

Leadership development for the long term

Leadership partners: Leadership Centre recommends top practitioners



Partner (n)

There are many definitions of a partner. It can be someone who shares in an action or endeavour, who plays on the same side or team, an associate or a spouse. At an organisational level, strong and supportive partnerships are critical to the success of life-changing projects. They can turn a compelling ‘story’ of a locality into reality and transform leaders and their communities.

While some argue leaders are not born, they are certainly born with potential. Like many of your colleagues and peers, from time to time you will look beyond your authority to develop your leadership skills. Our leadership partners can help you implement your leadership development strategy and acquire the skills you need to transform your area into a great place.

The Leadership Centre for Local Government is proud to work with the top practitioners in leadership development. Each has undergone a rigorous selection process so you can be confident of their track record in delivering high quality individual and group solutions to the fast-changing landscape of local government.

Through our partners you have access to first class trainers, psychologists, coaches, former council leaders and chief executives, organisational development specialists, management consultants, mentors and facilitators.

We hope this publication is valuable in helping you choose the right leadership path for you.

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Leadership development strategy

Today's local government leaders and chief executives are at the heart of their communities – it is up to them to provide the imagination and the inspiration to create a community out of place.

They are no longer expected to lead on just service delivery, but also to provide the same inspirational lead to all organisations and partners delivering services to their community. More than this it's about creating a story – a vision for their communities that makes sense to people, and lets them decide what works for them.

Through visionary leadership they are identifying long-term opportunities and meeting the short-term challenges required to transform their localities.

This takes energy, imagination and skill. It also takes courage to seek independent advice when needed.

In the words of one council, political leadership does not grow on trees - but it can be cultivated. Only in the right conditions where there is a mood for change and a real desire to achieve excellence can an authority move from being good to great.

The Leadership Centre aims to improve the quality of leadership development to which local government has access.

Our partners have undergone a rigorous selection process involving 150 organisations. From this we have short-listed eight partners who have a track-record of delivering high-quality work to the sector.

We aim to make it easier for authorities to find and engage the right suppliers, and help our partners develop new and innovative leadership products to meet the changing needs of the sector.

We have developed this partnership booklet to help you identify the support you may need in shaping change at a personal and organisational level, whether it be through coaching, mentoring, building effective relationships, participating in facilitated events or using a range of diagnostic tools to move forward.

Our strategies can help you become a true leader - not just for today, but tomorrow.

Theme 1

Leadership development programmes

Reactions to leadership development programmes vary and depend largely on the individual. Some leaders comment on the powerful impact of taking part. Others find the journey a slow and painful process.

No matter where you are at, our partners are experts at reading the situation. Sometimes all it takes is a little nudge and some goodwill on your behalf to set the oft-liberating change process in motion.

Our partners can devise a bespoke strategy that draws on a range of cutting-edge programmes designed to help you become more outward looking, more comfortable working with difference and help to bring about sustainable solutions to intractable problems.



Case study

Aberdeenshire appreciative inquiry

Theme:
Leadership development programmes

Partner:
SOLACE Enterprises

Our brief was to assist Aberdeenshire Council in developing excellent and innovative leaders who could contribute to the provision of first class public services to local people.

We offered a programme based on Appreciative Inquiry (AI), an approach we have been at the forefront of pioneering within local authorities. The principles are based on new thinking about organisational change and how this relates to human systems. Our leadership development philosophy is based on leadership in context so each programme was tailored to specific circumstances and needs. Councils in Scotland face many similar issues to those in the rest of the UK but also have unique legal and operational requirements which need to be recognised.



Over 150 participants from the top three tiers of managers in the Council, including head teachers took part in our programme which ran from October 2006 to November 2007. It began with 360° feedback based on a set of leadership competencies developed by the Council. Each participant received a two-hour feedback session to help them focus on their personal and professional development plan.

During the discovery phase participants engaged their part of the organisation in a series of conversations to discover the stories that give life to the organisation at its best – examples of where leaders are already modelling the leadership behaviours and values of the organisation.

This was followed by a two day workshop on the Dream, Design and Destiny elements of the AI programme, during which participants:

- Shared their stories of excellent leadership already happening
- Created a shared picture of how life would be if these moments happened more consistently, with the organisation achieving its full potential
- Reviewed how close the organisation was to that picture, thinking about key partner relationships and the community and strategic plan
- Devised a professional development plan, reflecting on what behaviours would be most useful to change
- Created a focused “next steps” plan with a process for tracking progress

Managers reported that they valued the coaching sessions with our consultants which formed part of the 360° feedback process:

“I found it helpful to talk about me”

“The best 2 hours development since I joined”

80% of participants said they could see where they could apply the AI tools as a technique within the workplace. Staff responded well to the appreciative approach managers adopted when enquiring about ‘what works well’. The emphasis on the positive which comes with AI, is welcomed in an environment of continuous inspection and audit.

While the impact of the programme will be evaluated in the longer term, an immediate result has been a greater understanding of the leadership behaviours and values of the Council’s competency framework.



Case study

Matrix, Focus, The Know – programmes for senior leaders in a locality

Theme:
Leadership development programmes

Partner:
Common Purpose

The Matrix, Focus and TheKnow are powerful educational experiences that bring together leaders from all sectors - private, public and voluntary/community - and widely differing backgrounds. The diversity of the participant group is central to the challenge of the programme that allows participants to develop their own leadership abilities through collaboration with their peers in other sectors, site visits, panel discussions, expert briefings and exposure to different approaches to leadership.

Together they explore and work through real-life challenges from business, the public and voluntary sector. Participants visit prisons, housing developments, businesses, hospitals and manufacturing plants in order to find inspiration outside their usual experience.

They will learn about alternative approaches to leadership through the eyes and experience of fellow participants. The end result is that participants will learn a lot more about themselves as leaders, as well as how society works - and will explore the central themes of leadership, partnership and diversity.

Participants develop:

- Enhanced capabilities to lead and implement change in rapidly changing environments
- The ability to see the wider context, adapt faster and spot opportunities and threats
- Improved communication and problem-solving skills
- Increased levels of creativity and innovation, particularly in working with diversity and in managing complexity
- Greater leadership skills, especially the ability to lead beyond authority

Locally based programmes run across the UK offering different approaches to reflect local conditions:

Matrix is a 10 day programme held over five months (5 x 2 days). Each Matrix programme day is held at a different venue within the geographic region in which it is being presented.

Focus is a six day programme - a two-day residential event followed by a series of four days. Each Focus programme day is held at a different venue within the geographic region in which it is being presented.

The KNOW is a highly personalised and flexible programme that offers over 50 events and 200 hours of learning. Each participant can choose from a wide range of flexible learning modules, all created and run by Common Purpose staff, to make up a minimum of 60 hours, maximum of 90 hours).

Sarah Ebanja, Deputy CEO, London Development Agency - Graduate of Matrix, South London 1993

'If I didn't think it was good I wouldn't still be involved' says Sarah Ebanja, bluntly and affirmatively. Deputy CEO and group director of the London Development Agency (LDA), a mayoral organisation responsible for driving London's economic growth, Sarah graduated from a Common Purpose programme in 1993. Today she remains active on the advisory panel, exploring ways of developing the programmes, encouraging involvement, and improving the selection process. The LDA works with partners in industry, public and volunteer sectors, and Sarah firmly believes that the success of the Common Purpose scheme depends on striking a similar balance amongst the participants: a mix that enables different ideas and perceptions to be expressed.'

'I just thought it was an excellent programme. It exposes you to experiences, and forces you to interact with people who you wouldn't normally in your day-to-day job. It opens your mind to learning from others and challenges perceptions and stereotypes.' In personal and professional terms, she sees it as an 'all round development tool for those seeking to progress to senior levels or leader in their field'.

Vanessa Walker, Principal consultant, Improvement and Development Agency, London - Participant York and North Yorkshire Focus 2007

'When I joined the Focus Common Purpose programme at York and North Yorkshire, I had two key objectives in mind. One was to consider and explore my leadership role in a wider context than a traditional leadership programme would offer. I felt a resonance with the concept of 'Leading Beyond my Authority', which I think I do, but the programme has given me additional confidence to carry this further. My second objective was very specific to a project I am working on currently. I was keen to take advantage of the opportunity to work with Common Purpose colleagues across the three sectors to help define good governance behaviour characteristics within local strategic partnership working. This is to contribute to a benchmark to be rolled out as a review tool with LSPs. I am delighted that a proportion of my colleagues (and new friends) are attending a workshop I am facilitating in December to do just that.

My experience of the programme itself is very positive - the people we have met, the exercises, opportunities for group discussion and visits have been highly stimulating and enabled me to understand much more about leadership in the wider context than local government. It has also allowed precious time for me to reflect on my own leadership style and think of ways to do things differently.

I would recommend this programme to any leader from any sector within their locality'.

Case study

Coca-Cola:
Leadership with added fizz

Theme:
Leadership development programmes

Partner:
Lane4

In 2000, an employee survey highlighted a low level of confidence in the leadership team and staff turnover was above the industry average, despite good business performance. Coca-Cola Enterprises' top leaders asked Lane4 to help them consolidate success and improve morale by addressing these issues.

Lane4 found that the executive team lacked cohesion and although the company was strong on task-by-task, achievement-oriented management, it suffered from a lack of shared long-term vision and supportive personal relationships. This was affecting employee trust and commitment.

Lane4 consultants talked individually with each member of the executive team, as a precursor to a three-day retreat where the team established a 'code of conduct' to guide their working relationships with each other. This was followed up with conversations to share feedback, deepen their personal and working relationships and address any concerns, plus an executive development programme for the top 60 leaders.



“I want us to provide the best possible future for our people. I want people to want to come to work every day.”

Vice president for human resources

In parallel, Lane4 took the top HR managers through a rigorous 18 month training process to qualify as coaches and then double up with Lane4 consultants to roll-out the workshops to a further 150 Coca-Cola managers. This had the added benefit of enabling HR managers to apply their learning and achieve their own development goals.

The way Coca-Cola Enterprises wholeheartedly embraced the work early on, and recognised that significant change would take time and investment, was pivotal to the success of the programme. For example, the CEO attended every workshop as it cascaded down through the company for an hour of questions followed by dinner. Leaders tended to recoup the time they invested in the development programme through the greater empowerment of their direct reports, resulting in responsibilities being pushed down the organisation.

Leaders from the high-achieving, healthily competitive culture at Coca-Cola Enterprises appreciated coaches with personal records of elite sporting achievement. Experiences from the world of sport brought to life aspects of peak performance in a business context and drove engagement with the programme.

There was significant improvement in staff perception of their leaders' behaviours, in particular in the third and fourth years of the programme.

Data from 2004 demonstrated a 60% fall in voluntary staff turnover, improvements of up to 50% in employee trust and commitment and a 70% increase in Lane4's leadership cohesion rating.

At the beginning of the project “high performance expectations” and “individualised support”, two of the identified key leadership behaviours, were in conflict. This meant that, in general, one of the behaviours was being exhibited at the expense of the other. This conflict was reduced over the course of the programme.

There was a significant increase in attitudinal data across the four time-points at which feedback was collected. These attitudes included organisational commitment, job satisfaction, leader effectiveness, leader satisfaction and trust in/loyalty to the leader. A clear statistical link was established between this result and the leaders' ability to role-model appropriate behaviour.

Coca-Cola Enterprises and Lane4 were awarded Best Executive Development Programme at the 2004 HR Excellence Awards.



Case study

Somerset County Council

Theme:
Leadership development programmes

Partner:
Stanton Marris



In 2006, Somerset County Council used an adviser from the Leadership Centre to explore their leadership development requirements. As a result, the Council commissioned Stanton Marris to run a flexible process of leadership development for executive members and directors.

Stanton Marris then worked closely with the chief executive and the leader, with guidance from the head of HR and OD in creating a programme that met Somerset's leadership requirement on three levels:

1. The challenges for the organisation
2. Developing individual leaders
3. The three leadership teams – the executive team, cabinet and the joint leadership team

Somerset had a recent track record of rapid improvement and was preparing to embark on further change. Our first involvement was to interview all joint top team members, feed back the issues, recognise the strengths within the team on which to build and agree the areas of group behaviour to improve. A shift in culture to enable future change was agreed as a key business challenge and the focus for initial leadership development work.

The joint leadership team used an appreciative approach to develop a simple articulation of the required shift in behaviours and attitudes and used this framework ("the 4Cs") to review their leadership of the organisation through a 360° feedback process and the development of an informal 'contract' of expectations between members and officers. The qualitative 360° process was particularly helpful in building the confidence of individuals and sparking an honest and constructive discussion.

The leadership work has had a challenging and exciting backdrop: a change of leader, a rejected bid to pursue unitary status, the achievement of 4 stars and the signing of the ground-breaking joint venture with IBM and Taunton Deane Borough Council to provide support services to the County, the Borough and other public agencies.

The programme has extended Somerset's approach to leadership development in a number of ways. Officers and members took the behaviours framework into the organisation. Work on leadership has been undertaken with Scrutiny and Overview members and with the opposition member groups under the theme of 'leadership in opposition'. The joint top team has taken on the leadership of place agenda and worked on a 'story' to articulate the council's aspirations for the community.

The next phase for Somerset will involve the joint practice and development of leadership across a range of partner organisations.



Theme 2

Building effective relationships

In the right conditions, relationships can empower. They are the bedrock of winning authorities. But they can also suffer under strain, affecting morale and leaving decision-makers in a vulnerable position.

Positive relations are cultivated by regular dialogue about shared priorities and interests – the vision thing. Difference of opinion is respected and a new environment of trust, confidence and progress is born.

If you have drawn a line in the sand and want to move on with renewed energy and confidence you might consider the expertise of our partners in helping you build more effective relationships.

Our associates can work with you to identify the fundamental elements needed to build effective relationships from the inside out, whether it's with your own team, the public, or other important local government partners.

Case study

A review of strategic partnership working in Gloucestershire

Theme:
Building effective relationships

Partner:
The Tavistock Institute



Increasing weight is being placed on local partnerships, including an enhanced role in relation to the negotiation and delivery of local area agreements. The dynamics of partnership working can be complex, particularly so in county areas. The challenge of negotiating a Local Area Agreement (LAA) highlighted significant weaknesses in the partnership arrangements in Gloucestershire. It meant that ambiguities in governance and accountability arrangements had to be addressed, and it emphasised the need for a genuine jointly-owned vision for the county.

In response to this, the Gloucestershire Local Government Association commissioned a review of partnerships in the county to ensure that they were fit for purpose for the delivery of the LAA. In the event, however, the review - which was facilitated by the Tavistock Institute - focused as much on the underlying dynamics of partnership as on structures.

Ambivalence about the role of politicians, particularly among councils' partners, was identified as a key issue, as was the gap between the Gloucestershire strategic partnerships on the one hand and thematic partnerships and district level partnerships on the other hand. As significant, however, was the fact that in many cases it was not clear what role or task a particular partnership was playing at any one point in time. That made it difficult for the members of those partnerships to understand what their role should be.

The core of a new approach to partnership working in Gloucestershire, which emerged from the review, was a cycle of partnership working: deliberation, authorisation, implementation and evaluation.

Deliberation has been conceived of as an inclusive process, shaping a strategic vision for the future development of the county and monitoring progress towards that vision. We recommended a reconstituted strategic partnership - as a partnership of partnerships - as the vehicle for that task.

Implementation and evaluation - reviewing progress and learning from it - are seen as being tasks for a community strategy implementation executive, which the review proposed should take over from a more narrowly focused but effective LAA project board.

A crucial issue in any partnership structure is how the key organisations authorise the action necessary to implement recommendations that emerge from the partnerships. One of the conclusions of our review was the creation of a new vehicle for collective decision making, bringing together the leaders of the county and district councils with the chairs of bodies such as the Primary Care Trust and Learning and Skills Council. Two phrases reverberated throughout this review of partnership working: "the benefit of the doubt" and "give and take". In too many cases, partners have resisted giving others the benefit of the doubt, and have been more enthusiastic about taking than giving.

So it was clear from our work that these structural changes alone would not secure more effective partnerships. Two other things were necessary. First, local government must display the partnership behaviour it wants its partners to mirror. In two-tier areas, that means councils being seen to work better as partners. Second, whatever structures are in place, some important issues that span partnership boundaries, both geographical and thematic, will be important. Cross-boundary working is notoriously difficult and needs to be worked at and supported.



Case study

Building relationships with people in different sectors and organisations

Theme:
Building effective relationships

Partner:
Common Purpose

Common Purpose was asked by Sheffield Local Strategic Partnership to build the relationships between the various theme partnerships making up the LSP. Working with the chairs, chief executives and partnership managers, Common Purpose were able to help them to build a better understanding of one another's roles and responsibilities, to see the shortcomings in the way they were working, and to develop their processes and approaches to working more collaboratively in the future.

The challenge was to establish meaningful dialogue between the eight theme partnerships so they could be mutually supportive and identify unnecessary duplication. Each of the theme partnerships felt they were doing good work and it was sufficient to issue minutes and briefings.



The Common Purpose approach was to do some initial research with a sample of partnership managers and board members to identify our starting points. They also asked what would help the theme partnerships to work more collaboratively. Having got this information a bespoke programme of both tried and tested and new techniques to address the challenge was designed. The partnership managers were not participants on the programme and it was evident they also needed to be bought into the process as they would have to implement most of the actions, so they were brought in as expert advisers early in the programme and also as co-negotiators towards the end.

Working with Common Purpose entails all participants being involved with the learning activities. Everyone is engaged, from Chief Executives of large public sector organisations, through councillors to the proprietor of a large hotel. Individuals are not allowed to dominate nor to escape making a contribution, all offered within a safe and supportive environment in which to do so.

The LSP's Director said:

“The workshop achieved more than I had expected – it pointed out some structural flaws and confusion of remit.”

The local authority chief executive Sir Bob Kerslake said:

“Common Purpose was able to tailor programmes for the specific needs of both the LSP Board and the wider family of partnerships. Their approach is consistent whilst having the ability to innovate and meet different needs. I believe Common Purpose has a role to play in developing the leadership capacity of local government.”



Theme 3

Coaching

Coaching is the new leadership imperative for today's local government leaders. The process can deliver intelligence and greater self-awareness of the impact you are having on the business and the people within your authority.

Our partner coaches have a knack of getting the best out of people. Sometimes it's just the simple things that hinder performance – a basic ignorance not easy to acknowledge, a lack of skill that is taken for granted or a lack of confidence that can be countered by simple reassurance.

Whatever your goals, our partners can help you focus on the main game, stepping in when needed for personal or team coaching.

But mastering new skills need not be onerous. It should leave you feeling empowered through improved relationships, better teams, more clarity, better performance and more personal impact as you and your organisation take on the bold challenges of tomorrow, today.



Case study

Coaching for credibility and impact in a new role

Theme:
Coaching

Partner:
Praesta Partners LLP



Our client was moving into her first chief executive role. As the CEO, her position covered a broad range of activities and she was in new territory. The organisation had just received a poor audit report and in key areas remedial action needed to be taken immediately: it was key to step forward early with strong, clear messages to settle the organisation and external relationships. As CEO, the strengths that she needed to bring to the fore were the ability to delegate, direct and use her own coaching style in her dialogue to focus and support her key directors.

A key element of the coaching therefore was to enable her to find ways of using her team and senior managers in the most effective way in order to deliver throughout the whole organisation.

The coach worked with her initially:

- To establish the key skills and values that she would need to apply to bring vision and direction into the new role
- To develop and strengthen her view as to where and how she could add value and quickly
- To map the external relationships and to reframe new relationships going forward
- To look objectively at the team and to resist her natural instinct to step in
- To encourage her to stand back and take on different perspectives

In doing so, an otherwise daunting task was simplified, action areas were given priority and she had the courage to take difficult decisions effectively.

The chief executive was able to establish new routines for working with her senior managers and for communication with the organisation as a whole. Despite her busy schedule she took the opportunity to engage with the organisation, setting new sights on performance, better realism of current achievements and the outline of the path of how they were going to go forward together.

Case study

Performance in partnership (executive coaching in the police service)

Theme:
Coaching

Partner:
OPM



OPM coached members of the police service and other local agencies for some years. This case study looks at a short, focused project aimed at boosting the competence of police officers at Basic Command Unit (BCU) manager level.

The context was a large urban police force. A process of organisational diagnosis, together with analysis of performance review returns, had identified that the BCU managers (and the organisation) would benefit from a 360° feedback process, complemented by coaching to help them construct an action plan for their own development. OPM's role was to help each manager reflect on the results of their 360° process, then coach them to an action plan.

We followed a series of defined steps with each officer:

Review the 360° results.

The 360° tool had been designed in close cooperation with the human resources department, based on an existing competency framework. The aim of this first stage was to highlight the learning from the patterns of feedback received. Each manager was encouraged to be inquisitive about the results, so that they did not over- or under-react to the messages emerging from the data. The analysis was set in the context of averages for each cohort, so that each person could benchmark their data against others. At the end of this part of the process, each manager had identified a set of issues to explore further with his or her coach.



Planning the coaching process

Each manager was offered a maximum of two days coaching time, and at this stage it was agreed how to use the coaching time available to the person. The options on offer included further one-to-one coaching to build on the initial analysis and assemble all the reflections into a robust personal development action plan; the coach shadowing the Manager at events or meetings and offering feedback; and team coaching for the Manager and his or her management team.

Carrying out the coaching interventions

Typically, a number of sessions were spent helping the manager assemble his or her own personal development action plan. Unusually this was combined with some work shadowing by the coach, followed by feedback and coaching on the role and behaviours used by the managers in different contexts. Team coaching was adopted by a number of managers. Each manager finished the process with an action plan to develop his or her leadership and managerial capability.



Theme 4

Mentoring

Mentoring derives its name from Greek mythology when Odysseus left Mentor to look after his son whilst he fought the Trojan wars.

Mentor was charged with raising Telemachus in the ways of wisdom and the name has since passed into our language as shorthand for wise and trusted counsellor and teacher.

Today mentoring is one of the most powerful personal development tools available to leaders and chief executives. It matches a practitioner who is seeking guidance with someone credible who has the advice to give.

Our mentors are current or former chief executives and leaders who are highly regarded in their field and understand the challenges of local government first hand. They share a passion for nurturing new talent and can guide you on your path of self awareness and discovery, acting as a sounding board on important decisions and giving you clarity and confidence when you need it most.

You will find mentoring most useful if you are:

- New in the post
- Developing new professional skills
- Looking for improvement in management and professional areas, including political skills
- A councillor or board member
- Changing your career direction



Case study

Mentoring a newly appointed director

Theme:
Mentoring

Partner:
SOLACE Enterprises



A local authority chief executive asked us to mentor a newly appointed director who had come from outside local government. She felt that the director might not understand the nuances of dealing with political situations in a different sector, and what it meant to be political with a small p – i.e. the politics of how things get done in the organisation and with partners, as well as with a large P; working with elected members. SOLACE Enterprises offered the director and his chief executive four possible mentors and they met two and made their choice.

The director had six sessions of two hours each, a month apart, with a mentor who was herself a former chief executive. They met initially and made sure the chemistry was right and that a relationship could be built on trust and respect for each other. The chief executive joined the first session to agree a three-way mentoring contract. The mentor and mentee then identified specific goals, some to do with knowledge – how the authority might work - and some to do with attitudes and behaviour.

The mentor was working with the organisation, represented by the chief executive and the outcomes she wanted, the mentee and the outcomes he wanted (not always the same), and the relationship between the two. She had to respect the confidentiality for both and to encourage them to be open and clear with each other.



The mentor's style is one of asking open and thought-provoking questions, not giving advice, encouraging the director to be aware of his learning and observations, and to endorse his skills.

The chief executive joined the fourth session for thirty minutes, and she and the director gave feedback on how the process was working. They did so again at the final session as an overall evaluation. They had evidence from their working lives of how the director was learning, and how he had put that learning to good effect. Further revisions of the goals clarified what needed to be achieved before the sixth session ended, and a 360° feedback exercise was undertaken once the mentoring had been completed.

Feedback, which included elected members, showed very positive results, and the director requested a further four sessions to embed his learning and to work on a personal development programme. These four sessions were spread over a year, with increasing gaps between meetings to ensure no dependence was created.

The mentoring relationship is now completed, but the director still emails the mentor occasionally for thoughts about new areas.





Theme 5

Facilitated events

Our partners are experts in facilitating change through events and discussions, including difficult conversations that are not always easy to have.

They can organise a 360° leadership exercise to get real feedback on individual and organisational performance or organise special away days for the management team and partners. They can help arrange sessions to explore and develop a 'one team' leadership approach or enable a smooth transition for a newly elected leadership team.

Our associates are skilled at working with senior teams, identifying joint learning from recent problems and helping you find ways to rebuild trust and confidence or repair any damage when relationships take a turn for the worse.

They can help get the ball rolling on step change or recommend a variety of techniques and skills aimed at changing culture, improving relationships and planning for a brighter future.

Case study

Improving collaborative activity: a half day event with leaders and chief executives

Theme:
Facilitated events

Partner:
The Tavistock Institute

This event was designed for the county and district councils in a south east county. No councils in the county had opted to bid for unitary status, but the discussion about the issue had created tension and led to deteriorating relationships, particularly between the county and district councils. There was an impressive level of joint working, but it had developed pragmatically and involved different groups of councils. The forthcoming spending review was seen as a key driver for more effective joint working and the aim of the event was to explore how collaboration could be improved.



The Tavistock Institute's two-person team interviewed at least one person (the leader or chief executive) from each council in the run up to the event, using the data collected in that process to inform the design and as a starting point for the discussion. Issues identified included:

- Concerns that the “post-unitary decision peace” masked more pervasive underlying issues
- That councils were cherry picking partners rather than pursuing collaboration across the county
- The existence of a set of unresolved links between performance, efficiency and governance
- The need for an overarching framework within which incremental improvements and developments could fit

The event was designed around four activities, which took place in a combination of group and plenary discussions:

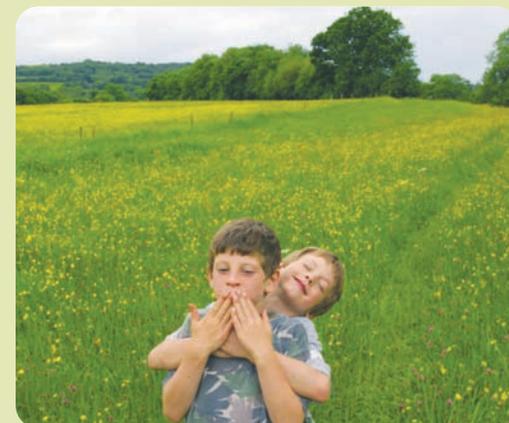
- The identification of partnership successes
- The identification of barriers to working together
- Ways of addressing the barriers to working together
- An outline programme to improve collaborative activity

The issues and actions which emerged included:

- The importance of continuing to build and rebuild trust following the unitary discussions
- The sensitivity of voting rights in proposed new local governance arrangements

- The scope for refocusing the Joint Leaders Committee to provide strategic leadership for collaboration, focussing initially on the barriers which had been identified
- Establishing a new group bringing together council leaders and their equivalents in partner organisations
- The need for an honest discussion about where the greatest scope for efficiency savings lies

The key conclusion, however, was that the discussion had been an honest one, that it was essential that this degree of honesty should be maintained and that external facilitation had helped to create an environment in which honest conversations could take place.



Case study

Facilitation skills with elected members as local leaders

Theme:
Facilitated events

Partner:
OPM



The purpose of this project was to support the top team of a county council with the introduction and development of devolved working. The initiative was a collaborative venture with district and parish councillors that aimed to establish the front line councillor as a local leader of their community. It involved a series of local meetings that had three related functions:

- To spend a small budget on local improvements
- To scrutinise county services at the local level
- To engage local people

Our work started with initial meetings to plan the project and discuss objectives with the leadership team. We held an initial briefing day for councillors followed by a half day session for members who were to chair the first meetings. An evening 'mock meeting' gave groups of councillors a practice run. Feedback was then sought from chairs, vice chairs and lead officers.

We knew early on that in order for the sessions to be successful, they could not be run like traditional council committee meetings. This meant those chairing the meetings had to step out of their comfort zones and lead the meeting using a range of facilitation skills.

The project demonstrated how skilled facilitation can help bring together a group with a history of different views and disagreements such as county, district and parish councillors.

It also showed that elected members are keen to learn and use facilitation skills. The emphasis on the local leadership role of councillors enabled them to demonstrate their previously underused skills and showed that there are important roles to be filled outside of the executive.

We recognised that the meetings would only work if they were well designed and the right people were briefed. Often people were not clear about where they wanted to get to – beyond having a general sense that they ought to talk about an issue.

The facilitations also demonstrated the need to be clear about what people at meetings were being asked to do; disagreements between members should be dealt with outside a public meeting and skilled and enthusiastic chairs who are willing to learn are a big help, as are supportive senior officers.



Theme 6

Diagnostic tools

Have you ever felt something was not quite right but you couldn't put your finger on it?

Choosing the right diagnostic tool is the first step towards gathering the intelligence you need to correct systemic problems, resolve conflict and change patterns of behaviour.

Whether intended or not, people at the top often get bogged down in the trenches, unable to see the wood for the trees. Over time, internal fighting, failing political leadership, poor productivity or a fragmented approach to governance can take its toll.

Sometimes you have to get out of the ditch and up on the balcony for a better view. Our partners are skilled in helping you see that bigger picture.

Our list includes leading edge organisational development practitioners and world-renowned performance psychologists. Whether it's psychometric testing, organisational scans, an assessment of performance or personal style, they can help find the right diagnostic tool to set you and your authority on the highway to success.



Case study

Driving performance in a leading car manufacturer

Theme:
Diagnostic tools

Partner:
Lane4



What makes an 'A grade' dealership?
This car dealership has 7 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These can be summarised as:

- Profitability
- Absorption of running costs
- Market share
- Sales Target achieved
- Customer satisfaction
- After-sales
- Part sales

The training and development department were aware of a large difference in performance levels between the highest and lowest performing dealerships.

The challenge was for Lane4 to identify the key factors that underpin a high performing dealership. This served two purposes:

1. To provide a benchmark for lower performing dealerships to aim for
2. To gain greater clarity on how the other dealerships can become high performing

Lane4 recognised the need to gain a view of the 'bigger picture', and therefore measure the 'performance environment' of each dealership, rather than just individual facets of performance such as leadership or teamwork.

The employees within each dealership were asked to complete Lane4's High Performance Environment (HPE) Scan. The HPE Scan is an empirically validated diagnostic, underpinned by the Lane4 HPE Model, which measures the key predictors of sustained individual, team, and organisational performance.

The results of the HPE Scan give organisations a profile of their current performance environment. This profile highlights strengths, as well as any blockages which might be impeding current and future high performance. By measuring all of the key factors in an organisation's environment the HPE Scan shows the causes rather than just the symptoms of current performance.

In total, 143 dealerships participated in the scan phase, giving an overall response of 1741 completed scans. Each dealership was then graded A, B or C, according to how well it scored on the HPE Scan.

The Lane4 Research and Diagnostics team then analysed the relationship between how well dealerships scored on the HPE Scan and how well they were performing on their KPIs. Specifically, the aim was to identify the key predictors of performance for a dealership.

Analysis showed the key significant differences between the A, B, and C dealerships.

For example, in terms of leadership, 'A leaders' were much more visionary in their style than Bs, whilst Cs reported receiving lower recognition for good performance than the As and Bs.

- The HPE factors measured were shown to significantly predict performance on 5 of 7 KPIs shown in figure 2.
- The Scan identified the key predictors of each individual KPI e.g. Leaders providing a good role model enjoyed higher customer satisfaction.

Lane4 conducted feedback sessions with each individual dealership that participated in the Scan process. The Dealership Principal (DP) of every dealership was also given a report of their Scan results. These feedback sessions aimed to:

- Raise the DP's awareness of the dealership's strengths & weaknesses
- Help the dealership understand how their performance environment compares with other dealers
- Raise awareness of the HPE factors which predict performance on each KPI
- Identify actions to take from the results

By re-measuring the dealerships, the HPE Scan will be able to both demonstrate progress made, and evaluate the return-on-investment of any future Lane4 performance development interventions.



Case study B

Birmingham City Council

Theme:
Diagnostic tools

Partner:
Stanton Marris



In 2006, Birmingham City Council, the largest local authority in Europe with 58,000 employees, asked us to help address its poor organisational performance through a wide-ranging programme to touch every member of staff. Only one in five staff felt the council had a clear vision, while a new CEO and a major business transformation programme meant yet more change in a climate of low morale. BCC knew that the planned £450m, 10-year overhaul of processes and systems would not work without an equivalent sea-change in the culture.

We proposed using our proprietary bespoke combined tool and process, branded 'BEST' for Birmingham. Teams hold a workshop in which they discuss, assess and score their own teams against agreed values and behaviours, and go on to agree actions they can implement to improve their team scores.

Once the idea was agreed, there was extensive early work fully to engage both the executive management team and the political leadership. The deputy leader of the council became the sponsor for the

programme, sending key signals about the importance of the work to the council's wider aims and the need for Members to engage with it. Senior managers and cabinet together endorsed a set of core values and behaviours ('BEST', standing for Belief, Excellence, Success and Trust), developed with a cross-section of the wider organisation. The workshop programme was piloted by the Corporate Management Team, showing willingness to hold its own behaviours up to the light. As the programme rolled out, the chief executive and other senior managers continued to be closely involved, communicating and role-modelling the desired values and behaviours, and attending events to give personal messages of support.

The next major phase was the development and training of 2,000 staff members, each chosen by their team to be that team's 'BEST' leader on the programme and run the team's 'BEST' workshop. Many of them had no experience of facilitation, leadership or even speaking at meetings.

Teams were widely dispersed across the city, some working part-time shift patterns that made it difficult to get together to hold team workshops. Despite the obstacles and their early anxieties, staff found 'BEST' enabling, empowering and enjoyable.

Feedback showed that senior managers' role in training and development events was inspiring and encouraging. Thousands of small organisational changes resulted directly from the programme, and relations within and between teams improved, helping to shift the culture and improve performance.

Stanton Marris was the catalyst, working with senior managers and the cabinet to commit to and support the programme and give staff members the self-belief and skills they needed. This achieved high-impact change quite quickly, while transferring skills and equipping the organisation to carry forward the work.

CEO Stephen Hughes says:

"Stanton Marris gave us credibility in getting buy-in. They got us off the starting block in a way we could not have achieved by ourselves. Developing leaders is all about building capability in the client and Stanton Marris has been great at that. Some consultancies create mystique around them, like they've got the secret formula. What Stanton Marris did was share the recipe and ingredients, so we could learn how to make it ourselves."

Richard Billingham, organisational development director, says:

"BEST's credibility comes from being seen as an internal rather than an external process. Ultimately, it's essential we make - and are seen to do - these changes ourselves. It would have been easy to use our size as an excuse to do nothing. But we had to get across the message that thousands of small changes at grass roots among teams make for one big change."

The first wave of the 'BEST' programme did not include teachers. Positive feedback from council employees about their experience has prompted demands from teachers for 'BEST' to be extended to them. Plans for this are being developed.





Leadership Partner top skills

Agency	1.	2.	3.
Common Purpose	Leadership development programmes	Building effective relationships	Facilitated events
Lane 4	Leadership development programmes with an element of diagnostic	Coaching, including creation of coaching cultures in organisations	Diagnostic tools
OPM	Executive Coaching	Facilitated events	Leadership development programmes
Praesta Partners LLP	Coaching one to one	Coaching senior teams	
SOLACE Enterprises	Leadership development to fit the context of the organisation	Building effective relationships/partnership working	Coaching for improvement and change
Stanton Marris	Leadership development programmes	Building effective relationships	Diagnostic tools
The Tavistock Institute	Building effective relationships	Facilitated events	Coaching



How to contact our partners

Common Purpose

Telephone:
0114 259 3067

Contact:
Julia Fell

Email:
julia.fell@commonpurpose.org.uk
www.commonpurpose.org.uk

Lane4 Management Group

Telephone:
01628 533733

Contact:
Jonathan Harding

Email:
jon.harding@lane4.co.uk
www.lane4performance.com

Nicholson McBride

Telephone:
020 7724 0232

Contact:
John Nicholson
Nick Kambitsis

Email:
john.nicholson@nicholsonmcbride.com
nick.kambitsis@nicholsonmcbride.com
www.nicholsonmcbride.com

OPM

Telephone:
020 7239 7826

Contact:
Helen Brown

Email:
hbrown@opm.co.uk
www.opm.co.uk

Praesta Partners LLP

Telephone:
020 7478 3105
020 7478 3125

Contact:
Peter Shaw
Elizabeth Walmsley

Email:
peter.shaw@praesta.com,
elizabeth.walmsley@praesta.com
www.praesta.com

SOLACE Enterprises

Telephone:
0845 601 0649

Contact:
Rita Sammons

Email:
rita.sammons@solaceenterprises.com
www.solaceenterprises.com

Stanton Marris

Telephone:
020 7637 0290

Contact:
John Bruce-Jones

Email:
jbj@stantonmarris.com
www.stantonmarris.com

The Tavistock Institute

Telephone:
020 7417 0566

Contact:
Mannie Sher
Phil Swann

Email:
m.sher@tavinstitute.org
p.swann@tavinstitute.org
www.tavinstitute.org

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Leadership Centre for Local Government
Warwick House
25 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 0PP
www.localleadership.gov.uk

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