



CENTRES
FOR EXCELLENCE
IN TEACHER TRAINING



Regional Learning and Skills Workers

Report of a pilot Network Meeting in
the South West March 2009

1. Background

There are many individuals employed by national agencies who work regionally across the country to promote and support both organisations and individuals in developing better practices with learners through Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) nationally contracted programmes. There are also regional workers who represent Sector Skills Councils, Professional bodies, Awarding Bodies, the promotion of Adult Learning, Skills for Life, Regional ICT support centres and national strategies.

Those colleagues who work regionally are usually supported by the programmes and activities they represent through a range of promotional and support material including web pages. They are often tasked with setting up meetings and opportunities for development and new learning. Sometimes they are tasked with organising consultations or carrying out research. It is not unusual that these workers are often working to bring about whole organisational approaches in the methods they employ.

The use of a regional focus to support organisations is very welcome as it emphasises the uniqueness of a locality and builds on existing intelligence and network infrastructures. What is often not so welcome though is the deluge of information and opportunity that comes with so many different organisations offering support and regularly the same people are targeted. If the targeted organisation is a large one such as a college there are dedicated roles that are selected e.g. Staff Development Managers, Skills for Life Managers. If the organisation is small it is usually one person who receives all information and contact.

The SWitch south west Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT) is coordinated through a regional centre; Learning South West, which is an educational charity and cross sector membership organisation. The organisation aims to work in partnership to develop and promote excellence in teaching and learning in post compulsory education. It was suggested at an LSIS Joint Contractors meeting that the SWitch CETT would provide an ideal site to host a first pilot regional workers network meeting and report back some key findings and recommendations that may be helpful to national agencies and other locations with CETTS or who have regional resource organisations like Learning South West.

The SWitch CETT is a partnership of over fifty organisations. Many deliver Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD), some organisations invest in the development of their staff training and development and some support and promote key areas of work related to promoting excellence in teaching and learning.

2. The Network Meeting

The meeting took place on March 11th 2009 at Learning South West in Taunton Somerset.

The aim of the meeting was for Learning and Skills Regional Workers to meet as a collective to explore potential synergies and evaluate how these could be realised for the benefit of one another and Learning and Skills colleagues

The objectives of the meeting were to:

1. Identify the full range of support available to colleagues in the south west
2. Recognise similarities and differences in our regional work
3. Describe shared potential strengths and synergies
4. Generate ideas on ways strengths and synergies could be taken forward
5. Evaluate the worth of the meeting

The meeting was attended by 12 people who work regionally from:

- NCETM : National Centre for Teaching Excellence in Mathematics (Tribal, Nord Anglia)
- E-CPD (BDP) whole organisation approach to improve teaching and learning through effective use of technology.
- NIACE- E-Guides to support practitioners in their use of technology.
- Skills for Life Improvement Programme (CFBT) whole organisational approaches and CPD for practitioners
- Move On (Tribal) Approaches to support SfL for practitioners and learners
- Functional Skills Programme (LSN)
- RSC JISC- ICT support centre
- Regional Skills for Life Unit (LSC/RDA)
- Institute for Learning Connections Advisor (IfL)
- SWitch CETT Manager and Co-ordinator (LSIS)
- Learning South West- regional projects manager

(Apologies from Subject Learning Coach Programme (Nord Anglia) STEM –Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths and LLUK)

Activities were designed to draw out key synergies and support the creation of new ideas to work more effectively for the benefit of organisations and individuals. The Agenda and Facilitator notes can be found in Appendix 1 and 2 the meeting was evaluated and an example form is at Appendix 4

3. Outcomes from the Meeting:

Key points arising:

A burden rather than an opportunity?

- Providers are bombarded with offers of support and resources; there is often an 'embarrassment of riches' but small resource to support people in prioritising and managing the various proposals. (It usually falls to a few people within a large organisation and the same person in smaller ones)
- Funding is perceived less about an opportunity to develop and improve and more about short term planning with associated targets and little time to find the links between national, local and organisational priorities
- Feeling from providers that many regional workers are undertaking very similar work and there is much duplication going on- 'same, same, different names'

'Short term funding and lack of joined up thinking at strategic level makes things difficult at the interface with providers'

'Is there any evidence that ideas generating from bottom up have been funded? Have we ever started with the idea first?'

Whose targets are they anyway?

There is unanticipated rivalry to engage with providers- especially with 'whole organisational approaches' and a lack of knowledge between regional workers about each other's role.

- Regional workers even though highly professional are charged with their own targets so understandably have little time to think about other colleague's programmes/activities and their associated targets
- There are key differences in regional workers' roles- some have a brokering role and others have a delivery role.

'Some colleagues are delivering specific programmes with set outcomes which are given to them- often on short funding timescales others seem to have a more flexible brief. How can we make use of this to the benefit of the region?'

- There are a range of different programme models and sometimes a lack of co-ordination between them.

'We have some good models of collaboration in place nationally already but we need to build on this with regional approaches'

'Independent brokerage through Learning South West and the SWItch CETT is helpful'

'Ways to promote brokerage of support and programmes available is a good idea e.g. joint events, joint bulletins, and joint projects'

- The current plethora of organisations involved in supporting provider improvement results in a labyrinth of acronyms and logos.

'I think we need to develop and maintain better knowledge of each others projects, remit and offers in order to best promote our work to relevant organisations and individuals'

There is a cultural feeling aboard that people are continuing to be 'done to' rather than doing it for themselves.

'There is a commonality about approaches to ongoing professional learning (CPD) and ways of working with learners which imply the value of interagency coordination and hence meetings of regional workers'

We still need regional workers, however those who work nationally or in areas as opposed to 'regions' are spread too thinly and cannot really know what's going on on the ground.

4. Recommendations from the meeting:

- **Devise a coherent approach for offering support to providers** that enables them to identify CPD and support individuals that align to their organisational priorities this could include -

Planning a joint regional event for cross sector provider curriculum leaders between all regional programmes in September 09 (sequenced around national commissioning process and provider planning). The event to be organised like a Learning Fair with surgeries available for colleagues to discuss and prioritise and plan how to manage the various opportunities available in the region

'Make the delivery strategy clearer to providers so that they can see how training fits together, should be sequenced, and is of true value to their staff and is planned around their own organisational priorities'

- **Hide the wiring:** Organisations and practitioners do not need to know the intricate details of who is contracted to do what – they need simple packaged information and to be in touch with a human being as well as a web site.

'providers are often confused at present and there is sometimes resistance to support, but when it is explained, they are very positive e.g. one consortium had asked not to be contacted because of the number of offers of support. When I did get to talk to them, they said 'why has nobody told us all this before?'

- **Try to simplify the offer for providers.**

Develop an independent brokerage system to assist and collaborate with LSIS and its sub-contractors. This will help promote a more cohesive message to providers and maximise opportunities for giving feedback to national programmes via an independent organisations like many of the CETTS. Think about developing joint projects between programmes

- **Support the CPD of regional worker staff**

Allow time and promote in job descriptions and contracts for regional workers to network with others in a similar role. To meet other workers and learn first hand what is happening with work and within the location. To foster a sense of beneficial mutual support and provide an opportunity for regional workers to plan how to work more effectively for the benefit of providing organisations and their staff.

'Have regular meetings such as today to 'show and tell' about one another's programmes, think about potential joint events or projects'

'The networks could be organised and facilitated through the CETT network.'

Develop E input (through contribution from each commissioned organisation) for a regional workers group to share information and ask for help and support from one another-a community of Practice approach.

Evaluating each individual programme is not always helpful as it takes too long to synthesise the messages emerging from each component part. Feedback on key trends, patterns could also be fed back from the regional worker group to national key strategic groups swiftly.

Paula Jones

Switch CETT Manager

Host and Facilitator of the pilot Regional Workers Meeting

Many thanks go to the south west regional worker colleagues who gave their perspective and imaginative ideas so professionally, freely and helpfully at the meeting. The evaluations indicated how beneficial the meeting was for these colleagues. It has been agreed for the SWitch CETT to arrange a further regional workers network meeting in summer 09 to plan for a joint regional event between national programmes and agencies for September 09.

Appendix 1

South West Regional Workers Network Meeting Bishop Hull House, Bishops Hull, Taunton, Somerset March 11th 2009 10-1pm

Aim of the Meeting:

For Learning and Skills Regional Workers to meet as a collective to explore potential synergies and evaluate how these could be realised for the benefit of us and our Learning and Skills colleagues

Objectives: It is hoped by the end of the meeting we will:

6. Identify the full range of support available to colleagues in the south west
7. Recognise similarities and differences in our regional work
8. Describe shared potential strengths and synergies
9. Generate ideas on ways strengths and synergies could be taken forward
10. Evaluate the worth of the meeting

Meeting Programme

- Welcome: Speed Dating and Missing you
- Background and Purpose of the Meeting
- Same and Different Activity
- Strength and Synergy Activity
- Ideas and Opportunities Activity
- Evaluation : Weighing up the worth

Appendix 2

Facilitator Notes – Regional Workers Meeting 11th March 2009

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Time	Activity	Who	Resources
10:00	<p>Welcome: Speed Dating and Missing you</p> <p>People find a partner and find out: Who they work for what their role is, and something they like about their job. Be prepared to introduce the person to the rest of the group. Facilitator capture the roles on flip chart- ask group to identify missing colleagues</p>	<p>All</p> <p>PJ</p>	<p>Flip Chart and pens</p>
10:30	<p>Background and Purpose of the Meeting:</p> <p>LSIS Pilot : Reporting Back sharing model</p> <p>CETTS</p>	<p>PJ</p>	
10:40	<p>Same and Different Activity</p> <p>Work in Pairs for 15 mins Join in two groups and share and assemble a</p>	<p>PJ Introduce</p> <p>All</p>	<p>Venn Diagram</p> <p>Flip chart and pens</p>

	<p>shared large group Venn diagram 15mins</p> <p>Each Group present briefly to each other 15mins</p> <p>Identify key similarities and key differences 10mins</p>	KB and PJ to support the processes	
11:20	Coffee and Comfort break		
11:35	<p>Strength and Synergy Activity</p> <p>Working in small groups with the diagrams identify key strengths or potential synergies the diagram(s) suggests to you. (15mins)</p> <p>Collect these on cards</p>	<p>PJ Introduce</p> <p>All</p>	<p>Completed Venn diagram</p> <p>Cards</p>
12:05	<p>Ideas and Opportunities Activity</p> <p>In pairs assemble ideas on how these strengths and synergies could be helpful to you and the colleagues you aim to support 15 mins</p> <p>Each pair display their ideas- (Lay on table)</p> <p>Whole group walk round and review</p> <p>Collect as appropriate any barriers ? 15mins</p>	PJ Introduce	<p>Completed cards</p> <p>Ideas sheet</p>
12:40	Evaluation : Weighing the worth	PJ Introduce	Evaluation Sheet
1:00	Close and Lunch		

Appendix 3



**South West Regional Workers Network Meeting
Evaluation:**

Name..... Regional Role.....

What were the main benefits of the meeting for you?

What key messages would you give to national strategic groups and agencies (e.g. LSIS) about regional working and workers?

Which ideas are worth taking forward for you, your regional colleagues and learning and skills colleagues?

What benefits do you think future meetings could provide for you, your regional colleagues and learning and skills colleagues?

Any other comments?