qualitative information is just as important in making a judgement about what has been achieved. Examples of qualitative measures that are right at the heart of what succession planning is all about include the following:

- quality of candidates applying for posts at 1st and 2nd tier level
- public understanding and appreciation of the role of the DCS
- commitment of DCSs to the provision of leadership development for 2nd and 3rd tier officers as a core aspect of their work
- collaboration between local authorities in managing talent and creating development opportunities for staff

Qualitative measures like these are difficult to work with because they don't easily translate into numerical targets, and because the data needed to provide feedback can only be gathered through surveys, interviews and questionnaires, all of which can be expensive and time consuming.

Despite this, it is important to make the effort. If the decision is taken to dispense entirely with qualitative measures, then something important, the human dimension, will be lost and all of the effort and energy that are available for succession planning will become focused on filling the vacancy without any regard for whether it makes a difference.

Mechanisms for gathering data

Establish mechanisms for gathering data.

It is crucial that the regional strategy and plan should avoid becoming a bureaucratic exercise. With this in mind the data gathered should be readily available so that there is no need to create many new processes. Much of the data gathered by the region should be readily available from organisations and be based on the existing practices and processes within the organisations in the region. For example, all organisations will have information on turnover in posts and applicant numbers. The quarterly reporting process also requires progress to be recorded against a number of progress indicators shown in the table below (Table one).

Table one: Performance indicators

| |
|--|
| Number of vacancies |
| Number of posts advertised |
| Average number of applicants per post |
| Average number of shortlisted candidates per post |
| Number of posts filled on a permanent basis |
| Number of advertised but not filled on a permanent basis |
| Number of posts readvertised |
| Number of active contacts re succession planning |

Stakeholders

Involve stakeholders in setting and measuring success.

All key stakeholders should have an input in defining the measures and contributing to the evaluation of success through engagement with regional roles.

The role of the region

Monitoring and evaluation always present significant challenges for any national initiative, particularly when the work is being delivered through a devolved regional or local strategy. It will be important to balance the need to be accountable to the National College and collect information in a standardised format, with the benefits that come from local discretion.

The regional lead for succession planning will have the following responsibilities:

To establish targets and performance indicators for the region and agree these with key stakeholders including the National College

Working closely with stakeholders and the National College, the region will need to agree what measures and targets it would ideally like to aim for, what information is readily accessible, what more might need to be collected, and therefore what performance indicators should be realistically set. These will underpin the strategy and plan, and will allow the monitoring of progress.

To identify data sources and mechanisms for obtaining data

By working with organisations, the regional leads will be in position to identify where and how to access data. This may, for example, be best accessed from the human resources teams within the organisations and also from the DCS group itself. The regional lead should then set up mechanisms for this data to be gathered at regular intervals. This may be quarterly for example.

The role of local authorities and other organisations in the region

Share data and support the identification of measures

A broad range of stakeholders from the organisations within the region should be encouraged to contribute to the identification and development of the measures that will indicate progress. This will help to ensure their active commitment to the strategy and plan.

Contribute to data gathering

Organisations will be asked to contribute to the data gathering process. Care should be taken to make these processes as simple as possible using data that is already available.

Key Challenges

The key challenges are:

- **ensuring that the measures make sense**
- **adopting indicators which that really measure success**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 13 – Four-level model for evaluation of the strategy and plan
 - resource 14 – Quarterly report format
- **gathering too much or too little data**
- **keeping data relevant and up to date**
- **avoiding data becoming the focus of the end result**
 - resources that may help you:
 - resource 13 – Four-level model for evaluation of the strategy and plan

Annex:

Sample Partnership Agreement

DCS Leadership succession 2010-11: agreement to work in partnership

This partnership agreement is between the National College and the DCS sponsor for succession planning in the region, appointed by the chair of the regional DCS group.

1. Our partnership offer

The College will:

- provide a grant of [xxxx] specifically for succession planning in the region
- liaise with the workforce policy committee of ADCS
- maintain contact with those leading succession planning in the region, including the chair of the DCS regional group
- commission and maintain a National Framework for Succession Planning for Children's Services
- liaise with and support regional groups
- co-ordinate and disseminate evidence of emerging and effective good practice
- produce support materials as required, including the development and maintenance of online resources
- undertake national initiatives where they might be required (such as liaison with the Improvement and Development Agency/Local Government Association on development work with elected members)
- run a co-ordinated campaign to raise the profile of the DCS role; and
- track progress and report to the regional groups and DCSF on the impact of its work

Regional DCS groups will:

- appoint a regional lead with an appropriate level of experience to make sure that networks are created and sustained and that plans are implemented
- gather and maintain data about supply and demand for 1st and 2nd tier posts
- manage talent effectively, by identifying, encouraging and supporting high-quality candidates for senior positions within children's services
- promote formal leadership development opportunities, including the National College's Aspirant DCS programme
- agree a detailed expenditure plan for the grant with the National College and monitor it throughout the year

- monitor and evaluate the impact of succession planning work in the region, adjust priorities as appropriate and assess value for money
- make available to the National College any activity outcomes, evaluations and information relating to the spending of the grant by comprehensive and timely completion of a quarterly report
- support each of the region's local authorities in developing an appropriate culture of talent management and succession planning and, where there are gaps, creating opportunities to help talented staff develop their careers
- support the emerging regional networks to deliver the 2020 workforce strategy, making sure that workforce development and succession planning are closely aligned with each other
- promote leadership diversity in terms of career backgrounds, and social and ethnic characteristics
- champion a positive image of children's services and, in particular, the role of the DCS and other senior officers

Note that the following provisions apply to all DCS succession partnership agreement grants:

- The local authority takes all reasonable steps to safeguard public funds and to ensure that the funds are expended for the succession planning purposes only, as outlined in this letter and any guidance issued by the National College pertaining to the grant.
- The National College reserves the right to conduct any audits, as it sees fit, in relation solely to the payment of this grant.

Next steps

If you wish to take up this offer of partnership working, please complete and return the response form by [xxxx]. We hope that you will continue to work in partnership with us, as collectively we can continue to accomplish much more.

For any further information or to discuss or comment on the DCS Succession Planning Initiative please contact dcsprovision@nationalcollege.org.uk.

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.

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